

Fattebert, Ulysses Charles (1871–1947) and Ellen I. Burrill (1875–1963)

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Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Carlos and Ellen Burrill Fattebert did pioneering educational and medical missionary work in Mexico and the Philippine Islands.

Education and Mexican Mission Work

Ulysses Charles Fattebert was born on September 9, 1871, in the forested mountains of Placer County, California.¹ His preferred name was Carlos. When he was a teenager he united with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1892 he attended Healdsburg College in California. The following year he went on to Battle Creek College in Michigan, and then took nurses' training at Battle Creek Sanitarium.²

In May 1897, Carlos went to Mexico, where Adventist work had been initiated just a few years earlier, centered in Guadalajara. He served as a self-supporting missionary nurse for more than five years. When he returned to the United States he earned a medical degree at St. Louis University School of Medicine in Missouri.³

Marriage and Renewed Mexican Mission

In December 1905, Dr. Fattebert returned to Mexico, once again as a self-supporting man under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board.⁴ He located in the city of Celaya, central Mexico.⁵

In June 1906 he married Ellen I. Burrill. Born October 5, 1875, at Ionia, Michigan, Ellen had spent seven years as a missionary teacher in the Cape Conference, South Africa.⁶ Ellen joined her husband in full-time mission service in Mexico. She conducted a small girl's school in Celaya with separate classes for American and Mexican students. The students, who were of the Catholic faith that predominated in Mexico, appreciated the Bible classes that she included in her curriculum, Dr. Fattebert reported.⁷

Carlos and Ellen moved north from Celaya to the smaller city of San Luis Potosi, where they were well-established by 1908.⁸ Once again Ellen started a mission school for Americans and Mexicans. She told of one little girl who asked, "Why don't you have school on Saturdays?" Another student chipped in, "Don't you know she can't work on Saturday? She is a Seventh-day Oddfellow."⁹

In 1911 Dr. Fattebert published a comprehensive report of his work. At San Luis Potosi he was located on a sugar plantation where approximately 800 people were employed. The owners had initiated a medical insurance fund into which the workers paid a monthly premium. The fund supported Fattebert and his medical supplies. Obstetrical work was undertaken by local mid-wives, untrained and primitive. Fattebert was kept busy with cases of malaria, dysentery, tonsillitis, intestinal worms, skin diseases, venereal disease, wounds and ulcers and many more complaints. Surgery was only performed in dire circumstances because of the lack of suitable assistance and facilities. The doctor added that more than 20 families among the limited pool of literate folk were regular readers of his church papers even though management was not friendly to evangelical efforts.¹⁰

Mission Work in the Philippines

The Fatteberts returned to America in March 1913. Ellen undertook post-graduate studies in New York for six months. The couple was then appointed to denominational medical missionary work in the Philippine Islands, beginning September 1913.¹¹ There they established the first Adventist mission station on the island of Cebu,¹² located at Argao, and began to learn the local language. In addition to medical work, Dr. Fattebert arranged for the publication of tracts in the Cebu-Visayan language.¹³ Twelve months later he reported he was conducting regular worship services for approximately 100 people and had treated 274 patients.¹⁴

Unfortunately, as early as 1917 it was observed that both Carlos and Ellen were showing signs of poor health due to the tropical climate.¹⁵ Again in 1920 a visiting church leader commented on their deteriorating health.¹⁶ However, they persisted at their mission post on Cebu until late in 1920. By then the number of church members in the Cebuan Mission had reached 79.¹⁷ Then they transferred to pioneer Adventist work at Misimis on the north coast of Mindano where many Visayan-speaking immigrants had settled.¹⁸ They gained some converts before returning to the United States in September 1921.¹⁹

Final Years

While on furlough after arriving back in the homeland, Dr. Fattebert participated in a mission symposium at the 1922 General Conference session in San Francisco.²⁰ During the academic year of 1923-1924 he taught French and Spanish courses at Pacific Union College in northern California.²¹

In 1924 the Fatteberts located at Phoenix, Arizona, where Carlos set up a private medical practice²² and Ellen taught at Arizona Academy.²³ Initially she taught grades 5-8, later specializing in teaching of English and Spanish.

²⁴ In 1935 she discontinued teaching in order to care for her husband. His health had slowly deteriorated, and the number of his patients had dwindled, until finally he was unable to continue his practice.²⁵

Heart failure caused Dr. Fattebert's death at age 76 on September 3, 1947, in Phoenix. He was laid to rest in the local Greenwood Memory Lawn Cemetery.²⁶ Ellen remained in Phoenix. She was diagnosed with cancer in 1962 and passed away on August 23, 1963, at the age of 87.²⁷

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NOTES

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