

Vollmer, Henry Walter (1881–1981) and Marion May (Wilber) (1899–1988)



Henry W. Vollmer, American Medical Missionary College Class of 1905 photo.

Photo courtesy of Department of Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, Loma Linda University.

MILTON HOOK

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.

Henry W. Vollmer, M.D., medical director at Loma Linda Sanitarium and, later, at St. Helena Sanitarium, became noted for successful health evangelism while serving as medical secretary for the Pacific Union Conference.

Early Years

Henry Vollmer was born on February 20, 1881, at Marshall, Wisconsin, to Jasper and Augusta Ludwig Vollmer. His parents were of German heritage and worked a farm near Milton, southeast of Madison. Their three sons were Alfred Martin (b. 1876), Henry Walter (b. 1881) and Lawrence Jasper (b. 1890).¹

After completing his medical degree in 1905 at the American Medical Missionary College, Henry served as an intern at the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan.² It was there that he met Rose Barber who graduated as a nurse in 1906.³ They married on October 24, 1907, in Bozeman, Montana, where Henry established a medical

practice. W.F. Martin officiated at the ceremony.⁴ After a few years in Montana the Vollmers moved to Oregon where Henry practiced in Forest Grove.⁵

Henry and Rose were blessed with three children, two of whom survived—Margaret Rose (b. 1908) and Donald Henry (b. 1914).⁶ When Rose's sister passed away prematurely, leaving her two daughters Rose Eileen (b. 1913) and Dorothy (b. 1921), they were adopted by Henry and Rose.⁷

Sanitarium Director

In 1918 Vollmer was appointed medical superintendent of Loma Linda Sanitarium. At the time there were five other doctors on the medical staff. The number had increased to 17 by 1924⁸ when he transferred to Glendale Sanitarium to serve as assistant medical superintendent. In 1926 Dr. Vollmer was appointed medical director at St. Helena Sanitarium.⁹

Only a few years after her sister died, Rose passed away May 2, 1928, at the age of 43. Rose was interred in the Hillside Memorial Park, Redlands, California.¹⁰

Two years after Rose's passing, on May 13, 1930, Henry married Marion May Wilber (1899-1988) at Loma Linda. Marion had taught at Loma Linda Academy and advanced to be principal of the teacher training school connected with Pacific Union College.¹¹ She was also a talented musician.¹²

After his marriage to Marion, Dr. Vollmer continued for another decade as medical director of St. Helena Sanitarium. He reported in 1930 that during the previous year the institution received more than 2,000 patients, performed 489 surgical operations and gave more than 28,000 hydrotherapy treatments. Employees, including nurses in training, numbered approximately 200.¹³ During the ensuing years of the Great Depression the institution almost managed to break even financially. At the same time local churches continued donations for two charity beds and free surgery for poverty-stricken patients.¹⁴

Health Education and Evangelism

Vollmer did not restrict himself to medical administration and surgery. Instead, he took an active part in the local churches, lecturing on health and temperance.¹⁵ This voluntary work proved so successful that he developed it further during his next assignment.

In 1940 Dr. Vollmer transitioned from the administration of medical institutions to fostering health education and health evangelism as medical secretary for the Pacific Union Conference. In this role he introduced training in home nursing for conference workers and church members and health inspections at church schools.¹⁶ He followed the concept of preceding evangelistic campaigns with a series of health lectures to generate interest in religious topics.¹⁷ Marion assisted by conducting nutrition and practical cooking classes.¹⁸ Their combined efforts

met with success and led to invitations from outside the Pacific Union Conference to conduct similar programs.¹⁹

Final Years

Dr. Vollmer officially retired in 1952 from his post in the Pacific Union Conference, having devoted 34 years to medical ministry leadership. However, his good health permitted him to join with his wife and Dr. J. Wayne McFarland in conducting their health education programs for many more years.²⁰

Just 18 days short of the age of 100, Henry Vollmer suffered a fatal heart attack at Loma Linda on February 2, 1981. He was laid to rest in Montecito Memorial Park, Colton, California.²¹ Marion, who was 18 years younger, passed away on May 12, 1988, and rests alongside Henry.²²

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NOTES

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