

Waddell, Ralph Forest (1907–1985) and Ellen Naomi (Dick) (1912–2015)

MILTON HOOK

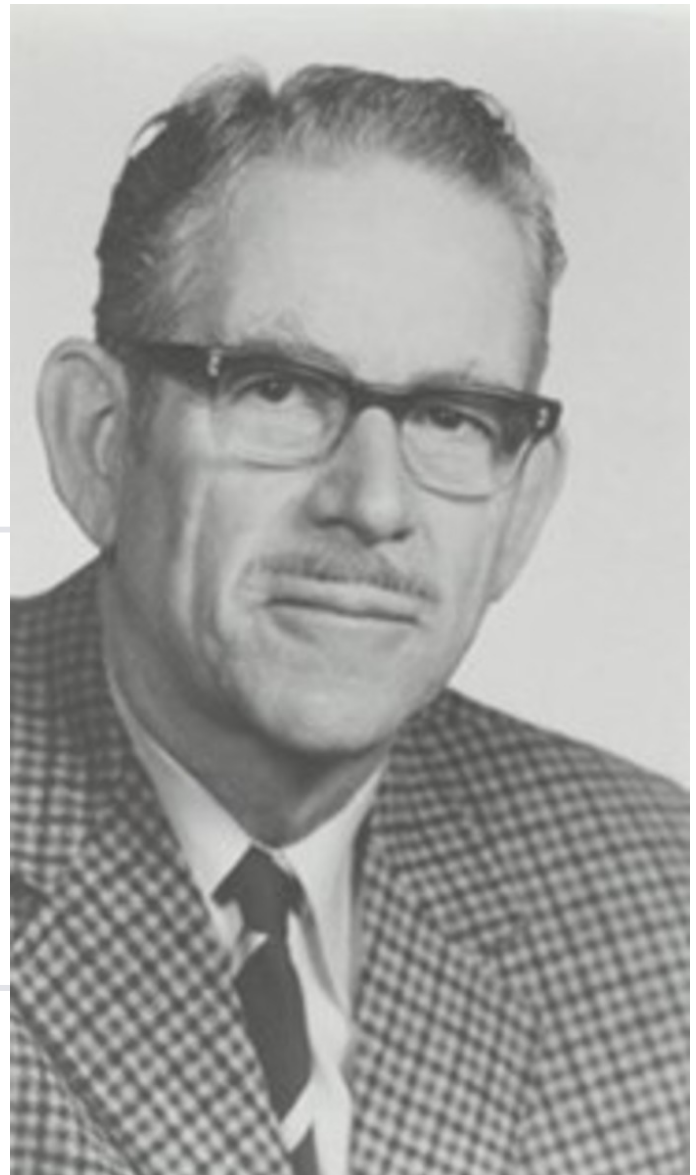
Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New 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.

Ralph F. Waddell, M.D., and his wife, Ellen Dick Waddell, pioneered medical mission work in Thailand, taking leading roles in the development of Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital and its School of Nursing. Dr. Waddell later served as Medical Department director for the Far Eastern Division and then for the General Conference.

Heritage and Education

Ralph Waddell was born in Delton, Wisconsin, on December 22, 1907, to Pearl Eugene Waddell and his wife, Mabel Anna (Barker). He grew up on the family farm with two siblings, Arthur Barker (b. 1905) and Margaret Pearl (b. 1909).¹

The Waddell farm was located at Baraboo, a little south of Delton. At the age of 12 Ralph was baptized by Ernest Ferris during the Wisconsin camp meeting at Fond du Lac. After graduating from Bethel Academy near



Ralph Forest Waddell

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Columbus, Wisconsin, he enrolled at Emmanuel Missionary College in Michigan in 1925, then transferred to Union College in Nebraska in 1928. He continued his college education at the University of Wisconsin for a term in 1930, then graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1931 from Pacific Union College in California.

Waddell then took medical training at the College of Medical Evangelists, Loma Linda, California. He married nurse Ellen Naomi Dick in Glendale, California, on June 6, 1935. After a year of internship at Portland Sanitarium in Oregon, he received his degree as a medical doctor in 1936. The couple's first child, Beverly, was born in Portland in 1936. Their two other children would be born in Thailand: Corlene (1938) and Ralph II (1949)?

Ellen Dick Waddell was born October 15, 1912, into an Adventist family in Beiseker, Alberta, Canada, and baptized in 1923 by J. J. Reisinger. She completed the stenographic course at Walla Walla College in 1931 and took an additional year's training in 1931-1932 at Northwestern School of Commerce in Portland, Oregon. Ellen then went to southern California for nurses training, graduating from the White Memorial School of Nursing in Los Angeles in 1935.³ She would utilize her training in both the business and nursing fields in her overseas mission service.

Bangkok Mission Clinic

In November 1936, Ralph and Ellen Waddell headed to Siam (Thailand), where Dr. Waddell was appointed to establish medical mission work. A nurse was already conducting a small dispensary in Ubon Province in the eastern part of the country. Waddell was directed to pioneer a clinic in the capital, Bangkok. A four-story building was acquired, renovated to accommodate 24 patients, and opened in 1937. He was the only physician together with three registered nurses and seven nursing assistants. Ellen assumed the role of treasurer for the clinic. Hydrotherapy treatments became popular with the local people, and Ralph was kept busy with surgeries.⁴ He became renowned for his successful tonsillectomies.⁵

World War II Years on the Homefront

Forced to evacuate as Japanese forces advanced through Thailand in World War II, the Waddells arrived in California on October 7, 1941.⁶ After a few months of furlough Dr. Waddell joined the staff of the Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital, April through October 1942. He was then appointed as the medical director of the Boulder Sanitarium and Hospital, Colorado. He held this role until November 1945.⁷

In July 1945 Waddell was placed under deferred appointment by the General Conference with a view for him to return to Thailand as soon as possible and carry forward plans for expanding the medical work.⁸ Despite disruptions and limitations, work at the clinic was continued during the war years by national staff.⁹ Also, Dr. Benea, a European physician, worked during Dr. Waddell's absence. The outpatient department functioned throughout the war. The inpatient department was forced to close for 20 months due to air raids. The facility

was self-supporting and some profits were forwarded to the Red Cross and other charities.¹⁰

Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital

Prior to departure for Thailand, Waddell was ordained to the gospel ministry in Los Angeles on January 19, 1946, by J. Lamar McElhany, General Conference president, and Louis K. Dickson, one of the GC vice presidents.¹¹ The Waddell family sailed from San Francisco on March 23, 1946, for Thailand.¹² Ralph resumed his role as medical director of the clinic, and Ellen served in the dual role of treasurer and teacher in the school of nursing. They served in these capacities until July 1953.¹³ During 1946 the clinic treated over 20,000 outpatients and 776 inpatients. Several doctors assisted Dr. Waddell together with 12 graduate nurses, 14 nurse aides and others to staff the pharmacy, laboratory and x-ray departments.¹⁴

On December 26, 1946, funds accrued from the clinic's operations, combined with appropriations from the General Conference and Far Eastern Division, were used to purchase a nearby six-acre (2.4-hectare) tract of land for the development of what became known as Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital. The land included the house, called the Annex, that had been leased and utilized by the clinic prior to the war, but closed during the hostilities. The former Annex was remodeled and became the initial sanitarium building. Another building was converted into quarters for the School of Nursing in 1947.¹⁵

In 1949, Dr. Waddell was appointed to the additional role of medical secretary for the Far Eastern Division.¹⁶ This portfolio brought heavy responsibilities with oversight of seven major medical institutions throughout Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Malaya. These facilities employed 20 doctors, both national and expatriate, 69 graduate nurses, 18 technicians and three chaplains.¹⁷

Ellen Waddell relinquished responsibility as treasurer of Bangkok Hospital and Sanitarium in April 1951 but continued teaching in the School of Nursing. She then served as director of the nursing school from July 1952 to July 1953.¹⁸

In July 1953 Dr. Waddell was appointed associate secretary of the General Conference Medical Department. He was tasked with chairing the College of Medical Evangelists Fundraising Committee.¹⁹

Ralph and Ellen resumed their mission service in Thailand in November 1955, he resuming his role as medical director of the Bangkok Sanitarium and Hospital and she as director of the School of Nursing.²⁰ Their term witnessed the completion of a new three-story building for the school of nursing. It accommodated dormitory rooms, a chapel, offices, classrooms and library. Queen Sirikit officially opened it during the dedication on December 2, 1958.²¹

Medical Department Leadership

In June 1960 the Waddells returned to America on furlough. They gained a two-year leave of absence in order to do further studies at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Ralph earned a Ph.D. in public health. Ellen improved her qualifications with a masters degree in public health education. In late 1962 they were back in Singapore for Ralph to resume his role as medical secretary for the Far Eastern Division. Soon after their return Ellen was appointed to be his assistant, giving special attention to nursing education within the Division.²²

Their supervision took them to all parts of the Far East. In 1964, for example, Ralph organized a major gathering of medical administrators for instruction and council at Baguio, Philippine Islands, while at the same time and venue Ellen conducted a workshop for 36 nursing supervisors.²³ At other times, Dr. Waddell was busy throughout the division with Five-Day Plans to Stop Smoking.²⁴

At the General Conference session in Detroit, Michigan, June 1966, Dr. Waddell was elected secretary of the GC Medical Department, later renamed the Health Department.²⁵ The role entailed fostering the church's vast and growing worldwide network of medical institutions and services. It also involved educating the church about application of Adventist health principles in the contemporary world, and promoting their dissemination to the wider public. Toward those goals, Dr. Waddell regularly published articles about health in the denominational journals.²⁶

Final Years

After retirement from the General Conference in 1975, Ralph and Ellen located in the Loma Linda, California, area. They returned to Thailand in 1976 for a short-term volunteer assignment at Bangkok Adventist Hospital, as it was known by then. They again volunteered for short-term service in 1978 at Guam Seventh-day Adventist Clinic, Agana, Guam.²⁷

Ralph passed away on May 18, 1985, at age 77, and was buried at Montecito Memorial Park in nearby Colton.²⁸ Ellen died on May 22, 2015, at the age of 102. She had married Reuben Nelson but was interred, also at Montecito Memorial Park, under the name Waddell.²⁹

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