



Grave plaques of William Ammundsen and wife Effa.

Photo courtesy of Lot Lzrd. Source: *Find A Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/209595539/william-byron-ammundsen>

Ammundsen, William B. (1888–1978) and Effa (1888–1873)

THANG SUAN SUM, AND INGRID IDYLL M. TORNALEJO

Thang Suan Sum (B.Th., Spicer Memorial College; M.A. in Religion, Andrew University, Spicer Memorial College-off Campus) currently, works at Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary as a Bible instructor in religion.

Ingrid Idyll M. Tornalejo is a Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science (BMLS) Graduate of the Adventist University of the Philippines. She is currently a second-year student at the Adventist University of the Philippines, College of Medicine.

William and Effa Ammundsen were missionaries to the Philippines. William was a poet,¹ colporteur, pastor, educator, church administrator and college president, while Effa dedicated her ministry to young people.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

William Byron Ammundsen was born on November 7, 1888, in St. Paul, Minnesota.² His father, Christian Ammundsen, was from Norway, and his mother, Anna Nelson, was born in the U.S.A.³ William was raised in a Seventh-day Adventist home, but was not baptized until the age of 22. He spent his childhood years in St. Paul and Excelsior in the state of Minnesota.⁴ William was the youngest of five siblings of two girls and three boys, namely Emma Sophia, Hattie Emilia, Clarence Arthur, Elmer Carleton, and William Byron.⁵

Ammundsen received his education at both public and denominational schools.⁶ From 1898 to 1904, he attended St. Paul Church School. He also spent four years in different public schools, such as Sibley School in St.

Paul, and half a year in Excelsior Public School in Minnesota.⁷ In 1911, he proceeded with his education at Walla Walla College, where he completed their academic course in 1915 and the college course in 1919.⁸ In June 1911, at a camp meeting in Walla Walla College, William Ammundsen accepted Jesus as His Savior and was baptized by John Isaac. He adds, "I was raised in an Adventist home, but was not baptized until I was 22."⁹

William B. Ammundsen married Effa Marie Ragsdale on September 5, 1917, in Boise, Idaho.¹⁰ She was born on October 29, 1888, at Milton, Oregon.¹¹ Effa was the youngest of the three children of Theron L. Ragsdale and Ida Rodell Goodrich.¹² She spent her early years in College Place, Washington, where she also received 16 years of education from Walla Walla College. They had two children, both boys.¹³ Leonard Byron Ammundsen¹⁴ born in the Philippines on October 23, 1921, but died in 1961.¹⁵ The other son, Burton Everett, was also born in the Philippines on May 11, 1924.¹⁶

Ministry

During the summers of 1911, 1912, and 1917, William Byron Ammundsen worked as a colporteur in Washington, wherein he would make more than his scholarship each year.¹⁷ While he was completing his literary course in Walla Walla College, he was also the business manager of their school paper, *The Western Collegian*.¹⁸ Apart from being a staff member of their college paper, he was also the head of the carpentry department, a choir leader in church, and an assistant preceptor in the college.¹⁹

He was active in camp meetings and took important roles such as being the tent master in tent efforts. It was in one camp meeting where he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior as well. In the summer of 1916, Ammundsen assisted Elder J. F. Piper during a tent effort in Seattle.²⁰ He reports, "I am enjoying the work and hope the Lord will use me to win souls for him."²¹

He also held several hall efforts as a volunteer worker with C. J. Cole in 1919 and 1920 which he was not able to finish due to his call to serve the Lord as a missionary to the Philippines.²² Aside from his voluntary efforts, William Byron Ammundsen also wrote poems, one of which was published on October 10, 1916, in the *Eastern Canadian Messenger*.²³

Ammundsen and his family arrived in the Philippines in 1920. From that year until 1926, he would serve as the president of the Northern Luzon Mission.²⁴

In April 1921, Ammundsen wrote an article for the North Pacific Union Gleaner giving updates on his ministry. He reported that he and his family resided in the Northern part of Luzon, particularly the town of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, where the headquarters for the local Adventist Mission is located.²⁵ During his ministry in the Philippines, he learned the local dialect in order to communicate with the locals in their daily encounters and to preach without using an interpreter. While adjusting to the local environment, he reached out among the local people to share the Word of God.²⁶ Effa Ammundsen also helped out in the ministry by teaching children in a small

church school in their dining room.²⁷

The training he had received during his college years contributed to his ministry in the Philippines. As the director of Northern Luzon Mission, he was able to support church building projects in areas needing places of worship.²⁸ His experience as a colporteur also equipped him to train young men in the province of Pangasinan to carry out evangelistic work and to earn their scholarships in order to study in school.²⁹ In one of his articles to the Far Eastern Division Outlook, he wrote,

We are recanvassing Pangasinan Province for Heralds of the Morning, and the boys are doing just as well this time as, or better than, when the territory was canvassed the first time. We have twelve young men who are trying to earn their scholarship so as to be privileged to return to school, and they are putting forth strong efforts to make this possible.³⁰

In 1926, Ammundsen was appointed as principal of the Philippine Seventh-day Adventist Academy, which was later renamed as Philippine Junior College in 1928. Aside from being the college president, he also served as its business manager and bible teacher.³¹ Throughout his service as a principal, he regarded Christian education as of great importance not from the ideas of man, but of God.³² As a result, his earnest work with his associates produced the best school year in the history of Philippine Junior College in 1928. That year's enrollment had 260 students, four of which had full scholarships and two had partial scholarships. The industries of the school also included carpentry, gardening, laundry, sewing, and embroidery.³³ The number of the school's enrollment and graduates continued to improve in the following years that their facilities were starting to get cramped. With this, plans of expansion commenced.³⁴ W. B. Ammundsen served the college until 1930 with his wife, Effa, who also served as head of the Normal Department (equivalent to today's Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education Department) for some time.³⁵ The Ammundsens labored in the Philippines for ten years before they had to leave due to the war.³⁶

Later Life

In 1932, William Byron Ammundsen was hired as a Bible teacher in Mountain View Academy, in Mountain View California after he returned back to the United States from his missionary work in the Philippines.³⁷ He served in the Central California Conference as a minister for several years³⁸ before he moved to Southern California Conference to serve as a minister and a faculty member at the Lynwood Academy.³⁹ He then moved to the Northern California Conference, where he would serve as a faculty member and principal of the Golden Gate Academy, Oakland, California; and pastor of the Manteca, California, Church until 1952.⁴⁰ Even after retirement, Ammundsen served as chaplain of Paradise Valley Manor in National City, California.⁴¹

William and Effa Ammundsen had a seven-month, round-the-world journey in 1964. One of the "high points" that they remembered was their two-week visit to the Philippines on October 15, 1964, via the S.S. Oronsay.⁴² As

the couple had worked in the Philippines for ten years, they were met at the pier by colleagues from Philippine Union College, some of their old-time students, and teachers.⁴³ They also paid a visit to the headquarters of Northern Luzon Mission. Finally, they left for the United States of America on October 28, 1964.⁴⁴

Effa Marie died in 1973. Later, Ammundsen married Sadia L. Schaffner.⁴⁵ He passed on September 10, 1978, in San Diego County, California. Elder William Byron Ammundsen died at the age of 89.⁴⁶

Contribution

William and Effa Ammundsen reached out to the people needing to hear God's message. William Ammundsen contributed greatly to developing Christian Education as the principal of Philippine Junior College. He was a board member of the Manila Sanitarium and Hospital,⁴⁷ and a part of the Executive Committee of Philippine Publishing House.⁴⁸

The ministry of William and Effa Ammundsen was marked with enthusiasm for Christian Education and the salvation of the young people they encountered in the Philippines. They were servants of the Lord who assisted in changing many young people's lives by giving them opportunities to receive quality Christian Education.

SOURCES

Alsaybar, B. B. "Former PUC President Makes Two-Week Visit." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, December 1, 1964.

Ammundsen, W. B. "A Smile." *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, October 10, 1916.

Ammundsen, W. B. "Progress of Philippine Junior College." *Far Eastern Division Outlook* November 1930.

Ammundsen, W. B. "Luzon, Philippines." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, April 7, 1921.

Ammundsen, W. B. "Chapels for Growing Constituencies in Northern Luzon."

Ammundsen, W. B. "Christian Education." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1929.

Ammundsen, W. B. "The Progress of the Message in Northern Luzon." *Missions Quarterly* 14, No. 2 (1925).

Biographical Information Blank, "William B. Ammundsen." General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

"College Notes." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, June 22, 1916.

Comstock, Darryl. "Golden Gate Academy Has First Alumni Homecoming." *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 18, 1966.

Dalrymple, Gwynne. "The Mountain View Union Academy." *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 11, 1932.

"Deaths." *ARH*, November 9, 1978.

"Family Search," <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LRCB-L7Z/anna-ammundsen-1857>.

Frost, S. L. "Training of Our Youth." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August- September 1929.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/155279019/effa-marie-ammundsen>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/169986521/leonard-byron-ammundsen>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60083447/theron-l-ragsdale>

https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/34/?name=William_Amundsen&event=_CA

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/209595539/william-byron-ammundsen>

Lashier, S. J. "Union Office Notes." *North Pacific Gleaner*, June 4, 1925.

Lashier, S. J. "The Western Collegian Staff." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, April 27, 1916.

"News Notes." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, September 6, 1917.

"News Notes." *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, June 8, 1916.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association. Various years.

<https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

NOTES

1. W. B. Ammundsen, "A Smile," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, October 10, 1916, 1.
<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/ECM/ECM19161010-V16-40.pdf>. Accessed June 29, 2021.
2. Biographical Information Blank, William B. Ammundsen, General Conference Archives.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. "Family Search," <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LRCB-L7Z/anna-ammundsen-1857>. Accessed July 15, 2021.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. "News Notes," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, September 6, 1917, 6.

11. "Family Search," <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LRCB-L7Z/anna-ammundsen-1857>.
12. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60083447/theron-l-ragsdale>. Accessed July 17, 2021.
13. S. J. Lashier, "Union Office Notes," *North Pacific Gleaner*, June 4, 1925, 8.
14. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/155279019/effa-marie-ammundsen>. Accessed July 15, 2021.
15. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/169986521/leonard-byron-ammundsen>. Accessed July 15, 2021.
16. No Author, *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1, 1924, 12.
17. Biographical Information Blank.
18. S. J. Lashier, "The Western Collegian Staff," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, April 27, 1916, 5.
19. Ibid.
20. "News Notes," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, June 8, 1916, 4.
21. "College Notes," *North Pacific Union Gleaner* June 22, 1916, 6.
22. Biographical Information Blank.
23. W. B. Ammundsen, "A Smile," *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, October 10, 1916, 1.
24. B. B. Alsaybar, "Former PUC President Makes Two-Week Visit," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, December 1, 1964, 9-10.
25. W. B. Ammundsen, "Luzon, Philippines," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, April 7, 1921, 1-2.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. W. B. Ammundsen, "Chapels for Growing Constituencies in Northern Luzon," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1924, 5.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

31. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1928), 278; (1929), 287. B. B. Alsaybar, "Former PUC President Makes Two-Week Visit" *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, December 1, 1964, 9-10.
32. W. B. Ammundsen, "Christian Education" *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1929, 2.
33. S. L. Frost, "Training of Our Youth," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August- September 1929, 2.
34. W. B. Ammundsen, "Progress of Philippine Junior College," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, November 1930, 8.
35. B. B. Alsaybar, "Former PUC President Makes Two-Week Visit" *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, December 1, 1964, 9-10.
36. Ibid.
37. Gwynne Dalrymple. "The Mountain View Union Academy" *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 11, 1932, 3.
38. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1933), 51, 233.
39. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1940), 60, 61, 272.
40. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1944), 52, 228; (1949), 59; 1952, 69. Darryl Comstock, "Golden Gate Academy Has First Alumni Homecoming," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 18, 1966, 3.
41. "Deaths" *ARH*, November 9, 1978, 31.
42. B. B. Alsaybar, "Former PUC President Makes Two-Week Visit" *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, December 1, 1964, 9-10.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/34/?name=William_Amundsen&event=_CA. accessed July 17, 2021. "Deaths" *ARH*, November 9, 1978, 31.
46. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/209595539/william-byron-ammundsen>. Accessed July 6, 2021; See also *SDA Yearbook*, 1979, 502.
47. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1930), 11, 301, 302, 347.
48. Ibid.

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000