



Graeme Barnett in his role of Education Director, West Australian Conference, c. 1990.

Photo courtesy of Jan Barnett.

Barnett, Graham Frederick (1945–1998)

LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

Graham Frederick Barnett, a teacher and administrator, was born in Kingaroy, Queensland, Australia, on February 4, 1945.¹ After completing his diploma of primary teaching at Avondale College in 1968,² he married Jan Elizabeth Durbridge (born February 24, 1948) on December 31, 1968, in Perth, Western Australia.³ They had two daughters, Liesl Jan Marie and Piari Renee.⁴

Barnett's first posting was in 1969–1970 to a teaching position at Wanganui in the North Island of New Zealand.⁵ He then spent a year as the principal of the boarding junior high school at Paglum in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG).⁶ In 1972–1973 he was the primary schools supervisor for the Western Highlands Mission based in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea.⁷ Then from the beginning of 1974, he was based in Lae as the supervisor of the 100 schools in the Primary (Elementary) Education program for the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM), most of which were difficult to access in that mountainous country with few roads.⁸ Barnett was also a relief pilot in the PNGUM aviation program. At the beginning of 1980, the family returned to Australia, where he became the principal of the Toowoomba Adventist School in South Queensland, remaining in that state for seven years before being invited to work in Western Australia from the beginning of 1988.⁹

In Western Australia, Barnett was for several years both the director of Education and the Youth director for not until 1995 was the Youth leadership role passed on to someone else. During his time in Western Australia, he completed a master's degree in educational administration with the La Sierra University extension campus program sponsored by the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 1997 the family returned to Papua New Guinea, where Barnett was appointed to oversee the Teacher Training Program at Pacific Adventist University (PAU), and Jan was also asked to teach. Tragically, Barnett was seriously burned over 80 percent of his body on Friday, October 2, 1998, while refueling generators that were providing temporary electricity for the Education Department at the university. Initially treated at the Port Moresby General Hospital, he was subsequently evacuated by aerial ambulance to Australia, where he struggled for three and a half weeks before losing the battle for his life on October 28, 1998.¹⁰ His funeral service was conducted by South Pacific Division President Laurie Evans and by Pastor Peter Cousins.¹¹

SOURCES

"Appreciation: Barnett." *Record*, March 6, 1999.

Evans, L. J., and P. Cousins. "Graham Frederick Barnett obituary." *Record*, February 6, 1999.

Graham Frederick Barnett Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick." Document: "Barnett, Graham Frederick."

Graham Frederick Barnett Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick." Document: "Biographical Record."

Graham Frederick Barnett Service Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick." Document: "Service Record."

"Missionary Dies from Burns." *Record*, November 21, 1998.

NOTES

1. Graham Frederick Barnett Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick," Document: "Biographical Record."
2. Graham Frederick Barnett Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick," Document: "Barnett, Graham Frederick."
3. Graham Frederick Barnett, "Biographical record."
4. Ibid.
5. Graham Frederick Barnett Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Folder: "Barnett, Graham Frederick," Document: "Service Record."
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. "Missionary Dies from Burns," *Record*, November 21, 1998, 5.
11. L. J. Evans and P. Cousins, "Graham Frederick Barnett obituary," *Record*, February 6, 1999, 14; "Appreciation: Barnett," *Record*, March 6, 1999, 13.

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