

# Martin, Elwyn Leonard (1912–1983) and Alma Maria (Shaw) (1915–1991)



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## DULCIE PARKER (MARTIN)

Dulcie Parker (Martin) (registered nurse, Sydney Adventist Hospital, and midwifery nursing, Ryde Memorial Hospital, Sydney) was born at “Batuna” Solomon Islands to missionaries Elwyn and Alma Martin. After graduation she married Lewis Parker and spent 10 years in New Guinea, where her husband was a pastor and a pilot for the Adventist mission aircrafts. In 1973 the Parkers returned to Australia, where Dulcie Parker worked as a nurse until 1998. The Parkers have two adult children, four grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.

Elwyn and Alma Martin, 1970.

Photo courtesy of Dulcie and Lewis Parker.

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Elwyn Martin and his wife, Alma, served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in various capacities in Australia, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Papua and New Guinea. Martin was skilled as a farmer, engineer, pilot, and ship’s captain, as well as being a pastor.<sup>1</sup>

## Early Years

Elwyn Leonard Martin was born to share farmers Ethyl May and Leonard Harrold Martin in Gilgandra, New South Wales (NSW), Australia on September 26, 1912.<sup>2</sup> As a young man and while living at the farm, Elwyn became a sawmiller and qualified as an engineer. On Sundays he served as a lay preacher at the Methodist church.<sup>3</sup>

In 1934 Martin attended the Llewellyn Jones evangelistic series in Mudgee.<sup>4</sup> He intended to put Jones straight! However, he could not fault Jones’s presentations, because “every word preached was backed up by the Bible.” So he asked for Bible studies, and Alfred Parker, who was working together with Jones, was happy to share his faith with Martin. Two days after Martin lost his job because he would no longer work on Sabbath, one of his

former business partners approached him about purchasing a motor vehicle service and repair business. This provided a valuable income for the remainder of the year.<sup>5</sup>

Martin attended the Australian Missionary College from 1935 to 1937.<sup>6</sup> He was impressed to be a missionary in the Solomon Islands and applied to the Australasian Division for an appointment. He received an invitation to go to the Solomon Islands, but it was conditional on his going as a married person. About then the principal of Avondale asked Martin to drive him to the Adventist camp meeting at Parramatta Park in Sydney. At this camp Llewellyn Jones introduced Martin to Alma Shaw.<sup>7</sup>

Alma was born in Grenfell, NSW, on October 9, 1915.<sup>8</sup> She was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist in 1933, having attended a tent evangelistic series that also had been conducted by Llewellyn Jones, this time in Grenfell. A. L. Pascoe was working with him and remained as pastor of the church when Jones moved on to Mudgee.<sup>9</sup> They were married in the Grenfell SDA Church on February 26, 1938.<sup>10</sup> Theirs was the first marriage solemnized in the newly constructed church.<sup>11</sup> They sailed for the Solomon Islands on March 19, 1938.<sup>12</sup> Martin was replacing H. Barham as an engineer.<sup>13</sup>

## The Solomon Islands

They started working at Batuna, then headquarters for the Solomon Islands Mission.<sup>14</sup> Martin was able to use his skills to install two new diesel engines in two 45-foot boats. He also repaired the sawmill and cut much-needed timber for maintenance at the mission station. By 1940 he was designated as the “manager of industries” at Batuna.<sup>15</sup> The family returned home to Australia in mid-1940 and were in Wahroonga for the birth of their son Leonard on June 5, 1940.<sup>16</sup> They remained in Australia for the duration of World War II. Martin was offered employment in the Engineering Department of the Sanitarium Health Food Company at Cooranbong, NSW, where he worked from January 1941 until December 1943.<sup>17</sup>

## Growing Bananas

In 1944 the family shifted to Mullumbimby, where Martin worked in the banana industry. He spent much of his time visiting with his neighbors and assisted many of them to become Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>18</sup> Local pastor George Parker, Alfred's brother, suggested that he go to the Australasian Missionary College once again, this time to train for pastoral ministry. Martin was happy growing bananas and was glad to help others find Jesus. Alma informed George Parker that Elwyn had already been to the college and had served three years in the Solomon Islands. Parker did not give up, but sent a letter to the division, asking them to invite Elwyn and Alma to return to service in the Pacific Islands.<sup>19</sup>

## Papua

On April 21, 1949, the family traveled to Port Moresby.<sup>20</sup> Four children were now a large part of the family: Dulcie Merle, who had been born on November 11, 1938, at Batuna in the Solomon Islands; Leonard Stanley, who had been born on June 5, 1940, in Wahroonga, NSW; Edna Ruth, who had been born on May 30, 1943, at Cooranbong, NSW; and Llewellyn Harold, who had been born on January 5, 1948, at Mullumbimby, NSW.<sup>21</sup>

From Port Moresby they traveled by boat to the Vailala River in the Gulf of Papua. They disembarked at Maira Plantation and walked a mile from the river to Belepa School, which was then headquarters for the Gulf Mission.<sup>22</sup> It was Alma's responsibility to care for the children, including little Lew, who was a little more than one year old, while at the same time home schooling the older children. After just eight months, in December 1950, Dulcie, age 12, and Len, age 11, left home to go to school in Australia.<sup>23</sup>

During their time at Vailala, Martin was engaged in many duties. It was reported in October 1950 that he had gone "one hundred miles up the Vailala River, and took two meetings a day in a village where there were eighty men besides women." When he arrived to commence the meetings, the men said, "We want to hear this story, but we have no food. How can we sit here six or seven days and listen to stories?" Martin sent them off to gather sago and other food, and then they attended the meetings. "When the call was made for consecration of their hearts to God, and to give up their betel nut and pigs, only two men remained in their seats."<sup>24</sup>

But Martin also brought his practical ability to bear in many tasks. In 1953 he was asked to spend time in Port Moresby supervising the construction of a new church next door to the church headquarters at Ela Beach, Port Moresby.<sup>25</sup> This church was to be the main SDA church in Port Moresby for many years.

In 1954 the Martin family transferred to Paglum, a mission station to the north of Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands.<sup>26</sup> He was the director for the Mount Hagen district.<sup>27</sup> They lived for a time in a grass house that had a leaking roof. The mission gave Elwyn \$100 to fix the leaking roof, but he had a different idea. He drove twenty miles to visit Frank Aveling, a Seventh-day Adventist layman who operated his own sawmill. Frank told Elwyn that if he cut the logs himself, the \$100 would give him enough to build a modest house. He still needed iron for the roof. Elwyn had noticed a bundle of roofing iron by the side of Mount Hagen airstrip. He contacted the owners and was advised it had been wrongly sent to Mount Hagen and would cost too much to relocate. The iron was gifted to the church.<sup>28</sup>

Elwyn Martin was ordained as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on March 9, 1955, at Togoba in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea.<sup>29</sup> On April 1 he was one of a group of four, "Pastor J. B. Keith, president of the Coral Sea Union Mission; Pastor F. T. Maberly, president of the Western and Southern Highlands; Pastor L. T. Greive, the district director of the new territory; and the writer [Elwyn Martin]," who were appointed "to go into Tari to contact the Southern Highlands people in order to procure land for our first mission station."<sup>30</sup>

On August 2, 1955, Martin was on a flight with S. H. Gander, from the Coral Sea Union Mission, and R. A. Greive, who was itinerating in the highlands. They had just taken off from the Togoba airstrip when the plane crashed.

The pilot died. All of the passengers suffered injuries. Martin suffered a fractured skull, and at first was not expected to live. Roy Yates, a Seventh-day Adventist doctor from the Togoba leprosarium, cared for him.<sup>31</sup> At the end of 1955 the family was appointed to the North New Zealand Conference.<sup>32</sup> They returned from New Guinea in December 1955 and traveled to New Zealand.<sup>33</sup> They were stationed in Wanganui, where Martin's recovery continued. He became the pastor of the Wanganui church and obtained a private pilot's licence.<sup>34</sup>

In April 1959 Elwyn and Alma returned to Vailala, to the new mission station that was located on the bank of the Vailala River. He was the president of the Papuan Gulf Mission.<sup>35</sup> The house that they had lived in many years before had now been shifted to land adjacent to the river next to Karakara village.<sup>36</sup>

Martin was qualified as a ship's master, able to navigate in international waters. He was sent to Brisbane, Australia, in October 1960 to be the captain of the 48-foot cabin cruiser *MV Uraheni* while it was ferried to Papua. It was dedicated on the Brisbane River on Sabbath, October 15, 1960, and sailed the next day for Port Moresby.<sup>37</sup> The Papuan Gulf Mission, with headquarters now at Karakara, had the use of this new boat. Late in 1962 Elwyn developed malaria, which could not be controlled.<sup>38</sup> His declining health required the permanent return of the family to Australia at the end of 1962.<sup>39</sup>

## Pastoral Work

From 1963 to 1972 Martin served as a pastor in the Victorian Conference.<sup>40</sup> He loved flying airplanes, so twice he flew to New Guinea during his holidays to visit his daughter Dulcie, who served there with her missionary pilot husband, Lewis Parker. In the early 1970s, while visiting Dulcie, Elwyn traveled as a passenger on a commercial flight from Port Moresby to Goroka, in which the pilot fainted because of lack of oxygen. Elwyn assumed control of the aircraft and flew the plane over clouds at 16,000 feet until the pilot recovered on descent into Goroka. In doing so, Elwyn saved the lives of all on board.<sup>41</sup>

## Later Years

In December 1972 Elwyn and Alma retired from active ministry and moved to Dural, Sydney.<sup>42</sup> They enjoyed sharing time there with three of their children. By January 1975 Dulcie and her husband had returned from Papua New Guinea to live in Western Australia, where Dulcie's husband, Lewis Parker, flew aircraft for the West Australian Conference. This gave Elwyn more opportunities to go flying.<sup>43</sup>

Elwyn died at his home in Galston, Sydney, on February 13, 1983.<sup>44</sup> Alma died December 6, 1991.<sup>45</sup> Both Elwyn and Alma are buried in the Avondale Cemetery at Cooranbong, NSW, Australia.<sup>46</sup>

## Service Summary

Solomon Islands Mission	January 1938–December 1940	engineer
SHF, Cooranbong	January 1941–December 1943	engineer
Coral Sea Union Mission	January 1949–December 1955	mission pastor
North New Zealand Conference	January 1956–March 1959	pastor
Coral Sea Union Mission	April 1959–December 1962	pastor/pilot/ ship captain
Victorian Conference	January 1963–December 1972	pastor

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"Two missionary families sailed . . ." *Australasian Record*, May 9, 1949.

"Word has been received . . ." *Australasian Record*, May 13, 1940.

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## NOTES

1. Much of the information in this biography is written from the personal knowledge of the author as the eldest child of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
2. Elwyn Leonard Martin Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Biographical Information Blank"); personal knowledge of the author as the daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
3. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
4. "South New South Wales: Review of the Field," *Australasian Record*, April 16, 1934, 6.
5. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
6. Elwyn Leonard Martin Biographical Records.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. "Organization of the Grenfell Church," *Australasian Record*, July 23, 1932, 6.
10. R. H. Powrie, "Martin–Shaw marriage," *Australasian Record*, March 21, 1938, 6.
11. Ibid.
12. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
13. "The missionaries en route to the Solomon Islands . . .," *Australasian Record*, March 28, 1938, 8.

14. Ibid.
15. A. R. Barrett, "Past and Present in the Solomon Islands," *Australasian Record*, June 3, 1940, 3.
16. Elwyn Leonard Martin Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Martin, Pastor E. L.").
17. Elwyn Leonard Martin Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Weekly Rates").
18. Goldie Scarr, "Moving Multitudes," *Australasian Record*, December 12, 1945, 4.
19. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
20. "Two missionary families sailed . . .," *Australasian Record*, May 9, 1949, 8.
21. Elwyn Leonard Martin Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Martin, Pastor E. L.").
22. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
23. Ibid.
24. C. E. Mitchell, "Awakening in Papua," *Australasian Record*, October 2, 1950, 5, 6.
25. C. E. Mitchell, "Dedication of the Port Moresby Church," *Australasian Record*, December 7, 1953, 6.
26. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin; "Making Friends with the New Valley," *Australasian Record*, May 23, 1955, 3.
27. E. L. Martin, "Faith Takes Wings into Tari," *Australasian Record*, May 23, 1955, 2, 3.
28. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
29. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
30. E. L. Martin, "Faith Takes Wings into Tari," *Australasian Record*, May 23, 1955, 2-3.
31. "Adventists in New Guinea Plane Crash," *Australasian Record*, August 22, 1955, 3.
32. "Three appointments affecting the mission field . . .," *Australasian Record*, November 14, 1955, 16.

33. "Missionaries permanently returned . . .," *Australasian Record*, January 23, 1956, 16.
34. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
35. "Missionaries on the move . . .," *Australasian Record*, January 19, 1959, 16.
36. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
37. R. R. Frame, "New Mission Ship Sails for Papua," *Australasian Record*, November 21, 1960, 1.
38. "A Taste of Missionary Service," *Australasian Record*, February 18, 1963, 2.
39. Elwyn Leonard Martin Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Weekly Rates").
40. Ibid.
41. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
42. Elwyn Leonard Martin Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Martin, Elwyn Leonard"; Document: "Martin, Pastor E. L.").
43. Personal knowledge of the author as a daughter of Alma and Elwyn Martin.
44. C. R. Stanley, "Elwyn Martin obituary," *Australasian Record*, April 16, 1983, 15; E. C. Lemke, "He Awaits the Master's Call," *Australasian Record*, April 23, 1983, 12.
45. Lewis G. Parker, "Alma Maria Martin obituary," *Australasian Record*, February 29, 1992, 14.
46. Ibid.

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