



Gordon and Greta Williams, c. 1937.

From General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

## Williams, Gordon Locke (1909–1997) and Greta Agnes (Rideout) (1914–1985)

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### 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.

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Gordon and Greta Williams served four years as missionaries in China.

## Early Years

Gordon Williams was born in Oregon, Missouri, on April 18, 1909, the eldest child of Walter Claude and Julia Victoria (Locke) Williams. His father was employed as a salesman and accountant for a company selling farming implements. A daughter, Margaret (b. 1916), was later added to their family but perished in childhood. The family moved to Washington, Missouri, then to Milwaukie in Oregon.<sup>1</sup> The death of their daughter caused them to think seriously about spiritual matters and brought about their conversion as Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>2</sup>

On June 2, 1931, Gordon married Greta Agnes Rideout at College Place, Washington. Elder Fred Jensen performed the ceremony. Gordon was still pursuing his education, Greta was employed as a teacher.<sup>3</sup> Gordon had attended Laurelwood Academy and advanced to Walla Walla College,<sup>4</sup> working at the campus service station and in the bakery to help support themselves.<sup>5</sup>

## Denominational Service

During the summers of 1932 and 1933 Gordon assisted in evangelistic crusades, taking responsibility for the music. In the first summer, he was located at Brewster, Washington State. In the second summer, he went to Miles City and Kalispel, Montana.<sup>6</sup>

Gordon and Greta ministered full time in the Upper Columbia Conference, mid-1934 through mid-1937.<sup>7</sup> They conducted crusades in Echo, Oregon, and then back in Washington State at Endicott, Omak, Chewelah, Wenatchee, and Okanogan.<sup>8</sup>

In 1937, Gordon and Greta accepted an appointment for overseas mission service in China. They sailed from America on July 31.<sup>9</sup> Upon their arrival, they attended the mandatory language studies and transferred to the South China Union Mission, an entity composed of Kwangsi (Guangxi) Province, Kwangtung (Guangdong) Province, Fukien (Fujian) Province, Hainan Island, Hong Kong, and Macao.<sup>10</sup>

On the Sabbath afternoon of February 19, 1938, in the Hong Kong chapel, Gordon was ordained to the gospel ministry. Elders Samuel Frost, Sidney Lindt, and A. L. Ham all had a part in the service.<sup>11</sup> For a short time, Gordon held evangelistic meetings with some success in Foochow (Fuzhou), Fujian Province.<sup>12</sup> He was then appointed to be the director of the South Fukien (Fujian) Mission. His headquarters were located on Gulangyu Island, which had a very cosmopolitan population. Throughout the broader field of Gordon's responsibility, his territory consisted of ten churches and eight companies with a total baptized membership of 492 members.<sup>13</sup> However, at times he did assist other church officials in the north of the Fujian Province.<sup>14</sup> Statistics reveal that during the time that Gordon was director of the South Fukien Mission, the number of baptized members rose to 567.<sup>15</sup>

Gordon's employment was terminated in 1941 due to misconduct. He admitted to his indiscretions and apparently Greta forgave him. Deteriorating war conditions in China caused them to flee to Manilla in the

Philippine Islands, where they joined the civil service of the United States Army, only to be overtaken by the Japanese occupation. They were classified as American citizens and survived the ordeal in remarkably good health. At the end of the conflict, they were repatriated back to America.<sup>16</sup>

## Return Home

Gordon and Greta returned to America in 1945.<sup>17</sup> They stayed briefly in California, expressing their willingness to re-enter church employment but, at the same time, making it known to church officials that they were maintaining their connections with the Army.<sup>18</sup> They journeyed north to familiar parts of Washington State.<sup>19</sup>

Gordon did not continue in church employment. Records trace him to Phoenix, Arizona, in 1946. At that time, church officials advised he could maintain his membership with the local church, but not be given credentials to preach.<sup>20</sup>

Greta passed away on July 31, 1985, at the age of seventy-one. She rests in a solo plot in Mount Vernon Memorial Park, Fair Oaks, California.<sup>21</sup> Gordon passed away in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 28, 1997.<sup>22</sup> They were survived by their four children: Gladys, Virginia, Leslie, and Richard.<sup>23</sup> Brief obituaries for both Gordon and Greta were published in church periodicals.

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## NOTES

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