

# White, Harold Clement (1888–1928) and Mabel Violet (Piper) (1886–1990)



Harold Clement White

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

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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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Harold and Mabel White served together in New Zealand, Australia, and Fiji. Harold White worked as a pastor, evangelist, and church administrator. Mabel White was a teacher, college matron, and a founding faculty member of the Pukekura Training School in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

## A Long Journey

Harold White was born to Henry William Joseph White and Annie (Johns) White in Southampton, England, on May 23, 1888.<sup>2</sup> He had an older brother, Albert, and a younger sister, Rosalind. The family migrated to South Africa in 1889 where the parents were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1897.<sup>3</sup> The time of depression following the Boer War prompted the family to sail to New Zealand.

## Studies and Service

As a young man, White enrolled at the denomination's Pukekura Training School, Cambridge, New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> He began the advanced course that would lead to a career in either teaching or ministry, but part way through his studies he married Mabel Violet Piper, the elementary teacher at Pukekura, in January 1911.<sup>5</sup> Mabel Piper was born in Christchurch on June 19, 1886, and graduated as a teacher from the Avondale School for Christian Workers (later renamed the Australasian Missionary College) in Cooranbong, New South Wales.<sup>6</sup> They transferred to Avondale, where Harold White graduated from the biblical-academic course in 1912.<sup>7</sup>

After graduation, the Whites were immediately appointed to the Buresala Training School in Fiji. They sailed from Sydney aboard the *Maitai* on October 16, 1912.<sup>8</sup> Harold White had charge of the school for two years, training young people as missionaries.<sup>9</sup> In 1915, he supervised mission evangelism throughout the Fiji islands,<sup>10</sup> and at the end of the year the family, which by then included infant Ivan, returned to Australia because of Mabel White's poor health.<sup>11</sup>

Back in his homeland, White was appointed to teach at Australasian Missionary College for three years, from 1917 through 1919. He was given charge of the carpentry department and taught woodworking and geography.<sup>12</sup> During this term of service a second son, Sefton, was born into the family.<sup>13</sup>

In 1920, White was invited to be the home missions secretary in the North New Zealand Conference.<sup>14</sup> It was the first of various administrative roles that brought about frequent moves throughout Australasia. The following year, 1921, he was appointed to the church headquarters office at Wahroonga, New South Wales, to be the assistant in the home missions department of the Australasian Union Conference.<sup>15</sup> On the Tuesday evening of August 30, 1921, a special service was held in the Wahroonga church to ordain White to the gospel ministry. Elder W. W. Prescott, field Secretary of the General Conference, who had arrived from America that same day, conducted an impressive ceremony.<sup>16</sup>

When White was appointed to the presidency of the Tasmanian Conference in 1922 he was the only ordained minister among the small membership.<sup>17</sup> In 1923, he returned to Wahroonga headquarters to be the Missionary Volunteer secretary.<sup>18</sup> His responsibilities were increased in 1924 to include assistant education secretary.<sup>19</sup> And a further addition was made in 1925 when the home missions department was placed under his care.<sup>20</sup> The latter addition proved to be temporary, for in 1926 he reverted to his former roles.<sup>21</sup>

After four years at headquarters, with heavy responsibilities, White was appointed president of the West Australian Conference, on the opposite side of the continent, in September 1926.<sup>22</sup> In July 1928, he was suddenly struck down with pain and rushed to a private hospital where he was diagnosed with a kidney stone blockage. Surgery took place immediately, but four days later complications caused his death on July 31. It was fortuitous that Elder A. G. Daniells was already travelling west by train and arrived in time to officiate in the burial service at Karrakatta Cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

## Widowhood

Mabel White was remarkably resilient. Despite her tragic loss, she soldiered on, raising her two boys and returning to the classroom to teach. She rendered another fourteen years of service, first on the familiar campus of the Australasian Missionary College as matron and domestic science teacher (1929),<sup>24</sup> followed by preceptress (1930),<sup>25</sup> and assistant English teacher (1931).<sup>26</sup> She transferred to the New Zealand Missionary School to fill the role of matron from 1930 to 1937.<sup>27</sup> She then took an extended break before teaching in the South New South Wales Conference in 1946<sup>28</sup> and another three years at the Australasian Missionary College as English teacher from 1947 to 1949.<sup>29</sup> Mabel White then taught for the Victorian and New South Wales education departments until she was eighty years of age. She was a gifted public speaker and tailor, making all her own clothing until she was over ninety. Her final home was the Charles Harrison Memorial Nursing Home in Cooranbong. She died on July 18, 1990, aged 104, outliving both of her sons.<sup>30</sup>

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## NOTES

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