

Hilliard, William Ira (1888-1971) and Jessie (Hilliard) (1891-1970)

VONCILE HILLIARD YOUNG

Voncile Hilliard Young attended Far Eastern Academy and Pacific Union College. She is retired and had served as a missionary in Taiwan and Singapore for 16 years and pastored in the Northern California Conference. She married Samuel Wayne Young and has three children.

William and Jessie Hilliard served in China and other parts of the Far East from 1916 to 1962.

William Ira Hilliard was born in Mitchell, South Dakota, United States of America, to Archie and Lelia Hilliard on December 21, 1888. Jessie Emma Allen Hilliard was born in Calistoga, California, on February

14, 1891, to Albert Warren and Margaret (Davis) Allen.¹ William and Jessie met while both were studying nursing at Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital in California. They were married on June 7, 1916, in Templeton, California, and left for mission service in China on August 9, 1916.²

They both first served as nurses, and William also served as an accountant, working in Shanghai, China, with Dr. Charles Landis to open the first Adventist-operated hospital in China. Their first son was born in 1917 while they were in Shanghai, but he lived only a few hours. Their second son, William Albert, was born in Shanghai in 1920.³ After five years in Shanghai, they were sent to Yencheng, in Honan Province (modern-day Henan), where William served as the treasurer of the mission for 10 years. There, their third son, Warren Ivan, was born in 1922. During the period of civil and military unrest among Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army, the warlords of the north, and the communists in the south, the Hilliards returned to Shanghai for safety reasons.

Their next assignment was to Hankow (modern-day Hankou) in Hubei Province, where William was the treasurer of the Central China Union Mission. They then went to Harbin, Manchuria, in the far north, where William served



William Ira Hilliard, passport photo for travel to China, 1924.

Photo courtesy of Luann. Source: *Find a Grave*

, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90413009/william-i-hilliard>

as the secretary-treasurer of the Manchurian Union Mission. At that time, their sons were sent to the Far Eastern Academy in Shanghai and then Hong Kong. When the Japanese invaded China, the China Division headquarters was relocated to the Philippines, where it was thought that they could continue to operate. Due to the circumstances, the General Conference advised William to leave his wife, Jessie, and the boys in the U.S.A. while he went to the Philippines alone to serve as the treasurer of the China Division, beginning in 1941. When the Japanese invaded the Philippines, William, along with many other missionaries, was interned as a prisoner of war (POW) by the Japanese for three and a half years, until the end of World War II.⁴

After the war, in 1946, the Hilliards returned to Shanghai, where William became the China Division auditor. When the People's Republic took over China mainland, all division and union workers moved south to Hong Kong. In 1950, William Ira became the secretary-treasurer of the Japan Union Mission. The Hilliards remained there until they were transferred to Taipei, Taiwan, where he took up the position of treasurer of the South China Island Union Mission until he retired in 1962 to Angwin, California.⁵

Jessie Emma Hilliard passed to her rest on December 8, 1970, in Placerville, California, and William Ira passed away soon after, on March 18, 1971, also in Placerville.⁶ Their sons also served in Asia, William Albert in the Far East for 15 years, and Warren Ivan, in China and Japan for 39 years.⁷

SOURCES

Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114919, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

William Ira Hilliard Biographical Information Blank, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG21, Record 114919, December 31, 1950, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States of America.

"William Ira Hilliard." In *Zhong Hua Sheng Gong Shi* (Chinese Seventh-day Adventist History). Edited by Samuel Young. Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission, 2002.

"William Ira Hilliard obituary." *ARH*, May 6, 1971.

NOTES

1. William Ira Hilliard Biographical Information Blank, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG21, Record 114919, December 31, 1950, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.
2. William Ira Hilliard Biographical Information Blank.
3. "William Ira Hilliard" in *Zhong Hua Sheng Gong Shi* (Chinese Seventh-day Adventist History) ed. Samuel Young (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission, 2002), 760.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. "William Ira Hilliard obituary," *ARH*, May 6, 1971, 46.

7. Voncile Hilliard Young, personal knowledge as a granddaughter of William Ira and Jessie Emma Hilliard.

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