

Cannon, Paddy

(1903–1960)

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.

Paddy Cannon was the first indigenous Australian to be ordained as a local church elder. He was born on March 17, 1903, and came to the Mona Mona Mission in March 1916.¹ While he married twice, April 8, 1923 and July 12, 1931, little is known of his family other than that he had five daughters and two sons. One daughter, Marlene, was known as a 'wanderer' before she finally settled on Palm Island.²

Soon after arriving at the Mona Mona Mission in 1916, Cannon accepted the Adventist message and made the mission his permanent home. For the rest of his life he spent much of his time spreading the gospel among his people.³ He was a faithful witness for his Lord wherever he went and he always took part in the annual *Appeal for Missions*. Cannon's huge grin and friendly manner never failed to impress tourists to whom he demonstrated the art of boomerang throwing.⁴

In 1956, Cannon was ordained as an associate elder of the Mona Mona Church by Pastor Norman Ferris. Ferris wrote: "I understand that Paddy is the first Australian aborigine to be ordained to such a position, and his appointment to this office will bring satisfaction to many who have been associated with this mission in the past. Paddy is greatly loved and honoured by his people and is a tower of strength to the community."⁵

Three years later, while still holding the office of elder, Cannon was also named the village leader of the township of Kuranda in north Queensland.⁶ After his death, he was honored by having the new kitchen and



Paddy Cannon at Mona Mona.

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

amenities block on the North Queensland campground named the “Paddy Cannon Amenities Block.”

Cannon died suddenly of a heart attack early on the morning of Sabbath, May 7, 1960⁸ at the age of 56 while attending the North Queensland Conference camp meeting at Townsville. Survived by his elderly mother, Mary Ann Lawrence, two sisters, and seven children, Paddy Cannon was laid to rest at his beloved Mona Mona Mission.⁹

SOURCES

“Aboriginal roll #5,” Mona Mona Mission Box 1. South Pacific Division Heritage Centre. Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

“Last Sabbath it was my privilege...” *Australasian Record*, November 12, 1956.

Mona Mona Mission Box 2. South Pacific Division Heritage Centre. Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Rowe, A. E. “Paddy Cannon Obituary.” *Australasian Record*, June 6, 1960.

Rowe, Dorothy M. “News of Royalty and Other Personages at Mona Mona.” *Australasian Record*, May 4, 1959.

Vince, R. A. “North Queensland Conference Camp and Biennial Session: North Queensland Grows Up.” *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1965.

Weedon, M. M. “Dusky Faces on TV.” *Australasian Record*, April 27, 1959.

Weedon, Margaret. “Fragrant Memories.” *Australasian Record*, June 20, 1960.

NOTES

1. “Aboriginal roll #5,” Mona Mona Mission Box 1, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia; Mona Mona Mission Box 2, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
2. Ibid.
3. Margaret Weedon, “Fragrant Memories,” *Australasian Record*, June 20, 1960, 4.
4. M. M. Weedon, “Dusky Faces on TV,” *Australasian Record*, April 27, 1959, 1.
5. “Last Sabbath it was my privilege...,” *Australasian Record*, November 12, 1956, 16.

6. Dorothy M. Rowe, "News of Royalty and Other Personages at Mona Mona," *Australasian Record*, May 4, 1959, 5.
 7. R. A. Vince, "North Queensland Conference Camp and Biennial Session: North Queensland Grows Up," *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1965, 3.
 8. A. E. Rowe, "Paddy Cannon Obituary," *Australasian Record*, June 6, 1960, 15.
 9. Margaret Weedon, "Fragrant Memories," *Australasian Record*, June 20, 1960, 4.
-

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

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