Cyril and Marie Pascoe

Photo courtesy of Roy Hollingsworth.

# Pascoe, Cyril (1915–2017), and Marie Jean (Eden) (1916–2008)


## SHIRLEY TARBURTON

Shirley Tarburton, M.Litt. (Distinction) (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2008 after 40 years teaching church-school (mainly high school but including eight years at university). An Australian, she has taught in four mission fields, Australia, and New Zealand. She has authored five books and co-authored one on church history, biography and family history, as well as several magazine articles. She is married to Dr. Michael Tarburton with two adult children and four grandchildren.

Cyril and Marie Jean Pascoe worked for the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church for 33 years, mostly as missionaries in Papua New Guinea,[1] and then spent a further 12 years as self-supporting missionaries in the South Pacific, which enabled them to work in areas closed to the SDA Church.[2]

## Early Life

Cyril Pascoe was born on April 25, 1915, in Ashhurst near Palmerston North, in the North Island of New Zealand.[3] He was the third of four children of Pastor James (1879–1942) and Ellen (Dawn) Pascoe (1887–1958).[4] His siblings were Ernest James (b. 1910 in Goulburn, New South Wales, Australia, d. in 1993 in Gisborne, New Zealand),[5] Hilda Vespa (b. 1912, New Zealand, married Pastor Cyril Forrest Hollingsworth in 1934, and d. 1970 in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia),[6] and Gwynneth, (b. 1924 in New Zealand and d. in Melbourne, in 2013).[7]

Cyril's father was a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist who moved to a new town every two or three years, where he would run a series of meetings and then stay just long enough to establish a church before moving on.[8] Running the meetings was a team effort, and as the children became old enough, they also contributed. For example, in Greymouth in the South Island, in 1924–1925, James preached, Ellen sang, Ernie played the piano, and Hilda and Cyril helped clean up.[9]

## Education and Internship

By the time Cyril was 12, he had lived in six different towns. Despite attending a different school every couple of years, in Invercargill (about 1930) he was awarded a medal for being dux of the school (highest ranking student academically). He later sold the medal and donated the proceeds to an appeal for the purchase of a mission ship.[10]

In 1931 the Pascoe family had moved back to the North Island, where Cyril's father was working in Whanganui. About 70 kilometers (43 miles) away was the New Zealand Missionary College (now Longburn Adventist College), and it was Cyril's goal to further his education there. To earn the annual fees of £34, Cyril began to grow potatoes. However, when they were ready to sell, his father asked whether he would be willing to donate them to some church members who were in desperate need. Cyril agreed but was still able to attend New Zealand Missionary College in 1933 because a donor covered his fees.[11]

After graduating at the end of 1934,[12] Cyril sailed to Australia and enrolled in the ministerial course at the Australasian Missionary College at Avondale, New South Wales. He graduated in November 1936[13] and was appointed to sell evangelistic literature in the South New South Wales Conference. Cyril was joined by his cousin, Martin Pascoe, a fellow graduate.[14] Together they worked the towns around the emerging city of Canberra until the end of September 1937, when Cyril's father, who was now the president of the South New Zealand Conference,[15] asked him to come to Christchurch[16] to fill a temporary vacancy.[17] About the same time, Cyril

received an appointment to evangelism in the Queensland Conference to commence in January 1938.[18] The new year found him in Bundaberg, working on an evangelistic team led by Pastor A. I. Mitchell and running a tent mission.[19] The campaign resulted in 46 baptisms![20]

## Marriage

While Cyril was at the Australasian Missionary College, he met Marie Jean Eden. Marie had been born January 10, 1916, in Cheltenham, Victoria,[21] and was the third child of William (1882–1970)[22] and Marion (Buchan) Eden (1896–1975).[23] Her siblings were Edna Marion (1913–2003),[24] John Henry (1914–1989),[25] and Fred[26] (dates unknown). While the children were still young, the family moved to Dingley, and their mother received Bible studies from a neighbor.[27] She was baptized, and she and the four children worshipped each Sabbath in the neighbor's home until the Dandenong SDA Church was organized, with Marion being one of the charter members.[28] Marie's father joined the church much later.[29]

After Marie completed her studies at Avondale in 1937, she was appointed to the Sanitarium Health Food Café in Perth as the kitchen supervisor.[30] During 1938 Cyril and Marie were widely separated, but they must have written many letters because on January 10, 1939, they were married in the Red Hill SDA Church in Brisbane.[31] After their wedding, they left on Cyril's motorcycle for their honeymoon (which was spent in a tent)[32] and then proceeded to their appointment in Rockhampton.[33]

## Career

Cyril and Marie had been in Rockhampton only a few weeks and were planning to run an evangelistic campaign near the Fitzroy River[34] when they were requested to go to Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, where Cyril would be the district director.[35] They immediately accepted and were booked to sail on April 6, 1939, from Sydney.[36] Upon arrival in Sydney, it was decided to postpone their departure long enough for them to obtain some basic training in tropical medicine[37] because their mission station was isolated, and they would be carrying out medical patrols across the island.[38]

They landed at Kieta,[39] Bougainville, on May 30, 1939, and took up residence at the SDA head station, Rumba, at the foot of the mountains about five kilometers (3 miles) inland from the coast.[40] This station was well-established, having been set up 15 years previously,[41] and had a school.[42] Cyril itinerated widely, mainly on foot but also by canoe,[43] and many came to the mission station and school for instruction.[44] Early in 1941 Cyril baptized 42 converts.[45] He also placed trained islanders in a number of villages as Bible workers and teachers,[46] and toward the end of 1941, he baptized another 94 people.[47]

World War II had commenced in the northern hemisphere just three months after the Pascoes commenced their mission service. In January 1942, Marie was evacuated from Bougainville to Australia in response to

approaching enemy forces.[48] The District Officer of Kieta made her responsible for several Japanese detainees who were being sent to Australia for internment.[49]

On January 30, 1942, the Japanese invading force captured Rabaul, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) from the Pascoes' location. Cyril immediately joined the rest of Kieta district's expatriate population (about 14 men) as they activated their preplanned evacuation strategy.[50] They had been planning to use Cyril's new mission ship, scheduled for delivery on February 1.[51] In its absence, a former mission ship, the *Herald*, was used to convey them down the coast to the Methodist Mission's schooner, *Bilua*, in which they commenced, on January 25, the precarious journey to Port Moresby.[52] Here, on February 5, Cyril joined seven other men[53] and an aboriginal family,[54] all SDA missionaries who were evacuated on the *Diari*, captained by Pastor George Engelbrecht. They reached Cairns, Queensland, safely around February 26, and Cyril was able to obtain passage by rail to Melbourne to join Marie.[55]

## Australian Interlude and Ordination

Cyril was appointed to pastoral work in Wangaratta, Victoria, with his parish encompassing Wodonga in the north, Benalla in the south, and Puckapunyal Army Base in the west, where he provided support to SDA military personnel.[56] At the 1942 Australasian Union Conference Annual Meetings, Cyril's ordination to gospel ministry was approved,[57] and he was ordained at the Victorian Conference Session on Sabbath, January 16, 1943.[58] Later that year he ran a successful evangelistic campaign in Wangaratta, which resulted in a group preparing for baptism.[59]

## Postwar Return to New Guinea

At the November 1944 Australasian Union Conference Annual Meetings, Cyril was appointed as the Secretary of the postwar New Guinea Mission.[60] (Bougainville was not yet open for missionaries' return.[61]) Leaving Marie in Sydney, he arrived in Lae at the end of May[62] and flew by military transport to the highlands administrative center near Benabena.[63] He assisted Pastor A. J. Campbell to reach his post at Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands by a military jeep, becoming the first to take a motor vehicle over this track.[64]

The Australian military was still in charge and facilitated movement within the country, which required permits to move from district to district.[65] In September, there was no transport available for newly arrived Frank Maberly to get from Lae to his highlands appointment at Omaura,[66] so on October 1,[67] Cyril took a group of carriers and walked more than 200 kilometers (124 miles) down to Lae to meet him, and then they hiked all the way back.[68]

Late in 1945, missionaries were given permission to reenter Bougainville, so Cyril took an opportunity early in 1946 to go to see how the believers there had fared.[69] He found many of them suffering from the destruction of

their gardens during the war. The administration provided two 40-ton barges, which Cyril towed to Fauro Island at the southern end of Bougainville, where 40,000 Japanese internees had been held. After the prisoners had been removed, a large amount of leftover food supplies had been buried. Cyril and his helpers, using digging sticks, unearthed quantities of dried potatoes, cabbage, beetroot, carrots, and other food and filled the barges with it, saving many from starvation.[70] The administrators then gave Cyril permission to bring Marie back to the territory.[71]

About the same time, he was transferred to Rabaul to superintend the Bismarck Archipelago Mission,[72] and in July, he brought Marie to join him there from Sydney.[73] Due to the extensive amount of sea travel needed to cover his territory, Cyril was assigned the *Veilomani* and spent weeks at a time at sea, and Marie often accompanied him.[74] During March and April 1947, he took a group of men from headquarters on a tour of the Solomon Islands as far east as Rennell and Bellona, assessing the needs.[75]

His territory included Manus Island, and early in 1948, Cyril and a crew of five Papuan seamen flew to Sydney to sail Manus's new mission vessel, the *Light*, to its place of service.[76] This was his last task as superintendent of the Bismarck Archipelago Mission because the way had opened up for him to return to service on Bougainville Island as district director there.[77]

He and Marie pioneered a new mission station at Inus, and the *Veilomani* was exchanged for the *Devare.*[78] Cyril's brother, Ernest, came and used his expertise as an electrician to assist in the establishment of the station.[79] With his contacts, Cyril was able to obtain otherwise hard-to-obtain items, which greatly benefited the mission building program.[80]

A reorganization of administration saw the formation of the Coral Sea Union Mission, which held its inaugural executive meeting in February 1949.[81] In the resultant reassignment of personnel, Cyril was appointed to supervise the huge building program that this entailed.[82] This necessitated the Pascoes moving to Lae. An indication of the impact they had made in the secular community can be seen in a tribute to them that was published in the *Pacific Islands Monthly*.[83]

In 1950 Cyril was given the responsibility of Union Secretary for the Ministerial Association, Sabbath School, and Home Missions.[84] Characteristically, Cyril put all his energies into his new responsibilities and organized a vigorous evangelistic program for later in the year.[85] However, Bougainville remained his first love, and he was delighted when, in January 1951, he was able to resume directorship of the Bougainville Mission.[86]

The Pascoes returned to Inus and took up where they left off, building up the mission station and keeping in touch with the other stations on the island with the *Devare.*[87] At a district gathering in April, Cyril baptized 33, Marie presented 40 candidates for investiture in Missionary Volunteer Classes, including one Guide, and the first Bougainvillean pastor was ordained: Pastor Pipiranu.[88] Ambitious plans for expansion throughout the island were also activated.[89]

November 1952 saw the upgrading of the Bougainville Mission and the installation of Cyril as inaugural president and treasurer.[90] Over the period from December 1953 to April 1954, the Pascoes and Pastor Pipiranu were delegates to five conference camp meetings, involving traveling the length and breadth of Australia.[91] They returned to Bougainville in May 1954 in time to get ready for a round of district meetings.[92] Cyril's energy received frequent comment,[93] and he seemed indefatigable as he taught, built, visited, and searched to implement the most beneficial programs in his territory.[94] In fact, the locals had a nickname for him, *masta bilong work*,[95] also calling him *Kakara*.[96]

Early in 1958, after a total of 12 years in Bougainville, Cyril was appointed to be the President of the New Britain Mission, which meant moving back to Rabaul.[97] This time he was leaving Bougainville with expanding evangelization.

One of his first tasks was to transfer the *Ka Seli* from the New Hebrides to the New Britain Mission.[98] This was successfully achieved with Cyril and a crew from Rabaul, sailing it 1,200 nautical miles on a route that was new to most of them.[99] However, the ship proved to have a faulty engine.[100] Being fully aware of the financial constraints on the mission, Cyril undertook to fix the problem himself, thus saving his budget about AU$5,000.[101] There were no further reports of a repeat of that trouble with the engine. Cyril used the ship extensively, traveling along the coast of New Britain and then hiking inland to visit the villages because there were no roads through the middle of the island.[102] He took every opportunity to find places that would accept the placement of a teacher to lead them to a better way of life.[103] After making two extensive trips around his territory by 1960,[104] he focused on an area that had a history of persecuting our missionaries.[105] This was in the Talasea district on the Willaumez Peninsula on the northern coast of western New Britain.[106]

During 1961, Cyril spent a lot of time there with builders from Australia, establishing a new mission center at Silovuti.[107] While doing this, he and Marie lived on the *Ka Seli*.[108] At the beginning of 1963, the West New Britain Mission was organized, and Cyril was appointed as president.[109] He and Marie took up permanent residence at Silovuti and oversaw an increasing number of local missionaries.[110] An early goal was to establish a boarding school, and within a year this was having a wonderful influence throughout the mission area.[111] As he was no longer the president at Rabaul, Cyril had less frequent access to the *Ka Seli*, so he purchased the *Nola* with his own funds for his use.[112]

All that Cyril did was focused on expanding the influence of the gospel. He did whatever needed doing, no matter what the task. In about April of 1966 he was installing a street lighting system on the station at Silovuti when the tractor he was driving up the hill stalled and rolled backward. He leaped off as the shoulder of the road crumbled, but the tractor rolled on top of him, crushing him into the ground before rolling off him. His bones were crushed, and he could barely breathe or move. His wife and other staff were there quickly, and as he said his good-byes, they prayed for him. As Pastor Papaol prayed, Cyril suddenly felt his strength return, his breathing eased, and he continued the prayer himself. His excruciating pain left him, and while his wife radioed

headquarters for medical help, the clinic nurse investigated the 18-centimeter (7-inch) tear in his scalp.[113] A doctor arrived by helicopter about three hours later and sewed up his scalp. A week later, Cyril was almost back to normal. This made a deep impression on villagers from miles around, and there was a surge in respect for the mission's teachings.[114]

The school's students gained excellent results in the government examinations, and it became well-known for its choir. The clinic was much appreciated.[115] In 1982, the government asked the Church to surrender the lease to Silovuti so that a timber company could take it over. The mission station and school were reestablished 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) away.[116]

With everything going well, Cyril started looking around for a new challenge.

## Self-Supporting Ministry

At the end of 1968, Cyril took early "retirement," and he and Marie returned to Bougainville as self-supporting missionaries. Here they worked to reclaim many who had left the church of their parents.[117] After some time, they returned to New Britain and located in an area known for fire-walking, where there was no SDA work. Because they were not officially working for the SDA mission, they found they had access to areas that had refused SDA missionary activity.[118]

After three years, while on a visit to Rabaul, Cyril met the owner of three large plantations on the coast about three hundred kilometers (186 miles) to the west. He invited Cyril to base himself there. This gave the Pascoes access to an area that had long been denied to the SDA Church and also opened the way to work further down the coast. Here they built a mission station and established three churches strategically placed to service "wild" areas in the "bush."[119]

## Permanent Return and Retirement

In 1980 Cyril and Marie decided to move back to Australia. They handed over to the church the mission station they had built and the three churches with a total membership that soon grew to well over five hundred, with an unknown number of adherents still living in the "wild" areas. They then settled in the Nambour area of Queensland.[120]

However, the mission field was still on Cyril's mind. He knew the Adventists in Choiseul needed a mission boat, so he purchased one in the early stages of construction, completed the drawings needed to build it, and worked on it until it was finished. It took five years, but finally the *Tana* was delivered to the Solomon Islands.[121]

Later, Cyril and Marie spent five years ministering in Manurewa, Whangarei, and Dargaville in the North Island of New Zealand, where Cyril had lived in his teens.[122] They moved back to Nambour, where they actively participated in local church activities.[123] Cyril continued to preach regularly and conducted funerals throughout

the 1990s.[124]

In 2002 they moved into a unit at the Adventist Retirement Village in Caloundra, Queensland, where Cyril again preached for church services regularly and held Bible studies.[125]

## Final Years and Death

Marie passed away on August 28, 2008, just four months short of their 70th wedding anniversary.[126] Although they never had children of their own, over the years they cared for more than 35 children at various times and for differing lengths of time.[127]

In 2015, Cyril celebrated his 100th birthday and moved to Melbourne to be closer to family. Up until that year, he had continued living independently and retained his driver's license.[128] He spent the rest of his days in residential care at AdventCare Whitehorse in Melbourne, where he passed away April 19, 2017, six days before his 102nd birthday.[129]

## Legacy

Cyril had a heart for service. No task was too small, too large or too dangerous for him to tackle. His nephew gave the following tribute:

Cyril's focus was never on this life: his interest was in eternal life. His entire working life and his retirement years were devoted to encouraging all within his influence to experience a closer walk with the Lord. He will be remembered fondly.[130]

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