

# Piper, Harold Edgar (1882–1965) and Lily Agatha (Brown) (died 1965)



Harold and Lily Piper on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary, 1956.

Photo courtesy of *Australasian Record*.

## 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.

Apart from a brief period of service in Tonga, Harold and Lily Piper spent the rest of their forty-six years of denominational service in Australia and New Zealand. There, Harold was an evangelist and administrator. Remarkably, in his long career Piper served as the president of all but one of the then nine local conferences across Australia and New Zealand.

## Early Life and Education

Harold Piper was born in Christchurch, New Zealand on January 30, 1882.<sup>1</sup> His mother Mary Piper, and several of her children had attended an evangelistic series in Wellington in 1890, New Zealand conducted by the American Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) evangelist, Mendell Crocker Israel and his associate, Stephen McCullagh. Mary Piper and several of her children joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church at that time, though her husband, while not opposing her decision, did not become a church member. However, three sons and a daughter were to enter the work of the Church. Notably, the next four generations of the family served the Church in Australia and New Zealand and further afield.<sup>2</sup>

In 1901, Harold Piper, who had been working as a Draper was baptized and began his denominational service as a colporteur.<sup>3</sup> From 1902 to 1904 Piper was a student at the Australasian Missionary College at Avondale.<sup>4</sup> At the college he met Lily Brown. They married in 1906,<sup>5</sup> and to this union of nearly 60 years were born in New Zealand two children, Elva Rae Piper (1911) and Ross Clinton Piper (1914).<sup>6</sup> Lily Brown had graduated from the Teaching Course at the Australasian Missionary College in 1904.<sup>7</sup> She was appointed as a teacher in New Plymouth, New Zealand in January 1905.<sup>8</sup>

## Denominational Service

Late in 1904, before he graduated from Avondale, Piper had been appointed to evangelistic work on the north coast of New South Wales, Australia, to work with the American evangelist, J. L. McElhany.<sup>9</sup> However, the plans changed and in May 1905 Piper was on his way to New Zealand where he was to be engaged in literature evangelism for the rest of the year.<sup>10</sup> By the end of 1906 Piper was granted a Ministerial Licence and was engaged in ministerial work in New Zealand.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning of 1908 the Pipers returned to Avondale where Lily taught in the teacher training program from which she herself had graduated just three years earlier and Harold used the opportunity to return to his studies and subsequently graduated from Avondale as a teacher at the end of the year.<sup>12</sup> They were then appointed as missionary teachers at the newly established school in the Haapai Group of Islands in the kingdom of Tonga.<sup>13</sup> However, their service there was brief, as the couple had to return home in 1910 due to Lily's "serious health problem."<sup>14</sup>

From 1910 to 1916 the Pipers were engaged in evangelism in New Zealand.<sup>15</sup> Harold was ordained to the gospel ministry in Palmerston North, New Zealand, in December 1913.<sup>16</sup> In 1916 Harold was called to the Presidency of the Queensland Conference. This was the beginning of an unbroken period of 24 years during when he served as the President of seven of the then nine local Conferences in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> Pastor Piper served as president in the Queensland Conference (1916-1918), Tasmanian Conference (1918-1921), Western Australia Conference (1921-1925), North New South Wales Conference (eight months in 1925), South New Zealand Conference (1926-1930), North New Zealand Conference (1930-1936), South New South Wales Conference (1936-1940), and Victorian Conference (1943-1945).

From 1941 to 1948 Piper was the vice-president of the Australian Union conference and it was during this time that he was 'lent' by the Union Conference to the local Victorian Conference as also the president of that field. With both roles requiring fulltime engagement, Piper was very busy. Piper not only served as president of eight of the nine local conferences in Australia and New Zealand but was also invited to be president of the ninth, South Australia, but that he was unable to accept the position at that time.<sup>18</sup> From 1948 to 1950 Piper carried executive duties for the Australasian Inter-Union Conference.<sup>19</sup> He retired in 1950.<sup>20</sup>

Harold Piper died on May 30, 1965.<sup>21</sup> Lily Piper lived just ten more days after her husband until June 10, 1965.<sup>22</sup>

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## NOTES

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4. Ibid.

5. A. G. Stewart, "Fifty Golden Years Together," *Australasian Record*, December 3, 1956, 11.
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9. S. M. Cobb, "The Summer's Campaign in New South Wales," *Union Conference Record*, November 1, 1904, 3.
10. "Brother H. E. Piper . . .," *Union Conference Record*, May 15, 1905, 7; "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, December 1, 1905, 6.
11. "The New Zealand Conference," *Union Conference Record*, December 31, 1906, 6.
12. "Brother and Sister Harold Piper . . .," *Union Conference Record*, January 20, 1908, 7; "Names of Students Who Have Completed Courses," *Australasian Record*, November 20, 1972, 12.
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22. C. S. Palmer, "Lily A. Piper obituary," *Australasian Record*, July 21, 1965, 15.

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