



Alfred and Pamela Brandt.

Photos courtesy of Peter J. Brandt.

Brandt, Alfred Hilarius (1915–1991) and Pamela (Cooling) (1922–1999)

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Alfred and Pamela Brandt served the Adventist Church in various capacities in the United Kingdom, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Denmark, and Uganda.

Early Life

Alfred Hilarius Brandt was born January 13, 1915, in a small town of Ringsted, south of Copenhagen, in Denmark. His father, Rasmus Peter Brandt, was born in 1867 and his mother, Anna Petrine Nielsen, in 1877. Alfred was the fourth and last-born child of his parents. He had one brother and two sisters: Christian, Else, and Bende. Alfred's parents operated a business in Ringsted, where his mother, Anna Brandt, sold goods in a family painting shop, while his father, a well-known painter with many customers, went around doing paintings for people. They were both devoted members of the Danish State Church. Rasmus traveled throughout Europe and restored many of the historic paintings in churches and cathedrals. The family had a maid who took care of the house and the children.¹

As a young man, before his conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist faith, Alfred H. Brandt was an avid Scout who eventually became a Scout leader. During his scouting years, he set a Danish running record and was honored by Lord Baden-Powell, the World Scout Leader.² He also worked in the clothing business and became a very good businessman and marketer. This business venture taught him persuasive language, fluent communication, team playing, and a friendly deportment—skills he continued demonstrating wherever he worked as an administrator in the mission field.³

Conversion to Adventist Faith

Around 1934, Alfred and his sister Else were baptized by Pastor Mogens Bakke who later became a well-known pastor of Skodsborg School and Sanitarium, situated in the northern part of Copenhagen. After that Mogens and Alfred became best friends for the rest of their lives.⁴ Many years later, Alfred's sister Bende was baptized into the Adventist Church. (Bende became the mother of Anne-Mette Brandt Jepsen, the wife of Pastor Thorkild Pedersen. Bende received Bible studies from her son-in-law, Pastor Pedersen. By the time she was baptized, the Pedersen family had one child and they were working as missionaries in Uganda). As soon as he was baptized into the Adventist church, Alfred H. Brandt enrolled in Vejlebjerg School of higher learning in Denmark.⁵

School, Ministerial Training, and Marriage

Alfred attended a local public elementary school known as Ringsted Folkeskole.⁶ He later attended the Adventist Vejlebjerg School of higher learning in Denmark.⁷ He then studied ministerial education at Newbold Missionary

College in England from the summer of 1939 to 1943 and tropical education at the University of London (London College).⁸

There were no Adventist senior colleges in Denmark, except Skodsborg School and Sanitarium which offered physical therapy, nursing, and dietetics. Alfred wanted to continue with his ministerial studies so as to become a minister. At the same time World War II was threatening the country. Therefore, in the summer of 1939 Alfred decided to “escape” from Copenhagen to England, using a commercial boat,⁹ with the hope of completing his ministerial course work at Newbold Missionary College in one year’s time. His father sent him very little money due to the looming war. In April 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Denmark and communication was totally cut off. Sadly, in 1943 he received a Red Cross letter stating that his father had passed away. During this crucial moment, Alfred became a literature evangelist and started selling books around England, alongside a fellow Dane by the name of Norskov Olsen. Both Norskov and Alfred were students at Newbold College. (Norskov Olsen later became president of Loma Linda University). Besides canvassing, Alfred also cleaned windows at Newbold. It was money he earned from the selling of books and the cleaning of windows that paid his school fees and met other overhead expenses.¹⁰ Instead of one year, he spent five years in London.¹¹

One day Alfred was praying while sitting in an open area at the college. A young lady, a fellow student from the school of education by the name of Pamela Cooling, noticed him. She approached and asked him what he was doing. Alfred replied, “I am praying that one day I can go to Africa as a missionary.”¹² From that day Pamela and Alfred met each other frequently at his work place, as he cleaned the college and dormitory windows. They also met at the playground, entertainment events, music recitals, church services, and other school events. Alfred was a talented musician and artist and provided lots of entertainment. They started playing tennis together. Eventually they became friends and courted each other.¹³

In June 1943, both Pamela and Alfred graduated. Pamela graduated with a master of arts degree in education,¹⁴ with specialization in linguistics.¹⁵ Alfred graduated with a degree in ministerial education from Newbold Missionary College.¹⁶ He also earned a degree in tropical education from the University of London (London College).¹⁷

Pamela Cooling Brandt was born at Brighton in south England on October 10, 1922, the only child of Ernest Cooling (born 1896), and Elsie Cooling (born 1894). Ernest Cooling fought in World War I (1914-1918), at the end of which he married Elsie, and both became members of the Adventist Church through an evangelistic effort. Ernest was a businessman who owned property, a convenience store, and a printing press. Their daughter Pamela attended Brighton Elementary School and Brighton High school before deciding to become a teacher.¹⁸ Thereafter, she attended Newbold Missionary College, from 1939 to 1943. It is from there that she chose to be the wife of a prospective missionary to Africa.

Ministry

United Kingdom: South London. In 1943, when Alfred completed his studies at Newbold College, he could not return to Denmark immediately because of insecurity due to World War II.¹⁹ He had to find employment in London, and from 1944-1945 he practiced his ministerial work in the Croydon and Lewisham churches in south London.²⁰ Pamela Cooling taught at the nearby Stanborough Park Secondary School²¹ soon after graduation, as she and Alfred planned to get married. On July 30, 1945, Alfred Brandt and Pamela Cooling were married at Stanborough Park Church. Pastor L. D. Vince officiated at their wedding. Alfred and Pamela Brandt had three children who were born while the family served as missionaries in Africa. J. Peter and Shirley were born in Malawi, and Wayne was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Denmark: Copenhagen. In 1946, at the end of World War II, the new couple went to Sorø, Denmark, a neighboring town to Ringsted. In this small town and the surrounding area, Alfred Brandt held several evangelistic meetings in large halls. He was billed as the Danish Evangelist after organizing many similar events in English towns during the bombings and attacks on England.²² This gained a lot of interest by local Danes, as Alfred's escape was well publicized in the newspapers. It is here that Alfred served as a pastor of several churches before receiving and accepting a missionary call from the Southern African Division to work at Malamulo Training Institute in Malawi.

Pamela's diary describes the DC3 flight, which took three days to reach Nairobi, Kenya, with hotel stops each day. They used the same plane, the same pilot, and finally a small 14-seater to Blantyre in Nyasaland (Malawi):²³ Pamela was pregnant with Peter at the time, but she kept it a secret or she could not have been allowed to travel on such a long journey.²⁴

Malawi: Blantyre. The Brandts arrived at Blantyre, Malawi, in December 1947, where Alfred Brandt served as principal²⁵ of Malamulo Mission Training Institute.²⁶ Pamela Brandt²⁷ served as a member of the faculty at the same institute, teaching languages. They both served at the school until 1951.²⁸ When they left Malamulo, they were replaced by R. Jackson in 1952.²⁹

In 1952 Alfred H. Brandt was elected to serve as secretary for the home missionary, press relations, publishing, and Sabbath School departments of the South East Africa Union Mission, in Blantyre, Malawi.³⁰ His wife, Pamela Brandt, served as a licensed missionary at the same union mission.³¹

Zimbabwe: Bulawayo. From 1953 to 1960, Pastor Alfred Brandt served as secretary for the education, home missionary, and Missionary Volunteer departments of the Zambesi Union Mission.³² The union covered northern and southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe), with headquarters in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

In 1953, when the Brandt family arrived in Bulawayo, they found an already existing small school in a room behind the present Bulawayo church, near Lobengula Street. The school had only seven children.³³ Soon the church discovered that Pamela Brandt had good credentials and experience in teaching, and she was asked to serve as principal of the school from 1953 to 1960. She raised funds and built the school, naming it after her missionary friend in England,³⁴ "Anderson Preparatory School."³⁵ The school grew so rapidly that they had to

move it to the Hillside area, closer to Hillside Road and Percy Avenue. After reorganizing the school, it attracted both Adventist and non-Adventist children. Students wore a school uniform similar to that of the Adventist institution, Helderberg College, in South Africa. Soon the Zambesi Union Mission administration brought in several additional teachers. It was here that her own son, J. Peter Brandt, started school in 1953.³⁶

In 1955, Alfred acted as principal of Solusi College as the search committee looked for a new principal.³⁷

Kenya: Nairobi. On September 11, 1960, Alfred Brandt flew from Denmark, where the family was on furlough, to Nairobi, where he had just accepted a call to serve as secretary of the education, temperance, home missionary, and Missionary Volunteer departments at the East African Union, in Nairobi, Kenya.³⁸ His wife and children sailed separately from London on September 9, 1960, on the ship *Warwick Castle*.³⁹

In 1961 Pamela Brandt started another school to take care of the children of overseas workers, located on Milimani Road (now Jakaya Kikwete Road), behind Nairobi Central Church. The school was named Maxwell Preparatory School after one of the Maxwell missionary brothers from London.⁴⁰ She was the first principal of the school from 1961 to 1963, while her husband served as a department director at the East African Union, as well as president of the Central Kenya Field. The school included both primary and lower secondary school classes, starting with about 13 students, including Peter, Shirley, and Wayne Brandt, and Leif Lind (son of the union president). Pamela Brandt and Martha Vinglass were the pioneer teachers.⁴¹ That year the school gained popularity, and students from around the world began applying for admission. Soon the number rose to 80 students. East African Union president, M. E. Lind,⁴² had to secure funds to build a multi-classroom school building and begin looking for more teachers from the USA to assist the two pioneers.⁴³

From 1986⁴⁴ to 1988,⁴⁵ during the tenure of Pastor Fredrick Wangai, the first Kenyan to serve as president of the East African Union, the high school section was named "Maxwell Adventist Academy" and relocated to a spacious plot of land outside Nairobi, on Ongata Rongai Road in Kajiado county. It is today one of the most prestigious international high schools in the entire Republic of Kenya. Maxwell Adventist Academy admits children of Adventist workers from all over the world, as well as any other child whose parents wish them to be taught there. The lower-grade Maxwell Preparatory School was left at the Nairobi Central Church and is still operating with many students from within and outside Kenya.

From 1962 to 1963, Alfred H. Brandt was president of the Central Kenya Field at Chalmer's Square, Shauri Moyo, in Nairobi.⁴⁶

Burundi: Bujumbura. In 1964 Alfred H. Brandt was elected president of the Central African Union,⁴⁷ with headquarters in Bujumbura, Burundi. The union covered the countries today known as Burundi and Rwanda. In May 1964, he returned from a furlough during which he had studied the French language in Switzerland. He served the Central African Union until October 1967.

Denmark: Copenhagen. Because of their children's education, the Brandts left Bujumbura in October 1967 after 20 years of service in Africa, with a dream that had become a reality. After his return, Alfred became the president of the East Denmark Conference, a position he held until 1970.⁴⁸

Lebanon: Beirut. Early in 1970 Alfred Brandt received a call to serve as secretary for the Missionary Volunteer, lay activities, and public relations⁴⁹ departments of the newly-formed Afro-Mideast Division in Beirut, Lebanon. On June 3, 1971, Alfred and Pamela Brandt, with son Wayne, arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, for the new assignment. The other two children remained in school in Denmark.

Ethiopia: Addis Ababa. In November 1974, following the departure of H. W. Palm, Alfred Brandt was requested to serve as acting president of the Ethiopia Union Mission while also serving as a department director of the Afro-Mideast Division in Beirut, Lebanon. He served for a short time until Bekele Heye took over. In August 1979 the Brandt family retired to Denmark after serving the church both overseas and at home for about 35 years. They then moved to California in the United States, where two of their children were already living. Wayne Brandt left Denmark for the United States in 1973 to study dentistry at Loma Linda University; J. Peter Brandt followed in 1977 to work as a physical therapist after graduating from Skodsborg and the University of Copenhagen; Shirley, with her husband Niels Nielsen and their two boys, moved in 1980; they also worked as physical therapists after graduating from Skodsborg.⁵⁰

Post-Retirement Service

In 1980, Alfred served the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for three months as a volunteer in Kampala, Uganda, where he distributed relief funds, food, blankets, and clothing to church entities, communities, and the displaced after the ouster of President Idi Amin in 1979.⁵¹

Demise

Pastor Alfred Hilarius Brandt died on June 16, 1991, in Redlands, California, at the age of 76. Pamela Cooling Brandt died on March 12, 1999, in Redlands, California, at the age of 77. They were buried at the Desert Lawn Memorial Park in Calimesa (near Redlands), in California.

Legacy

The Brandts started Anderson Preparatory School in Zimbabwe, and Maxwell Preparatory School, which became the cradle of Maxwell Adventist Academy in Nairobi, Kenya. Pamela Cooling Brandt was a pioneer school administrator and an excellent teacher, who made all learning fun.⁵² From 1953 to 1960 she reorganized a one-room church school behind the present Bulawayo Church near Lobengula Street in Zimbabwe, with only seven children. She first named the school "Anderson Preparatory School,"⁵³ after her fellow missionary friend in

England. The school grew rapidly and had to relocate to a bigger plot at Hillside Road and Percy Avenue.⁵⁴ From 1961 to 1964 she established and taught at the Maxwell Preparatory School in Nairobi with only 12 children. It was soon “bursting at the seams” with more than 80 children. This came to be the cradle of modern-day Maxwell Adventist Academy on Magadi Road, Ongata Rongai, on Adventist Hill in Kajiado County, close to the East-Central Africa Division in Nairobi, Kenya. Pamela Brandt, a fluent linguist, taught English, French, and Latin (besides being highly proficient in Danish).⁵⁵ She also taught music to all the students (mainly the recorder). Even though Pamela could not read music herself, she somehow managed! She enrolled all the students in piano lessons, hiring professional piano teachers to come to the school every week.⁵⁶

They were talented preachers of the gospel message. Pastor Alfred H. Brandt was a remarkably talented preacher.⁵⁷ He was many times invited to camp meetings as a guest speaker. In 1957 and 1958 he spoke at Kazingo and Mitandi Adventist Churches in the Rwenzori Mission Station (now Rwenzori Field) in western Uganda. His sermons were always precise. He would start with an illustration, move on to the biblical message, and end with a practical example with a spiritual lesson. After that he would deliver an appeal. Often all who attended his meetings would give themselves to Jesus Christ due to the inspiring message he had delivered.⁵⁸

They prepared others to engage in the preaching and health ministry in Africa. A. H. Brandt was a worker with foresight. He had a zeal for expanding the gospel mission in Africa through the use of all the other talented men and women that he could possibly identify. In pursuit of this vision, he assisted in recruiting other hardworking people to the African mission field, including Thorkild and Anne-Mette Pedersen in the first half of the 1960s. He worked with Pastor Magdalon Eugen Lind who served as secretary of the Trans-Africa Division⁵⁹ in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). At that time, Pastor Alfred H. Brandt was serving as president of the Central Kenya Field at Shauri Moyo, Nairobi, Kenya⁶⁰ and later as president of the Central African Union⁶¹ in Bujumbura, Burundi. Thorkild and Anne-Mette Pedersen, the missionary recruited by Pastor Brandt, served at the Rwenzori Mission Station from 1964⁶² to 1968⁶³ and transformed the gospel ministry in the region from chaos to order; from hopelessness to hopefulness; from segregation to inclusion, and from illiteracy to functional literacy.

Alfred did not just spread the gospel through preaching and teaching. He also recruited and guided his sister, Else Brandt, who was just as talented as her brother, to fill the gap in health ministry. Before she became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Else owned a flower shop in Denmark.⁶⁴ When she became an Adventist, she sold it. In the 1940s, as Alfred was struggling to study at Newbold College in London, Else was taking a nursing course at Skodsborg School and Sanitarium in Copenhagen.⁶⁵ Upon completing the course, she was called to work at Kendu Hospital in Kenya in 1949.⁶⁶ In 1950, when Ishaka Mission Hospital was opened in Uganda, she was invited there and was initially the only nurse.⁶⁷ The hospital had no bed sheets for patients to use. She used her own money and bought the first bed sheets and pillow cases for Ishaka Mission Hospital in Ankole, western Uganda.⁶⁸ She served Ishaka as a licensed missionary of the Uganda Field⁶⁹ until 1958.⁷⁰ Upon her return to Denmark after about five years, Else became head of the Skodsborg nursing program and the human resources manager.⁷¹ Certainly, much of what she accomplished can be credited to the inspiration

received from her brother Alfred.

They were great people of prayer. The vision, life, and work of Alfred serve as a perfect example to both young and old Adventist believers. He achieved his dream, so eloquently expressed to his classmate, Pamela Cooling, at Newbold College from 1939 to 1943: "I am praying that one day I can go to Africa as a missionary."² If we ask God to recruit us in His service, He is faithful and willing to do so.

They rendered servant leadership by example. Pastor Alfred and Pamela Brandt's missionary life in Africa was of a distinctive nature. They were highly devoted to duty. They rendered sincere and faithful services to people and to the Church. Their servant leadership style, creative abilities, and team spirit were exemplary. They used soft and persuasive language that bound workers and believers together. They did not run short of words of edification and encouragement to fellow workers and church members. They employed all the talents they had to communicate God's love. Their services as teacher evangelists still speak to thousands of people all over the world who go through the schools they established. They stand out as model characters to emulate.

SOURCES

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NOTES

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