

# Anderson, Clifford Russell (1905–1967)

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## 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.

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Clifford Russell Anderson was an evangelist, medical doctor, church administrator, and published author. Anderson was also well known for his *Your Radio Doctor* that was broadcasted worldwide and endorsed by the World Health Organization.

## Early Life and Family

Clifford Russell Anderson was born in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on October 25, 1905.<sup>1</sup> He was the older of twin boys and fourth of five children born to Albert William Anderson and his wife Agnes Margaret (Linklater).<sup>2</sup> His siblings were Albert Mendelsohn Anderson, born on July 11, 1892, and later killed in action over France in January 1918 and buried there;<sup>3</sup> Roy Allan Anderson, born on March 25, 1895, who served for many years at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; Doris Estelle Anderson (later Mrs R. G. L. Cooper), born on September 29, 1900; and his twin brother, Ormond Keith Anderson, also born on October 25, 1905, and who spent many years in public evangelism in the South Pacific Division.<sup>4</sup>

Before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, Albert Anderson had been a professional musician and businessman. Clifford was reared in a home of culture and academic excellence.<sup>5</sup> His childhood was spent in the Warburton Valley, Victoria, where his father was, among other things the manager of the Signs Publishing Company.<sup>6</sup> The



Clifford R. Anderson

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

family moved to Sydney, New South Wales, in 1916 where he completed his primary and secondary education.<sup>7</sup>

## Work and Service in Australia

On completion of his education, Clifford Anderson worked as a stenographer and assistant editor of the *Australasian Record* at the Signs Publishing Company from 1921 to the beginning of 1923. Then, later in 1923, while studying for the ministry at Avondale College, Clifford worked in the Avondale Press, further acquainting himself with the publishing business.<sup>8</sup>

In 1924 Clifford joined his brother Roy in evangelistic work in New Zealand. On his return to Australia, he worked for the Sanitarium Health Food Company, first at the Melbourne café and then in Brisbane.<sup>9</sup> During this time he frequently preached in local churches. After working for just a few months at the Brisbane café, he was appointed to evangelistic work in Ayr, North Queensland.<sup>10</sup> Later, he became a member of his brother's evangelistic team in Brisbane, working with the youth and conducting a 150-voice choir.<sup>11</sup> While in Brisbane he met Lela Fowles, who had been born in Brisbane on October 23, 1910.<sup>12</sup> Her parents were Winifred Harold Lambert Fowles and Elizabeth Bertha Augusta Wendt. Lela's mother had been baptized in London by Clifford's brother, Pastor Roy Allan Anderson, some years earlier.<sup>13</sup> Lela Fowles and Clifford Anderson were married on January 21, 1930.<sup>14</sup> Their first of two children, Ian Russell, was born August 4, 1930.<sup>15</sup>

## The London Years

Clifford and Lela Anderson left Queensland and traveled to London, England, to work with his brother Roy in his London evangelistic crusades. They traveled together to London on the same ship with Roy and his wife. They were granted a year's leave of absence by the Queensland Conference.<sup>16</sup> For six years the brothers worked together in a major evangelistic outreach in London. Roy commenced a crusade in Finsbury Park Cinema on June 1, 1930, a few months after arriving.<sup>17</sup> By 1934 they were both conducting crusades, Roy at the Palladium in Palmers Green and Clifford in Lenham Hall, South London.<sup>18</sup> Clifford was ordained as a minister while in England.<sup>19</sup>

## A Change of Direction

Clifford decided to pursue medical training so that he could combine health evangelism with pastoral evangelism. From 1937 he studied medicine at the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California, United States of America. Pastor A. G. Stewart wrote of him in 1940: "Pastor Clifford Anderson, who accompanied his brother to England, having had several years of evangelistic experience in Australia, is now at the White Memorial Hospital in California gaining hospital experience. Although he proved successful as an evangelist, he felt that medical training would be helpful in his work, and decided to take a course at Loma Linda, which he completed last year. He expects to qualify next year as a medical practitioner."<sup>20</sup>

In 1942 he entered medical practice in Washington, D.C. While in Washington, he was appointed as a Diplomat of the National Board of Medicine and Licentiate, Medical Council of Canada. It was also during the years in Washington that their daughter, Bette June, was born.<sup>21</sup>

In 1944 the family was invited to locate in Kingston, Jamaica, where Dr. Anderson was responsible for the development and building of the Andrews Memorial Hospital.<sup>22</sup> In addition, he was appointed as the medical secretary of the Inter-American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 2, 1945.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of 1946, Dr. Anderson was invited to be the medical superintendent of the Florida Sanitarium.<sup>24</sup> However, the family remained in Jamaica until 1949 when, for health reasons, they returned to the United States and settled in Worthington, Ohio, where Dr. Anderson undertook graduate study on the fields of neurology and psychiatry at Harding Hospital.<sup>25</sup> After a short time in Worthington, the Andersons moved to Washington, D.C., where Dr. Anderson accepted an appointment as a staff physician at Washington Sanitarium and Hospital.<sup>26</sup>

## “Your Radio Doctor”

During this time in Washington, Dr. Anderson began his well-known series of *Your Radio Doctor* broadcasts, building and equipping a recording studio in his home basement to assist in that endeavor.<sup>27</sup> These programs were soon in great demand internationally, broadcast all over the world, used by the Burmese government, and endorsed by the World Health Organization. Later the United States Information Agency promoted them, and consequently, Dr. Anderson became the family doctor to millions around the world.<sup>28</sup>

In 1957 Dr. Anderson and his family moved west to California, where he took a residency in internal medicine in Glendale, California. In that same year, The National Institutes of Health granted Dr. Anderson a Fellowship in Cardiac Research at the Children’s Hospital, Hollywood, California, and the Los Angeles General Hospital. In the following years, he assisted in the clinical teaching of cardiology at the White Memorial Hospital. In 1965 he was granted an Exceptional Service award by the Los Angeles County Heart Association.<sup>29</sup>

During this period, correspondence indicates that Mrs. Lela Anderson was unwell and that she and Dr. Anderson were living separate lives.<sup>30</sup> At some stage, the marriage was terminated and a divorce was obtained. Lela Anderson died on February 25, 1967.<sup>31</sup> She was just 57 years old.

In addition to his broadcasts, Dr. Anderson was a prolific writer on health issues. His ability to explain complex scientific health issues in language that readers and listeners with a nonmedical background could easily understand was a very special gift.<sup>32</sup> Many of his articles for popular journals such as *The Signs of the Times* were translated and republished in many languages. His sixteen-lesson correspondence course *Radiant Health* was used in the United States, Australia, and England. He was the author of *Modern Ways to Health*, which was translated into many languages and published in many editions globally.<sup>33</sup>

## Later Life

In 1966, Clifford Anderson married Dr. Dulcie Blunden,<sup>34</sup> daughter of Herold and Nellie Blunden, pioneer missionaries to China.<sup>35</sup> For the last two years of his life, he took a special interest in epidemiology and health education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). At the time of his death, he was under appointment as an instructor in the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University.<sup>36</sup>

Clifford Anderson died on June 2, 1967, in Glendale, California, after a nine-month struggle with a brain tumor.<sup>37</sup>

## Legacy

Robert H. Pierson, President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in commenting on the contribution of Dr. Clifford Anderson, wrote, “Few men have made the contribution to this cause that Cliff has made by his preaching, his writing, his medical practice, and his daily witness for the Saviour. It is a real loss to the cause of God, as well as a personal loss to some of us who have known him intimately through the years.”<sup>38</sup>

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