

Campbell, Alexander John (1901–1970) and Emily Myra (Ford) (1902–1971)

ALWYN CAMPBELL

Alwyn Campbell, B.A. in library science (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia). Campbell retired from a career in Education in 1998 as the Head Teacher-Librarian at the Sydney Adventist College. He was born in Sydney of missionary parents and engaged in educational leadership in denominational schools and colleges in Australia and Papua New Guinea. He is married to Edna with two adult sons, one adult daughter, and five grandchildren.

Alexander John Campbell (known as Alex) was a pioneer missionary to the Solomon Islands and the Highlands of New Guinea.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Alexander John Campbell was born on May 17, 1901 in Boulder City, Western Australia. His father, also Alexander John (1865-1922; known as John) was a mining engineer and farmer while Alex's mother, Mary Ann (Warmsley), (1862-1931) cared for home duties.¹

Alex and his mother, Mary, became Seventh-day Adventists in 1906 through reading the *Great Controversy* delivered to their home by colporteur T. Whittle.² Unfortunately, Alex's father always opposed their new religion. In the same year, the family moved back to Victoria where John Campbell bought a 100-acre farm about 30 miles West of Melbourne near Geelong. Unfortunately Alex had only four years of formal education as he did not start school until he was nine and left at 13 when the school closed. However, life on the farm kept him very busy and provided a broad education in practical skills.³



Alexander and Emily Campbell, 1925.

Photo courtesy of Alwyn Campbell.

In 1910 Alex was baptized at the St Kilda Camp Meeting in Melbourne. In the same year the family moved to Sydney.⁴ Alex became a member of the Stanmore Seventh-day Adventist Church. Regular church and camp meeting attendance strengthened his resolve to undertake theological training at Australasian Missionary College. During vacations he worked as a colporteur which provided scholarships at Avondale for 2 years. His personal diary states, "I battled my way through to Avondale."⁵

In 1924, during his final year at the college, Alex was introduced to fellow Avondale student, Emily Ford, from Kingaroy, Queensland. However, before he could graduate from the ministerial course in 1924, Alex was appointed to evangelistic work at Lismore in the North New South Wales Conference.⁶

Emily was born in Mullumbimby, New South Wales on February 9, 1902.⁷ Her parents were John and Jane Ford. Welshman John was a successful dairy farmer and his wife was a competent nurse and midwife. A visit as a patient to the Sydney Sanitarium had resulted in John Ford's conversion to Seventh-day Adventism and, as a result, his wife Jane and other members of their large family of eleven children were converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well.⁸ Alex and Emily were married by Pastor Whittaker in the Murwillumbah Church on July 23, 1925.⁹

Ministry

At the Australasian Union Quadrennial Conference held at Newcastle in 1926, the recently married couple were called to serve as missionaries in the Solomon Islands.¹⁰ Alex and Emily sailed from Sydney on December 22, 1926 after having attended a special course on nursing and tropical diseases at the Sydney Sanitarium¹¹ On the journey they worked hard at learning the Marovo language which is mostly used in the Western Solomon Islands. Mission Superintendent, Pastor H. P. B. Wicks, finally delivered them on the mission vessel *Melanesia* to their remote destination at Lavilai, near Buin, on the South East coast of Bougainville in early February 1927. It was their first mission appointment.¹² A small cutter, the *Genitu*, meaning "love," was provided for their use in mission visitation along the South coast of Bougainville.¹³

Gradually God's work developed in the hill country behind Lavilai and more missionaries were needed to meet new calls. In 1928 an important first was celebrated when Tounai, a young Lavilai village convert, was baptized with a friend in the nearby Biriane Waters.¹⁴ He was the first baptized Adventist in all of the Territory of New Guinea.¹⁵ Tounai became a lifetime preacher of the gospel to the tribes of central New Guinea as well as on Bougainville itself.¹⁶

To help relieve the desperate need for more missionary teachers, the Campbells were transferred to Choiseul, leaving Bougainville in September 1928.¹⁷ They settled at Ruruvae, Choiseul Island in the Solomon Islands. The Ruruvae church was organized toward the end of 1929¹⁸ followed by the opening of an intermediate school.¹⁹ During their term at Ruruvae, a number of young national missionaries from the Solomon Islands Mission were sent for service to such places as Mussau Island, Bougainville, and Guadalcanal.²⁰

At the end of 1929, Alex and Emily Campbell returned to Australia for furlough.²¹ Before returning to their assignment, their first child, Heather, was born at the Sydney Sanitarium on July 8, 1930.²² They returned to Choiseul and continued their work, utilizing the small mission ship *Advent*.²³ At the beginning of 1934, the family left Ruruvae for their second furlough. Their place was taken temporarily by J. D. Anderson and family.²⁴ On November 24, 1934, Alexander Campbell was ordained while attending the camp meeting at New Lambton, Newcastle in New South Wales.²⁵ The family left Sydney on December 15 to return to Choiseul.²⁶

In December 1935, Alex and Emily received an appointment to Central Ramu, New Guinea.²⁷ Reluctantly they left Ruruvae and travelled to Rabaul where Emily remained for a time while Alex travelled on to take up their appointment.²⁸ Their first son, Kenneth David, was born in Rabaul.²⁹ After 8 weeks, Emily joined Alex on the New Guinea mainland. Sadly, when Kenneth was just 15 months old, he died in Salamaua hospital on May 31, 1937.³⁰

Twin boys, Gordon Robert and Alwyn Francis, were born to the Campbells in the Sydney Sanitarium.³¹ Gordon and Alwyn grew up mostly at Kainantu until the government ordered the evacuation of women and children before the Japanese invaded New Guinea in 1941.³² They were flown out to Salamaua by small aircraft and then on to Australia.³³ Kainantu mission station was taken over by the Australian military and used as a hospital in April 1942.³⁴ With advancing Japanese military presence, Alex and two other Seventh-day Adventist missionaries were left trapped in the New Guinea Highlands as their proposed escape routes were cut off.³⁵ An order from the Australian military directed that any remaining expatriates should proceed westward 200 miles (320km) to Mt. Hagen, a designated staging point for evacuation of military personnel and civilians to Australia.³⁶ After nine days of hard trekking, Alex and his two companions arrived in Mt. Hagen.³⁷ Finally, on May 20, 1942, their turn to fly out arrived.³⁸ Before their escape flight in two small civilian biplanes to Australia via Horn and Thursday Islands, Alex had a final meeting with his national leaders, giving them instructions, reassurance, and ending with prayer. These pioneer expatriate missionaries left behind a group who continued on with the missionary program in spite of the real dangers of war.³⁹

During the remainder of the war, Alex was the church pastor of Bundaberg and Maryborough Churches in Queensland. Toward the end of 1943, Alex, after obtaining permission from the Australian Government, sailed on a troopship with naval escort to Port Moresby in order to provide encouragement and support for the mission stations along the Papuan Coast. Using the mission ship *Diari*, he visited stations both east and west of Port Moresby.⁴⁰ Also, before the official end of the War he was able to return to Kainantu in 1945. There he discovered significant damage to the mission home caused by Japanese strafing and bombing. Unfortunately, some of his personal records were destroyed when a bomb hit one of the mission station buildings.⁴¹

Alex and Emily and their twins arrived back at Kainantu Mission Station on the last day of 1946. Heather was left with relatives in Queensland so she could further her secondary education.⁴² In 1953 she graduated from Sydney Adventist Hospital as a nurse. Meanwhile the twins were enrolled in the Queensland Primary Correspondence School. When ready for secondary school, they went to live with relatives in Sydney until they

completed their final year of high school in 1955. They then won PNG Government Scholarships. Gordon went to Medical School at Sydney University, and Alwyn went to Teachers' College at Bathurst and Balmain, Sydney, as well as the Australian School of Pacific Administration (A.S.O.P.A), Middle Head, Sydney. Both returned to New Guinea to give some years of service to the country in their medical and educational careers:⁴³

On June 23, 1953 Alex was appointed president of the Eastern Highlands Mission based in Goroka.⁴⁴ In 1954 when he was attending the 47th Session of the General Conference in San Francisco, Elder H. M. S. Richards Sr. introduced him to John E. Ford, the director of International Educational Recordings in California.⁴⁵ The president of the organization was Frank Knight, brother of Pastor A. W. Knight.⁴⁶ International Educational Recordings was utilizing a low-cost finger-driven gramophone which Campbell recognized as having the potential to provide recorded evangelistic messages in many different languages of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) mainland.⁴⁷ Soon thereafter Pastor Sid Stocken began experimenting with the metal "cake-tin" gramophones at Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands of PNG and realized that a very powerful evangelistic tool was within reach.⁴⁸

Emily's role as a missionary wife and mother was significant. She efficiently managed the everyday duties and problems of a mission station with loving care and ready encouragement. She assisted medically as well as teaching health and hygiene to national workers' wives, including village mothers and babies. She provided warm hospitality, mentored young expatriate missionaries, communicated with government officials as required, and generally kept the station running well while Alex was absent on mission patrols.⁴⁹ In a report, one patrol paid tribute "to the faithful womenfolk who stand by at home to keep the oversight of the work."⁵⁰

After their next furlough Alex and Emily were appointed to Tetamanda, near Wabag in the Western Highlands of New Guinea. They arrived in June 1958.⁵¹ This was to be their last assignment in New Guinea because in May 1960, Alex suffered a stroke at Wabag.⁵² This forced their permanent return to Australia.

Final Years

Back home, Alex was appointed as the caretaker and custodian of the fully restored home of Ellen White, "Sunnyside," which was dedicated on November 20, 1960. While he was at Sunnyside, he also helped establish the new South Sea Island Museum next door to Sunnyside and served as its first curator.⁵³

An example of their continuing passion for mission was the project Alex and Emily developed between 1967 and their passing. It was a program for the financing and distributing of a missionary book entitled "Perilous Paradise." Authored by Eric Were, it illustrated the Adventist exploits in Papua New Guinea. It was distributed to noted personalities, motel chains, and organizations such as Qantas, as a form of missionary outreach.⁵⁴

Both Alex and Emily suffered declining health in the late 1960s. Alex suffered a serious stroke and was admitted to the Sydney Sanitarium where he passed away on October 2, 1970.⁵⁵ Emily spent the last 2 years of her life in

the Charles Harrison Memorial Home, Cooranbong, before her death on January 23, 1971, just three months after the passing of Alex.⁵⁶

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