

Cormack, James
Ernest
(1908–1997), and
Linda Gladys
(McLane) (c.
1911–1979); later
Maude (Jackson)
(1907–1994)



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.

James Ernest Cormack

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Center, South Pacific Division.

Pastor James Cormack and his wife Linda gave almost 40 years of service for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, the Solomon Islands, the Cook Islands, and Tonga, serving as a pastor, evangelist, and church administrator.

Early Life and Service

James Ernest Cormack was born on August 5, 1908, in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.¹ His mother became a Seventh-day Adventist in Kogarah, Sydney, when he was three years old.² He was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist by Pastor A. W. Anderson in the Hurstville Church, Sydney, New South Wales.³

After studying for the ministry at the Australasian Missionary College, Avondale, from 1928 to 1932, he spent much of 1933 as a literature evangelist prior to being appointed as a minister in the North New South Wales Conference.⁴ He began ministry in August 1933 and worked for the balance of 1933 and 1934 in the Port Macquarie, Wauchope, and Kempsey districts with H. A. Kent.⁵ While there he took a strong role in leading out in activities for juniors and youth. He was involved in not only training the young people but also completing the requirements for being a Master Comrade. When he was awarded his badge by Marion Hay, North New South Wales Missionary Volunteer Secretary, she reported that he was the first in the Australasian Division to receive this honor.⁶ However, in a later edition of the *Australasian Record*, it was reported that in fact he was the second to receive the honor. A New Zealander, K. J. Wooler, had been invested some six months earlier.⁷ He was at least, the first to be invested as a Master Comrade in Australia.

In November 1934 he was transferred to South Australia.⁸ While working in that conference, James married Linda Gladys McLane on November 11, 1935, in the Murray Bridge Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁹ They had met while they were students at the Australasian Missionary College. She was born about 1911 in Inverell, New South Wales, to Richard and Maria A. McLane.¹⁰ Her family had become Seventh-day Adventists through the ministry of Pastor C. Reynolds.¹¹ Together James and Linda would have three children: Enid Ruth (Allan), born at Kukudu in the Western Solomon Islands, and Lynette Fay (Donald), born on at the Sydney Sanitarium, Wahroonga, New South Wales.¹² Their third child, Wendy Joy, is referenced in the life sketch of James Cormack given at his funeral, but there is no mention of her in the biographical and service documents filed in the archives of the South Pacific Division.¹³ She died at 18 months of age in the Cook Islands and is buried in the Cook Islands Christian Church grounds, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands.¹⁴

A Life of Service

The Cormacks moved to the South New South Wales conference for evangelistic work in November 1937.¹⁵ They were there only four months before Cormack was appointed as a district director in the Solomon Islands in March 1938.¹⁶ Located at Kukudu, near Gizo in the Western Solomon Islands, they remained there until the family had to be evacuated back to Australia because of the imminent escalation of hostilities in World War II.¹⁷ Linda and baby Enid (with other expatriate women and children) left from Gizo on the *Malaita* in early January 1942.¹⁸ The *Melanesia* with James Cormack, Robert Barrett, John Howse, John Gosling, David Ferris, Charles Tucker, and Hamley Perry left Batuna on January 27, 1942, at four o'clock in the morning for the voyage back to Australia, reaching Hervey Bay in Queensland after six days and then, after a few days, on to Sydney.¹⁹

Within a few weeks, the family moved to Tasmania, where Cormack had been appointed as an evangelist.²⁰ During their time in Tasmania, he was ordained to the gospel ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on November 11, 1942.²¹ But their stay was again cut short. At the end of 1942, they were on their way to the Cook Islands, where Cormack would be the president of the Seventh-day Adventist mission until December 1951.²²

They were then transferred to Tonga, where again, Cormack was president of the mission.²³ In April 1956, Cormack became the Secretary of the Sabbath School and Home Missionary Departments of the Tasmanian Conference.²⁴ From December 1961 until his retirement in early 1972, he engaged in pastoral ministry in the South New South Wales Conference.²⁵

Retirement and Later Years

James and Linda Cormack spent almost 40 years in denominational service. In the later years, Linda suffered from poor health. She had two radical surgeries, and having endured three courses of deep radiation, she had no strength or energy. James Cormack retired from active ministry on January 19, 1972, in order to better care for the needs of his wife.²⁶ Having settled on the New South Wales Central Coast, Cormack was involved in the Erina and The Entrance churches, serving as the senior elder of the latter for many years.²⁷

Cormack cared for his wife Linda for many years until she died on June 5, 1979.²⁸ On October 26, 1980, he married Maude Jackson, whom he had known since his youth at the Hurstville Church.²⁹ She had been born in Sydney on December 27, 1907, and was the widow of Pastor Andrew Jackson.³⁰ They had just nine years together before Maude's death on October 28, 1989.³¹ Cormack's eldest daughter, Enid Allan, died in Dubbo, New South Wales, on August 3, 1994.³²

Besides being a pastor, evangelist, and administrator, James Cormack wrote the book *Isles of Solomon*, recounting their days in the Solomon Islands and the perils of impending war.³³ After the death of Maude, he moved into the Alton retirement village in Cooranbong, where he lived until his death³⁴ on November 11, 1997.³⁵ November 11 was the date of his marriage, his ordination, and his death.

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