

Guiot, Cecile Francine (1898–1981)

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Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist*, the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Cecile Francine Guiot was a missionary to New Caledonia.

Early experience

Cecile Guiot was born in Paris on February 15, 1898¹ and spent most of her early years in England and Ireland while retaining her French citizenship² She migrated to Australia in 1923 as she sought relief from a form of rheumatism. She also sought treatment in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, New South Wales (NSW) and then on the south coast of NSW eventually coming under the care of Dr Freeman at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital (SS&H), Wahroonga. At the SS&H she was given some Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) magazines and, subsequently, she wrote to the publishers for a packet of tracts outlining Adventist beliefs. By the end of her medical treatments, she had read herself into the SDA Church.³

Guiot accepted employment as a domestic servant in Moree, NSW while continuing her hydrotherapy by regularly bathing in the local mineral spas. She remained six months all the time observing Saturday as her Sabbath. Then she returned to Sydney and was baptised in June 1926 during the Australasian Union Conference Session. Griffith and Marian Jones attended those same meetings. Guiot was invited to join them in a mission



Grave of Cecile Guiot, Avondale Adventist Cemetery, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Photo courtesy of Barry Oliver.

venture in French-held New Caledonia. Cecile and Marian had been corresponding as pen pals for some time, and Jones had already made efforts to gain a foothold in New Caledonia but found it difficult. He believed Guiot, who spoke some French, would have better prospects.⁴

Missionary to New Caledonia

In November 1926, Guiot sailed to New Caledonia with Griffith and Marian Jones.⁵ They hired rooms at Nouville, the port for Noumea, and used the location as their base to journey around the island and to the outlying Loyalty group. Jones won a handful of converts including some from the island of Neba in the north where the British influence was strongest. Guiot accompanied one convert to the SS&H for treatment.⁶ She was away six months in Sydney, and during that time the convert was baptised at the SS&H.⁷ In her absence Jones and his converts met with opposition from other church groups and government authorities culminating in his hasty exit from the island.⁸

The Australasian Union Conference (AUC) employed Guiot to continue as a missionary when Jones departed, but her efforts were kept low key with results never appearing in statistical reports, and the mission never mentioned in *SDA Year Books*. For eighteen months, she supplemented her income by working part time in the Noumea hospital. While nursing patients with typhoid fever, she, herself, caught the disease but made a quick recovery. Eventually her canvassing among the public, and her visitation to the scattered church members occupied all her time. She regularly met with about twenty-five Sabbath School members in Noumea and translated the junior lessons into French.⁹ She distributed picture rolls, tracts, books and magazines in both French and English. She sold public subscriptions of French issues of *Life and Health*.¹⁰ Her visitations took her by the small and crowded steamer around the islands to isolated members¹¹ one of which was a former pastor of another denomination who assisted her by translating tracts into the Ouvean language to use on his native island.¹²

In 1936 Guiot attended the AUC Session in Melbourne.¹³ She gave a good report: she spoke of fellow believers in New Caledonia who remained faithful to their baptismal vows, and of how her Sabbath School doubled in attendance. Despite her frail health, she returned to New Caledonia to continue her lonely witness. In February 1938 a sudden illness brought her back to the SS&H for a few weeks.¹⁴ Again, in 1940, she had to return for medical attention and took some months furlough at the same time.¹⁵ She resumed her work for twelve months when, in February 1942, she was advised to return to Sydney in view of the threat of a Japanese invasion of New Caledonia.¹⁶

Guiot was then appointed to join the Brisbane Crusade team as a Bible worker.¹⁷ Eighteen months later, with the Japanese in retreat, plans were made for her to return to New Caledonia, but the allied forces were occupying all available accommodation.¹⁸ She had to linger, only to find that stricter conditions for entry had been put in

place. Finally, in late 1947, the French Consul granted her a visa,¹⁹ and she arrived back in Noumea in February 1948.²⁰ She worked for almost three more years and then, in November 1950, she returned to Sydney for further medical treatments. At the same time she attended the AUC Session at Avondale College and submitted her retirement request.²¹

Retirement

Guiot settled in the Adventist community at Cooranbong, NSW. Meanwhile, the Tahitian Mission assumed increasing responsibility for New Caledonia. In the summer of 1967, Guiot took a sentimental journey back to her beloved mission field and was pleased to see the first SDA church in New Caledonia almost completed at Poum.²² She had taken many trips to that northern tip of the island to nurture interest in the Advent message.

Despite her frail health, she spent thirty years in the Cooranbong community, passing away on November 16, 1981.²³ She was a diligent and resilient missionary and can be ranked among those women mentioned by the Apostle Paul who laboured with him in the gospel.

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