



Donald and Una Watson on their wedding day.

Photo courtesy of Kenton Johanson.

Watson, Donald Henry (1905–2004)

MILTON HOOK

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* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Donald Henry Watson was a missionary to Pitcairn Island and worked for the Adventist church in Australia and New Zealand.

Early Life

Donald Henry Watson was born in London, England, on December 19, 1905, and became a motor mechanic after his basic education. He migrated to New Zealand and settled at Napier where he first came in contact with Seventh-day Adventists. Young evangelists Roy Anderson and Hubert Tolhurst studied the Scriptures with him, and he united with the church in late 1923.¹ Donald attended the New Zealand Missionary College (NZMC), 1924 through 1929, and advanced to the Australasian Missionary College where he graduated from the ministerial course in 1932.²

A Varied Career

Many years of service were given by Donald as a teacher, minister, and hospital chaplain in seven different countries around the world. He began by canvassing *Through Turmoil to Peace* for the first six months of 1933 in Gisborne, New Zealand.³ Being a doctrinal book, it was not an easy volume to sell, unlike simple Bible stories for children. Donald spent 1936 selling *This Mighty Hour* as a support ministry for a major Auckland evangelistic crusade, an equally difficult book to sell.⁴ Pastoral care was given by Donald in Wellington, 1933 through 1935, and Hamilton and Auckland until he was appointed to teach Bible subjects at NZMC for 1938 and 1939. He was also placed in charge of the basket-weaving industry on campus.⁵ While serving at NZMC, Donald met Una Millicent May Gardiner, a West Australian who had taught business subjects at the West Australian Missionary College and had transferred to teach the same subjects at NZMC. They were married by Elder Cyril Palmer in the campus chapel on December 19, 1939.⁶ Donald returned to the care of local churches in the North New Zealand Conference, first at Whangarei (1940), Feilding (1941), and New Plymouth (1942, 1943). On December 4, 1943, he was ordained in Auckland prior to setting sail for Pitcairn Island.⁷

Pitcairn Island

There was something alluring about Pitcairn Island—a dot of rock in a vast ocean, inhabited by Seventh-day Adventists whose non-Christian ancestors were mutineers who almost wiped themselves out by murdering each other. Despite having to negotiate a dangerous beach-head on entry, very few Adventist teachers and ministers turned down an opportunity to serve among the Pitcairners. Donald and Una arrived safely in early 1944, together with infant daughter Patricia Ngaere and new-born Verona Ruth. Donald taught elementary school, conducted an evangelistic series, and introduced Sabbath-afternoon youth meetings. He also started a baptismal class, something that had lapsed for eleven years. Their isolation was exacerbated because of World

War , ships rarely passing by with Western goods, and forcing the islanders to subsist entirely on their own limited produce.⁸ Donald and his family remained there until mid-1946 when they took furlough in New Zealand prior to sailing for a new appointment in the Cook Islands Mission.⁹

Cook Islands

During 1947 through 1949 Donald was headmaster of the Cook Islands Training School (later Papa'arua Adventist College) at Titikaveka, Rarotonga. The school provided an elementary level, but its main emphasis was the training of youth to be mission workers. Its enrollment was approximately twenty juniors and thirty-five youth. It was a coeducational institution offering classes in the mornings and manual labor in the gardens during the afternoons, producing a food supply for themselves and making it largely a self-supporting institution.¹⁰

Australia

The Watson family returned from the Pacific Islands under appointment to the North New South Wales Conference, Australia, in 1950. For the next decade Donald nurtured church members in rural districts such as Mullumbimby¹¹ and Armidale.¹² In 1961 Donald transferred to the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC). Having served previously in remote island fields such as Pitcairn Island and the Cook Islands, Donald and Una were happy to minister to the small community on Lord Howe Island, an outpost of Australia and a part of the GSC. The island was accessible by flying boat, which would deliver regular supplies. Donald began a baptismal class, and he and Una introduced the young people to Junior Missionary Volunteer activities.¹³ After four years they removed to Norfolk Island, an equally remote outpost, and ministered there in a similar fashion for a further three years.¹⁴ Donald and Una had earned the reputation of being missionaries to the isolated. They returned to the city of Sydney and served for another three years prior to retirement in 1970.¹⁵

Retirement

Watson was not content to be idle during his retirement. He and Una traveled to Japan so that Donald could serve as a hospital chaplain,¹⁶ and then they moved on to Edmonton, Canada, to be near their eldest daughter, Ngaere, where Donald assisted with ministerial duties for the Alberta Conference.¹⁷ In 1979 they transferred to Karachi Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, Pakistan, for more chaplaincy work.¹⁸ When they returned to Australia, they first settled in New South Wales¹⁹ but eventually entered the Victoria Point Adventist Retirement community in Queensland. It was there that Donald passed away on March 29, 2004.²⁰ He was ninety-nine years of age. Following Donald's death Una transferred to Elizabeth Lodge Retirement Home, Sydney. She passed away on September 22, 2008, aged ninety-six.²¹ Both Donald and Una were cremated and their ashes are held by loved ones.²²

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NOTES

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20. "Donald Henry Watson," *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, June 2004, 26.
21. Robert Craig, "Una Millicent May Watson," *Record*, November 15, 2008, 14.
22. Ruth Watson, email to Milton Hook.

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