



The Wearer family in Chinese Costume, in Huizhou, c. 1920. Left to right: Julie Wearer, daughter Audrey (on mother's lap), Alonzo Wearer, and son Robert (standing).

Credit: General Conference Archives Glass Lantern Slide Collection.

Wearner, Alonzo Joseph (1892–1964) and Julia Johanna (Jacobson) (1893–1976)

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Alonzo and Julia Wearner were missionary nurses to China; Alonzo also served as an administrator, pastor, chaplain, author, and religion teacher.

Alonzo was born July 4, 1892, in Denver, Colorado, to Carl A. (1857-1931) and Matilda (1859-1935) Wearner who were Swedish immigrants to the United State of America.¹ They had recently been baptized by Alonzo T. Jones, so they named their son "Alonzo" after him.² In April 1914 Alonzo graduated after attending the Nursing Training School at St. Helena Sanitarium for three years. From 1914 to 1916 he attended Pacific Union College. He dated his conversion to 1910 when he attended a series of evangelistic meetings by Elder Kennedy during a camp meeting in Grand Junction, Colorado.³

Julia was born March 5, 1893, in Underwood, Iowa, to Henry F. (1866--1936) and Mary (1871-1937) Jacobson, Danish immigrants to the United States. She attended Pacific Union College (1909-1910), then went to the Sanitarium Intermediate School (1910-1911), followed by time at the St. Helena Sanitarium (1911-1914) before finishing at Pacific Union College in 1916. She was baptized on September 1, 1912, by Elder C. M. Gardner.⁴

On Aug. 25, 1914, Alonzo and Julia were married by E. J. Hibbard.⁵ They left San Francisco with returning missionaries Sherman A. and Mary Nagel on the steamship *Venezuela* on its maiden voyage in October 1916 headed for China.⁶ They were initially placed in Weichow (Waichau, now called Huizhou) working with the Nagel family for the Hakka people. Early on Mary and Julia were noted for putting forth special "effort" on behalf of "the women."⁷ They were stationed on a mission compound overlooking the East River just outside the city walls. By 1917 they had a small school for girls and another for boys within the city. From here they supervised a total of six schools and twelve mission stations.⁸ Here their first two children were born: Robert (b. 1918) who was named after the famous missionary Robert Morrison (1782-1834), and Audrey (b. 1920).⁹ In 1921 fighting in the region forced them to have to flee to Hong Kong for a couple of weeks.¹⁰

On January 25, 1923, the Wearners left on furlough leaving from Hong Kong. By the time they reached Shanghai, Audrey had a sore throat. Her health deteriorated so that by the time they arrived in Japan they went ashore to get help and discovered she had diphtheria. She tragically passed away January 30 and her remains interred in Japan.¹¹

Alonzo returned early to China on March 20, 1924, on the *Empress of Australia*, with a group of missionaries in order to arrive for the annual meeting of the Far Eastern Division.¹² Julia who was pregnant returned with Robert on August 14, 1924, to join him.¹³ The Wearners were asked to serve at the Hupeh Mission (now called Hubei) replacing Brother Lillie where Alonzo replaced him as mission president.¹⁴ Here they had two more children: on Dec. 7, 1923, Marjorie was born; and two years later on July 19, 1925, they had another son, Russell Stanley.¹⁵ On May 14, 1925, Alonzo was ordained to the gospel ministry.¹⁶ They reported that by November 1925 there were

350 members scattered across 15 chapels. Furthermore, there were 37 native evangelists and teachers and five foreign missionaries working together in the province.¹⁷

By April 1926 Alonzo suffered partial paralysis where he was treated by Dr. Harry W. Miller in Shanghai.¹⁸ That summer they went to the mountains to retreat from the heat but found themselves caught between warring factions. Local farmers provided them food, and the soldiers left them alone. After a daring escape on two freight cars, they arrived at Hankow. During the evacuation, Julia contracted typhoid fever.¹⁹ Once they were sufficiently recovered to travel, now “broken and disappointed” at having to return on “permanent return,” they departed Shanghai on November 5, 1926, on the *S. S. Korea Maru*.²⁰ Upon their return to the United States, he served as chaplain of the St. Helena Sanitarium and pastor of the Sanitarium Church; Julia served for another 17 years as a nurse. Administrative changes at the college created an opening for someone to teach Bible classes to the nursing students. This prompted him to return to school where he finished his B.A. and M.A. degrees. Alonzo was afterward called to the head of the Bible departments at Southwestern Junior College (1943-1946) and Union College (1946-1953).²¹ After their retirement, they moved to Redlands, California, and then to Angwin, California, in 1960. Alonzo authored several class outlines and two textbooks, *Fundamentals of Bible Doctrines* and *The Art of Personal Evangelism*. He had also contributed a commentary on the Gospel of John for the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (published 1954--57). Julia assisted her husband in the preparation of these textbooks and other manuscripts.

On December 19, 1964, Alonzo died at the St. Helena Sanitarium in California. In the last decade of his life he was an invalid due to polio. By 1971 Julia moved to New Market, Virginia, to be near her son, Robert. Julia died on February 6, 1976, in Luray, Virginia. Alonzo and Julia are buried next to one another in St. Helena Cemetery.²²

SOURCES

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Biographical Information Blank for Julia Jacobson Wearner, Oct. 9, 1916, General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

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NOTES

1. See Family Tree created in Ancestry.com for detailed ancestry information: <http://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tools/tree/179781613/invitees/accept?inviteId=1291be0e-001f-49dc-bac1-74c4704550ef> [accessed 12/25/21]
2. Robert G. Wearner, "Wearner History: A Missionary Family," unpublished manuscript in possession of author.
3. Biographical Information Blank for Alonzo Joseph Wearner, October 9, 1916, General Conference Archives.
4. Biographical Information Blank for Julia Jacobson Wearner, October 9, 1916, General Conference Archives.
5. Obituary, *Napa Valley Register*, February 9, 1976, 6.
6. See note, *ARH*, October 26, 1916, 24.
7. C. E. Weaks, "General Meeting Among the Hakkas," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, February 15, 1918, 2-3; also published in *ARH*, March 28, 1918, 11.
8. W. T. Knox, "A Visit to the South China Mission Field," *ARH*, June 7, 1917, 12.
9. Consular Reports of Births, 1910-1949 [accessed from Ancestry.com 12/25/21].
10. See notes in *ARH*, March 10, 1921, 12-13.
11. "Letter from Brother A. J. Wearner," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, February 15, 1923, 4; see also note *Asiatic Division Outlook*, February 1, 1923, 8.
12. See note: *ARH*, April 3, 1924, 24.
13. "Sailing August 14 for the Far East," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1924, 12.

14. A. Mountain, "News Items from Central China Union," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, September 1924, 9.
 15. See note: *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August-September 1925, 12.
 16. Robert G. Wearner, "Wearner History: A Missionary Family," unpublished manuscript in possession of author.
 17. A. J. Wearner, "The Day of Opportunity in Inland China," *ARH*, November 12, 1925, 13.
 18. "At the Shanghai Sanitarium," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1926, 18.
 19. "Latest Word from Inland China," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1926, 16.
 20. "Departures," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, Dec. 1926, 12. See also Robert G. Wearner, "Wearner History: A Missionary Family," unpublished manuscript in possession of author, which describes him as "broken and disappointed."
 21. "Death of Alonzo J. Wearner," *ARH*, January 14, 1965, 24.
 22. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48336609/alonzo-joseph-wearner> [accessed 12/25/21]
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