



The Lyle C. Wilcox family, the three children's names are Lois, Bonniel Jean, and Wendell.

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Wilcox, Lyle C. (1891–1970) and Hazel Pearl (Lyle) (1895–1987)

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

Lyle Wilcox served as an educator in California, Washington, and Idaho before he and his wife, Hazel, gave 36 years of mission service in China, the Philippines and Malaya.

Heritage and Education

Lyle Wilcox was born at Hoquiam, Washington, on August 30, 1891, to Thomas and Lora Flanders Wilcox. Lyle had two older sisters: Hazel Belle (b. 1887) and Nina Fern (b. 1890). Lyle's father was a saw-miller who later turned to farming and truck-driving. His mother conducted their home as a small boarding house for seniors and workers at the sawmill.¹ His parents joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church while Lyle was a small boy.²

After two years in public school, Lyle attended the Adventist church school in Hoquiam. While attending the church school he was baptized by Elder Thomas H. Watson. Lyle advanced to the Forest Home Industrial Academy, Mount Vernon, Washington, and proceeded to Pacific Union College, graduating from the ministerial course in 1916.³

Early Career and Marriage

Following his graduation Lyle taught in the church school at Oakland, California, for two years. His career was interrupted in 1918 by the World War I military draft. He was stationed at Camp Lewis near Tacoma, Washington, and the war came to an end half way through his year of enlistment.⁴ Soon after his discharge from the U.S. Army, he married Hazel Pearl Lyle on June 24, 1919.⁵

Lyle then resumed denominational service as preceptor at Western Washington Missionary Academy (later Auburn Academy) for the 1919-1920 schoolyear. He then served as principal and Bible teacher for the same institution, 1920 through 1922. Hazel, a 1917 graduate of Pacific Union College, taught music and English at the academy, 1919-1920. The couple's first child, Lois, was born in 1920.⁶

Lyle then moved briefly into conference administration, 1922-1923, as Education and Missionary Volunteer secretary with the Southern Idaho Conference. In this role he was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1923 at Caldwell, Idaho, by James W. Norwood and Herbert G. Thurston.⁷

Mission Service in China

In mid-1923 Lyle and Hazel Wilcox were appointed to China. Lyle served as principal of the Cantonese Intermediate School in Guangdong Province and doubled as the South China Union secretary for the Education and Missionary Volunteer departments.⁸ Hazel taught English and music.⁹ Enrollment at the school numbered approximately 150.¹⁰ Nine national teachers assisted with the classes. Many students earned their fees by working in the school industries, one being a lace-making enterprise employing young women.¹¹ During the earliest years of their term Lyle and Hazel experienced troubled political conditions in the province, banditry,

and piracy, which hampered progress to some degree but by the end of the decade peaceful conditions had returned.¹²

During this first term of mission service the couple had their second daughter, Bonibel, born in 1926, followed the next year by Wendell, their first and only son. Wendell Wilcox (1927-2012) later would serve as a missionary pastor and administrator in several Asian nations.¹³

The family departed China in late November 1928 for a furlough back in America.¹⁴ They remained an extra year while Lyle served as pastor of the church in Peoria, Illinois. They returned to China in 1931 in order for Lyle to take up the portfolios of Home Missions, Education, and Missionary Volunteers for the South China Mission.¹⁵ Hazel did secretarial work in the same mission office and taught music to private pupils.¹⁶ Financial depression during the early 1930s made it difficult for the Harvest Ingathering campaigns organized by Lyle. He reported that results virtually plateaued.¹⁷ His reports from the Education department spoke of 38 training institutions under his care.¹⁸

Wartime in the Philippines

After a furlough in America, Lyle and Hazel were appointed to the Philippine Union Mission in 1940. He was placed in charge of the Sabbath School and Home Missions departments and she worked in the business office.¹⁹ Within a year Lyle was elected president of the Philippine Union Mission.²⁰ Due to the Japanese occupation of the territory in 1942 during World War II, he could not fully function in this role, but for about two years he and other American missionaries were allowed a limited measure of freedom.²¹

Then, in July 1944, Lyle was imprisoned at the Los Baños Internment Camp south of Manila.²² Hazel and her invalid mother were shown some compassion and allowed to stay in their private home.²³ Lyle suffered hunger and severe privations along with more than 50 Seventh-day Adventists in a group of over 2,000 other civilian prisoners. Not until February 23, 1945, were they rescued by American paratroopers and Filipino guerrillas in a daring raid on the camp that killed the guards and ferried the prisoners to safety across a lake before Japanese reinforcements could arrive.²⁴

When peace returned Lyle and Hazel remained in the Philippines to gather energy. They continued their recuperation in America during 1946.²⁵

Service in Singapore

In 1947 Lyle and Hazel returned to mission service in the Far East for what would be a final, 12-year term before retirement. They were located in Singapore with the Malayan Union Mission. Lyle held various administrative roles in the departments of Education, Home Missions, Sabbath School and Temperance and for four years was one of two general field secretaries. He taught Bible for two years, 1956-1958, at Malayan Union Seminary. Lyle

completed his assignment as chaplain at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital, 1959.²⁶ Hazel served as editor of the *Messenger*, the periodical of the Southeast Asia Union Mission, 1958-1959, and was a valued worker in the office of the Singapore Bible Correspondence School.²⁷

Retirement

Lyle and Hazel Wilcox retired to the vicinity of St. Helena Sanitarium, California, Lyle serving as assistant chaplain for the institution while his health permitted. He passed away on April 19, 1970, in a convalescent home at Calistoga after a prolonged illness and was laid to rest in the St. Helena Cemetery.²⁸ Following Lyle's death Hazel lived with her daughter, Bonnibel Neufeld, in Ohio. Hazel passed away on August 9, 1987, and was returned to St. Helena for interment with Lyle.²⁹

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