

Cafferky, Allan Bryan (1920–1953)

MICHAEL CAFFERKY

Michael Cafferky, D.B.A. (Anderson University) is retired from the Ruth McKee Chair for Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. He taught undergraduate and graduate courses in management, business strategy, entrepreneurship, organizational theory, and business ethics. Dr. Cafferky has authored numerous journal articles and eight books, including *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective* (InterVarsity Press, 2015). He also served as editor of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business* for the Christian Business Faculty Association, 2016-2018.

Allan Bryan Cafferky was the first self-supporting Seventh-day Adventist medical missionary to the Cayman Islands.

Early Life (1920–1940)

Allan Bryan Cafferky was born on May 28, 1920, in Peace River, Alberta, Canada. He was the third of four children born to Bryan and Rosalba Cafferky (1887–1940; 1896–1984). Allan’s father was one of the “home children” who were sent from the Ellen Smyly Home for Ragged Boys in Dublin and other homes in Great Britain to Canada, arriving in 1902. Allan’s maternal ancestors were French Canadian Roman Catholics.

When Allan and his siblings were very young, his parents, needing to find work, placed the children for several months in an orphanage called the Home of the Friendless in Winnipeg, Manitoba. After being reunited, the family moved to the United States.

In 1925, while they were living in Cleveland, Ohio, a garbage truck accidentally struck four-year-old Allan while he was driving his small pedal car along the sidewalk. Allan escaped serious injury, but the traumatic experience left such an impression on him that he came to believe he had been saved to serve others as a missionary. Decades later his sister Kathleen wrote a story about the incident, published in *Our Little Friend* magazine.¹



Allan B. Cafferky, c. 1947.

Photo courtesy of the LLU Heritage Center digital archives.

A few years later, after the family moved to Regina, Saskatchewan, Allan began telling his friends at the Adventist primary school he attended that he wanted to become a medical missionary. As a high school student at Scott Collegiate Institute, he talked about this goal so often that his friends there called him "Doc."²

Professional Preparation (1940–1946)

After a year at Canadian Junior College (now Burman University) in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, Allan, with just \$72 in his pocket, headed for southern California in order to complete undergraduate studies at La Sierra College, preparatory to studying medicine at the College of Medical Evangelists (CME), later renamed Loma Linda University.³

While studying medicine at CME, Allan met and married Lois Vickery on December 21, 1943, in Redlands, California. They would have four children.⁴

After his basic medical science training at the Loma Linda campus, Allan completed his clinical training at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles in May 1945. This was followed by a nine-month internship at Edward W. Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, Michigan. When the General Conference (GC) conducted its 1945 Annual Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Cafferky and his wife, Lois, along with two other physicians and their wives, drove the 65 miles from Lansing to attend Sabbath services, even though gasoline was still being rationed because of World War II. While there, Dr. Cafferky met a church administrator who encouraged him toward fulfilling his dreams of engaging in medical missionary service.

After moving back to California following the hospital internship, Allan met with Dr. Clifford R. Anderson, the medical secretary for the Inter-American Division, who was recruiting physicians to establish medical missions. This contact led to a call from the Inter-American Division for Dr. Cafferky to serve as a staff physician at Andrews Memorial Hospital in Kingston, Jamaica, beginning in August 1946.⁵ Subsequently, however, plans for his work were adjusted, and for the time being, Dr. Cafferky remained in California practicing medicine to support his family while preparing for mission service. On December 9, 1946, the General Conference Committee approved the appointment of Dr. Cafferky for self-supporting medical missionary work in the Cayman Islands. This authorization included six months of financial support, and the General Conference also approved a loan to purchase medical equipment needed for his work.⁶ He was now slated to begin service in George Town, Grand Cayman, on March 1, 1947.

Soon after the GC approval, however, Dr. Cafferky was diagnosed with cancer of the colon and hospitalized on December 23, 1946, for major surgery.⁷ This setback delayed but did not put an end to his prospective mission service. After Allan's recovery, he and Lois, with their children, Allan and Rosemary, set out on May 14, 1947, for Cayman by way of Kingston, Jamaica. In Kingston Dr. Cafferky attended an orientation at Andrews Memorial Hospital, and then, by the middle of June 1947, the family finally arrived in George Town, Grand Cayman.

Medical Mission Clinic in Cayman (1947–1948)

Soon after their arrival, Dr. Cafferky reported that the work was going well.⁸ The U.S. Navy allowed him to use one of the small buildings on the Navy base that had been used for radio communication.⁹ Even though his surgical instruments had not arrived yet, he was busy treating patients, who appreciated his work. His purpose, he wrote, was to put “our work before the native people.”¹⁰

Soon Dr. Cafferky's surgical instruments arrived, and he added surgery to the scope of services he provided. He treated patients who came to the Health Centre in George Town, but also called on people at other parts of the island. Dr. Cafferky made excursions by car into the east end of the island, taking with him sterile instruments to perform surgeries for people who were too ill to make the trip to George Town. He also traveled by boat to Cayman Brac island to provide care for patients.

Seven months after arriving in Grand Cayman, he wrote to his mentor at CME, Dr. Harold Shryock, about the success of the work and of his dream to establish a “small institution” in George Town. Serving with him were a midwife and a nurse who administered anesthetic. “How glad I am to be a graduate of CME,” he wrote. “During my high school days in Canada I prayed daily that I could become a medical missionary.” Regarding his future outlook, he added, “My plans are to stay here a total of three years, then return to specialize in surgery and treatment of malignant tumors.”¹¹

Although he was a self-supporting physician and needed to support his growing family, Dr. Cafferky was not unmindful of the needs of the poor on the island. During his first nine months he provided care during nearly 2,500 office visits, performed more than 100 surgeries, and treated 372 patients entirely without charge and another 242 on a partial charity basis. Ninety percent of his patients were “not of the Seventh-day Adventist faith.” He also served the church as the Medical Department secretary of the Grand Cayman Mission.¹²

Resistance to Dr. Cafferky's work developed on the part of a local government-paid doctor who, according to talk circulating among the patients, was jealous of Cafferky's popularity. Tariffs increased on all medicines that Dr. Cafferky had ordered to be sent to the island. Patients had a difficult choice: Either they could get their care from the government-paid physician or pay higher costs for medicines and get their care from Dr. Cafferky. Some of Dr. Cafferky's medical school classmates contributed money to help pay for medicines. Allan reported to them optimistically that though he wasn't making any money in his work, he made enough to pay the family's living expenses. Eventually, though, the financial pressure brought Cafferky to the point where he could no longer even support his family. Late in 1948 he decided they should move back to Jamaica.¹³

Dr. Cafferky's growing concerns about his own health contributed to the decision to move.¹⁴ In September of 1948 the British West Indies *Visitor* reported: “Dr. A. B. Cafferky, our doctor in the Cayman Islands for the past year, has recently accepted a call from the Andrews Memorial Hospital to connect with their staff on a part-time basis. For health reasons and because of circumstances in the Cayman Islands at this time Doctor and Mrs.

Cafferky have responded to this call."¹⁵

Soon after Allan arrived in Kingston he sent a summary of his Cayman experience to the CME Alumni Association: "In Cayman I operated a small hospital and outpatient clinic on a self-supporting basis. . . . We didn't make any money, but paid our way and had good experiences."¹⁶

In spite of the good results, he believed he should take the family back to the United States, at least temporarily. But he also still believed that he would one day return to the Caribbean to serve as a medical missionary. On January 9, 1949, the Inter-American Division executive committee agreed to assist the Cafferkys' return to the United States.¹⁷

Final Years in the United States (1949–1953)

Upon his return to the United States early in 1949, Dr. Cafferky joined Walter Seibly, M.D., in medical practice in Clarkston, Washington. Four years later, on June 8, 1953, he wrote Esther V. Hackman, executive secretary of the CME Alumni Association, alerting her to the fact that he wanted to sell his medical practice and move back to the British West Indies to engage again in self-supporting medical mission service.¹⁸

Later in the summer of 1953 Dr. Cafferky flew to the Bahamas and Jamaica for the purpose of evaluating the prospects for fulfilling his dream.¹⁹ During that trip he became ill and called his wife to meet him in Jamaica for the trip home. In September 1953 Allan suffered a grand mal seizure and was hospitalized from then until his death on December 31, 1953, at White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. The cancer had metastasized and spread to his spine and brain.

Contribution

Because of the brevity of his life, the impact of the medical mission work in Cayman Islands was not as great as Dr. Cafferky had envisioned. The hospital he envisioned that might be built in Cayman was never established in his lifetime. Yet his influence on Cayman was felt for a number of years following his service.

SOURCES

Anderson, C. R. "News of Our Medical Work." *British West Indies Visitor*, May 1948.

Cafferky, A. B. Letter. *CME Alumni Association Journal*, March 1949.

Cafferky, Allan B. Allan B. Cafferky to Esther V. Hackman, CME Alumni Association. June 8, 1953. Copy in author's possession.

———. Allan B. Cafferky to Harold S. Shryock, M.D. January 12, 1948. Copy in author's possession.

———. News item. *CME Alumni Association Journal*, April 1948.

Crofoot, K. S. "Cayman Islands Mission News Notes." *British West Indies Visitor*, September 1947.

Dick, E. D. Interoffice Memorandum to the Treasury, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. December 9, 1946. Copy in author's possession.

"Dr. Allan B. Cafferky at Georgetown, B.W.I." *Medical Evangelist*, August 1, 1947.

"Dr. Allan B. Cafferky obituary." North Pacific Union *Gleaner*, February 22, 1954.

General Conference Committee. December 9, 1946. General Conference Archives.

"Here and There Over the Union." *British West Indies Visitor*, September 1948.

"Inter-American Division." *Review and Herald*, August 28, 1947.

Inter-American Division Executive Committee minutes. April 3, 1946, and January 9, 1949.

James, E. "People, Places, Projects." *Inter-American Division Messenger*, July-August 1947.

Janzen, M.D., J. "Description of Operation—Post Operative Notes." Los Angeles: White Memorial Hospital, December 26, 1946. Copy in author's possession.

Taylor, Kathleen. "Why God Saved Alfred." *Our Little Friend*, April 30, 1954.

"Report of the Committee on Distribution of Labor." *ARH*, June 16, 1946.

U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration, and Naturalization Service, Form 543. Allan B. Cafferky Border Crossing. October 2, 1940. Eastport, Idaho.

NOTES

1. Kathleen Taylor, "Why God Saved Alfred," *Our Little Friend*, April 30, 1954, 18.
2. Edwin A. Cafferky, interview by author, College Place, Washington, April 20, 1999.
3. U.S. Department of Labor, Immigration, and Naturalization Service, Form 543, Allan B. Cafferky Border Crossing, October 2, 1940, Eastport, Idaho.
4. "Dr. Allan B. Cafferky obituary," North Pacific Union *Gleaner*, February 22, 1954, 11.
5. Inter-American Division Executive Committee minutes, April 3, 1946; "Report of the Committee on Distribution of Labor," *Review and Herald*, June 16, 1946, 216.

6. E. D. Dick, Interoffice Memorandum to the Treasury, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, December 9, 1946, copy in author's possession; General Conference Committee, December 9, 1946, 331, General Conference Archives.
7. J. Janzen, M.D., "Description of Operation— Post Operative Notes" (Los Angeles: White Memorial Hospital, December 26, 1946), copy in author's possession.
8. E. James, "People, places, projects," *Inter-American Division Messenger*, July-August 1947, 5; "Inter-American Division," *ARH*, August 28, 1947, 25.
9. K. S. Crofoot, "Cayman Islands Mission News Notes," *British West Indies Visitor*, September 1947, 6.
10. "Dr. Allan B. Cafferky at Georgetown, B.W.I.," *Medical Evangelist*, August 1, 1947, 1-2.
11. Allan B. Cafferky, Allan B. Cafferky to Harold S. Shryock, M.D., January 12, 1948, copy in author's possession; Allan B. Cafferky, news item, *CME Alumni Association Journal*, April 1948.
12. C. R. Anderson, "News of Our Medical Work," *British West Indies Visitor*, May 1948, 5.
13. Orville Schneider, interview by author, Loma Linda, California, March 24, 2004; Lois Cafferky, interview by author, June 21, 1999, Spokane, Washington.
14. Edwin A. Cafferky interview.
15. "Here and There Over the Union," *British West Indies Visitor*, September 1948, 2.
16. A. B. Cafferky, letter, *CME Alumni Association Journal*, March 1949.
17. Inter-American Division Executive Committee minutes, January 9, 1949.
18. Allan B. Cafferky, Allan B. Cafferky to Esther V. Hackman, CME Alumni Association. June 8, 1953. Copy in author's possession.
19. Lois Cafferky, interview.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000