



Ivan Duke Higgins family.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Higgins, Ivan Duke (1917–1997)

CHERYL CHRISTO HOWSON

Cheryl Christo Howson earned a graduate diploma in computer aided interior designing at the Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture for Women in Pune, India. She co-founded an interior design company in Sri Lanka and worked as a copywriter. She contributed to the morning devotional published by Women's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the *Shepherdess International Journal* magazine, and the *Adventist Review*. She has written several plays. Currently (2020), she lives in Hosur, India while preparing for a piano exam.

Ivan Duke Higgins, a college professor and administrator, who served the Seventh-day Adventist church with distinction in four continents: Asia, Africa, Australia and North America.

Early Life

Ivan Duke Higgins was born July 2, 1917 in Howe, Idaho, the United States.¹ His parents Marcus Luther Higgins (1884-1967)² and Winona S. Higgins (1886-1963)³ had two other sons, Marcus H. and Andrew Ellsworth. The latter served as a pastor for a short while and died at the age of 30. The Higginses also had one daughter, Leota Chinnock.⁴ Growing up in an Adventist home, Ivan was baptized at the age of thirteen. Ivan completed B.A. degree at Pacific Union College with a major in Bible and a minor in chemistry, and later completed M.A. in education at the same institution.⁵ While at college Ivan met Eileen Nita Hare, a secretarial student,⁶ and daughter of Agnes T. and Eric B. Hare,⁷ pioneer missionaries to Burma.

Eileen and Ivan were married May 14, 1940. Barely a few months later, the couple sailed to India as missionaries. They had two children: Ivaleen Winona born in India,⁸ and Shirlee Mareen born in Angola.⁹

Tragedy struck the Higgins family in 1947 in the midst of their furlough from India. While driving from Texas to Washington, D.C., to visit Eileen's parents, a tragic car accident resulted in Eileen's death.¹⁰ Ivan and the two girls miraculously survived.¹¹

Later that year Ivan married Phyllis Charlotte Borrowdale.¹² Born in Fresno, California, on September 9, 1918, Phyllis was a child of Adventism. Her parents, Pastor and Mrs. R. J. Borrowdale, had served as missionaries for 34 years in Burma (Myanmar). Phyllis completed secondary education at Vincent Hill School in Mussorie, India, and later attended Pacific Union College where she obtained her B. A. with a major in secretarial science and minors in Bible and home economics.¹³ The couple had two children both born in India: Jennifer Leota born in Poona (Pune) on August 26, 1949 and Robert Gilmore born in Ranchi, on March 1, 1952.¹⁴

Career and Ministry

Ivan Higgins's denominational service began in 1940 when he left the United States with his first wife Eileen to be missionaries in India in Southern Asia Division.¹⁵ While engaged in studying Tamil language full time, Higgins maintained a full schedule of giving Bible studies and conducting devotional services.¹⁶ At the conclusion of the language study, Higgins was appointed principal of Spicer Junior College (Spicer Adventist University) in Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore. His service there, however, was cut short in February 1942, when the government took over the school buildings for war (World War II) purposes.¹⁷

The Higgins family spent the war years in Africa, where Ivan served as the principal of the Angola Training School.¹⁸ In March 1943, he was appointed director of the Missao Adventista, Lepi, Angola, Portuguese West Africa.¹⁹ At the conclusion of the war, the family returned to India where both Ivan and Eileen served as teachers at Vincent Hill School, Mussoorie, for two years until their furlough in February 27, 1947.²⁰ While on furlough the family experienced the tragic death of Eileen Higgins.²¹

Death and tragedy were not to interrupt the Higgins family's devotion to mission and ministry. God had a different charter to Ivan Higgins and Phyllis Higgins whom he married on April 2, 1948.²² The couple left for Burma (Myanmar), where he served as the principal of the Union Training School.²³ After one year in Burma, the family moved to India. For the next six years Higgins served as the president of Spicer Missionary College (Spicer Adventist University), Poona (Pune).²⁴ The five years of leadership Higgins provided at the Southern Asia Division's premiere institution were known for academic enhancement, administrative stability, and speedy growth. In December 1951, Higgins was ordained to the gospel ministry.²⁵

The family moved back to the United States in April 1954 and joined the staff at Pacific Union College, California, where Higgins served for 4 years as teacher, Dean and Assistant Registrar.²⁶ He also served as liaison officer to enable the affiliation of Australasian Missionary College (Avondale College) with PUC. The Higgins family eventually moved to Australia ²⁷ where, Pastor Higgins served for a short while as registrar and teacher at Avondale College.

Back in the United States on furlough, Higgins undertook 3 years of graduate study at the University of Southern California and graduated in 1963 with a doctoral degree in education. After this, Avondale College invited Dr. Higgins to return as the Academic Dean. After serving in Australia for the next four years,²⁸ the family moved to India in 1967 to serve as the principal of Vincent Hill School in Mussoorie. Their children Robert and Jennifer also returned to India and enrolled at Vincent Hill.²⁹

In 1969 Dr. Higgins was asked to serve as the acting president of the Northwestern India Union, and later as its president. In December 1970 the family moved to Bangalore where he served as the president of South India Union for a year and five months.³⁰ In 1972, the family returned permanently to the U.S.A.³¹ and joined the Canadian Union College with Dr. Higgins serving as academic dean and registrar, and Mrs. Higgins working as a teacher and office secretary. In 1976 Dr. Higgins was appointed as vice-president for Administration and Instruction.³²

Later life

In 1990 Dr. Higgins along with two former faculty members of Canadian Union College were awarded the newly-established Emeritus Faculty Award.³³ Dr. Higgins passed away on October 5, 1997 at McMinnville, Oregon.³⁴ He was buried in Evergreen Memorial Park in McMinnville, Yamhill, Oregon, United States. His wife, Phyllis, passed away in 2003 and was buried beside him.³⁵

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