

# Adair, George Ernest (1895–1969)

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## 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.

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George Adair provided 37 years of sound management in Sanitarium Health Food Company and Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital in the Australasian Union Conference, ensuring the viability of these institutions in both the Depression and the years of World War II.

## Early Life and Marriage

George Ernest Adair was born in Fairfield, a suburb of Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, in 1895. In the same year, his parents, John and Bessie, moved to Charters Towers, where they met the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Norwegians Lewis and Otto Anderson and a colporteur, Thomas Whittle. These friends influenced the Adairs to be baptized in 1895. They were among the earliest converts in the colony of Queensland.<sup>1</sup>

About the turn of the century, the Adair family migrated to Gisborne, New Zealand. John, a bricklayer, was seeking work. George had two older sisters, an older brother, and a younger brother, Reg. His older brother, Archie, was a member of the Anzac forces.<sup>2</sup> George received his elementary and high school education in Gisborne and then worked as a plumber for eight years. During that time, in February 1916, George was baptized.<sup>3</sup>



George Ernest Adair

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook. From the collection of Peter Adair, Sydney, NSW.

George wed Florence Reynolds in 1918. They enjoyed a happy, lifelong marriage. They were the first couple to be married in the Wellington Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

## Career

George left plumbing and began work as a storeman in the Wellington branch of the Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) in February 1918. Within six months, he was given managerial responsibilities, first at Wellington and then at Auckland, despite the fact he had no certified training in accountancy or the food industry.<sup>5</sup>

Natural management skills brought further responsibilities. In 1924 he was appointed as assistant manager of the Christchurch SHF factory together with the oversight of all New Zealand (NZ) retail outlets. This led to his promotion as general manager of all SHF business in NZ.<sup>6</sup> With it came the ex officio position on the South New Zealand Conference executive committee.<sup>7</sup>

In 1930 George moved to the SHF head office in Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia. There he began as an assistant secretary, with special duties as sales and advertising manager. He then progressed to the office of associate secretary and, later, general secretary.<sup>8</sup> This last position was the pinnacle of SHF management and carried an ex officio position on the executive committee of the Australasian Union Conference.<sup>9</sup>

At the September 1941 Australasian Union Conference Session, George was appointed to transfer across the road to the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital to work as house manager.<sup>10</sup> After twenty-four years with the SHF, he was to carry administrative responsibilities in this medical institution through the difficult war years. In 1942 General Douglas MacArthur proposed to take over the hospital for military purposes. His plans prompted many prayers for divine intervention, and eventually, the threat dissipated.<sup>11</sup>

When the war was over, George was reappointed to the health food industry as manager and secretary of Granose Foods in Hertfordshire, England. This assignment was also difficult because of the scarcity of raw materials being acute under postwar conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to Australia, George accepted lesser responsibilities in 1952 as manager of the Carmel SHF factory, Western Australia.<sup>13</sup> It was a bonus that he and Florence could live near their son, Keith, who was also employed by the SHF. (Their other son, Desmond, worked as a carpenter). As a member of the local Bickley Seventh-day Adventist Church, George took an active part as chairman of the nominating committee and the building committee.<sup>14</sup> Two years later he transferred to the management of the Perth SHF retail shop in Central Arcade and its café in Hay Street in addition to the Perth Wholesale Branch.<sup>15</sup> This role occupied a further two years, and all the time George continued to preach at Perth churches as he had done at Bickley.

George's final assignment was the management of the SHF café in Hunter Street, Sydney, from 1956 to January 1960.<sup>16</sup>

## Later Years and Legacy

After a prolonged illness, George passed away on July 13, 1969, in the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital.<sup>17</sup> He had given 37 years of continuous service.

During the depression of the 1930s, George provided sterling leadership in the health food business, from which profits were directed toward mission projects.<sup>18</sup> Later, his steady business hand was also evident in crises at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital and Granose Foods.

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### NOTES

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2. Peter Adair, email message to Milton Hook, July 7, 2016.
3. W. L. Kilroy, "An Appreciation of George Ernest Adair," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 11, 1969, 14.
4. Ibid.
5. "Personalities: G. E. Adair," *Sanco News* 1, no. 1 (March 1939): 5.
6. Ibid.
7. E.g., "New Zealand, South Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 203.
8. "Personalities: G. E. Adair," 5.
9. E.g., "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 70.
10. "Nominations, Appointments, and Transfers," *Australasian Record*, October 6, 1941, 8.
11. Laurence Gilmore, "The Great Deliverance of 1942," *Adventist Heritage* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 17.
12. E.g., "Food Companies," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 271.
13. "Food Companies," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 277.
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