

# Casebeer, Homer David (1886–1948)

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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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Homer Casebeer served as a missionary in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic prior to 25 years as director of the Spanish Division in the Bureau of Home Missions of the General Conference.

## Early Years

Homer Casebeer was born in Hay Springs, Nebraska, to James and Martha Loughridge Casebeer on June 26, 1886. There were four children in their family:

Albert Loughridge (1879-1897), George William

(1882-1966), Homer David (1886-1948) and Carlotta “Lottie” Ellen (1901-1955).<sup>1</sup> Homer’s father was of Dutch-Scottish descent. His mother also had some Scottish heritage.<sup>2</sup> When Homer was an infant his family moved to Wyoming and, in 1890, to Boise, Idaho. Both parents were schoolteachers and Homer’s elementary classes were under their tutelage.<sup>3</sup>

Homer attended Walla Walla College (1901-1903), Healdsburg College (1904-1905) and again at Walla Walla College (1905-1907). He paid his tuition fees by working in the various college industries such as broom-making, carpentry, the mechanics shop and the gardening department. In the summers of 1905 and 1906 he earned scholarships for college tuition by canvassing Adventist literature door to door.<sup>4</sup> On October 8, 1906, he married Edith Wyoming Smith, fellow canvasser and a young woman he had grown up with in Boise. The couple would



H. D. Casebeer

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

have two daughters: Alice Loughridge (b. 1907) and Helen Kathleen (b. 1910).<sup>5</sup>

Following his marriage Homer taught at the Boise church school, a multi-grade room of 32 students. He then became colporteur leader for the Southern Idaho Conference, 1911-1912, and was associated with F. D. Wagner in evangelistic work, 1913-1914. Casebeer then chose to improve his education and graduated in 1916 at Pacific Union College, completing a B.A. degree and the Advanced Ministerial course.<sup>6</sup>

## Caribbean Mission Service

George Casebeer, his older brother, began mission service in South America in 1905, and in 1916, Homer and Edith Casebeer, too, were appointed to a Spanish-speaking mission field, albeit in the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> They began work in Puerto Rico, building up a church at Cayey, a station in the central hills of the island. While still under the auspices of the Puerto Rico Mission, Casebeer transferred to the Dominican Republic in 1918 to pioneer another church in the capital, Santo Domingo.<sup>8</sup> With the assistance of another evangelist, Francisco Megrant, converts were won and a church organized.<sup>9</sup>

Casebeer was ordained to gospel ministry in 1919 in Idaho while on furlough. He returned to the mission field as director of the Puerto Rico Mission, 1919-1921, the area of responsibility including the Dominican Republic and the British Virgin Islands.<sup>10</sup>

## Bureau of Home Missions

Casebeer ministered briefly in Mexico in 1921 en route to begin his new appointment as director of the Spanish Division of the Bureau of Home Missions. This was a General Conference entity, with an office set up in Glendale, California, in close proximity to the Pacific Union Conference headquarters.<sup>11</sup> The position proved to be the defining role of his church career. Edith taught Bible and Spanish at Glendale Academy, 1921-1922, and Spanish at Southern California Junior College in Riverside for the last half of 1928.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of the Spanish-speaking people in the United States at the time were Mexicans. Their communities stretched from New York city, down along the southern states and as far north as San Francisco on the west coast. By 1930 an estimated 1400 converts were organized into churches.<sup>13</sup> Casebeer led from the front, conducting tent crusades to attract the crowds.<sup>14</sup>

In October 1932 Casebeer accepted a call back into foreign mission service as president of the Chile Conference headquartered in Santiago, Chile.<sup>15</sup> After just under two years in South America, he returned to the United States in 1934, served briefly in the Illinois Conference and then resumed his efforts for the Spanish-speaking people under the aegis of the Bureau of Home Missions. His field of evangelistic endeavor grew wider to include Portuguese-speakers and American Indians or First Nations.<sup>16</sup> Casebeer reported to the General Conference that during the three-year period, 1938-1940, conversions numbered 520 Spanish, 143 Portuguese and 99

American Indians.<sup>17</sup>

Nurture of church members among the First Nations took Casebeer, among other places, to the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, Canada. A group belonging mainly to the Mohawk nation worshipped regularly in a church building on that reserve.<sup>18</sup> In 1945 he made an extensive trip among the Sioux members scattered through the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota. He found the family of Jake Two Bulls at Mule Creek, Ed Two Bulls and family at Red Shirt Table, John Two Bulls and family near Oglala, Matthew Two Bulls and family at Pine Ridge and the Kills Right family at Porcupine. All these folk were faithful church members often isolated from fellow believers and deeply appreciative of his visit.<sup>19</sup>

Casebeer had been a prime mover in building up the Spanish-American Training School that opened in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1920, just before he began his work with the Bureau of Home Missions. This school prepared Spanish-speaking young people for gospel service as teachers, Bible instructors, pastors, and evangelists. In his second stint leading the North American Spanish work, Casebeer vigorously advocated for denominational funding of a secondary school that, though long-delayed, finally became a reality in 1942. Located just north of Albuquerque, New Mexico, it was first known as the Spanish-American Seminary, then renamed Sandia View Academy in 1953.<sup>20</sup>

The numbers of Spanish-speaking converts in the United States grew rapidly. Casebeer initiated camp meetings exclusively for their groups, the first being in Rio Grande Valley, Texas, in 1944. His brother, George, was stationed in San Antonio, conducting evangelistic campaigns among the Spanish.<sup>21</sup> The first Spanish camp meeting in New Mexico also took place in 1944 on the campus of the Spanish-American Seminary. Immediately following this gathering Homer travelled north to attend a similar meeting at Monte Vista, Colorado.<sup>22</sup>

## Final Years

In the summer of 1946 Casebeer retired after 40 years service. He rested for a year and then accepted leadership in the Los Angeles Spanish church. He ministered there for only twelve months before he passed away on July 1, 1948. Edith and their two married daughters, Alice Enos and Helen Weaver, were left to mourn.<sup>23</sup> He was interred in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California.<sup>24</sup> Edith was blessed with many more years, passing away on January 28, 1980, at the age of 93. She was laid to rest alongside Homer.<sup>25</sup> She is best remembered for her many articles, poems and children's stories published in church periodicals.<sup>26</sup>

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## NOTES

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7. J.W. Westphal, "A Brief History of Our Work in Ecuador," *ARH*, April 8, 1915, 17; D.D. Fitch, "Santo Domingo," *ARH*, June 20, 1918, 11.
8. W.A. Spicer, "Seen and Heard in Porto Rico," *ARH*, January 31, 1918, 17.
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10. Casebeer Biographical Information Blank, August 15, 1932, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114883, GCA.
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Casebeer's office at 307 N. Howard Street was about a half-mile from the Pacific Union office at 603 E. Broadway, and he received mail at the union's post office box.
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14. P. E. Brodersen, "Items of Progress," *ARH*, September 28, 1922, 21.
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21. Homer D. Casebeer, "Spanish Camp Meetings," *ARH*, August 10, 1944, 20.
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26. See, for example, Edith Wyoming Casebeer, "Recognizing Christ," *ARH*, January 15, 1931, 5.

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