

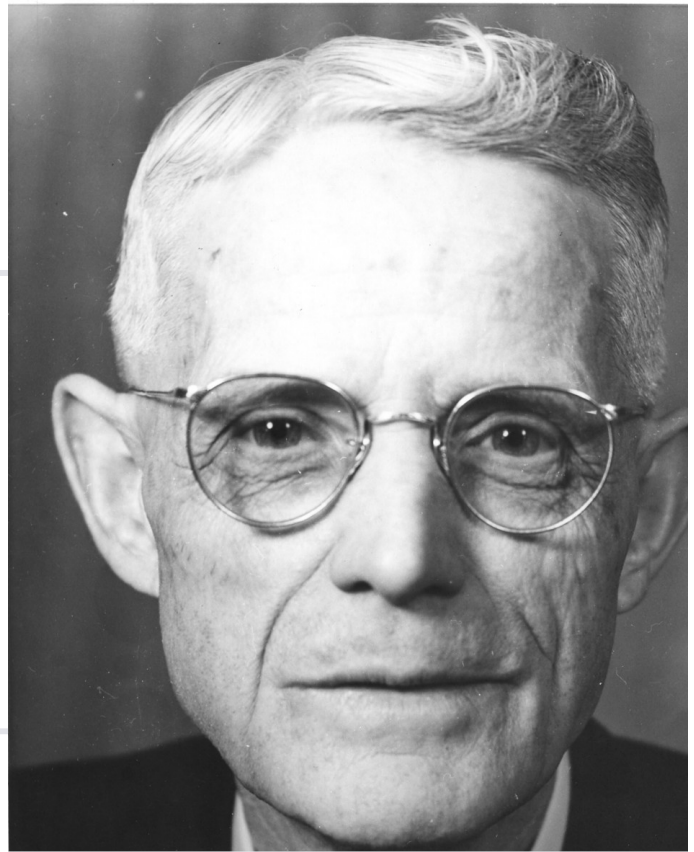
# Stratford, Sydney

## Victor (1890–1966)

### ROBERT I. STRATFORD

Robert I. Stratford graduated with diploma in accounting and took up an appointment with Sanitarium Health Food Company in Tasmania. In 1969 he became the accountant of the Greater Sydney Conference. From 1971-1973 he was the accountant and assistant auditor of the Trans Tasman Union Conference followed by secretary-treasurer of the Fiji Mission. Stratford served in Melbourne as the Book and Bible House manager until 1980. From 1980 to 1990 he was the secretary-treasurer and stewardship secretary of the Tasmanian Conference (F.C.P.A.). In 1990 he became part of the General Conference Auditing Service where he served until retirement in 2004.

Sydney Victor Stratford was an office secretary, sales manager, home missions leader, business teacher, youth leader, and union conference secretary. He spent his career in the service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australasia.



Sydney Victor Stratford

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

## Early Life

Sydney Victor Stratford was born the fourth of six children in Adelaide, SA, on January 4, 1890.<sup>1</sup> As a six-year-old he wondered why the corner store was always closed on a Saturday and the owners' primary school children left school early each Friday in wintertime.<sup>2</sup> Six years later Stratford stumbled across what looked like a circus tent on the Kensington Oval, near his Adelaide home in the suburb of Norwood.<sup>3</sup> There were numerous smaller tents with Bibles on tables and people singing in the big tent. The billboard, "The Home of the Saved," attracted his attention, so he and his mother and sister came back that evening and for the following meetings. They became convicted of the second coming of Christ and the Sabbath by the preaching of E. W. Farnsworth,<sup>4</sup> a visiting evangelist and president of the Australasian Union Conference. Stratford wrote, "The first hymn I recollect hearing was 'Oh, There'll Be Joy When the Work Is Done.' But when Farnsworth preached, I was thrilled through and through. There was a real ring about it. He expounded the Word with great power. He made the new earth so real and the eternal kingdom a place so to be desired that the influence of that sermon has never left me."<sup>5</sup>

## Years of Service

In 1905 Victor Stratford graduated from the Adelaide Commercial College as *dux* of the class with a shorthand speed of 150 words per minute and with a gold medal in bookkeeping and accounting. He was also awarded a scholarship, which he relinquished.<sup>6</sup> That same year he accepted an invitation to be the office secretary and an assistant to R. H. Constandt, then secretary-treasurer and acting president of the South Australian Conference and Tract Society.<sup>7</sup>

In March 1906 Stratford moved to Warburton, VIC, to be the office assistant to W. D. Salisbury, the manager of the newly formed Signs Publishing Company.<sup>8</sup> Of that time Stratford recalled: "In those days forty-nine years ago, we really did believe that Jesus was coming very, very soon. I helped our men clear their land of bush, and we slid the enormous logs down into one of the gullies. We didn't need them; the Lord was coming soon."<sup>9</sup>

In 1907 Stratford moved into the Book and Periodical Department of the Signs Publishing Company, where he remained until 1910.<sup>10</sup> Then from March 1910 to September 1913 Stratford worked initially in Burwood, Sydney, NSW, at the Australasian Union Conference as the assistant to the president, J. E. Fulton, and as assistant treasurer to C. H. Pretyman. He moved to Wahroonga when the union office moved there six months later.<sup>11</sup>

Stratford's association with John Fulton made a profound impression on his life and work ethic. He wrote, "I thank Heaven for the comradeship of such a man of God. He was the most lovable man I ever met."<sup>12</sup>

In January 1912 Victor Stratford married Agnes Templeton Wallace, daughter of John Wallace, an engineer of the Signs Publishing Company.<sup>13</sup> As a child Agnes attended the very first Adventist camp meeting in Australia at Brighton, VIC, and was an early pupil at the first Adventist school at North Fitzroy, VIC.<sup>14</sup> As a 15-year-old Agnes joined the Bible Echo Publishing house and was the first girl to transfer to the Signs Publishing Company.<sup>15</sup> Three children were born to the family: Fairley Marion (Quick), on January 23, 1914; Ian Roy, on February 20, 1916; and Alice Orma (Dawson), on March 20, 1925.<sup>16</sup>

From 1913 to September 1915 Stratford served the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference as secretary-treasurer.<sup>17</sup> Then he was back in Warburton from 1915 to the end of 1919.<sup>18</sup> During these war years, when supplies and technical support were in short supply, Stratford was asked to be the secretary to the Signs Publishing Company, and the Book and Periodicals manager.<sup>19</sup>

In 1919 Stratford responded to an invitation from the Australasian Union Conference to be the Home Missions secretary for the union, with the added responsibility of secretary to the union the following year.<sup>20</sup> Stratford maintained both of these responsibilities until February 1924, when an urgent need for a business lecturer at the Australasian Missionary College necessitated the release of Stratford to that position.<sup>21</sup> He remained at the college until the end of 1930. During that time Stratford involved himself with the students in many missionary outreach activities and musical concerts.<sup>22</sup>

His association with the students led to his appointment as Youth secretary of the Australian Union Conference until 1936.<sup>23</sup> He was concurrently the assistant secretary of the union during that time.<sup>24</sup> In 1936 he was appointed as the Home Missions secretary, a portfolio he retained until 1938.<sup>25</sup> On October 6, 1932, Stratford had been ordained to gospel ministry at the Concord (NSW) camp meeting.<sup>26</sup> During these years Stratford traveled extensively by rail and ship across the continent and to the far reaches of the Australasian Union territory of the South Pacific, developing Missionary Volunteer societies. On one occasion while visiting camp meetings and youth conventions in the North Queensland region he visited the indigenous school Monamona Mission, west of Cairns, QLD. As a pianist and a tenor soloist he taught the students the song "Smile, Smile, Smile."<sup>27</sup>

On most trips he carried a full-sized typewriter with a folding table.<sup>28</sup> He was also equipped with a pencil, a notepad, and a working knowledge of shorthand, so there was not much that escaped his recordkeeping. From 1938 to 1941 Stratford was assistant secretary, then secretary, of the Australasian Union Conference.<sup>29</sup> He remained in this role until 1945 during World War II.<sup>30</sup> In addition, he edited the *Australasian Record* from 1941 to 1943.<sup>31</sup> During those war years Stratford kept careful account of the status of the Church's mission vessels and other Church assets. His personal files included typewritten transcripts of letters written by expatriates escaping from mission stations or, later, returning to mission stations when hostilities had ceased. Included were transcripts of correspondence from indigenous workers acting as caretakers of the Church's assets. These files are at the South Pacific Division Archives.<sup>32</sup>

In March 1945 Agnes, Stratford's wife of 33 years, died after a long illness.<sup>33</sup>

## Final Years of Service and Retirement

After the war years Stratford continued serving as associate secretary of the Australasian Union Conference/Australasian Inter-Union Conference (1948) until June 1952.<sup>34</sup> During this time Stratford married Rhoda Snow in August 1947.<sup>35</sup> She was the sister-in-law of Thomas J. Bradley.<sup>36</sup> In 1952 he retired after 47 years of denominational service.<sup>37</sup>

Stratford with Rhoda set up home at Long Jetty, NSW, where he supported the local Seventh-day Adventist church at the Entrance.<sup>38</sup> Sydney Victor Stratford died on February 8, 1966, after a short illness.<sup>39</sup> Rhoda died in 1997, age 96.<sup>40</sup>

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