

Vince, Ronald Arthur (1917–2009)

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.

Ronald Arthur Vince was a minister and church administrator in England and youth leader in the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Early Life and Education

Ronald Arthur Vince was born at Wood Green, a northern suburb of Greater London, on March 18, 1917.¹ His parents were Christopher and Sarah Henrietta (Moolenaar) Vince. Sarah was of Dutch

heritage. Prior to his marriage Christopher had united with the first colporteurs to work in England² During their first years of marriage Christopher and Sara had sailed to America, set up home in Battle Creek and worked in the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Their three eldest children, Harold (b.1902), Lillian Martha (b.1905) and Leonard Daniel (b.1907) were born in Battle Creek.³ Sadly, Harold, died of an intestinal disease when only two years old.⁴ Christopher took his family back to England about 1908. Five more children were born in England: Raymond Christopher (b.1908), Horace John (b.1910), Olive May (b.1913), Grace Hilda (b.1915) and Ronald Arthur (b.1917)⁵



Ronald Vince

Photo courtesy of Angela (Vince) Saunders.

For his academy level education Ronald attended the Watford Grammar School, excelling in Latin.⁶ His eldest brother, Leonard, was serving as a minister in the South England Conference at the time⁷ and Ronald chose to prepare himself for a similar career. He entered Newbold Missionary College (now Newbold College of Higher Education) and graduated from the Ministerial Course in 1937.⁸

Ministry

Public evangelism in the South England Conference occupied Ronald during his time as an intern. He was appointed to assist Elders J. M. Howard and M. J. Mustard, chiefly in Colchester, Essex.⁹ By 1940 he was appointed to be the district leader of evangelism in the Gloucester/Cheltenham region, Gloucestershire.¹⁰ In 1942 and 1943 he conducted a successful crusade in Luton, Bedfordshire.¹¹ During 1944 and early 1945 Ronald was in the unenviable situation of ministering in the northern suburbs of London at the time of the German Blitz with their V-1 and V-2 rockets. In commemoration of the 1844 Great Disappointment a centenary day of fellowship was held in the Holloway Advent Church, Ronald leading the song service in his rich baritone voice.¹² He was also the momentum behind the Edmonton group of believers establishing themselves in their own dedicated house of worship in 1945.¹³

In his final year of ministerial studies Ronald had met a fellow student from Sweden, Rosa Birgit Christiane Johanson, better known as Kitty. With the outbreak of World War she had returned home to Stockholm and trained as a nurse. A courtship by frequent letters continued between them throughout the War years and, finally, after a Jacob-like wait of seven years they were married in the Stanborough Park Church on December 30, 1945. The British Union Conference president, Elder Harry Lowe, performed the ceremony.¹⁴

With Kitty's training as a nurse Ronald caught a vision of themselves as medical missionaries and began studying medicine at Cambridge University just prior to his marriage. He continued his medical course for eighteen months but then chose to return to evangelism.¹⁵ In 1947 he accepted an appointment in the North England Conference, ministering in Sheffield. While serving in that role he was ordained to the gospel ministry during the annual conference session held in the Sheffield City Hall. The special service was held on the Sabbath of July 16, 1949. Elder Arthur Maxwell, editor of the *American Signs of the Times* was present and among those who took an active part were Australians Elder Edmund Rudge, president of the British Union Conference and Elder Harold Blunden, a Field Secretary of the General Conference.¹⁶

In mid-1950 Ronald was invited to be the main speaker at the graduation services at his Alma Mater, Newbold Missionary College, an indication of the high regard for his thoughtful homilies.¹⁷ Soon after that event he was elected to carry the portfolios of Education, Temperance and Young People's secretary for the British Union Conference,¹⁸ roles he held until 1954.¹⁹ He became involved in the organization of the European Youth Congress, Paris, in July 1951. He had a leading role in the song services.²⁰ His departmental duties took him to all parts of the United Kingdom, e.g., a youth rally in Liverpool,²¹ a conference session in Ireland²² and a convention

in Bristol for Missionary Volunteers.²³ His departmental report rendered in 1954 spoke of the success of the Congress in Paris, youth camps he had conducted throughout the United Kingdom, the introduction of Pathfinder courses for juniors (Busy Bees) through to seniors (Master Guides) and appropriate uniforms for them, the formation of Missionary Volunteer Book Clubs and an Adventist University Student's Association, in addition to news of evangelistic campaigns held by various youth societies. It was an impressive report marked by innovation to unite the church youth in Christian fellowship and constructive endeavours.²⁴

In addition to his youth ministry he was also chosen as one of the speakers on the British version of the Voice of Prophecy in c. 1951. At the time it was impossible to buy time for radio broadcasts on the British Broadcasting Corporation. The alternative was to use Radio Luxembourg. A regular Tuesday afternoon and Friday evening timeslot was secured. Thousands of listeners requested Bible correspondence courses.²⁵ Ronald served as a speaker for the program until 1954.²⁶ It was an invaluable experience for a similar role he would engage in during work in Australia.

Transition to Australia

Ronald's ground-breaking success in his United Kingdom youth ministry marked him as a man for similar work in Australia where the field had been without a youth leader for two years. Accordingly, he was appointed to transfer to Australia in the closing months of 1954. The family sailed on the SS "Strathnaver," arriving in Sydney on December 9.²⁷

In Australia the youth leaders of the union and the local conferences had diligently begun the introduction of Pathfinder clubs.²⁸ Ronald's mandate from the General Conference was to accelerate the spread of these clubs. After a few months of orientation he convened a planning session in August 1955 with all youth leaders²⁹ to schedule several Pathfinder Fairs such as those at Brisbane, Queensland,³⁰ and the Australasian Missionary College, Cooranbong, New South Wales.³¹ Their agenda included plans for the major South Pacific Youth Congress in Melbourne, December 1956. With 1,800 youth in attendance and Elder Theodore Lucas, General Conference Missionary Volunteer secretary present, this event firmly established the popularity of Pathfinder clubs throughout the South Pacific region.³²

By December 1960 the increasing number of clubs necessitated three different congresses, the first at Fulton Missionary College, Fiji,³³ a second at Auckland, New Zealand³⁴ and a third in Adelaide, South Australia.³⁵ These involved considerable organization by Ronald including the arrangement for Elder Laurence Skinner, Associate Missionary Volunteer secretary from the General Conference, to be the guest speaker at all three events.³⁶ Ronald organized another major extravaganza for December 1964, a gathering of two thousand youth titled the Australasian Division Youth Congress. It was held in Melbourne, climaxing with a Festival of Music in the alfresco Myer Music Bowl to which the public was invited. Elder Claude Martin, Missionary Volunteer secretary for the Far Eastern Division, was the guest speaker throughout the meetings.³⁷

As youth leader Ronald, of necessity, spent much time travelling the vast territory under his care. Respite from travel came in 1967 when he accepted the role of principal of Longburn College in New Zealand. It meant he remained as a shepherd of young people but his efforts were concentrated on a select group who were fortunate to have such a man of calm temperament and wide experience. His term was cut short in February 1969 when an emergency arose in the South Queensland Conference that left them without a president. Ronald was requested to transfer post-haste and adopt the leadership. He continued in the role of president until the end of 1971 when he was appointed to be the Associate Communication secretary for the Australasian Division.³⁸ In this capacity his mellow voice and clear diction were used to advantage as speaker for the Voice of Prophecy "These Times" radio broadcasts.³⁹

In May 1973 the Australasian Division voted to establish Christian Services for the Blind. A similar entity was operating at American headquarters but mailing weighty Braille materials to Australia had become expensive. Ronald was delegated to build the services in Australia while he continued with his radio work.⁴⁰ He developed the services to the point where it eventually occupied all his time. Audio books on cassette tapes were mailed from his office and he introduced regular camps for blind children after visiting similar models in America in 1975.⁴¹

Retirement

Ronald officially retired in May 1980⁴² but chose to continue with some part-time assistance in the Adventist Media Centre, serving as principal of the Bible Correspondence School and continuing his work for the blind.⁴³ At home in Galston, suburban Sydney, he enjoyed gardening and furniture-making. He and Kitty continued worshipping in the Wahroonga Church, their home church since arriving in Australia.⁴⁴ Kitty was not experiencing good health. She passed away on October 12, 1989, and was laid to rest in the Avondale Memorial Cemetery.⁴⁵

On September 9, 1990, Ronald married Helen Lenore (Smith) Rosendahl in the Galston Seventh-day Adventist Church. Elder Thomas Ludowici performed the ceremony. They remained in Galston but fellowshiped with the Wahroonga church members. Later they transferred to the Adventist retirement village at Cooranbong, New South Wales, and worshipped in the nearby Avondale Memorial Church. At the age of ninety-two Ronald had a fall and broke his hip. During remedial surgery on July 16, 2009, he sadly suffered a major stroke and quickly passed away.⁴⁶ He was interred alongside Kitty.⁴⁷ Left to mourn were Ronald and Kitty's children: Roger Maxwell (b.1947), Kenneth Waldemar (b.1948), Angela Elaine (b.1951) and Dianne Ingeborg (b.1956)⁴⁸ and his wife, Helen. After Ronald's death Helen returned north to be near her children in Port Macquarie, New South Wales, where she passed away aged eighty-nine, March 21, 2020. Her ashes are retained in a feature wall at Innes Gardens Memorial Park, Port Macquarie.⁴⁹

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