

Cox, James John Charles (1925–2020)

MILTON HOOK

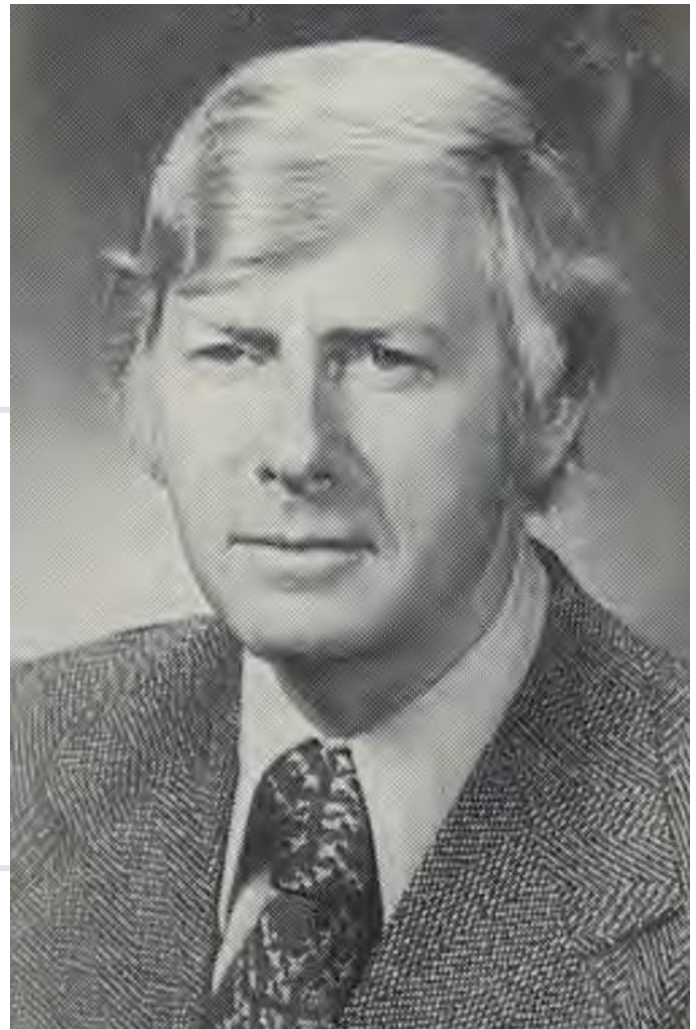
Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New 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.

A pastor and New Testament professor, James J. C. Cox served Adventist academic institutions in Australia and the United States both as a scholar and an administrator.

Early Life and Ministry

James John Charles Cox was born on June 12, 1925, to James and Janet Cox of Kakanui in the far southeast of New Zealand. His father was a musician and his mother an artist. Another son, Larry, was born after James. The family moved north to Auckland where James attended the Seddon Memorial Technical School (now Auckland University of Technology) in Auckland city, 1936 through 1938. James joined the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1941 and completed his secondary education in 1944 at New Zealand Missionary College.¹ During the summer vacation he engaged in colporteur work² and then proceeded to Australia to attend the Australasian Missionary College (later Avondale University College) where he graduated from the ministerial course in the class of 1946.³

An appointment opened for Cox in 1947 to begin as a ministerial probationer in the Tasmanian Conference.⁴ On March 15, 1948, he married Yvonne Alice Cameron in the Launceston church. Pastor Reginald Millsom performed the ceremony.⁵ Commonly known as Jim and Alice, the pair sailed to North New Zealand where Cox



James J. C. Cox

From *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 20, 1973.

engaged in evangelism until 1954.⁶ He was ordained to the gospel ministry towards the end of his service years in the North New Zealand Conference.⁷ The Cox's only child, John Cameron Milne, was born in 1950 in New Zealand.⁸

Advanced Studies

Gifted with an academic mind, Cox determined to pursue further studies. He and his family made the bold decision to move to America. During 1955 and 1956 he studied at Walla Walla College (now Walla Walla University), College Place, Washington, completing a bachelor's degree. He continued his studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, then in Washington, D.C., earning a master's degree in 1957. At that time joined the faculty of Washington Missionary College, Takoma Park, Maryland (now Washington Adventist University) as an assistant professor, teaching Greek and religion classes.

While teaching at the college, Cox pursued further studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, taking courses in Semitic languages and cultures. He advanced to the prestigious Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a doctoral program in New Testament studies, beginning in 1959.⁹ He was the recipient of three Harvard graduate fellowships, a Rockefeller doctoral fellowship and a Danforth teaching grant, all in the course of earning his Ph.D. with distinction in 1963. During his studies he did some lecturing at Harvard University and at the Episcopal Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia. He took part in archaeological digging at Hisban in Jordan. He was also an annual professor at the William Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.¹⁰

New Testament Professor at Andrews

For 15 years, 1965-1980, Cox lectured in New Testament courses at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, by then relocated as part of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. From 1974 through 1977 he also served as the general editor of the scholarly series titled *Andrews University Monographs* and was associate editor of the journal *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (AUSS). He published articles in the *Harvard Theological Review* and the *New International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. He presented a paper at the First International Congress on Coptology in Cairo in 1976 and another paper at the Seventh International Congress of Patristic Studies held at Oxford University in 1978. He was a member of the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Schools of Oriental Research.¹¹ Almost every year while at Andrews University Cox published an erudite article in AUSS.¹²

He was a giant in the academic field but Cox never forgot he was ordained as a shepherd of the church community. He preached frequently to the congregations in the neighborhood of Andrews University. In 1980, when representatives of Kinship, a new organization of Adventists who identified as gay requested that church leaders and scholars address their questions and concerns, Cox took the initiative in gaining the approval of

General Conference leaders for himself along with a small group of scholars and pastors to be present at the organization's gathering that summer. Cox's compassionate response to a call for help in a context highly charged with controversy reflected the qualities that won wide admiration among faculty colleagues and students.¹³

Cox thrived at Andrews. In addition to the academic life, he and Alice enjoyed meeting with Australasian students in their Koala Club social gatherings.¹⁴ Beyond her husband's impact, Alice Cox, too, left lasting memories as the manager of the Andrews University Bookstore, 1968-1979.¹⁵

Avondale College Principal

In mid-1980, Cox was called to return to Australia and serve as principal of Avondale College. His pre-eminent task was to pilot the introduction of the Master of Arts (Theology) degree in affiliation with Andrews University. At the same time he lifted some diploma courses, such as business and secondary education, to the bachelor's level. He developed closer ties with Sydney Adventist Hospital, offering a Diploma of Applied Science (Nursing) for those who did their practical training at the hospital. He introduced features of Andrews University to the Avondale campus such as the wearing of academic regalia at graduation programs and the annual gathering of alumni called Homecomings.

Another feature of Cox's leadership was his recognition of the importance of a substantial church building on campus. Plans had been made to demolish the original chapel to make way for a contemporary church. Cox, however, refused to cast sentiment and history aside. Instead, he obtained a heritage listing on the old chapel and raised funds for its restoration. He selected another site for the new house of worship and prior to his return to America in mid-1984 had the satisfaction of being among the dignitaries who took part in the ceremonial turning of the sod for its construction.¹⁶ His valedictory from the faculty and staff of Avondale College highlighted his "professional assistance," "negotiating skill" and "pastoral care."¹⁷

New Initiatives and Final Years in America

On his return to America Cox co-founded with James Londis the Washington Institute, an innovative outreach to the public arena in the nation's capital.¹⁸ In 1989, Cox returned to academic administration, serving as a vice-president for academic affairs at Columbia Union College, 1989-1991.¹⁹

Cox officially retired in 1991. He and Alice settled at Lake Mary, Florida, and worshipped regularly at nearby Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist church in Longwood. Retirement was in name only because Cox continued to enjoy good health and gave five years as academic dean of the fledgling Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences (now AdventHealth University) in Orlando. He was also a board member of the Hospice of the Comforter, under AdventCare, in Altamonte Springs.²⁰

Alice Cox passed away on May 30, 2004. Except for an occasional hospitalization Jim Cox cared for himself with some assistance from his son. He passed away on April 13, 2020, at age 94. The ashes of both Alice and Jim were scattered locally.²¹

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NOTES

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12. *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, complete archive searchable at <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/auss/>.
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