

# Anderson, Leslie Earl (1943–2002)

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## COLIN DUNN

Colin Dunn, B.Ed. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia). Dunn retired in 2011 from pastoral ministry in the North New South Wales conference, Australia. He is Australian by birth and has served the church as a minister, aircraft engineer, pilot and mission president in the South Pacific Division. In retirement, he supports Adventist Aviation Services – PNG as Quality and Safety management, other project management roles, and local church elder. He is married to Maureen, has one existing daughter and two grandchildren.

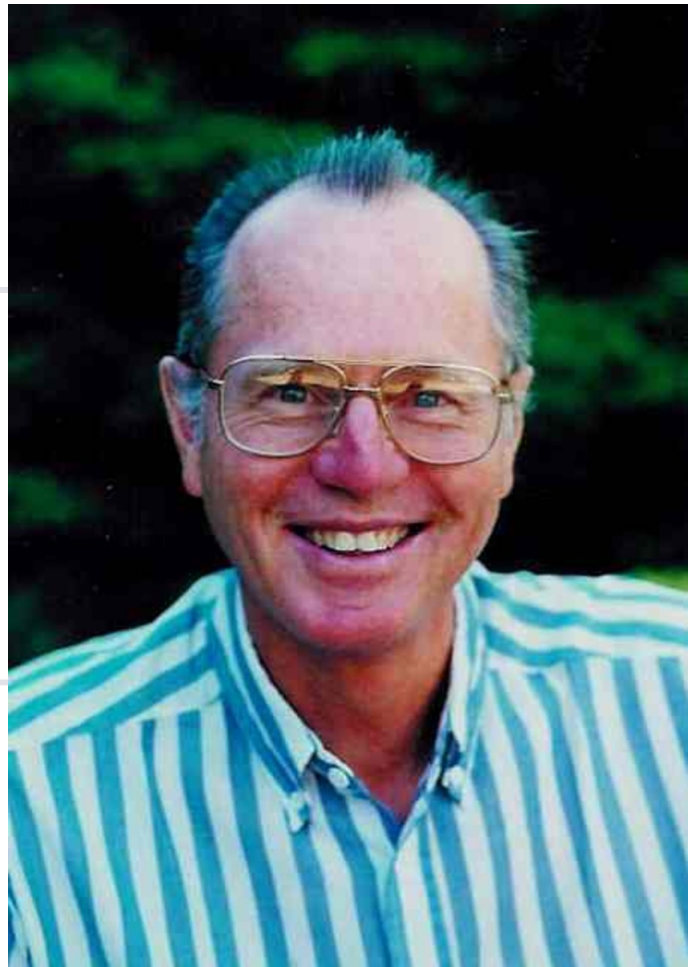
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Leslie Earl Anderson was an engineer, chief pilot, and director of Adventist Aviation Services for the South Pacific Division. He was born on November 27, 1943, in Dinuba, California.<sup>1</sup> He died in a plane crash on May 3, 2002, on Mount Elimbari in Papua New Guinea.<sup>2</sup>

Anderson was the second of four boys in the family. He attended Pacific Union College Elementary School in grades 1 and 2, home school in Burma for grades 3 to 6, grade 7 at Vincent Hill School in India, and graduated from grade 8 at John Nevins Andrews Elementary School in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup> He was baptized in February 1955 by his father in the Chin Hills, Burma, along with older brother David and the first Chin converts.<sup>4</sup>

Anderson spent his first three years of secondary school at Vincent Hill School in India, and graduated from Canadian Union College Academy (now Parkview Adventist Academy) in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, in 1962<sup>5</sup> That same year he met Mary Lane Anderson, an Alberta farmgirl, born on October 29, 1947, as the second child of six to John Aron and Helen Jeanette (Horn) Anderson. Mary Lane came to Parkview Adventist Academy in the fall of 1962 for grade 10.<sup>6</sup>

During the summer of 1963 Anderson was appointed as the first student missionary from Canadian Union College (CUC) to work on the *Northern Light*, a mission boat serving the communities along the coast of British Columbia, Canada. Les and Mary Lane graduated from CUC (now Burman University) in 1966, Les with a



Les Anderson, c. 2000

Photo courtesy of Papua New Guinea Union Mission.

theology degree<sup>7</sup> and Mary Lane with a two-year arts diploma. The next day, May 30, 1966, they married in Sedgewick, Alberta,<sup>8</sup> Mary Lane's home church. Les was sponsored by the Ontario Conference to the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, where the couple continued their education.<sup>9</sup>

Halfway through his Master of Divinity program Anderson received an invitation from the General Conference to work in Ethiopia. The young couple arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on August 17, 1967.<sup>10</sup> The following day they drove to Dessie, where Les was station director for a hospital, school, church, and clinic. Their first child, daughter Loy Lane, was born on October 30, 1968. In 1969 Anderson was asked to be the union youth director,<sup>11</sup> and the family moved to Addis Ababa, where son Glendon Bruce joined the family May 31, 1970. Anderson also served as temperance director.<sup>12</sup>

Les Anderson had a heart for young people, establishing Pathfinder groups in several parts of the country and organizing summer camps and youth rallies as well as Five-Day Stop-Smoking Plans. While on a weeklong safari out in the country, he watched a Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) plane fly over. This prompted him, along with two other friends in Addis Ababa, to buy a Cessna 140 and begin flying lessons. In 1972, while on furlough, he earned his commercial pilot's license.<sup>13</sup> In the fall of 1973, during his third term in Ethiopia, Quiet Hour and its donors bought a Cessna 185 for use in the Ethiopian Mission. On December 2, 1973, the *Della Hanson* was dedicated in Addis Ababa, and Les was the first pilot. This opened up other areas of service, including a biweekly medical clinic on the Sudan border.

Christmas 1975 found the Andersons back in Angwin, California, on permanent return in order for Anderson to upgrade his aviation ratings. In 1976 he obtained his instrument rating, in 1977 his flight instructor<sup>14</sup> and airframe and power plant licenses. In the summer of 1977 he was invited to the British Columbia Conference, where he was ordained on September 10, 1977. Then the family left for their first assignment in Whitehorse, Yukon. Friends in California purchased a Cessna 180 for his use in the vast expanses of the north. The plane was dedicated *Bonne Nouvelle*.<sup>15</sup> The district took in the northern part of British Columbia all the way to the Arctic Ocean. The airplane became a very valuable part of his ministry.

In July 1984 the Andersons moved to Victoria, British Columbia, where they served for seven years.<sup>16</sup> In 1992 Anderson took a much-needed sabbatical from the stress of pastoral ministry and went into private business. He was in Ukiah when he received a phone call from Trevor Robinson, director of Adventist Aviation Services, Papua New Guinea (PNG), inquiring if he would be interested in working in PNG as a pilot and engineer.

The Papua New Guinea Union Mission confirmed the appointment in November 1997.<sup>17</sup> The Andersons arrived in Goroka, PNG, in the first week of May, 1998. For the next four years Anderson carried at various times the titles of pilot, engineer, chief pilot, and director of Adventist Aviation Services (AAS).<sup>18</sup> Because he was also a pastor, he often flew out to help with baptisms and camp meetings as well as doing his AAS duties.<sup>19</sup> He loved the people, he loved the church, he loved his family, and most of all he loved his Lord. That is how he lived, and that is how he died.

Only four weeks before his plan to return permanently to America he died at approximately 3:30 p.m., May 3, 2002, in the Kaw Kaw Gap on Mount Elimbari in Papua New Guinea, where his plane crashed.<sup>20</sup>

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## SOURCES

Anderson, Les E. "Pilot's Log, 2." Unpublished document held in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson.

Anderson, Mary Lane. "Biography of Leslie Earl Anderson." Unpublished document written October 11, 2018, held in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson.

"Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson." Unpublished document in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson.

Director of Vital Statistics. "Certificate of Marriage, Leslie Anderson and Mary Lane Anderson." Edmonton, Alberta: Department of Health, September 9, 1966.

Dunstan, Lee. "Three Angels over Papua New Guinea." *Record*, October 17, 1998.

O'Toole, S. V. "Department of Transport Papua New Guinea Aircraft Accident Report." Document held in the archives of the Department of Transport, Papua New Guinea, June 21, 2002.

"Papua New Guinea Union Mission Aviation Advisory Committee Minutes," November 26, 1997.

Stacey, Brenton. "Adventist Pastor-Pilot Dies in PNG Crash." *Record*, May 25, 2002.

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## NOTES

1. "Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson," unpublished document in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson.
2. S. V. O'Toole, "Department of Transport Papua New Guinea Aircraft Accident Report," document held in the archives of the Department of Transport, Papua New Guinea, June 21, 2002.
3. "Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson."
4. Mary Lane Anderson, "Biography of Leslie Earl Anderson," unpublished document written October 11, 2018, held in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson. Much of the data in this biography are the personal reflections of Mary Lane Anderson, the wife of the late pastor Leslie Anderson.
5. "Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson."
6. Mary Lane Anderson, "Biography of Leslie Earl Anderson."
7. "Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson."

8. Director of Vital Statistics, "Certificate of Marriage, Leslie Anderson and Mary Lane Anderson" (Edmonton, Alberta: Department of Health, September 9, 1966).
9. Mary Lane Anderson, "Biography of Leslie Earl Anderson."
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Les E. Anderson, "Pilot's Log, 2," unpublished document held in the personal collection of Mary Lane Anderson.
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15. Mary Lane Anderson. .
16. "Curriculum Vitae—Les E. Anderson ."
17. "Papua New Guinea Union Mission Aviation Advisory Committee Minutes," November 26, 1997.
18. Lee Dunstan, "Three Angels Over Papua New Guinea," *Record*, October 17, 1998, 10.
19. Brenton Stacey, "Adventist Pastor-Pilot Dies in PNG Crash," *Record*, May 25, 2002, 5.
20. O'Toole, "Department of Transport Papua New Guinea Aircraft Accident Report."

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