

# Craig, Francis Cecil (1920–1983)

---

## LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

---

Francis Craig spent his career in the Sanitarium Health Food Company, becoming its general manager in 1971 and continuing until his retirement in 1982.

Francis (Frank) Cecil Craig was born in Wollongong, south of Sydney, New South Wales, on March 25, 1920, the second son of Cecil Albert and Lily Thompson Craig.<sup>1</sup> After graduating from the two-year business course at Avondale College in 1937 Craig began working for the Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) in 1938, making Weet-bix and Granose biscuits in the factory at Warburton, Victoria.<sup>2</sup> In March 1939 Craig accepted a position as an office worker in the Brisbane SHF factory.<sup>3</sup>

Craig married Freida E. Rabe on August 5, 1941.<sup>4</sup> In the years to come they would have three children, Jeanette, Alan, and Ron.<sup>5</sup> Just four months into their married life together, Frank was drafted into the Australian army. He served as a noncombatant on the front line, working as an operating theater assistant with the 7th Field Ambulance. Three of his four years of service were in high-conflict zones, including Milne Bay, Bougainville, Lae, Nassau Bay, and Salamaua in Papua New Guinea. Sometimes he was just two thousand feet (six hundred meters) from enemy lines, living in swamps and trenches. He was known as a man of prayer. When the sound of air raid sirens signaled the need to get into their slit trenches, his war-weary friends were often heard to say "Let's get in with Franky . . . he prays."<sup>6</sup> Frank Craig did not get to meet his infant daughter, Jeanette, until she was 18 months old.<sup>7</sup>



Francis (Frank) Cecil Craig

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

At the end of the war economic conditions in Australia were difficult as the country made the transition back to a peacetime economy. Wartime government contracts were cancelled and many, particularly women, lost their jobs, while at the same time thousands of servicemen were being discharged and seeking civilian employment. Once demobilized from active military service, Frank asked if he could return to his career with the Sanitarium Health Food Company, and as a result was employed as an accountant in the Brisbane office in February 1946.<sup>9</sup>

By August 1952 Craig was an assistant manager for the company in Sydney before becoming the New Zealand manager for the company in February 1959.<sup>10</sup> During his 7.5--year term in New Zealand he managed the continuing growth and expansion of the three factories in Christchurch, Palmerston North, and Auckland, as well as the New Zealand wholesale branch. It was also during his tenure that the head office for New Zealand moved, in 1964, from Christchurch to Auckland.<sup>11</sup>

He transferred back to Sydney in October 1966, this time as the factory manager.<sup>12</sup> In November, 1970 he moved to the head office of the company and took up a new role as the assistant secretary and marketing manager.<sup>13</sup> Only five months later, on the death of W. L. Kilroy, he became the secretary (manager/CEO) for the Sanitarium Health Food Company, remaining in that role until poor health required his early retirement in June 1982.<sup>14</sup>

There were many notable men who made the Sanitarium Health Food Company what it is today. Following on from the legendary George Fisher, who consolidated the company into a successful business, were such individuals as George Chapman, Carl Ulrich, Andrew Dawson, Bertram Johanson, Wilfred Kilroy, and Frank Craig who was then followed by Cameron Myers.<sup>15</sup> Together these men took the company through many difficult and challenging times. They navigated their way through the Great Depression of the 1930s, successfully expanding the business while their competitors were failing. They led through the difficult years of World War II, when resources were scarce (fuel, vehicles, and new machinery were almost impossible to obtain). Because of the chronic fuel shortages, making transportation difficult, factories were established in every state. Postwar growth saw a new generation of leaders working to maintain and equip an updated network of larger but, in time, fewer factories to meet new demands and market forces. When the Plant Development Division of the company wanted to introduce computers to the company's production lines, many in company leadership positions were initially reluctant to consider this new and expensive electronic automation. However, the new equipment soon proved its worth, and permission was given to advance and innovate further so that a more robust and productive manufacturing environment could be developed to meet increasing retail demand.<sup>16</sup> With Frank Craig's continued input, the Sanitarium Head Office and the Head Office of the South Pacific Division combined in 1975 to select "Datapoint" to supply and install a major computer network. This bold move successfully streamlined both the company's and the Church's operational needs moving both organizations into the age of silicon chips, gigabytes, and online communication.

Frank Craig was widely respected for his leadership, encouragement and mentoring. He saw the SHF as “a work of God’s devising” and a very real gift to the Church. He showed great courage and fortitude when it was needed in difficult times. He never carried a grudge, and believed in his people.<sup>17</sup> In all, he gave 43 years of service which, by denominational policy, included credit for his four years in the army.<sup>18</sup>

Frank Craig’s life was immersed fully in his church and in “the company” and he reluctantly took early retirement after a long and difficult illness associated with the prolonged use of malarial medications during his wartime service in Papua New Guinea. Frank Craig died on August 15, 1983.<sup>19</sup>

---

## SOURCES

Francis Cecil Craig Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: “Craig, Francis Cecil.” Document: “Biographical Record.”

Francis Cecil Craig Service Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: “Craig, Francis Cecil.” Document: “Service Record.”

Jewson, E. P. “Craig–Rabe marriage.” *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1941.

Myers, D. C. “Life-Sketch of Francis Cecil Craig.” *Australasian Record*, October 1, 1983.

Parmenter, K. S. “Francis Cecil Craig obituary.” *Australasian Record*, October 1, 1963.

Parr, Robert. “Sanitarium Health Food Company.” In N. P. Clapham, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific 1885–1985*. Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, n.d., 98–111.

———, and Glyn (*sic*) Litster. *What Hath God Wrought, The Sanitarium Health Food Company Story*. Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, n.d.

---

## NOTES

1. D. C. Myers, “Life-Sketch of Francis Cecil Craig,” *Australasian Record*, October 1, 1983, 12.
2. Francis Cecil Craig Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: “Craig, Francis Cecil”; Document: “Biographical Record”).
3. Francis Cecil Craig Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: “Craig, Francis Cecil”; Document: “Service Record”).
4. E. P. Jewson, “Craig–Rabe marriage,” *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1941, 8.

5. Myers.
6. Ibid.; Ron Craig, email message to author, April 6, 2019.
7. Jeanette (Craig) Moss, phone interviews with author, April 5 and 6, 2019.
8. Francis Cecil Craig Biographical Records.
9. Ibid.; Jeanette (Craig) Moss, phone interviews with author, April 5 and 6, 2019.
10. Francis Cecil Craig Service Records.
11. Myers, 13.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Francis Cecil Craig Service Records.
15. Robert Parr, "Sanitarium Health Food Company," in N. P. Clapham, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific 1885–1985*, (Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, n.d.), 109.
16. Robert Parr and Glyn Litster, *What Hath God Wrought, The Sanitarium Health Food Company Story* (Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, n.d.), 419.
17. Myers, 12.
18. Francis Cecil Craig Service Records.
19. K. S. Parmenter, "Francis Cecil Craig obituary," *Australasian Record*, October 1, 1963, 14.

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000