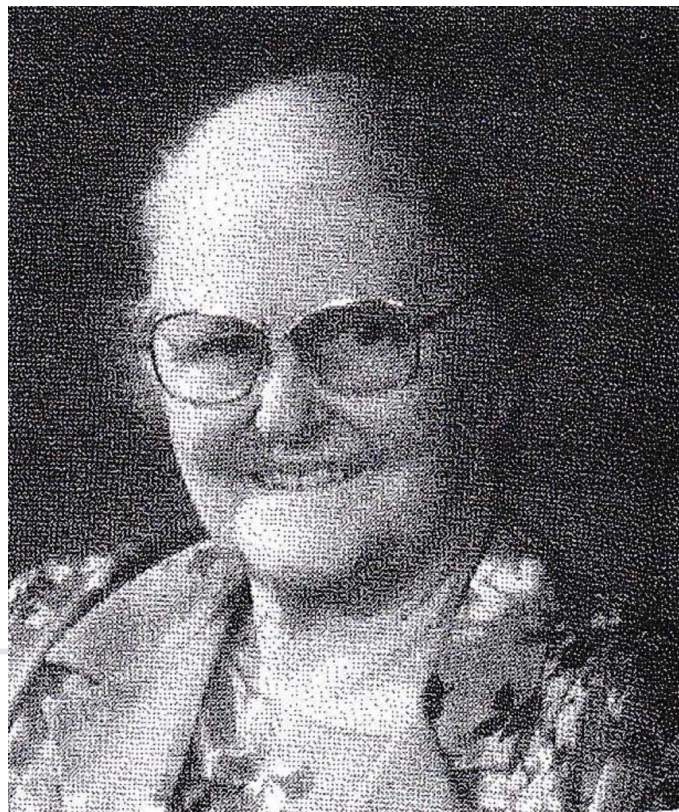


# Howell, Laurence Isaac (1903–1975) and Gwendoline Fanny (Plowman) (1908–1988)



Gwendolyn Howell

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

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## 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.

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Laurence and Gwendoline Howell worked as missionaries in Papua and New Guinea.

## Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Laurence Isaac Howell was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family in Napier, New Zealand, on September 3, 1903.<sup>1</sup> During his childhood his mother drove him to church in Napier each week in her horse and buggy.<sup>2</sup> Laurence was baptised in December 1918.<sup>3</sup> He graduated from the New Zealand Missionary College which he attended during 1920-1923, and, after working for a short time as a motor engineer, studied at the Australasian Missionary College (Avondale) for three years before graduating from the Biblical Academic (ministerial training) Course in 1928.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, ministerial course graduates were required to spend at least one year in literature evangelism before being appointed to a pastoral position. Accordingly, Laurence worked from March 1929 until November 1930 as a colporteur in Western Australia.<sup>5</sup>

On December 22, 1930, Laurence married Gwendoline Fanny Plowman who came from his home town of Napier in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> She had been born in Napier on August 25, 1908.<sup>7</sup> Their ministry together was to last more than 44 years.<sup>8</sup> To this union two sons were born, Arthur Barrie, born in Port Moresby, and Douglas Glen also born in Port Moresby.<sup>9</sup>

## Ministry

Almost immediately after their marriage Laurence and Gwen Howell sailed to Australia where Laurence was assigned to gain medical experience in the casualty department of a Sydney hospital before sailing for Papua at the end of February, 1931.<sup>10</sup> In the years that followed, the Howells were stationed at Vailala.<sup>11</sup> However their service was interrupted by the hostilities of World War II. By February 1942, the Howell family together with a number of other expatriate missionaries had been evacuated to Australia under difficult circumstances.<sup>12</sup> For the next two years Howell worked as an engineer for the Sanitarium Health Food Company in Lewisham, Sydney.<sup>13</sup>

In December 1943 Laurence Howell returned to Papua.<sup>14</sup> By 1947 the family was stationed at Bena Bena in the Eastern Highlands.<sup>15</sup> Laurence was ordained to the gospel ministry at Kabiufa in the Papua New Guinea highlands on April 7, 1951.<sup>16</sup> At the time he was the District Director of the Bena Bena Mission.<sup>17</sup> In the late 50s, Laurence Howell was appointed to commence the work of the Church in eastern Papua with headquarters at Samarai.<sup>18</sup> Howell then served as a president of the Milne Bay Mission from January 1963 until his retirement and permanent return to Australia on January 10, 1969.<sup>19</sup> Except for two years during the war, the Howells had worked as missionaries in Papua and New Guinea for the entire 1931–1969 period.<sup>20</sup>

## Final Years and Contribution

Laurence and Gwendoline Howell retired in 1969 and settled initially in Sydney, Australia.<sup>21</sup> They spent time in New Zealand in retirement but then returned to Australia.<sup>22</sup> Laurence died in the Sydney Adventist Hospital on April 11, 1975 and was buried in the Avondale Adventist Cemetery at Cooranbong, New South Wales.<sup>23</sup> Gwendoline died on October 9, 1988 and was buried in the Avondale cemetery beside her husband.<sup>24</sup> As the president of the then Australasian Division, R. R. Frame, wrote in his life sketch for Laurence Howell,

Reflecting on the spiritual qualities of brother Howell, it is very easy for me to visualize so many of the people of Papua New Guinea rising up today and calling his name blessed, for to them he presented the message of salvation. A very strong characteristic of brother Howell was that of kindness and human understanding, particularly to the one in need. He always went out of his way to lift the downtrodden.<sup>25</sup>

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