

Kranz, Alfred Frederick John (1900–1993)

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.

Alfred Frederick John Kranz was a teacher and school administrator in Seventh-day Adventist schools in Australia and New Zealand.

Early years

Alfred Frederick John Kranz was born in Hammond, South Australia on August 5, 1900. His parents were Carl Ferdinand Kranz and Ernestine Wilhelmine Kranz (Hantschke).¹ He had a half-brother William Henry Hentschke (Willie), and a sister Wilhelmina Christina Kranz (Minnie).² Because he was a good student and with parents who valued education, the family moved from their farm into the town of Wirribara, so he could continue his education. By the age of 16, he was studying by distance education through Adelaide University and obtaining excellent results. The same year he began work as a student teacher in the government school system.³

By 1918, as a consequence of reading his Bible, Kranz became a Christian, and a year later at the age of 19 he accepted the Sabbath as the consequence of reading some Seventh-day Adventist literature. By that time and, though still very young, he was the principal of the Iron Knob Primary School, a state government institution.⁴

Soon those working in the South Australian Conference office heard of this unusual young man who kept the Sabbath and following a visit from the conference president, church members sponsored Kranz for a year of study at the Australasian Missionary College at Avondale and while a student there he made the decision for



Alfred Frederick Kranz

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

baptism which occurred later at Nuriootpa, South Australia.⁵ Kranz entered denominational work, first as a literature evangelist (1920), then as a principal (1921), with one year in ministerial work (1922), and from then on he spent the rest of his working life in the Education Ministry of the Church.⁶

Kranz had initially worked as a colporteur so as to fund a second year as a student at Avondale, but the Conference leadership asked him to stay on in South Australia and so at the age of just 21 (1921) he found himself the principal of the Adventist Primary School in Adelaide. While in Adelaide during his one year of ministerial work, Kranz boarded with the Collins family and on April 12, 1922⁷ married their eldest daughter, Gertrude Ethel Collins who had been born in Melbourne, Victoria on January 15, 1892.⁸

After working as the principal of the Ponsonby Adventist School in Auckland, New Zealand for two years, Kranz then served as preceptor (dean of men) and teacher at Longburn College (1925-27, also in New Zealand, and then as the Bible teacher (1928-29). The Kranz family had two sons during these years — Alfred Lynden and Russell Maurice.⁹ Ordained on November 30, 1928 at Longburn,¹⁰ Kranz and his family transferred back to Australia a year later where from 1930 at the age of just 29 he was the Bible teacher at the Australasian Missionary College until 1939.¹¹ During this time he wrote many of the Bible textbooks for which he became renowned.¹² Somewhere along this journey, the students began to affectionately refer to Pr. Kranz as 'PK' though never, ever, within his hearing!¹³

From 1940-46 Kranz was Principal of Carmel College near Perth and during this time he and Ethel adopted their daughter Valerie Rose.¹⁴ By this time the Church in Australasia was recognising the need to upgrade the qualifications of its senior educators and the Kranz family was sent to the SDA Seminary in Washington D.C. on study leave.¹⁵ But before Kranz could enrol in the M.A. in theology degree program he first had to complete his B.A. and in order to expedite that he challenged several classes his advisors were requiring him to take. Allowed to take the final examinations for each, Kranz was asked when he wanted to schedule them and he always consistently said, "tomorrow," in each case to the amazement and surprise of the Seminary faculty. He passed each of those examinations easily, as he had taught those subjects at Avondale, Carmel, and Longburn Colleges for about 15 years and had published textbooks for each.¹⁶

While on study leave in Washington D.C. Kranz completed his B.A. and M.A. in theology from the SDA Theological Seminary.¹⁷ Returning to Australia in 1949, Kranz with Pr. Nelson Burns, who had also just completed his M.A. degree in Theology, cared for the Bible Department at Avondale College until the end of 1954. During his many years of teaching at Avondale he twice served as acting principal for months at a time though the role was never made permanent.¹⁸ Possibly this was because he was too valuable as a Bible teacher.

By the mid-1950's the first lecturers with doctorates were in training or joining the faculty, and so in 1955 Kranz returned to Longburn College, this time as principal, until his official 'retirement' on January 1, 1965.¹⁹ For some years, after stepping out of his leadership role, he continued to teach Bible at Longburn, and served as registrar

and librarian. Gradually, he reduced his work load until he moved to Napier, a town in New Zealand some 100 miles north of Longburn in late 1973,²⁰ thereby completing 44 years and seven months of denominational service.²¹ On October 6, 1974 Ethel died.²² Then on March 30, 1975, Alfred Kranz married Joy Carter.²³ This union was cut short as Joy developed terminal cancer²⁴ and died on October 16, 1983.²⁵ After Joy's death Kranz married Marlene Broad on February 28, 1984 and they had almost nine companionable years together.²⁶

Later Years

During his retirement years Kranz accepted many speaking engagements, kept an immaculate garden and thoroughly enjoyed his large personal library.²⁷ In May 1991, he suffered a small stroke.²⁸ Then in February 1993 he suffered a severe stroke which hospitalised him in Hastings, New Zealand. Just a few weeks later, on March 29, 1993, he died while resting in a hospital chair.²⁹

Alfred S. Jorgenson in reflecting on the enormous influence Pastor Kranz had on all who knew and worked with him and were students in his classes said,

Alfred Kranz reigned supreme in the classroom. . . Dignified, somewhat reserved, but extremely energetic, exuding an enthusiasm that was contagious, his class sessions were dynamic expressions of his own intense study of the Bible and his desire to share with his students the values and blessings he had received from it. . . .when I left Avondale, the desire uppermost in my mind was the prayer that maybe one day God would enable me to be a Bible teacher like 'PK'.³⁰

SOURCES

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NOTES

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2. Ibid.
3. Karen Miller, "Adventist Author and Educator Dies," *Australasian Record*, May 22, 1993, 10.
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7. Ibid.
8. Alfred Frederick John Kranz Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Kranz, Alfred Frederick John," document: "Biographical Information Blank, April 5, 1950."
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Alfred Frederick John Kranz Service Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: "Kranz, Alfred Frederick John;" Document: "Personal Service Record."
12. Miller, 10.
13. Personal knowledge of the author as a nephew of Kranz' second wife, Joy Carter.
14. Ibid; Alfred Frederick John Kranz Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Kranz, Alfred Frederick John," document: "Biographical Information Blank, April 5, 1950."

15. Ibid.
16. Personal knowledge of the author as a nephew of Kranz' second wife, Joy Carter.
17. Alfred Frederick John Kranz Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Kranz, Alfred Frederick John," document: "Personal Service Record."
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Miller, 11.
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30. Alfred S. Jorgensen, "Memories of a Teacher," *Australasian Record*, May 22, 1993, 10.

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