

Knight, Arthur William (1893–1978)



Arthur W. Knight.

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook.

A. BARRY GANE

A. Barry Gane, Ph.D., has served the church on three continents over a period of 45 years. He has been a youth director at union and division levels, a university professor, chaplain, and pastor. Gane has earned two doctorates, both in the area of Youth Ministry and Leadership. He is married to Marilyn and they have two adult children, Daniel and Kymberley, and are blessed to have five grandchildren. He retired in 2015 as the head of the School of Ministry and Theology at Avondale College of Higher Education. Gane continues serving as an advisor to doctoral students and teaches in the areas of both Leadership and Youth Ministry.

Arthur William Knight was known for being a pioneer—a man of “firsts.” He was the first Tract Society secretary in North Zealand Conference. He was appointed the first leader of the literature ministry in India, Burma (Myanmar) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). He organized the first “Appeal for Missions” with Pastor C K Meyers. He was the first young man to become a conference M. V. Leader. Later, he worked as the first young chaplain at Sydney Adventist Hospital where he worked for over 20 years raising funds for the new hospital and training a number of the nurses who went on to enter ministry and become leaders at conference and union level in the church. He was the first secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist “Retired Workers” Association. He was the first chaplain of the “Adventist Business and Professional Men’s Association.” He made the first contribution to the building of the Auckland Adventist Hospital and to the Avondale College Foundation.

Early Years (1893–1924)

Arthur William Knight was born on March 14, 1893 in Kaukauna, New Zealand, the third son of Sidney Herbert and Margaret Agnes Knight (Watson)¹. His father, Sidney, emigrated to New Zealand alone as a boy of 16 in 1879 just eight years before the establishment of the first SDA church in Auckland. The family moved to Hastings where Arthur’s older brother Franklin became an Adventist under the influence of two trained medical missionaries from Sydney Adventist Hospital (Sanitarium) and a short while later began work as a literature

evangelist in Auckland leaving Arthur at home in Hastings.² Arthur was the acting secretary of the Hawkes Bay Jockey Club and had a promising future in the business world. Although his brother and other friends who had accepted the Adventist message constantly dogged his steps he let them know he had no interest in joining them. But after persistent resistance Arthur finally relented and started to explore the Adventist message with new convert Fred Grubb and was convicted and soon baptised by Irish American Pastor J. M. Cole in October 1913.³ He then joined his brother in selling the book *Heralds of the Morning* for the next year.⁴

In 1914 Arthur attended the Australasian Missionary College with his brother Franklin and it was here that the church first recognised his business skills and experience and took him off the farm to work in the college office. In 1915 he was appointed Tract Society Secretary in Wellington New Zealand, his first official appointment for the church in the newly formed North New Zealand Conference.⁵ In the middle of that year, he accepted a position as publishing reader in India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. He was responsible for training colporteurs and in this work, he travelled extensively.⁶ In the first year they canvassed the cities of Calcutta, Lucknow, Bombay, Simla, Mussoorie, Madras, and Ootacamund. Along with E.D. Thomas a Tamil worker, he started the literature work in the local languages.⁷ There were many cross-cultural experiences that shaped his appreciation for the local people as this time. He particularly enjoyed working in Rangoon, Burma and overseeing literature work for the Karen people. This became a thriving center very quickly.⁸

The work in Asia gave him an appreciation for William Carey the pioneer missionary to India. He had the chance to visit the mission station Carey established in Serampore outside Calcutta. This was over 100 years prior to Arthur's time but he gathered courage knowing that Carey had worked for ten years before his first convert.⁹

Toward the end of his second year in India Arthur, like so many other missionaries became very ill, so it was decided that he should return to Australia.¹⁰ Illness was to dog his steps for most of his life. The first World War meant the sea travel was very dangerous. In fact, one of the early church Presidents, Professor Salisbury, was lost at sea when his ship was torpedoed.¹¹ Knight recuperated in the Sydney Adventist Hospital and as soon as he was well enough was put back to work. His first major role was to work with Pastor C. K. Meyers in 1918 to coordinate the first "Appeal for Missions" campaign (ADRA Appeal) with the goal to raise \$8000.¹² This became a regular part of the church calendar and over the years allowed the general public to contribute to the vast mission services of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

In the same year, 1918, Arthur met, courted and then married Myrtle Neary on November 20.¹³ Myrtle was born on September 28, 1892 and had joined the church with her mother and sister just a few years before she met Arthur. She was from Bathurst and had recently attended the Australasian Missionary College. They spent the next three years in Western Australia as part of the evangelism team with Pastor Harker. It took some time for Arthur to develop his evangelistic preaching, but, eventually, he was taking his place on the platform and witnessing the power of the Holy Spirit move on his audiences. Time in public evangelism was prematurely ended as the young couple were asked to take on the role of preceptor and Bible teacher at the West Australian

Missionary College, Carmel in the hills above the city of Perth.¹⁴ Among his students was one Len Minchin who was later to become the General Conference youth director. Illness struck again and the young couple made a request to return to the eastern states of Australia where they had family support.¹⁵

Franklin Knight, Arthur's brother, was now the youth leader for the Australasian Union Conference and suggested that Arthur become the youth leader for the Victorian Conference. He became the first male to head up youth work in a local conference as prior to this the position was always held by a woman.¹⁶ Youth Work took all of his focus and energy for the next five years. Arthur and Myrtle had an open-door policy and young people were always visiting their home as events and ministry initiatives were planned. Travel was extensive as the conference covered Victoria and Tasmania and it meant a lot of time away from home. April 24th, 1924 in North Fitzroy church was chosen as the day for Arthur's ordination¹⁷ but it was filled with so much more including a meeting that evening at Balwyn church to plan a youth evangelism program. Throughout the day, Arthur continually tasted blood in his mouth but said nothing until 10:00 o'clock that night when he visited a doctor to tell him it had continued for the whole day. Their fears that it might be tuberculous (TB) were realized when the doctor visited him in the morning. The President, Pastor F. A. Allum, and Pastor J. H. Woods came to anoint the desperately ill young pastor. Tuberculous was a leading cause of death at this time.¹⁸ It was 14 months before he was well enough to return to work, funds depleted by medical costs, but ready to go again.

The Chaplaincy Years (1926–1951)

Arthur joined the staff of the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital as Chaplain in 1926.¹⁹ Up until this time it had always been the role of an older pastor. After just a few years the doctors observing his failing health suggested that Arthur move to warmer climes and spend more time outside in the open air.

With very little money, he now worked as a volunteer in evangelism for short periods in Brisbane, Parramatta and Tasmania alongside Pastor W. W. Fletcher and even ran a series with the visiting General Conference President A. G. Daniels.²⁰ He was back in full time employ in Adelaide for two years before being invited back to the "San" in Sydney in 1934. In 1936, while serving as chaplain, he became a regular speaker on the Advent Radio church that aired weekly on 2UE in Sydney but was broadcast through the Pacific.²¹

He began to teach the male nurses how to preach and run meetings in local churches and the young women nurses how to give bible studies. During this term as Chaplain he was also Pastor of the Wahroonga church for nine years. This allowed him to give the pulpit to the young men training at the hospital.²² Among the many students he trained were Eric Clark, Claude Judd, Ron Taylor, Lester Hawkes, Phil Cappe, and Reg Brown, among others. He formally retired from the hospital in 1951 but worked another two years running revival meetings in various conferences until his retirement in 1953.

While at the Hospital he ministered to Mrs. E. M. Stewart, and she was so impressed by the hospital care and his ministry that she appointed him as the Executor of the E. M. Stewart estate. He later wrote that he assisted her

in her desire to do something for the nurses of the Sanitarium and arranged for the "Woodburn" flats at Manly to be transferred to the church hoping to give opportunity for rest and relaxation for nurses and hospital staff. He also worked with E. M. Stewart to see her desire to help fund the "Kressville" and "Parklea" Homes for the aged.²³

The Knights had three sons who each had very successful careers and are widely known in the church and community. Ronald married Patricia and they set up a medical practice in Brisbane and served the church at a number of different levels. After retiring from the medical practice Dr. Pat retrained to be a Chaplain in the public hospitals of Brisbane and served until she was over 90 years old. Arthur Lyndon, "Lyn", married Audrey and became a very successful business man who set up the "Adventist Business and Professional Men's Association" and raised millions of dollars for the Sydney Adventist Hospital and Avondale College. John the youngest of the brothers and also a Doctor married a nurse Noreen and has had a very public presence in the media and in the philanthropic arena.

The Later Years

Arthur and Myrtle Knight retired in Sydney in 1953 and Arthur died at the Sydney Adventist Hospital on October 19 1978²⁴ and his wife Myrtle died 14 years later on February 6, 1992, a few months short of her 100th birthday.²⁵ Arthur was connected to the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital from the time he joined the SDA church right through to the moment of his death where he passed away peacefully on one of its wards. The Knight Ward on level 9 of the new Clark Tower honours Arthur's legacy.²⁶

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NOTES

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2. *Ibid.*, 5.
3. *Ibid.*, 8.
4. *Ibid.*, 8.
5. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
6. *Ibid.*, 13; A. W. Knight, "Twelve Months' Work in India," *Australasian Record*, vol. 21, no. 14, April 9, 1917, 3-4.
7. Knight, "As I Remember", 15.
8. *Ibid.*, 17.
9. *Ibid.*, 17.
10. *Ibid.*, 18.
11. *Ibid.*, 13, 14.
12. *Ibid.*, 19.
13. *Ibid.*, 20.
14. *Ibid.*, 21

15. Ibid., 22.
16. A. H. Piper and J. L. Smith, "Victorian Conference," *Australasian Record*, vol. 26, no. 6, March 20, 1922, 6.; Knight, *As I Remember*, 23
17. J. H. Woods, "Ordination service," *Australasian Record*, vol. 28, no. 20, May 19, 1924, 5.
18. "How Lucky We Are: How People Died 100+ Years Ago, and How We Die Today", accessed March 10, 2018 <https://www.alternet.org/personal-health/how-lucky-we-are-how-people-died-100-years-ago-and-how-we-die-today>
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