

# Townend, Maxwell Gordon (1923–2007) and Eunice May (Rhodes) (1921–2004)



Maxwell Townend, early 1950s.

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

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## CALVYN TOWNEND

Calvyn Townend, B.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia). Townend retired in 2015 as general manager of Adventist Media Centre, Sydney. A New Zealander by birth, Townend served as a pastor, evangelist, departmental director and administrator. In retirement he has done evangelism in Papua New Guinea, and Sarawak, Malaysia, and leadership development throughout the Pacific. He has authored one book and edited many newsletters. Townend is married to Dawn with three children, ten grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

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Max and Eunice Townend spent three years as missionaries to India. They subsequently served in the Australasian Division, based in Australia, and the Far Eastern Division, based in Singapore.

## Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Maxwell Gordon Townend, the sixth child of Randolph Barker Townend and Gertrude Townend, was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on March 3, 1923.<sup>1</sup> He had six siblings: Joan (Mrs. J. Millward), Ronnie, Austin, Lorraine (Mrs. L. Robson), Lesley, and Brian.<sup>2</sup> He spent his childhood in Wellington and Lower Hutt, where he attended school. He attended New Zealand Missionary College for two years before being conscripted into the New Zealand Army for noncombatant service.<sup>3</sup>

He was posted to the army headquarters staff in Auckland with the rank of sergeant. After his older brother Lesley was conscripted into the 24th Field Ambulance, they were posted together to the commanding officers headquarters staff in the Solomon Islands. Later they were transferred to Nissan Island, Papua New Guinea, to care for the medical needs of wounded New Zealand, United States, and Australian soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Some months later they were evacuated to New Caledonia, and Max was admitted to a military hospital for two weeks. He decided to return to New Zealand on independent leave without pay.<sup>5</sup>

After he arrived home, he met Eunice Rhodes, and they were married on September 20, 1944.<sup>6</sup> Eunice had been born on October 6, 1921, in Christchurch, New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> The army offered him full pay and paid his fees to complete his study at New Zealand Missionary College. They then moved to the Australasian Missionary College, Avondale, Australia, where Max completed the ministerial course. During this time two children were born—Raewyn (Binning) and Kevin.<sup>8</sup>

## Denominational Service

Townend began his service in 1939 as a salesman in the Wellington Sanitarium Health Food Shop before transferring to Christchurch in the same role.<sup>9</sup> He served as a literature evangelist in South New Zealand in 1947, in order to earn money for fees to attend the New Zealand Missionary College. After two years of training, he was appointed as a literature evangelist in South New Zealand (SNZ).<sup>10</sup>

In 1951 he was appointed to Ashburton church in the South New Zealand Conference. The couple then transferred to Nelson, where he served as pastor/evangelist for two years. He conducted an 80-voice choir to support J. B. Conley's evangelistic series of meetings in Christchurch in that year, before being transferred to Central Otago, SNZ, for a year. He returned to Christchurch on appointment as home missions, Sabbath School, public relations, and radio/TV secretary for the South New Zealand Conference.<sup>11</sup> He was ordained at Christchurch on January 18, 1958.<sup>12</sup>

In 1959 he was appointed departmental director of the Greater Sydney Conference for one year before being invited to take up a position in the South India Union Mission, Bangalore, India. He worked there as departmental director for three years. He conducted evangelistic crusades and training institutes and seminars, teaching laypeople personal evangelism.<sup>13</sup>

Upon returning to Australia, he was appointed in 1962 as a departmental director of the Greater Sydney Conference, and then between 1963 and 1966 in the Trans-Tasman Union Conference. Then between 1966 and 1970 he served as communication director of the Australasian Division and as radio/TV and public relations secretary, adding Sabbath School secretary in 1970 and 1971. Between 1971 and 1977 he was only radio/TV and public relations secretary.<sup>14</sup>

From 1977 until 1982 he lived in Singapore, serving as communication director of the Far Eastern Division.<sup>15</sup> In that role he was also editor of the *Far Eastern Division Outlook*,<sup>16</sup> and was supervising radio and television ministry and Bible Correspondence schools.<sup>16</sup> In one special assignment he was asked to go into China to try to establish contact with the church. After arriving in one of China's largest cities, he decided to walk down the main street as a busker, playing hymns on his mouth organ, and thus made contact with Christian people.<sup>17</sup>

Once again back in Australia, he served as a projects director at the SPD. The role included the development of leadership skills among Pacific Island leaders and promoting the new Pacific Adventist College in Port Moresby. These roles merged into administrative assistant to the South Pacific Division (SPD) president until he retired on July 1, 1988.<sup>18</sup> Then as a subsidized sustentee he served another five years as assistant to the SPD president.<sup>19</sup>

During their years of service Eunice not only cared for her home and family but was for a number of years employed by the church organization. While in Singapore she was layout editor of the *Far Eastern Outlook*. Then when they had returned to Australia she was for some time the receptionist at the South Pacific Division office.<sup>20</sup>

Max and Eunice celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with family and friends on September 20, 1994.<sup>21</sup> Eunice suffered a debilitating stroke in 1997. Maxwell cared for her for seven years until she died on January 7, 2004.<sup>22</sup> Maxwell died on October 2, 2007.<sup>23</sup>

## Summary of Max Townend's Denominational Service<sup>2,4</sup>

1939-1940	Retail Sales	Sanitarium Health Food Company, Wellington
1946	Retail Sales	Sanitarium Health Food Company, Christchurch
1947	Colporteur	South New Zealand Conference
1947-1949	Student	New Zealand Missionary College, Longburn, NZ
1950	Colporteur South	New Zealand Conference
1951-1954	Evangelism	South New Zealand Conference
1955-1958	Departmental Director	South New Zealand Conference
1959	Departmental Director	Greater Sydney Conference, Sydney
1960-1962	Departmental Director	South India Union Mission, Bangalore
1963-1966	Departmental Director	Trans-Tasman Union Conference, Sydney
1966-1977	Departmental Director	Australasian Division, Sydney
1978-1982	Departmental Director	Far Eastern Division, Singapore
1982-1988	Projects Director	South Pacific Division, Sydney

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## SOURCES

Burnside, G. "Townend-Rhodes marriage." *Australasian Record*, November 20, 1944.

Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon." Document: "Biographical Record."

Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon." Document: "Workers Biographical Record."

Maxwell Gordon Townend Service Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon." Document: "Service Record."

Townend, Calvyn. "Eunice May Townend obituary." *Record*, January 31, 2004.

———. "Maxwell Townend obituary." *Record*, December 15, 2007.

———. "The Townend Story." Unpublished document presented to a meeting of the Sev Ad Historical Society, Cooranbong, August 2, 2002. Held in the personal collection of the author.

"Townend, Max and Eunice . . ." *Record*, November 19, 1994.

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## NOTES

1. Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon"; Document: "Workers Biographical Record").
2. Calvyn Townend, "The Townend Story," unpublished document presented to a meeting of the Sev Ad Historical Society, Cooranbong, August 2, 2002, held in the personal collection of the author, 9.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. G. Burnside, "Townend-Rhodes marriage," *Australasian Record*, November 20, 1944, 7; "Townend, Max and Eunice . . .," *Record*, November 19, 1994, 13.
7. Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon"; Document: "Biographical Record").

8. Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon"; Document: "Workers Biographical Record").
9. Maxwell Gordon Townend Service Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon"; Document: "Service Record").
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Maxwell Gordon Townend Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives (Folder: "Townend, Maxwell Gordon"; Document: "Biographical Record").
13. Maxwell Gordon Townend Service Records.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Personal knowledge of the author as the nephew of Maxwell and Eunice Townend.
17. Ibid.
18. Maxwell Gordon Townend Service Records.
19. Personal knowledge of the author as the nephew of Maxwell and Eunice Townend.
20. Townend, "Eunice May Townend obituary."
21. "Townend, Max and Eunice . . .," *Record*, November 19, 1994, 13.
22. Calvyn Townend, "Eunice May Townend obituary," *Record*, January 31, 2004, 15.
23. Calvyn Townend, "Maxwell Townend obituary," *Record*, December 15, 2007, 14.
24. Maxwell Gordon Townend Service Records.

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