

Hon, Eric William (1908–1980) and Hazel (Young) (1914–2014)

KELVIN HON

Kelvin Hon, M.B., B.S. 1961 (University of Sydney, NSW, Australia) was born in Tenterfield, NSW, Australia in 1936, the eldest son of Eric and Hazel Hon. He now lives in Sydney NSW, Australia with his wife, Léone. He graduated from the faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney in 1961 and had postgraduate training in various hospitals in Sydney and the U.K. He has worked at the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, N.T., Hong Kong and later in Family Practice in the Galston-Dural area of Sydney. He also acted as the Medical Officer and Board member for the Adventist Aged Care Facility, Kings Langley, Sydney. He retired in 2017.



Eric and Hazel Hon on their wedding day, 1935.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Kelvin Hon.

Eric Hon served the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church as a pastor, church administrator and health educator for over 40 year. Hazel Hon, wife of Eric served with her husband but also in her own right as an author and health educator. Their ministry was unique and varied. Though based in Sydney for the most part, they also worked in the United States of America in New York and California. Eric was the first from the Australian-Chinese community to feel the call to ministry in the SDA Church.

Early Life and Education

Eric William Hon was born in Glen Innes, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, on October 26, 1908. His father Harry Gee Hon was born in China in 1877 and migrated to Australia as a young man, settling in Sydney, NSW. His mother Cecelia Wong See was born in Sydney NSW in 1888. Eric's father was a general storekeeper in Glen Innes, NSW. Eric was the eldest of eleven children, seven girls and four boys. Eric's sisters were Dulcie, Merle, Ora (Meelee), Hona, June (Long), Maisie (Fook) and Jill (Wong). His brothers were Albert and Colin (both of whom died in childhood) and Edward ("Ted").¹

In the early 1920's the Hon family were suffering financial difficulties. At the same time Cecelia Hon needed help for caring for her growing family. Susannah Lockyer was employed to help with the washing. Cecelia was impressed by Susannah's honesty and her caring attitude. When she became aware of the Hon's distress she offered to pray for them. As a result of Susannah's interest and concern, Cecelia Hon accepted Christianity and later became a baptized member of the SDA Church. Because of the financial problems their house was sold, and in 1923 they moved to Sydney to stay with relatives.²

In 1924, following his initial schooling, Eric, fifteen years old at the time, was sent by his father to open a general store in the country town of Tenterfield, NSW. Eric was a keen and talented hockey player and was a star player of the local Tenterfield team. He was playing a competition game in the neighbouring town of Lismore on Saturday morning quite near to the local SDA church. He knew that his mother was praying for him. He suddenly became convicted that he should not be playing on Saturday, God's Sabbath. This was the last game he played on a Saturday. Like his mother he joined the SDA church.

Eric attended the Avondale Missionary College, Cooranbong, NSW, in 1933 for six months³ He then returned to Tenterfield to continue managing the family business. By then his sisters and his brother had also joined the SDA church. In 1935, the family decided to close the business from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Notices were placed in the local paper, the Tenterfield Star and also in the shop windows.⁴ The result of this decision was not a long-term loss of business as expected but, instead, an eventual increase.

Hazel Young was born in Tenterfield, NSW on August 18, 1914. Her father Tommy Wong Young was born in Canton, China in 1884 and migrated to Australia when he was a small boy. He eventually became a storekeeper and businessman. Hazel's mother Amy Quay was born in Sydney, NSW in 1892. Hazel was the eldest of four children, Audrey (Showyin), Eulalie (Ward), and Leonard Young. Hazel left school at the age of twelve years to help manage the family business in Qurindi, NSW. She became an SDA when she came to know the Hon family.

Eric and Hazel were married in Inverell, NSW on April 20, 1935. In 1935 following her marriage to Eric, Hazel and her sister Eulalie attended Avondale Missionary College, Cooranbong, NSW for six months⁵ Eric and Hazel had three children, Kelvin Richard, Bruce David, and Judith Merelyn.

Years of Service

1939-1944	Pioneered work amongst the Chinese of Sydney ⁶
1944-1954	Director of the Social Service Center, Sydney
1949-1957	Assistant Home Missions and Sabbath School Secretary in the Greater Sydney Conference

1957-1963	Church Pastor in the Greater Sydney Conference
1964-1967	Medical Secretary of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference in the Australasian Division
1968-1970	Medical and Temperance Secretary of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference in Australasian Division
1970-1976	Retired but continued to work with churches in the Sydney area in a voluntary capacity
1976-1978	Director of Metro Ministry in New York, USA
1978-1980	Lecturer at Weimar College, California, USA

In 1939 Eric and Hazel were invited by the South NSW Conference to make contact with the Chinese families of Sydney. These families had varied occupations such as businessmen, shopkeepers, market stall holders, farmers, and they were scattered around the city. One of these families was the Long family who owned a poultry farm in the outer suburb of Guildford. Though the parents welcomed Eric and Hazel into their home, it was their children, Norman, Eddie, Clem and Marge who joined the SDA church. All of them have made major contributions to the SDA church. Norman, Eddie, and Clem building churches in Australia and the Pacific Islands, and Marge in Health Ministry.

Eric found that the Chinese were not receptive to spiritual teachings but were eager to acquire practical knowledge. So, first aid and home nursing classes were started as a means of making contact.⁷ A Branch Sabbath School was started for the children. A center was initially set up in Surry Hills, one of the lower socio-economic areas of Sydney. There was a lot of suffering in the community and not just among some of the Chinese families, so Eric's ministry extended to the wider community. The SDA Social Service Center⁸ was established in 1944 and was based in Daking House in Sydney. The staff consisted of two trained nurses, a welfare officer, a workman supervisor, stenographer and Eric as the Director.⁹

The services provided rapidly expanded to regular home nursing, arranging foster homes for children, the establishment of an adoption agency, and assistance in times of emergency. The reputation of the Social Service Center became rapidly known around the city and referrals came from government departments, welfare agencies, hospitals, and doctors. Eric had read *The Ministry of Healing* by Ellen G. White and that had largely determined the direction of his work. He wrote, "The broader meaning of health spreads beyond physical soundness or well-being. It reaches into the realm of mental and spiritual. Health, therefore, in the wider connotation, is soundness of body, mind, and soul – the condition of being whole physically, mentally and spiritually."¹⁰

Eric envisioned that the local church should be a center where basic health care and education could be provided as a means of making contact with the local community. As a result, health clinics were established in a number of SDA churches around Sydney. These were basically manned by volunteers under the direction of nurses. They would provide physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, health education and cooking demonstrations. The churches involved were Drummoyne¹¹, Woollahra¹², Concord¹³, Stanmore¹⁴ and Thornleigh. A maternal and post-natal health clinic was started at Kellyville. These were pioneering ventures as very little was provided by government agencies.

Health education and cooking demonstrations were not common at the time. Hazel began to demonstrate healthful vegetarian cooking, and she was assisted by Marge Long who was a registered nurse. Marge presented talks on healthful living. The first were given at the annual camp meeting of the Greater Sydney Conference of SDA at Blacktown in about 1950, and later at various camp meetings around Australia¹⁵ and New Zealand¹⁶. Over the years demonstrations were expanded to the general public in public halls, numerous organizations, shopping centers, and on television. A School of Health was established and teams of demonstrators were trained to provide demonstrations in cities and towns around Australasia¹⁷. When the South NSW Conference was divided into the Greater Sydney Conference and the South NSW conference in 1949, Eric was appointed Assistant Home Missionary Secretary and director of the Social Service Center of the Greater Sydney Conference. He was ordained to the ministry in 1951, the first Chinese ordained in Australasia. In 1964 he was appointed Medical Secretary of the Trans-Tasman Union Conference.

As well as conducting cooking classes, Hazel pursued a number of other interests. When their son Kelvin first attended the SDA High School at Burwood, Hazel decided that a Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) was needed at the school. At the time, she was already president of the P&C Associations at two other government schools attended by Bruce and Judith. In 1949 Hazel organised an association named the Home & School Association. This was the first established in Australasia.

This was not her only project. Their home church at Thornleigh was urgently needing a rebuild and as a way of raising funds for this project Hazel established an Opportunity Shop in Gladesville, Sydney.¹⁸

Eric and Hazel also had a great interest in the young people of the church. A Young Marrieds Club was formed and regularly met in the Hon family home in Cheltenham, Sydney. In addition to his other roles, Eric was the unofficial chaplain on the Sydney University SDA Students Society. The Hon family home was also a place of gathering for the Chinese SDA students studying in various tertiary institutions in Sydney.

Retirement and Continued Ministry.

In 1970 while attending camp meetings in New Zealand, Eric suffered a massive heart attack. On returning to Sydney he retired from his position at the Trans-Tasman Union Conference. However, he continued to minister in a voluntary capacity to various churches in Sydney. Eric and Hazel converted the rumpus room in the family

home to a demonstration kitchen and they continued to give health talks and cooking demonstrations. Numerous interested groups and clubs from around the Sydney came by chartered bus, usually on the personal recommendations of someone who had benefitted from the Hon's ministry. In this way, many thousands of people were taught the principles of healthful eating, drinking and living.

In 1975 Eric and Hazel travelled overseas to visit the General Conference Session in Vienna and also to visit family and friends in various parts of the world. In the UK and USA, Eric and Hazel gave health talks and cooking demonstrations in various centers.¹⁹ While visiting a doctor friend in Angwin, California, it was found that Eric suffered from severe heart disease and as a result he underwent coronary artery bypass surgery.²⁰ It was fortunate that he was in the USA at the time, as that form of surgery was in its infancy in Australia.

After returning to Australia, Eric was asked by the General Conference, as a Sustentee On Overseas Service (S.O.S), to organise a health education and community services program in New York Metro Ministry.²¹ He was appointed director for two years. N.J. Satelmajer was appointed as associate director and Ted N.C. Wilson as assistant director.²² As part of the program Hazel conducted a number of health and cooking demonstrations and cooking and nutrition schools in various centers in the area.²³ Other areas of ministry included Five-Day Stop Smoking Plans, Stress Control Seminars and Health Screening Clinics.

In 1978 Eric and Hazel joined the staff at Weimar College, California to train church members and youth in particular in the Christ-ordained mission of medical missionary work. Unfortunately, in May, 1980, Eric suffered a fatal heart attack two weeks before the completion of his term at Weimar College.²⁴

Hazel returned to Australia and even though she had lost her lifelong partner, she continued to promote healthful living by giving health talks and cooking demonstrations around various centers in Australia and the Pacific Islands.²⁵

With the assistance of Geoff Richardson and Marjorie Dodd (nee Long), she developed a health care center, Cedarvale Health and Lifestyle Retreat which is located in Kangaroo Valley NSW.²⁶ Live-in programs commenced in January 1991.²⁷

Hazel passed away on the May 14, 2014 following a prolonged illness.

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1. Ted studied medicine at the College of Medical Evangelism (Loma Linda University) California USA, and later became Professor of Obstetrics at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, where he developed the foetal heart monitor in 1955. This enabled obstetricians and midwives to quickly detect foetal distress during pregnancy and labour. Eric's sister Maisie founded the Asian Aid Foundation in 1966.
2. Kelvin Hon: personal knowledge as the eldest son of Eric and Hazel Hon.
3. George W. Rollo, "College Clippings," *Australasian Record*, October 7, 1935, 5-6.
4. Ibid.
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7. Ibid. See also H. J. Halliday, "Class Training," *Australasian Record*, September 30, 1940, 5.
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