

# Johanson, Bertram Olaf (1902–1982)

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## SHIRLEY TARBURTON

Shirley Tarburton, M.Litt. (Distinction) (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2008 after 40 years teaching church-school (mainly high school but including eight years at university). An Australian, she has taught in four mission fields, Australia, and New Zealand. She has authored five books and co-authored one on church history, biography and family history, as well as several magazine articles. She is married to Dr. Michael Tarburton with two adult children and four grandchildren.

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Bertram Olaf Johanson held management positions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's (SDA) Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) for over thirty years, and at retirement was the Assistant Secretary of the Health Food Department of the Australasian Division (now the South Pacific Division, [SPD]) of the General Conference of the SDA church.



Bertram Olaf Johanson

Photo courtesy of the Sanitarium Health Food Company Archives.

## Early Life

Bertram Johanson was born in Melbourne on February 6, 1902 to Johan Peter Marius Johanson and his wife, Faith Omer.<sup>1</sup> He was the third son and fifth child of their six children.<sup>2</sup>

Johanson spent the first four years of his life in North Fitzroy, Melbourne, then, just before his fourth birthday, his family moved to Warburton where they lived for the next ten years.<sup>3</sup> Here he completed most of his schooling which he continued at Avondale when his parents moved to Cooranbong in 1915.<sup>4</sup> In September, 1917, he went with his family to Japan when his father took up his appointment as the President of the SDA missions in Japan, Korea and Manchuria.<sup>5</sup> Bertram attended language school to learn the Japanese language.<sup>6</sup> Due to his father's deteriorating health, the family returned to Australia early in 1919.<sup>7</sup> The Johanson family located in Warburton again, and Bertram worked for the Signs Publishing Company as a clerk during 1920 until September 1921.<sup>8</sup>

## Marriage and Family

In September 1921 Bertram relocated to Wahroonga, NSW, where he commenced working for the Australian Union Conference as a clerk, then as an accountant until the end of November, 1927.<sup>9</sup> Here, on September 1, 1924, he married Olive Doris Camp who was a co-worker in the AUC office.<sup>10</sup> Olive had been born on November 22, 1895 in Wellington, New Zealand,<sup>11</sup> and prior to joining the Wahroonga staff had worked at Pacific Press in California.<sup>12</sup> Bertram and Olive had two children, both born in Wahroonga: Wilma Olive<sup>13</sup>, who later married Kelvin Shinn at Wahroonga on October 18, 1948,<sup>14</sup> and Donald Harry.<sup>15</sup>

## Career

In December, 1927, the Johansons sailed for Christchurch, New Zealand, where Bertram was the accountant at the Sanitarium Health Food Company office until the end of September, 1929. From October 1, 1929 until the end of 1931, he was the manager of the same branch. At the beginning of 1932, the Johansons moved back to Sydney and Bertram held the office of Secretary of the SHF at the Head Office in Wahroonga until October 1933. He spent the next three years as SHF Factory Manager at Cooranbong. From November 1936, throughout World War II, until February 1944, Bertram was the Production Manager for the SHF back at Head Office in Wahroonga. He then worked back in Christchurch as the District Manager for the SHF in New Zealand until the end of October, 1946. Bertram returned to Wahroonga again in November, 1946, this time as General Manager for the SHF Company – a position he held for nearly sixteen years. For the last six years before he retired, Bertram was an assistant General Manager of the SHF and served as the Assistant Secretary of the Health Food Department of the Australasian Division (SPD).<sup>16</sup>

## Retirement

Bertram retired December 19, 1968,<sup>17</sup> a year and a half after Olive had been immobilised by a severe stroke.<sup>18</sup> They obtained a unit in the (SDA) Kressville Retirement Village at Cooranbong where they were able to spend most of Olive's remaining years together with Bertram nursing her and caring for her every need.<sup>19</sup> She died June 6, 1976 in the Charles Harrison Nursing Home at Cooranbong.<sup>20</sup>

Even during retirement, Bertram was active. He took on the voluntary responsibility of maintenance manager of the Kressville Village. He oversaw the maintenance of the complex and often did a lot of the work himself. One of his neighbours was a widow, Eunice Barbara Felsch (nee Thomson) with whom he had worked in both Cooranbong and Wahroonga. On December 12, 1976, they married and had six happy years together.<sup>21</sup>

## Death

Bertram remained active and in good health until he died. On Sunday, October 17, 1982, after enjoying a family lunch at his sister-in-law's home, he walked home to attend to some tasks. His wife stayed to help clean up, and when she arrived home an hour later, she found he had passed away, dying peacefully as though he had just fallen asleep. On October 20, he was buried in the Avondale Cemetery.<sup>22</sup> Eunice lived another 17 years, dying on November 27, 1999 in Toronto Private Hospital.

The following tribute was given in his obituary: "Brother Bertram Johanson was always a quiet and patient personality, well organised, careful and meticulous in everything he undertook - and his demeanour was that of a true Christian gentleman."<sup>23</sup>

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## SOURCES

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Coombe, L. C. "Life Sketch of Mrs. Olive Doris Johanson." *Australasian Record*, July 19, 1976.

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Needham, A. C. "Rosendahl, Thelma Edith Grace (nee Johanson)." *Australasian Record*, October 4, 1997.

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Tudor, Ralph. "Shinn-Johanson." *Australasian Record*, November 29, 1948.

Turner, W. G. "Johanson-Camp." *Australasian Record*, September 29, 1924.

Victorian Births, Bertram Olaff Johanson, North Fitzroy, 2853/1902.

Victorian Births, Eric John Johanson, Elsternwick, no. 18261/1899.

Victorian Births, Thelma Lizzie Edith Grace Johanson, A'adale, 15411/1907.

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## NOTES

1. Victorian Births, Bertram Olaff Johanson, North Fitzroy, 2853/1902.
2. His five siblings were: (1) Mabel Faith Muriel who was born in Lambeth, London on December 6, 1888 (British Births, Mabel F M Johanson 1Q 1889 Lambeth 1d 437). In 1912 she married Harry C. Stacey, (later, Pastor) and she died November 28, 1974 in Cooranbong, NSW (L. C. Coombe, "Stacey," *Australasian Record*, January 20, 1975, 14.); (2) Walter Omer, born in Launceston, Tasmania, on May 19, 1891. He married Susan May Gadsden in Melbourne on June 3, 1914 and died in Wahroonga, NSW, on December 5, 1934 (A. G. Stewart, "Walter Omer Johanson," *Australasian Record*, January 7, 1935, 7.); (3) Faith Gretta Barbara was born July 1, 1892 in Launceston, Tasmania (Tasmanian Births, Faith Johnson (sic) Launceston, RGD22/1/73 no 1020/1892). In 1925 she married Roy William Barham (C. M. Snow, "Barham-Johanson," *Australasian Record*, February 22, 1926, 7.). She died in Cooranbong, NSW on November 5, 1975 (O. K. Anderson, "Barham," *Australasian Record*, February 9, 1976, 15.); (4) Eric John was born May 31, 1899 in Melbourne (Victorian Births, Eric John Johanson, Elsternwick, no. 18261/1899). He married Nettie Roberta Hare in 1919 in Shanghai, China, and died in Cooranbong, NSW on November 13, 1999 (Bert Grosser, Bert Piez, "Johanson, Pastor Eric John," *Australasian Record*, January 22, 2000, 14.); (5) Thelma Lizzie Edith Grace, was born at Warburton, Victoria, on June 29, 1907 (A. C. Needham, "Rosendahl, Thelma Edith Grace (nee Johanson)," *Australasian Record*, October 4, 1997, 14; Victorian Births, Thelma Lizzie Edith Grace Johanson, A'adale, 15411/1907.). In 1941 she married Pastor Edward Christian Rosendahl, and on August 20, 1997, she died in Toronto Private Hospital, NSW (A. C. Needham, "Rosendahl, Thelma Edith Grace [nee Johanson].").
3. O. K. Anderson, "Life-Sketch of B. O. Johanson," *Australasian Record*, December 18, 1982, 12, 14.
4. A. W. Anderson, "Pastor J. M. Johanson, a Brief Life Sketch," *Australasian Record*, March 19, 1928, 7.
5. Faith Johanson, "Arrival in Japan," *Australasian Record*, April 22, 1918, 2-3.
6. O. K. Anderson, "Life-Sketch of B. O. Johanson," 12, 14.
7. Ibid.
8. Bertram Olaf Johanson, Worker's Biographical Record. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Johanson, Bertram Olaf." Document: "Worker's Biographical Record."
9. Ibid.
10. W. G. Turner, "Johanson-Camp," *Australasian Record*, September 29, 1924, 7.
11. Bertram Olaf Johanson Workers Biographical Record.

12. Turner, 7.
13. Bertram Olaf Johanson, Workers Biographical Record.
14. Ralph Tudor, "Shinn-Johanson," *Australasian Record*, November 29, 1948, 6.
15. Bertram Olaf Johanson, Workers Biographical Record.
16. Ibid., and O. K. Anderson, "Life-Sketch," 14.
17. Bertram Olaf Johanson, Sustentation Fund Application. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Johanson, Bertram Olaf." Document: "Sustentation Fund Application."
18. L. C. Coombe, "Life Sketch of Mrs. Olive Doris Johanson," *Australasian Record*, July 19, 1976, 12.
19. O. K. Anderson, "Life-Sketch," 14.
20. Bertram Olaf Johanson, Worker's Biographical Record.
21. O. K. Anderson, "Life-Sketch," 14.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

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