



Roy A. R. Thrift

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

Thrift, Richard Alfred Roy (1894–1975)
and Ethel Maude (James) (1890–1975)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist*, the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Richard Alfred Roy Thrift, an Adventist minister and administrator, and his wife, Ethel Thrift, a department secretary, served the Church in Australia, India, and Papua. Ethel Thrift also worked in New Zealand prior to her marriage.

Early Years

Richard Alfred Roy Thrift, usually known as Roy, was born on March 27, 1894, in Quirindi, New South Wales to George and Frances Ann Stockdale Thrift. Thrift was raised on a farm on the soil rich Liverpool Plains. Elder Charles Paap conducted an evangelistic series of meetings in the Quirindi Public Hall in 1913! Thrift and his family attended these meetings and began to observe Saturday as Sabbath. Thrift had difficulties because he was in army training and could not gain Sabbath exemptions. Eventually he gained release from his enlistment and a Seventh-day Adventist couple, Garside and Minnie James, invited him into their home.² A daughter, Ethel James, was Young People's Department secretary for the New South Wales Conference in Sydney at the time, and a friendship developed between her and Roy Thrift.³

Thrift spent most of the 1914 school year at the Australasian Missionary College with the dual purpose of learning more of the Advent message and training as a literature evangelist.⁴ The following year, from March to October, he sold copies of the *Great Controversy* in New South Wales towns. Office reports indicate he was a successful salesman.⁵ Late in 1915, Thrift accepted an appointment to colporteur in India.

Overseas Assignment

Thrift was not entirely a lonely figure in India. A number of fellow workers had arrived ahead of him, including Arthur Knight, John Fulton, and William Fletcher. Thrift was first listed among the India Union Mission team,⁶ but later found himself among the Bombay Mission group.⁷

In the Bombay City Seventh-day Adventist church on April 14, 1919, Ethel James and Roy Thrift were married.⁸ Ethel James had been born in Ballarat, Victoria, on September 26, 1890. She spent thirteen years in church secretarial work prior to her marriage, first in the Australasian Union Conference office at Wahroonga, then at the Strathfield office of the New South Wales Conference, and finally, the Wellington office of the New Zealand Conference. She then returned to the Strathfield office as departmental leader for the youth in the Conference.⁹

The Thrifts' first two children were born in India, Milton Melville (1920) and Ethel Leila (1922).¹⁰

Back in Australia

Roy and Ethel Thrift returned to Australia and worked in the Victorian Conference during 1923. In 1924, they moved to the Tasmanian Conference where they remained through 1932. Their third child, Elva Minnie, was born in Burnie.¹¹ On May 15, 1932, Roy Thrift was ordained to the gospel ministry in the Launceston Seventh-day Adventist church; the first ordination service to be conducted in that church.¹²

A series of administrative roles were then given to Thrift. From 1933 through 1936, he was superintendent of the North Queensland Mission, a small entity of 258 members in five churches.¹³ During 1937 through 1941, he was president of the West Australian Conference¹⁴ and in the war years, 1942-1945, he served as one of three vice-presidents at the Australasian Union Conference headquarters in Wahroonga.¹⁵

Overseas Again

Following World War II, Thrift was appointed superintendent of the Papua New Guinea Mission from 1946 to 1948, with headquarters in Port Moresby.¹⁶ During this his tenure, mission stations damaged by war were reconstructed and mission work expanded into new areas, particularly some highland regions.

Return to New South Wales

On Thrift's return from Papua New Guinea, he served as pastor in various churches within the North New South Wales Conference, between 1949 and 1959. After forty-four years of service, he officially retired in May 1959. In retirement, the Thrifts lived in Warners Bay, New South Wales, where they continued to assist local churches for another decade.¹⁷

Full Retirement

Failing health led Roy and Ethel Thrift to move to Western Australia in 1971 in order to live with the family of their youngest daughter, Elva, on a wheat farm at Bungulla, west of Kelleberrin. In 1973, they moved to a high care unit at the Seventh-day Adventist nursing home, "Sherwin Lodge," Rossmoyne, near Fremantle. Ethel Thrift died on April 3, 1975,¹⁸ followed by Roy Thrift a few months later, on December 3, 1975.¹⁹ Both workers had loyally served their church in a variety of roles and locations, including fourteen years in oppressive climates of high humidity. A number of other members of the Thrift family have made significant contributions to the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.²⁰

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"An interesting wedding took place..." *Australasian Record*, July 21, 1919.

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"Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work." *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1915.

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NOTES

1. M[ervyn] A. Chapman, "Life Sketch of Richard Alfred Roy Thrift," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, vol. 81, no. 5, February 2, 1976, 13-14; H. A. Hill, "George Thrift obituary," *Australasian Record*, March 11, 1929, 7.
2. "Life Sketch of Ethel Maude Thrift," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 20, 1975, 10-11.
3. "New South Wales Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1914), 133.
4. Richard Alfred Roy Thrift Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: "Thrift, Richard Alfred Roy;" Document: "Richard Alfred Roy Thrift Biographical Information."
5. E.g., "Monthly Report of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1915, 6.
6. E.g., "India Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1916), 140.
7. E.g., "Bombay Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1921), 129.
8. "An interesting wedding took place..." *Australasian Record*, July 21, 1919, 8.
9. "Life Sketch of Ethel Maude Thrift," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 20, 1975, 10-11.

10. Richard Alfred Roy Thrift Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: "Thrift, Richard Alfred Roy," Document: "Richard Alfred Roy Thrift Biographical Information."
11. Ibid.
12. A[lbert] W. Anderson, "Ordination Service at Launceston, Tasmania," *Australasian Record*, June 13, 1932, 8.
13. "Statistical Report of the Home Field of the Australasian Union Conference for the Half Year Ended June 30, 1934," *Australasian Record*, December 10, 1934, supplement.
14. E.g., "West Australian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 75.
15. E.g., "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943), 65.
16. E.g., "Papua New Guinea Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 77-78.
17. Richard Alfred Roy Thrift Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: "Thrift, Richard Alfred Roy," Document: "Richard Alfred Roy Thrift."
18. "Life Sketch of Ethel Maude Thrift," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, October 20, 1975, 10-11.
19. M[ervyn] A. Chapman, "Life Sketch of Richard Alfred Roy Thrift," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, February 2, 1972, 13-14.
20. See, for example, Thrift, Lyndon Robinson and Grace Merle (Stewart), and Thrift, Alan George and Yvonne Zanotti.

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