



Neil Ramon Thrasher family.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Thrasher, Neil Ramon (1921–2006) and Lucille Bertha (Daniel) (1922–2003)

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Neil Ramon Thrasher was a missionary doctor and medical director. He was a surgeon, and a certified specialist in radiology who served with his wife, Lucille Bertha (Daniel), in North America, Africa, and in several countries in the Far Eastern Division.

Early Life

Neil Ramon Thrasher was born May 13, 1921, to parents Raymond Reese Thrasher of Wallula, Washington, and Katherine Ellen Mills of Carmi, Illinois.¹ He was the second of three siblings who later all became medical doctors. They grew up on the Thrasher Farm along the Columbia River, in College Place, Washington.² His elder sister, Lois Virginia, was born April 4, 1918,³ and his younger sister, Thais, on July 25, 1930.⁴

Thrasher's uncle Lloyd Biggs was a missionary and explorer in Africa during the early 1900s, who would often narrate tales of his adventures. His uncle's stories, godly influence of his parents, and their faithfulness to their calling greatly influenced Neil's conversion into the Adventist faith and prompted him to follow their footsteps in giving up an easy and comfortable life.⁵ Thrasher was baptized at age 14 in the Columbia River near Wallula, Washington, by Elder Stewart Kime.⁶

Education and Marriage

Thrasher attended Wallula Grade School from 1926 to 1935, and Columbia High School in Casey Washington from 1938 to 1941. He transferred from one college to another in an attempt to accomplish his bachelor's degree. He attended La Sierra College from 1941 to 1942 and transferred to Washington State College from 1942-1943. He attended Walla Walla College from 1943 to 1944.⁷

Thrasher married Lucille Bertha Daniel on September 12, 1942 in Couer d'Alene, Idaho.⁸ At the time of their marriage, Lucille was not yet baptized as an Adventist. After college, the couple moved to southern California to pursue medical studies. He attended the College of Medical Evangelists from 1944 to 1948, where he completed his course in medicine.⁹ The Thrashers have five children, namely, Pamela, Andrea, Sylvia, Rhett, and Kurt.¹⁰

Lucille Thrasher was born July 13, 1922 in Palouse, Washington, to non-Adventist parents Clarence I. Daniel and Amy E. Turnbow of Winlock, Washington.¹¹ The youngest of five siblings,¹² she spent her early years in Attalia, Washington; Spokane, Washington; Loma Linda, California; and Los Angeles, California. She was converted into the Adventist faith through her husband, Neil Thrasher, and was baptized in December 1942 in Pullman, Washington, by Elder Frank Oliver.¹³

Lucille Thrasher attended elementary school from 1925 to 1936 in Attalia, Washington, and Columbia High School of Two Rivers, Washington from 1936 to 1940. She attended Eastern Washington College of Education in Cheney, Washington, from 1940 to 1942. She transferred to Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington from 1943 to 1944, and completed her B.A. in Elementary Education from Pacific Lutheran University in 1964. She took graduate studies at St. Lawrence University, New York, and Loma Linda University, in Psychology Administration.¹⁴

Lucille Thrasher taught in many church schools. She worked as a church school teacher in Yucaipe, California, from 1944-1945, and in Los Angeles, California from 1945-146. She served as a nursery school teacher in Los Angeles California from 1946 to 1947 and 1949 to 1951. From 1954 to 1957 she taught in the mission school in Bangkok, Thailand. She served as a church school Teacher in Bandung, Java from 1960 to 1961. She also taught in the School of Nursing in Bandung, Java from 1961 to 1963.

From 1964 to 1965 she taught at a public school in Auburn, Washington.¹⁵ She also taught at Glendale Union Academy in 1973.¹⁶

Career/Ministry

Neil Thrasher started his medical career as an intern in Seattle General Hospital 1947 to 1948. From 1948 to 1951 he was a resident physician at White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. He was an assistant professor and radiologist at the University of Oregon in Portland from 1951 to 1952. From 1952 to 1954 he served in the U.S. Army as chief of the Department of Radiology at the U.S. Army Hospital at Camp Carson Colorado.¹⁷ He spent two years as a as a medical officer during the Korean War.¹⁸ As he completed his military service, Thrasher received an invitation to serve as radiologist for the Bangkok Sanitarium.¹⁹ Over the next three decades he served as a medical missionary service in Southeast Asia, in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Dr. Thrasher served as staff physician, radiologist, and assistant medical director of Bangkok Sanitarium, Thailand, from 1954 until 1959.²⁰ In 1960 the Thrashers returned to the U.S. for furlough. Thrasher made use of several of his furloughs to take refresher courses to upgrade his medical skills, taking courses in hand reconstruction and heart surgery, and sometimes for longer periods to practice orthopedic surgery.²¹

Dr. Thrasher, served as director of Rumah Sakit Advent, the Bandung Sanitarium and Hospital (aka Bandung Mission Hospital) in Indonesia, from 1960 to 1962.²² He continued to serve Bandung Sanitarium until August 1964.²³ From August 1964 to August of 1965 he was a resident and surgeon in orthopedics and surgery at the University of Washington School of Medicine.²⁴ The following year, the Thrashers returned to their mission field in Indonesia, where Dr. Thrasher served as staff physician of Bandung Mission Hospital.²⁵ In 1967, he was acting director, surgeon, and radiologist of Rumah Sakit Advent.²⁶ In 1968, the Thrashers were approved for a permanent return to the United States to attend to family responsibilities.²⁷ In 1969 the General Conference voted for Thrasher to be placed under deferred medical appointment to Saigon in the Far Eastern Division.²⁸

In 1972 the General Conference voted for Dr. Thrasher, then in a residency program at White Memorial Medical Center, to be placed under deferred appointment to the Far Eastern Division for service at Bandung, Java.²⁹ In 1973 he was reassigned to Saigon Adventist Hospital.³⁰

In 1976, Dr. Thrasher served at the Empress Zauditu Memorial Adventist Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as a staff physician.³¹ In 1979, he was again voted to serve as physician-surgeon, and chief of staff of the Bangkok Adventist Hospital.³² In 1982 he served in the orthopedics department of the same institution.³³

In 1983 Thrasher served as the vice president of Penang Adventist Hospital, in Penang, Malaysia.³⁴ From 1984 to 1987 he returned to Bangkok Adventist Hospital, in the orthopedics service.³⁵ In 1985, he served there as acting vice president for medical affairs.³⁶ From 1988 until his official retirement in 1991 he was chief of staff of Phuket Adventist Hospital in Thailand.³⁷

In 1991, the General Conference voted the official retirement of the Thrashers from denominational service. The General Conference voted to give the Thrashers official appreciation in recognition of their 26 years of dedicated service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Far Eastern Division as “an orthopedic surgeon in both Bangkok and Phuket, Thailand as well as in Penang, Malaysia, as a medical director and physician at the Bandung Hospital in Indonesia.”³⁸

The Thrashers settled in Palm Springs California. Although officially retired in May 1991, on January 12, 1994, Neil and Lucille Thrasher returned to Thailand, where Dr. Thrasher served as physician/orthopedic surgeon at Bangkok Adventist Hospital. They completed their service in that institution by the end of 1996.³⁹

Later Life

Dr. Thrasher retired from active medical practice in 1997. A few years later he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. The Thrashers moved to Alterra Clare Bridge in Lynnwood, Washington. Despite his illness, his energy and care for his family was never affected. He died in his sleep on March 17, 2006, at age 86. He was preceded by his wife Lucille in death on January 9, 2003, in Seattle, Washington.⁴⁰

Legacy

The Thrashers lived an extraordinary life of sacrificial service. Neil Thrasher was instrumental in the upgrading of the many Adventist health institutions in Southeast Asia renowned for medical excellence.⁴¹

The Thrashers had a profound love towards human beings from all walks of life, regardless of their background, occupation, or social status. He displayed fondness and care to all his patients, whether rich or poor. Dr. Thrasher not only worked in the hospital, but also rendered services, including giving medical attention to patients battling different kinds of illnesses in refugee camps along the Cambodian border. During weekends he devoted his time to free clinics in far-flung villages, ensuring care was provided for poor patients who could not

pay their medical fees.⁴²

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