

Notes on Annie Osborne Hamilton

Born: 29 October 1908, Gore.

Married: Francis William Hay, 2 January 1935, Timaru

Children: Daphne Lorraine, born 8 February 1938, Taumarunui.
Laurence Osborne, born 1 December 1940, Auckland.
Murray Francis, born 7 December 1945, Dunedin; died 18 September 1946, Dunedin.
Glenys Esther, born 18 January 1948, Napier.
Lynette Dawn, born 5 March 1950, Hamilton

Anne Osborne Hay née Hamilton died: 13 August 2002, Porirua.

Francis William Hay died: 14 December 2002, Wellington.

Birth, schooling and employment

Annie Osborne Hamilton, born on Thursday 29 October 1908, was sixth of the eight children, and the fourth daughter, of William and Mary (Polly) Hamilton. She was born in the commodious house built a few years previously by her father at 9 Denton Street, Gore, Southland,

In 1914 Annie was enrolled in Gore Main School where she completed the 6th Standard, having lessons in the municipal bandroom for Std 5 and the town hall for Std 6 after the school was destroyed by fire in 1917.

An incident that happened during Annie's school days burnt itself into her conscience and was never forgotten; she would tell the story to her children in later years. A girl in Annie's class always wore a hat – none of the children knew why. One day Annie was walking behind this girl and as an act of bravado pulled the hat off – and to her horror the girl's hairless head was revealed for all to see. Annie was overcome with shame and remorse for having been so cruel, and this sense never left her.

Anne also used to recount to her children how one day she and her younger sister Doreen decided to go to the brickworks where their father was employed, even though they had been told that they must never go there. At the brickworks Doreen slipped and got mud on her pants. The sisters realised that this would give them away when they got home, and so Annie took Doreen's pants to wash them in a deep pool that had formed in an abandoned clay-pit. As she went out along the plank that was over the pool, she lost her balance and fell into the water, hitting her head on the plank as she went down. Luckily for her (and us!) a workman heard Doreen's screams and managed to save Annie from almost certain drowning.

Annie was prevented from attending high school because of her deteriorating eyesight. She lost vision almost totally in one eye and it was feared would become blind. However, though she wore glasses all her life, her restricted sight was never obvious and did not prevent her from driving a car and carrying out the normal duties of a wife and mother and of a Salvation Army officer.

Some years after leaving school, Annie gained employment in the local drapery shop of H. and J. Smith Ltd as cashier, a position she held for six years, resigning to look

after her mother in February 1930. H. and J. Smith operated a centralised cash system whereby all money for purchases was sent in spring-powered cartridges along wires to the two cashiers situated in a secure office on the first floor. The cashiers would check the invoice, provide a receipt and, if necessary, change and send the cartridge back down the wire to the counter, where the assistant was serving the customer. Annie greatly enjoyed both the responsibility and the company at the shop.

However, Annie's mother had a stroke when she was 53, and needed assistance in the house, which Annie provided in 1930 and 1931.

The Salvation Army connection

Annie's parents were Salvationists, but Annie, with other of the Hamilton children, attended the Methodist Sunday school until she was 11 years old, at which time she decided to go with her mother to the Army. She tells the story in the 'personal experience' account that accompanied her application for Salvation Army officership in 1931:

My mother had been a Salvationist for many years, and as we children grew older, we desired to take our stand with her. Almost from the first I recognised that to be a Salvationist required the giving of myself wholly to God; this knowledge brought conviction to my soul. For many weeks I struggled, and then to remain in a prayer-meeting became unbearable, so for a few weeks again, I attended Church with my father. This did not bring any peace or comfort to my heart, so the following Sunday, being Decision Sunday, I surrendered myself, and have been conscious from that time of the power of God in my life. I have taken my place in the Corps, endeavouring to do my best, because I knew it was work that God desired me to do. For many years I have felt the call to Officership, that the whole of my life might be spent in winning souls.

In 1928 her father William Hamilton had been 'struck off the roll' of the Gore Salvation Army for buying a tobacconist shop.

In her application for officership, Annie gives the date of her conversion as 4 June 1922 in the Gore Corps, when she would have been 13 years old. She signed the Articles of War and became a senior soldier the following year, at which time also she was commissioned as the treasurer of the Junior Corps. In 1929 she added to this leadership of the Sunbeams (the junior branch of the Salvation Army Guards movement for girls).

The GP who examined Annie in relation to her application for officership appended to the official form a confidential letter which says, in part: 'Otherwise (i.e. apart from piles) she is a good healthy girl – I should say one who will be a great asset to you – from the character point of view'. The corps sergeant-major also attached a letter to his report form in which he says: 'I have never had the opportunity of backing a more reliable, trustworthy, conscientious candidate, she has always been most willing to do her utmost to further the SA War, and a pleasure to work with at all times'.

Annie herself, in her letter responding to the Army's acceptance of her for training, ends with: 'I am enjoying a splendid souls experience, and trying to make the remaining few weeks profitable both to myself and others' – a characteristic note.

So Annie journeyed to Wellington and on 12 March 1932 began training as a cadet in the 'Crusaders' session for work as a Salvation Army officer. The principal's final

report on her, dated 10 January 1933, gives her a general grade of 3 out of 4, and reads as follows:

Religion: Has a deep experience which is an inspiration to others.

Education: Is quick and intelligent, though not outstanding in lessons.

Appearance: A tall, good looking girl of neat appearance.

Leadership: Commands attention and respect as a leader.

Health: Is not very robust; suffers constantly from piles and ear trouble.

First appointments

Testimony to the regard with which Annie was held by her training officers is the fact that her first appointment was as cadet-sergeant on the staff of the college to help train the next session. This appointment was short-lived, however, as economic circumstances led to the Army cancelling that session, so Annie was re-appointed, as a probationary-lieutenant, to assist Captain Elsie Lavis at Te Kuiti Corps. While here Annie took very ill with typhoid fever and spent some months recuperating. Also, during this year she first met her husband-to-be.

Eight months later, and with promotion to lieutenant, she was moved to Gonville, Wanganui, to assist first Captain Coralie Avenell and then from 1 March 1934 Captain Edith Fantham. It was from Gonville that Annie was married.

At one of these 'single' appointments Annie and her commanding officer were so poor that they had only one pair of wearable uniform shoes between them. They used to take turns at going out about corps business with the shoes on, and doing home duties without them – what happened on Sundays I'm not sure!

Marriage and officership

When attending the Congress held in Auckland in 1933, Annie stayed with her sister Ella who was married to Captain George Thompson then stationed at Newmarket Corps. Also, staying in the quarters was Frank Hay, a friend of George's from his time as men's side officer in the training college. Frank took a liking to the attractive young visitor, and on the train journey home managed to sit beside her. So a friendship began, and in June 1933 Frank received permission from THQ to further his interest, with official recognition of an 'understanding' between the two. The relationship developed: in March 1934 permission for an engagement was given, and on 2 January 1935 Frank and Anne (as she now preferred to be known) were married by Major Alfred Suter in the Timaru SA Hall (not Gore, as you might expect, as Anne's mother had been incapacitated by a stroke).

The documentation compiled at this time on the basis of which the territorial commander would make his decision re the marriage proposal is interesting. Anne's DC is positive about her: 'Says the Lieutenant is quite efficient and successful, is good, capable and very much alive. Has marked capacity for leadership. She is not too strong as far as health is concerned.'

Two weeks after the marriage the happy couple arrived at their first appointment together – Papakura Corps, where they remained for 18 months.

[For the rest of the story of Anne's work and life see *Notes on Francis William Hay and Annie Osborne née Hamilton.*]