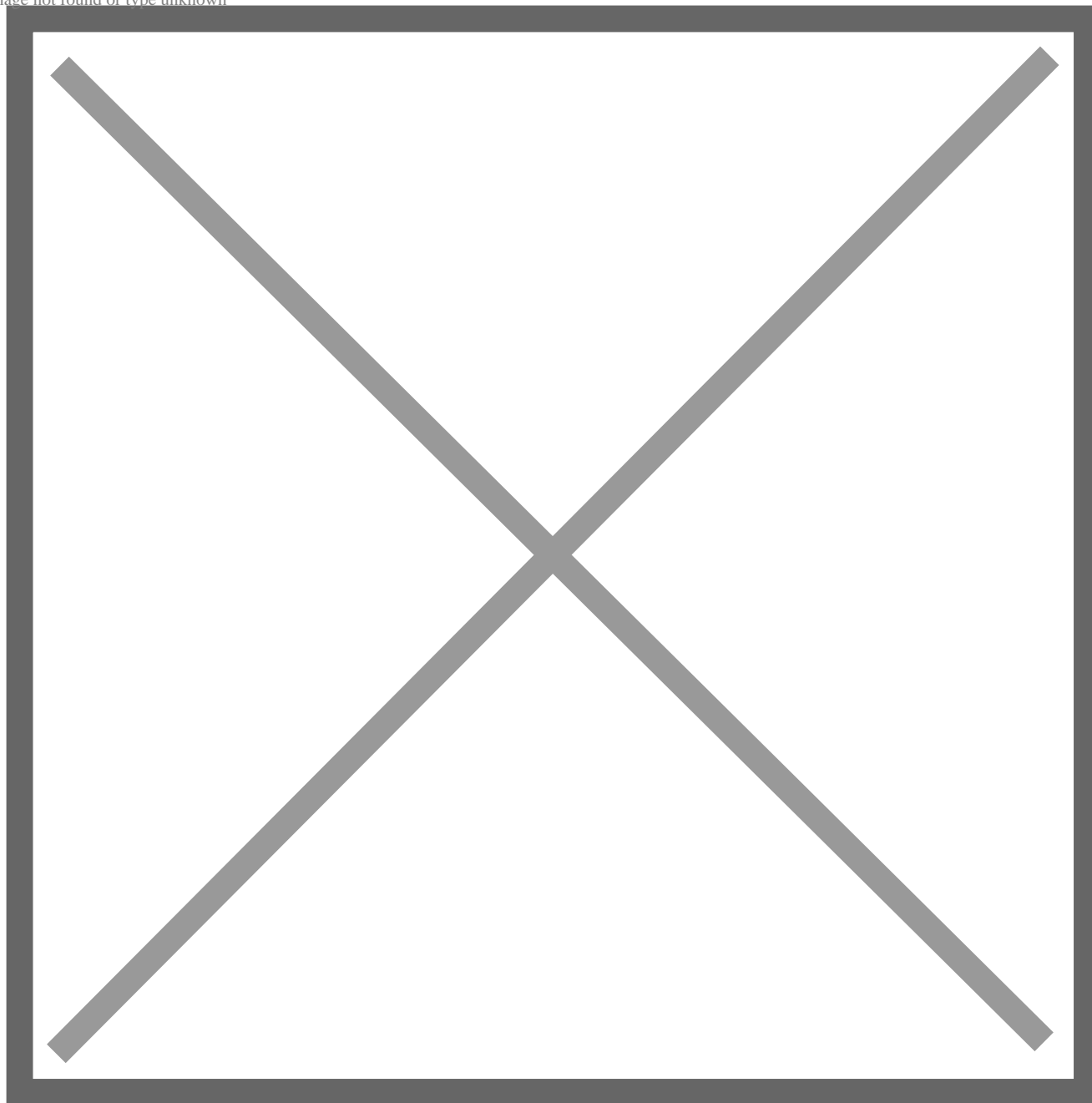


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## Robinson, Mario Kemble (1911–2011)

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### ENOC IGLESIAS ORTEGA

Enoc Iglesias Ortega, Ph.D. (University of Morelos, Mexico), is an associate professor at the Adventist University of Colombia and editor of the university journal of studies and research. He has written seven books and has co-authored two others besides having written numerous magazine articles. He has worked for the Adventist Church as university president, academic vice president, and general secretary, as well as university director of admissions and records. He is married to Aura Graciela González Arjona and has two adult children.

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Mario Robinson Kemble was a renowned musician, pastor and church administrator in Colombia, Venezuela, and the

United States.

## Early Years and Marriage

Mario Robinson Kemble was born March 31, 1931 to Walter Robinson and Crisilda Kemble in San Andrés, Colombia. As a child he enjoyed horseback riding. Mario was homeschooled by his mother Crisilda. The family moved to Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and later to Medellín, Colombia so that their children could attend the Colombian-Venezuelan Academy.<sup>1</sup> Medellín had become the center of Colombian Adventist life in 1927, when the Colombian-Venezuelan Union was created. As a child Mario was impressed with the message about the Second Coming of Christ that was preached in evangelistic meetings.<sup>2</sup>

Robinson developed a passion for music, while his siblings, Riva and Tulio, were interested in baseball. Mario was privileged to take piano lessons from Marie Oppenheimer, a Jewish-German pianist, who taught at the Colombian-Venezuelan Academy. From his first recital, Robinson captivated the audience. He also studied with Maestro Santamaría, consummate musician in the School of Fine Arts.<sup>3</sup>

Mario Robinson was baptized in 1943 at the Colombian-Venezuelan Academy.<sup>4</sup> He received his secondary school diploma in 1949 at that same educational institution. He distinguished himself as a pianist, and continued his studies at the School of Fine Arts where he also taught piano. In 1951 he returned to the School as a full professor of music and religion. He exercised his considerable musical talent not only on the piano but also on the accordion.<sup>5</sup>

A serious public crisis arose in Medellín that caused Robinson to move to Barquisimeto, Venezuela, as a political refugee. Pastor Gabriel Castro, who at the time was running an evangelistic campaign, asked Robinson to provide the music. While there, Robinson studied at the Conservatory under the direction of Maestro Paul Freaud who was preparing him to go to France. However, shortly before the trip to France, Robinson abandoned the plans to go to France and remained in Venezuela.<sup>6</sup>

In 1949 Robinson met Elsa Hironymus, a student at the Colombian-Venezuelan Academy. Later, the couple began a formal relationship and on December 18, 1952, Elsa Hironymus and Mario Robinson were married.<sup>7</sup>

## Ministry

Pastor Mario Robinson's pastoral work can be summarized as follows: pastor in Bogotá, Colombia (1952-1953); professor and ministerial secretary, Island of San Andrés (1953-1955); pastor in Barranquilla, Colombia (1956-1957);<sup>8</sup> pastor and professor at the Colombian-Venezuelan Institute and in Cali, Colombia (1958-1961); pastor overseeing over 40 congregations while carrying out evangelistic efforts in Bucaramanga (1962-1964); pastor on the west coast of Panama (1965-1966); president of the Panama Conference (1966 and 1969); secretary of various departments of the church and pastor in Costa Rica (1969-1973); president of the Colombian Islands Mission (1973-1978).

Robinson was sent to Papayal, Santander in 1956. There, he worked with Pastors Luis Liévano and Loren Gallardo, and an 80-member church was established in 1960. Church members still remember the hymns they sang accompanied by Pastor Robinson on the accordion.

## Final Years

In 2006 the news reached the Colombian-Venezuelan Institute and the Adventist University Corporation that Pastor Mario Robinson was gravely ill. Prayers were raised on his behalf.<sup>9</sup> Robinson often thought about his visits to Medellín, "to his beloved ICOLVEN", and his years as a student and his teacher Ann de Gardner. Mario Robinson Kemble died in Loma Linda, California, on March 11, 2011.<sup>10</sup>

## Contribution

Pastor Robinson Kemble's work was recognized for his music ministry to the Adventist churches under his care. At the end of his career, he went to California where he taught and pastored until 1993, at which time he retired from active service. Even so, he continued his musical activities until his death.<sup>11</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Daniel A. Duffis, *Blessed Heritage: The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on San Andres and Old Providence Islands* (Medellin: Litografía ICOLVEN, 2000), 123.?
2. *Ibid.*, 139.?
3. *Ibid.*?
4. Enoc Iglesias Ortega, *Instituto Colombo–Venezolano Corporación Universitaria Adventista: Valores y servicio 1937-2000* (Medellin: Litografía ICOLVEN, 2004), 199.?
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6. Duffis, 139.?
7. *Ibid.*, 140.?
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9. Enoc Iglesias Ortega, *En el Nuevo Milenio: Historia de la Corporación Universitaria Adventista 2010-2017*, volume II (Medellin: Litografía ICOLVEN, 2018), 305, accessed February 15, 2020, [http://repository.unac.edu.co/handle/11254/650.?](http://repository.unac.edu.co/handle/11254/650.)
10. Loida Robinson Kemble, telephone interview by the author, June 11, 2019.?
11. *Ibid.*?

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