



Radio Lira, La Ceiba, Alajuela, Costa Rica.

Photo courtesy of Royner Jose Ramirez Alvarez.

## Radio Lira

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### MILTON ALBERTO CASTILLO

Milton Alberto Castillo Gómez obtained his master's degree in pastoral theology at the Adventist University of Montemorelos (UM, extension of Andrews University), and a bachelor of theology degree at the Adventist Center for Higher Studies (CADES, Alajuela, Costa Rica). He currently serves as president of the Northern Adventist Mission of Costa Rica and is married to María Guadalupe Castillo. They have two children and four grandchildren.

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Radio Lira, a non-profit organization in Costa Rica, offers its audience varied spiritual programming that includes blocks of music and messages by dynamic speakers.

### Pioneers of the Radio Ministry in Costa Rica

In 1980 Omar Grieve, an Argentine based in New York, arrived in Costa Rica. His father had directed him through the communication and production of the television program "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" in the city of New York.<sup>1</sup>

Omar Grieve and a group of his collaborators received the support of Pastor Eubanks, who granted them permission to start work on a university radio. These enthusiastic students defined their goals and printed stationery and letterhead. Then they obtained permission to use space that was previously a bathroom of the men's dorm.<sup>2</sup>

By 1981 the Radio Club was formed, composed mostly of CADES students who worked in a very traditional way. They were truly Adventist radio pioneers.

In 1982, what had been a basement full of porcelain and tile was transformed into a dry and cozy reception room, recording area, and two control booths for audio and radio. The walls, floor, and ceiling were fully transformed. The leaders of this ministry opened the doors of the recently transformed radio studio to learners of broadcasting, actors, and operators.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1983, the director, Roberto Eubanks, published in the newspaper *La Nación*, three consecutive announcements to those who would like to sell a frequency right for broadcasting in the AM or FM bands. A month later, Amado Céspedes Arias, a concessionaire of a frequency in 1540 KHz, offered to sell it. The Boskind family decided to financially support the project, and the frequency was purchased at 1540 KHz.

The disadvantage of this purchase was that only ten blocks from the house where Radio LIRA worked, it could not be heard, according to measurements made in August 1983. Meanwhile, Pastor Robert Folkenberg, learned of the situation, and he began efforts to obtain financing for the installation of the radio. On February 9, 1983, in the offices of the Inter-American Division, a vote was taken to support the radio with an appropriation of US\$30,000. Three months later engineer Bob Erickson made his first trip to Costa Rica.<sup>4</sup>

Professors Eustacio Penniecook and Johnny Ramírez made numerous efforts to:

Obtain the 1540 KHz frequency right, in the name of the Costa Rican Church Association of Seventh-day Adventists, when the Costa Rican Mission was chaired by Pastor Pablo Perla and Pastor Noel Ruiloba was director of communication.

Establish a contract with a private consultant to request from the government four frequencies for international diffusion.

Process with the Costa Rican Mission the establishment of a booth, two towers, and a set of radio broadcasts on the property of the Hatillo Church and the Adventist Educational Center of Costa Rica.

Agree with the Central American Union on a financing plan for the monthly operation of the station, together with CADES, which by June 1983 represented a monthly disbursement of 27,000 colones.

According to the recommendation of engineer Bob Erickson, a house was rented for the transmitter plant with all its auxiliaries and the work was carried out by Mario Camacho.<sup>5</sup>

With the work of the CONSASA, a link for a studio-transmitter was built, one in 250.02 and another in 469.345 MHz.

In August 1983 the radio equipment was moved, which at the time included two very old monophonic record players, a microphone, a small monaural amplifier, a domestic manufacturing transmitter with an antenna coupler, and a set of 30 discs with music provided by Radio Canada.<sup>6</sup>

On October 20, 1983, at the meeting of the board of directors of the Costa Rican Mission, Pastor Noel Ruiloba was appointed as director of the CADES Radio. It was arranged that the Hatillo plant would be turned on and off by Professor Eduardo Barr or his sisters, who resided on the campus where the transmitter was located. Studio operators at the CADES facilities were Rubén H. García Toc and Eduardo González, and the speakers were Otto Ortíz, Ariel Monterroso, and Meyling Beltran.<sup>7</sup>

## Legal Framework

The Adventist Church in the 1980s was given the task of venturing into broadcasting to carry the message of salvation to the people of Costa Rica.

Based on the Radio and Television Law No. 1758 of June 19, 1954, the award of the frequency 1540 KHz was achieved by the Office of National Radio Control which was subsequently exchanged with Fernando López Fallas, who delivered the frequency 88.7 FM, and Radio Lira yielded the frequency 1540 AM. It is important to note that Radio Lira was assigned the frequency 88.7 FM, to cover the entire national territory and it was for political reasons that they cut off and handed over the area of Pérez Zeledón to another person.

The frequency 88.7 FM was assigned nationwide until 2003 when a contract was signed with the president of the republic, Dr. Abel Pacheco. The validity of the contract is for a period of 20 years after which a new contract will be made.

To give legal support to Radio Lira in 1991, the Radio Lira Association was formally constituted before the Registry of Legal Persons of the National Registry according to file 4146 and whose legal ID is 3-002-115677, which is currently represented by Pastor Milton Castillo Gómez.<sup>8</sup>

## Beginning of Transmission

On September 19, 1983, the air signal of TIASD (Radio Lira) was released for the first time. With great enthusiasm, applause, congratulations, and praise, the first transmission of the radio was celebrated.

From the beginning there were programs such as *The Voice of Hope*, *Opening the Doors of Understanding*, *Sharing Life*, *School of Life*, and *Lift Your Eyes*. Except for *The Voice of Hope*, all the programs were produced at Radio Lira studios, under the direction of Pastor Noel Ruiloba and Rubén García Toc.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the first radio operators were: Moisés Beletzui, Pablo Houghton, Alicia Rivas, Rosaura Barrantes, Eduardo González, Marta Flor, and Doria Álvarez.

In November 1985, Pastor Rubén García was employed as radio programmer, and in March 1985 he joined the family of Radio Lira engineer, David Leroy Gregory, who served as general manager and chief engineer of the Adventist radio complex in Costa Rica.<sup>10</sup> Valuable programs were produced by Pastors Hugo Gambetta and Humberto Raúl Treiyer, and voluntary support was provided by Oscar Álvarez Paiz.

On December 1, 1985, the radio building, which had been built in January 1985, was inaugurated. Since May 1986, Radio Lira International had broadcast surrounded the globe. The signal has been captured in: Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, United States, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Germany, Australia, Denmark, France, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and India.<sup>11</sup>

## New Administration

In 1989, the Board of Directors of UNADECA, assigned the administration of the radio agency to the Costa Rican Mission, and in 1990 Pastor William Gomez was appointed radio director. On July 5, 1990, the directors of the Costa Rican Mission, Pastor William Gomez, engineer David Gregory, and engineer Raymon Lenz, bought from Fernando López the frequency of 88.7 FM. As part of the payment, the frequency 1540 KHz AM is transferred and the difference was made in cash.

On November 24, 1990, the directors of the Costa Rican Mission and the radio celebrated a Fellowship Day in order to raise funds for Radio Lira, with the objective of financing part of the payment of the purchase of the new frequency.

On November 25, 1990, with the presence of Pastor Leslie McMilan, the frequency of 88.7 FM was officially inaugurated. Also present were Pastors Leonel Pottinger, president of the Costa Rican Mission; Salvador Mairena, director of communication of the mission; Noel Ruiloba and Daniel Medina.<sup>12</sup>

## Amplification

Over time it became necessary to improve the facilities, and the construction of two production studios, a computer center for the whole complex, and further expansion of the engineering department was considered. To receive programs produced by the church in other places, it was planned to install a satellite receiver antenna.

Four new shortwave transmitters for 19,22,25,31 and 49 meters, were installed in Cahuita, Limón. With the support of the Boskind family, the Adventist World Radio offices were moved to a new location in Carrizal de Alajuela.

Other directors of Radio Lira were Juan Carlos Muñoz, Carlos Molina, and Manuel Medina Obando. In 2002 the director of the radio was Vanessa Molina de Noguera, the first woman to occupy this responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

## Statistics

Costa Rica has a territory of 51,100 square kilometers, and currently Radio Lira covers 81 percent of the territory, since the other 19 percent is covered by 88.7 stereo, from the southern zone of Costa Rica, as this is a legally shared frequency.

Of the 4,966,000 inhabitants of Costa Rica in 2019, Radio Lira reaches 94 percent of the assigned coverage; however, via internet it is accessible to the entire population and the world. Lira Radio listeners include Catholic, Protestant, and Seventh-day Adventist Church members.<sup>14</sup>

## Significant Events that Led to the Reach of Soul Winning

Booths and towers were required to transmit the evangelistic waves of the local broadcaster (1540 KHz, at the beginning), and five short-wave frequencies to transmit from Costa Rica what “the radio station, which consisted of producing, compiling and bringing together the best of Spanish language programming,” said Don Jacobsen of Adventist World Radio. It was a significant event to be supported by Adventist World Radio as Radio Lira fulfilled its objectives in the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

Another significant event was the financial help of Sidney Boskind who agreed to purchase the radio station.<sup>16</sup>

Since 1983, Radio Lira has been one of the instruments that God has used to bring souls to the feet of Jesus Christ. It began by broadcasting a few hours a day, 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and only covered ten kilometers at 1540 KHz. Today it transmits at 88.7 FM, around the clock and covers 94 percent of the Costa Rican territory!<sup>17</sup>

## What the Radio Lacks to Fulfill its Mission

The station is a non-profit organization that offers its audience varied and healthy programming that includes blocks of music, interventions by dynamic speakers, and messages that bring people closer to God. It still needs to:

Convert the signal to stereo so that it is heard with better sound.

Further implement technology platforms for the effectiveness of gospel preaching.

Work together with pastors to have an effective visitation team.

Strengthen programming with live national programs of biblical content where there is interaction with listeners.

Promote and administer a Radio Bible School.

## List of Directors

Noel Ruiloba (1983-1989); William Gómez (1990-1991); Manuel Medina (1992-1993); Vanessa de Noguera (2001-2004); Luis Gerardo Mora (2004-2006); José Ma. Vallejos (2006-2007); Eduardo Viales (2007-2008); Eugenio Vallejos (2008-2013); Osmel Serrano (2013-2014); Earnal Scott (2014-2015); Milton Castillo (2015-2019).

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