



Zytkoskee, Aldred Gordon (1916–2005)

Gordon Zytkoskee
Photo courtesy of Carroll V. Brauer.

SAMIR BERBAWY, AND DAUN REDFIELD

Samir Berbawy, M.A. in mathematics Education (Pacific Union College), was born in Egypt and spent his early years in Egypt and Lebanon. He attended Middle East College (now Middle East University), Lebanon. Berbawy served as president of the Egypt Field from January 2006 to August 2009.

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Aldred Gordon Zytkoskee significantly contributed to the development of the Adventist mission in Egypt. He was the president of the Nile Union of the then Middle East Division of the General Conference from 1958 to 1962.

Early Life

Aldred Gordon Zytkoskee was born on July 10, 1916, in Maryland, United States of America, the third and youngest son of Adrian Edmund and Laura (Tate) Zytkoskee. His brothers, Adrian Salisbury (July 23, 1910–October 13, 1953) and Tate Van Eman Zytkoskee (September 15, 1912–January 4, 1999) both became Seventh-day Adventist ministers.¹ His mother died of cancer just before he turned two years old.²

Education and Marriage

After Gordon's mother died, his father moved the family to Wisconsin, where he homeschooled his sons. After six years, they moved to Winona, Minnesota, where their father hired a church-school teacher to continue teaching his boys at home.³ At some point, Gordon attended Maplewood Academy⁴ and then went on to Union College in Nebraska, from which he graduated in 1941.⁵ On May 24, 1941, he married Miss Evelyn Mae McWilliams, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles McWilliams.⁶ Miss McWilliams had graduated from Union College in 1940. Together, they attended the Theological Seminary at Washington, D.C., in the fall of 1942 to study the Arabic language.⁷ Their daughter, Sheryl Ann, was born on December 12, 1948.⁸

Gordon showed leadership promise throughout his years at Union College, both spiritually and in the colporteur work. During the summers of 1937 and 1939, he worked as a colporteur in the Wyoming Mission and earned a scholarship doing so in 1939.⁹ In April 1938, he was appointed to lead 40 students in the canvassing group at the college.¹⁰ He was a prayer band leader during the weeks of prayer in 1939¹¹ and 1940,¹² and in February 1941, he was chosen to be the president of the colporteur band that trained 33 students to work in literature evangelism.¹³

Ministry

While still a student at Union College in December 1940, Zytkoskee and Walter Mazart held evangelistic meetings in Milford, Nebraska. Upon his graduation from Union College in 1941, the Bureau of Guidance and Placement placed Zytkoskee as a ministerial intern in Minnesota, where he assisted Elder Carl Sundin in an evangelistic campaign at the Brainerd Tabernacle in September–December 1941.¹⁴

A. Gordon Zytkoskee was ordained along with Elder Neal C. Wilson and eight others on February 26, 1944, at Washington Missionary College, immediately before being sent to the "Arabic Field."¹⁵ Zytkoskee's ministry there began as a pastor and evangelist and serving on the Mission Committees in Iran and Egypt. Mrs. Zytkoskee was also a missionary in this field.¹⁶

Egypt was within the Nile Union Mission, which also encompassed Anglo-Egyptian Sudan north of the 15th parallel, Libya, Yemen, the portion of Arabia bordering on the Red Sea, and the Aden Protectorate. By 1958, the name was shortened to the Nile Union, omitting the word *mission* to help with the recognition of the Church by the local governments.

Elder Zytkoskee served on the management board of the Fayoum Training School, which became the Adventist Training School, in Fayoum, Egypt, through 1950.¹⁷ In 1947, he also became the director of the newly founded Matariah Mercy Home, an Adventist orphanage in a suburb of Cairo. Meanwhile, Mrs. Zytkoskee was teaching grades 9 and 10 at the Heliopolis Adventist School and also teaching cooking classes and singing in the Friday morning assemblies.¹⁸

In 1951, Elder Zytkoskee took over the role of president of the Egypt Mission vacated by Elder Wilson when he became president of the Nile Union Mission.¹⁹ While Elder Zytkoskee held the office of president, Mrs. Zytkoskee

served as the Primary headmistress and a teacher at the Heliopolis Adventist School for a year. Elder Zytkoskee remained president of the Egypt Mission and director of the Matariah Mercy Home until 1955, when his duties took him to the Middle East Division office, where he became secretary of the Radio and Television, Voice of Prophecy, Home Missionary, and Young People's Missionary Volunteer (Y.P.M.V.) departments. He continued in the Radio and Television and Y.P.M.V. departments until 1957.

During the time that Elder Zytkoskee was in charge of the Radio and Television department, the Bible correspondence course associated with the *Voice of Prophecy* program became available in Turkish for the first time. In addition, advanced courses focusing on the book of Daniel were offered to those who completed the first set of Bible studies. These studies led to the establishment of extension Sabbath Schools for the graduates in the division²⁰

On June 24, 1957, Gordon and Evelyn, with their daughter, Sheryl Ann, departed from the Middle East. As they were leaving, they stopped in Beirut, Lebanon, on June 23, where he presented the commencement address for the Middle East College graduation exercises.²¹ They went to Canada, where he became a pastor at the Toronto Awde Street Church in the Ontario-Quebec Conference. They were not in Canada long; on November 11, 1958, he became the president of the Nile Union.²² At that time, Elder Zytkoskee was in the U.S.A. being treated for cancer of the throat.²³ In his absence, Carroll Brauer was named the acting president, and Richard Wilmot was the secretary-treasurer.²⁴ Elder Zytkoskee sailed for Egypt on April 22, 1959, and his wife and daughter followed after school was out in mid-June.²⁵ He picked up additional duties in the Nile Union besides being the president, also serving on the board of trustees at Middle East College and the board of management at the Nile Union Academy. By 1961, he had also picked up the secretary duties for the Ministerial, Public Affairs, Publishing, and Temperance departments of the Nile Union.

In 1962, the Middle East Division Executive Committee decided to dissolve the Nile Union; an action suggested by the General Conference to simplify the division organization.²⁶ The Zytkoskees moved briefly to Lebanon, and then returned to the U.S.A. In 1963, Elder Zytkoskee was appointed to be the assistant administrator of the Personnel department at the soon-to-open Kettering Memorial Hospital in Ohio.²⁷ While her husband was finding employees for the new hospital, Mrs. Zytkoskee took a position teaching grades three and four at the Dayton Junior Academy.²⁸ Elder Zytkoskee continued in the Kettering Hospital Personnel department and was also president of the Hospital Personnel Management Association of the Seventh-day Adventist Hospital Association until April 1, 1971, when he was appointed the director of the Personnel Administration department at the General Conference, a position that he held until he retired in 1978.²⁹

Later Years

After his retirement from the General Conference, Zytkoskee remained active with the Adventist Volunteer Service. He and his wife left their home in Paradise, California, on April 26, 1989, to return to Egypt, where he briefly served as acting president of the Egypt Field.³⁰

Elder Zytkoskee lived his final years with his wife in Paradise, California. His frequent letters to various Adventist publications, which clarify details and add overlooked facts, show that he closely read Adventist periodicals in his retirement.³¹ He passed away Thursday, October 13, 2005, in Paradise.³² His wife, Evelyn, was reported as "at rest" in Arizona as of June 2016.³³

Legacy

Notable contributions of Elder Zytkoskee to God's work in Egypt include support of compassionate ministries and gaining government support:

1. Elder Zytkoskee was the director of the Matariah Mercy Home, the first Adventist orphanage, from its opening in 1947 until 1955.³⁴ The orphanage was started in 1947 with Mrs. Erna Kruger, a widowed German nurse who dedicated her life to the boys and girls of Egypt. She became "Mama Kruger" to 5 Egyptian orphans, initially, and then to 22, and then by 1959, 42 orphans.³⁵ At that point, the villa where it was located was too small to accommodate all the orphans seeking help, so under Elder Zytkoskee's care, the orphanage was rebuilt starting in 1961 as one of the projects supported by the first quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. The work was completed in 1963, after he left Egypt.³⁶
2. Elder Zytkoskee was instrumental in the development of the Benghazi Hospital in Libya. King Idris of Libya offered the Church their choice of land at no charge for the building of the hospital.³⁷
3. Elder Zytkoskee finalized the Egyptian government's official recognition of the Adventist Church in Egypt, which until this day gives our work privileges only a few denominations enjoy.³⁸

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