

Archbold, Bender Lawton (1908–2006)

GEORGE W. BROWN

George W. Brown, M.A., Ph.D.-*honoris causa* (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan), is a well-known preacher, educator, and administrator who retired in 1993 as president of the Inter-American Division. He has served the church as pastor, evangelist; college president, professor, dean of men; union and division youth director; and division field secretary. He authored *Portraits of Jesus* and *The Fruit of the Spirit* and has written extensively for the *Adventist Review* and other denominational journals. Pastor Brown and his wife, Carla, live in Avon Park, Florida and have four daughters, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bender Lawton Archbold was the first native born Inter-American to be president of the Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, serving from 1970 to 1980, the decade when the division became the fastest growing and the largest of the SDA world divisions. He was also a renowned preacher, dean of men, teacher, academy principal, departmental director, and administrator.¹

A second generation Seventh-day Adventist, Archbold was born on June 12, 1908, on the Colombian Island of Providencia, also known as Old Providencia. He was the fifth of 11 children born to Sheridan Tyler and Matilde Carlota Archbold.²

Archbold was the product of Christian education from elementary to post graduate. He began his education at age nine in the little Adventist primary school on his home island of Providencia, walking three miles, five days a week, to reach the school, even though there was a public school next door to his home.³ On completion of his primary education he attended the West Caribbean Training School in Las Cascadas, Panamá, where he obtained his secondary education. In 1922, while studying at the West Caribbean Training School he was baptized. After graduation in 1928, at the early age of 20, he began denominational service as a church school teacher in the Bay Islands, Honduras, where he taught for two years.⁴

In 1930 Archbold attended Southern Junior College (now La Sierra University) in Riverside, California, and graduated with an associate degree in business administration in 1932. His pursuit of higher education took him to Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, where he graduated in 1935 with a B.A. degree in religion, with minors in English and business.

Immediately after graduation, Archbold began 45 years of distinguished denominational service to the church in the Inter-American Division. He served as dean of men and teacher at West Indies College (now Northern Caribbean University), Mandeville, Jamaica, from 1935 to 1941. On November 24, 1936, he married Frances Victoria Burke, a licentiate of the Royal School of Music in piano performance. They had two daughters, Elizabeth and Ruth.⁵

In 1941 Archbold accepted a call to serve as departmental director for Education, Youth and Lay Activities in the Panama Conference. While in Panama, he was ordained to the gospel ministry on February 13, 1943. In 1947, he became the principal of the newly founded Colegio Industrial Panameño (Panama Industrial Academy). In March 1949, he accepted a call to serve as Youth and Education director for the Caribbean Union Conference. He was elected president of the South Caribbean Conference in 1950 and served in that capacity for seven years.⁶

In 1957 Archbold became president of Caribbean Union College (now University of the Southern Caribbean). He served with distinction in this capacity until 1962. In 1960, during his tenure as president of Caribbean Union College, he was granted a bursary to Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he completed a master of arts degree in school administration and educational psychology.

At the 1962 General Conference Session in San Francisco, California, Archbold was elected director of the Lay Activities department of the Inter-American Division (IAD). He was the first native Inter-American to hold an elected position at the IAD headquarters.⁷ Four years later, at the 1966 GC Session in Detroit, Michigan, he was elected executive secretary of the Inter-American Division. At the following GC Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1970



B.L. Archbold, IAD President 1970-1980
From *Changing Lives in Inter-America, 1922-1997, 75 Years of Miracles* (Miami, FL: IAD Publishing Association, 1997).

he was elected president of the Inter-American Division.

During the next ten years under his dynamic leadership the church in IAD broke all previous records in the world Church for evangelism and church growth. Archbold was a charismatic church leader with an engaging personality, a disarming sense of humor, and contagious laughter. He was affectionately known as “Uncle Ben.” During his presidency of IAD his dynamism and passion for evangelism earned him the epithet, “Mr. Evangelism.”

In 1972, on the golden anniversary of the Inter-American Division, Archbold launched a division-wide evangelistic initiative titled “Evangelism Explosion” that brought the Inter-American Division to the forefront in evangelism and church growth and became the hallmark of the division.⁸ In 1977 IAD became the first division of the world church to reach a membership of half a million members.⁹ This extraordinary church growth soon captured the attention of the world Church and set in motion a new momentum of global evangelism and church growth.¹⁰ In recognition of Archbold’s outstanding leadership, Andrews University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, on June 3, 1979.¹¹

At the 1980 General Conference Session Archbold retired after 45 years of dedicated and productive service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On August 12, 2006, he died in Orlando, Florida, at age 98.¹²

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Daniel A. Duffis, “Dr. Bender Lawton Archbold – Sunrise June 12, 1908, Old Providence, Colombia, Sunset August 12, 2006, Orlando, Florida, USA,” unpublished document in honor of his life sent to his family at the time of death, August 2006, sent to author by Archbold’s daughter.?
2. Ibid.?
3. Ibid.?
4. Oswald E. Gordon, “Bender Archbold’s Early Years,” unpublished document in honor of his life sent to his family at the time of death, August 19, 2006, sent to author by Archbold’s daughter.?
5. Duffis.?
6. Gordon.?
7. Eric John Murray, *A History of Seventh-day Adventists in Trinidad and Tobago, 1891-1981* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: College Press, 1982), 179.?
8. Floyd Greenleaf, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1992), 45.?
9. Office of Archives and Statistics, “115th Annual Statistical Report 1977,” accessed November 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1977.pdf>.?
10. Ian Green, “Bender L. Archbold” in Nevlyn D. Fredie and A. B. Noel, eds., *Seventh-day Adventists 100 Years, 1891-1991* (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad: Caribbean Union Conference of SDA, 1991), 1.?
11. George W. Brown, “Division President Receives Doctorate at Andrews,” *Inter-American Division News Flashes*, June 26, 1979, 1.?
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