

# Broberg, Svend

## Aage (1896–1974)

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### KAREN ESTHER WILBY

Karen Esther Wilby (nee Broberg) was born in Denmark but spent most of her childhood abroad with her missionary parents. She was trained as a nurse at The Peace Memorial Hospital in Watford, England, qualifying in 1956, and as a midwife in London and Reading, qualifying in 1958. She spent the early half of the 1960s working part-time as a midwife in West Africa. She worked as a matron in a nursing home in Scotland for 7 years and as a district nurse in Denmark for 10 years until retirement in 2002.

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Svend Aage Broberg served the Seventh-day Adventist Church for 37 years as a pastor-evangelist, departmental director, and leader in Denmark, Africa, and the United States. Fifteen of those years Svend and his wife Laurette spent in the mission fields of West Africa and Ethiopia.

### Early Life

Svend Aage Broberg<sup>1</sup> was born August 12, 1896, in Copenhagen, Denmark. His father, Hans Peter Christian Broberg, owned a tobacco shop in and had been a heavy smoker until his conversion and baptism, which occurred several years after his son had already joined the church. Hans Peter died in April 1945. Karen Broberg, Svend's mother, also became an Adventist along with her husband and died in 1941. Svend Aage had a sister, Anna Jacobsen, who would marry Alfred Paaske and who died in the 1970s.

The young Svend managed his father's tobacco shop until he joined the army in 1918-1919. Very interested in sports, he was good at them. One day he met another athlete who was better than him, and they had a chat together. The man was a vegetarian and a Seventh-day Adventist. When Svend wanted to know more, he was invited to some Bible lectures in Copenhagen conducted by T. Tobiassen. After he attended during the winter of 1920-1921, Pastor Tobiassen baptized him at the end of the series on June 12, 1921.

### Education, Marriage and family



Svend Aage Broberg, c. 1945

Photo courtesy of Esther Wilby.

Broberg completed a three-year course at Nærum Mission School in Denmark (1921-1924) and sold books and magazines during the summer months. He continued his studies for the ministry at Stanborough College in Watford, England in 1924. However, running out of funds after only seven months, he returned to Denmark and again became a literature evangelist. The selling of Adventist literature went well, and in 1925-1926 he completed his ministerial training at Emmanuel Missionary College (later to become Andrews University) in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

Back in Denmark, on September 27, 1927, Svend married Laurette Angine Andersen at the Town Hall in Copenhagen, followed by a service in the Adventist Church. Laurette had been born on October 18, 1893, in Harres near Bredebro in South Jutland, Denmark. When Svend died, he and Laurette had been married for 47 years.

The marriage produced two daughters, Ruth and Esther. Ruth was born in Denmark on August 17, 1928, and trained as a nurse and midwife. She served for some years in the mid-1950s as a missionary in Dessie, Ethiopia. In 1960 she married Paul Willis in Los Angeles, California, and died April 9, 2013. The couple had three children: Jonathan, Joanna Lis, and Judith Ann. Esther was born December 13, 1934, and trained as a nurse and midwife in England. On October 18, 1959, she married Henry Christopher Wilby. Serving as missionaries in Ghana and Nigeria (1960-1966), they had three children: Susan Lynn, David Broberg, and Laila Joyce.

## Ministry

When Svend Broberg finished his studies in the U.S.A., he began working for the church as a Bible instructor for Chr. Resen in Aarhus, Denmark, 1926-1927. Then followed a period as an evangelist (1927-1930) in Adventist pioneer John Matteson's hometown, Rudkøbing, on Langeland, then on the island of Bornholm and in Skagen, the northern most town in Denmark. In 1930 L. H. Christian and L. Muderspach ordained him to the gospel ministry. During 1930-1933 Broberg served as a departmental director (Sabbath School, youth, and home missions) for the Denmark Conference.<sup>2</sup>

In 1935 he received a call to be the superintendent for the Sierra Leone Mission in West Africa, a position he held until 1942.<sup>3</sup> The tropical climate strained their health, and the family took their furlough in Denmark several times. On one of the furloughs, in 1940 during World War II, someone interviewed Broberg before he left for Sierra Leone and reminded him of the risk of underwater mines when they would have to take the ship from Amsterdam to Sierra Leone. "Broberg, wouldn't you rather stay at home?" To which Broberg responded: "I feel my call is to be in Africa. There I have my work, and I am happy to be out there."<sup>4</sup> In 1942 both the Broberg adults became extremely ill. Unable to return to Denmark, since the German army occupied the country at that time, church leadership offered them treatment and employment in the United States.

While in America, Broberg worked as an evangelist, first in Ohio, and later in Seattle and Chehalis in Washington State. In 1946 Danish Adventists elected him president of the East Denmark Conference, and he held that

position for five years.<sup>5</sup> In 1951 he became president of the Ethiopian Union Mission and remained there until 1959.<sup>6</sup>

Back in Denmark he worked as an evangelist in the East Denmark Conference until his retirement in 1962. Having spent time in the mission field in Ethiopia, where life was simple, funds sparse, and the amenities limited, it was a challenge, especially for Laurette Broberg who was the economical type, to adjust to the modern way of life in Western Europe. They never used the fridge in their apartment in Bornholm. Since they had managed without one in Ethiopia, why the need to use it in Denmark?

A young intern, Walder Hartmann, who worked with Broberg one winter, remembered how his mentor was blessed with a caring wife who looked after his health. When he had a cough, Laurette Broberg would buy some licorice pastilles, which she rationed by cutting them into four pieces. That way they would last longer. The same intern also witnessed, how well Pastor Broberg was received in the churches and how good he was with people. Svend was the sensible and pragmatic type that could see it from the point of view of the people he served.<sup>7</sup>

## Later Life

In their retirement the Brobergs resided in Silkeborg in Mid-Jutland. In the last few years Broberg increasingly struggled with Parkinson's disease. The last three years of his life he and his wife were lovingly cared for in the Adventist Nursing Home in Randers until he finally died October 10, 1974, after a stroke. Laurette Broberg died September 21, 1981.

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### SOURCES

*Adventnyt 2000*. Odense, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag.

Historical Archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark (HASDA) Vejle fjordskolen, 7140 Daugaard, Denmark. hasda@adventist.dk.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1931, 1937, 1947, and 1952.

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### NOTES

1. If no other sources are mentioned, the information comes from private papers, documents kept in the Historical Archive of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (HASDA) in Denmark, and personal knowledge of the author, S. A. Broberg's daughter, Esther Wilby.
2. "Denmark Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1931), 227.

3. "Sierra Leone Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1936), 176.
  4. Ingemann Olsen, "Fra tobakshandler til sjælevinder (From Tobacconist to Soulwinner)," *Adventnyt*, January 2000.
  5. "East Denmark Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 138.
  6. "Ethiopian Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 147.
  7. Telephone interview with Walder Hartmann, retired pastor, educator, and editor, February 28, 2020.
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