

Arroyo Alvarado, Francisco (1913–2001)

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Francisco Arroyo was an Adventist pastor, evangelist, and church administrator from Costa Rica.

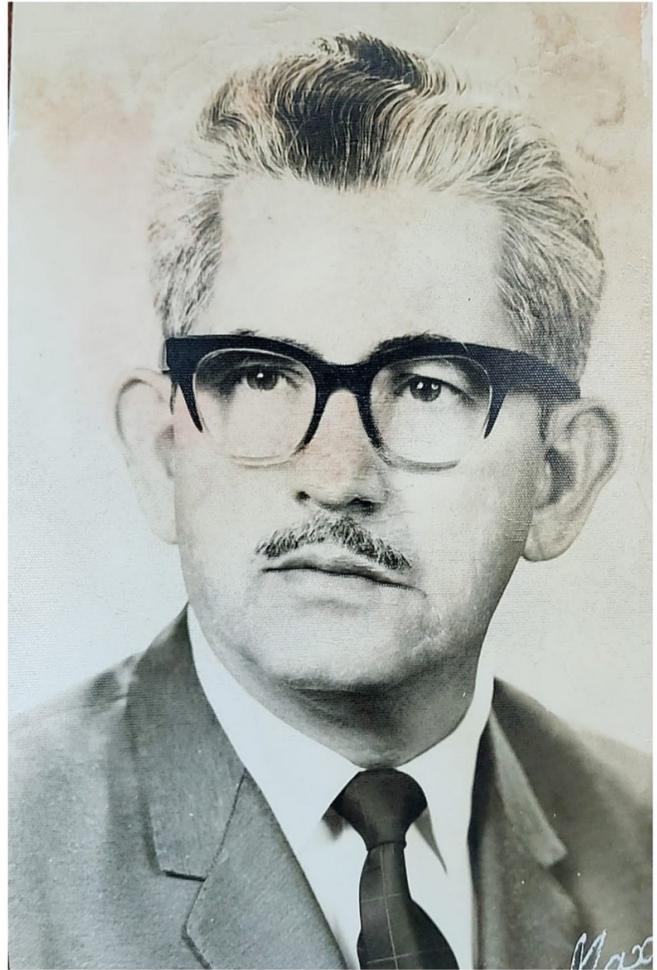
First Years

Francisco Arroyo was born December 31, 1913, in the city of Alajuela, Costa Rica. His mother was María Alvarado and he had seven brothers (Carlos, Víctor, Luis, Paco, Chama, and Rosa). Even from his childhood, Pastor Arroyo displayed a strong sense of responsibility by helping his mother with household chores and assisting with household finances by selling food in the central city market.¹

At age 18 he successfully completed his secondary studies in Alajuela and then moved to San José, the capital, continuing his education until graduating as a public accountant. Studying accounting at night, during the day he worked in construction on commercial buildings, houses, and schools.

Education and Marriage

When he was 25 years old and had graduated as a public accountant, he traveled to the city of Siquirres in the province of Limón with his wife, Julia Acuña, and their two small children (Carlos and Mery Lou) to manage a farm that produced cocoa. In 1936, while working in that place, he made his first visit to an Adventist church



Francisco Arroyo Alvarado

Photo courtesy of Mayra Ester Garcia.

where he met Pastor Joaquin Vela, the only Hispanic pastor.² After listening to the Adventist message, he finally made the decision to join the church together with his wife. Francisco was the first Hispanic convert to accept the Adventist faith in Siquieres, a city where English speaking predominated.

First Administrative Responsibilities

In 1942 the Larrabees, leaders in the Central American Union based in Costa Rica, discovered that Arroyo was both a good carpenter and builder and at the same time a potential candidate for other church services, so they encouraged him to attend the Tres Ríos Hispanic American Adventist Academy located south of San José. At the end of 1943 he graduated³ and the denomination employed him as an accountant for the academy for two years.⁴ In 1946 he received a call as secretary-treasurer of the Mission of El Salvador, becoming the first Central American appointed for that responsibility since only North American expatriates had performed those functions because of a lack of indigenous workers

In 1950, while Arroyo was still treasurer of the Salvadoran Mission, the Central American Union asked the El Salvador Mission to grant him permission to go to Costa Rica to build a new Adventist school in La Ceiba, Alajuela. Arroyo traveled to the city of Alajuela with his whole family to construct the Vocational College of Central America (COVAC). Working with much self-sacrifice, he and his crew completed the school in 15 months. The educational complex consisted of men's and women's dormitories, a classroom and administration building, a library and an auditorium, in addition to a church, a house for the school principal, three apartments, and additional homes for teachers.⁵

At the end of his COVAC construction work in April 1951, he returned with his family to El Salvador to continue his responsibilities as treasurer. In addition to being the treasurer, every Sabbath he visited a different congregation, often accompanied by his family. As a result of his dedication, God blessed his work by considerably increasing the local church membership and finances. Recognizing his abilities, the Central American Union ordained him to the ministry in 1952.⁶ That same year, only one month after his ordination, he returned to Costa Rica to assume the position of administrator of COVAC, the same institution he had built in 1950, a position he then held for seven years and nine months. Besides his administrative duties, he taught accounting, administration, and the basic principles of church building. The young men of the school liked him very much because he enjoyed soccer and participated in social activities with young people. He also aided those who had financial difficulties.⁷ So great was his passion to help others that in 1954 he along with Pastor Manuel Carballal of Cuban origin started a bakery to provide work for low-income students.⁸

In 1960 the Mission of El Salvador elected him as its president where he served for four years. From 1968 to 1969, Pastor Arroyo returned to Costa Rica as general manager of COVAC, particularly focusing on promoting the school's industries. On January 1, 1970, he joined the Costa Rican Mission as secretary-treasurer until September of that year when he became its president. During his administration the church grew and opened

new districts. He bought a large piece of land, now the site of the Hatillo church, currently one of the largest, as well as the location of the Adventist Educational Center of Costa Rica, a school known as the Hatillo school. The purchase was providential since the land belonged to the government who intended to use it for the construction of houses. Pastor Arroyo's son-in-law, Ananías González, negotiated the formalities to obtain the land. Arroyo and his son Carlos then had the privilege of building the school's first classrooms and offices.

As president of the Costa Rican Mission, Arroyo promoted the growth of the church in Guanacaste, Puntarenas, Alajuela, Cartago, Limón and San José, and in other places such as Tres Ríos, Turrialba, Desamparados and San Isidro del General. During his administration the Costa Rica Mission bought a beautiful farm in Orotina in August 1974, now called the Orotina Campsite.⁹ Although many thought that he had been wrong to buy it, it has proved to be a great blessing to many young Adventists in Costa Rica. He also had a health ministry that earned him the title of "mud doctor," since it helped heal people with mud poultices.¹⁰

After finishing his presidency in Costa Rica, Pastor Arroyo served as auditor of the Central American Union!¹¹

The Final Years and Contribution

After 33 years of service, Pastor Arroyo expressed to the Central American Union his desire to rest from active duty and retired December 31, 1976. Then he went to live with his daughter Mayra and son-in-law Pastor Ever García. Pastor Arroyo died August 28, 2001, in Brea, California.

Not only did he bring many to the Lord, but his selfless work also continues to be reflected in the institutions and buildings still used in the service of the church. He held the first treasurer position in Costa Rica when previously only foreigners had filled the role. Some people still practice his use of "mud" poultices as a way to treat some diseases.

Source

Rubio, Luis Montalbán. *Los Adventistas en Costa Rica....un siglo de avance*. San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Costa Rica, 2002.

NOTES

1. Arroyo, Mayra, interviewed by author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, May 27, 2019.

2. *Ibíd.*, 18

3. *Ibíd.*

4. Arroyo, Mayra, interviewed by author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, June 12, 2019.
5. *Ibíd.*
6. *Ibíd.*
7. Luis Montalban Rubio, *Los adventistas en Costa Rica...un siglo de avance* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Costa Rica, 2002), 148.
8. *Ibíd.*, 148.
9. Rubio, 168.
10. Arroyo, Ever Guenther, interviewed by author, July 26, 2019.
11. Arroyo, Mayra, interviewed by author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, June 12, 2019.

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