

Streithorst, Walter Jonathan (1918–2007)

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Daniel Oscar Plenc, Th.D. (River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina), currently works as a theology professor and director of the White Research Center at the River Plate Adventist University. He worked as a district pastor for twelve years. He is married to Lissie Ziegler and has three children.

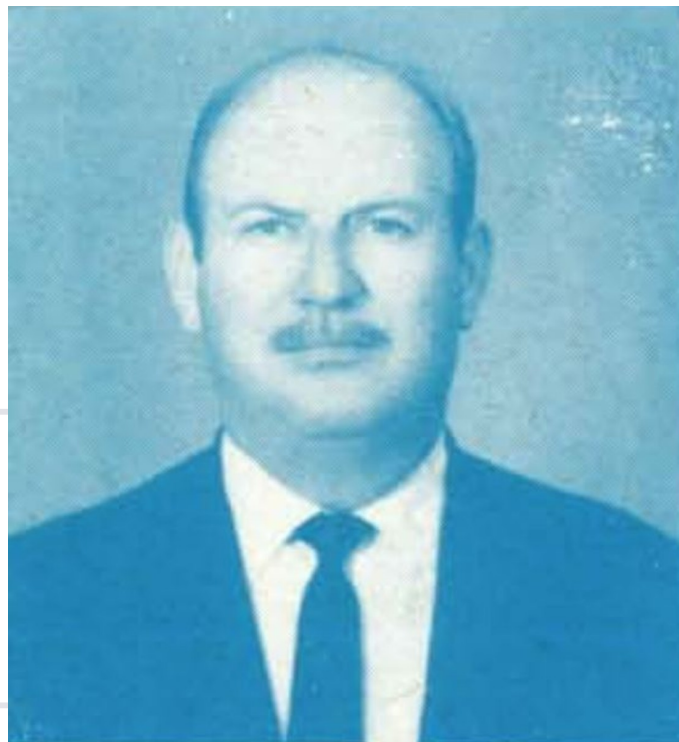
Walter Jonathan Streithorst was a pastor in North Brazil and missionary in Amazonas, continued the Luzeiro boat ministry, served as a denominational administrator in three unions in Brazil, and was a department director in the South American Division.¹

Early Years, Education and Family

Walter Jonathan Streithorst was born in the city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, on May 17, 1918. He was the son of Germano Paulo Streithorst and Apolônia Klein, European immigrants, whose parents were introduced to Adventism in Germany. Germano and Apolônia had six children: Germano, Walter Jonathan, Harry, Helga Esther, Emmanuel and Helen. All six siblings were workers in the church. Walter started canvassing at the age of 16.

His father, Germano Paulo Streithorst (1889-1979), was a pastor and administrator born in Prussia, current Germany. He studied at Friedensau Adventist Seminary, Germany and Belgium. He married Apolônia Klein in 1913 and began his ministry in 1911. He moved to Brazil in 1914, where he was president of various church fields for 25 years and taught at Brazil College. He served for 54 years and died in Brazil.²

Walter J. Streithorst studied theology in Germany and at Brazil College. His desire to work in the Amazon began in 1940 when he heard a lecture by Jessie Rowley Halliwell (1894-1962), pastor Leo B. Halliwell's wife (1891-1967), about the medical and spiritual service with the riverside people of the Amazon aboard the Luzeiro I mission launch. Walter graduated at the end of 1940 and was called to Rio-Minas Gerais Mission, to help



Walter J. Streithorst as president of the East Brazil Union.

Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

canvassing students. That year he was summoned to military service by the Army Infantry Regiment in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. His fiancé, Olga Cupperi Storch, graduated in the following year in the same institution and was called to work as a Bible instructor in her father's (Gustavo Storch) evangelistic campaign in Belém, Pará.³ Walter was also called to Belém in 1942 by Leo B. Halliwell.

Walter and Olga married on May 5, 1942, in the central church of Belém, Pará. They immediately traveled to São Luís, Maranhão with Olga's parents where Pastor Storch held an evangelistic campaign. During the meetings Walter and Olga were Bible instructors. In addition, Olga played the piano and Walter sang as a soloist. When the campaign was finished, Streithorst remained as the pastor of the new church. They also founded a church school. Olga was the church and school keeper, sold books, served as treasurer of the church, and prepared the reports for the mission. The couple had two children: Walter Streithorst Filho and Sônia Amazonita Streithorst.⁴

Pastoral and Missionary Experience in the North of Brazil

For three years Streithorst was a pastor in the states of Maranhão and Piauí, in the North Coast Mission.⁵ His work required frequent traveling by train, truck, boat, canoe, ox, swimming, etc. He distributed publications, gave Bible studies, preached, taught hymns, and projected slides in his evening Bible meetings. As a result, the groups and churches increased. At the end of three years he was transferred to Belém, Pará, where there were three churches (Central, São Braz and Pedreira).

Six months later in 1945, when he was only 26, Streithorst was called to be the first president of the Central Amazonas Mission, established in Manaus, capital of Amazonas State. The mission consisted of the states of Amazonas and Acre, and the territories of Rondônia and Roraima, an area of 926,645 sq. mi. (2,400,000 sq. km.) with a population of 700,000 inhabitants (one inhabitant per 1.3 sq. mi; one inhabitant per 3 sq. km.). In this huge territory there were 77 baptized members. Six years later Claudomiro Fonseca, treasurer of the mission, and his wife Esmeralda joined them.⁶ They had to repair the boat Luzeiro I and started traveling in it. The American nurse Frederik C. Pritchard who had directed the boat Luzeiro I and was responsible for the interior groups, had returned to the United States. Olga served as an accountant and was the person in charge of the books for canvassing. The nurses Marcos Eduardo Gutiérrez and his wife Belkis Pidoux arrived from Argentina to join the group of workers.⁷ During Streithorst's administration of the mission, a school was built. The canvassers (like Pedro Linhares) traveled in canoes through narrow streams of water and canals. In the three capitals, Boa Vista (Roraima), Rio Branco (Acre) and Porto Velho (Rondônia), the mission built churches, schools, and pastoral houses.⁸

Streithorst continued the work of Leo and Jessie Halliwell in the Amazon on the Luzeiro launches. Leo B. Halliwell was the president of the North Brazil Union Mission (1936-1954) followed by Walter J. Streithorst (1954-1968).⁹ Streithorst reported having worked as a missionary for 27 years in the Amazon, since February 1942, in

the territory of the North Brazil Union Mission.¹⁰ The North Brazil Union Mission consisted of the Central Amazonas Mission, the Lower Amazonas Mission (Pará and Macapá) and the North Coast Mission (Ceará and Piauí), comprising more than half of Brazil's territory. When Streithorst arrived in the North Union there were 2,590 members; when he left 14 years later, there were 16,500. His successor was pastor Joao Wolff. During the administration of Streithorst, the headquarters of the North Brazil Union Mission was built, Belem Hospital was expanded (inaugurated in 1953), five boats were built (Luzeiro IV, V, and VI, and two smaller ones for canvassing), Para Day Academy was started in Belém,¹¹ Adventist Agricultural-Industrial Academy in the Amazon countryside and Agro-Industrial Adventist Trans-Amazon Academy were launched, and an agreement was made with the government of Pará to operate 23 mobile clinics on the Trans-Amazon highway for ten years.¹²

Subsequent Tasks

After he left the Amazon, Walter Streithorst worked for four years as president of East Brazil Union in Rio de Janeiro (1969-1973). During that time many churches were built, the number of members grew, and a new headquarters building was built. In 1976, he went to the South American Division in Brasilia during the presidency of Roger A. Wilcox when the headquarters was being built after moving from Montevideo, Uruguay. At the division headquarters, he was public relations secretary and field missionary secretary. He was also pastor for a year in the Central Adventist Church of Brasilia. Streithorst worked in the departments of Religious Liberty, Home and Family, Civic Duties and Social Assistance, and he was the president of the Brazilian Adventist Hospital Group. After 14 years in the South American Division headquarters, Streithorst served as chaplain of the Golden Garden Hospital in Brasilia until his retirement in 1985. During his 45 years of work he received many awards and medals for his service.¹³

Olga Storch Streithorst died in 2000, in Belém, Pará. She had lived with her husband for 58 years.¹⁴ Walter Jonathan Streithorst died on June 5, 2007, in Belem Hospital, Pará State.¹⁵

The legacy of pastor Walter J. Streithorst is solid and fruitful. His excitement in spreading the gospel, his administrative skills, his calling for social assistance in the Amazon and other fields, and his leadership in several departments of the South American Division made him an example for new generations of missionaries.

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NOTES

1. For an autobiography, see: Walter Jonathan Streithorst, *Minha Vida na Amazônia* [My Life in Amazon] (Tatuí, São Paulo: Brazilian Publishing House, 1993), 178 pp. See also: Rubens S. Lessa, *Construtores de Esperança: na Trilha dos Pioneiros Adventistas da Amazônia* [Builders of Hope: On the Trail of Adventist Pioneers of the Amazon] (Tatuí, São Paulo, Brasil: Brazilian Publishing House, 2016), pp. 232. Loriza Kettle, *Uma igreja na selva; a história sobre pionerismo da Igreja Adventista no Amazonas* [A church in the jungle; Adventist Church pioneer story in the Amazon] (Campinas, SP: Millennium Editora, 2016), 98-103.
2. Germano Streithorst, "Rumo ao Brasil Sob a Proteção Divina" [Towards Brazil Under Divine Protection], *Revista Adventista*, December 1971, 7; Germano Streithorst, "Trabalhando no Brasil" [Working in Brazil], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 1972, 15; "Descansa o casal de pioneiros" [The pioneer couple rests], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 74, n° 4, April 1979, 23. See a review of his life on the following site: Enciclopédia da Memória Adventista no Brasil [Adventist Memory Encyclopedia in Brazil]: http://www.unasp-ec.com/memoriadventista/enciclopedia/8/039s_streithorst_germano.htm. Accessed on July 26, 2018.
3. Gustavo S. Storch (1896-1993) was a pastor, evangelist and administrator born in Santa Maria do Jetibá, Espírito Santo, Brazil. Graduated in Brazil College in 1922, he married Agatina Cupperi and was father of three children: Lyndon, Ebenezer and Olga. He was a district pastor for twelve years in Minas Gerais, Sergipe and Rio Grande do Sul. He was ordained to the ministry in 1925 and served as president of Pernambuco Mission in East Brazil Union (1930-1935), he was an evangelist of North Brazil Union Mission (since 1936). Later he was elected president of North Coast Union. He worked for 40 years for the Adventist church and died at the age of 97, in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. For an autobiography, see: Gustavo Storch, *Venturas e Aventuras de Um Pioneiro* [Fortune and Adventures of a Pioneer] (Santo André, SP: Brazilian Publishing House, 1982); "Dormiram no Senhor" [They Slept in the Lord], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 89, n° 12, December 1993, 31. See also: Enciclopédia da Memória Adventista no Brasil [Adventist Memory Encyclopedia in Brazil]: http://www.unasp-ec.com/memoriadventista/enciclopedia/8/038s_storch_gustavo.htm, accessed on July 26, 2018.
4. Walter Streithorst Filho studied medicine, was director of Belem Hospital (2002-2012) and still works in that institution. He married Maria Bezerra, employee of Belem Hospital and had three children: Patricia Gisela, Ingrid Daniela and Walter Streithorst Neto. All three are

missionaries in the medical field. Sônia Streithorst studied social service and worked in Belem Hospital, Silvestre Adventist Hospital and then moved to the United States.

5. The North Coast Mission was established in Fortaleza, Ceará. The president was Roger A. Wilcox. The mission had two districts and two workers: (1) Maranhão and Piauí, with W. J. Streithorst and (2) Ceará, with Aldo Carvalho. Emmanuel de Jesus Saraiva, *A História do Adventismo no Maranhão: 80 Anos de História e Milagres* [Adventist History in Maranhão: 80 Years of Histories and Miracles], 2nd ed. (São Luís de Maranhão: Gráfica e Editora Maia, 2002), 286 pp.
6. Melvin Northrup, *Pão sobre as Águas: a fantástica história de um missionário na Amazônia* [Bread over the waters: a fantastic story of a missionary in the Amazon], translated by Delmar Freire (Tatuí, SP: Brazilian Publishing House, 2005), 240 pp. Francisco Abdoval da Silva Cavalcanti, *Luzeiros, Esperança a Bordo* [Hope on Board], 3rd ed. (Niterói, RJ: Editora Ados, 2012), 142 pp. Ana Paula Ramos, *Desafio nas Águas: um resgate da história das lanchas médico-missionárias da Amazônia* [Challenge in the waters: A rescue of the history of medical missionary boats from the Amazon] (Tatuí, SP: Brazilian Publishing House, 2009), 128 pp.
7. M. E. Gutiérrez graduated as a nurse masseuse (1952) of River Plate Sanitarium, Entre Ríos, Argentina. He worked in the missionary-medical boats of Amazonas Central Mission, he was ordained to the ministry, directed departments in North Brazil Union Mission and Buenos Aires Conference, Argentina, was the president of Central Argentina Conference and directed departments in East Brazil Union Mission. He retired in 1988. See "Clase del CAP 1952-2002: Recuerdos y bendiciones" (96-page material prepared for the meeting of the graduates of River Plate Academy of 1952), 35-36.
8. N. W. Dunn, "On the Amazon River," *ARH* 128, n° 16, April 19, 1951, 24. L. H. Olson, "Along the Banks of the Great Amazon," *ARH* 129, n° 31, July 31, 1952, 1, 18.
9. See: Olga S. Streithorst, *Leo Halliwell na Amazônia* [Leo Halliwell in the Amazon] (Santo André, São Paulo: Brazilian Publishing House, 1979).
10. W. J. Streithorst, *Minha Vida na Amazônia* [My Life in the Amazon], 7.
11. Walter J. Streithorst, "Primeiro Ginásio da União Norte Brasileira" [First Gymnasium of North Brazil Union Mission], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], September 1961, 24-25.
12. Each clinic had three units: an ambulatory vehicle, another for a bedroom and a van for shorter and faster trips. Each team had a physician, dentist and nurse, conductor and assistant. The Transamazônica Highway (BR-230) is the third largest highway in Brazil, with 4,977 km crossing seven Brazilian states: Paraíba, Ceará, Piauí, Maranhão, Tocantins, Pará and Amazonas.
13. Medal for 350 years of Foundation of the City of Belém do Pará for relevant services rendered to the community (1968); Medal Cavaleiro da Ordem de São Paulo, the Apostle, for Relief and Religious Services (1976); Medal of the Order of National Integration, Order of St. Paul the Apostle (1976); Decoration of the Order of Merit of the Air Force, in the degree of Knight, given by the Minister of Aircraft with approval of the President of the Republic (1980); John Lipke Medal, awarded by Brazil College, for services rendered to the College and the Seventh-day

Adventist Church in Brazil (1980).

14. Rubens S. Lessa, "Tributo" [Tribute], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 96, n° 4, April 2000, 2.
15. Michelson Borges, "HAB lança pedra fundamental do novo prédio: crescimento vertical" [HAB lays cornerstone of new building: vertical growth], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], year 102, n° 1190, July 2007, 26, 27.

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