

# Harper Navarro, Therlow Juan (1924–2001)

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## THERLOW A. HARPER

Therlow A. Harper, Ph.D. (Montemorelos University, Nuevo Leon, Mexico), is a retired pastor, teacher, and administrator who worked for the Church for 41 years. He was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA because his father had left Cuba in 1951 to study for his master's degree in Tennessee. In 1953, they returned to Cuba. Therlow A.'s family moved to Costa Rica where he attended primary school, and later his family moved to Mexico where he completed postgraduate studies. He married Ana Castillo Osuna and they have three children.

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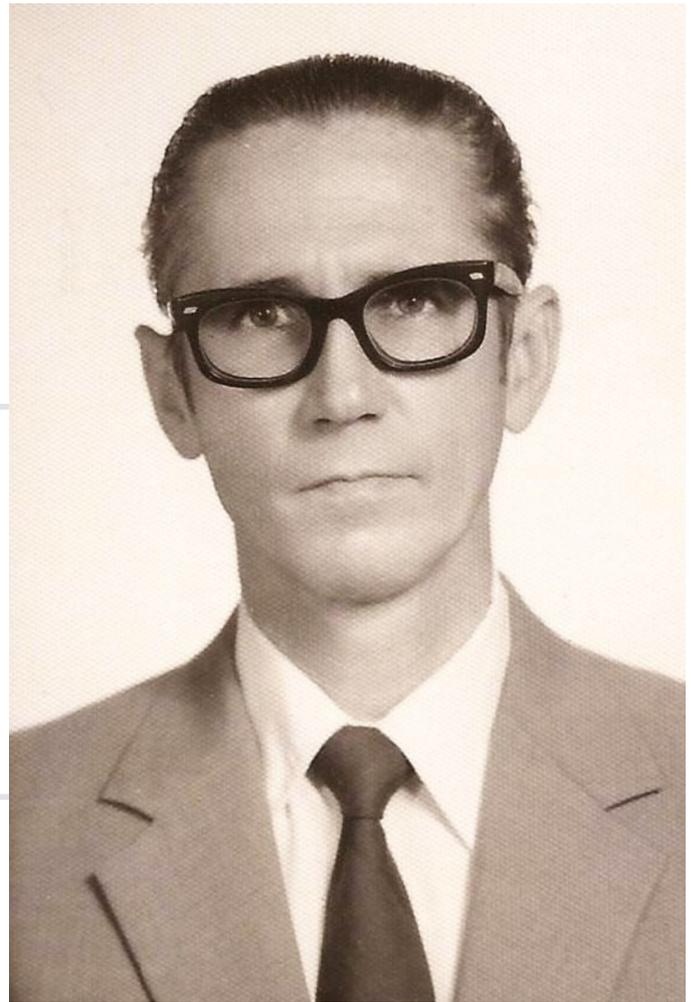
Therlow Juan Harper Navarro was dean of men, professor of science, college vice president, college president, university vice president, and a true promoter and supporter of Adventist Christian education.

## Early Years

Therlow Juan Harper Navarro was born March 25, 1924, in Havana, Cuba. His parents were Therlow Charles Harper, a North American, and Zoraida Navarro Murga, a Cuban young lady. His father had met his mother while canvassing in Cuba. They had six children: Kareen, Therlow Juan, Gilberto, Clell, Nildo, and Zoraida.<sup>1</sup>

When an accident happened to Therlow Charles's father, the family moved to the United States, where they lived for six years in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Upon returning to Cuba in 1929, the Harper Navarro family settled in Cidra, a small town in the Matanzas Province, where Therlow completed elementary school. Sometime later the family moved to the town of Unión de Reyes where Therlow studied secondary level grades.<sup>2</sup>

## Education and Marriage



Therlow Juan Harper Navarro

Photo courtesy of Therlow Abelardo Harper.

In 1941 Therlow was accepted as an industrial student at Antillian Union College in Santa Clara, province of Las Villas, Cuba, where he completed the preparatory level and two years of university level. At that time the institution only offered the first two years of higher education.<sup>3</sup>

Upon graduating in 1947, Therlow was called to work at that same institution as dean of men and professor of science. He taught physics, chemistry, and mathematics. In 1948, he married María de la Luz González Chávez, with whom he had four children: Norka, Therlow Abelardo, Waldo René, and Eduardo Gabriel.<sup>4</sup>

In 1951 Therlow received a scholarship to study at Southern Missionary College at Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, where he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry in 1953. He then returned to Antillian Union College in Cuba to continue working as a professor teaching the three science courses.<sup>5</sup>

## Professional Life and Graduate Studies

In 1956 Therlow was appointed vice president of the college and, in December 1957, he was called to be president of the Central American Vocational College (COVAC) in Alajuela, Costa Rica, today known as Central American Adventist University.<sup>6</sup> On May 2, 1959, Therlow Juan Harper Navarro was ordained to the ministry while he was president of COVAC.<sup>7</sup>

In 1962 Pastor Therlow Harper received a scholarship from the National Science Foundation in the United States to study for a master's degree in chemistry in Boulder, Colorado. When he finished his degree he was invited to work for NASA and was offered a tempting salary, but his life's mission was clear to him: to dedicate his talents, abilities, and knowledge to the service of Adventist Christian education wherever God called him to go. For this reason, Pastor Harper returned to Costa Rica to continue the presidency of the college for an additional two years.

He then accepted a call to be president of the Montemorelos Vocational and Professional College (COVOPROM) in the city of Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico.<sup>8</sup> From 1965 until his last breath in 2001, he dedicated all of his energy, talent, and ability to the development of this beloved Adventist institution.

In 1971, Pastor Therlow Harper contacted educational and governmental authorities of the state of Nuevo León about the possibility of elevating the college to university status. In 1973 the governor of the state of Nuevo León, Luis M. Farías, signed a document approving the creation of Montemorelos University and Pastor Therlow Harper was named its founding president. COVOPROM continued to exist, but as a preparatory mid-level educational institution.<sup>9</sup>

In 1976 Pastor Harper was appointed vice president for student affairs of Montemorelos University, a position he held for six years. In 1982 he was asked to accept the presidency of COVOPROM with the purpose of creating programs in technical careers for students who did not want to spend many years acquiring a university degree. In this way, technical programs were offered in nursing, secretarial studies, and other areas.

## Retirement Years

Although Pastor Therlow Harper officially retired in 1988, he continued as an active faculty member, teaching classes in the schools of education, theology, nursing, and others. Teaching was his life's passion. He taught classes such as Study of the Gospels, Philosophy of Christian Education, Manual Education, and Child Discipline. In 1988, the year of his retirement, he received a doctoral degree in education, *Honoris Causa*, from Montemorelos University.

Professor Therlow Harper taught for 13 years after he retired. The motto of his life was to work for God as long as he was given strength, and he certainly lived out that motto. His last class ended in December 2000. He had plans to continue teaching during the second semester of the 2000-2001 school year, but he passed away on January 29, 2001, the eve of the beginning of the second academic semester.<sup>10</sup>

## Contribution and Legacy

Pastor Therlow Juan Harper Navarro was convinced of the value of Adventist Christian education, and he believed in and obeyed God's inspired books. He believed in education combined with useful work, unselfish service, and a total commitment to God's service. He liked to spend time gardening and cultivating fruit trees, and loved to share the fruit of his trees. He was firm in complying with biblical principles and his life was an example of living by them. He was loyal and carried out administrative directives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>11</sup> God blessed his efforts and made His work prosper.

Revelation 14:13 says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Professor Therlow Harper's teachings remain in the hearts of the thousands of students who passed through his classrooms. The example of his Christian life is a source of inspiration for present and future workers, not only in Mexico, but in Inter-America. His entire life was a valued testimony to the transforming power of Adventist Christian education in the life of human beings who carry out its teachings and principles.

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### SOURCES

Barceló Guerrero, Saúl. *Huellas de los que ayer pasaron*. Montemorelos, N. L., México: Editorial Montemorelos, 2012.

Montemorelos University, "Employee Service Record of Therlow Juan Harper Navarro." Accessed July 15, 2018. University Personnel Office.

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### NOTES

1. Saúl Barceló Guerrero, *Huellas de los que ayer pasaron* (Montemorelos, N. L., México: Editorial Montemorelos, 2012), 99.
2. Ibid., 100.
3. Ibid., 101.
4. Ibid., 106.
5. Montemorelos University, "Employee Service Record of Therlow Juan Harper Navarro." Accessed July 15, 2018.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Author's personal knowledge, as he is Therlow Juan Harper Navarro's son and worked alongside him throughout his life.
11. Ibid.

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