

# Roth, Arthur H.

## (1911–1982)

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### GLENN O. PHILLIPS

Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

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Arthur Harry Roth was the fifth president of the Inter-American Division (1954-1962). Elder Roth was a pioneering and dedicated administrator who for more than 30 years significantly contributed to the growth and success of Adventism in the Inter-American Division. During his long and distinguished career, he served as evangelist, pastor, mission president, and youth and education director at the union and division levels as well as the secretary of the Inter-American Division between 1936 and 1962.<sup>1</sup>

Elder Roth and David Baasch planned, organized, and conducted the largest and most successful youth congresses across the Inter-American Division between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. These events contributed to many youth activities, success in youth evangelism, and a significant increase in youth with direct involvement in soul winning across the Inter-American Division.

## Early Life

Arthur Harry Roth was born September 21, 1911, in Clinton, Missouri, was baptized in his early youth, and attended and graduated from Canadian Union College (now university) in 1932.<sup>2</sup> On completing his education there, he continued his studies at Walla Walla College and received his BA degree in theology in 1934. His first assignment was as an elementary teacher in Lewiston, Idaho, before launching into evangelistic work for the South Dakota Conference where he worked for a year.



A.H. Roth, IAD President 1954-1962

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

## Marriage and Service to the Church

Arthur Harry Roth married Alice Rosalind Olsen in Takoma Park, Maryland, on May 12, 1936, and together the young couple headed immediately to the Inter-American Division mission field where they spent more than three decades of intense service to the Church. Elder Roth's first assignment was as the evangelist for the Panama Conference headquartered in the Canal Zone.<sup>3</sup> He was ordained into the gospel ministry in Panama in 1937. His vision and administrative abilities were quickly recognized, and he served as president of the Costa Rica and Nicaraguan Missions followed by his appointment as director of the Sabbath School and Missionary Volunteer departments of the Inter-American Division in 1941.

He traveled widely across the division and worked to expand the spread of Adventism among the large Amerindian populations in Mexico and in the countries of Central America. He promoted the construction of church buildings in areas with significant Native American Adventist membership. He promoted the implementation of policies that fostered the improvement and expansion of the growing number of primary and secondary schools as well as the junior and senior colleges across the division. He introduced many innovative plans and strategies that caught the imagination of the youth and that effectively witnessed an increase in youth evangelism. He coordinated numerous youth congresses, including the first division-wide youth congress held in Havana, Cuba, in the fall of 1957, as the youth and education secretary of the Inter-American Division.<sup>4</sup>

## Inter-American Division Secretary and then President

In 1950 he was appointed the secretary of the Inter-American Division, serving one term until he was elected president of the division in 1954. He ended his eight-year tenure in 1962.<sup>5</sup> During these years he was at the forefront in promoting the membership growth of Adventism in every corner of the division. His overriding objective throughout these years was clearly expressed by him when at the end of his presidential term he remarked, "Everything we do we believe should be done with an evangelistic purpose. After all, soul-winning is our most important business."<sup>6</sup> During his presidency of the Inter-American Division, Seventh-day Adventists in many countries faced numerous new challenges from the emergence of politically radical governments that sought to limit their religious liberty, including Cuba, and he worked diligently to maintain normalcy for the Adventist believers in these countries.

## Later Years

After his decades of service in the Inter-American Division, Elder Roth was appointed special assistant to two General Conference presidents, R. R. Figuhr (1962-1966) and Robert H. Pierson (1966-1979). He next served the General Conference Secretariat. Elder Roth died February 26, 1982, in Tacoma Park, Maryland,<sup>7</sup> having served

the Church he loved very actively in a wide range of administrative positions for more than 40 years.

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## SOURCES

"Arthur H. Roth." *ARH*, May 20, 1982.

"Arthur H. Roth." *Columbia Union Visitor*, April 1982.

Greenleaf, Floyd. *The History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean* 2 vols.

Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999.

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## NOTES

1. "Arthur H. Roth," *ARH*, May 20, 1982.

2. "Arthur H. Roth," *Columbia Union Visitor*, April 1982.

3. Floyd Greenleaf, *The History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999), 2: 500.

4. *Ibid.*, 139, 169.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 331.

7. "Arthur H. Roth," *ARH*, May 20, 1982.

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