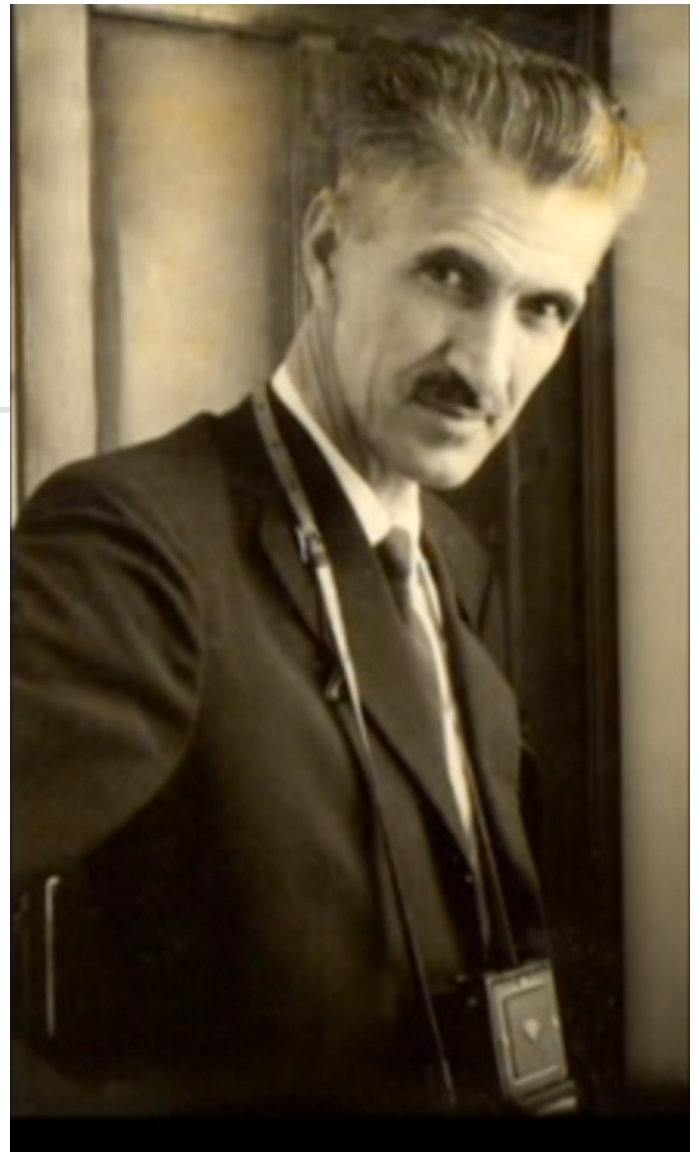


Azevedo, Roberto Rodrigues de (1916–1980)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Roberto Rodrigues de Azevedo

Photo courtesy of the Brazilian White Center – UNASP.

Roberto Rodrigues de Azevedo, pastor, evangelist and journalist, was born March 3, 1916, in the city of Santo Antônio da Patrulha, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.¹ His parents were Arthur Rodrigues de Azevedo and Cândida Mendes Azevedo, who had 14 children, four of whom died in childhood.² The ones who survived were Emílio, Alcindo, Alzira, José, Alicia, Onélia, Cândida, Osvaldo and Lídia Azevedo.³

Roberto grew up in the countryside on his parents' farm. A son of Adventists, he got to know the gospel at home. His father was an active member of the Rio Grande do Sul Conference, and donated the land for the

construction of the first Adventist church and school in Rolante, state of Rio Grande do Sul. Roberto was baptized at the same church when he was 12 years old. He completed his elementary education in the Adventist school in his city and decided to become an Adventist minister. On his mother's side, he was nephew of José Amador dos Reis, the first Adventist Brazilian ordained minister,⁴ ordained April 10, 1920.⁵

At the age of 19, Roberto decided to study theology at Brazil College (known today as *Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo*, or UNASP-SP). He began his studies in 1936 and graduated in 1940. Three months after his graduation, he married Flora César Silveira, on February 10, 1941.⁶ She was the sister of Dr. Ajax César da Silveira, and a faithful partner in her husband's ministry.⁷ She worked as a teacher in the Adventist school in the city of Rio Grande for a year, and worked in the Brazilian public schools system for 32 years.⁸ From this union five children were born: Júlio, Roberto, Paulo, Eglon, and Sérgio.⁹

In 1941 Azevedo accepted the invitation to be a minister in the Rio Grande do Sul Conference in the city of Rio Grande. While there, he faced some challenges because, in the previous year, the city was considered the region with the second highest rate of tuberculosis in the world, and some of them were members of his church.¹⁰

Azevedo was a pastor in Rio Grande up to the middle of 1945,¹¹ when the intense pace of work began to affect the couple's health. Though they tested negative for tuberculosis, they had to undergo medical treatment.

Azevedo was then assigned to work in the city of Pelotas, a place without an Adventist church. His first work was to help Pastor Araceli S. Mello, who at the time was looking for interested people to begin a series of public evangelism. After four months of work, shortly before the meetings began, Pastor Araceli had to leave the field, and the Azevedos became responsible for the evangelistic campaign.

The result of this missionary effort was remarkable.¹² Azevedo was ordained to the pastoral ministry in 1946.¹³ On November 14 of the same year, in a joint effort with the local church members and with the help of a donation from the General Conference, Azevedo started construction of the first school and church of the city of Pelotas, on May 10, 1947.¹⁴

After that, Roberto was called to work in the city of Ijuí¹⁵ until around 1950¹⁶, when he was appointed to serve as a pastor in the central church in the city of Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul.¹⁷ During his work in this church, he got in touch with journalists, who allowed him to advertise the church's programs in the local press. He also wrote several articles about religious themes that were published in the city's newspapers.¹⁸ He worked in this church for two years, when in 1952 he was called to serve in the São Paulo Conference.¹⁹ While still in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, he also gave his contribution to the Adventist Church establishing some new schools.²⁰

In the São Paulo Conference, Azevedo worked for some time as a church pastor in the districts of Belém and Mirandópolis.²¹ While serving as a pastor in this city, he was appointed to lead the Public Relations department of this conference, where he stayed for some time.²² While living in São Paulo, Azevedo studied journalism at

Cásper Líbero College.²³ In 1957 he was chosen to lead the Public Relations, Radio, and Temperance departments of the South Brazilian Union Conference.²⁴ He worked in this position until 1966²⁵, and from 1963 on he was responsible for union telecommunications.²⁶

In 1967 Azevedo was appointed as leader of the Public Relations and Radio-TV departments of the South American Division (SAD). He served in this position until 1970.²⁷ From 1971 to 1973 he led the Public Relations and Temperance departments at the East Brazil Union Conference.²⁸ At the end of his ministry, he returned to the Sao Paulo Conference where he became a church pastor.²⁹ He retired in 1978, with 62 years in the city of São Paulo.³⁰

Even retired, in 1978 after the division of the São Paulo Conference, Azevedo became responsible for the Public Relations department of the new field called Paulista Leste Conference (East Sao Paulo Conference). Pastor Roberto Azevedo loyally served the Adventist Church for 38 years.³¹ The South American Division asked him to prepare an illustrated report of the work in the SAD, to be presented at the General Conference of 1980, held in Dallas, Texas.³²

While preparing the report, Azevedo experienced health problems. He traveled for three months visiting many parts of the division's territory. He returned to Brazil, and as soon as he was ready to continue traveling, he felt acute heart pain. Even while in a hospital, he kept working on the project with a team of eleven people. He finished it,³³ and died May 11, 1980, age 64. He was buried in the Congonhas Cemetery in the city of São Paulo.

Roberto de Azevedo's ministerial talents and impassioned efforts took the Adventist message beyond denominational limits. He became well-known in Brazil because of his reports, pictures, and documentary movies, all produced with the goal of disseminating the Adventist Church, its social work, and its message through mass media: magazines, newspapers, radio, and television. Due to his good relationship with journalists, he also published his productions in different entities of the Brazilian press, distributing the church's message and work for free. In this way, he can be recognized as an outstanding press communicator and "pioneer of the Adventist public relations" in Brazil.³⁴

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