

Nosso Amiguinho (Our Little Friend)

SUELI NUNES FERREIRA DE OLIVEIRA

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Nosso Amiguinho (Our Little Friend) is a monthly educational magazine for children, published by the Brazilian Publishing House (BPH) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil. Its history goes back more than sixty years.

Background

Although officially launched in July 1953, the history of *Nosso Amiguinho* begins before that. There was a sense that relevant material aimed at a young Adventist audience was needed. But there was still the question of whether this kind of publication would succeed in Brazil. Thus, on December 1, 1952, a “Special Release” issue launched. Two weeks later, a second “extra” issue was published. Both editions served as tests of the market.

Initially, *Nosso Amiguinho* was meant to be published every fortnight. “Twice a month you will receive it [*Nosso Amiguinho*].”¹ But research conducted in the archives of the BPH shows that only the first two experimental issues were published fortnightly. The magazine was finally released six months later on a monthly basis.

According to Miguel J. Maly, the first editor of the magazine, the reception of the experimental issues did not meet expectations. He ascribes this fact to the kind of articles covered by these two editions: they were almost solely composed of translations that were far from the national reality.²

The first issue, printed on four 10.43 inches × 7.4 inches (26.5 cm × 19 cm) pages in red ink, contained the following articles: “Martinha and Rifão,” a short story with moral lessons; “To Our Little Reader,” an editorial introducing the magazine; “Our Little Space,” a script for a children’s play; “You Should Know...,” an advertising segment for subscriptions; “To the Young,” a short poem; “Sketches for Coloring,” Sabbath School lessons; a section with riddles; and, finally, comics about traffic rules.

The experimental second issue had similar content but also added a section that was included in the subsequent issues: “Who Am I?” which introduced Bible characters.

Founding and History

With the first official issue of the magazine published around July 1953, the editor, Miguel J. Maly, sought to give a Brazilian face to its content and avoid the use of translated articles from similar foreign magazines.

Another measure Maltby pursued was ensuring that the magazine had a Christian nature yet a “non-proselytizing” one. While *Nosso Amiguinho* was originally designed for Adventist readers, it was not intended to present doctrinal content.³

The first year’s issues of *Nosso Amiguinho* had twice the number of pages as the experimental ones, with eight monochromatic pages of the same initial size, but the color of each new issue varied.

The masthead of the first regular edition presented the following information:

Nosso Amiguinho, a children’s newspaper for the Young Adventists of Brazil. Monthly periodical registered under the terms of the law. Year I, July 1953, nº 1. Editor in chief: Miguel J. Maltby Associate Editors: D. Christman and R. E. Adams. Headquarters, newsroom, and offices: Pereira Barreto Avenue, nº 190, mailbox nº 34, Santo André, São Paulo. Annual Subscription: Issue: Cr\$ 2,50 [equivalent to USD\$0.023 at the time]⁴

The issues of the first year followed the same content pattern and editorial philosophy. But some themes reappeared in consecutive editions, providing the creation of the following columns:

“Through Brazilian Lands and Forests,” a discussion of one specific animal from Brazilian wildlife at a time, starting in issue 2 and from then on.

“Reviewing,” a presentation about subjects discussed in the Sabbath School lessons, from issue 3 and on.

“The Little Reader Writes,” letters from the readers, from issue 4 on.

“Comics,” comics strips about wildlife, from issue 5 onward.

In the first year, all issues had a range of print runs, with a high of 10,800 (first issue) and a low of 4,882 copies (issue 2).⁵ Between 1953 and 1962, Miguel J. Maltby was the editor in chief of *Nosso Amiguinho*.

Issue 13 inaugurated a new phase. The first significant change was the format, with new dimensions of 9.05 inches × 6.10 inches (23 cm. × 15.5 cm.). Another meaningful change was the redefinition of the audience, which had been Adventist children. From this issue on, the magazine was targeted toward children in general. This change was expected since issue 2, when the masthead stopped including the word *Adventists* as it had in the first issue.⁶ Even though an Adventist readership was not specified in the second issue of *Nosso Amiguinho*, this direction became very evident because the themes of the Sabbath School lessons were explored. Only with this new phase during the second year did the biblical content start to become more generalized and less specific. At the same time, the magazine included an increasing number of activities and comic strips.

In December 1954, the magazine introduced two new features: 20 pages and a cover page with trichrome printing on coated paper. In 1955, *Nosso Amiguinho* began to be sold via canvassing, which increased its print run considerably. That year it reached a record of 402,878 printed copies.⁷

In February 1957, the editor created a new column. At the time, it was named "Our Little School" and later "Creative School." This column is currently known as "Study While Playing," and its purpose is to present didactic knowledge in a playful way. In October of the same year, for the first time, the magazine's central pages included a colored paperboard for cutting and building paper objects. This later became a regular section, which now is called "Let's Cut and Build."

With an increased print run, *Nosso Amiguinho* was becoming better known, to the point of gathering attention from education and cultural authorities. In 1959, the magazine reached its highest print run of the decade with 960,280 copies. This record would not be repeated in any year of the subsequent decade, only being surpassed in 1974.

The magazine's first editorial change took place in May 1962. The issue had a short explanatory text from the publisher's general manager, naming journalist Arnaldo Benedicto Christianini as the new editor of the magazine.⁸ Small editorial changes were implemented during Christianini's time as editor in chief of *Nosso Amiguinho*. A new page was created for teaching crafts and a section called "Newsroom of Knowledge," which was the forerunner of the "Children's Newspaper" that eventually became the current "Our Little Newspaper."

Arnaldo Christianini was in charge of the magazine until December 1962. Other editors following him were Luiz Waldvogel (January–April 1963); Helga Bergold (May 1963–December 1964); Otto Joas (January 1965–November 1968); and Ivan Schmidt (December 1968–December 1972).⁹

The cartoon drawings that started in January 1970, when illustrator Heber Pintos began working for *Nosso Amiguinho*, were a great new aspect of the magazine. His work was decisive in changing the magazine's visual presentation. Although the character Noguinho already existed as the magazine's mascot, he had rarely been explored until then. His name was created by Miguel Maly by omitting some letters between the words that form the magazine's Portuguese title: "Noguinho" comes from *Nosso Amiguinho*. According to the editor, the character's first sketches were made by an unknown staff member, but its role did not seem relevant at the time.

It was through Heber Pintos's collaboration that the character became an active individual. In December 1970, Noguinho had two pages in the magazine dedicated to his debut story.¹⁰ Another important addition at this time was the final incorporation of the then-occasional column "Let's Cut and Build" to the magazine's central pages. The inside pages also began to be printed in two colors, whereas the cover was still printed in three colors.

The activities published at this time were meant to foster reader participation, with coloring pictures and even a page intended to teach children to make their own drawings. The section was titled "Artist Corner." In September 1970, the magazine featured its first illustrated cover as a trial for its new definitive style, which was officially adopted in September 1971. During this period, the magazine used cartoons for its internal illustration style, owing to Heber Pintos artwork.

In July 1972, *Nosso Amiguinho* celebrated 20 years of existence with a special edition. Pages 2–5 summarized the magazine's story. Four former editors in chief wrote special messages to the readers: Miguel J. Maly, Arnaldo Christianini, Helga Bergold, and Otto Joas. In these messages, the former editors praised the publication's performance and growth, and they expressed their longing for *Nosso Amiguinho* to remain the "best children's magazine."

That same year the characters later known as "Noguinho's Troupe" were officially introduced to readers. The psychological profile of each group member was created by Ivan Schmidt, and their artistic concepts came from Heber Pintos. Later, the sketches grew more caricatured through Osnei Furtado's work; Osnei Furtado had become the illustrator in charge of the magazine's internal pages and cover.

The characters Luísa, Quico, Casusa (then spelled with two s's and now with two z's), and Azeitona, which literally means "olive," were printed next to Noguinho on the back cover, so readers would get to know them.¹¹ Even though the character of Professor Sabino had already appeared in some previous issues, he was not part of "Noguinho's Troupe" nor did he have any relationship with the team. He was not even called Professor Sabino. Only his drawn form and persona were similar to the current Sabino.

Several new updates were made in the period between 1972 and 1980. A new page appeared: "For the Girls," later titled "Luísa's Page." Erlo Köhler, who was a graphic designer at the time, presented several editorial contributions, such as the sections "Practical Science," "Little Newspaper—Supporting Your Culture," and "Little Encyclopedia," but some of these were only published occasionally.

In January 1973, with Ivan Schmidt having left the editorial office of the BPH, the designer Erlo Köhler was acting editor, working under the supervision of the editor in chief who was legally responsible for *Nosso Amiguinho*. This collaboration lasted until May of the same year, when Ivo Santos Cardoso was appointed editor.

In 1973, "The Reader's Page," which had been called "Mail" for more than twenty years, began to publish readers' drawings sent to the editorial staff. It was later named "Little Friend Mail" until June 1977. In August of 1977, the column started to be called "Cazuza's Group"—a name that remains unchanged. This section currently focuses on the photos of the readers and their impressions regarding the monthly content they receive at home.

In July 1977, *Nosso Amiguinho* introduced a new column: "Let's Play Guitar," with lessons taught by Alba Regina T. Hebel. During the same month, the publisher signed a contract with the guitar manufacturer Giannini; its factory would begin to provide musical instruments as contest prizes among the magazine readers in exchange for publicizing its guitars in its print classes. The guitar lessons continued for more than ten years and were suspended only in 1989; however, the magazine did not feature guitar lessons in 1982. The agreement with Giannini also lasted for almost ten years; the only exception was in 1986 when the guitars came from the guitar manufacturer Di Giorgio. The following year Giannini provided the musical instruments again in a partnership that lasted until May 1988.

The “Little Newspaper” column started in January 1974, aiming to address general knowledge and curiosities.

The following people were the editors in chief of *Nosso Amiguinho* from 1973 to 1996: Ivo Santos Cardoso (May 1973–April 1977), Rubens da Silva Lessa (May 1977–December 1979). Then, from January to December 1980—one entire year—there is no record of an editor in the magazine’s files, suggesting a new period of interim administration by Art Department chief Erlo Köhler. Finally, from January to July of 1981, Abigail Liedke assumed editorship of *Nosso Amiguinho*. Between August 1981 and December 1984, the journalist Rubem Milton Scheffel was legally the editor. The text preparation and editing, however, were in the charge of Wilson de Almeida, who eventually became the editor until December 1996.

In July 1983, the magazine published a 56-page issue, with a print run of 150,000 copies. João Baptista Figueiredo, then president of Brazil, sent a message applauding the magazine. The São Paulo city council and the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo state also paid homage.¹²

In March 1984, a new one-page column titled “For You to Think” was created; it had short reflections on a given topic. In December of that same year, the comics about Old Testament stories were discontinued, and a new series on New Testament subjects began to be planned.

From this point onward, Noguinho, Professor Sabino, Cazuzza, Quico, Luísa, and Azeitona gained more prominence in the articles and other pages of the magazine. A “civic calendar” was also finally released as a result of research carried out since January 1983. The calendar, launched in the form of cards that could be cut out of the magazine and archived by readers, highlighted civic dates, biographies, and relevant events in the history of humanity.

In January 1985, the column “For Them” changed its title to “Luisa’s Page.” And in January 1988, the “Study While Playing” column used 36 consecutive issues to present a series on Brazilian geography, concentrating on the country’s peculiarities and regional characteristics. The series was titled “Traveling Across Brazil.”

In May 1988, the contract between BPH and Giannini for awarding musical instruments ended. A new contract was signed the following month, but this time with Sonata, which made sound-recording equipment. In exchange for mentioning Sonata’s brand, the magazine received four children’s record players every month to be awarded to its readers.

From 1987 on, the illustrator Osnei Furtado was commissioned to make the covers of *Nosso Amiguinho*, and illustrator Paulo Godoy was assigned to create the internal drawings. The series of biblical comics resumed in July 1988 with the publication of episodes from Jesus’ life. A further interruption of the series occurred in July 1991, and the Old Testament series was reprinted thereafter.

When the magazine celebrated its fortieth anniversary in July 1993, two new characters created by illustrator Andrei Vieira were added to the fictional troupe: a girl named Gina (later simply called Gi) and her little cat, Mindinho. Thus, the troupe received one more girl and one more mascot.

In January 1997, Sueli N. Ferreira de Oliveira, part of the editorial staff since 1991, took over the magazine's direction and has been in charge ever since. In February 2000, after researching the spontaneous feedback from readers, the magazine received a new format: 8.11 inches × 10.63 inches (20.6 cm. × 27 cm.) and printed on lightweight coated paper. From then on, the covers began to be illustrated by Andrei Vieira.

Since 2002, *Nosso Amiguinho* has turned into a brand, not just a monthly publication. CDs, videos, coloring books (biblical or not), handouts, cards, and licensed products have been released. In 2003, for the golden jubilee celebration of *Nosso Amiguinho*, the magazine had a special cover printed in a golden color, highlighting its 50 years of existence, and its readers received a CD specially prepared for this occasion.

From 2004 on, the column "Study While Playing" began to present a theme per year. "*Nosso Amiguinho* in School" was created at this time too. "*Nosso Amiguinho* in School" meant to serve the schools that adopted the magazine as supporting material for teaching projects. That same year, in January, Vera Diniz took on the role of magazine designer, assisted by Flávio Oak. Later, Flávio took over the entire visual programming of *Nosso Amiguinho*.

Realizing the need to include children with special needs, the section "Good Sign" was created in May 2010, with expressions in LIBRAS (Brazilian Sign Language).

In March 2012, designer Paulo Martins started to lead the visual programming of the *Nosso Amiguinho* family of magazines. That same year, a major sales campaign for the magazine took place. Under the title "Know How," it featured lectures, play shows (performances made by actors dressed up as the troupe characters), movie reports, special magazine editions, illustrated books with collectible cards, and articulated toys.

In August 2014, Anne Lizie Hirle Chimello became the associate editor of the magazine. In October of that same year, Flávio Oak left his position as designer of the magazine, and Marcos Santos assumed the role, along with Paulo Martins. Between 2015 and 2016, the magazine launched a new ad campaign aimed at encouraging reading. Its title was "The Words Adventure" and included a DVD, CD, and special issue.

Outlooks

Over the years, *Nosso Amiguinho* has been transforming, evolving its image, and updating itself. In October 2016, due to demand for a new design and modernization of the characters, a completely new magazine was launched. It contained more practical artwork, following the best trends in children's illustrations in the global publishing market. The changes to the stroke and color of the drawings became the responsibility of illustrator Thiago Lobo and his team.

In 2017, the character Luísa received a foster sister, who appeared in the December 2016, February 2017, and May 2017 issues. Besides inserting a foster character, the editorial staff intentionally added family members to the magazine's main characters. In times when families are formed in such a different way from the ideal presented by God and taking into account the educational nature of *Nosso Amiguinho*, it was considered

relevant to present the conventional family structure, with its biblically acceptable variables.

Today, *Nosso Amiguinho* stands out for its emphasis on school support for its readers, which strengthens year after year. Nevertheless, its pages contain biblical concepts and stories of civic and moral values, which are useful for the formation of responsible citizens who are willing to fulfill their duties and live well in the community, wherever they may be. The current print run of the magazine is 60,000 copies.

In recent years, *Nosso Amiguinho* has also been present on social media: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Contacts through social media bring readers closer to the magazine's editorial staff. Furthermore, it is a strong tool for the dissemination of the brand.¹³

Editors

Miguel J. Maly (1953–1962); Arnaldo Christianini (1962); Luiz Waldvogel (1963); Helga Bergold (1963–1964); Otto Joas (1965–1968); Ivan Schmidt (1968–1972); Erlo Köhler (acting) (1973); Ivo Santos Cardoso (1973–1977); Rubens da Silva Lessa (1977–1979); Erlo Köhler (acting) (1980); Abigail Rodrigues Liedke (1981); Rubem Milton Scheffel (1981–1984); Wilson de Almeida (1985–1996); Sueli Ferreira de Oliveira (1997–).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Edith Teixeira, "Ao Nosso Leitorzinho" [To our little reader], *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend], edição especial de propaganda [special release edition], no. 1 (1952).
2. Miguel J. Maly, Brazilian Publishing House archives, November 27, 1989.
3. Ibid.
4. Miguel J. Maly, "Saudação" [Welcome], *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend] 1, no. 1 (July 1953): 1.
5. Data based on research carried out in the archives of the Production Management Department of the Brazilian Publishing House, Tatui, São Paulo, Brazil.
6. Miguel J. Maly, *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend] 2, no. 2: 8.
7. Data from the Production Management Department archives of the Brazilian Publishing House.
8. *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend] 9, no. 11: 12.
9. Research conducted on the volumes from the referenced time.
10. "Noguinho está de férias" [Noguinho is on vacation], *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend] 18, no. 6 (December 1970): 4, 5.
11. *Nosso Amiguinho* [Our little friend] 20, no. 1: 20.
12. Sueli Oliveira, "A revista que cresceu com o Brasil" [The magazine that grew up with Brazil], *Revista Adventista* [Adventist Review], January 2014, 24.
13. Available at <http://nossoamiguinho.cpb.com.br/banca/>.

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