

Tabuenca, Juan (1919–2007)

SUSANA ALICIA TABUENCA DE SCHNEIDER, AND DANIEL OSCAR PLENC

Susana Alicia Tabuenca de Schneider

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.

Juan Tabuenca was an Adventist pastor, evangelist, ecclesiastical administrator, and theology professor who served in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.¹

Early Years and Education

The son of Marcelina Gracia and Andrés Tabuenca, Juan Tabuenca was born in Armstrong, Santa Fe, Argentina, on April 28, 1919.² His parents were Spanish. Andrés Tabuenca had traveled from Spain to Argentina with his brother Pedro Tabuenca (1893–1960), looking for a better future for his family. Marcelina remained in Spain with their two small children until Andrés was established in Argentina and able to bring them. In this period, Marcelina learned the Adventist message through a canvasser, converted, and learned how to read through the Bible. A year later, she was able to travel to Argentina, and through her testimony, Andrés was converted. Altogether, the couple had six children: Emilio, Alejandro, Elisa, José, Juan, and Luis; Juan was the fifth. Juan's brother José (1917–1999) was an Adventist pastor and administrator.

The family lived in Armstrong until 1922. When they heard about River Plate Academy in Entre Ríos, Argentina, they sold their lands and moved to Costa Grande, near the academy. Andrés and his family dedicated to poultry and agriculture in order to be able to educate their children in the academy. Soon Andrés was employed by River Plate Academy, in charge of the farm and the care of the birds, a position he maintained for 37 years as the school grew and became known as River Plate Junior College, and then River Plate College. Juan was baptized on November 16, 1935, in Puiggari, Entre Ríos.

Marcelina always put in the heart of Juan the idea of being a pastor, telling him that she had dedicated him to God in her womb. This, and the encouragement of some teachers who saw potential in that shy and rustic boy, made him decide to continue his studies. In addition to working from dawn helping his father in the tasks of the farm (milking, plowing, sowing, harvesting, and other chores), he took the products by car to sell in the neighboring city of Diamante. This work prepared him for canvassing, a work in which he excelled. He earned eight and a half scholarships in one summer, which paid for not only his annual studies but also that of his siblings and helped his family to prosper economically.³

Juan Tabuenca graduated from River Plate Junior College in 1942, having completed the theology and commercial courses.⁴ Years later, he obtained a bachelor's degree in theology (1964). Juan married Liria Miriam Alava.⁵ He began working for the Adventist organization on November 17, 1942, at age 23.

Years of Ministry

Juan began his service in Buenos Aires Conference as aspiring ministry (1942–1944) and soon became a pastor and an evangelist (1945–1954). He was ordained to the pastoral ministry on February 11, 1950. He worked as the theology professor at River Plate College for a year (1954) and then returned as an evangelist to Buenos Aires Conference (1955–1958). He continued as an evangelist in Uruguay Mission (1958–1961). While Juan was a pastor in Uruguay, he studied psychology at the National University of Montevideo because he saw the need to be better prepared to help with the problems that arose in his ministry.

In Uruguay, he met Nelly Alba Marrone, whom he married on December 4, 1961, his first wife having died some time before. Alba was born on May 10, 1927, in Montevideo, Uruguay. Her parents were Alfonso Antonio Marrone and María Rosa Alonso. She was baptized on January 2, 1943, in Montevideo Normal Institute. She obtained the title of Master (1949) at the Montevideo Normal Institute. Alba and Juan Tabuenca had two daughters: Ana Beatriz (1966) and Susana Alicia (1969).⁶ Alba and Juan were an excellent pastoral team; they loved the service and dedication to the church.

Pastor Tabuenca was the Theology professor (1961–1965) and director (1966–1969) of Chile College.⁷ He then served as a pastor and an evangelist in the Central Argentine Conference (1970–1974) before becoming the president of the Uruguay Mission (1974–1978) and then president of Central Argentine Conference (1978–1981).⁸

After these years of administrative work, he returned to River Plate College, where he was a professor of theology (1981–1984) and director of the Theology Department (1983–1984).

Retirement and Legacy

Juan retired on February 28, 1984, at the age of 65, having given 41 years of service. However, he chose to continue serving: he went canvassing, was chaplain of the River Plate Sanitarium in Entre Ríos, Argentina, and taught theology at River Plate College and River Plate Adventist University until 1994. He died in Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina, on July 17, 2007, after suffering a deep neurological deterioration due to Alzheimer's disease.

Pastor Juan Tabuenca left to the younger generation an example of dedication and passion in fulfilling the mission of the church as a pastor, evangelist, administrator, and professor. His legacy was of service, love, and work for the Lord.

SOURCES

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Tabuenca, Juan. *Refutación a los reformistas* [Rebuttal to reformists]. Lima, Perú: Department of Publication, 1968.

Wasiuk, Oscar N. *Reseña histórica de la Iglesia Adventista del 7° Día en el Uruguay* [Historical review of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uruguay]. Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1996.

NOTES

1. Information corroborated with file 1480 of the former Austral Union Conference, Argentine Union archives.
2. For Andrés Tabuenca's biography, see Raúl Posse, "Necrología" [Obituary], *La Revista Adventista* [Adventist review], June 1965, 19–20.
3. The 1949 issue of *La voz del colegio* [Voice of the academy] was dedicated to Andrés Tabuenca: "En reconocimiento por su fiel servicio de años en esta casa, dedicamos este número de 'La Voz del Colegio' al consejero Cristiano, padre agnecado, trabajador incansable." (In recognition of his faithful service of years in this house, we dedicate this number of "La Voz del Colegio" to the Christian counselor, self-sacrificing father, tireless worker.). *La voz del colegio* [Voice of the academy], November 1949, 3.
4. See *La voz del colegio* [Voice of the academy], November 1942.
5. Liria Miriam Alava was born on July 12, 1920, in Finland and grew up in Paraguay and in Misiones, Argentina. She studied at River Plate Academy, Entre Ríos, Argentina, where she got a bachelor's degree. Data extracted from DF 363, from the White Research Center, River Plate Adventist University, Entre Ríos, Argentina.
6. The family was completed with the two sons-in-law: Enrique Maurer and Gabriel Schneider, and three grandchildren: Juan Manuel Maurer, and Caterina and Naiara Schneider.
7. In this period, Juan Tabuenca prepared "Refutación a los reformistas" [Rebuttal to reformists] (Lima, Perú: Department of Publication, 1968).
8. Oscar N. Wasiuk, *Reseña histórica de la Iglesia Adventista del 7° Día en el Uruguay* [Historical review of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uruguay] (Buenos Aires: South American Spanish Publishing House, 1996), 44, 45.

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