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## Stiles, Waldo Wilfred (1909–1997)

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**FERNANDO BARRENO MARTÍNEZ**

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Waldo Stiles was a missionary physician who helped the Quito Adventist Clinic (CAQ), and worked in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

## Early Years

Waldo Stiles was born May 27, 1909, in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, United States. He was the eldest son of George S. and Cora Maio Carr Stiles,<sup>1</sup> and brother to Elwyn Edward Stiles. He was raised on a dairy farm in Michigan, in an Adventist family that provided him missionary service experiences.<sup>2</sup> At the age of eight or nine Stiles was impressed to hear the adventures of a missionary to Africa.<sup>3</sup> In 1920, when Stiles was 10, his parents moved to Riverside, California, and at 20, the family moved to Oronoko, Michigan.

### Education and Marriage

In 1926, when Stiles was 17, his father asked him what future profession he was interested in. His first answer was lawyer, but after further discussion, he decided he wanted to be a physician.<sup>4</sup> Though his parents couldn't help him financially, Stiles started medical school in 1929, at the College of Medical Evangelists of Loma Linda. Its work-study program allowed him to work for his tuition. In addition, he acquired medical experience working at California Methodist Hospital, Santa Barbara Hospital, and Los Angeles County Hospital, in San Fernando.<sup>5</sup>

At this time he met Virginia Lee Harris, whom he married June 13, 1933, in Los Angeles, California.<sup>6</sup> They had two children, Jolene and John.<sup>7</sup> Stiles studied and graduated from Emanuel Missionary College, Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1933. He received his medical diploma at the end of his internship in 1934, in Madison General Hospital, Madison, Wisconsin.<sup>8</sup> Later, he specialized in general surgery, and volunteered as a missionary physician for the Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference. His request was rejected for cumulating a debt during his studies. He decided to work in Arpin, Wisconsin, from 1934 to 1936.<sup>9</sup>

## Medical Missionary Ministry in Peru and Bolivia (1936-1940)

Although only his wife Virginia had taken Spanish classes, on April 29, 1936, Stiles was invited by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to take part in the "In Mission Lands" program,<sup>10</sup> serving as a missionary physician in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru.<sup>11</sup> On July 14, the Inca Union Mission (UI) appointed him as Arequipa Polyclinic superintendent.<sup>12</sup> In February 1937, Stiles was invited as missionary physician by the UI to take part in the Annual Commission Session, and assess the future medical work in Peru, especially in Arequipa and Juliaca.<sup>13</sup> At the UI Annual Session, in March 1937, the Board of Directors organized the Plans Commission<sup>14</sup> under the direction of Pastor Lundquist, with Stiles responsible for medical institutions development.<sup>15</sup> The commission included Arequipa Polyclinic, Juliaca Clinic, and the administration contract<sup>16</sup> of the Public Hospital in Chulumani Sud Yungas, Bolivia.<sup>17</sup>

On March 27, 1937, the Inca Union Mission decided to temporarily close Arequipa Polyclinic.<sup>18</sup> Stiles was asked to present a clinic restructuring and reopening plan,<sup>19</sup> but the mission decided to permanently close the clinic and sell its property,<sup>20</sup> donating its equipment to Juliaca Clinic.<sup>21</sup> Stiles was assigned to serve in the Bolivia Mission.

In November 1937 Stiles was appointed to the Bolivia Mission administration council,<sup>22</sup> and to the position of medical work director.<sup>23</sup> A salary of 200 Bolivians (currently US\$28, 84) was established.<sup>24</sup> The network included the Bolivian Industrial Institute<sup>25</sup> and Chulumani Sud Yungas Hospital,<sup>26</sup> among other responsibilities. Stiles served there until April 15, 1940, when, due to Virginia Stiles' health issues, the General Conference voted on Stiles' and his family's permanent return to the United States.<sup>27</sup>

## Medical Missionary Ministry in the U.S.A. (1940-1957)

On his return to the United States, Stiles tried entering the Public Health Services through the Navy during World War II, but his request was rejected for health reasons and for lack of availability. However, he got his physician license in New Mexico, and finished his internship in General Surgery in Decatur, Illinois, at the end of 1941.<sup>28</sup> Stiles settled in Albuquerque.<sup>29</sup> He looked for Spanish speaking communities and moved to Belen, New Mexico, where he remained until 1943.

In 1944 Stiles returned to Albuquerque, where he set his office. He then did a General Surgery refresher course at White Memorial Hospital, Los Angeles. Later, he was chief surgeon at St. Joseph Hospital until 1954. He joined the navy, serving in outpatient surgery at a San Diego hospital, and later transferring to the navy base, where he was an executive officer until January 1957.<sup>30</sup>

## Medical Missionary Ministry in South America (1957-1972)

During the time he served the American Navy, Stiles was called by the General Conference to serve as a missionary physician in South America.<sup>31</sup> Pastor Fillman, Ecuador Mission president, requested Stiles' help to work in Ecuador.<sup>32</sup> In 1946, when he visited Ecuador, he realized the need for missionary medical work in the country.<sup>33</sup> In February 1957, the Stiles family went to Ecuador to serve as self-sustaining missionaries.<sup>34</sup>

To obtain his medical license for Ecuador, Stiles went through the process of documents, exams, and thesis supporting validation<sup>35</sup> at the Central Ecuador University College of Medical Sciences.<sup>36</sup> He received his license in 1957.<sup>37</sup> In 1958, because of the favorable weather,<sup>38</sup> the Stiles settled in Quito.<sup>39</sup> There he acquired a 630 square-meter property downtown for the construction of a clinic known as Quito American Clinic (CAQ). Stiles invested

US\$37,000 from his U.S. Navy retirement pension in this project.

Dr. Stiles' influence reached a well-regarded Ecuadorian physician, Dr. Salas, who after Bible studies decided to join the Adventist Church.<sup>40</sup> In January 1960, Stiles took part in the sixth Inca Union Mission quadrennial congress as a delegate. That September, Waldo and Virginia received their missionary credentials.<sup>41</sup> In the same year, the Stiles family decided to donate the clinic to the Inca Union Mission.<sup>42</sup> A commission, under Ecuador Mission supervision, was created to integrate the new institution to the Adventist organization.<sup>43</sup> The commission report was presented on July 13, which approved the request and suggested that from September 1st of the same year, the clinic was to be taken in. The same vote stated that Stiles was to be considered an "overseas" worker.<sup>44</sup>

The General Conference approved the vote August 11, 1960, pointing out that the CAQ should become part of the World Network of SDA Clinics and Hospitals.<sup>45</sup> On September 15, the GC corroborated Stiles as an "overseas" missionary, counting from the moment he got his medical license in Ecuador.<sup>46</sup> In 1962, he was invited as a delegate to the Inca Union Mission General Session.<sup>47</sup> In January 1964 he was designated medical director,<sup>48</sup> a position he held until April 1969.<sup>49</sup> Later, he held the position of clinic director until 1972.<sup>50</sup>

## Late Years

Waldo and Virginia Stiles returned to the United States May 1, 1973,<sup>51</sup> selling their house in Quito to Ecuador Mission<sup>52</sup> after determining the high elevation in Quito was detrimental to Virginia's health.<sup>53</sup> They settled in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, where Dr. Stiles worked as a physician for a few more years at Alamo Navajo Health Center.<sup>54</sup> On December 13, 1997, Waldo Stiles died at the age of 88. The memorial service was conducted by Pastor Mario Robinson, on December 20, and he was buried in Vista Memory Gardens, where Virginia Stiles was also buried in 2003.<sup>55</sup>

## Contribution

Waldo Stiles contributed much as a medical missionary worker in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In Peru, he assisted in founding the Arequipa Polyclinic, and in founding the Adventist medical work in Juliaca.<sup>56</sup> In Bolivia, he served at the Sud Yungas public hospital, Chulumani, responding to the Adventist church's request for him to manage it. Stiles also worked as a preacher, often traveling from La Paz to Chulumani, on a notorious road that it is known as the "death road."<sup>57</sup> In Ecuador, he founded and directed the church's medical missionary work. Stiles was highly regarded by church leaders, communities, and government in Ecuador because of his selfless spirit.<sup>58</sup>

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