

Bietz, Arthur L.

(1915–2001)

ALYSSA LOPES

Arthur Leo Bietz was a long-term Adventist church planter, pastor, educator, and psychologist. He explored the connections between principles of clinical psychology and pastoral ministry.

Early Life

On July 21, 1913, Arthur Leo Bietz was born to Daniel Samuel and Christina Unterseher Bietz on their farm near Bowdon, North Dakota. Both of his parents, originally of German ancestry, had been born in Russia. His mother had immigrated to the United States as a small child and his father as a teenager.¹ The families had settled in the same area and had converted to Adventism from the Baptist and Lutheran churches respectively. He attended the Adventist elementary school in his town, of whom his parents were patrons. He was baptized at 13 years old.²

In 1926, Bietz attended Cheyenne River Academy, an Adventist boarding school in Harvey, North Dakota.³ In 1929, he moved to Lincoln, Nebraska and finished his senior year at College View Public High School.⁴ Bietz attended Union College the following year.⁵ He saw his future wife, Violet Klein, over spring break of his freshman year in Washburn, North Dakota. Bietz was anxious to meet Violet, and his sister Ottilia helped facilitate their courtship via mail. After years of dating long distance, they got married on September 18, 1934, in Lincoln, Nebraska.⁶ Bietz planned to graduate in 1935 but never officially graduated from Union as he missed final examinations due to his father's death.⁷



Arthur L. Bietz

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Career

Arthur Bietz began his pastoral career in 1935 in Rochester, Minnesota where he successfully established a new church. He spent the following four years raising churches and building Adventist communities in Minnesota.⁸ In 1939, Bietz was ordained by the Adventist church and moved to Berkely, California where he pastored from 1939 to 1943.⁹

In 1943, Bietz became the chair of the new Applied Christianity Department at the Los Angeles campus of the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University).¹⁰ At the same time, he became the pastor of the White Memorial Church in LA and enrolled in the University of Southern California to continue his education. In 1944, he completed his bachelor's degree in psychology; in 1945, he received a master's degree; and a PhD in religion from the same university in 1946. His dissertation considered the roles of clergy in assisting young people struggling with emotional problems and considered the importance of psychology in a pastoral role.¹¹

His only child, Constance "Connie" Kay Bietz (now Granucci), was born January 5, 1949.¹²

In 1961, Bietz transferred to Glendale Seventh-day Adventist Church where he was involved in radio ministry for several years and directed the Glendale Psychological Center.¹³ Throughout this time, he remained in close association with Loma Linda University, holding the first meeting of the Institute of Scientific Studies for the Prevention of Alcoholism in July of 1967, of which he was the director.¹⁴ Bietz was also a prolific author. In total, he published 25 books and pamphlets, including *When God Met Men* and *In Quest for Life*. Many of these publications were derived from his sermons at Glendale Seventh-day Adventist Church. He also wrote articles for denominational publications like *Signs of the Times*.¹⁵

Later Life and Legacy

Bietz retired in 1972 but remained a pastor emeritus at Glendale Church until his death.¹⁶ He also founded and directed the Central Bank of Glendale during this time.¹⁷

Arthur L. Bietz died on October 7, 2001, at 88 years old.¹⁸ His connection of psychology and religion was revolutionary for the time. The churches and Adventist communities he helped build persist to this day.

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