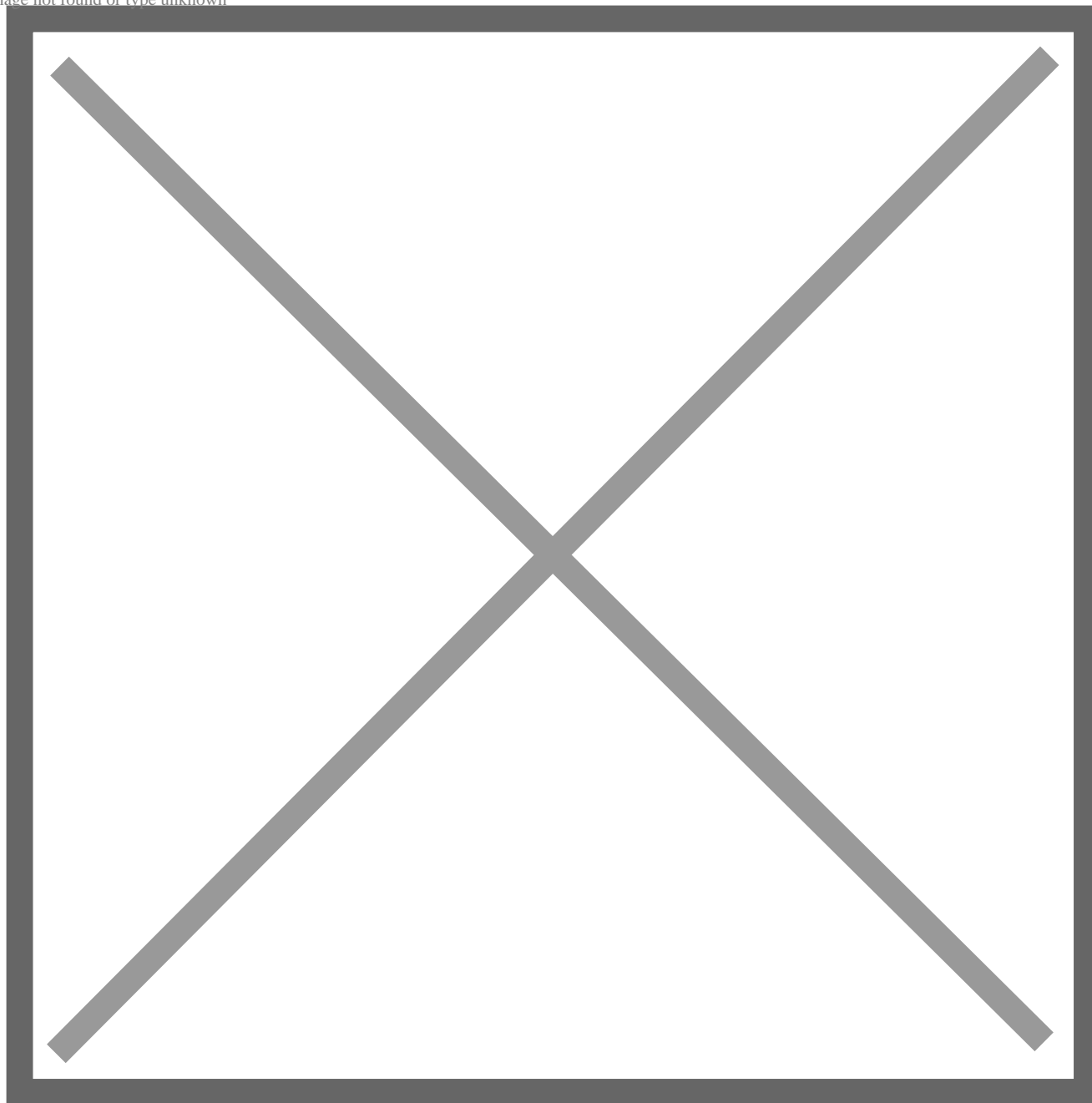


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Adventist Media Centre–India

CHERYL CHRISTO HOWSON

Cheryl Christo Howson earned a graduate diploma in computer aided interior designing at the Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture for Women in Pune, India. She co-founded an interior design company in Sri Lanka and worked as a copywriter. She contributed to the morning devotional published by Women's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the *Shepherdess International Journal* magazine, and the *Adventist Review*. She has written several plays. Currently (2020), she lives in Hosur, India while preparing for a piano exam.

Adventist Media Centre–India is operated by the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was

established in 1947 and reorganized in 1989. It is located in Pune, Maharashtra, India.

Developments

Archie E. Rawson had a vision of using the media of radio and Bible Correspondence Schools to spread the message more rapidly in India after observing how the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) had worked in South Africa and America.¹ He had seen how quickly the VOP had spread to other countries just a few years after its first nationwide broadcast in 1942 in the United States. By 1947 the VOP was broadcast in six languages on over six hundred stations around the world and had correspondence schools in four countries.² India was one of those four countries, thanks to the determined dedication of Rawson.³

Founding 1947

After serving in Sri Lanka for several years, Rawson had returned to India in 1946 as the Southern Asia Division Radio secretary and director of the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School.⁴ He was determined to begin the first Voice of Prophecy Correspondence School in Southern Asia. In April 1947 he opened the school in his own home on the division campus in Poona. The only course available was in English; and the entire staff consisted of just Rawson and his wife.⁵

Enrollments increased, and more staff was required, and so the school was soon moved to the rear of the Salisbury Park English Church. After a few months the school was relocated in a new primary school building still under construction. On Monday, May 9, 1949, the Voice of Prophecy personnel and equipment moved over to the ground floor of the division office building where it remained until 1975.⁶

First Broadcasts and a New Studio

The first broadcasts were the half hour "Voice of Prophecy" heard from the old Radio Goa in April 1950⁷ and on Radio Ceylon (SLBC) in December of the same year.⁸

In order to cope with the production of all these new radio programs for the huge populations in Southern Asia, a production studio was installed in 1954.⁹

By 1957 the Voice of Prophecy was sending out lessons in 15 languages from six different locations. The recently installed studio had been producing radio programs in four Indian languages, as well as recording a library of suitable music.¹⁰

Pastor C. R. Bonney, 1958

The Rawsons left Southern Asia on permanent retirement to America on September 23, 1958.¹¹ At the 1958 General Conference Session, Charles Ronald Bonney was appointed Radio Secretary of the Southern Asia Division. Charles and Eva Bonney¹² accepted the call and sailed for India on October 4 of that year with their two younger children, Maria and Stephen.¹³ They served there for 3 years 7 months in Salisbury Park, Poona (Pune), until May 30, 1962.¹⁴ Pastor Bonney introduced new courses and encouraged further translations into local languages. By 1959 the first one-million mark of applications had been reached. More branch schools were opened, resulting in the second million being reached in only four years.¹⁵

Pastor Kenneth Gammon 1962

Pastor Kenneth Gammon took over the Voice of Prophecy after the Bonney's left. During his stay Ken Gammon laid emphasis on the Group Study Plan, and his wife Beryl Gammon helped develop the outreach of the health course. However, their two daughters, Frances and Heather, had serious health problems, and it was necessary for the Gammons to request immediate permanent return to England. They left Bombay May 23, 1965.¹⁶

VOP Director and Radio-TV Secretary Become Two Posts

Around September 1965, George W. Maywald was appointed acting division Radio-TV secretary and director of the VOP Bible Correspondence Schools till a replacement could be found to fill Pastor Gammon's post.¹⁷ At the General Conference, July 1966, W. H. Mattison was elected to be in charge of the Ministerial and Radio-TV (Voice of Prophecy) for Southern Asia.¹⁸ Later that year in September, O. Israel, who had been in charge of the book department of the OWPH, was appointed the new director of the VOP school, Poona. I. K. Moses served as Radio program coordinator.¹⁹

VOP Studio is Expanded

The studio had existed for twenty years without much change, although the number of programs produced had

drastically increased. It was decided to expand the studio that was operating in rather cramped conditions. On September 15, 1974, there was an official opening ceremony for the enlarged VOP studio. There were three studios available for the production of programs. The large *Music Studio* was used for music recordings and talk programs. It was 20 feet by 30 feet, with a control room and adjacent facilities, such as the small *Talk Studio* that could be used independently for announcements and talk recordings without disturbing musicians in the main studio. The *Technical Studio* contained the bank of tape recorders, disc player, amplifiers, and mixers. Programs produced in the studios were then forwarded to SLBC in Colombo for direct broadcast according to a prearranged schedule.²⁰

Pastor Adrian M. Peterson was appointed in charge of the Communication Department at the division in 1975²¹ Under his leadership, several changes occurred.

Adventist Communication Centre (ACC) 1975

Although various other VOP schools were opened, the largest school was still located in Poona with 10 people on the staff.²² At the end of 1975, it was consolidated with the studio into ACC, the Adventist Communication Centre. And in June 1976, a new home was given to the VOP school again. It was moved out of the main division building to a self-contained bungalow, still on the Salisbury Park compound.²³ However, the production studios were always located in the two-storey building that serves as the headquarters office for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern Asia.²⁴ Pastor V. D. Ohal was appointed the director of the VOP, and then the ACC, during this transitional phase²⁵

AWR-Asia 1976

On October 7, 1976, approval was granted by the AWR Board at the General Conference for Southern Asia to operate its international short wave radio outreach as AWR-Asia on the broadcasts from Sri Lanka²⁶ It was the second station to be organized under the AWR concept.²⁷ Pastor Adrian Peterson, who was then in charge of the Communication Department, was also the director of AWR-Asia, while Pastor V. D. Ohal remained director of the ACC.²⁸

The equipment in the studio was most up-to-date for its times and operated by a trained and efficient technician. To maintain and upgrade the standard of music, a music production supervisor was appointed in 1976²⁹ By 1977 the studio was producing nine programs a week in seven languages.³⁰

In 1979 the programs of AWR-Asia were heard in 11 different languages from Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Dacca. Some of the programs broadcasted were *Your Story Hour* (produced in Medina, Ohio, USA); a Bengali program with Mr. P. K. Gayen; a Nepali program with Mr. Deep Thapa; Radio Monitors International with Pastor A. M. Peterson and Miss Sonia Christo – which consisted of various announcements, news, information, music, and features; broadcasts to Africa that were prepared in the AWR-Asia studio in Poona on behalf of the Afro-Mid East Division as a fill in; a Sinhala program with Pastor R. Aranze, recorded on tape in Sri Lanka and then prepared in the Poona studio and broadcast from the Maldives.³¹

By 1981 the studio was producing 25 broadcasts in 9 languages, and there were 43 staff members at the ACC³²

In 1981, to mark the 30th anniversary of AWR-Asia, a worldwide listener contest was conducted that produced a mail response from 32 countries. The special programs for the "World's Biggest DX Contest" were produced in the Poona studios of AWR-Asia. They were broadcast in conjunction with the international outreach of the AWR network over several short-wave transmitters in Sri Lanka, Portugal, Andorra, and Guatemala. The target areas for these broadcasts were Europe, North Africa, Middle East, Southern Asia, and the Far East. An additional broadcast on FM and AM also gave full coverage to all of Sri Lanka and South India.³³

In 1989 Edwin Brave Mathew was appointed the director of the Adventist Communication Centre and VOP Studio³⁴ The director of the Center was no longer the communication director of the division. D. S. Poddar continued as division communication director, but the minutes of the ACC were now cosigned by Mathew and not by Poddar. This was a major step toward becoming an independent division institution. The ACC minutes from 1989 were sent to the General Conference, and the SDA Yearbook dates this as a reorganization.³⁵

Adventist Media Centre

In 1998 the division Executive Committee took an action to change the name from Adventist Communication Centre to Adventist Media Centre.³⁶ However, the yearbooks continued with the old name for a few years more.

The Health and VOP departments were reopened on July 30, 2012, after they were renovated, and three channels were also launched at the same time.³⁷

Historical Role

After its humble beginning with two staff members in the home of Archie Rawson, the VOP expanded to another school in Bangalore. As more languages were added, various VOP language schools were transferred to an appropriate center, but the school in Pune remained the largest, and the main headquarters.³⁸

The ACC (AMC) was so progressive that India was the second station to be organized under the worldwide AWR concept as AWR-Asia in 1975.³⁹

Outlook

Throughout the initial years, the VOP (AMC) was ahead of its time in reaching places where people couldn't go. Often when evangelists entered hitherto unentered areas in the Southern Asia Division for the first time, they would find VOP graduates already familiar with the gospel. Both radio and the correspondence courses were very effective.

As technology advanced, the ACC (AMC) invested in renovations and new equipment to keep pace with the changing world.

More recently the AMC also invested in training its staff members. Two people from SUD were sent to the Video Production Studio Training conducted by AGCN at Miami, Florida, USA July 12-21, 1999, to improve the quality of programs coming out of AMC. Those who attended were Ravindra Sunder Rao, technician, AMC and John Rajagopal, producer, "Last Call."⁴⁰

Social Media has changed much of the way people communicate. In keeping with that, an app was created in 2016 by Elvin Jackson and Jacob Kunthara from GOAL ministries to help the radio programs reach more people. It was programmed to be available in 15 different languages.⁴¹

In order to continue to be relevant in the future, the Adventist Media Centre must carry on using the most up-to-date forms of media for communication, as it has throughout the years.

Official Names

Voice of Prophecy (1947-1975); Adventist Communication Centre (1975-1998); Adventist Media Centre (1998-Present).

Directors

Voice of Prophecy: Arcie E. Rawson (1947-1958); Charles R. Bonney (1958-1962); Kenneth Gammon (1962-1965); Osuri Israel (1965-1975).⁴²

Adventist Communication Centre: Vasant D. Ohal (1976-1981); K. P. Philip (1981-1985); David S. Poddar (1986-1988); Edwin B. Matthew (1989-1998).⁴³

Adventist Media Centre: Edwin B. Matthew (1998-2003), Edwin Charles (2004-2010); Edison Samraj (2011-2016); Vara Prasad Jacob (2017-Present).

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“Voice of Prophecy Thirtieth Anniversary.” *Southern Asia Tidings*, December 1, 1977.

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