

# Leichsenring, David Elias Nathanael (1927–2020)



David Leichsenring

Photo courtesy of Brazilian White Center - UNASP.

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## THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP (2)

The Brazilian White Center – UNASP (2) is a team of teachers and students at the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center – UNASP at the Brazilian Adventist University, Campus Engenheiro, Coelho, SP. The team was supervised by Drs. Adolfo Semo Suárez, Renato Stencil, and Carlos Flávio Teixeira. The following are the team members: Melissa Querido Batista, Priscila Carvalho dos Santos, Allan Sleyter Soares de Atayde, Jonatan Ferreira Nascimento, and Leo Eduardo Menegusso Valenzi.

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David Elias Nathanael Leichsenring was a Brazilian colporteur, teacher, and missionary.

## Childhood and Basic Education

Leichsenring's mother, Maria Goldammer Leichsenring (1894-1988), was born in Austria and emigrated to Brazil in 1919. In the same year, she began studying at the Brazil Adventist College (CAB), currently Brazil Adventist University, São Paulo Campus (UNASP), being baptized the following year.<sup>1</sup> She began working at the Brazil Publishing House (CPB) as a secretary, where she met David's father, Adolpho Gustav Leichsenring (1894-1977), who was a typographer.<sup>2</sup>

Due to health problems caused by the lead that his father came into contact in his profession, his parents moved from Santo André to the countryside, in Serra Negra, Paraná. It was there, in a German colony, that David was born, on October 2, 1926. The conditions in which the young man was born were simple. He, his parents, and seven siblings shared a small mud house where they all slept on mats. Eating meat was a rare privilege in David's diet, reserved only for special occasions.<sup>3</sup>

Being of humble origins, in order to study, he normally had to travel a long distance to reach the German school in the region. However, this would not be the case for Leichsenring. The boy would be prevented from getting an education three different times. At the time he reached the age required to begin his studies, he fell ill with

an unknown illness that incapacitated him, causing him to miss the period of enrollment.<sup>4</sup>

When he recovered in 1939, the local school closed due to World War II, which made it impossible for him to study again. At the end of the War, Leichsenring tried to enroll in the Brazilian school that had been opened, but he was prevented from starting it a third time due to his Austrian origin and advanced age. Without many options, Leichsenring began earning money selling fruit for export until, at the age of 19, he finally went to the current Instituto Adventista Paranaense (IAP) to start studying.<sup>5</sup>

## Studies and Colportage

The school routine was challenging and strange for Leichsenring. In addition to wearing shoes for the first time in his life, Leichsenring had to learn Portuguese at the age of 19. Up until then, he had only learned how to speak German.<sup>6</sup> This young man, however, was determined to make the most of the experience. Because he had no prior education, Leichsenring would need to study with children much younger than him. Even though he did not have a formal education until now, he had some knowledge thanks to his mother's encyclopedias, which he read frequently. Therefore, with the desire to make up for the lost time, Leichsenring took three different tests to advance grades and passed.<sup>7</sup>

Determined to develop and finance his education, in addition to working as a janitor at the school, Leichsenring quickly joined the colportage ministry.<sup>8</sup> Since he did not know Portuguese very well or had experienced formal studies, the publication director responsible for Leichsenring tried to dissuade him from colportaging, but without success. Leichsenring went on to the town of Rio do Oeste and, even without prior experience, managed to sell a good amount of material. Unfortunately, after delivering the books, the people who bought them from Leichsenring demanded their money back, leaving him with dozens of books and penniless. Determined not to give up, the young man went to the neighboring village, Rio Doce, and there he managed to sell almost all the books again, with only two remaining, which he gifted to the family who had received him.<sup>9</sup>

After studying for two years at IAP, he went to São Paulo to study at CAB, the same school his mother had studied at, where he stayed from 1950 to 1952, when he got back to IAP and finished his basic education.<sup>10</sup> Leichsenring's school experience with his educators, especially with teacher Romeo Ritter, was so positive that he decided to become a Biology teacher.<sup>11</sup> Thus, he enrolled at the Pontifical Catholic University of Curitiba, where he graduated in 1957 in Natural Sciences.<sup>12</sup>

## Educational Ministry

Leichsenring dedicated himself completely to educational work, becoming the first Biology teacher with a higher education degree in the Adventist Educational System in Brazil. He worked as an educator at what is currently

the UNASP, São Paulo campus, for his entire career, a total of 35 years. In addition, he served as director of the Audiovisual Department and CIPA, Professor of Industrial Arts and head of the campus workshop.<sup>13</sup>

Leichsenring was helped and influenced by teachers during his time as a student, and when he became a teacher, he sought to do the same. On numerous occasions, he paid for young people's education and, whenever he had the opportunity, he encouraged them to invest in personal education. Even when he was a student, Leichsenring acted this way.<sup>14</sup>

Pastor Holbert Schmidt is an example of this. At age 14, Holbert was recovering from an illness when Leichsenring knocked on his door in 1950 while colporteur. Leichsenring traveled to neighboring towns on weekdays and stayed at Holbert's house on weekends. Seeing the boy's condition, Leichsenring tried to persuade his father to enroll him in school so he could learn. Even with his host's refusal, Leichsenring did not give up, and ended up bringing his school's principal to the house. With the principal's help, Leichsenring managed to convince the father, and Holbert was able to study and later become a pastor. This dedication and encouragement to education was present throughout his career.<sup>15</sup>

## Personal Life

While studying at the Brazil Adventist College boarding school, Leichsenring met his future wife, Nellie Adel Holland Leichsenring, who was born in 1935 in Valparaíso, São Paulo. The two would get married in this same city on April 5, 1955.<sup>16</sup> Nellie, like her husband, dedicated herself to the Adventist Church, holding positions as deaconess, director of the Women's Ministry, and teacher at a children's Sabbath School. The couple, who remained married for a total of 65 years, had four children: Dalee, Daisy, Davis, and Dilza.<sup>17</sup>

## Retirement and Last years

In 1992 at the age of 66, Leichsenring retired, and the couple decided to continue working for the Lord as canvassers in the United States. After a while, they returned to Brazil and bought a motor home. After filling it with denominational material, and the two traveled through the states of Minas Gerais, Tocantins, Mato Grosso, Brasília, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Rio Grande do Sul, giving lectures on health and distributing evangelistic literature for a total of 18 years.<sup>18</sup>

This is how Leichsenring spent his last years until, on June 12, 2020, he passed away at the age of 94. His life was full of trials and challenges that were capable of overwhelming anyone else. Leichsenring, however, was an example of resilience and perseverance in the face of obstacles, and he surpassed every hardship with faith and determination, leaving behind a lasting legacy.<sup>19</sup>

"Bodas de Diamante." *Revista Adventista* 110, no. 1303 (December 2015).

Dilza Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista, Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White: UNASP campus Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 7, 2024.

"Dormiram no Senhor." *Revista Adventista* 85, no. 2 (February 1989).

"Dormiram no Senhor." *Revista Adventista* 72, no. 9 (September 1977).

Hobert Schmidt, interviewed by Melissa Querido, Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White: UNASP campus Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, March 26, 2024.

"Memória," *Revista Adventista* 115, no.1361 (September 2020).

Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista, Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White: UNASP campus Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, May 7, 2024.

Souza, Maria A. Barbosa de. "A Saga da Perseverança." *Comunicação Social*. Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo. São Paulo.

"Trailer Missionário,.."*Revista Adventista* 94, no.10 (October 1998).

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## NOTES

1. "Dormiram no Senhor," *Revista Adventista* 85, no. 2 (February 1989): 35; Maria A. Barbosa de Souza. "A Saga da Perseverança," (*Comunicação Social*. Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo. São Paulo): 31-32.
2. "Dormiram no Senhor," *Revista Adventista* 72, no. 9 (September 1977): 27; "Memória," *Revista Adventista* 115, no.1361 (September 2020): 40; Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
3. Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
4. Maria A. Barbosa de Souza, "A Saga da Perseverança," (*Comunicação Social*. Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo. São Paulo): 32.
5. *Ibid.*, 32-33; Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
6. Dilza Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista; Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
7. Dilza Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista; Maria A. Barbosa de Souza, "A Saga da Perseverança," (*Comunicação Social*. Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo. São Paulo): 32-33.
8. Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.

9. Maria A. Barbosa de Souza, "A Saga da Perseverança," (Comunicação Social. Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo. São Paulo): 25-29.
10. Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista;
11. Ibid.; Hobert Schmidt, interviewed by Melissa Querido.
12. Dilza Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
13. Ibid.; "Memória," *Revista Adventista* 115, no.1361 (September 2020): 40.
14. Dilza Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista; Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
15. Hobert Schmidt, interviewed by Melissa Querido.
16. Nellie Leichsenring, interviewed by Melissa Querido Batista.
17. Ibid.; "Bodas de Diamante," *Revista Adventista* 110, no. 1303 (December 2015): 8.
18. Ibid.; "Trailer Missionário," *Revista Adventista* 94, no.10 (October 1998): 30.
19. "Memória," *Revista Adventista* 115, no. 1361 (September 2020): 40.

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