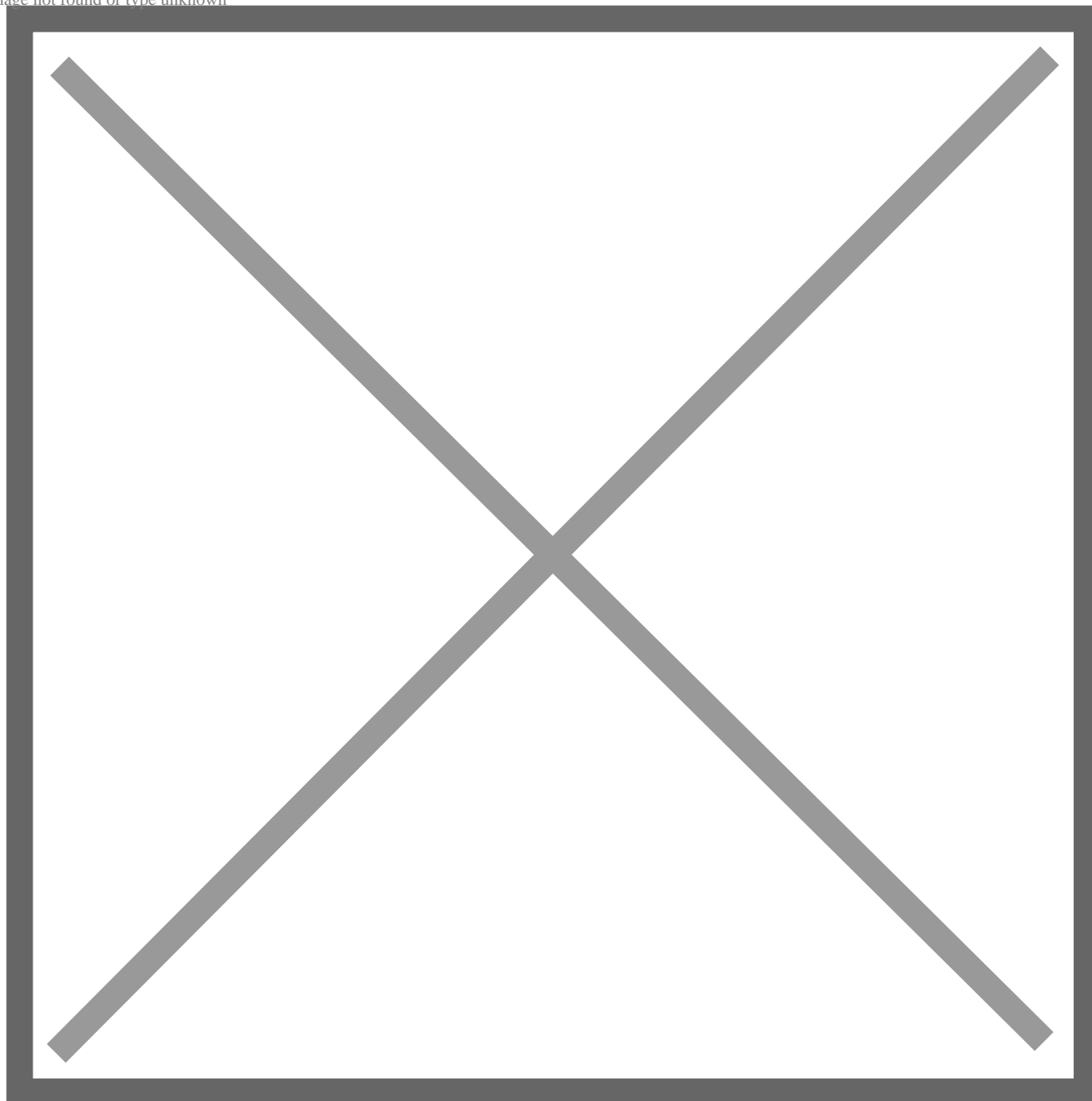


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# Salvador Adventist Hospital

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**NESIAS JOAQUIM DOS SANTOS, AND ADILSON DA SILVA VIEIRA**

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Adilson da Silva Vieira

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Salvador Adventist Hospital was a medical unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that operated from 1984 to 1990. It was located at Caetano Moura Street, nº 20, district Federação, ZIP code 40210-340, in the city of Salvador,

State of Bahia, Brazil.

## Developments That Led to the Establishment of the Institution

Although the Adventist movement in Bahia started in 1905, its origins are directly related to the 1904 events, more specifically, the creation of the Brazilian Conference (currently Rio de Janeiro Conference). Pastor F. W. Spies got elected to preside over the new field and soon began to travel through the Brazilian backlands, which, at the time, were a comprised region by the newly created Conference.<sup>1</sup> In 1908 the pastor went to the city of Santo Antônio de Jesus to baptize the first Adventist of the State of Bahia.<sup>2</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church took a long time to achieve sustainable growth in the capital of Bahia. Leaders like John Lipke,<sup>3</sup> Manoel Kumpel,<sup>4</sup> Manoel Rohde,<sup>5</sup> and the canvassers Zacharias Marthins Rodrigues,<sup>6</sup> Leopoldo Nabuco, among others reported difficulties in working in Salvador during the early 20s. They attributed this difficulty to factors such as unbelief, strong Catholic tradition, religious mysticism, and a strong influence of Afro-Brazilian religions, mainly Candomblé and Umbanda in the region.

Despite all difficulties faced by the Adventist pioneers, around 1930 some canvassers, under the leadership of Elder Julio Miñan, spread a remarkable amount of literature, and thus the resistance of the people decreased. It was then that Miñan published an article in the Revista Adventista (Adventist Review) to notify the end of the obstacles that prevented the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bahia so far, stating that the path was open for the advance of preaching.<sup>7</sup> As for the 1940 decade, the work in Salvador grew a lot, equating to the one carried out in the state countryside, where the activities moved steadily forward. This was due to the canvassing, which always fulfilled its missionary role for that time and region in a fundamental way.<sup>8</sup>

While the gospel advanced in the capital of Bahia, the Seventh-day Adventist Church opened the first missionary institutions that would develop health work. The creation of São Paulo Adventist Hospital,<sup>9</sup> in the capital of São Paulo, and Silvestre Adventist Hospital, in the city of Rio de Janeiro,<sup>10</sup> marked the beginning of a new era. Both hospitals were inaugurated in 1942. Four years later, in 1946, the social assistance services were carried out in the State of Bahia through the medical missionary launch Luminar I (Luminary),<sup>11</sup> operating on the Sao Francisco River. This action made the local church dream of a hospital unit in the capital-a dream that seemed to be very distant.<sup>12</sup>

Another factor that boosted the desire to establish an Adventist hospital in Bahia took place in 1960 when the pilot George Shaw went on to serve more distant regions of the state with the missionary plane. Shaw would provide medical care and bring supplies so the first aid procedures could be offered to the patients, under the leadership of Pastor George Merlin Kretschmar, who presided over Bahia-Sergipe Mission between 1961-1968.<sup>13</sup>

During the 1960s, to speed up the medical care process, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began operating an ambulatory in the Central Church of Salvador.<sup>14</sup> As the services got advertised, and more people started to come for it, the project needed to be moved out to the district Brotas, in the Alto do Saldanha Street, s/nº. The ambulatory remained at this address until the year of 1976, more precisely till December 31, when the vote nº 282/76 enclosed it. One of the reasons for the closure was the lack of medical professionals with the Adventist health philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

During Pastor George Merlin Kretschmar's term, in 1964, the church concentrated efforts on the city of Itaquara. There a set of administrative actions organized a structure of services and institutions that comprised a vegetable garden, bakery, pottery, and a day-school located at the Arroz farm, where there was also a settlement for agricultural producers. Eventually the day-school received a boarding-school regime. In addition, also in 1964, the Clínica Adventista de Itaquara (Itaquara Adventist Clinic) was created. Through these actions, later on the idea of establishing a hospital in the capital took form.<sup>16</sup>

To maintain the clinic in Itaquara, the Seventh-day Adventist Church called two doctors from the city of Rio de Janeiro: Dr. Júlio Davi and Dr. Aloísio Sergio Melo. After a setback in the project, Dr. Aloísio Sergio de Melo returned to Rio de Janeiro. Whereas Dr. Júlio Davi remained in the city for over ten years, up to the closing down of the clinic.<sup>17</sup>

In 1976 The Bahia-Sergipe Mission asked the higher organizations to send to Salvador a representative of the Grupo Hospitalar Adventista Brasileiro (GHAB) (Brazilian Adventist Hospital Group) to carry out a local evaluation.<sup>18</sup> In a meeting Dr. Zildomar Deucher was chosen to present a technical evaluation on the viability of the hospital in Bahia,<sup>19</sup> as well as to work on a special committee for enabling such a goal.<sup>20</sup> Everyone hoped that this evangelistic tool (medical missionary work) would finally reach the territory of Bahia.

At the time all the Health institutions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil were under GHAB administration, which already comprised São Paulo Adventist Hospital, Silvestre Adventist Hospital, and Belem Adventist Hospital. Meanwhile, the other regions of the country had a huge lack of the medical work. The first announcements of change on this scenario came in 1978, when GHAB opened Manaus Adventist Hospital.<sup>21</sup>

In 1979 a team from the Loma Linda School of Medicine, in the United States, visited Brazil, at the invitation of GHAB, to elaborate health advancing projects, including the opening of new hospital units. Through that opportunity, Zildomar Deucher, a cardiologist and then president of GHAB, started an intense resources campaign to open new medical units in the country. As the days passed by, the dream of having a hospital became more real for the Adventists in Bahia.<sup>22</sup>

On December 7, 1982, GHAB leadership decided to celebrate, through a thanksgiving worship, the fortieth anniversary of the medical work in Brazil. The several administrators, doctors, nurses, employees, and even former

patients of the Adventist hospitals in operation in Brazil joined the occasion which was covered by the Adventist Review, announcing the expected construction of two new hospitals-in Brasília, Federal District and Salvador, Bahia , as well as the restructuring of a third hospital in the city of Recife, Pernambuco.<sup>23</sup>

It is worth stressing that during the GHAB term as the entity in charge of the Adventist hospitals, new hospital units were purchased in several regions of the country. In addition to the ones in Brasília (1981), Recife (1982), and Salvador (1982) <sup>24</sup>, GHAB managed to open units in Curitiba, State of Paraná, Belo Horizonte, State of Minas Gerais (1981), and Vitória, State of Espírito Santo (1982).<sup>25</sup>

## Founding of the Institution

The foundation of HASa is related to an important episode of 1976-when Dr. Milton Afonso, then president of Golden Cross,<sup>26</sup> received an offer to buy a hospital in Belo Horizonte. Whereas he was enthusiastic about acquiring the hospital, he realized his friends and employees didn't agree with this initiative,<sup>27</sup> in spite of the fact that the establishment was considered "a giant," being even compared to "a medical city." The dispute concerning this matter was so great that Dona Cresolina, a trusted employee of Dr. Afonso, resigned due to the insistence of Dr. Afonso on the matter.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the largest hospital in the State of Minas Gerais was acquired, changing its name from Santa Monica Hospital to Belo Horizonte Adventist Hospital.<sup>29</sup>

After this episode, in a scenario of continuous acquisitions, in 1981 Golden Cross acquired a hospital still to be finished in Salvador; only its structure had been built.<sup>30</sup> The SDA administrative units that supported the acquisition were the East Brazil Union Conference, based in Niterói (currently Southeast Brazil Union Conference), and the Bahia Mission, based in Salvador (currently Bahia Conference). In addition, Golden Cross collaborated as one of the institution's first sources of subsidy in carrying out the acquisition and renovation of the building.<sup>31</sup> The renovation took place between 1982 and 1984 and was completed on June 1. The fact that the building was located at a Brazilian capital, in the noble area of the city, influenced its purchase, as frequently, the capital was the place where the countryside population would go to receive health treatments.

Among the people who worked for the acquisition of Salvador Adventist Hospital were: Zildomar Deucher, Floriano Xavier dos Santos, Wilson Silva, José Orlando Correia, Germano Boell, Gustavo Pires da Silva, Luís Henrique Perestrelo, Zinaldo Azevedo, Antônio Ribeiro, Dr. Milton Afonso, and others.

Even before the renovation work of the establishment was completed, "in June 1983, Dr. Paulo Azevedo took over the management of HASa, with Brother Naor Toledo Pinto as his administrator." Also in 1983, more specifically on December 9, a board of directors met and decided that as of January 1, 1984, the institution would be renamed the Adventist Hospital of Salvador. On January 10, 1984, the first surgery performed at HASa was conducted by the physician Corinto Amorin.<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of the activities, while the work was not yet completed, there were only six offices and a small laboratory in the hospital, and eight doctors worked there. Later, the institution inaugurated the emergency room and another laboratory. In addition, the hospital purchased two new radiology devices, which made the demand for the site grow. To address this new demand, HASa hired four more Adventist doctors, integrating them into the institution's team.<sup>33</sup>

In March 1984, the hospital already covered 15 medical specialties and had 20 medical specialists. The establishment also had conventional offices and a dentistry office. In addition, HASa already offered physical therapy services. All this growth preceded the long-awaited opening date,<sup>34</sup> which was celebrated on June 29, after all the construction was completed.

The inauguration was finally celebrated, in a service held in the hospital's internal parking lot. On the occasion the speaker of the event was Pastor Floriano Xavier dos Santos, leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the southeast, east, and northeast of Brazil. In addition to the speaker, ecclesiastical authorities such as Neal Wilson, world leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, were present; Pr. João Wolf, leader of the church in eight countries in South America; Germano Boell, Gustavo Pires, Luís Henrique Perestrelo, Aliomar Moura, and Araújo and Demóstenes Neves. There were also present: Dr. Zildomar Deucher, director of GHAB and director of Silvestre Adventist Hospital; Dr. Paulo Cesar de Azevedo, director of HASa; and Dr. Milton Afonso, executive director of Golden Cross. During the event, Neal Wilson talked about the initiative to prevent and cure diseases, which was the focus of the institution.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to all the authorities mentioned, the ceremony was attended by a Presbyterian missionary who made a generous donation. He was a Bible supplier for the Brazilian Bible Society (SBB) and "immediately donated 5,000 leaflets with Bible portions to the hospital." The missionary work carried out at the hospital over the years demonstrated that the generous donation was very useful.<sup>36</sup>

Some political authorities were also invited. Among them worth mentioning is the presence of Dr. Nilson Barros, the health secretary of the State of Bahia; Dr. Manoel Castro, mayor of Salvador; Edmilson Braga, superintendent of the Federal Police of Rio de Janeiro; as well as two architects and GHAB members, Waldemar and Silvia Wenzel.<sup>37</sup> The presence of the most diverse guests was important as it showed that the hospital was there to support and to serve all people, without exception, in the most dedicated way possible.

As a complement to the opening celebration, the guests took a tour of the hospital with some of those present. On this tour the guests got to know the equipment and visited the facilities, which had a capacity for 120 beds. In

addition, a cocktail was offered to the nearly 300 people attending the event.<sup>38</sup>

After the inauguration, the good service provided by the institution, combined with the name linked to the Adventist network of hospitals, enabled the credibility of the hospital with users. Soon after its first year of operation came the recognition for the good services provided by the institution. The Brazilian Social Activities Research Company (Embrapas) conducted a public opinion poll in 1985, in the city of Salvador. The result of this research placed the Adventist hospital in first place “as the best of the year in the field of hospitals, in public preference, and sympathy.” Due to the prominence regarding its services, the hospital participated in a ceremony held on August 30, 1985, in which it “received the Public Consecration Diploma.”<sup>39</sup>

## Institution's History

The first year of the hospital operation was very successful, and its growth could be seen on the official reports. In 1984, when reporting the situation in which the institution was, the medical director, Paulo C. Azevedo, said that the mark of 40 patients a day had already been reached. In addition, the average number of patients admitted had grown from 21 to 28 between July and August of that year. The surgical center performed between 5 and 10 surgeries a day and had already attended six patients simultaneously in its ICU (Intense Care Unit). In all, there were already records of almost two thousand monthly medical appointments, not to mention that the dental office was experiencing a “growing demand.” Among the patients there were people from various health care plans, but most of them were from Golden Cross. On the other hand, there was an average of “15 percent to 20 percent” of patients with no health plan.<sup>40</sup>

But the institution's success was not restricted to its medical services. Since its very beginning, HASa recorded the fruits of its missionary work. One of these results was noticed when the patient, Rosa de Fatima Dantas Coelho, came to the hospital to make an appointment. Some time earlier she had received Bible studies from Adventist members in a town near Salvador. But as she came to the hospital, she didn't imagine it was an Adventist institution.<sup>41</sup>

Despite having sought the hospital only for an appointment, Rosa de Fátima needed to be admitted. During her time in the hospital, the patient accepted Christ as her personal Savior and was accepted by profession of faith on May 18, 1984, on a Friday. The next day she was privileged to keep her first and last Saturday because, due to her problem, Rosa de Fátima passed away a few days later.<sup>42</sup> However, it was in the hospital that she had her last chance to give herself unreservedly to Christ.

Also in 1984, four HASa doctors went to the district of Rio Vermelho to direct a series of conferences. “The group of Rio Vermelho started with a patient from Salvador Adventist Hospital who was undergoing physiotherapy treatment with sister Sofia Rodrigues, physiotherapy technician of the hospital.” It was this patient who, after returning home, offered her place for the meetings, so that the group could function in the region. Encouraged by Bahia Mission, health professionals held meetings they called “Health Meetings.” These meetings were held fortnightly, every other Saturday.<sup>43</sup> In addition to this project, doctors, nurses, and other professionals from the hospital began the evangelistic work in the district Boca do Rio. Today there are two churches that started through the initiative of the hospital workers—the churches of Barra and Ondina, both in the city of Salvador.

Among the several evangelistic initiatives of the hospital, the first week of prayer of the institution took place from June 1 to 8, 1985. This week was conducted by the part-time chaplain of HASa, the dermatologist Dr. Carlos Gama Michel, who led some people to accept Christ. At the end of the seven days of fellowship, 20 people accepted the appeals and were baptized.<sup>44</sup>

Over the years it became clear that the spiritual support service was indispensable for the good evangelistic progress of the hospital. The area of chaplaincy has always been composed of good teams, of which is worth noting the one composed of the chaplains João Antônio, Aurineide Tavares, Demostenes Neves, and Aliomar Moura, and Araújo. And to assist them, there were the volunteer helpers—Brothers Raimundo Santana and Yorgy Nicola Spiro Khoury—who provided this service with great commitment.

At the end of 1984, Dr. Paul César, the hospital general director, gave a report on the medical and missionary areas. He said that the number of daily admissions had exceeded the mark of 30 patients and that the hospital had begun to provide arterial blood gas (ABG) and electroencephalography (EEG) services. Regarding the missionary area, the hospital counted more than forty people studying the Bible.<sup>45</sup>

In late 1984 Dr. Paulo César, general director of the hospital, gave a talk on the medical and missionary areas. He said that the number of daily admissions had the home of 30 patients and that the hospital started to provide blood gas and electroencephalography. Regarding the missionary area, the hospital accounted for more than forty people studying the Bible.

Among the ones who contributed to the good medical performance, during the approximately seven years that HASa was in operation, it is noteworthy mentioning: Doctors Wilson Silva, Carlos Gama Michel, Elpídio Nunes, Otoniel Meira, Valéria Meira, and Isaías Almeida, appointed hospital vice-director in 1985. In addition to them, people from other sectors contributed to the medical work that was carried out in Bahia, such as the civil servants Jurandir Januário Reis and Francisco Silva, from the financial sector; and the secretaries Luzia Vilas Boas, Mara Núbia, Dalete Duarte, Elda Barbosa, and Maria Lucia Marques. In all, there were 150 Adventist employees at the hospital, of whom 16 were doctors and 2 were dentists. There were also 6 nurses and 50 technicians, assistants, and attendants.<sup>46</sup>

In 1985, the hospital recorded a great advancement. It managed to put into operation the NICU (Neonatal Intensive

Care Unit), which, at the time, was a pioneering service in Bahia. Coordinating this sector was Dr. Clódis Vitor dos Santos.<sup>47</sup> The growth HASa experienced allowed it to play an important historical role in the context in which it was inserted.

## Historical Role of the Institution

HASa's mission was to fill the existing gap of medical missionary work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Salvador, due to the lack of an imposing health unit. For the church leaders, the systematic effort of the medical missionary work in the State of Bahia was very important, for this work is considered as the right arm of the message of the third angel by Ellen White.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the institution's objective was maintained during the time it was open, under the tutelage of the GHAB and later of the church. Results related to good services and excellence in patient recovery confirmed the hospital's growing credibility.

Often the hospital carried out projects in support of Bahia Conference's missionary services. In 1988 the hospital organized a march in downtown Salvador. This mobilization was attended by thousands of people, who used 700 posters, 120 banners, themed cars, and other visual materials. During this movement, participants distributed 25,000 leaflets- enough to open two editions of the "How to Quit Smoking" course, in addition to nutrition courses, which were taught by hospital doctors and church volunteers.<sup>49</sup>

## Overview

Regarding the surrounding context of the institution, the time was promising for the implantation of several health units, including Salvador Adventist Hospital. Recognizing the favorable scenario, the Adventist Church in Brazil established the *Grupo Hospitalar Adventista Brasileiro* (GHAB) (Brazilian Adventist Hospital Group) to congregate and lead the hospital institutions of the denomination established in Brazilian territory. With such support, the repercussion concerning HASa was so good and positive that Bahia Mission recorded in minutes that the hospital services were dignifying the name of the church in the capital city of Bahia.<sup>50</sup>

However, the political and economic changes that took place in Brazil in the late 1980s profoundly affected the financial viability of many of the health institutions that were in operation up to then in the country. Such effects were also felt concerning the self-sustainability of HASa. After studies on the financial viability of the institution, the decision taken was to close its activities and return its structure to the Golden Cross, which occurred in 1990. However, over the seven years of HASa's operation, this hospital unit benefited the whole State of Bahia, leaving its missionary legacy in the history of the Adventist work in that region.

## List of Names

Salvador Adventist Hospital (1984-1990).

## List of Leaders

Medical-Directors: Paulo Cesar de Azevedo (1984-1990).

Administrative-Directors: Naor Toledo Pinto (1984-1990).

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