

Noujaim, Salim

Elias (1898–1966)

CHRISTOPHER MARK HYNUM

Christopher Mark Hynum, MD, MPH (Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.) retired in 2018. Prior to his retirement, he worked as a physician, physician supervisor, and as a chief medical officer. He spent two years as a college student at Middle East College, Beirut, Lebanon and five years in Saudi Arabia, working for an oil company. He now volunteer teaches in the Biology Department of Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon.

Salim Elias Noujaim was an early Adventist convert in Lebanon. He initially supported the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a layman and later served many years as a school principal, president of the Lebanon Section, Voice of Prophecy director, and Education secretary for the Middle East Union.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Noujaim was born on July 14, 1898, in the village of Maasser El Chouf, high up in the mountains of Lebanon and near a remnant grove of cedars known as The Cedars of God. He was the youngest child of a family of eight. His father died when he was an infant, and his mother raised the entire family alone. According to family members, she profoundly influenced all her children by instilling in them a sense of duty and responsibility, which they carried with them throughout their lives.¹

Noujaim was a bright student and attended the American High School in Souk-El-Garb. There he met Pastor Shukri Nowfel (the first ordained Lebanese Adventist minister). He was particularly impressed with the Adventist health message and began practicing its tenets even though he was not a church member.²

After World War I, Noujaim continued his college education in France, majoring in engineering. There he met and married Renee Thominet, who was very impressed with his high moral standards and the fact that he neither drank nor smoked. They fell in love and married in Paris in the Catholic Church. They had three children:



Salim Noujaim, c. 1950s.

Photo courtesy of Denise Kafrouni.

Madeleine (who became a nurse), Samir (who became an engineer), and Denise (who became a librarian)³

Ministry

The couple later returned to Lebanon, where he reconnected with the Adventist Church. Both he and Renee took Bible studies and were baptized in the Autumn of 1924 by Pastor Nils Zerne, an early Swedish Adventist missionary to the Middle East.⁴

Salim Noujaim fluently spoke Arabic, English, and French and began teaching at the Choueifat College near Beirut (currently known as the International School of Choueifat). At the same time, he began studies in the field of Education at the American University of Beirut. Upon completion of his degree Noujaim received a call to teach at the Adventist church school in Egypt and later transferred to the Adventist school in Mosul, Iraq.⁵

The Great Depression, followed by World War II, greatly impacted and later ended official church work in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East. Foreign missionaries were forced to leave. During this period Noujaim worked in the Iraq Petroleum Company. He later returned to Lebanon, where he established a business to support his family while continuing to be active as a layman in sharing the Advent message.⁶

After Second World War, Noujaim was ordained as a minister in 1947 and returned to denominational service. He had a particular burden for education and desired to establish high standards in all the Adventist church schools. He also believed a solid Christian educational foundation was a cornerstone for spreading the Adventist message.

Noujaim first worked as a principal for the Adventist School Mouseitbeh (1951-1955) in Beirut, Lebanon, before becoming the Education secretary for the Middle East Union. He served in this capacity for several years, providing support and oversight to the Adventist church schools in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey.⁷

Noujaim later served in other capacities, including the Voice of Prophecy director in Lebanon, Temperance and Religious Liberty secretary for the Middle East Union, and member of various church administrative committees and education boards. His final church appointment was president of the East Mediterranean Field from 1959-1961.⁸

Noujaim contributed to the church as an author, translator, and editor. He translated into Arabic the books *Bible Doctrines* and *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* and the Sabbath School lessons. He also edited the Arabic translation of *Desire of Ages*. Noujaim wrote articles for *The Journal of True Education*⁹ and served as an editor-in-chief for the Lebanese magazine *Hope and Health Magazine*.

Noujaim passed away after a long life of church service on May 8, 1966, in Los Angeles, California.¹⁰

SOURCES

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Noujaim, Salim. "Home and School Relations." *Journal of True Education* 18, no. 1 (October 1955): 20.

Middle East Division Board Minutes, 1953-1964. General Conference Archives. Accessed December 12, 2022. See [here](#).

NOTES

1. Denise Kafrouni, the youngest daughter of Salim Noujaim, interview by the author, August 29, 2022.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.; Manoug Nazirian, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lebanon 1897-1997* (Beirut, Lebanon: The East Mediterranean Field of Seventh-day Adventist, 1999), 47, 93.
8. Nazirian, 69, 93; Middle East Division Board Minutes, 1953-1964, General Conference Archives, accessed December 12, 2022, see [here](#).
9. See, for example, Salim Noujaim, "Home and School Relations," *The Journal of True Education* 18, no. 1 (October 1959): 20.
10. Denise Kafrouni, the youngest daughter of Salim Noujaim, interview by the author, August 29, 2022.

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