

Self-biography of Robert Elden Ford
February 1, 1921 – October 26, 2006

My parents, Elder and Mrs. Ford, met and were married in Walla Walla College. They were then called to go to work with Elder Stahl in Peru. There they lost their oldest son. At that time they were working around Lake Titicaca. I was born in the little town of Pomata no too far from the Lake. When I was six months old my father was called to open the work in Ecuador. So they moved to Colta among a very large Indian population. My father and mother both did medical work. Two of my sisters were born there; the oldest died of cholera in Kansas on a furlough. The other sister, Mrs. Sylvia Larson, lives in McMinnville, Oregon. Of the two youngest boys, the oldest died in Costa Rica, and Bill Ford resides in Texas.

When I was nine years old we took another furlough, and since my father had an idea that he would be called to work on the medical launches on the Amazon, he decided to go down the river from Colta, Ecuador. We started where the Amazon is a small stream all the way to the mouth of the river, which is miles wide. That was an amazing three month trip of walking through jungle, then canoe travel, small river boats, then small steamers. When the furlough was over he was called to Guatemala instead of the Amazon, where he became the mission President. There I took my primary grades in the Adventist School that my father established, along with some correspondence lessons to learn English.

My parents brought me to the US for my Academy schooling. I entered the 9th grade in the San Diego Union Academy, where I lived with my uncle Frank Ford. On finishing the 12th grade I went to Walla Walla College, where I met Venessa Standish, my wife to be. While still in Walla Walla in April of 1943 I received a call to reopen a school in the Bay Islands of Honduras. It was to become a boarding academy for the whole country of Honduras. But I turned down the call saying that I was not yet married, and I still had one more year in order to finish College.

Venessa, graduated from the teacher training course on June 6th 1943. We were married that same afternoon and settled down to get ready for my final school year. But Central America heard that I was married, so they sent another call to me for the same work in the Bay Islands, with a promise that at the end of the first furlough I would receive help to finish my College work. The reason they were so urgent in our going to Honduras was because they had called several other people and all had refused. Also I knew Spanish, and the government required that the school function in Spanish, although most of the population of those islands was English speaking in those years.

There we started a 10 grade day school on the Island of Guanaja. We also had two Honduran Adventist teachers to help us. The 10 grade day school was to be just a beginning, and then they wanted me to establish a boarding school in the mountains of Guanaja. But soon it was seen that it would be much better to put the boarding school on the mainland of Honduras. There it could more easily serve all three islands as well as students from the mainland. During our two years in the Inlands, our oldest son Bob was born.

There it was my job to look for land and supervise the building of a boarding Academy. The mission chose a nice farm that eventually grew to 2000 acres of the very best land anyone could want. We had a good number of students, and most of them had to work hard to pay for their expenses. The first year I was both the Principal and Business Manager. So I requested the help of someone with more experience. The next year they gave us a Principal so I could just teach and do the work of the Business Manager. During those years our second child, Kathleen, was born. After 4 years there we took our first furlough and I finished my College work at La Sierra University. After graduation I was called to be Dean of boys and teacher in our College in Costa Rica. Pat, our third child was born while we were in Costa Rica. After three years we were sent back to the Bay Islands again. This time as pastor of the 11 churches on those three Islands. All the churches had to be reached by water, so I bought a 24 ft. inboard motor launch. During those years we had another furlough to the US where our fourth child Dan was born.

After 5 years in the Islands I was called to be the President of the British Honduras Mission. There we experienced Hurricane Hattie which destroyed 9 of our churches.

Our next call was to Nicaragua, where after pastoring two districts, I was named President of that Mission. After several years or working there I asked to be able to go back into educational work. I returned to the US where I received my Masters degree in Education at Pacific Union College. I then received a call to our boarding school CEA (Centro Educacional Adventista), in Pena Blanca, Honduras. There Dan, our youngest, was the only one still at home during those years. During those four years, I served as Bible teacher.

In 1974, from CEA we were urgently called to build up the Academy in British Honduras that had been severely damaged by Hurricane Hattie. While serving there as Principal of the school, we were called to establish ECAS (Escuela de Capacitacion Adventista Salvadoreña). There it was my job to find the land and the money to purchase it with. By 1983 a 12 grade boarding Academy was opened.

We retired in 1987 but after 6 months in Loma Linda, California, visiting our children and other family members, we returned to ECAS

to serve in various capacities, but this time as a volunteer. In 1992 we decided to retire definitely and settled here in Loma Linda, California. In all we had worked 48 years in Central America. But here in Loma Linda we continued to solicit donations to help worthy students and other needs of the school. This year my health problems made it impossible to continue the work I was doing. We both have precious memories of those 48 years in Central America.