Trans-European Division President Wiklander to retire in July

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division, informed church officials that he plans to retire from his post at the end of July.

Wiklander announced his decision earlier this month at a February 12 staff devotional during two days of leadership training for union presidents. Appreciation for his service was expressed by the staff through the Executive Secretary Audrey Andersson and by Sandra Grice, associate director for the General Conference Auditing Service.

“I have enjoyed my work and the many people I have come to know in various parts of the division, and I will leave my responsibility with much gratitude to God and my colleagues,” Wiklander said. “I will greatly miss the fellowship and friendship within our office, which I think is something very unique and precious. May God bless you all and his work in this part of the world.”

July will mark Wiklander’s 19th year as president of the division, which is based in St. Albans, England.

In a statement he said: “I am grateful to God for the blessings I have received, the many things I have learnt, and especially for the wonderful team I have had around me in the division office and in the unions and other fields within the division. It is good for me to be able to spend more time
with my family, and there are some interesting book projects and biblical research that I want to attend to in my retirement.”

Wiklander said he had spoken with Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson, who will chair the division’s Executive Committee in electing a successor.

Prior to coming to the division, Wiklander served in his native Sweden as principal of Ekebyholm School, as well as executive secretary and president of what is now the Swedish Union of Churches Conference.

As president of the division, Wiklander oversaw two realignments of its territory. Colleagues said he provided stable leadership during the transitions and helped the division redefine its mission, vision and purpose.

For family of missing Adventist doctor, April service to bring some closure

The family of an American Seventh-day Adventist doctor who disappeared in Ukraine nine months ago will hold a service in April to celebrate his life.

Dr. Jay Sloop, a retired obstetrician serving as Health Ministries director for the denomination’s Upper Columbia Conference, was helping church leaders in Kiev establish a lifestyle center in the Ukrainian capital when he went missing during an early morning walk in Zamkova Gora Park.

Sloop, 77, was last seen on May 15, 2013. Security camera footage showed him entering the park in central Kiev, but not leaving.

No substantial leads have since emerged in the case, despite extensive searches and an ongoing investigation by Ukrainian police and the U.S. embassy in Kiev.

“We know little more than we did within hours of Dad’s initial disappearance,” son Greg Sloop said in a blog he set up to keep friends and family informed of the search.

While active searches ended in September, the family continues to follow up with contacts in Ukraine and maintains a hotline where people can report information, he said.

In a February 12 blog post, Sloop reiterated the ambiguity of the situation and said the service is not reason to further speculate on Dr. Sloop’s status.

“No matter what you might believe, we are left without Dad in our lives right now. We’d like to take time to remember who he is and was, what things were important to him, and reminisce on the time he spent with us,” Sloop wrote.
The April 26 service will “be a good time to create a small sense of closure for everyone involved,” another son, Richard Sloop, told the Yakima Herald.

Details on the service can be found at sloop.net/wordpress.

Remembrance: In costume, Hoshino presented Adventist Church co-founder White

Seventh-day Adventists from around the world had their picture taken with Rita Hoshino portraying the denomination’s co-founder Ellen G. White, who died in 1915.

In her later years, the former college and high school staff member was a presenter—as it’s known in the industry—of White, who wrote prolifically and whom the Adventist Church considers a 19th century prophet.

Hoshino, who died February 10 at the age of 58 from complications of kidney disease and pneumonia, saw her fledgling ministry take off following her 2010 appearance at the General Conference Session exhibit hall in Atlanta. Adventist Heritage Ministries (AHM) sponsored her presentation there and at other events nationwide, including campmeetings, youth events and anniversaries of denominational institutions.

Like many presenters, she researched her character and told stories in the first person. “Her stories were so well done,” said AHM President Thomas Neslund. “I couldn’t have afforded it, but I would have wanted to hire her full time. I appreciated her dedication to the cause.”

She could travel with little advance notice to tell stories of White writing her touchstone book “The Great Controversy” on the back of leftover hat ads to save money on paper, or the time White bought an old horse named Charlie. Hoshino eventually purchased a back-up outfit after her costume didn’t come back in time from the cleaners.

According to her website, Hoshino’s goal was to point people “not to Ellen White, but to the Jesus she so adored.”

“She took her portrayal of Ellen White very seriously,” said longtime friend Michelle Mesnard, who served as director of Public Relations at Pacific Union College (PUC). “She did not portray an idealized or cartoon version of Ellen White. She wanted people to see her human side.”

Rita Sue Hoshino was born in 1955 and adopted by a family in Tennessee. Her birth mother was Caucasian and her birth father was Chinese-Hawaiian, which gave her facial features similar to the Adventist icon she would later portray.

The family moved to the western U.S. state of California, where she graduated from Mountain View Academy and PUC. As a teenager she once portrayed a young White at an event for the Pacific Press Publishing Association, where her father worked.
At PUC she majored in art and was known for her humor. As senior class president, she led the graduation processional out of the gym on roller skates, a controversial move in 1979.

She worked for PUC becoming the assistant dean of students, a job she held for 23 years before accepting a position at Mountain View Academy. She was also a promoter and booking agent for Christian musicians.

Friends said she had a near photographic memory, earning her the moniker “Rita Rolodex” for her ability to remember people and intricate details about their families. As a presenter she could quote White while improvising, sometimes while taking a curveball from a fellow presenter.

“Young adults especially, they loved to see her humor and wit come through, because if you read James and Ellen, they had a sense of humor,” said Dennis Farley, a pastor who presents the character of White’s husband James.

In 2010 the duo performed in New York at the Hiram Edson Farm dedication after presenting at an Adventist church in Rochester earlier that day. They each took separate cars to the farm, with Hoshino staying in costume for the drive.

“I wish I’d had a camera,” Farley recalled of the 35-mile trip. “I kept looking in the rearview mirror and there was Ellen White driving the car behind me.”