"They’re Circling for Me!"
Using wings for the gospel in Papua New Guinea

Retired—And Ready to Serve

Thank God for a Nagging Wife
Rainbow Over Hell
The June 10 issue was especially outstanding because of two articles. “Rainbow Over Hell” is a remarkable conversion story. “Exiled” strengthens our faith because Sasha was faithful in Sabbath observance in spite of unreasonable Soviet persecution. I hope to see more of these types of articles, which are worth filing.

— Dorothy Oster
Colfax, California

Finding Our Place in the Kingdom
As an avid reader of The Adventist Review, I was very surprised by the July 22 editorial by Ella Rydzewski, “Finding Our Place in the Kingdom.” Surprised that an article that presents such insightful conclusions on the categories of church members who contribute to the life and growth of the church also includes such insensitive side: “Too many singles fall into this category.”

During the past four years as The Adventist Singles Ministries coordinator in our conference, I too have experienced the unwillingness of the single member to hold a church office or contribute to programs—even for singles. However, I have come to a far different conclusion than that of Rydzewski. I believe that the reason our single members have not found their place in the kingdom include: (1) many single church members, hurt and striving to survive in a difficult situation, have not always experienced the warmth and acceptance of God’s love through other church family members; and (2) many single members have experienced thoughtless, most times unintentional, comments and labeling such as “Too many singles fall into this category.”

My question would be: Is it not better that any member, single or married, be in church warming the pew than to be outside of the church in an uncaring world? Does someone hanging on to the church because they have been raised in it not say something about their longing to belong? After all, if I were in a warm caring environment in which I felt God’s love and acceptance, I might even be encouraged to do my part in sharing His love with all I come in contact with. Perhaps I could even find my place in the family of God.

— Darlene Reimche
British Columbia, Canada

The Verdict Is Guilty
Roy Adams’ editorial “The Verdict Is Guilty” in the August 12 edition of the Review started me thinking. It seems that in Florida the jury verdict in the litigation against the tobacco industry could force the company to pay billions in damages. Adams remarks: “The resulting flood of litigation could well cripple the deadly business. And that is what we want.”

Now, I am as much against smoking as anyone. But isn’t it about time we took some of the blame ourselves? Aren’t we responsible for our own actions? It’s so easy to say, “It’s not my fault; someone else is to blame, so I will sue him.” (Didn’t Adam and Eve have the same idea in the garden?)
No one forces us to smoke; it is our own choice. Don’t you think we should begin taking some responsibility for our own actions?

—Ferne I. Ellingworth

Yountville, California

In his editorial in the August 12 world edition of the Review, Roy Adams gives informative data on the evils of the tobacco industry. However, in his closing paragraph, asking “Why am I writing all this in the World Edition?” Adams seems to be salving his conscience by joining in the political dogfight in Washington with overtones of his advocating one of these groups over the other. I dare-say that the great majority of Adventists worldwide are confirmed nonsmokers. With the mass number of Adventists having access to computer technology such as the Internet, it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to convey to us something we already know—the use of tobacco is harmful and should be totally avoided.

After having said this—and the Review editorial staff still insists on getting involved in the political spectrum—let’s give equal time in condemning the alcohol industry with the same fervor and descriptions offered by Adams: “heartless industry”; “confident corporate fat cats”; “humongous stash of blood money”; “marketers of death.”

Although very harmful to one’s health, tobacco rarely, if ever, contributes to deaths resulting from domestic violence, as does alcohol.

Other suggested related editorial topics for the Review are the number of deaths caused from abortions, unlawful misuse of guns and the lack of enforcement of existing laws, films with a violent theme . . . or would any or all of these be politically incorrect?

—Stanley R. Jones

Knoxville, Tennessee

Adapting to Culture

Blessing always comes to me from reading the Adventist Review. I write in response to the Faith Alive! column from the August 12 issue. A precious example of giving commendation to others is given in Luke 19, where Jesus is represented as saying “Well done” for faithful service. However, in view of Jesus’ teaching about the prayers of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18 and worship as a performance in Matthew 6:5, it would seem that applause to the worship of God and especially to prayer, whether sung, played on an instrument, or spoken, is inappropriate.

Tactfully asking the audience, before the performance of sacred music, not to applaud is one helpful way to maintain the focus on worship rather than on the “performer.” Cultural adaptation isn’t always a virtue.

Thank you for letting the Review speak to the issues. My prayers are uplifted daily for the encouragement and guidance of the Holy Spirit to writers and editors of Adventist periodicals. Praise to God for the powerful answers to these prayers.

—Arthur E. Blake

Horatio, Arizona

I always read with interest Calvin Rock’s column, and I wish to comment on “Adapting to the Culture” (A ugust 12).

In searching for answers to controversies questions, I like to ask, “Is there any word from the Lord?” (Jer. 37:17). For example, there are many texts in both the Old and New Testaments that make it quite clear that “A men” is the preferred response when worshiping God.

Sometimes we use culture as an excuse for what we like to do. Surely we don’t want it said of us: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25, NKJV).

May I add that the chapter “Behavior in the House of God,” from Testimonies to the Church, volume 5, is very helpful when looking for answers regarding worship.

—Vivian Kemper

Napa, California

Cover Story

“They’re Circling for Me!”

The work never ends—at least that’s the way it seems to a mission pilot.

By Les Anderson

Articles

Everyone Thought She’d Be Immortal

Two years after Diana’s death, people are still asking, “What was her lasting influence?”

By Marie and Fred Pelsers

Thank God for a Nagging Wife

She knew what I needed before I did.

By Krisanat Supannaroj as told to Aileen Ludington

Retired—And Ready to Serve

Inactivity held no appeal, so we decided to follow the Lord’s path to adventure.

By Elfriede Volk

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From Violence to Peace

Phyllis Scott-Zimmerman knows what it’s like to be a victim. Now she teaches people how to avoid that fate.
"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Publishing Board: Jan Paulsen, chair; Phil Follett, vice-chair; Lowell Cooper; William G. Johnson; Robert E. Lemon; A. C. McCune; A. L. R. Stenbakken; Donald R. Sathy; Ted H. Wilson; Robert Nixon, legal advisor

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To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. (Please query before submitting long articles.) Include address, telephone number, and Social Security number, where available. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638.

E-mail: Adventist reviewmag@adventist.org
Compuserve network: 74617,15

Subscriptions: US$38.97 for 40 issues, US$50.97 for 52 issues. Add $10.20 postage for addresses outside North America. To order, send your name, address, and payment to your local Adventist Book Center or Adventist Review Subscription Desk, Box 1119, Hagerstown, MD 21741. Single copy, US$2.50. Prices subject to change without notice. Subscription queries and changes of address: Call 1-800-436-3991, 301-393-3257 or e-mail shanson@rhpa.org.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Adventist Review, 55 West O’Keefe Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.


The Adventist Review (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 1849, is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is printed 40 times a year each Thursday except the first Thursday of each month by the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD 21740. Copyright © 1999, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.
Vol. 176, No. 41
“Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!” (Matt. 6:22, 23, Message).

Jesus, who said these words, was the most complicated individual who ever walked the planet. We believe He was the God-man, a mysterious blending of deity and humanity that is unique in human history. Yet this Man exhibited a fundamental simplicity of life and work that belied the complexity of His being.

His teachings conveyed eternal truth, but they were accessible to the humble and the unlearned.

His mind plumbed the depths of wisdom, but He spoke through homespun stories and down-to-earth illustrations.

He lived a full life, with long days and nights packed in ministering to people in need; but surrounded by crowds and pressed by the needy and by enemies, He sustained a deep, unruffled calm.

Jesus of Nazareth knew who He was and why He was here. With all the complexity of His being and the demands of His mission He had taproots that fed His soul and kept Him upright.

We cannot do better than Jesus. With all the pressures that we feel as people of this age and as Christians, if we are to find peace of mind and spiritual well-being, we need a basic simplicity of life and purpose.

Without it, we will drown in the flood of information spewed out by the Internet and the media. We will be ever learning but never able to attain a knowledge of truth, ever striving but never arriving.

Without it, we will zig and zag from one ephemeral experience to the next. We will be wanderers in the vast expanse of the universe, nomads whose only meaning comes from satisfying the demands of the flesh.

I believe that you can probe the life of any successful person, any leader, and very soon you come up with simplicity. The tree may be vast—the schedules hectic, the tasks multiple—but it is sustained and nurtured by a few taproots of principle, priority, and value.

In the King James Version the words of Jesus paraphrased above read: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (verse 22). The word translated “single” is the Greek haplous, which means “single, simple, sincere,” hence “clear, sound, healthy,” or even “generous.”* In context Jesus was speaking of the pull of society upon us to accumulate wealth and possessions; He calls His followers to a life of singleness or simplicity that can resist the currents of prevailing greed.

How can we find this simplicity that will ensure peace of mind and spiritual success?

For me, the answer is found at the start of the day. A deluge of information comes to my desk—books, magazines, newsletters, government releases, plus unsolicited videos and the beckoning world of the Internet. I cannot begin to handle all the material accessible to me (I do read every letter and see that every manuscript gets evaluated), but I start the day alone with the Bible.

I have a host of committees, appointments, and ego-stroking invitations that I might turn to, but the one appointment I must not miss is when I meet my Lord quietly at first light. That’s the only one that matters, because it orders all that follows during the day.

I earnestly desire that we Seventh-day Adventist Christians will remain a simple people. Not simple-minded, but simple in trust, in belief in God’s Word, in obedience, in love, in joy, in hope, in dress, in lifestyle. That will bring us fulfillment in daily living and attract all around us.

In our preaching, let’s not try to make the gospel difficult. In our teaching, let’s not try to sound profound and learned. In our evangelism, let’s not hedge up the way for unbelievers. In our organization, let’s cut back on bureaucracy, travel, and conventions.

This message began in simplicity, and it will end in simplicity.

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We've all experienced rejection of some kind, and it's not a pretty feeling. In fact, depending on its severity, the good feelings we've accumulated about ourselves disappear like a hydrogen balloon unclasped from the hand of a child.

There are stages, of course. Sometimes we believe we can cope and become an even better person. Other times we're devastated. Rejection by a spouse, a child by a parent, by a lover, by a good friend—these leave imprints that sometimes last a lifetime.

TV star Dylan McDermott's parents separated before he was 2, and when he was 5 years of age his 20-year-old mother was killed in an accident. Brought up by a grandmother, Dylan saw his father only occasionally during his early years. "Whenever you lose a parent," he says, "there's an insecurity that's bred everywhere." He believes the world is so fragmented because "so many people leave" and "that's why there's so much addiction in the world." He was "a lonely latchkey kid . . ." Rejected and . . . a delinquent.1

Although other rejections may not be as traumatic as the Dylan account, rejection of any proportion cannot easily be dismissed. If our ideas are turned down by our colleagues, we do not succeed in our athletic dreams, or the products we attempt to sell do not have the customer appeal we had envisioned, the memories can go deep like an inhaled poison.

I encountered rejection in 1989. William G. Johnson, editor of the Adventist Review, wrote, "Thank you for submitting the enclosed manuscript written for our consideration. . . . Unfortunately, the manuscript does not quite meet the needs of the Adventist Review at this time. Your writing shows considerable ability, and I hope you will not be discouraged . . . ." A

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"Use rejection as a launching pad to shake yourself up. Recapture your dreams," wrote Gregg Taylor, who was manager of a business firm in a Vancouver, British Columbia, office. He claims that it's important to go through the grieving process. But keep your eyes open; network like crazy and use your imagination."

When their application for admission to an educational institution is turned down, students experience rejection. Kaplan College advised such students to "archive the letters in a safety deposit box—when you donate a building to your alma mater in 2030, mail the rejection letters, along with a press clipping to the schools. In red pen, write 'nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah.'"

When rejection surfaces, it's helpful to reread biblical accounts of leaders who faced this unsavory experience, and you will receive encouragement. Take Samuel, for instance. Samuel's sons proved unworthy of the office given them by their father and, in essence, rejected him.

The elders now became dissatisfied and said to Samuel, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us" (1 Sam. 8:5, NIV). Reminding the elderly of their age and that their advice is not needed is probably one of the most discouraging messages they can ever hear. Add to that the suggestion that their offspring are rebellious, and you have persons who experience rejection at a time in their lives when they might, instead, relish memories of accomplishment.

"The aged prophet looked upon the request as a censure upon himself."2 And so Samuel turned to the Lord and received this message: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" (verse 7). Christ knew rejection beginning with Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, the Eden experience, the Calvary sacrifice, and through the years as so many of His children turn Him away. But "Did God reject His people?" Paul asks.

Then he answers his own question. "By no means!" (Rom. 11:1, NIV). That's the most encouraging message we'll ever hear and, if internalized, it could transform our rejection experiences into a reevaluation of our God-given potential.

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2Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 604, 605.
GIVE & TAKE

LET'S PRAY
Have a prayer need? Have a few free minutes? Each Wednesday morning at 8:00 the Adventist Review staff meets to pray for people—children, parents, friends, coworkers. Send your prayer requests and, if possible, pray with us on Wednesday mornings. Let's share in each other's lives.

WE NEED YOU
Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.

ADVENTIST LIFE
My daughter Laura was looking at her Little Friend and opened it up to her lesson for the next week. It showed pictures of Aaron burning incense on the altar of incense. She asked me, “Is he popping popcorn, Mommy?”
—Kelly Plank, Lee Summit, Missouri

Recently I was helping out in our church's kindergarten Sabbath school class. The leader asked the children, “When is God not watching over you?” She was hoping to get the answer “Never,” but instead got from 5-year-old Rikki, “God doesn’t watch over us at church, because He is resting on that day.”
—Greta Bullock, Mount Shasta, California

QUOTES
“Satan is a germ with a bad idea.”
—Gabrielle Cook, age 5, Middletown, Pennsylvania

“Truth becomes too strong unless softened by love, and love becomes weak unless strengthened by truth.”
—Pastor Loren Seibold, Worthington SDA Church, Columbus, Ohio

DREAM CENTER
In this feature, Adventists share church-related dreams.
A few months ago I wrote in about my dream of having a clearinghouse for Adventist travelers. It would match overseas workers who needed items with Adventist travelers who had extra baggage allowance. Thanks to your publication, Bryan Gray has started this clearinghouse.

You can access the Traveler's Clearinghouse at http://www.adventmall.com or http://genesis-online.com/adventmall/pages/travelers.html. Now that it has started, we are asking your help in publicizing and improving it. Thank you for your help in getting it started and in letting people know.
—Earl Furman, Ridgecrest, California

JOTS & TITTLES
While visiting a church recently I was impressed with their bulletin caption—“COME AS YOU ARE. GOD WILL HAVE YOU NO OTHER WAY.”
—Esther Oldham, Montrose, Colorado

INTENTIONAL?
This was noted on the front cover of the July 31, 1999, Record (South Pacific Division church paper):
“In this issue:
SAH (Sydney Adventist Hospital) awarded quality accreditation
“Who needs God?”
We hope that the juxtaposition was not intentional!
—Colin and Merian Richardson, Lae, Morobe Province 411, Papua New Guinea

ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS
A ST SEPTEMBER WHILE FLYING ALONG
the rugged, beautiful coast of Papua New Guinea,
just before the point where we would turn north
and head out over open water to the Trobriand Islands, one of the pastors on board pointed and said, “See that tin roof down there on the beach? That is our Seventh-day Adventist church at the village of Berubona.”

Intrigued by the lovely remote setting on a sandy beach, I replied, “Wow, it’s beautiful! Let’s go visit it sometime. How do we get there?”

“The only way to get to Berubona is either by dugout canoe or by dinghy [a 19-foot fiberglass work boat], and the mission’s dinghy is broken.”

“How’s that wrong with it?”

“It has a hole in the bottom.”

“How long has it been like that?”

“A bout two years. We have tried to repair it, but we can’t get the materials, and besides, no one knows how. Without the dinghy, the only way for the pastor of the Tufi district to visit his many churches—separated by deep fjords and long stretches of open water—is to paddle a dugout canoe.”

A few minutes later we turned and headed north out over the emerald and indigo Coral Sea toward our picture-perfect South Sea island destination, the Trobriands.

The next few days defy description. How do you put into words the experience of hearts being united in love, of worshipping, singing, and praying with gentle, fun-loving islanders who have seen few, if any, Americans of like faith? How do you describe celebrating a baptism with the turquoise water lapping on a white sandy beach fringed with coconut palms and circled by singing locals throwing flowers on the newly baptized? How do you capture the bright-eyed eager children gathered in a circle around a fire on the beach singing in three-part harmony, or fill the void of the empty pastor’s house and the empty schoolroom (because no pastor or teacher can be found)?

Maybe I couldn’t find a pastor and teacher for the Trobriand Islands, but perhaps I could do something to help the pastor of the Tufi district get to his many churches. I determined to at least have a look at the mission dinghy to see if it was fixable. So when we got back to Popondetta, I asked the mission president to drive me out where the boat lay like a beached whale.

They were right about the hole! The entire bottom was worn off from the countless landings on sandy beaches. A few hundred dollars’ worth of fiberglass (made possible by generous friends back in my home base) and about four days of hot, itchy work had the craft looking as good as new.

Last February my wife, Mary Lane, and I flew the pastors of the North East Papua Mission to Tufi and joined them for the two-hour ride in the now-functioning mission dinghy out to Berubona for a pastors’ retreat. The story that unfolded during the next five days really began a long time ago.

Sick of Heathenism

Shortly after the turn of the century the chief of the village decided there had to be a better way of life. Sick of heathenism and of living in constant fear of the spirits, and tired of the killing and fighting that continually tore

“THEY’RE CIRCLING FOR ME!”

M aybe planes can preach after all.
through his village, he invited the Anglican missionaries, recently arrived in the area, to come to his village. So it was that Berubona became an Anglican village, with significant improvement in the quality of life.

Years went by. The chief was vigilant in the defense of his territory, determined that nothing would change. One day about 40 years ago when a group of Seventh-day Adventists landed on his beach, he drove them off with a loaded shotgun. Nothing was going to threaten the church he had brought to his village.

More years went by until one day six years ago the chief's son, a young man by the name of Harold, attended an evangelistic meeting in the city of Lae. There he found that while the Anglican Church had indeed brought much good to the village, it had stopped short of teaching the full truth. He thrilled to the message of Christ's soon return, and determined to take the Seventh-day Adventist message back to his village.

There, however, his enthusiasm was met with unveiled hostility.

Eventually he found two other young men who also saw the beauty of the gospel and joined him in worship on Sabbaths. Slowly the little group grew, first meeting under Harold's house and then, in spite of opposition, building a little church right on the beach. For four years they faced unremitting persecution, even to the shedding of blood. In spite of threats and abuse, however, the little group continued to worship, until one week a group of angry villagers rushed into the church service with clubs and spears. Dragging the worshipers out onto the sand, they gave them a savage beating.

But Harold would neither leave nor quit. He just kept on loving the people and sharing his faith. Impressed with Harold's determination and his refusal to fight back, the persecutors finally gave up. For two years now this group has been meeting in peace and has grown.

When we waded ashore, there were 20 to 30 believers to welcome us with open arms and hearts. To have a White meri (woman) who would paddle a canoe up the river and help them work their gardens melted their hearts and formed a bond of sweet fellowship.

In fact, we learned a little later that when the women heard the pilot was bringing his wife, they were frightened, wondering how they were going to manage to take care of a White meri with nothing but kuna (native material) houses and no facilities of any kind. It eased their fears a little when Pastor Kepsie, the mission secretary, assured them we were openhearted people and told them not to worry. But I think it wasn't until they saw Mary Lane willing to be one with them that they genuinely opened their hearts.

The Rest of the Story

Before we left we decided to cross the river and walk through the Anglican village. Berubona is really two villages, one being right down on the beach and mostly Adventist, and the other across the river, largely Anglican. We stopped to speak with the leader of the Anglicans and took pictures of various family groups (which they love). One of the men asked, "When you leave, will you circle our village twice?"

"OK, just for you, I will circle two times."
Backtracking through the village to where the canoe was docked, we were waylaid by a woman rushing to give us a gift of tapa cloth (native cloth made of bark). We graciously thanked her and went on our way. Then another came with her gift.

The next day, loaded down with gift after gift of clay pots and other items, we rode the mission dinghy back to Tufi. As we flew the first load back to Popondetta, I made two circles and a low pass over Berubona. People were jumping so high and waving so hard I thought they might jump right into the plane. It was with a deep sense of nostalgia that I rocked my wings in a goodbye salute and climbed up to clear the ridge ahead.

Sometime later, while again on a flying assignment in the North East

FOOT SOLDIERS: A great deal of the work in Papua New Guinea is done by lay leaders such as Harold and Daisy Momosina and their family.

LITTLE CHILDREN, LITTLE CHILDREN: The future of the work in Papua New Guinea will rest on the shoulders of these bright-eyed members of the next generation.

What We Do and How We Do It
BY LES ANDERSON

The Papua New Guinea Union Mission owns and operates three Cessna 206s, and our purpose is to provide transportation for the church mission program into the remote and isolated villages. Because this country is so extremely rugged, there are virtually no roads. Airplanes are often the only way of getting around and have played a very significant role in taking the message to this country. We are supposed to have four pilots, but right now there are only two of us.

Approximately half of our flying is what we call mission flying—that is, taking pastors, doctors, teachers, and departmental leaders and others where they need to go. Often we bring members into camp meetings, congresses, or workers’ meetings of various kinds. We also carry supplies, equipment, and evangelistic and medical teams. At times we serve as the moving van for church workers, moving families into new villages or to new assignments. We do a lot of medical evacuations and sometimes carry dead bodies back to the villages for burial in their home area—something that’s very important to the local people.

The other half of our flying is what we call commercial flying, and in a sense you could say this part is basically a charter service. We use the profits from the commercial flying to sub sidize the mission flying. The only limit is what we are able to handle. There is always a waiting list of people wanting to go somewhere or cargo to be moved. We carry the produce from the farmers in the villages into town where it can be sold, and we carry food supplies and other goods back to the villages. Everything from roofing iron to chickens. Even the commercial flying has a direct impact on the church because if the members can’t get their crops to market they have no money for tithes and offerings, and nothing for food, medical, or educational needs. We of course don’t limit the commercial flying to Adventists, and so we are able to be of service and a witness to many others, and to open the way into many unentered areas by flying in to offer them a service.
One week a group of angry villagers rushed into the church service with clubs and spears. Dragging the worshipers out onto the sand, they gave them a savage beating.

Papua Mission, I heard the rest of the story. Well, at least the rest as far as it goes right now.

It turned out that the man who asked me to circle twice nearly got in a fight with the woman who gave us the tapa cloth.

"They are circling for me!" he insisted.

"No, they are circling for me. I gave them the tapa cloth!"

"No, they are circling for me. I asked them to circle twice."

"Well, I think maybe I had better go join the Adventists. They have a mission plane, and they are organized and care about their members."

I haven't heard an exact number, but from what the Tufi district pastor told me, the people are swarming to the Adventist church. They feel that very soon the whole village may be Adventist.

I remember when we dedicated the plane in Ethiopia, Della Hansen, for whom it was named, said the mission plane couldn't preach or love people. Only people could do that. But it seems that in this case maybe the plane is doing some preaching. Of course, only God can bring the results, but it's fun to be a part of it.

Les Anderson is the director of Adventist Aviation Services for the Papua New Guinea Union Mission based at Goroka, in the central highlands of Papua New Guinea.
A few years ago when a local elder declared bankruptcy I questioned his moral obligation to repay the debt. Our conference stewardship secretary directed me to Counsels on Stewardship, page 257, and Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 308, 309 where, referring to the eighth commandment, we are counseled not to overreach in trade and to pay all debts. I would like to place this matter on our church’s business meeting agenda. My motion would be: “That the pastor contact any church member who declares bankruptcy to discover if it is his or her intention to repay the debt over time, to keep the church harmless before the Lord.” A negative response would result in discipline of some sort, i.e. loss of office and/or membership. Would this be a good idea?

I do not think so, for a number of reasons. 1. Bankruptcies, where permitted, are legitimate legal instruments of commerce. 2. The local congregation is not tasked, nor should it be, to monitor its members’ personal finances. 3. While individuals who utilize bankruptcy provisions to avert rightful debts or to advantage themselves over others are in error, judgment in this matter is for the civil courts, not the ecclesiastical body. 4. Deciding upon the legal and moral merits of bankruptcy cases would no doubt accrue to the church considerable expense, attention, and blame without the promise or power of final disposition.

If, however, the courts convict a member for fraudulent activity in this or any other business enterprise, or if a member seeks redress within the church for damages incurred in transactions with another member, it is the duty of the church, in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20, to address the issue.

A authority to act in such an eventuality is already provided in the Church Manual (see item 5, “Fraud or Willful Misrepresentation in Business” in the list of the 11 reasons for church discipline, p. 169, 1995 ed.).

No new policies are needed.

Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, and upon accepting the gospel the eunuch was baptized without first studying the 27 Fundamentals (Acts 8:26-40). Why cannot we do the same: that is, baptize the people into the church and teach them the distinctives later? Of course, they could not hold office or be declared members in good standing until the distinctives were clearly understood, but at least we could get them into the church.

Preaching Christ and Him crucified before introducing the distinctive truths of Adventism is a very effective method of evangelism. Only when individuals have firmly dedicated their lives to Christ are they truly willing to obey His commandments.

But should we baptize persons before teaching the distinctives? No. To baptize one as a member of the church before presenting the full message is not honest. One should know and accept the beliefs and rules of the organization they are joining.

On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists hold that all the distinctives (what we sometimes call “testing truths”), i.e., the Sabbath, tithing, dress reform, etc., must be illumined by the cross and that Jesus’ command, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), forever settles the possibility of separating His sacrifice and our obedience.

As for the Ethiopian, his background and response suggest that he was already a keeper of some of the Ten Commandments. Notice: he allowed no other gods to come before Jehovah (one); his acceptance of the crucified Christ indicates freedom from idol worship (two); he was, since Sunday worship had not begun in the Christian world, in all probability, a Sabbathkeeper (four); he was, as a eunuch, dedicated to chastity (seven); and he was absolutely truthful with regard to both his lack of understanding and his desire for baptism (nine).

If available to the Holy Spirit, we too will be used to interpret truth to earnest inquirers. That is an exciting prospect for, as our prophet reminds us, “Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion” (The Great Controversy, p. 390).

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, nightly dividing the word of truth.”

Tyler was singing as he painted on his model plane. Mr. Cooper had just taught the children that song in Sabbath school.

Auntie Jennifer was staying with Tyler while Mom and Dad had to be gone a few days. Now she was quietly reading in Dad’s favorite chair while he worked on his model plane.

Auntie sang, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, nightly dividing the word of truth.”

Suddenly Auntie Jennifer made a choking sound. “Auntie, what’s the matter?” Tyler asked. “Are you OK? Oh, you’re laughing. What’s so funny?”

“Come here, Tyler,” Auntie giggled. “I am laughing. I was trying not to, though. But the words sounded so funny. Do you know what you were singing?” Auntie gave him a big hug. “Sing it again for me.”

Tyler sang the song again. “What does it mean?” asked Auntie.

“I don’t know,” he admitted. “I think there is a verse something like it in the Bible. Let’s go see if we can find it,” suggested Auntie Jennifer. She went to the library and pulled out a Bible and another book she called a concordance that she said would help them find the verse in the Bible.

Auntie and Tyler sat at the table. “First of all,” she said, “we must ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand whenever we read the Bible.” After she prayed, they decided that the key word they would look at in the concordance was “study.”

There were two verses in the Bible that had the word “study” in them. They chose 2 Timothy 2:15. Auntie showed Tyler the page in the front of the Bible that named the different books in the Bible. Soon they found 2 Timothy 2 and then verse 15: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Tyler was sort of disappointed. He liked that part about dividing the word of truth at night. He had figured that the “word of truth” was some giant animal’s tooth. When he told Auntie, they both laughed. At least now the song made sense. Auntie said that they were the workmen studying the Bible.

Auntie Jennifer told Tyler that when she was little, she used to pray like this each night: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep” (instead of “my shoulder keep”). She said that lots of people learn the wrong words when they’re little, but that part of growing up is learning to get it right.

What’s a Word of Tooth?

Family Time

On Tuesday (or whatever day you like), invite your family to worship God with you.

☛ Ask your family if anyone has ever memorized a poem, a song, or a Bible verse, and then found out they had learned the wrong words. How did they feel when they finally figured out what the words were supposed to be?

☛ Get a Bible and a concordance. Make sure the concordance is for the same version of the Bible that you are using. Some Bibles have a concordance in the back. Ask someone to pray for those at your worship as you study the Bible together. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you understand the Bible when you read it.

☛ Decide on a favorite verse to look up in the concordance. It could be “You will seek me and you will find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Now decide on a key word you will look for in the concordance. You might choose the word ‘seek.’ After you have found “seek” in the concordance, look down the list for your verse. When you find the Bible text listed, open the Bible to that verse and read the verse and the one that follows it.
Everyone Thought She’d Be Immortal

While much of her charisma continues, will the memory of Princess Diana ever rival that of a humble woman who died 2,000 years ago?

BY MARIE AND FRED PELSER

Do you remember Diana Spencer? Like a “once-upon-a-time” fairy tale, she left schoolgirl dreams for the royal palace. And the world fell in love with Princess Diana. That same world was stunned when she died in Paris on August 31, 1997.

The next day Lady Susan Hussey, a veteran lady-in-waiting for Queen Elizabeth, tried to get into Buckingham Palace. There were more than 250,000 people at the gates. They had built a hill of flowers, about a half-million bouquets, at the palace gates to honor Diana. Susan Hussey tried to fight her way in, but had to give up.

Afterward at Balmoral she told the royal household, “You know, I couldn’t actually get into Buckingham Palace.”

Prince Andrew sniffed, “What on earth do you mean, you couldn’t get into the palace?” Lady Susan retorted indignantly, “I mean, I couldn’t get in through the front gates!”

Only then did it begin to dawn on the royal family that England had been turned frenetically upside down by the death of Diana.

People stood in lines for as long as 12 hours to sign one of 43 books of condolence. Each day checks poured into Kensington Palace by the hundreds, the beginnings of a memorial fund.

Millions of letters and cards were received, with extravagant tributes and bouquets. “To Diana, Queen of Heaven,” one read. “Dodi and Diana, Together in Heaven,” another. She was an icon to millions, almost a goddess. The officials serving royalty were alarmed. It all seemed to herald a Diana cult that could dog Prince Charles for the rest of his days. He would be seen as the villain who had broken up his marriage; she, the heroine and saint.

True believers in Diana were everywhere, ready to lambast anyone who dared to question her perfection. Those who remained dry-eyed, who muttered to themselves that the tragedy need never have occurred had she stayed at home with her children, did not dare to open their mouths. An icon had passed away, and her spirit ruled the earth.

A Princess Diana Memorial Fund was started and was soon approaching the £70 million mark. They put her name on a children’s hospital in Birmingham. They talked of a 2.7-acre, £10 million flower garden in Kensington Gardens, with a 300-foot statue of Diana in the middle of it. Diana was, just after her death, the most famous woman in the world.

It Did Not Last

Just a year later, in August 1998, a memorial walk was organized in London, following the route of her funeral cortege. The walk was going to be a great occasion of sentiment and grief and of remembering the fairy goddess. Senior courtiers at both Buckingham Palace and St. James’s were terrified that the occasion would provoke a recrudescence of Dianamania. At tense meetings beforehand they tried to identify possible “flashpoints.” “We were very nervous,” admitted one. “It was a very tense week for us.” The organizers were hoping for between 15,000 and 500,000 people, with the rest of England sitting glued to their televisions and weeping, in spirit joining the walk.

As it turned out, just 300 came, out of a population of 60 million.

What had happened? We don’t have all the answers. Unquestionably, affection for the princess still runs high in the U.K. But at the very least the poor turnout probably foreshadows a waning of popularity, a return to normal.
world cannot give us immortality. Nor can it confer upon us either sainthood or divinity.

Another Time, Another Woman

Let’s shift our gaze to another woman, Mary Magdalene of the New Testament.

Mary Magdalene did not live in a palace. Not even in a big city. She lived in Bethany, a village, and in a lowly little house. She was seduced into sin by a rich, prominent man named Simon. When he discarded her like a rag, she lost all self-respect, drifted to the village of Magdala next to the lake of Galilee, and lived a dreary life of sin.

Then she met Jesus. He cast out the devil that had taken control of her, and then, when she weakened, did it again and again—seven times. It was only after the seventh time that she held steady.

She never had an easy life—probably always had to scrimp and save. She never was a saint or a goddess in the eyes of the masses. Yet there was something remarkable about Mary.

One day a wealthy man invited Jesus to have dinner with him. Learning about it, Mary used all the money she had to buy an expensive alabaster jar of perfume, and sneaked up to the place where Jesus was reclining at the dinner. Her heart was bursting with love for Jesus because He had saved her soul. Her most ardent desire was to worship her Redeemer and Saviour.

She loved Jesus more than any other, more than herself—“with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (see Matt. 22:34-37).

True Immortality

How did Mary come to acquire this consuming love for her Saviour?

Luke tells us: “A s Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed.

Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her’ (Luke 10:38-42).

“Mary served at the table, but Mary was earnestly listening to every word from the lips of Jesus.” What Martha was doing needed to be done; but it should have taken second place, not first. Jesus was uttering words of divine wisdom, and Martha should have made time to hear them.

“A s Christ gave His wonderful lessons, Mary sat at His feet, a reverent and devoted listener.” What Martha was doing needed to be done; but it should have taken second place, not first. Jesus was uttering words of divine wisdom, and Martha should have made time to hear them.

“Mary was storing her mind with the precious words falling from the Saviour’s lips, words that were more precious to her than earth’s most costly jewels.”

Sitting at Jesus’ feet, Mary found her heart overflowing with love for her Saviour. And it was this, against the background of what He had done for her, that led her to perform that immortal act of gratitude. “W herever this gospel is preached throughout the world,” Jesus said, “what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Matt. 26:13).

She would never be forgotten as long as time will last. She would be famous among Christians, not as a goddess, but as a true child of God, saved by His grace. And she’d become immortalized in Christian memory as an example of true love for the Master.
And we get a sense of her devotion from her role in the closing events of Jesus' life on earth. We know that while many of His male disciples ran away, she stayed with Jesus right through His crucifixion and burial. “Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher.” 5 “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid” (Mark 15:47). She also kept vigil at His tomb with the same woman: “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb” (Matt. 27:61). She was one of the first at the tomb at about sunrise on the morning of the Resurrection (Matt. 28:1). She was one of the first to inform the apostles of the Resurrection (verses 7, 8). And she was the first—or at least one of the first—to whom Jesus appeared after His Resurrection (Matt. 28:9, 10; Mark 16:9; John 20:1, 11-17).

Nor need we be uncertain about her eternal future. Paul spoke about some other women “whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3). Mary’s name is surely also there. Like Paul, she could undoubtedly look back and say, “I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

In that day Mary, who loved Jesus with such consuming devotion, will look up to see her Saviour in glory on the clouds of heaven. “This is my God,” she will exclaim. “I trusted in him, and he saved me!” (see Isa. 25:9).

Jesus promised Mary and all others who are obsessed with love for God: “In my Father’s house are many rooms. . . . I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:2, 3).

The tears that Mary shed in this life, He will wipe away. She will eat of the tree of life; physical immortality will then be hers. And she will forever be a saint and princess, a royal child of the heavenly King.

1 Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.
2 We note, however, that other reports suggest that “thousands” participated in the 1998 march. See, for example Washington Post, Sept. 1, 1999, p. A16. Editors.
3 The Desire of Ages, pp. 558, 559.
4 Ibid., p. 525.
5 Ibid., p. 568.

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One of the byproducts of evangelism is the amazing stories that come to light as people are introduced to the Adventist message.

Last spring the Texico Conference assisted the Eastern Siberia Conference with an evangelistic series in the city of Kansk. The series ended with 130 baptisms. Among the new believers was Anna Kovelenko, an 83-year-old woman whom I met at the meetings.

Amazing Story

Anna was born on April 19, 1916, to parents Ivan and A. A. She was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church by Pastor G. A. Raus in 1931, at the age of 15. She later married, and in 1936 her father passed away. That same year Adventist pastors and members of the church in Russia began to be arrested. Pastor Raus, who had baptized Anna, was arrested and eventually shot. On June 27, 1936, police searched the home where Anna and her husband lived. They took all the Christian literature. The Great Controversy, Steps to Christ, and many other treasured books were confiscated. After the search, police arrested Anna's husband. Just 20 years old and pregnant, Anna was now all alone.

On August 14, 1936, Anna gave birth to a baby girl, Nadya. Several weeks later the police came to arrest her. When they saw that she had just given birth to a child, they decided to wait for a while longer. On October 27, 1936, Anna was arrested with Nadya, and they were both thrown into jail. The jail cell was very cold. There was no water, and there was a typhus epidemic. Nadya could not bear the extreme conditions, and she died when she was only 3 months old.

On February 14, 1937, Anna was sent to a prison camp in Siberia for 10 years without parole. The place where she stayed was not adapted for winter temperatures. The winters were very harsh and cold. Sometimes the temperature dropped to -60° F. During all this time Anna received no information about her husband.

Prison Life

Life at the prison camp was hard. Anna worked from dusk until dawn. She met a few other Adventist women who shared her beliefs, and they were allowed to rest on Sabbath. For 10 years she and her friends met in the corner of a house where they sang, prayed, and preached to each other.

In 1946 Anna was freed from the prison camp, but she could not go back home. She stayed in Siberia in the city of Kansk. In 1970 Anna received documents that pardoned her and her husband. The same document stated that her husband was shot in 1937. After 34 years of waiting, she finally knew about the tragic end to his life.

During her time imprisoned in the work camp, Anna had faithfully collected her tithe. When she was freed, Anna tried to find other Adventists in the community of Kansk. When she found none, she finally gave her tithe to the poor. For 53 years she continued searching for fellow believers.

Lonely Sabbaths

Anna spent many lonely Sabbaths with just her and the Lord. People from other denominations tried to get her to go to their churches, but Anna was faithful to the beliefs that had comforted her over the years. She also kept alive the hope of finding fellow Adventists. For 53 years she prayed,
“My God, are You really going to let me die without meeting other Adventists?”

God heard Anna’s prayer. This past winter Anna saw a billboard that advertised an evangelistic crusade that I was conducting in the city of Kansk.

At the beginning of the meetings she came to me and asked if this church believed in the Sabbath and other biblical truths. When I assured her that we did keep the Sabbath and we were Seventh-day Adventists, she thanked God with much rejoicing and tears, “After 53 years He has allowed me to meet my brothers and sisters in Christ!”

After the first meeting, Anna came up and gave me a stack of money and said, “Here is my tithe that I have been saving for years. I am so glad to finally be able to give it back to God.”

After the meetings were completed, a brand-new church group began meeting in Kansk. The first Communion service was a very touching scene as Anna said, “Thank You, God, that after 53 years, You have let me participate in a Communion service once again.” This was truly a very touching event for the entire church family.

Anna is an elderly woman who is still full of energy, strength, and enthusiasm as she tells what she went through during those years of searching. I praise the Lord for the wonderful experience of this brave woman who, even under the most adverse conditions, never lost her faith and trusted God to wait for His promises to be fulfilled. I am thankful for the inspiration that I have received from the faith of Anna Kovelenko.

Adventists Aid Earthquake Survivors

Survivors of the massive 7.6-magnitude earthquake in Taiwan September 20 received immediate aid from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Taiwan Adventist Hospital in Taipei began treating casualties immediately after the quake hit just before 2:00 a.m., reports James Wu, spokesperson for the church in Taiwan.

“The hospital is located in a residential area of Taipei, and a 12-story apartment block nearby collapsed,” said Wu. “Tragically, the first eight stories totally collapsed, and we were treating people from the ninth floor. The phone system and the power were both out, and we were operating on emergency power. There was extensive damage all around; however, the hospital suffered only minor cracks and remained fully functional. Patients were arriving continually, and we did our best to provide medical treatment and any other help.”

Early reports indicated that at least 2,000 persons lost their lives in this the worst earthquake to hit Taiwan in the past 50 years. At the time no Adventists were known to be among those missing or injured. The Adventist college and high school located near the epicenter have been reported safe, and there were no casualties.

At presstime the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) was making initial assessments for providing aid. ADRA personnel from ADRA/China and ADRA/Asia were ready to respond with assistance, according to ADRA representatives in the area.

“We are immensely saddened at the news of this tragic disaster,” says P.D. Chun, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. “We are in contact with local Adventist leaders in Taiwan and have asked them to convey our great concern to those affected by this tragedy and to assure them of our prayers and practical support.”

Polish Parliament Votes to Ban Tobacco Advertising

The Polish Parliament returned from their summer recess to discuss the smoking habits of Poles, and on September 10 the lawmakers voted to ban all tobacco advertising and sponsorship by the end of 2001. Though the law has yet to be approved by the parliament’s upper house, it is a real step forward to achieving the goal of a Polish society free of heavy smokers.

Undoubtedly, the vote was the result of the very active
A recent encounter with the media in Papua New Guinea (PNG) pleasantly surprised me. In the Post-Courier daily, the familiar became quite obvious.

John Pundari, 34, is a deputy prime minister and a Seventh-day Adventist. On Sabbath you will find him in his local congregation in Port Moresby. During the week, he is a politician. The paper reported Pundari’s reaction to comments that in the government’s division of labor, besides his primary position he accepted a portfolio of a “junior ministry.” Some wanted him to get a better deal out of his support for the current coalition government. Now Pundari oversees the Ministry of Home Affairs, Women, Youth, and Churches.

Pundari went for what he considers a “make or break” of Papua New Guinea. In his words: “When I was given the ministry, people strongly objected. But I was quietly pleased because for the first time we have a prime minister who recognizes the importance of youth, women, and churches in this country.”

The editorial comment that day was also about Pundari. The headline: “Pundari Right on Ministry.” What I read made me proud of his decision. “John Pundari should be congratulated for the attention he is giving to his new ministry. . . . In the past this ministry was regarded as a junior portfolio with bits and pieces put together to justify giving a ministry to a disgruntled MP. Not so this time. . . . Mr. Pundari is certainly taking it [the job] on seriously.”

“It’s the family units, the youths, women, and the churches who are the future of PNG,” John Pundari says. As I reflect on both the choice Pundari made and the challenge he is facing, it’s obvious where he sees his priorities as a politician. The young, women, and churches. Sounds a bit like my own list of priorities. Will Pundari make a difference? I’d like to believe so. In his community he is known for the values of the church he belongs to. He is a practicing Seventh-day Adventist. And for him beliefs, declarations, and deeds go together.

Church Membership in the Middle East Union Reaches the 10,000 Mark

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East Union (MEU) has passed the 10,000 mark in membership for the first time. According to statistical reports for the second quarter of 1999, the membership as of June 30, 1999, stands at 10,048.

“We thank the Lord for the many precious souls that have been baptized and added to the church during the first six months of 1999,” reports Sven H. Jensen, president of the MEU. “Our goal per year for this quinquennium is 800, and so far this year 762 people have joined the churches in the Middle East Union. Evangelism is a priority in our union in this last year of the century.”

According to a report received from Pastor Nathana Bathuel regarding their evangelistic efforts in south Sudan, 64 souls have been baptized with more preparing for the next baptism.

“It should be added that this report was not included in the total of the second quarter’s report from the South Sudan Field,” says Jensen. “We are encouraged by the zeal and perseverance in evangelism of our brothers and sisters in a very insecure part of our territory.”

Countries in Middle East Union include Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.
Global Mission Prayer Ministry

Budiman has been working in Bengkayang, an unentered area of Kalimantan, for two years. Kalimantan is on the Indonesian side of the island of Borneo. He has established a new group of believers in this town, as well as two nearby areas—Tigndesa and Lara Gunung. In this area of Kalimantan there has been fierce tribal warfare—complete with beheadings and cannibalism. Budiman recalls seeing people walking around with their enemies’ heads dangling from their hands.

When he first arrived in Bengkayang, Budiman wasn’t married, and he worked alone. His first task, he says, was to study the situation—the place and the people. Next he started to make friends with other Christians, Animists, Muslims, and Chinese Buddhists. "I played football with the people, went jogging in the mornings, and worked with them in the rice fields," he says. "At midnight I prayed, ‘Lord, first work in my heart. Then I can work with the people. Let me say what Jesus would say.’" Budiman soon began visiting in homes and sharing from the Bible.

The first key for successful outreach, says Budiman, is to be humble. "We have an expression here—‘we tread the ground.’ That means ‘we come here, we are like the people here.’"

Further Help

For further information on joining the Global Mission prayer ministry, please call 1-800-648-5824 and leave your name and address or phone number, or e-mail gminfo@adventist.org.

Crime and Violence in Jamaica Addressed by "Reclaiming Our Families 2000" Event

The Central Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in response to growing concerns over crime rates and violent incidents in that country, organized "Reclaiming Our Families 2000." The event brought together representatives from many sectors of Jamaican society and stressed the importance of prayer as a healing factor. "The mix of political and civic representatives emphasizes our collective need for prayer and sends a positive message to Jamaica," said Leon Wellington, president of the West Indies Union of Seventh-day Adventists. "It also assures people that God is still in control."

Attendees from the academic community, the music industry, politics, and other cultural segments gathered at Le Meridien Jamaica Pegasus Hotel on September 2 for the meeting. The prayer breakfast included songs, prayers, and speeches that urged Jamaicans to return to the values of religion, family, and personal and social responsibility.

Speakers included Arnold Bertram, local government minister; Olivia "Babsy" Grange, Jamaica Labor Party MP; and Herbert Thompson, president of Northern Caribbean University.—Adventist News Network.

News Notes

✔ Arson is suspected in a fire that gutted the Toronto Seventh-day Adventist Church near Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, on August 14. According to press reports, officers found signs of forced entry at the scene.

✔ Thomas L. Werner, president of Florida Hospital in Orlando, was recently appointed president/CEO of the Adventist Health System, effective January 1, 2000. Werner has served as hospital president and executive vice president of the Adventist Health System since 1984. He replaces Mardian Blair, who is retiring after 40 years of service with the Adventist Health System and 16 years as president/CEO.

What’s Upcoming

Oct. 16  Spirit of Prophecy
Oct. 30  Children’s Sabbath
Nov. 6   Week of Prayer begins
Nov. 20  Ingathering begins
IT WAS EMBARRASSING. I COULDN'T BELIEVE what was happening. My 60-year-old friend was striding easily up the incline toward the Tibetan palace, while I, a much younger man, struggled to breathe. A few more steps, and chest pain forced me to stop.

As a professor in a prestigious Thai university, I had many friends. This particular friend, an army general, invited me to accompany him on a trip to Tibet. The high altitude of this country caused me to feel some shortness of breath just walking around, but it was the short hike up to the palace that finally did me in.

The general put a sympathetic hand on my shoulder and eased me back down to the tour bus. I tried to apologize—to explain—but he shook his head. “Kris,” he said, “I know a place that can help you.”

The general began telling me about a unique health center in Thailand. One of his friends had gone there with similar problems and returned home much improved. When I got home I told my wife about the experience. My symptoms subsided, however, and I felt so much better. I returned to work and tried to put the episode out of my mind.

But my wife wouldn’t let me forget about it. Even though I tried to act as though it was nothing, that I didn’t care, she worried about me. She called the Bangkok Adventist Hospital and made arrangements for me to spend two weeks at their Mission Health Promotion Center, about 90 miles northeast of Bangkok.

At first I was angry and balked at going. I had too many bad memories of a previous experience when I had joined a health club hoping to lose weight. Their regimen didn’t include exercise, only diet. I was given powdered food to mix up and drink. I stuck with the program for two weeks and lost about eight pounds, but that was all I could stand. I was starving and felt miserable the whole time. Never again, I vowed.

Despite my seeming nonchalance, I really was concerned about my health. At 48 I felt like an old man. My hair was turning white, and I felt tired all the time. I’d gained so much weight I couldn’t find pants that fit. My back hurt most of the time, and even mild exertion caused shortness of breath. My feet hurt at night, and my wife complained about my snoring.

But my wife went on and on about going to the health center. She wouldn’t quit. Finally, I agreed to have the preliminary health checkup they required.

During my tests, I met such friendly, kind people that my hostility began to melt. Arrangements were made to take me to the health center that very afternoon. I finally gave in,
Deep down I realized I hadn’t much to lose. And maybe a life to gain.

feeling I had no choice. Deep down, however, I realized I didn’t have much to lose.

The Mission Health Promotion Center is located in a resort area of Thailand. Several smiling young people welcomed us and carried our bags to a luxurious room. My first act was to open the small refrigerator, looking for a snack. It was empty, except for a few bottles of water. At supper that evening I took extra food so I would have enough for my usual bedtime snack.

The next day I ate a lot of food and carried more to my room to put in the refrigerator. I felt sure I would soon be starving on this vegetarian food. At home I ate a lot of meat, but very few vegetables. I was also used to a lot of coffee—around six cups a day with a good dose of sugar.

I ate so much the first day I gained two pounds. This brought me to my senses and made me more willing to give the program a try. Besides, I had met 28-year-old Wanee, who had been at the health center for three months. “When I came here,” she told me, “I weighed 236 pounds, could barely walk a mile or swim the length of the pool. Now I’m walking eight-10 miles a day and swim steadily for an hour at a time. I’ve lost 46 pounds so far and feel healthy, happy, and full of energy. Encouraged, I thought, If she can, I can, and put my heart into the program. I ate the vegetarian food, stopped my “snacks,” exercised to my limit, and enjoyed the hydrotherapy (water) treatments. At first I missed eggs, because they did not use any animal products; but the food tasted very good, and I even started liking brown rice. I especially enjoyed the homemade whole-wheat bread.

Although I am a Buddhist, I felt comfortable with the Christian environment. There was such an atmosphere of friendliness and warmth.
about the place that I began to relax. By the third day my fears and hostilities were gone.

At the end of 14 days I’d lost 10 pounds and complained to my wife that I should have lost more. She brought me a 10-pound bag of rice to show me how much fat was gone, and I felt better. I realized I had not felt starved at all; I was full of energy and felt good. I decided to stay another two weeks. This time I sent for my beloved bicycle and rode to town and back each day, about 12 miles. I continued to swim and jog, and I lost six more pounds.

I have a slender wife, who even at age 45 is youthful, healthy, and absolutely gorgeous. She was so happy with my improved health that she willingly cooked the kind of food I needed and encouraged me in every way. She had feared I would have a heart attack and leave her a widow. I began to realize how much she cared.

At home I arranged my life so I could continue the healthy lifestyle I’d learned. I have a fair-sized track around my home, so I could walk, run, or ride my bicycle whenever I wanted to. Twenty-five laps equaled one mile. I also worked out with weights every day.

During the following year I exercised one hour on arising, and one hour after getting home from work. I varied my exercise to keep it interesting, using a punching bag, playing ping-pong, things like that.

Fourteen months later my wife and I returned to the health center, but no one recognized me. I had lost a total of 63 pounds, my hair had darkened, and I could wear good-looking sports clothes again. My angina, shortness of breath, elevated blood pressure, and borderline diabetes were long gone. My resting pulse is 55, and my lung capacity nearly reaches Olympic rank. My wife says I am a better lover, and truly, our marriage is stronger and happier than it’s ever been.

Now that I’ve reached my weight goal, I plan to reduce my exercise regimen to one hour daily. I confess that I eat a little meat at one meal each weekend—a piece of beef or chicken, or a fish ball helps me from feeling deprived.

When I think back, I realize what a dangerous condition I was in, and I know my life has been spared. I now feel that God cares about me, and helped me find this health center. I believe that I have found God. I’m so happy and thankful, I want to tell everyone about my experience. I also thank God for a wife who cared enough to literally “nag” me back to health.

When this article was written Drs. Aileen and Clifford Ludington were serving a mission term at the Adventist Health Center in Thailand.
WHEN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN British Columbia decided to downsize its workforce, my husband, Heinz, a social worker for 23 years, was offered an early retirement. It was tempting, especially since his doctor had told him that the stress of his job was causing Heinz’s high blood pressure.

But at age 57 Heinz felt that he wasn't yet ready to join the rocking-chair generation. “We could go somewhere as volunteer missionaries,” I suggested.

“It's an idea,” Heinz agreed. “We can speak English and German, and you know Dutch and a little French. Why don't you phone the General Conference and find out if they can use us?”

“And what are your qualifications?” asked one of the secretaries I spoke to. I told her that I had majored in journalism and minored in English and history.

“We could really use you in Russia,” she said. “We desperately need people to teach English there.”

Her words caught me off guard. Russia was the last place I would have considered. Born during World War II, I’d had experiences with Russians that still gave me nightmares. I remembered the fear and hunger in the camp where my family was detained, some of our neighbors who were killed . . .

“We could really use you in Russia,” she repeated.

“I thought they wanted only native English speakers,” I hedged.

“Well, yes, but the need is desperate.”

I sighed. “We're willing to go wherever God needs us.”

Just a Little Detour

Seven weeks after Heinz’s retirement took effect, as he was sitting in the living room reading a book, he complained of tightness in his chest and difficulty moving his arms. I drove him to our local hospital, where he was immediately admitted into the intensive-care unit. According to the specialist, he had had “a major cardiac event.” To check out the heart more thoroughly, the specialist sent him for an angiogram.

“I’ll let your own doctor explain the results,” the cardiologist said when the test was over. The nurse hugged me wordlessly, then left.

I sat in the waiting room while the nurses worked to stabilize Heinz.

Dr. Offer came right to the point. “I have good news and bad news,” he said. “The bad news is that you have an extremely aggressive form of heart disease. The good news is that we can do something about it.” With the help of a rough diagram, the doctor showed that Heinz had 90 percent blockages in three major cardiac arteries, with other blockages of 80 and 60 percent. “We're looking at a minimum of three or four bypasses, maybe more,” he said.

Though there was a waiting list of more than a year for cardiac surgery, Dr. Offer told Heinz that he had moved to the head of the line. “We’ll keep you in intensive care until they can operate,” he said.
The surgery was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Our children and grandchildren had only a moment to see Heinz before he was wheeled down to surgery. In preop he told me that he loved me, that the future was in God’s hands, and that he felt comfortable with that.

Heinz’s surgery involved six bypasses. The damage, the doctor said, was what one would expect to find in someone more than 20 years his senior. Despite this, Heinz was able to walk out of the hospital six days later.

“W hat now?” I asked him.

“I still want to go to Russia,” he said. “God must have had a purpose in sparing my life. I want to spend the rest of it serving Him.”

“But what if . . . ?”

“You mean, what if I have another heart attack? God can take care of me in Russia as well as here in Canada. And if not, well, so be it. Time is short; I want to spend it serving Him.”

That summer we attended camp meeting at Camp Hope, British Columbia, where Hans Diehl was one of the featured speakers. We were impressed again with how God had provided just what we needed to hear. Attending all of Diehl’s lectures about health, we made a final change in our lifestyle, eliminating all visible fats and animal products from our diet.

We were ready to travel to Russia. Although the mission committee in Moscow felt that, because of our European accent, we would not be suitable for the larger language centers, they urged us to contact Pastor Hong on the island of Sakhalin.

Situated just north of Japan, Sakhalin’s island was used as a penal colony by both Russia and Japan, and there are 118 people groups represented in the capital city of Yuzhno Sakhalinsk, where the language school is located. This diversity presents a unique opportunity for evangelism.

The language school is part of the Russian Sahmyook University, which offers degrees in linguistics (Russian, Korean, Japanese, and English), computers, theology, and music. Begun by the Korean Union, Sahmyook is the only Adventist school in the East Russian Union Mission, which covers more than half of Russia.

“H ow long could you stay?” Pastor Hong, the director of the language school, asked when we contacted him.

“A s long as God gives us the strength and ability,” we replied.

Life in Russia

We arrived on Sakhalin on November 2 and began teaching a week later.

On a typical day classes begin at 8:30 in the morning and continue until 8:30 in the evening. Besides teaching, Heinz has been given the responsibility of pastoring the English church; and after Pastor Hong’s return to Korea, Heinz became the director of the language institute. A year later he was made vice president of Sahmyook University.

God has been good. In the past two years we haven’t missed any classes because of illness. Walking every day, Heinz gets water from a hillside spring above the town, carrying it home in a pack-sack that weighs 60 pounds. Drinking water from the tap is not recommended; besides, it’s not always available.

Neither is electricity. Electricity is coal-generated, and in the winter supplies cannot keep up with demand. Many classes have to be taught by candlelight. Students wear heavy boots and fur coats to keep warm. They just shrug their shoulders and say, “That’s Russia.”

Shopping takes longer than in North America, because most of it is done in outdoor markets. Most things are available; it just takes time to find them. For one Communion service we hunted all over town for red grape juice. We finally found one bottle 15 minutes before sundown.

At times our faith is tried, but God somehow always provides what we need, when we need it, and in a way that strengthens our faith.

In an attempt to reclaim absentee church members, we advertised a Homecoming Sabbath with a special speaker one Sabbath. But the speaker had to return to Korea unexpectedly, and Heinz was told that he’d have to take the service himself.

God, however, provided not one but four special speakers: the president of the Euro-Asia Division and three individuals from the General Conference. Two young women who attended that day had not been to church for more than two years. Despite family opposition, they have again become regular, active members.

God also had a hand in a legal dispute with the city about ownership of the school property. Although it has not been completely resolved, opposition has weakened, and the mayor’s daughter, one of our students, has been baptized and has changed her major to theology.

One young man from Sahmyook visits hospital patients on Sabbath afternoons. On one of these visits, he met a woman who had been a high-ranking member of the country’s intelligence service. He talked to her about God and offered to pray for her. On his next visit he left her some books to read, including one about the Sabbath. When she returned to her own city the woman shared what she had learned, and has 17 people meeting in her home every Sabbath.

The popularity of our language school is growing, so that it is larger than the one in Moscow. But we badly need teachers—teachers who are willing to give up the comforts of home and spend a year or two in service for others.

For us, the greatest benefit of being here is an enriched spiritual experience and a closer relationship with God. It is, however, a work that not everyone can do.

But we have heard God’s call in Isaiah 6:8, and we have answered, “Here am I; send me.”

Elfriede Volk writes from Yuzhno Sakhalinsk, Russia.
What, exactly, is the “firmament” mentioned in Genesis 1?

Your question is not as simple as it seems, because some interpreters have read into the word “firmament” primitive ideas that reflect the mythologies of other ancient cultures. Yet Genesis 1 uses simple and majestic language to depict the birth of a planet as it comes into existence from the hands of the Creator. Although told in a way that any human can understand, Genesis 1 allows for further comprehension through scientific investigation without being irrelevant or primitive.

With respect to your specific question, “firmament” (רַגִּיאכ) has been taken by some to refer to the primitive ancient Near Eastern concept of a gigantic, metallic, heavenly dome placed by God or the gods over the earth. If this understanding is correct, then Genesis 1 is culturally conditioned and becomes useless in understanding how God brought the world into existence. Let’s take a quick look at Genesis 1, paying particular attention to your question.

1. Genesis 1 Is Unique: When compared to ancient Near Eastern Creation accounts, the biblical narrative is certainly unique. The absence of polytheism and of any reference to God’s struggle with the forces of chaos set the Genesis creation account totally apart from its contemporary and competing Creation stories. There is absolutely nothing in the ancient Near Eastern narratives about a six-day creation followed by a seventh day of rest. Yes, there are some similarities, but when they are placed within the totality of their respective stories they are not significant.

In fact, the similarities may well be, at least in some cases, remnants of truth preserved in the pagan narratives. The biblical story is unparalleled and seems to be a polemic against other Creation ideas prevalent in the ancient world.

2. Use of the Word “Firmament”: As far as I know, the Hebrew term רַגִּיאכ (firmament) is not found in any other ancient language, and its Hebrew meaning is not completely clear. The verbal form means “stamp down, spread out, hammer out,” suggesting that the noun “firmament” designates the vault of heaven as a solid dome. But the noun does not necessarily designate the concrete result of the hammering out. The basic idea of the verb is of extending something, and the noun could then express the idea of expansion or, here in Genesis 1, the “expanse.” Since Genesis 1 does not describe the nature of the “firmament” created during the second day, scholars tend to explain it in terms common to ancient ideas of a solid vault.

Genesis 1 says several important things about the “firmament.” First, its function was to separate the waters below from those above. The fact that it separates the waters could suggest that there is an element of concreteness to it, but nothing is said specifically. This silence makes it possible for us to use the modern word “atmosphere” to designate it.

Second, the suggestion that the reference is to the atmosphere is reinforced by the fact that the “firmament” is the space where birds fly: “Let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky” (verse 20, NIV). Third, the “firmament,” or expanse, is specifically called “heavens,” or more precisely, “sky” (NIV), in verse 8. The emphasis is not on concreteness but rather on the space separating the waters, making room for birds to fly.

Finally the text says that the sun and the moon were in the firmament/expanse of the heavens to function as lights. The word “firmament” does not distinguish between the sky and the stellar heavens, but neither does it deny that distinction. The description in the text is from the perspective of a person who looks up and sees the moon and the sun in the sky.

The mystery of Creation by a loving God will never be completely understood by His creatures. Still, Genesis provides the only trustworthy account of that glorious event; and even there we find only a brief but reliable summary of His creative action. Modern science cannot prove or disprove what Genesis says, but it can expand our understanding of our God’s power.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.
The Silk Road—in the Western mind, images of this ancient thoroughfare are likely shrouded in myth and obscurity, but it did exist. From the second to the fifth centuries, traders and caravans traveled this 4,000-mile route stretching from Xian in China to Damascus and Antioch in the Middle East. Crossing mountains and plains, they carried silk from China to the West and wool, gold, and silver from the Roman Empire to the East.

But travelers transported cargo other than silk and gold—Hellenism, Buddhism, and Islam were likewise spread by soldiers and pilgrims.

Today salvation travels over the route of the Silk Road—"gold tried in the fire," and the silken garments of Christ’s righteousness—carried via radio by broadcasts on Adventist World Radio.

Since 1987 AWR has broadcast in five Chinese languages into China, reaching that most populous country on earth with phenomenal results: thousands of baptisms and hundreds of new congregations. The gospel “treasure” is now heard by other nations along the Silk Road—nations formerly part of the U.S.S.R. and bearing the exotic names of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

AWR is sponsoring a series of programs on Kyrgyz radio in the Kyrgyz and Russian languages, and a program in Uzbek on a station in southern Kyrgyzstan that reaches into Uzbekistan. Victor Rabinovich, director of the Almaty, Kazakhstan, Adventist Media Center, is working with church leaders to begin programs in Tajik and Turkmen.

Bert Smit, AWR’s Europe region director, recently met with Emilbek Kaptagev, chair of the state commission on religious affairs in the Kyrgyz Republic. Kaptagev underlined the importance of maintaining a “balanced spiritual viewpoint” in Kyrgyzstan, which is 80 percent Islamic with a high level of religious freedom for other faiths.

Smit also met with Bayma J. Sutenova, vice president of Kyrgyz TV and Radio Corporation. She said she listens daily to the Voice of Hope because “it brings exactly what our people need—inner healing. It is the best program we have on our radio station.” Sutenova is also professor of broadcast communication at Bishkek University and told Smit she uses tape recordings of the Kyrgyz Voice of Hope program “to illustrate effective radio production.” She said that this program is “the standard by which other programs should be judged.”

Remember the peoples of these ancient nations along the Silk Road in your prayers—ask God to bless them as they find spiritual renewal and hope in Jesus.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and listener services for Adventist World Radio.

**MAKING CONTACT:** Bert Smit, AWR Europe region director, left, meets with Kyrgyz radio vice president Bayma Sutenova, center, to discuss the Voice of Hope radio program.

**POINT OF ORIGIN:** Igor Shishow is a technician in the Almaty, Kazakhstan, studio, where radio programs in Kyrgyz and Kazak are produced.

**GOING PUBLIC:** The Voice of Hope radio program schedule is included in radio program listings in the local newspaper in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The Silk Road itself faded into memory when the Roman Empire disintegrated, but the "radio road" carrying the gospel through these lands goes from strength to strength. Sutenova gave the telling testimony: “Without this important program on our station, there would definitely be less hope to offer to the people of Kyrgyzstan.”

Remember the peoples of these ancient nations along the Silk Road in your prayers—ask God to bless them as they find spiritual renewal and hope in Jesus.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and listener services for Adventist World Radio.
The hills are alive with the sound of music,'” I warbled. “‘La la la la la.”

“You are so om chee [tone-deaf],” Sandy moaned jokingly.

“You’re just jealous ’cause I sing so well,” I laughed.

“I’m jealous of your energy,” Sandy responded. “I must rest!”

I was climbing Jiri Mountain (the second-highest mountain in South Korea) with three Koreans who went by the nicknames Sandy, A lice, and M ike. A nd though not exactly the Everest disaster, the trip wasn’t going as planned.

Since arriving as a student missionary in South Korea, I had learned to love mountain climbing, and I had convinced M ike (one of my sister’s mountain-climbing buddies), Sandy, and A lice that climbing Jiri M ountain would be fun.

Big mistake! M ike was mountain master. H e normally ran up mountains. Sandy and A lice had never climbed even one of the smaller mountains—let alone Jiri M ountain. M y skill lay somewhere in the middle. It wasn’t long before M ike was carrying Sandy’s and A lice’s backpacks, as well as his own. A nd let me tell you, he looked pretty funny.

“Can we stop?” A lice would ask every 10 minutes.

“Just a little bit farther; you can do it,” M ike encouraged.

A lthough we were breaking a record pace for slowness, M ike didn’t complain. I kept looking for signs of irritation, but he stayed cheerful.

W e were halfway up when M ike moaned, “Oh no! W e forgot something!”

“W hat?” I asked in dismay. M y mind ran through the list of what I considered to be essential.

“Beer,” M ike told me.

“Beer?” I asked. “You weren’t planning on hauling beer up this mountain, were you?”

“M ountain climbing isn’t mountain climbing without beer,” M ike stated.

“You can survive one night without beer,” I said unsympathetically. M ike was a good friend. In fact, he was one of the nicest guys I knew. But his drinking really bothered me.

A s we continued up the mountain, we actually passed someone. The man had stopped to rest, and so did we. H e had been climbing around Jiri M ountain for a month. H e was carrying his own tent, stove, food, gear, and clothes. H e wasn’t carrying a backpack—he was carrying a house.

“I am so thirsty. Do you have the oranges?” Sandy stopped the conversation to ask me.

“Yeah,” I said, and I started passing the oranges around. W ith the man sitting so close it felt strange not to give him one. Y et I didn’t want to.

It wasn’t that I was opposed to sharing oranges. I had carried these oranges a long way. I had sweated for these oranges. A nd I wanted us to eat them.

A s I selfishly clung to my oranges, I watched M ike walk over and share his. I felt like dirt. I was the Christian. I was the one who was supposed to be an example.

A bout 8:00 p.m. w e reached the top of the mountain—finally! M ike had cheerfully endured our slow pace and endless teasing. Sandy had to ask, “Does anything make you mad?”

“Yeah,” M ike responded. “Selfishness.”

T hat night M ike went out, made some friends, and got roaringly drunk. A ctually, I’m just guessing this, based on his hangover the next morning. A t f irst I was bitter: Couldn’t he have gone one night without drinking? B ut then I began to wonder, W ho was worse—M ike or I?

I still think that drinking is wrong. B y taking a firm stand against alcohol the Seventh-day Adventist Church has saved its members from a lot of pain. B ut I don’t feel so smug anymore about being a nondrinker. I t’s not enough. C hristianity has got to be about more than what you don’t do.

S o where does that leave me? I t leaves me sitting at a computer wondering why things like oranges seemed so important. I t leaves me wondering why non-Christians often have such a good grasp on how Christ wanted us to act. I t leaves me determined that next time I won’t get so hung up on oranges.

Sari Fordham is a student at Iowa State University, where she is pursuing a master’s degree in English.