David and Jennifer Dill:
Mission to the Golden Triangle

Sandra Doran:
Subliminal Messages

Seven Steps to
Breaking Bad Habits
Outstanding Artwork

I want to express my thanks for the outstanding artwork providing the September 18 cover and illustrations for Dick Duerksen’s “Me and Mattithiah” and other articles on Bible characters. I searched without success for acknowledgment or recognition of the artist whose work contributed more than anything to the feature.

I would appreciate something about the artist when his or her work so enormously enhances the overall appeal and impact of an issue of the Review.

—Bill Robinson
Yakima, Washington

The artist, Lars Justinen, of Nampa, Idaho, was credited three times—on pages 3, 15, and 17—for his excellent work. His signature also appeared on two of his illustrations.—Editors.

I have been enjoying the new Review for some time now, and I have never enjoyed reading it more! Thanks for all the graphics, color, layout, and content. It is all excellent.

—Kevin Wilfley, Pastor
Oregon Conference

Worship Styles

Our special “Praise and Worship,” issue, which contains the Week of Prayer readings (Oct. 30, 1997), is bringing lively mail, both pro and con.

One item in the issue calls for clarification. As part of a series of photo essays on different worship styles, we included Grace Place congregation in Colorado. Our selection of Grace Place did not signify an editorial endorsement of that congregation’s agenda—the use was wholly in terms of worship. As the article indicated, conference leaders expressed support for the worship but voiced concern in the areas of finance and theology.—Editors

Adventists and Arrogance

I commend Andy Nash for his September 18 editorial. “Our Smug Smiles” was very much to the point and described some of us, as we give the impression that “we are the people.” By this approach we delude ourselves and do harm to the cause of God.

We should have a Christlike balance in our conversation when we meet others, all of whom are candidates for the kingdom. As Nash says: “We can’t write our own reference.” But by the appropriate word we can lift up Christ and thereby influence others for good. May this be our experience.

—Robert R. Frame
Hendersonville, North Carolina

I agree with Nash that the “God said it; I believe it; that settles it” brand of witnessing hardly achieves the intended result. Working in an institution in which the majority of the staff are non-Christian and there are only 50 Adventist students among 700, I have seen—and am seeing—that it does not.

But when it comes to a personal affirmation of faith, there’s nothing like this statement. For indeed, that’s what it was meant to be, as sung by the Heritage Singers of the seventies (the best singing group ever): “And that settles it for me.”

—James Warjri
Hong Kong

New Relevance

After soaking up the “new” Review and enjoying the new relevance to where we live, I can no longer stay silent. I must express my appreciation for the whole September 18 Cutting Edge Edition, and especially for Sandra Doran’s “Grown but Not Forgotten.” Doran put her healing touch right where it hurts. What a blessing! I can hardly wait to call a friend who I know will be blessed by it as well.

Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing. Our daughter and her husband finally subscribed after our giving them our used copies.

—Alice Breakie
Cleveland, Tennessee

Misspelled Name

As a Communication Department employee at the Florida Conference, I was excited to see the September NAD Edition article “Youth-Run Evangelistic Series Leads to 50
Baptisms.” Too bad that the speaker’s name is misspelled. His name is César Cárdenas, not Gárdenas.

—A. Lee Bennett, Jr. Orlando, Florida

Our apologies.—Editors.

Something to Talk About?
After reading “Something to Talk About” on the Give & Take page of the September NAD Edition, I was led to wonder. We have often referred to the television as the “boob tube,” and many among us have declared it to be a tool of the devil and a time-waster. I wonder if the television has not been superseded by the Internet as the ultimate tool of the devil.

It boggles my mind that anyone has the time to send 28 messages a day over the Internet. Further, I am led to wonder if this is not also the devil’s new format for how to handle “sanctified” gossip. Certainly your list of top 15 subjects lends credence to that possibility.

Thanks for making me aware of the dangers of the Internet. As it stands now, I don’t have time to surf the Internet. After reading “Something to Talk About,” I am not even tempted.

—David L. Reynolds Canby, Oregon

Some Students Left Out
I was extremely disappointed to read your additional request in the September 25 Herald’s Trumpet feature. Normally you just ask the children to find the trumpet and send in a postcard telling where they found it. For some reason, this month you included a request for children to also tell what they liked best about their Adventist school.

Intentionally or otherwise, this request has been worded to eliminate all children not attending an Adventist school. Why couldn’t you also have asked children not attending our schools to write something positive about their Sabbath school or family worship!

After all your positive efforts to affirm students who, for whatever reasons, are not attending one of our schools, this was a huge shock to me. I could not believe the Review would so blatantly slap the faces of the children not attending an Adventist school this year. If we truly believe that those of our children attending public school have as much right to be Adventists as those attending our schools, why this sudden switch to single out only those attending our schools? And if the request for comments about Adventist schools was intended to be entirely separate from the trumpet-finding contest, why put it in the same column, where it could easily be misconstrued to be a condition of entry?

—Kelly Rose Bishop Bolton Landing, New York

By no means was the request a condition of entry for the Herald’s Trumpet contest. In fact, many of the submitted postcards had no mention of an Adventist school or what that child liked about it. Still, the request might well have been misconstrued by some, and for that we apologize. While the Adventist Review will naturally give greater coverage to Adventist schools, we also strive continually to affirm and minister to the thousands of Adventist students who attend non-Adventist schools. Thank you for your constructive letter. (Some of the responses to the Adventist school request will run on the December 11 Give & Take page.)—Editors.

Review Caps Available?
Hi. I’m a 15-year-old who just saw your “‘Hats Off’ to Adventist Youth” feature in the August 28 issue. I liked the Review cap and would like to know if there is a way one can purchase it.

—Sam Diaz Hialeah, Florida

At this point the caps (see p. 7) aren’t available for purchase, though we might look at that possibility later. But since you’re the first to request a cap, we’ll send you one free—as long as you wear it wherever you go!—Editors.
“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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There once was a man from Rome
Who was always reciting a poem;
But try as he might,
He never could quite
Keep the last line from being so long that it wrecked the whole thing.

I've always loved that mangled bit of verse, if only because it so gleefully reminds us of the gap between what we want to achieve and what we actually accomplish. Which of us hasn't at some time ruefully examined the chasm between our intentions and our abilities, our sincerity and our behavior, our desire and our delivery?

I found myself musing on this misfit limerick on a recent Sabbath as I stood and knelt and sang with more than 700,000 men on the Mall in Washington, D.C., at the Promise Keepers' "Stand in the Gap" Sacred Assembly. For the record, there was nothing laughable about the event. Rarely have I witnessed such painful, even tearful, sincerity in the company of men, and never have I been more certain that there are hundreds of thousands of Christian men in this land who are "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Beside me, behind me, around me, were thousands of men worshiping, praying, embracing, and confessing sins with a transparent honesty that couldn't fail to warm the heart of anyone who calls himself a Christian.

But as the limerick instructs us, sincerity is no guarantee of outcome. Our clumsy little verse also reminds us that the form of a thing usually determines most of its meaning. Limericks are meant for laughs, not litanies. The rollicking rhyme we relish at a party we would abhor at a funeral. In order for the verse (or the event) to succeed, there must be a fundamental congruence between the content and the form, an agreement between the intention and the structure.

And it's just at this point that I found myself most troubled by the Promise Keepers' Sacred Assembly. The stated intentions of the rally were certainly praiseworthy. I want to applaud men who gather to confess their prayerlessness, their abandonment of families, their abusive behaviors, and their racist attitudes.

But why come to the nation's Mall to do these things? Why choose the single most politicized public space in the nation to stage an event that was, we were told repeatedly, completely nonpolitical? Here where every conceivable political and social cause has been celebrated (and denigrated), it's fundamentally impossible to mass hundreds of thousands of men together and not rightly be judged as making a political statement.

What is that political statement, and why should Seventh-day Adventists be concerned about it? It is nothing less than the gathering growl of a religious and political conservatism in our land that is showing itself unfriendly to minority faiths and impatient with those who cling to distinctive beliefs. In a brilliant stroke of patriotic marketing, the Promise Keepers' leadership has equated caring about the moral future of this land with advocating Christian "unity." And unity—emotional, visible, tearful—is everything, it seems. Speaker after speaker at the assembly railed against the "sin" of denominationalism, by which they clearly meant any group that views itself as closer to the will of God than any other.

Millions of Christian television viewers no doubt cheered the sight of 700,000 men lifting Bibles over their heads in front of the U.S. Capitol. It was powerful political theater, and not at all lost on the hundreds of senators, congressmen, mayors, judges, and city councilors who attended the assembly and who certainly know how to count.

But it is just when we take those Bibles down and open them up, when we compare scripture with scripture, that Seventh-day Adventists arrive at an understanding of the identity of God's remnant people and a forecast for America's future that many in the Promise Keepers movement view as narrow, divisive, and sectarian. Revelation reminds us that the unity demanded by the Promise Keepers on the Mall will yet become a crushing and destructive force, flattening the freedoms of those who must place a higher value on embracing God's Word than on experiencing good fellowship.

Try as they might,
They never could quite
Keep the lasting impression from being so political that it—
Well, you finish it.
“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8, NIV).

As the holidays approach, I can’t help harking back to an unusual purchase I made last Christmas. Cindy and I were wandering through the Sanford, Florida, mall when, at one of those pop-up stands that feature such necessities as tie-dyed shirts and Florida Gators boxer shorts, we discovered a community of dolls that within seconds had Cindy pulling out my checkbook.

Dubbed Time-Out Kids and dressed in real kids’ clothes (complete with Reeboks), the toddler-sized dolls specialize in one thing—being there. Should a troublesome child get sent to the corner, the doll will simply stand there with them, shielding its eyes sympathetically as long as necessary.

It’s more than a metaphor. Children are just little people, and all people—all people—need relationships that don’t fade, that endure through the best times and the worst. They need someone in their corner.

Christians must not only “share the gospel,” but “share our lives as well.” The degree we move from strangers to acquaintances to friends to best friends is the degree to which people will open their hearts to who we are and what we believe.

Yes, people need the straight gospel—a message of hope for corners like theirs. But they also need relationships—someone in their corner with them. They need the whole package.

People need gospel relationships. Their souls crave this beautiful blend. Diana did. So does Charles. And we all know their sons do. Your kids and grandkids need it. So do your volleyball teammates. So do your work associates. They might not realize it yet, but at some point they will. The love, the support you offer as they sit in their corner cubicles cracking lewd jokes, bragging about the night before—that love might well steer them toward Damascus-like roads. And keep them there.

The Time-Out Kid we bought last December in Florida now stands quietly in a little girl’s bedroom in Maryland. Alyssa (“Ally”) Nicole Nash stormed our home earlier this fall, and quite simply, I’d already die for her. To think, to know, that such an affection drove Jesus to our corner of the universe is more than enough this holiday season to drive me once again to a manger—and maybe bring a few friends along.

1 Technically, I was the one wandering; Cindy was much more deliberate.


3 After Philadelphia botched an easy field goal attempt in a Monday night game against Dallas, ABC’s Al Michaels quipped: “Deion will tell you that it’s divine intervention, and no one’s going to argue with him!”
ADVENTIST LIFE

My 6-year-old, Kaitlin, and I were returning from dropping off my older child at the Alberta Foothills Camp. To soothe Kaitlin's jealousy, I had promised her a treat at the convenience store in Stettler.

I became alarmed as soon as I stepped out of the car. Loud, fervent swearing came from the gas pumps. Hand in hand, Kaitlin and I hurried past a group of half-clad bikers. Inside the store I decided that we would quickly buy our goodies (including a chocolate bar for me) and leave before the bikers entered. I hastened Kaitlin’s purchase, but as we stood at the counter to pay, the group burst in. Averting my eyes from the leather and chains, I quickly paid and started back to my vehicle.

As I opened my door, Kaitlin dropped her candy. I called to her to hurry, but as she was opening the passenger door, I saw, to my dismay, an enormous biker walking straight toward us! I flipped the power locks, but realized that Kaitlin still had not climbed into the car. Oh, Lord, what do I do now? I thought.

By now a scarred and earring-pierced face and tattooed chest leaned against my window. Glancing at Kaitlin, I carefully rolled the glass down a few inches.

“Excuse me,” said the biker, reaching toward me, “but you forgot something.”

There in his leather glove lay my chocolate bar, which I had left behind in our hurry.

—Heather Grovet, Galahad, Alberta

When our 3-year-old grandson, Mitchell, got a new baby brother, I spent a while with the family to lend a hand. While there I made a coverlet for his bed and curtains for the windows in his room.

Spying my measuring tape on the table, Mitchell grabbed it and said excitedly, “I’m going to see how much I weigh!” Then, stretching the tape to his full height, he proudly exclaimed, “I weigh $100!”

—Evelyn Griffin, Hagerstown, Maryland

“HATS OFF” TO ADVENTIST YOUTH

Visit the Kelso-Longview church in Longview, Washington, and you might not have trouble seeing—but without the ministry of academy students Marty and Ryan Carty and T.J. Stone, you’d have a tough time hearing.

For several years these Adventist youth have handled the church’s audio system for services and a television program. Earlier this year, during phase one of the church's building program, Marty, Ryan, and T.J. gave 30 to 40 hours of their vacation, working, stringing wire, soldering, and checking the new system being installed. “We are so proud of these young men!” says member Elda H. Bland.

Congratulations to Marty, Ryan, and T.J.!

Look for your Review caps in the mail.

SOUND MEMBERS: (left to right) Marty, Ryan, and T.J.
BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON

They met in Silver Spring, Maryland, and for their first date he took her to the Hunan Manor in Columbia. Over Chinese food she shared with him her life’s goal—to be a missionary nurse in Thailand.

He had grown up on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, had never traveled, never planned to travel. His life was coming into focus, and he looked forward to pastoring churches in the Chesapeake Conference.

Conversation came easy between them. In spite of the probing and sparring of getting acquainted, they felt they had a lot in common.

Then the waiter brought the fortune cookies. She selected one, broke it open, and read: “Today will change the rest of your life.” And his: “Your feet will touch the soil of many lands.”

You take a bus from Bangkok, Thailand, and 11 to 12 hours later you come to Chiang Rai, a city of about 40,000 and center of the province by the same name. Only 37 miles (60 kilometers) from the border of Myanmar (Burma) and 92 miles (150 kilometers) from Laos, you are smack down in the infamous Golden Triangle—the opium center of the world.

Now you leave the bus, clamber aboard a pickup truck, and head for the mountains. Your destination lies 20 miles (35 kilometers) away, and it will take you an hour to get there—if conditions are good. But if you get stuck in dust bowls, it will take you much longer; if the rains have turned the track into a quagmire, you won’t get through at all.

Over the last five or six miles the road rises sharply. Apart from a few stretches of cement, the road is unpaved. You climb more than 3,000 feet and find yourself on top of the mountain. Ahead lies a village of some 600 people—Bang Korn.

In the middle of the village you come across a new house. Like the other houses around it, it’s small—about 20 feet by 26 feet—and built with a cement floor and bamboo walls. The 520-square-foot space has been...
divided into several tiny rooms—two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a front room. (Recently the home has been extended to accommodate student missionaries.)

The front room is especially important, because visiting is the chief social activity of the village. Like the houses around it, the front door is always open for people to drop by.

So walk right in and visit the family of four who built this house a year ago. His name is Pian Wuon Hin, hers Pian Fai Tzo. These are Mien names, but they also go by the Thai names Damrong and Jenjira, respectively.

The couple look young—in fact, they are 31. They have two daughters, one 4½ years and the other nearly 2. These girls’ names mean “Honey” and “Rainwater.”

Wuon Hin and Fai Tzo are dressed like the other villagers, but one glance tells you that they aren’t from around here. They are obviously Caucasian, and if you speak only English, they will identify themselves as David and Jennifer Dill, and their daughters as Jessica and Juliana.

What is this attractive, bright-eyed family doing here, so far from Maryland’s Eastern Shore? They are young Adventists embarked on an audacious mission—to plant the gospel among the Mien people.

The Mien are one of the many hill tribes of Thailand, and like almost all the others, they have very few Christians.

In Bang Korn 200-250 people are Mien, but in the 10 or so villages in the district about 3,000 other Mien can be found. But stretch the net beyond Thailand, and you can count about 40,000 people in Laos who speak the Mien dialect, 300,000 in Vietnam, and some 500,000 in China, with another 2 million in related groups. 

So far Christian work among the Mien has been limited to Thailand. And it’s been painfully slow: after 40 years the Overseas Mission Fellowship has raised up only 350 believers.

They found a furnished house for $80 per month and settled in. For a year they learned the Thai language, made friends, and waited on the Lord for plans to crystallize for their mission to the Mien.

Presiding over the entire mountain district is an elected official known as the gamnon (head man). A Mien, he is one of the few non-Thais to be given such authority.

David and Jennifer quickly realized that his support would be crucial to the success of their plans. They decided they needed to get acquainted, to live in his village of Bang Korn.

The Mien are a large, scattered people group virtually untouched by the gospel. Adventists up to now have had no work at all among them.

David and Jennifer Dill arrived in Thailand in May 1995. They brought with them just 11 pieces of luggage on the airplane: medical supplies, toys, clothes, some books. And they knew only one thing about the future: they would go first to Chiangrai, in northern Thailand.
So they visited the gamnon. “Visits” in Bang Korn can run three or four hours and revolve around polite conversation and cups of weak Chinese tea.

The gamnon, a man in his 60s, was opposed to Christians. With much prayer, David and Jennifer approached him on the first visit, seeking permission to live in the village. Taciturn at first, the gamnon slowly warmed to the earnest young couple and extended the desired favor.

Later David returned with a new request: Might they build a house on land owned by the gamnon? By now the gamnon was beginning to like David and Jennifer, and he offered them land in the center of the village—rent-free, for as long as they wanted!

But the Dills sought yet another favor of the gamnon. They wanted to plant Christianity as a truly indigenous faith among the Mien, not as a Western religion, and they realized how important it is to identify with people and their culture. It would be important for them to have Mien names to show that they belonged.

So they went again to the gamnon. “Please help us to live here,” said David. “Give us names.”

The gamnon agreed to do so, but he seemed to delay. At one point he apparently had settled on names, but changed his mind when he observed at a social function that David did not drink alcohol like the other Christians present.

At last on another visit the gamnon was ready. He took a piece of paper and wrote “Pian Wuon Hin” for David and “Pian Fai Tzoii” for Jennifer. They asked the gamnon the meaning of the names, but he refused to answer. When others told them the meaning, they were astounded: the gamnon had named David as his son and Jennifer as his daughter, adopting them into his family!

From age 14 Jennifer had wanted to be a missionary nurse in Thailand.

Her roots reach deep in overseas service: her parents, Calvin and Virginia Smith, served in Africa and Asia, and Virginia’s parents served as medical missionaries in Thailand. While a student at Far Eastern Academy in Singapore, Jennifer visited her grandparents and met a missionary nurse, who so impressed her that her life goal was at once formed.

By contrast, David grew up in Salisbury, on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, with little thought of going abroad. But after his spiritual turning point, which came at Highland View Academy and resulted in baptism, the Lord began to open his eyes to new possibilities.

Four years later David committed his life for service. He was studying biology, but was increasingly restless as to the course of his life. A new pastor joined the staff of the Greeley, Colorado, church and kept emphasizing, “Young people will finish the work.”

The first time he said it, he seemed to look straight at David. The next Sabbath David sat in another place, but when the words came again, David felt that, among the congregation of 400-500 people, the pastor had singled him out.

After a couple months David knew what was coming. When the pastor again said “It’s the young people who will finish the work,” it seemed as though the congregation in front of him dissolved and the pastor was addressing just him. And David yielded: “OK, Lord, I give up!”

He quit biology, enrolled at Columbia Union College, and studied for the pastoral ministry. Upon graduation, he was given an internship at the Spencerville, Maryland, church and assigned to help in youth ministry.

David had made a commitment and trained for service, but it would be another four years before all the pieces would come together. The Lord would slowly reveal where his spiritual gifts lay—in teaching and cross-cultural ministry.

A youth trip he led to La Vida Mission in New Mexico played a major...
role in his dawning realization. “It was an incredible experience,” he recalls. “Something really happened to our kids that had a tremendous impact on them and on the Navajo students. On the last night at La Vida we had an agape service, and everyone was crying—the Navajos didn’t want us to leave them.”

Then into David’s life came Jennifer. She had already trained as a nurse and was working in Washington, D.C. From the beginning she talked about her goal of serving in Thailand; she wasn’t interested in any guy who wasn’t interested in that goal. Her passion for overseas service influenced David greatly.

Two months after their first date they announced their engagement. Five months later they married.

The Chesapeake Conference sent them off to Andrews University for David to work on a Master of Divinity degree at the seminary. Conference president Wayne Coulter laid it on the line: “Make sure you come back to Chesapeake when you’re finished,” he said. “Don’t let Southern California or Florida steal you away.”

“I’m from Maryland and I will come back,” replied David. “Only if God calls us to go overseas will it be different.”

At Andrews David met a friend of Jennifer’s, who was involved in producing a magazine on mission to unreached people groups, The Last Frontier. The magazine, started by former seminary student Greg Bratcher, was connected with Adventist Frontier Missions—an independent Adventist missionary society founded in 1986 by then-students Clyde and Kathy Morgan, with the support of seminary professors Gottfried Oosterwal and Russell Staples.

Although AFM has its own board and plans its own mission to unreached people groups, it works in a close relationship with the organized church. In fact, Master of Divinity students may work at the AFM Office to meet one year of their practicum requirement, and this is what David Dill did in 1991-1992.

By now David and Jennifer were quite sure the Lord was calling them to overseas service, but where? Jennifer, still dreaming of Thailand, wrote to the president of the mission to see if they had any opening, only to be told that because of budget cuts that door was closed. During his year at the AFM Office David had researched a project for new work in Thailand, and AFM listed a call for volunteers in their magazine. The call ran for years without any takers.

Thailand was calling to their hearts, but the AFM opening came with a problem: AFM was not part of the regular church organization, which processes calls through the General Conference Secretariat. Jennifer’s parents, by now employed at General Conference headquarters, were reluctant about David and Jennifer’s involvement with a quasi-approved group.

Unbeknown to Jennifer, David was praying intensely for confirmation of the AFM call—that God would use other believers to verify His leading. As David studied his Bible, again and again his eyes would light on verses that suggested overseas service. One morning Jennifer awoke gasping from a dream. She had seen herself walking down a sidewalk and a man coming up and saying, “AFM has a call for you.” The next day they received a letter from the AFM Office. And as David and Jennifer sought the advice of seminary professors, all encouraged them to go out as AFM missionaries.

David called the Chesapeake Conference to tell them of the change in plans. The conference officers were very unhappy—they had already notified churches on the Eastern Shore that the Dills would be joining them. “What is AFM?” they asked. “We’ve never heard of it!”

David longed for conference affirmation. He began to pray that as a sign leaders would confirm the call by arranging a commissioning service. And it happened—at the Chesapeake camp meeting. And the conference, knowing full well that they would lose

The gamnon visited hardly any- one—he was afraid of spirits he might encounter in another’s home. But
David kept inviting him—and kept praying.

After about nine months the most important religious event of the year was approaching—the dreaded tiger tabu days. To ward off the evil powers during these two days the people of Bang Korn go through ceremonies imploring the spirits to protect them.

Although foreigners—even Mien from other villages—are excluded from the ceremonies, the gamnon gave David permission to attend. He squatted on the ground on the periphery, watching with the others, feeling accepted.

The next day was the first of the tabu days—"tiger sleeping days." No work, but visiting within the village was permitted. About 9:00 a.m. David looked up, and there stood the gamnon, framing the open door of the Dill home.

"Quick! Grab some stools and put on some tea," David called out to Jennifer.

The gamnon came in and sat down.

"Did you go to the ceremony last night?" he asked David. "How was it—did you enjoy it?"

For about 20 minutes they chatted, David waiting for the moment when the gamnon's real purpose would be revealed. Then the gamnon stood up.

"See you; I'm going to visit somewhere else now," he said.

Now the Dills grasped his real purpose—the gamnon had come just to visit them!

The Dills have been in Bang Korn about 18 months now. They have preached no sermons, held no evangelistic meetings, given no Bible studies.

They have spent their time among the people developing relationships, forming friendships, helping in the fields. Day by day, through daily contacts and visits long and short, they add to their grasp of the Mien language—their second new language within two years and one that is not only different from Thai, but, says David, six times more difficult.

Jennifer is realizing her dream of being a missionary nurse. She has come to realize the value of the principles God gave to Seventh-day Adventists long ago: by applying hot water and a charcoal wrap she was able to save the badly infected arm of an 8-year-old boy. She has seen her prayers answered as a little girl in shock with pneumonia started to breathe again.

The people of Bang Korn know that the Dills are Christians and have come because they are Christians. No secrets in the village; people know when the Dills' Sabbath is coming and remind them: "Two more days until your rest day." And slowly the gospel is rubbing off: the people are beginning to say "We're praying to God" instead of "We're appeasing the spirits."

"We're committed to stay until the task is done," says David. "The task is to establish believing communities among the Mien people—not just in Bang Korn, but elsewhere. We want a viable church that will continue to grow, to evangelize, to disciple, so that when we leave, it also will plant new communities."

"It's a hard life up here," says Jennifer. "Everything has to be done by hand. It's hard to keep things clean. But I know this is where I am supposed to be. Whenever I get discouraged, I can fall back on the knowledge that this is where God wants me to be, and I can make it."

I spent a whole morning with David and Jennifer at a retreat center outside Bangkok. They spoke very little about hardships—I had to prod them to share the downside of their odyssey. The loneliness. The isolation. The lack of contact with other foreigners, with other Adventists.

The low point, they said, was maybe the day the truck got stuck in the mud. Every time they tried to go anywhere they got stuck, and the local people seemed rude at their dilemma. Then one day they got really stuck. Another four-wheel-drive vehicle slid into their pickup and damaged it. They had to crawl out through the windows and carry the children all the way home—more than a mile—in the rain.

I listened and listened, feeling in turn interested, amazed, inspired. Here is one of the great stories of the Adventist Church, I realized, one as challenging as any I have encountered in my travels for the world church.

Two fortune cookies—did God have a hand that night? And the pastor with his repeated "Young people will finish the work"—God used him to change a life and accomplish a mission that only He could foresee.

Our God is great and wonderful. Does He see that from the Golden Triangle, infamous for opium, lives will rise like incense to His glory?

William G. Johnson is editor of the Adventist Review.
I grew up in the era of do's and don'ts. Am I saved, or am I not? What happens when I sin after giving my heart to Christ? Am I lost? Am I lost if Christ comes at that moment?

Deirdre's reply: When you give your heart to Christ, you feel remorse about sinning, sad that you've done something contrary to your relationship with Christ. That remorse prompts you to ask for His forgiveness, which He graciously offers.

But I sense that you're asking a somewhat different question—whether or not you're saved if you sin after giving your heart to Christ and having "your slate wiped clean." Am I close? And further, I hear you asking, "If Jesus should come right then, will I be lost because of that one sin?"

My answer is: I don't know. I'm not sure where that thin line is between eternal life and eternal death. And further, it has little to do with salvation, in my opinion. Focusing on that thin line can only hurt your ability to enter the kingdom.

Why? Because it focuses on the erasing of your sins instead of focusing on the Eraser of your sins. Spending all your time looking where you're walking makes you unable to look up and see who's walking with you.

I want to keep looking up to Christ and letting Him lead me to His kingdom. To look down for that thin line would only disorient me.

So am I saying it doesn't matter if we sin? Absolutely not. I agree with Paul; sinning isn't a way to generate more grace (Rom. 6:1, 2). Sin hurts Christ, and I feel sad and remorseful when I hurt my Friend. So by His power I claim the victorious life in Christ, avoiding sin and its hurtful consequences on me and my Saviour.

I can see how growing up in the "do-don't era" could influence your attention on finding that thin line between being saved or lost. But I encourage you to enter the "Jesus era," where embracing Him is our job, and crossing lines is His.

I've had a bout with depression and haven't gone to church for five Sabbaths now. No one from the church—not even my pastor—has called or visited me. I feel I'm not wanted. What do you think? Who's to blame? Am I? Should I go back to church and ask why?

Allan's reply: I sense your uncertainty about returning to church after being away, and I understand your feelings of being neglected in that your pastor and church did not minister to you during this difficult time. How can you know whether you are welcome at the church? Call your pastor directly and share your feelings. It's not uncommon to feel neglected when your church doesn't notice your absence, but it may be a bit presumptuous to conclude you're no longer welcome. A friendly, candid call to your pastor, sharing your concerns and questions, would be a worthwhile first step.

Who's to blame? It sounds like it's important to have someone or some group take responsibility for your feelings of being "unwanted." To blame someone for these feelings at this point wouldn't be very helpful. Truth and reconciliation rarely come when people blame each other. We're all human, and blame often stirs defensive or defeating reactions. If you blame your church or your pastor, it will adversely affect the relationship between all of you. If you blame yourself, it will add to the negative feelings you're experiencing. Blame is an unproductive, distracting issue right now.

It sounds like you want to return to your church and experience the fellowship and support that Christian community provides. Because you're unsure, a call to your pastor will be a good start. Lay blame aside and begin taking steps back to church. And if you really need someone to blame, blame Satan.

Send your questions about young adult life, Christian lifestyle, and Generation X culture to The X-CHANGE, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; or via E-mail to dream_VISION_ministries@CompuServe.com.

Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre.am VISION ministries, which strives to empower young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.
Beating the Hill Street Blues

A police cruiser isn’t the ideal place to witness God’s character, but it can be done.

BY CRAIG S. MEISSNER

Several years ago, on a festive Christmas evening, I found myself rushing to the side of a vehicle that had a shattered passenger window painted with pale-red blood. In the passenger seat was a well-dressed woman with a gunshot wound, clinging to life. Her husband held her hand tightly while sobbing uncontrollably. In the back seat sat their 3-year-old daughter, dressed in her Christmas best. Paramedics with a stretcher rushed to my side. Together we pulled the woman from the car and placed her on the board. I knew, however, that she had already lost the battle.

As I looked back at the little girl, I saw innocence in her eyes. She had no idea of what had just occurred. She didn’t understand that her mommy would not be coming home. As we roped off the area with dull-yellow crime tape, we learned that the family of three had been on their way to visit relatives in another part of the city when they were cut off by a passing vehicle. As the husband had attempted to elude his antagonist, a pistol shot from the other car brought their holiday plans to a horrible end. The papers would report the tragic tale, but would the world ever know that it was in my arms that the victim took her last breath?

I was saddened by the fatal results. I found it grossly ironic that such a horrible fate would occur on such a special day. After all, aside from all the family feasts, wrapping paper, and bows, is Christmas not the day we celebrate the glorious birth of Jesus, the Son of God? What kind of God would allow such misfortune during this special occasion?

I had had enough. I had been cast into a cold, dreary world, a world in which I had witnessed countless tragedies and senseless oppression. I witnessed the tragic aftermath, and though I tried not to let it affect me personally, it became impossible for me to walk away from each mad event without taking a piece of it with me. There within my thoughts I began to question why an all-powerful (and presumably all-loving) God would allow such tragedy. This progressed to my questioning the very existence of God Himself.

Life’s Choices

I chose my profession in law enforcement, it’s true. I decided to become a police officer because I wanted to help others. I wanted to make a difference in other people’s lives. But could...
one truly be prepared to combat all the troubles of a city like New York?

I was raised by a loving family and was always heavily involved in my local congregation. Always, that is, until I started attending high school. By then I found myself making more and more excuses for not going to church. In addition, my time seemed better suited for activities other than prayer, and I began to practice it less and less. By the time I had completed college and traveled the world (compliments of the U.S. Army), my religious beliefs were weak at best.

Then I became a police officer, assigned to an area that many would describe as being one of the most crime-ridden and depressing places on earth.

Life is supposed to be a journey, a trip full of stops for us to enjoy and lessons to learn. Well, I realized that at this particular stop many people didn’t share the same values I had been taught as a child. Here there was no “turning the other cheek,” no “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Here, sadly, each of the Lord’s ten commandments was broken on a regular basis. Once I saw a teenage boy kill his own brother because the brother refused to share his electric fan with him one hot August night.

The countless instances of domestic violence, child abuse, and senseless savagery, and the many emotions I experienced as a result, made me become hard-nosed and cynical. One day I took a look around and decided there was no God. After all I had been taught as a child, and in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, I convinced myself that God did not exist.

I philosophically tried to reinforce this conclusion with arguments that, to me, made eminently good sense: first, I reasoned, if God did exist, He would never allow such suffering to take place. Yet it did take place. I saw it every day—up close and personal.

Second, if we’re created in God’s image, why don’t we reflect more of His wisdom, love, and kindness? I thought I had it all figured out. I convinced myself that God did not exist and that I would never make a real difference in the world—there was nothing I could do to change it.

**Simple Gifts**

As time passed, I realized that although I could not help everyone (and thus change the world), it was my responsibility to help others when I was able to do so. I did this by beginning to overlook the grimness of it all and focusing
on what I could do to help those with whom I came into contact.

At first I did it because I felt it was my responsibility, my job. Then I noticed that the more I helped others, the more I enjoyed helping others. And beyond the joy that came into my life, I reveled in the fact that I was making a difference.

One day my partner and I raced into a burning building and escorted a destitute family to shelter. The single mother informed us that an infant was still inside. We found him in his crib. Fortunately, he wasn’t burned, but he did suffer from smoke inhalation, and he had to be taken to the hospital in an ambulance.

As my partner and I rode to the hospital with the child’s two siblings, we were touched by their concern for the baby, and we surprised them with a trip to McDonald’s. Later we learned that they had lost their favorite toys in the fire—a doll and a stuffed teddy bear. After we dropped the children off at the hospital, we found a nearby thrift shop and returned to the hospital with used but otherwise ample replacements. The kids couldn’t stop thanking us— their joy overwhelmed us.

On our way out of the Pediatrics Department, I noticed a young boy who had lost his leg in a car accident. As he sat in his wheelchair, I stopped to greet him. I followed his gaze to the small colorful medals on my uniform. His face lit up when I impulsively took the citations off my uniform and pinned every one of them onto his shirt before I shook his hand and headed for the door.

This became a turning point for me. This desire to help others and somehow to spread love instead of hatred turned me around and brought me back to God. I realized that it was His strength that enabled me to transform sadness into happiness and despair into hopefulness. Whether it was helping a stranded motorist, sharing a handshake or a high five, shooting hoops with the neighborhood kids, or removing one of my citations from my uniform and “ awarding” it to a child in the hospital, each act brought me closer to God. I was making a difference after all. I had rediscovered the biblical truth that it is better to give than to receive.

Now I’m involved in my local Episcopalian congregation again: organizing trips for the youth, donating goods and services for the needy, volunteering to help out with a Bible study group. My family and I go to church every week. And I not only believe in God; I’m thrilled to share with Him the task of reflecting the goodness and whole- ness of His love.

Craig S. Meissner is a New York City police officer who writes from Coram, New York. He is married and has two children.
Harpur thinks we err in speaking of life after death. Christians have difficulty with the time gap that exists between death and the resurrection, but Harpur concludes that “the resurrection is at the moment of death,” for the one who dies goes outside of time.

This stimulating book is logical in its approach. Harpur’s conclusions might fit Adventist theology if he hadn’t ignored the idea of satanic influence and the biblical teaching of the Second Coming. He also refers only briefly to NDE-type experiences by those who are not near death. But the idea of time and space existing for this earth—as it is today—could help answer complex metaphysical questions. If you have a probing mind, you won’t be able to put this book down.

Little of what the churches teach today about life after death ... makes much sense,” says Tom Harpur. Canada’s most prominent religious writer, Harpur approaches his subject with his own beliefs, but keeps an open mind while doing his research.

The author studied secular sources, Christianity, and other world religions.

Harpur believes Christ died for all people, and uses biblical texts that indicate universalism. He rejects reincarnation and belief in an immortal soul, showing them to lack biblical evidence.

The author interviewed an Adventist administrator. “All who have loved God and lived in conformity with Christ’s teaching will one day be saved,” said the interviewee. I wonder about this subtle salvation by works statement. What about Christ’s death for us and salvation being His gift? Though the Adventist spokesperson told Harpur we are not exclusive as to who inherits eternal life, he does not explain the basis of that life.

His ministry to dying people and research convince Harpur that NDEs (near death experiences) are real.
In the Arms of an Octopus—
And What I Learned About God

BY SALLY DILLON

I JUST can’t think of God as a loving father," my friend tearfully confessed. "My own father was so mean and did such awful things to me that I can’t equate a loving God and Father!"

In a poll of my other friends I heard similar sad stories. Too many of my friends feel incapable of relating to God as Father because of having received abuse of one kind or another at the hands of their dads. Some feel more comfortable relating to God as a mother or in gender-neutral terms. I understand how they feel, because I too base my image of God on my relationship to my father. Fortunately for me, however, I had a good dad.

It was my tenth birthday. And to celebrate, my dad took us all to the beach. (Birthday cake is always a little more exciting with sand in it.) My mother and two little sisters stretched out on the sand, enjoying the hot Ghanaian sunshine and the
rolling surf, but Dad and I had a different agenda. We were rock pool explorers. We climbed among the jagged granite pools carved by the pounding waves and peered into the myriad of individual communities. We scooped up starfish, shells, and miscellaneous later-to-be-identified critters into our buckets for examination.

Suddenly I let out a scream of terror. Something had reached out from under a rock and stroked my ankle with its slimy arm. A quick scoop with Dad’s bucket revealed a baby octopus that had been hiding in my rock pool. This was a real find. Much more exciting than the usual sea urchins and seaweed.

“We’ve got to show this to your mom and sisters,” Dad announced. “You stay here and watch the octopus, mom and sisters,” Dad announced. “Do not touch it! OK?”

I nodded my agreement, and Dad sped down the beach.

As the moments passed, I shielded my eyes from the sun and peered down the beach. Mom and my sisters were tiny figures against the cliffs at the other end of the little bay. This was going to take some time. I sat down next to my bucket and observed our catch.

Its head was about the size of a tennis ball, and it seemed to have more than the usual eight arms when they all writhed at once. I named it Ollie. Ollie looked very smooth and graceful unlike the usual eight arms when they all writhed at once. I named it Ollie. Ollie looked very smooth and graceful when my sisters never seemed bound by such restraints. Nor did he lecture me on how to free myself. He simply sat down in the slimy tide pool with me and pulled me close to him. He wasn’t able to pull the little creature off either, but he put his arms and legs next to mine, and the octopus shifted from my skinny shaking arms onto his big strong ones. I was free. And my feelings of panic were replaced by feelings of euphoria and freedom.

My dad was great!

Then I took a good look at Dad. It took a long time to get the creature off Dad’s arms. “He needs water,” he said. “I can wait, as long as he doesn’t bite or anything. He has a sharp beak that he uses to open clams and shells, but I don’t look much like a clam.” We pulled and waited and pulled again. Finally Dad was free. I had little red circles on my arms, but Dad’s were dark purple.

I snuggled close to Dad in the car on the way home. He never said a word about my disobedience. Every time I looked at the angry purple circles on his arms, my eyes filled with tears and my heart with gratitude and contrition.

It seemed to me that the circles took months to fade (though Dad remembers only a few days). They reminded me of Jesus and His scars, which He will carry for eternity. Like my Dad, He never berated me for them either. He just jumped into my slimy cesspool of life and took the results of my disobedience off my shakings of euphoria and freedom.

When I talk to my hurt friends, I want to put my arms around them and say, “My dad isn’t like that. Let me share him with you. Let me give you happy memories of what my father was like.” Maybe that is what Christianity is all about. Your heavenly Father is not like that either. Let me tell you what He is really like. Let me share my memories and help make them yours, too.

Sally Dillon is a freelance writer living in Timberville, Virginia.
Review and Herald Open House Builds Community Awareness

Visitors get an inside look at Adventist publishing.

BY CASSANDRA NESMITH, REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION PUBLICIST

Linda Layton, 36, and her husband, Rick, 43, of Gambrills, Maryland, enthusiastically agree that the open house and gigantic book sale held Sunday, September 7, at the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown was well worth the 90-minute drive from their home 85 miles away.

More than 1,200 visitors from local communities and surrounding states flocked to the Review and Herald to participate in the 150-year-old Adventist publishing company's first open house since its 1983 relocation to Hagerstown, Maryland.

From guided tours and an art show to a 5K fun run, face painting, and giveaways, the open house greeted visitors with an endless variety of fun and educational activities to introduce them to the Review and Herald and its many Christian products.

Nonstop Activity

Beginning at 10:00 a.m., guided tours of the publishing house and manufacturing plant, conducted at five-minute intervals throughout the day, allowed some 750 visitors to follow the process books and magazines undergo as they’re sent to press.

Highlights of the tour included a display of several original paintings by renowned religious artist Harry Anderson, live demonstrations of an antique Linotype machine (see photo), and viewing of the massive four-color web presses in action.

Crowds of bargain-hunting readers flooded the book sale to purchase discounted books and talk with authors. Meeting his favorite author for the first time, Mike Shacka, of Millersville, Maryland, reported ecstatically, “My most exciting moment was shaking hands with Ed Reid!” Book signings by popular authors continued throughout the day.

Outside, people bought vegetarian hot dogs and burgers and headed to the six yellow-and-white tents, where magazine editors offered activities ranging from blood pressure checks by Vibrant Life staff to a complimentary color analysis at the Women of Spirit display.

Albino Python

Guide and Insight magazines featured a life-sized magazine cover as a backdrop under which visitors could pose for a free photograph with live animals, such as a rare albino python, and other exotic props. Sabbath School Leadership volunteers dressed as Bible characters challenged visitors to a “Bible-reading marathon,” while children's leaders gathered in the Kids’ Ministry Ideas booth for freebies and bright ideas. Editors of Message, Listen, Winner, and the Adventist Review magazines hosted drawings for free one-year subscriptions.

With a day packed full of exciting, fun, and bargain-filled activities, the real challenge for visitors was deciding what they liked best. Responses included the Harry Anderson art exhibit, the gigantic book sale, the tours, Vibrant Life’s 5K fun run, the face painting, the desktop publishing demonstrations, the snow cones, the Linotype demonstrations, the music, the free popcorn, the book signings, the great vegetarian food, the color analyses, freebies, and meeting magazine editors and authors.

Employees and administrators together consider the Review and Herald's open house a resounding success.

Wrapping up the open house activities at
the end of the day, event coordinator Bonnie Laing said, “God blessed our efforts. People used to drive by this place every day on their way to work and had no idea what’s going on here.”

“The purpose of our open house is to increase community awareness and church awareness,” added Review and Herald president Ted N. C. Wilson. “Our next Open House will be September 13, 1998.”

Russian Government Confirms Adventist Church Status

The Russian government has confirmed that the new law restricting new religious organizations does not apply to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In a letter to the Adventist Church headquarters in Moscow, the deputy director of Russia’s Public and Religious Organizations Affairs Department confirmed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a legally recognized body. The director noted that the church has operated in the territory of the Russian Federation for 110 years, far longer than the minimum 15 years required by the new law.

In addition he explained that “according to article 9, the necessity to prove a 15-year existence of a religious entity in a certain territory applies only to those religious organizations that are not able to prove they belong to a centralized religious organization.” Since the Adventist Church has a highly structured organization, the new law does not affect its operation.

“Consequently, no discriminatory measures will be applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a part of the adoption of the new federal law,” said the director.

“We are pleased to know that officially we can continue to function freely, invite foreign evangelists, organize new congregations, begin operating in new areas, and register as conscientious objectors from military service,” said Victor Krushenitsky, public affairs and religious liberty director for the Euro-Asia Division.

However, other organizations have not fared so well under the new law. Lutheran and Pentecostal organizations have had their registration suspended, and the Salvation Army in St. Petersburg is to be expelled from its meeting hall, according to press reports.

“Even if we are not the target of this new law, we deplore the denial of religious liberty to others,” said John Graz, director of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department. “The implementation of the law could be very restrictive, and we may see misinterpretations in many places.”—Adventist News Network.

Uganda Prison Ministry Yields 117 Baptisms

Over the past two years nursing students and staff members at the Ishaka Adventist Hospital in Bushenyi, Uganda, have conducted a prison ministry in the local correction facility.

Started by the hospital’s medical director, the meetings first consisted of health lectures. Later brief Bible readings and hymns were included. Today staff members hold weekly Sabbath services, and 117 inmates have been baptized, says hospital spokesperson Leila Rocero.
The Blockbuster Bible

BY ROGER HUNTER, TEACHER, STANBOROUGH SECONDARY SCHOOL, STANBOROUGH, ENGLAND

Canon Michael Saward had made the national news in Britain once before, although for reasons he couldn’t control. In 1986 his vicarage in west London was robbed. He suffered a fractured skull, and his daughter was raped.

This time it wasn’t violence, but a discussion of violence, that pushed the canon into the news again. The treasurer of St. Paul’s Cathedral, Saward has just produced a collection of 24 sermons in which he compares the Old Testament to a blockbuster film, with graphic sex and violence.

He claims he is attempting to show in no-nonsense language that the Bible is about “real people and real events.” Saward continues: “I am not being vulgar for vulgarity’s sake. I want to talk to people in their language about the most important things in life.”

Saward has the blessing of the archbishop of Canterbury (the head of the Anglican Church), who himself is striving for sermons preached in Anglican churches to be simple and relevant. Saward says he aims for “people to look beyond the sex and violence in the Old Testament to the deeper message.”

This story raises some key questions, not just for the Anglicans but for Seventh-day Adventists in Britain as well. How relevant is Christianity to the modern generation? In many cases, not a lot. Esoteric debates on issues ranging from jewelry to perfectionism don’t mean much to people who, like Saward, have been through awful experiences.

However, we must also consider the valid question of whether people want a “blockbuster” film in church. Aren’t non-Christians looking for something radically different to empty materialism and gloom? Doesn’t this contribute to the success of cults today?

These are issues we need to consider prayerfully as we move into the twenty-first century.


NEWS COMMENTARY

The hospital’s ministry team also visits sick prisoners and helps with medicines and supplies.

ADRA Volunteers Respond to Hurricane Pauline

In the wake of devastation left by Hurricane Pauline on the southwestern coast of Mexico, Adventist Development and Relief Agency volunteers are providing food and relief supplies.

ADRA distributed 1,000 food baskets in seven towns affected by flash flooding. “There is mainly a need for food and water,” reports Rafael Garcia Valderrabano, ADRA director for the South Mexican Union. “Although the Mexican people are gathered together to assist their fellow citizens, the government is unable to meet all the needs.”

Garcia estimates that basic rehabilitation will take at least three months. ADRA Mexico is continuing relief assessments to find the areas of greatest need.

Adventist Nominated as U.S. Ambassador to Malta

Kathryn Proffitt, an Adventist from Phoenix, Arizona, has been nominated to serve as United States ambassador to Malta.

Proffitt, an active member of the Camellback Seventh-day Adventist Church in Phoenix, is president of Call America, a long-distance telephone company, and also director for ICG Communications, Inc. Selected for her experience and strong business background, Proffitt will be expected to articulate the complex economic interests of the United States, as well as other matters.

Her nomination was announced in a brief statement by the White House on September 29. An envoy for the president, she will go through Senate confirmation before assuming her post. The White House expects her nomination to be confirmed.

Oakwood College to Help Revitalize Local Communities

Oakwood College, in Huntsville, Alabama, has been awarded a $380,000 grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a community revitalization project.

The Oakwood/HUD partnership will provide a broad range of public service activities to help low- and moderate-income persons living in the Terry Heights and Hillandale communities in Huntsville.

Among the services provided will be an after-school tutorial program for school-aged children and financial assistance for a welfare-to-work center.
**Did You Know?**

**Many Mormons Are Born Again**

A new poll conducted by George Barna suggests that 26 percent of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints members, or Mormons, are born-again Christians.

Barna classifies born-again Christians as those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord of their lives and believe they will go to heaven after death. Conservative Christians consider some Mormon doctrines unorthodox, such as baptizing the dead by proxy, and considering the Book of Mormon on par with the Bible.

Barna explains that the people hold seemingly contradictory beliefs because they are not theologically savvy. The poll surveyed 6,242 adults nationwide.—Religion News Service.

**Charitable Bill Could Increase Donations**

A bill introduced in the United States Congress would expand the tax deduction for charitable donations to all taxpayers—not just those who itemize. Nonitemizers would be allowed to deduct 50 percent of their donations over $500 each year.—Religion News Service.

**For Your Good Health**

**Still Longer, but Getting Closer**

Differences in life expectancy for American men and women narrowed between 1990 and 1995. While women still lived longer than men in 1995 (78.8 years versus 72.4), that gap is about six months smaller than in 1990.—UC Berkeley Wellness Letter.

**Call Your Mother and Thank Her**

Stress hormone levels in working mothers put them at higher risk than other working women for health problems such as heart attack. The number of children at home made no difference in the stress levels—hormone levels were as high with one child as with several. Researchers believe higher stress levels seen in employed mothers is related to increased stress at home rather than work strain, and suggest that more equally dividing home responsibilities is the best way to reduce the burdens on working moms.—Duke University Medical Center.

—Compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, contact your ABC or call 1-800-765-6955.
Do you like to cook? It’s fun to stir things together and see what happens. However, it is a good idea to use a cookbook, particularly when you’re first learning to cook, and especially if you want to eat what you’ve cooked.

People who have been cooking for a long time often use a cookbook for inspiration. They know from experience how cooking works, so if they read something weird in a recipe, they might decide to do things another way.

For instance, let’s say a good cook is making soup. The recipe calls for two tablespoons of salt. That’s a lot of salt! The cook mixes in two teaspoons of salt, lets the soup cook for a while, and then tastes it. If it tastes as though it needs more salt, the cook will add a little at a time until it is just right.

The cook knows this rule: You can always add more salt, but you can’t take it away. If you have ever eaten a potato chip, you know that salt tastes good. Food that doesn’t have salt can be very boring. Would you even bother to eat a potato chip if it didn’t have salt on it? Salt makes eating interesting.

There is a funny verse in the Bible. It says, “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6, NIV).

What do you suppose it means to season your conversation with salt?

Perhaps it means that you should try not to be boring. When you talk to other people, think about what they are interested in.

Perhaps it means that you should be thoughtful and kind. When you talk to other people, be careful not to hurt their feelings.

Perhaps it means that you should be pleasant and charming. When you talk to other people, don’t whine and complain.

Just remember the cook’s rule: You can always add more salt, but you can’t take it away. When you are talking, once you say something, you can’t unsay it. When you talk to other people, think before you speak.

When Jesus spoke, His words were seasoned with salt. People crowded around to listen. They couldn’t stay away. He was so interesting and kind and charming. Jesus can help you learn to salt your words until they are just right.
A teenager had the courage to write me an anonymous letter this month. His message tugs at my heart.

"I take tranquilizers—doctor's orders. He says it's panic about growing up, but that's not it. I'm scared because everybody in my church keeps talking about the awful things going on, and saying that there's worse to come. I'm nervous about what could come any time now. People keep telling me to relax, but they don't relax. They just keep at each other. There's no peace at church. People keep talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ while they keep bashing one another and everyone else.

"They tell me I must 'resist' the spooky, invisible enemies that are out to get me. I try to reach out to these people for help, but they tell me to stop looking at people. But I can see people. Where is Jesus? Where is the peace? He seems so far away. I'm here. I'm just a teen.

"The doctor tells me to walk and take deep breaths. Nothing seems to work. Can you help me?"

To the writer of the letter, I reply:

"Young man, you were very brave to address your thoughts to the Adventist Review. It must be hard to be surrounded by people who make you feel frightened, alone, and hopeless. The very fact that you realize this 'brand' of Adventism is not quite right tells me that the Lord is working in your life. You are 100 percent correct. God doesn't want His followers to fight. He doesn't want them to be fearful, angry, bitter, judgmental. He sent His Son to this world so that we might have more abundant life. Seventh-day Adventists ought to be the happiest people on earth.

"I hope you can find at least one person who understands what it means to experience a joyous, peaceful Christian life. I know that the readers of the Review will join me in praying that one optimistic, caring, fun-loving, kind believer will come into your life. If you feel courageous enough, perhaps you can send your name to the Review's Give & Take column and receive some pen pals who can communicate to you the meaning of a fulfilling, abundant life in Jesus.

"Keep up your courage. Follow your heart. You may be the best thing happening to your congregation right now. Through you they may discover that what they're doing is counterproductive, damaging, and useless. Your honest sharing is a wake-up call to all of us. Thank you for taking the time to make us sit up and listen."

To members in Adventist churches everywhere I ask that you carefully consider the following questions:

1. What kind of spirit permeates my church? What part am I playing in creating that spirit? How do I feel after spending a morning at church? How might others feel?

2. What appears to be most important to the members of my church—hair-splitting theological correctness? forgiveness? warmth? relationships? What's most important to me as I enter into conversations on Sabbath morning, winning an argument or understanding a need?

3. What messages are being passed on to children in my church in connection with Adventist doctrines? Fear, guilt, and hopelessness? Or love, acceptance, security, peace?

If some of your answers make you feel even a bit uncomfortable, make a change for the sake of this one young man. Perhaps you have a different view from another faction in your congregation. What's more important, to convince others to accept your brand of justification versus sanctification, or to open your heart to a frightened, tense, confused child? What's more important, to formulate a plan of escape from torturers lying in wait during the time of trouble, or to assure a teenager that God loves him or her more than he or she can ever comprehend?

As adults we often spin around in our own orbits, unaware of the impact we are having on the younger members of society. Look around. Toddlers, elementary children, and teenagers are looking up to you. Listening. Formulating an understanding of God. Shaping an outlook on life. Searching for significance. Gropping for assurance. What messages are you sending their way?
Hanging

You can program your
John Forester’s heart must have just about stopped when he went to his barn one weekend morning and discovered that a 1,200-pound pregnant moose had decided to take residence there. Because his property is near Grand Teton National Park in northwestern Wyoming, Forester was used to seeing an occasional moose, but never up this close. And it looked as if this moose had come to stay. Plenty of water and hay under a covered roof—what more could she ask?

So when Forester tried to get into the barn to feed his horses, Mean Mildred, as he named her, charged at him and drove him off. He returned with a rifle and fired a couple rounds in the air, but “she turned right around and turned her ears flat and came right at me,” he said. He dived into the safety of some nearby bushes.

By Monday morning Forester had to escort his kids to their school bus with a rifle in his hand. So he called the game and fish agency, who sent Officer Tom Tillman to see what he could do to get Mean Mildred out of the barn—after all, the horses were getting hungry.

Officer Tillman tried a gun that shoots whistling firecrackers. Mildred wasn’t impressed. “I chased her around for a while,” Tillman said, laughing, “and then she chased me around for a while. She was pretty aggressive.”

Tuesday morning Tillman decided to take more drastic measures. He returned with a tranquilizing gun, but the moose shook off the darts nonchalantly. Then as the two men discussed further tactics, Mean Mildred leaped up, bolted over the fence, and ran away.

Sometimes a bad habit takes over our lives the way Mean Mildred adopted John Forester’s barn. And whatever we try to do to remove it, nothing seems to work. It just hangs on tenaciously, and we feel powerless to overcome it.

Actually, a habit should come as no surprise to us. It is, after all, a pattern of behavior that we ourselves have programmed into the computers we call our brains. Explaining how you form a habit in your brain can get overly involved in a lot of scientific words like “dendrites” and “axons” and “cytoplasm.” Basically, however, your brain processes messages and sends them on to different parts of the body through nerve cells. Any repeated thought or action helps to build up an electrochemical pathway through the nerve cells—the more repetitions, the stronger the pathway. And researchers have found that this kind of pathway can probably never be erased.

So does this mean that you can’t do anything about a bad habit? Are you doomed for the rest of your life to biting your...
fingernails or cracking your knuckles or overeating? Not at all. Here are some suggestions:

■ Ask God's help. The Bible says that you cannot expect to make any permanent change in your life without His help. “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Everything else you can do to break a bad habit must be based on a realization that your ability to do so comes from God. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13).

■ Choose a good time to change. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecc. 3:1). The holidays are probably not the best time to begin a campaign against overeating. You need to make the breaking of a bad habit as easy for yourself as you possibly can. Whatever advantage you can turn to your own favor is just good planning.

■ Focus on one habit at a time. Don’t try to overcome several at once. And almost any goal you may set for yourself is easier to accomplish by breaking it up into smaller goals. These smaller goals make the whole program look much more manageable and much less intimidating. As Mark Twain said, “habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.”

■ Analyze your habit. Make a list of the times and places that you most often exhibit the behavior you want to change. If you’re trying to do something about snacking between meals, you may find that you often gravitate subconsciously toward the kitchen—or a snack machine at school or at work—at certain times of the day. Then you can consciously arrange to be somewhere else during those times. One of the biblical principles of overcoming temptation is to avoid it if possible. Eve had no business being anywhere near the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

■ Replace the bad habit with a good one. Don’t forget that there are good habits as well as bad ones. Theologian Nathaniel Emmons said, “Habit is either the best of servants, or the worst of masters.” You use good habits to complete many of your routine tasks throughout the day. Aren’t you glad you don’t have to think your way through the process of tying your shoes every morning, or brushing your teeth, or making your bed? And you can develop good habits to help you handle much more important tasks.

Although your bad habit has formed a permanent pathway in your brain, you can program your brain to form a bigger permanent pathway through the constant repetition of a good behavior. Schedule a program of exercise at the time when you find you are most likely to watch too much television. Make a conscious effort to replace gossip with praise of people you know.

Jesus illustrated this principle in Matthew 12:43-45: “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.”

■ Think of your habit-changing campaign in positive terms. Focusing on all the things you are having to give up only casts a negative light on anything you try to do. If you are trying to lose weight, picture yourself looking better in a swimsuit rather than dwelling on all the chocolate cake you’re going to miss.

■ Don’t give up if you fail. Remember, those electrochemical pathways in your brain make it very easy to go back to your old habit. As Peter Miller, coauthor of Self-watching, says, “Quitting a habit is easy. Starting again is even easier.” If you give in to your old habit, don’t be tough on yourself. Consider it a learning experience and build on it.

Research has shown that the more times a person has tried to give up smoking, the greater are his or her chances of success. Don’t allow yourself to get discouraged. If Peter had let his failure in the courtyard at Jesus’ trial discourage him, he would never have become a great leader in the early Christian church. “Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again” (Prov. 24:16). If Jesus can forgive you, you surely ought to be able to forgive yourself.

God has promised that whatever Mean Mildreds you may have in your life, He will help you root them out. “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matt. 21:22). Why not ask Him today to help you rid yourself of your harmful habits?

■ Texts in this article are from the New International Version.

Gary Swanson is editor of the Collegiate Sabbath school quarterly and writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.
We journeyed to the elite coastal tourist town of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, because I like to ride carousels. Rumor had it they had a famous one that’s been in operation since the 1880s. Last winter a local artist repainted each horse and displayed the finished masterpieces in the local library before remounting them in the carousel.

I was excited as we found a parking place in front of the souvenir, ice-cream, and beachwear shops and the familiar carousel tune wafted through the salty summer air to greet us. We spotted an opening between other adults circling the “flying horses” and stepped up for a peek before I purchased my ticket. It was then we discovered that whoever had told us about the carousel had failed to mention one important detail.

True, the horses were spectacular with their shiny lacquered finishes, leather saddles, and real-hair manes. Unfortunately, this was a “kids only” carousel, with horses smaller than the norm. The miniature horses, legs posed in galloping style, swung by chains mounted high up beneath the carousel’s roof. Disappointed, I lingered awhile and studied the enamored faces of the lucky little ones who got to ride the horses round and round, reach for the brass and silver rings held by the mechanical arm, and be transported by the cheerful beat of the music.

Later, strolling on the boardwalk alongside the harbor, licking a chocolate-almond ice-cream cone, gaping at million-dollar yachts and sailboats, I noticed a little boy sitting on a freshly painted white wooden bench. He was swinging his legs and chatting happily with his father. “I got six silver rings,” he said proudly. “I held on tight and reached way out.” He demonstrated by clinging to his father’s arm and stretching out over the bench, his face animated with the memory.

Staring absently out to sea, the father answered in a monotone, unimpressed voice. “Silver rings don’t matter,” he said. “Only the brass ones count. Then you get a free ride.”

The boy’s legs stopped their carefree swinging. His brow furrowed in question. He stared at his father’s face, trying to figure out the significance of the words.

I froze in my tracks and glanced at the father. Should I set him straight? Didn’t he know that silver rings matter as much as brass ones? The anticipation matters. The preparing matters. The reaching at just the right moment matters. The grasping matters. The smooth feel of the metal matters. The storing of the rings on the horse’s ears matters. The tossing of the rings into the purple plastic pail held by the attendant as the horses slow down matters. If you carry the logic of the father to its fullest, why bother riding a wooden horse at all? You aren’t going to get anywhere.

If you carry my logic to the fullest, the process is as important as the prize. The learning as valuable as the diploma. The enjoyment of work as fulfilling as the paycheck at week’s end. The feeling of pride in participating as satisfying as the winning. The recognition of the little reasons to be happy as heartwarming as attaining the worked-for goal. The rejoicing in God’s daily gift of life as exhilarating as walking through the pearly gates. The making time in the now as high a priority as marking time for the future.

Slowly I regained my rhythm of stepping carefully on the boardwalk’s planks, of licking the melting spots of my cone before it dripped, of listening to the seagull’s squawks, of feeling the salty air on my cheeks. In a way I regretted not putting in my two cents, but then again, one backward glance at the father caused me to believe that perhaps he had gotten his first clue about the importance of process by the look on his son’s face.

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