Neil Watts’ plane went down five miles from shore in shark-infested waters.
A Sister’s Legacy

Jennifer Mae Barizo writes skillfully about the remarkable incidence of Dina and Natasha’s coming to know Adventists in Beltz, Moldova (“A Sister’s Legacy, Sept. 9). As administrative superintendents of the Forest Lake Church Sabbath school here in Florida, we featured Julius Garner, M.D., the principal caregiver in the drama of Natasha and Dina, on three different occasions. Many in this area are familiar with the thrilling story.

Their mother never visited the U.S.A.; only their father, Andrei, who initially attended his daughter Natasha on the flight. Later Natasha’s older sister, Dina, came so that their father could return home.

Barizo stated that the reason Natasha did not receive a bone marrow transplant was “they could not find the one person who could possibly save her life” (with a perfect marrow match). The reason was that the oncologist in charge knew that it would not be successful, and was reluctantly forced to rule against it. Dr. Garner provided leadership, together with a committee of donors, to raise $90,000, the cost of the transplant. When it was determined that the transplant was not possible, all donors were contacted, and a portion of the funds was provided for Dina’s enrollment in the nursing program. Prior to Dina’s enrollment, David Pasos, of Orlando, Florida, studied the Bible with her. Dina was baptized into the Garner family’s home church in Winter Springs, Florida, during the Thanksgiving break.

We do not want to detract from Barizo’s otherwise strong central theme and intent. The story is one that illustrates amazing grace, limitless love, and what Christ and His truth have done in the former Soviet Union, with the overwhelming generosity of many praying and sacrificing Christians.

—W. B. and Ellinor G. Quigley
Apopka, Florida

I was pleased to see some acknowledgment of and information about one of the most devastating nuclear disasters to happen in the earth’s history in one of our church publications. I have worked with the nondenominational Northern Colorado Project to aid victims of the Chernobyl disaster since 1994. It has been one of the most rewarding of my volunteer efforts. Bravo to those who helped this family from Moldova. These folks, along with those in the other areas devastated by the disaster, need all the help they can get to boost their hope, and we need to provide assistance, as they cannot possibly afford to do this themselves or as countries. More than 600,000 children live in the areas contaminated by Chernobyl, and we need to do all we can to help these people.

—Lelia Oster
La Salle, Colorado

Questions of Emphasis

Calvin Rock raises the question of bankruptcy in his October 14 column (p. 12) on “Questions of Emphasis.” I am not an expert on old Hebrew law, but I understand that bankruptcy, or its equivalent, has always been an option for God’s people. For example, in the...
year of jubilee all debt was canceled. This would be like a chapter 7 bankruptcy of today. Also, the debtor was provided relief in other ways, depending on the situation. For example, slaves were freed after seven years of service.

Most people who enter into bankruptcy do not do so willingly and without lots of soul searching. Many are forced into it because of events outside of their control, such as catastrophic illnesses not covered by insurance, noninsured business losses because of fire, floods, storms, or theft, major contractors going bankrupt and leaving the subcontractors with insurmountable debt, and investment in businesses that turn out to be fraudulent, etc.

I agree with Calvin Rock in his assessment. In practice, however, I believe that discipline is meted out in some form or fashion. In my local church, if you have been nominated for office, the pastor will meet with you to go over your finances. You will not be allowed to hold a church office until your bankruptcy debt has been repaid.

—John Marsh
Titusville, Florida

Recapture Your Dreams
Does anyone edit the stories before they are published? I believe so; however, through the editing process for “Recapture Your Dreams,” by Myma Tetz (Oct. 14), no one caught that party balloons are not filled with hydrogen, a flammable gas. It is helium that is used to fill balloons.

While this was not the subject of her story, it was in the first paragraph and left me stalled right there.

—Ruth Rich
Via E-mail

What’s Up There?
I read with interest the Angel Manual Rodríguez column in the October 14 Review as he answers the reader’s question regarding the “firmament.” I appreciated the information he provided—especially after spending the past quarter studying the topic of Creation in Sabbath school classes.

But I was very surprised to read his statement referring to other Near Eastern accounts: “If this understanding is correct, then Genesis I is culturally conditioned and becomes useless in understanding how God brought the world into existence.” It has been my understanding that all language is “culturally conditioned.” In fact, were this not so, there would be little likelihood of the reader/audience comprehending what the writer/speaker had in mind.

It is also my understanding that the Adventist “official” statement regarding the Bible confirms that we believe in “thought,” not “word,” inspiration. That would presumably suggest that the inspired writer expressed concepts in his/her language, appropriate to his/her culture at that time.

—Jim Kaatz
San Diego, California

Teach Now, or Later?
Regarding Angel Manual Rodríguez’s response to the question of when to baptize in “Teach Now, or Later?”

The issue is not doctrinal preparedness for a relationship with Christ but doctrinal preparedness to join the Adventist Church. Rodríguez states: “Baptism joins people to the church and calls them to stand for truth.” Here is where I feel that Rodríguez misses the track. Baptism is not admittance to the Adventist Church but admittance to the family of God, as evidenced by acceptance of membership by profession of faith for people baptized in other Christian churches.

I believe that we should baptize into Christ as soon as a person understands and desires the relational aspects of Christianity, then teach the distinctive Adventist doctrines, then accept them into membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

—Dennis Ferree
Caldwell, Idaho
“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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Do you remember how races used to begin when you were well, let’s say, in grade school? My friends and I would draw a line in the playground dirt (no paved play areas in rural Nebraska then), and one person would chant, “One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go.”

If you grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist, you’ve heard since you were well, let’s say, in grade school that the Lord is coming soon and you need to, like on the count of three, get ready. It was an oft-repeated challenge by the preachers of the day, who emphasized their message with loud cries warning of fire and brimstone. Frankly, that scared me into many sleepless nights, for even though I’d given my heart to Jesus, was I ready? Was I not? How would I know?

This Bible passage about readiness comes from Matthew’s chapter describing the signs of the end and what will happen if Christ comes and we have not prepared to meet Him. “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44). Even though the text clearly states, “Be ye also ready,” many preach and many hear “Get ready.” And after our initial “Yes, I must get ready” response that leads toward peace of mind, and because we tend toward futurism anyway, it’s easy to sit back and wait for the Sunday law before getting too excited about being prepared now to meet our Lord.

Last fall a little book entitled Getting Ready to Meet Jesus was published. In it are four covenants with an invitation to sign a pledge promising commitment. This is a wonderful book that brings the reader to once again give everything to Jesus. But I could wish that the authors had chosen a different title. For me there is an unwritten (and I know unintended) message saying that, should my life end today, I would not be saved because I am still getting ready. To me, “getting ready” says that I’m not quite there. Should have worked a little harder. Studied more. Made additional changes in my life.

Following Jesus’ pronouncements of last-day events and the “be ye also ready” admonition, He relates a story about 10 young women who were waiting for the wedding party. There were five who had purchased extra oil and trimmed their lamps. They were ready. When the bridal party arrived, the other five attempted to “get ready,” but they were too late. The bridegroom said, “I know you not” (Matt. 25:1-13).

The lamps represent the Word of God; the oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. All 10 had the Word of God. Only five had the Holy Spirit. All 10 had knowledge. Only five had fellowship with Christ; only five were willing to do His bidding; only five were ready.

Their experience is illustrative of ours. When we accept the gift of salvation, we are complete in Him and ready at that very moment, as were the women in the parable. But they didn’t just get ready to meet the Bridegroom; they stayed ready.

Jesus says, “Come with Me. You are ready to follow Me wherever I go.” But being ready is also progressive, for every day we must reconsecrate our lives to Him. Every day we must grow in Him. And every day we will bow before Him in grateful adoration.

Ellen White asked, “Are we getting ready for Him?” in the context of being ready so that “if we shall fall asleep, we can do so with hope in Jesus Christ.” She also uses the “get ready” admonition as an awakening for those who have fallen into "unjust, unrighteous criticism.” And she saw “that there would have to be a getting ready among those who have of late embraced the third angel’s message.”

Let’s remember that a lifetime is made up of moments. If there were no moments, there would be no lifetime. It’s the moments that count. It’s the being ready that counts.

1My Life Today, p. 349.
3Early Writings, p. 64.

Myrna Tetz is managing editor of the Adventist Review.
If God speaks at all, it is into our personal life. Listen to God in everyday sounds and in the quiet moments.1

I find our early church writings filled with metaphors of God and what He has to tell us in everyday life and especially in nature.2 They indicate that Adventists spent more time in prayer and meditation on the Word than they do today. Such news is hardly surprising given the treadmill kind of lives we lead. Modern life leaves us with the challenge of finding God in everyday, routine scenes and busy sounds. And His metaphors surround us—from the struggles and beauty of nature to those in our own lives. We can see the great controversy played out all around us if we keep our spiritual eyes and ears open.

Somewhere in our time line Adventism became more of an intellectual movement than a contemplative one. We need to get our balance back. Sometimes we ask too many questions and expect more answers than are possible this side of the Second Coming. Neither do our worship services always encourage the still, quiet voice of the Spirit (and our services don’t have to be “traditional” to encourage this sacredness).

I invite our readers to reflect on the metaphors of God in the small things; the lessons they can teach us even through the din of contemporary life. As an example, I remember one such time about a year ago at a gathering of writers for a seminar. The speaker had been author Robert Benson, who shared with us the quote that begins this editorial. After the meetings ended for the day, I stepped out the large glass doors of the conference building. I wanted to listen to God in the silence of night. Before me spread the upper Chesapeake Bay, reflecting a moon the color and shape of a half-slice of orange. A dock, with small lanterns on its railing every few feet, stretched like a dark bridge out into the bay. I thought of the biblical sea of glass as I noticed the calm water. “No one is there,” I said out loud. “I will walk to the end of the dock, sit on a bench and pray.”

As I walked down the wooden dock I noticed the shimmer of spiderwebs around each lantern hanging on the whitewashed railing. It occurred to me that the spiders had built their webs around the lights to better catch the summer night insects. At the end of the dock I took a seat, watched the moon in silence, listening to the quiet lapping of the water. Then I prayed. About 10 minutes into my prayer I noticed a spider on the 2’ x 4’ railing in front of me. A large flat sort of spider, it scooted along in short bursts. Then I noticed several other spiders below the railing. Their round bodies guarded numerous webs that hung from the boards. My eyes followed the railing in the dim light and identified many more spiders. There must have been hundreds of them in all sizes! I looked at my bench but didn’t see any there, nor were there any on the boardwalk around me. Relieved, I tried to pray again. But praying did not seem easy now; I became distracted by the myriad of spiders that surrounded me. I felt creepy but continued to pray and listen.

Suddenly I heard the sound of a siren far off. It seemed to come from the other side of the bay. But all I could see was a dark line of land across the water and on the right rows of lights several miles away. I waited until the siren stopped. Then I heard the sound of a motorboat some distance away, accompanied by voices.

I stopped praying and just listened for a long while and then got up to leave. I had learned that silence is hard to find. Life is full of distractions—the ominous spiders representing a hundred fears lurking on the sidelines. The siren reminded me that someone was in trouble—the disturbing sound of the world’s tragedies. The sound of the boat and voices told me that life went on in its usual ways even as I prayed.

So I have learned to listen to the sound of life going on as I listen for God. We don’t always need silence to pray; God speaks in the everyday things of life.


2“The beauties of nature have a tongue that speaks to our senses without ceasing” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 333).

Ella M. Rydzewski is editorial assistant of Adventist Review.
A wild rhubarb plant grows in the mountains of western Panama. As you can see, the leaves are humongous. A young Adventist volunteered to pose as the centerpiece for my picture.

A wild rhubarb might say, if it could speak: "Think big!"
— Richard H. Utt, Loma Linda, California

Also growing large and luxuriantly in this part of the world is the Adventist Church. When I left the area in 1952, there were 10 tiny churches and 450 members. When I returned for a visit 45 years later, the district had grown into an organized mission with a central office, 70 churches, and many schools. Membership had swelled to 15,000— that's a 3,300 percent increase! Since my visit they've added another 5,000.

A wild rhubarb might say, if it could speak: "Think big!"
— Michael H. Utt, Loma Linda, California

I am a Bible teacher at Kingsway College in Oshawa, Ontario. During final exams last year I asked this question: "How do people react when they face sin in God's church?"

One student answered: "When people face sin in the church some leave, some turn their backs, and some point fingers and accuse. For example, someone who commits adultery in the church is usually dismembered."
— Marino Romito, Ontario, Canada
My parish is mainly water. I serve my Lord as president of the Western Pacific Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—a far-flung region embracing islands of the southwest Pacific Ocean. At the northern end and beyond the equator is Kiribati, formerly known as the Gilbert Islands. Just below the equator sits the island of Nauru, famous for phosphate deposits. Farther south and to the west you find the Solomon Islands, with Honiara as capital. That’s where my office is located. Turning east and going farther south, you come to Vanuatu, previously called the New Hebrides. These islands bring you 20 degrees south in latitude and more than 1,000 miles from the equator.

The climate is hot, humid, and tropical. Although there is no large land mass in my entire parish, nevertheless some islands rise to significant heights. Pushed upward and formed from volcanic eruptions deep within the earth, they have peaks as high as 7,000 feet (2,133 meters) on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, and more.

As the Twin Otter pitched and rolled through the storm, I thought to myself: This is the worst flight I have ever been on. We were already overdue, and the pilot seemed confused, chopping and changing direction. I began to think, I wouldn’t be surprised if we crashed.

Then the engines roared as the pilot revved the motors. I relaxed. He’s come down under the clouds and has realized he’s too low and is trying to get a bit more altitude.

For a second or two the engines cut out. Then—bang!

Along with the other passengers I was flung forward. I braced myself for the next impact—I expected the plane to hit the side of a mountain. I’m going to be flying through the front of the plane, and I’m going to hit something really solid. But it didn’t happen—no second impact. Instead, water started pouring through the doors of the cockpit and up the aisle. We had crashed into the sea.
than a mile (1,880 meters) high in Espíritu Santo in Vanuatu.

About 900,000 people live on these islands, and some 43,000 are Adventist Church members. In general the island peoples are friendly and open to religion. Once their ancestors were head-hunters, with many of them cannibals; today most have been touched by Christianity, although pockets of native religions continue.

Among these recently independent emerging island nations, a political struggle is being waged, especially on the island of Guadalcanal, where I live. But there is also another type of warfare going on—a spiritual one—as I soon learned after arriving 20 months ago to take up my responsibilities.

I don’t think I’m any more paranoid than the next person you would meet. But when I experienced three near misses—three close escapes from death—in quick succession (in two of these my wife was with me) I became convinced that I was locked in a terrifying struggle with evil, deadly powers far stronger than I.

The first escape happened in Honiara on the very first day we arrived. As we were driving down the road, suddenly the steering broke and we were headed right into the oncoming traffic. It looked as if we had no way out, but then the car seemed to be guided by an unseen hand across the stream of approaching cars to the other side of the road.

Next came Port Moresby, capital of Papua New Guinea, a city not part of my field that I was visiting. On the way to the airport the driver of the car seemed to lose concentration and drove out into an intersection directly toward an oncoming bus. At the very last moment he realized what was happening and jerked the steering wheel. Somehow we missed the bus, although only by a hair.

During the third incident I was behind the steering wheel. One day while driving back from a preaching service down the coast, I put my foot hard on the gas along the only stretch of road in the Solomon Islands that permits you to entertain the thought of doing more than 30 miles per hour. I cranked up the engine to 55 and was just beginning to savor the moment when the back wheel locked up, dragging us across the road—with a truck bearing down on us. I cried out, “Lord, save us!” and the car spun around into a ditch on the other side, tipped up, and came to rest right side up on the grass. After it was pulled back onto the road, the car drove normally. Later we had mechanics check out the car, but they could find nothing defective—it ran without a hitch.

By the end of a year I figured that someone or something didn’t want me in the Solomon Islands. I was out of my depth in a new and spooky world where the powers of evil manifested themselves in a direct manner, and where my only hope lay in daily dependence on the One whose power was greater and who could deliver me from all the malign intrigues.

But the most terrifying experience lay just ahead, one in which I would stare into the face of death for hours and would learn the all-sufficiency of my Lord to save.

Because the Western Pacific Union Mission is so scattered, I spend a lot of time on airplanes. I am gone from home in Honiara almost half the year.

I didn’t have any particular feeling—any dread or premonition—as I boarded the flight from the island of Espirita Santo in Vanuatu that evening of May 8, 1999. Sixty minutes and the Twin Otter would have us on the ground in the capital of Port-Vila.
Mission secretary Bob Larsen would be there to greet me and take me home for the night.

Twelve of us boarded the flight—the pilot, an airline engineer, and 10 passengers. No one guessed that only five of us would survive the night and see the sun rise on a new day.

For me, it was different from any flight I had taken before. My wife, Joy, should have been there next to me—she in the window seat and I in the aisle seat. That was the way we always traveled and the way we expected this flight to be. But when we had arrived in Espírita Santo to help conduct camp meetings, we were surprised to find that Joy was listed to conduct a later meeting, one we hadn’t planned on. So I reluctantly left her behind that evening, as I was on an itinerary that would take me from Port-Vila to Sydney to attend a church conference.

A nd I was seated where I normally never sat—at the rear of the plane. I always sit up front, but earlier that week I had hurt my back. I couldn’t stand straight and had to preach stooped over, which embarrassed me. So when we boarded the Twin Otter through the rear door I simply slumped into the first available aisle seat. That decision helped save my life.

I put my computer on the seat where Joy should have been sitting. Behind me sat Wesley Rasu, a Vanuatu national. Just ahead were a young couple from Perth, Australia—Tim Hurford and his wife, Dr. Nicole Leeks. I was the only Adventist on board.

The flight started out smoothly, but then the storm hit. As I thought we might crash, I began to pray for Joy. Lord, I’m ready to die if that’s what’s going to happen, but please care for Joy.

Then came the roar of the engines, the second or two of silence, and the crash. What happened after that took only a few moments, but it seemed like a nightmare played out in slow motion.

When there was no second impact and the water began to pour in, we knew we had come down in the sea. We

Right there in the water I challenged the powers of darkness: Satan, in the powerful name of Jesus, who is greater, I command you to take your hand from us and let us get to shore.

We sat frozen for an instant; then Rasu headed toward the door. Hurford jumped across, opened the door, and pushed Rasu and another passenger out. Then he grabbed his wife, and soon there were four of them in the water, and one of them couldn’t swim.

I was still in the plane, struggling with my seat belt. It seemed like an eternity until I finally got it undone and leaped through the door.

Hoping the plane would float for a while, I scrambled up onto the wing. But the Otter was already sinking, so I didn’t stay there long. I pulled off my shoes and long trousers so I could swim more freely.

A couple people were still trying to get out of the plane and we yelled out: “Please, try to get some life jackets!” Eventually three others were in the water, making eight of us altogether. Three people had life jackets—Rasu, Danish tourist Jens Dahl, and a Frenchman, who by this time was on the other side of the plane. Dahl found a life jacket floating near the plane. Wesley Rasu was able to pull one out from near the rear door before the plane sank. He was having difficulty putting it on and asked me to help him. He couldn’t get it to inflate, but I blew into the two nozzles and it inflated. The couple from Perth and I went without life jackets.

In only a couple minutes the Otter slipped nose-down into the water. We watched it leave us, navigation lights still on, getting fainter and fainter as it sank to the ocean depths, taking with it the pilot and three others seated at the front. Then we were all alone in the dark and the cold.

The lights of Port-Vila shone in the far distance. I could see a vague outline
on either side and realized we were at the mouth of the big bay with Vila at the end of the bay.

Our situation looked grim. I thought, Some people will die tonight. I can’t see how they can make it all the way to the shore. People are going to die without knowing Christ or having the hope of salvation.

I called out, “We’re obviously in trouble here, but if any of you have faith in God, I’m a minister, and I’m going to pray if you want to join me in prayer.”

A couple people called out, “Yes!”

Over the roar of the wind and the rain I shouted as loud as I could, asking God to care for us and give us courage and strength.

Rasu had a light on his life jacket. Six of us decided to keep together. We focused on that light and kept saying to each other, “Don’t drift apart; keep together, keep close to the light.”

In the confusion a couple others didn’t come to us, so the six of us started slowly off together toward the lights of Port-Vila.

As we swam we kept wondering about how long it would be before the boats would come and rescue us. We figured that the people at the airport would know that the plane had gone down in the bay and would have boats on the way.

One of our group, an Englishman, had been injured. After about an hour and a half he began to drift away. Then he was gone. We never saw him again.

As the hours passed, there was less talking. I kept looking at the lights of Port-Vila and thinking, Where on earth are they? Is the search-and-rescue team out of contact because they’re at a party somewhere?

When the Twin Otter didn’t arrive, Bob Larsen grew more and more anxious. After being informed that the plane had crashed, he went back to the mission compound, where church members were having a social evening, and called everyone to prayer. He also notified church leaders as well as the district director in Espírita Santo, where Joy was preparing to sleep for the night.

We could see two lights, one at each end of the bay. One was bright; the other small and flickering. Which one should we head for?

Bob kept waiting for information about the missing plane. Finally about 10:30 p.m. he heard the announcement he dreaded. It came from the Vanuatu police and the Australian High Commission.

The plane had been found. There were no survivors.

But Bob and his wife, Anne, decided to wait before passing on the information to Joy.

No one saw the plane go down. While police were searching for it in the bush on Vanuatu, five of us were in the sea, desperately trying to keep afloat in the bay of Port-Vila.

On shore a family who lived at the south end of the bay heard on the radio about the loss of the Otter. They decided to leave a light on all night—just in case.

We swam for hours, but the lights on shore didn’t seem to be getting any closer. In fact, the tide was going out and we could make little headway.

Then we saw it—a ship! A freighter was coming, getting closer and closer. It came no more than two thirds of a mile (one kilometer) away, and we shouted out as loudly as we could.

But no one on it saw, no one heard. It went on, and we were alone again.

Later a fishing boat with a spotlight came up behind us. Again we tried to attract someone’s attention, but it also moved away.

After about four hours I was close to exhaustion. I figured I would probably die, and wondered what it would be like. I thought that others in the group might also not make it and that they could die without knowing Christ. I’m sure the Lord prompted me, and I called out to the others, reminding them of some of the wonderful promises of Jesus that tell us that no matter what happens to us, if we believe and trust in Him we can have assurance of eternal life.

My body was hurting terribly, and I felt like taking a deep breath, diving as deep as I could, opening my mouth, and letting it happen. I just hoped it wouldn’t take long.

I thought of myself dead, and everything else going on without me. I worried about Joy and how she would manage. I hoped she would find someone...
who would look after her.

But I felt assurance of salvation, and that was a wonderful relief. I would die and then wake up in the resurrection and see my Lord. W hat a wonderful comfort that was!

I knew G od could save me from the waters. But I knew that not everyone who prays gets saved. People die. Pastors die. W hy should G od save me and not others? I knew it would take a miracle to save us— I couldn’t do it in my own strength.

A nd I asked for a miracle. I cried out to G od, “M ay Your name be honored in this experience. If I am saved, open my lips that I might praise You more. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and You listened to my cry” (Jonah 2:1, NIV).

I knew B ob Larsen would have told people all around and they would be praying. A nd I prayed, “L ord, and he answered me. From the Lord, and he answered me. From the belly of the great fish: “In my distress I called to the L ord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry” (Jonah 2:1, 2, N IV).

I knew B ob Larsen would have told people all around and they would be praying. A nd I prayed, “L ord, don’t dis-appoint Your people. G ive them something to rejoice about and to praise You for.

I thought of the three close escapes from death, and a text I had used in a sermon that morning came to me. “G reater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). A nd right there in the water I challenged the powers of darkness: Satan, in the powerful name of Jesus, who is greater than you, I command you to take your hand from us and let us get to shore.

A nd W esley Rasu encouraged me. A t one point I said to him, “If I don’t make it, just tell them the pastor said that he loves his wife and that he’s at peace with G od.”

B ut W esley, a Protestant Christian, said, “O h, we’ll make it, brother.”

A fter so long in the water, and swallowing so much of it, our tongues began to swell—we were getting dehy-drated. T hen some rain showers came down. W e floated on our backs and let a few drops of fresh water run into our mouths.

N ot long after, I was swimming on my back—tired, shivering, and fighting muscle cramps. T hen I saw it. O ut of the dark, cloudy sky a bright little star came out right above me. I took it as a sign! L ord, thank You. T hat’s given me confidence that You are there and that You are looking down on me. You know my plight.

W e were out in the mouth of the bay, and we could see two lights that seemed to be closest. T he one at the left shone brightly; the other, on the right, was small and flickering. B ut they were far apart, at each end of the bay.

W hic h one should we head for? L ord, show us which light to go to, I implored.

W e decided to make for the small light on the right. G radually it seemed to be getting closer. T hen I thought I could see the beach, and I called out, “Isn’t that lighter—doesn’t that look like a band of white sand?” W e were maybe a third of a mile (a half kilometer) away. A nd after a while we could hear the roar of the surf. W e were getting closer! T hought, I’ll probably get tossed about on the coral reef and be badly cut up, but who cares as long as I make it to shore alive?

T hen we came across a trimaran anchored outside the reef. W e grasped the anchor chain and banged on the hull, hoping someone would be on board. N o one came, but now the beach was only a couple hundred yards away.

I got to the reef and crawled up on a ledge. S uddenly my right leg cramped, and I cried out in absolute pain that lasted maybe a minute. I rubbed the hard lump, and eventually the cramp went away. T hought, If that had happened out in the deep water, I would have been a goner. I would have panicked and gone under.

T he water above the reef was calm. A short swim. T he last swim. Beach. Praise G od. It’s a miracle! I’m alive!

I got to the shore and discovered I couldn’t stand. Twice I tried to get up, and twice my legs collapsed.

E ventually I was able to raise myself. A s the other survivors began to walk away, I said, “Let’s just come together for a minute.” W e put our arms around each other, and I prayed a prayer of thanks to G od. E veryone joined in the amen. T hen, tired and shivering, we stumbled toward the lights of the house a short distance away.

It was about 1:30 a.m. W e had been in the sea more than six hours. B ut we were alive!

L ater I learned that the decision to head for the small light on the right had been key to our survival. T he change of direction took us out of the current and enabled us to make progress.

A nd we learned something else: the point on the other side of the bay—Devil’s Point— is notorious for sharks!

M y mind turns back often to the events of M ay 8 and the early hours of the next morning. I don’t have nightmares, but I find myself going through the horrific experience moment by moment.

I am not a strong swimmer. I have a fairly small lung capacity, and not nearly sufficient strength to swim for six hours.

A couple months ago I thought I’d try a little experiment. I went out into the sea and tested how long I could stay afloat, swimming slowly. A fter 30 minutes it was over—I had to give up and go to shore.

I feel that G od has given me a sec-ond chance at life. M y priorities have changed and become more focused. W hen you come down to it, it’s only your relationship to G od and your family that really matters. You lose every-thing else.

A gain and again, I can’t help reflecting on what if. W hat if J oy had been with me when the O tter crashed? J oy is not physically strong: W ould we have gone down together, or would G od have worked a double miracle? F or only a miracle kept me alive.

A Ustralian N eil W atts oversees the work of the Seventh-day A dv entist C hurch in the islands of the southwestern Pacific O cean. W illiam J ohnson is editor of the A dv entist Review.
What biblical principles would come into play on the use of beverages that have the alcohol removed to the functional equivalent of nonalcoholic? I see nothing wrong with a cold “near-beer” after a hot day on the job—it tastes better than Gatorade. But some Seventh-day Adventists think that drinking it is just as bad a sin as drinking the alcoholic versions. Eventually you could get drunk on the one half of 1 percent alcohol. But you would need 30 to 50 drinks to do so. How would you respond?

Principles that should be considered include: 1. Example—How possible or probable is it that you can or will explain, to those who observe, that this beverage is “near-beer” and not the real thing? 2. Habit—How likely will this proximation to the genuine article embolden you to other “nearness” choices that, though innocent in themselves, place you on the edge of obedience? 3. Stewardship—While “near-beer” may be physically harmless and you indeed possess the proof to justify your use of it, why, given the fact that there are so many less controversial beverages (including some well-accepted grape drinks clearly marked nonalcoholic), add “near-beer” to the list of items that you have to explain? The less time we Christians spend in explaining unnecessary acts, such as drinking “near-beer,” the more time we will have for personal growth and gospel witness.

I was brought up to believe that the General Conference is the voice of God on earth. Yet it is sometimes in error and in need of changing decisions. If it were the voice of God, would it not be infallible?

Ellen White wrote, “God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for in doing so he despises the voice of God.”¹ This statement is best understood when we realize that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. . . . The representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”²

I conclude that the people who work at headquarters have special duties, but do not constitute the voice of God; that the world church in assembly has special powers, but is not infallible; that our miraculous corporate development evidences God’s leading in the vast majority of individual committee and assembly decisions; that we need not lose confidence when committees do err, knowing that, human frailty notwithstanding, “the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end.”³

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 417.
²———, in General Conference Bulletin, Apr. 3, 1901.
³———, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 261.
⁵Ibid.
⁶———, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 261.
⁷———, Life Sketches, pp. 437, 438.

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The Christmas Story

BY KENT SELTMAN

T WAS IN THE MOON OF WINTER-
time when all the birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchi Manitou sent angel
choirs instead.
Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wand’ring hunters heard the hymn:

“Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born. In excelsis
gloria!”

Within a lodge of broken bark the tender Babe was
found,
A ragged robe of rabbit skin enwrapped His beauty
round.
And as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang loud and high:

“Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born. In excelsis
gloria!”

The earliest moon of wintertime is not so round
and fair,
As was the ring of glory on the helpless Infant there.
While Chiefs from far before Him knelt,
With gifts of fox and beaver pelt.

“Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born. In excelsis
gloria!”

Oh children of the forest free, O sons of Manitou,
The Holy Child of earth and heav’n is born today
for you.
Come, kneel before the radiant Boy
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy.

“Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born. In excelsis
gloria!”**

This poem is an English translation of a Christmas carol
written in the language of the Huron Indians by a mission-
ary, Father Jean de Brebeuf, in the seventeenth century—
more than 300 years ago. Father Brebeuf wrote his answer to
a question that each of us faces: How do we do justice to a
story remote in time, place, and culture from our lives today?
Unlike the Huron Indians, we come to the Christmas
story with some understanding of biblical archaeology, bibli-
cal history, and the texts of ancient writers, so it would seem
that on this historical frame we could place the events of
2,000 years ago. Still, for those of us living in the dimension
of human life—threescore and ten—even a span of 2,000
years is a difficult leap. A birth 2,000 years ago can be
understood intellectually, but it is difficult to imagine the
reality of life at that distance in time.

We may think that Father Brebeuf inappropriately
stretched the details—from shepherds to braves, from kings
to chiefs, from gold, frankincense, and myrrh to pelts of fox
and beaver skin. But that stretch is really nothing compared
to the stretch that God our Father made in the gift of
Christmas when the Word—the abstract—was made flesh—
the concrete—and dwelt among us. While the dimension of
2,000 years of time is a challenge for us, it is a greater chal-
lenge to think of God, who does not even live in the dimen-
sion of time—from everlasting to everlasting. This is even
more abstract than the theory of relativity, which few of us
can really comprehend. The story of Christmas is a great
oversimplification of God; it was told 2,000 years ago so that
we might catch a glimpse of the greater glory and story of
God.

A birth in a stable, a Baby cradled in hay, is very quaint.
In our imaginations we romanticize the scene at Christmas.
Hundreds of reenactments are staged each December—live
crèche scenes with real sheep, donkeys, cows, actors dressed
in period garb, and a plastic Jesus doll. Each Christmas these
scenes across the nation create traffic jams of curious and,
perhaps, devoted Christmas onlookers. But the reality of a
lived-in stable is quite remote from the romantic reenact-
ment on a clean church lawn. A lived-in stable is not even the cattle barn at the state fair where young 4-H'ers sleep in fresh straw beside their “baby beef.” When we retell the story of Christmas we sanitize it, we romanticize it to meet our own image of what we would like it to be.

Without a vigorous exercise of our imagination, we retell the story of Christmas to ourselves as if it is set in the world of peace and prosperity in which we live. But the reality is that it was a hostile world into which this Baby came—probably more like being born in a stable in Sarajevo in 1994 than in a stable on the lawn of a church in an American city today. Almost immediately there was a price on the Christ child’s head. Even the act of taxation—the purpose of the journey to Bethlehem—is not quite a friendly, voluntary act.

We retell the Christmas story each year, but even out of the King James translation it is, for all its glory and wonder, only a poor humble symbolic hint of the real story of God. The words of the King James translation are, after all, only linguistic symbols—we provide the images based on our previous experience with those words. The Christmas season crèche scenes are only visual symbols of the real Bethlehem stable, the real living animals, and the real Mary cradling Jesus—God in the flesh—in her arms of flesh. That scene, however, symbolizes a larger and greater Christmas story that centers on the love of a God who, because of our limitations, gave us the story in the flesh of a child that we might see beyond to understand Him better.

Like the Huron Indians, we too are limited in our ability to understand. But we should pray that we can retell the Christmas story to ourselves in a way that will penetrate the reality of the God behind the Baby in a manger. Then we can have a grand celebration of Christmas and more fully comprehend the Christmas message:

“Jesus, your King, is born. Jesus is born. In excelsis gloria!”


Kent Seltman is director of marketing for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.
As I sat in the pew of the little Mexican church with Alma, Bryan, and the other students, I wondered how God would handle the latest problem we had laid before Him.

Our mission team was having a wonderful time working with the people in rural northern Mexico. During spring break from Southwestern Adventist University our group of students and chaperones had come to serve. We had

What can the Lord, who used saliva to heal, do with a locked Chevy van?

By Jeremy Jacko
as told to Cheryl McCluskey Jacko
conducted health education programs in local schools, worked with a small congregation in building their new church, and conducted several meetings for both adults and young people. Throughout our time in Mexico we had made many friends, including a young woman named Nelida.

Oops!

This evening's trip to the church for a youth meeting had ended with Bryan, our driver, absentmindedly tossing the keys to the van onto the dashboard before slamming the door and hurrying to join the group already inside the church. “Oh no! The keys!” we heard Bryan exclaim as he neared the church door. Immediately he turned and ran back toward the van.

Quickly sensing what was wrong, the other students and I raced after him. Just as we feared, the automatic door-locking feature of the university's van had worked perfectly—every door and window was securely locked. The keys were clearly visible through the windshield of the van—sitting peacefully on the dashboard.

“It’s almost time for the meeting to start,” Alma reminded us.

Someone suggested that we have a quick prayer about our key problem before going into church. We would have plenty of time to work on getting into the van when the meeting was over. A greeting with the suggestion, our students, the chaperones, and a few local church members joined together for prayer around our locked vehicle. We asked for God’s guidance and help; then we headed inside for the youth meeting.

Returning to our parking place later that evening, we all searched for some sign that God had already solved the van problem. However, every door and window remained securely locked. There was no sign of any change in our predicament.

Why Not Give It a Try?

“We may need to find a locksmith,” a student commented, “although I don’t know where we'd find one at this hour of the evening.”

“Maybe we can find someone who has one of those tools the police use in the U.S. for opening locked car doors,” suggested another student.

The church members, now all aware of the situation, had gathered on the street to try to help us solve our problem.

“Why don’t you try the key to my little red Nissan?” Nelida jokingly suggested, trying to break the mounting tension.

“Sure, why not?” laughed Bryan as he took the Nissan key and poked it at the keyhole on the Chevy van. The key slid in effortlessly. With an excited glance at the group, Bryan slowly turned the key. Immediately the lock button on the inside of the door popped up. Still not believing our good fortune, Bryan tried the door handle. The door opened! It was unlocked!

A shocked silence descended briefly on our group. “I can’t believe it,” said Alma in amazement as she watched the door swing open and Bryan retrieve the van keys. “Was there an odd coincidence that a Nissan key also fits a Chevy van.”

There was more silence as we puzzled over the unexpected event that had solved our problem.

“Let's do it all again,” suggested Alfredo, one of our adult chaperones. Looking at the circle of questioning faces, he explained to us, “Let's lock the van again and try to unlock it with the Nissan key. We'll keep our van keys on the outside this time, of course.”

Our group of university missionaries observed as the Chevy van was locked up tight again. The key to the little red Nissan was again inserted in the lock. We watched repeated attempts to make that key open the van door. No one was able to make it work. It was obviously the wrong key. But miraculously, in the hand of faith it had worked.

With joy and thanksgiving we finished our week of mission service, fully convinced of the Lord's never-failing love and care for us.

Jeremy Jacko is a theology student at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. Cheryl McCuskey Jacko is a wife and mother of Jeremy who lives in Elkins, West Virginia.

Service Calls

Many volunteers are placed in service positions each year through the Adventist Volunteer Center. Volunteer listings can be found on the website: www.adventist.org/gc/secretariat/volunteers.

Volunteers must meet the following requirements: be 18 years of age or older, have a minimum of one to two years of college, be a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in good standing.

The volunteer listings include teachers for language schools in China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and Russia. Elementary school teachers, as well as maintenance assistants and librarians, are needed for Guam-Micronesia schools. There are also requests for assistant youth pastors, assistant deans for men and women, and more. The website is a good place to check out the listings and qualifications.

Volunteer candidates from outside North America should contact their home division volunteer director and receive instructions for applying.

Students attending Seventh-day Adventist campuses in North America can apply through their campus chaplain's office. Adventist students attending non-Adventist campuses may apply through the office of Gerard Latchman at (301) 680-6478 or (301) 680-6464 (fax).

Other young adults in North America can contact the Adventist Volunteer Center at 1-800-252-7363.
A warm breeze stirred at the windows, nicely matching the convivial spirit already present in the classroom. Ties loosened, collars unbuttoned, anything resembling a fan in hand, the participants leaned into the issues.

"Are you saying that the French Calvinists during the Reformation may have actually provoked their own persecution?"

"Why did the English and American Shakers inspire such intense animosity from other Christians?"

"When will Adventism learn to speak the languages of Europe?"

For three unusually summerlike days in mid-September more than 75 scholars and religious leaders, Adventist and otherwise, gathered at Newbold College near Bracknell, England, to focus on the history of religious minorities in Western Europe since the Reformation. The academic conference was the second such gathering to be hosted at Newbold in the past 12 years, and attracted participants from more than 30 colleges and universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, the University of Strasbourg (France), Princeton, and the University of Leicester, as well as nearly a dozen Seventh-day Adventist institutions from around the globe.

"A mouthful of a title, but a very satisfying conference," observed one smiling American participant. "From Persecution to Pluralism: Religious Minorities and the Enforcement of Conformity in Western Europe Since the Reformation" was designed to attract scholars and thought leaders interested in the often-painful history of Europe’s small spiritual communities and their changing fortunes in increasingly pluralist societies.

"We wanted a legitimate academic theme, yet one that could be combined with Seventh-day Adventist interests," says David Trim, lecturer in history at Newbold College and the primary organizer of the conference. "This theme allowed us to link the past with the present, and offered the prospect of both substantive academic discussion and benefiting the church’s mission."

"By putting Adventist history in the wider context of the experience of other religious minorities in Europe, we can better understand why some faith communities grow or diminish," he adds. "The insights gained can be very practically applied to our church and its mission in the new century."

Trim, 29, drew on a broad network of historians and human rights specialists in designing the seven plenary sessions and 25 seminar presentations. More than 40 presenters addressed topics as diverse as Seventh-day Adventism’s reaction to Vatican II and lessons to be learned from the eighteenth-century Methodist revival led by John and Charles Wesley. A cluster of presentations focused on the history of the Huguenots, the French Protestants who were violently persecuted by both the government and the state church for nearly 200 years. Their story illustrates how theological innovation can become the cause of great political and social conflict through many generations.
Several presenters, including Professor Rik Torfs of the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and Willy Fautré, of “Human Rights Without Frontiers,” warned of the dangers to religious minorities from the current anticult enquiry commissions in Western Europe. In Belgium many well-established religious organizations, including Seventh-day Adventists, have been identified as cults, raising the specter of government restrictions on religious liberties guaranteed in both national constitutions and international conventions on human rights.

The conference was also scheduled to coincide with the 125th anniversary of the 1874 departure of John Nevins Andrews from the United States as Adventism’s first official missionary to Western Europe. Andrews’ attempts to “contextualize” his presentation of the Adventist message in Europe were highlighted in the conference keynote address by Harry Leonard, retired former chair of the Newbold College History Department. A Sabbath morning sermon by Bryan Ball, former head of Newbold’s Theology Department and retired president of the church’s South Pacific Division, also examined the impact of Andrews’ pioneering spirit on successive generations of Adventists in Europe.

Other presenters explored the implications of Andrews’ mission to Europe and the conflict that frequently emerges between new, truth-based movements and established national churches. Bert Beach, director for interchurch relations at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Monsignor Roland Minnerath, of the University of Strasbourg, discussed the thorny issues of proselytism and evangelistic activity from distinctly Adventist and Roman Catholic perspectives. Reinder Bruinsma, secretary of the church’s Trans-European Division, argued for revisiting Adventist attitudes toward Europe’s major faiths, particularly Roman Catholicism.

“One non-Adventist scholar told me

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**NEWSBREAK**

Greater Boston Academy Faces Eviction, Church Gets to Stay

BY SANDRA DORAN, an Adventist Review columnist, and news editor CARLOS MEDLEY

In the first trial by jury ever granted in the 101 years of Boston federal bankruptcy court, Seventh-day Adventists met with victory and defeat on October 29.

With the closing of Boston Regional Medical Center on February 4, the New England Memorial Church and the Greater Boston Academy in Massachusetts found themselves faced with possible eviction. At the close of the four-day trial, eight jurors found that the church has a permanent, irrevocable right to use the land and the church building in the same manner that they have been used for the past 50 years.

However, the jury found that an easement does not exist for the academy, which means that the school has no legal interest in the land or the building on the 42-acre campus.

On the same date, bankruptcy court judge Carol J. Kenner ruled that the Gutierrez Company, a Burlington-based developer, won the bidding for the land and the hospital buildings. The company plans to go ahead with its development with the church on the site, according to a report in the Boston Globe.

Negotiations are in process with the company with hopes of an extension for the academy to finish up the current school year on its present site. While plans remain unresolved, the academy and church are committed to finding a place to provide a Christian education for Adventist youth in the Boston area.

At the conclusion of the case the jurors passed word through the judge that they were extremely impressed with the unusual honesty of the Adventist witnesses, says Halvard Thomsen, Southern New England Conference president.

Providing testimony were current and former pastors, school principals, church members, and conference officials.

After the verdict was handed down, Eric Doran, pastor of the New England Memorial Church, presented
each of the three attorneys representing the church’s case with a copy of The Desire of Ages, stamped with their name at the bottom and a handwritten thank-you on the flyleaf signed by all the church members present. The lead litigating attorney was deeply touched by the gift and pledged to read the book, says Thomsen.

The case has consumed countless hours of preparation and physical, mental, and spiritual energy during the past year. The church and school need our prayers as they face the court decision and continue not only to deal with the uncertain future of the academy, but also to seek to help the many people who must leave their homes because they are located on hospital property, noted Thomsen.

“Obviously the constituency is still reeling from the loss of the hospital,” Thomsen says. “Many members had invested their life in the mission of the hospital, and to have lost this Adventist presence is a deep disappointment. To have lost the presence of Greater Boston Academy is also felt very keenly.

The uncertainty regarding the future of the church and academy during the process of the trial has made it difficult for the members to lay plans for the future. They had hoped the jury decision would be favorable to the school. Now they face the task of sorting out the implications and the options.

“Newbold president Andrea Luxton envisions a continuing role for the college in hosting major academic conferences. “I believe the conference gave an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars and church leaders on issues relevant to the future direction and mission of the church,” she says.

“The fact that scholars from other religious backgrounds were present added an extra richness. Without exception they seemed to leave feeling positive about the conference from an academic perspective, and with greater and sympathetic understanding of the Adventist Church, its mission and its challenges.”

“We hope that we can take up the challenge given us by a number who attended of making such a conference a more regular occurrence at Newbold College.”

Dr. Andrea Luxton, Newbold College president

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A System to Make All People Equal

BY BARBARA HUFF, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, EURO-ASIA DIVISION

It’s hard to miss hearing news about Russia’s current economic instability. First the ruble crash in August 1998 drove away Western businesses almost overnight. The buying power of the average Russian was cut in half. Then came the IMF scandal, exposing an ever-widening circle of crime and corruption.

It seems that after the fall of Communism the whole world came to help Russia. Selfish motives no doubt prompted some to come. Many others were motivated by the desire to illuminate lives darkened by years of isolation. Getting more than they bargained for, these businesses and people now share Russia’s new troubles.

One recent chapter in the economic saga deals with the Automated Teller Fund fraud. “Hundreds Robbed by ATM Bandits,” the Moscow Times headlines screamed. My husband and I worried about whether the bandits had our ATM PIN code. This is a hardship to those of us who have our money in banks in other countries. How do we safely get funds here to buy groceries? Our problem, however, is minor compared to the daily problems our brothers and sisters face when making their few funds stretch around necessities.

What’s this all about? A country that killed good behavior when it killed religion? A system that tried to make all people equal but ended up with an environment where no one feels ownership? A people who learned to survive by looking out only for themselves?

Perhaps it’s about all of the above. Perhaps it’s also about the fulfilling of end-time Bible prophecies (2 Tim. 3:1-5) and the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

NEWS COMMENTARY

A System to Make All People Equal

BY BARBARA HUFF, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, EURO-ASIA DIVISION

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Who Said It?
The Mystery Deepens

Readers share their impressions and reactions to a statement that’s become famous among Adventists.

BY ROY ADAMS

LET’S GET RIGHT TO IT. IN A MAY 13 editorial I asked the simple question “Who said it?” The reference was to a well-known statement on prayer that has been making the rounds in Adventist circles for some three decades now, being attributed—incorrectly—to Ellen G. White. The editorial invited readers to share what they knew about its source. Following are some of the responses.

In Quest of the Source

Sarah Clark, whose letter we ran in our July 8 issue, spoke for many. Commenting on my conclusion in the editorial that Ellen White was not the author of the statement in question, she wrote: “I’m grateful [for the information] and disappointed at the same time.” The quotation was her all-time favorite, she said. “I read it often, hung it on my wall, claimed the promises it entailed, and sent it out to others. And then, lo and behold, Roy Adams pulled the rug out from under me!” However disappointed that her “favorite author” did not write it, she was nevertheless glad to know the facts, and proceeded to join the quest. “Who said it?” she echoed my query. “Does anyone know?” This, I was to discover, has been the cry of many Adventists for the past 20 years.

When I wrote the editorial back in May, I had known for quite some time that the secondary source of the statement was an October 7, 1965, Review and Herald article written by a certain R. A. Rentfro. But for some reason I’d assumed (without further ado) that the author of the piece was no longer with us.

Imagine my surprise, then, when this came from Mrs. Helena Reid of Hawaii: “Pastor Dick [Rentfro] and his late wife were classmates of mine at Glendale Union Academy in California.” He now lives in the state of Washington, she said ([giving me his address and telephone]). Before I could use the information she sent, however, I received a letter from the man himself. “It was I who wrote that article in which I used the ‘famous’ quote,” Elder Rentfro’s letter began. It wasn’t the first time he’d run into curious source-seekers like me. Documents he subsequently sent me show inquiries to him reaching back as far as 1978—from Roger Coon (then pastor of the Takoma Park Adventist Church in Washington, D.C.); Tim Poirier of the Ellen G. White Estate (then located in Washington, D.C.); D. K. Griffith (then director of education for the Southern Union Conference). From pastors and laypeople the inquiries flooded in. A 1987 letter from Marilyn Remer of The Final Hours ministry was typical: The statement “has the sound of a Spirit of Prophecy quote, but we have been unable to locate it as such. It is such a beautiful statement we would like to . . . use it, but need the authorship to attach to it. If you could give us the information on this, you would solve a great mystery! Who wrote it?”
Mixed Reviews

However much many Adventists cherish the statement, not everyone who wrote saw it as a gem from heaven. "Thank you, Roy; you made my day," wrote Henry Welch of Alberta, Canada. "I always had trouble believing that passage, but because it was from 'EGW' . . . I did." He went on to explain that he'd found the statement in "conflict with several ideas." For example, he said, the idea of reaping what we sow. "God will not perform a miracle if you deliberately disobey." Furthermore, "how can prayer reverse the many sicknesses, relationships, etc., [that] we have in the church—let alone the world?" If it could, he argued, "everyone would flow to prayer."

Steve Riehle of Santa Maria, California, went even further, finding several claims in the statement "not categorically true." For example, he said, the statement holds that "no mistake is so serious that it cannot be remedied." Not so, Riehle argued. If in the dead of night, for example, you mistake the noise in your house as coming from a burglar, and in panic you end up shooting your teenage son to death, that's "a serious mistake that can't be remedied." Nor is it true to say that "whatever we need or desire, if we trust God, He will supply it." How about the millions of starving people around the world? Isn't it reasonable to assume that many are praying for food? he asked. But are they always fed?

No, says Riehle. "Any of the statements in the quotation seem to be platitudes generated by lightweight thinking. I don't think you should use this flawed quotation in your ministry. There is already enough simple thinking in the church." W hew!

Finding Parallels

One of the most interesting letters that came in was from Marg Jensen, Austin, Colorado. Several years ago when she learned that the source of the statement was in dispute, she began "to make notations of quotes in Ellen G. White's writings that sound similar [and] which we can document." Here are a few:

"With [God] there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat": "There is no chapter in our experience too dark for [God] to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel." "None are so vile, none have fallen so low, as to be beyond the working of this power:" "None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them."

"For every trial, God has provided help. . . . For every bitter draft that is placed to our lips, we shall find a branch of healing. . . . Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend."1

1The Desire of Ages, p. 490.
2Steps to Christ, p. 100.
3Christ's Object Lessons, p. 96
4Steps to Christ, p. 53.
5The Ministry of Healing, pp. 248, 249.

Dashed Euphoria

The two writers just cited do offer valuable cautions, in my view. In fact, I included one or two myself in the editorial. But as far as the value of the statement as a whole is concerned, any negative opinion is clearly in the minority. For many the thing is a jewel. "My dad has the same quotation," wrote John Konrad, general manager of W GTS, a Maryland-based Adventist radio station. "He has had it for years (at least 20 that I know of). . . . If you can find out who said it, please let me know."

And about five weeks after the editorial came out, I thought we were on the verge of solving the mystery. "Roy, while you were in Australia," my secretary's note said, "Robert Carr from Arizona called to let you know who is the author of the statement." I almost leaped out of my chair as it continued: "It is found in the book . . ." (and she proceeded to give the book title and the facts of publication as she'd received it).

Pressed with other work, I sat on the juicy tidbit for weeks, like a child savoring in anticipation the moment when it would be time to open that box of chocolate. When the time finally came to get the scoop, I tracked down Robert Carr on his mobile phone somewhere in Arizona. Getting quickly to the point after the briefest pleasantries, I put the question: "I understand you know the source of the quotation?"

No, he didn't. "My heart sank. "But my aunt's husband—he has a book with it. I can give you his number."

You can imagine my excitement when I eventually was able to reach Carr's uncle-in-law, Calvin Osborn. It was a sense of journey's end—as if I'd finally succeeded in finding the last piece that would complete a complicated puzzle. But, alas, it wasn't to be. Osborn did have the book my secretary had described—a gem of a work, he said. But he was sure the statement in question was not in there. Nor would it have been original, if it were.

Dead End—Again!

So it was back to Rentfro. Afters thinking about the countless hours he must have spent hunting down the particular quote over the years—with each search ending in frustration—I wouldn't have had the heart even to suggest he do it again. But I didn't have to. "I shall set about to reread my library," he volunteered. "I have about every book that Louis A. Ibert, banks and Clarence Edward Macartney wrote. I will start rereading all of Banks's books; I suspect it was his writing I quoted from in my article."

But what if he discovers that Banks or Macartney was himself only quoting? A nd if the first person to seize the quote from Rentfro's article and supply an erroneous reference for it? Was it a mistake? Was it deliberate? The mystery deepens.

*The editorial has been reproduced here for convenience, but you'd need a magnifying glass to read it this time around.

Roy Adams is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.
And the Greatest . . . Is Love
This fundamental teaching of the gospel was nonsense to pagans. What do we think today?

BY RUSSELL H. ARGENT

God is love" is the heart of Christianity. Here is the gospel in miniature. God so loved . . . that he gave (John 3:16).* Yet this viewpoint, so familiar to us, was revolutionary in the ancient world. No pagan god was considered loving. Imagine Zeus or Jupiter, Vishnu or Allah, as love. It's inconceivable.

Even "Plato would have met the statement 'God is love' with a bewildered shake of the head. From the standpoint of his thought such a statement would have been utter nonsense."¹

Either this belief in a loving God "is nonsense, to say nothing of maudlin humbug, or else it is by far the most exciting statement about God to be found in either the Bible or any other literature in the world."² Yet is it true? Can we know if God is love?

The Cross Tells It All
Conviction comes when we stand before the cross. For "the cross shows us what love meant. The sinless Son of God laid down his perfect life for sinners . . . It is not a love drawn from God by attractiveness in men; it is the expression of his innermost nature. It comes natural to him to love, because he is love."³

The first Christians, in their attempt to share this new understanding of a God who loved and gave, coined the Greek word agape. "A gape" is more clearly understood if it is contrasted with another, more widely used, Greek word—eros.

Eros, although an admirable word, is not found in the New Testament. The word refers to romantic or passionate love and love to the good. One scholar defines it as "love of the worthy . . . a love that desires to possess."⁴ A gape, on the other hand, has the opposite meaning. It is "a love given irrespective of merit, and it is a love that seeks to give."⁵

This word helps us to understand God's love—so broad and deep that "He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "You see, at just the right time," says Paul, "when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8).

This passage mentions such terms as powerless, ungodly, sinners—even enemies (verse 10). The marvel of Christ's love is that He did not just tolerate these kinds of people. He died for them.

"How wonderful, how glorious, how secure is the gospel!" writes Charles Hodge. "Those who are in Christ Jesus are as secure as the love of God, the merit, power, and intercession of Christ can make them. They are hedged around with mercy. They are enclosed in the arms of everlasting love."⁶

Against the Grain
"Good" religious people in Palestine were shocked by this message. Some rabbis taught that God loved the righteous...
and loathed the sinner. They told their students, “Let a man never associate with a wicked person, not even for the purpose of bringing him near the Torah.”

Sophisticated Gentiles preferred a policy of enlightened self-interest. “Call your friend to a feast, but leave your enemy alone,” Hesiod wrote. “Be friends with the friendly, and visit him who visits you. Give to one who gives, but do not give to one who does not give.”

Many modern people find this a sensible policy. In their quest for “upward mobility,” people court the powerful who can help them and shun the weak who cannot. If a person likes them or harms them, they return the emotion with interest. A bumper sticker advises: “Don’t get mad, get even.”

Christ’s Way Was Different

Christ taught a different way of life, revolutionary then as now. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:43, 44). God sends rain and sunshine to both the good and evil; Christians, like Him, must love impartially.

This is not easy to do. Hate, in its way, can be quite pleasant. As Byron said:

“Now hatred is by far the longest pleasure;
Men love in haste, but they detest at leisure.”

Paul, however, said that the whole law is fulfilled in the one command, Love (Gal. 5:14).

“Christians are not called to a way of life in which they are perpetually bound by a set of commandments” that they struggle to keep. “They depend on God’s grace, which allows them to live in freedom.”

“Christ’s love compels” (2 Cor. 5:14) the Christian to show loving concern for others. Captivated by their Lord’s unmotivated love, they have no choice but to love Him and others in return.

“To no man owe anything but love,” wrote Paul (see Rom. 13:8). Love is the only debt a Christian should have, a debt that they never succeed in repaying.

Does It Work?

But is this emphasis on love realistic? Or is it a fantasy when viewed in the cold light of the workplace, or when dealing with the myriad personalities we meet in life? To a cynical world, Christian love is just a sunny mirage, enabling naive people to avoid reality.

Critics of Christians say that no one can love on command. It results only in a bunch of hypocrites who wear plastic smiles as they manipulate susceptible people for their own ends.

These critics misunderstand the nature of Christian love. Often their views are influenced by TV soap operas and Hollywood extravaganzas. A gape (Christian love) endures because it rests on a firmer foundation than passion and emotion. This solid ground is love “in the sense of responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human being, the wish to further his life. This is the kind of love the Bible speaks of when it says: love thy neighbour as thyself.”
Christ was a realist, without illusions about humanity. Instinctively He understood their needs and responded to their personalities, so that John could write, “He knew men so well, all of them, that he needed no evidence from others about a man, for He himself could tell what was in a man” (John 2:25, NEB). The Lord knew “that fox” Herod and was aware of those “full of greed and wickedness.” “Hypocrites,” who lacked love and compassion, did not deceive Him; He called them “white washed tombs.” Some Pharisees He told to their face: “You belong to your father the devil” (Luke 13:32; 11:39; Matt. 23:27; John 8:44).

Christ also knows His followers, those who are motivated by love. Human nature sometimes gets in the way and they blunder, yet the tenor of their lives shows their intent. The difference between the true and the false is seen in a long-running feud between the Jesuits and Jansenists. According to Voltaire, they “contended for a century which party loved God most suitably, and which could most effectively harass and torment the other.”

Love is the essence of the Christian life. “For we have known and we have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and he who loves abides in God and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16).

Christians do not start to love because they happen to be in the right place, among especially lovable people; but because in some measure their lives have been changed by a vision of Calvary and they themselves are more lovable.

“As . . . how they love one another,” pagans commented as they watched the early Christians. This love spilled into their communities, challenged Caesar on his throne, and radically changed history.

As the twentieth century moves to a close, I wonder what unbelievers are saying about us?

* Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

4 Ibid., p. 5.
5 Ibid., p. 6.
6 Charles Hodge, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 293.
9 George Gordon, Lord Byron, “Don Juan.”
10 Morris, p. 197.

Russell H. Argent, before his retirement, was chair of the English Department at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, and director of publications at Washington Adventist Hospital.
Why a Dove?

Why did the Spirit manifest Himself in the form of a dove at Jesus' baptism?

There doesn't seem to be a generally accepted explanation for the use of the dove as representing the Holy Spirit. We are dealing with a question of interpreting a symbol that is not common in the Bible.

In the ancient Near East, doves sometimes represented pagan goddesses. In Egypt the "soul" of the deceased took the form of a bird, usually a dove, as it departed to the heavens. This symbolism is totally foreign to the Old Testament; doves are never a symbol of God.

However, an examination of the symbolic usages of the dove in the Old Testament could be of help in understanding its symbolic function at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16).

1. Symbol of Mourning: The low and soft cooing of the dove gave the impression to the hearers that it was lamenting or mourning, and it became a symbol for that human experience. During Hezekiah's illness he said, "I moaned like a mourning dove" (Isa. 38:14). Those who survive the attack of Babylon "will be . . . moaning like doves of the valleys" (Eze. 7:16). The prophet writes, "We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves" (Isa. 59:11).

2. Symbol of Vacillation: The dove flies to and fro, giving the impression that it is disoriented or vacillating with respect to its destiny. This characteristic of the bird became a fitting symbol for the indecisiveness of Israel, its lack of commitment to the Lord: "Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless—now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria" (Hosea 7:11).

3. Symbol of Love: The dove's beauty and its traditional faithfulness to its mate were taken by the ancients to be a symbol of human love and beauty. This is particularly the case in the Song of Songs: "My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice" (2:14); "O pen to me, my sister, my darling, my dove" (5:2; cf. 1:15; 4:1). Christ commanded the disciples to express in their lives the love and gentleness of the dove (Matt. 10:16).

4. Symbol of Deliverance: The rapid flight of the dove became a symbol of deliverance from one's enemies or from threatening circumstances. The psalmist writes: "O h, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest" (55:6). The Israelites returning from the Exile are described as those "that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests" (Isa. 60:8; cf. Hosea 11:11).

Probably the most important symbol of deliverance was the dove sent by Noah from the ark that came back with an olive branch in its beak (Gen. 8:10-12). It was a sign of peace; the storm was over.

Which of those meanings is expressed through the symbolic use of the dove at the baptism of Jesus? We can easily eliminate the first two because they express the negative side of the symbol. It is also clear that according to Matthew 3:16 the dove is a visible expression of the anointing presence of the Spirit.

But why the dove? The words spoken by God at that moment help us to understand the symbolism. He said, "This is my Son, whom I love" (verse 17). The symbol of love, the dove, and the word of love merged in the experience of the baptism of Jesus. God's love was flowing down to His Son as a member of the human race. In Christ a channel was found through which God's love could reach us; He was anointed to function as the only means through which God's grace is available to us.

One could also argue that the dove is, in this particular case, a symbol of deliverance. The dove as a symbol of the love of God appeared, telling us that, as with the Flood, the storm of sin is not powerful enough to keep us permanently separated from the Father. Our planet is now connected with heaven through Christ. In accepting His Son, God signifies to us that we are also accepted in the Beloved through faith in the provision He made on our behalf.

Scripture references are from the New International Version.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute.
You may not have noticed, but at 8:24 p.m. U.S. Eastern time on Tuesday, October 12, an event of major importance happened in our world. Do you remember what you were doing at that moment? Do you remember where you were?

At that very moment, someone has calculated, a baby was born somewhere, and the population of our world reached 6 billion. Does that matter? Is that something I need to know? Is that going to affect me in any tangible way?

Yes to all of the above. Here is why.

As a part of what God is doing in His world just before His Son returns, it is extremely important to you and me that we be faithful to the task He has given us. We are concerned about the members of our family. Every one. We are interested in the people on our street, down the block, at the next desk. Every one.

But as members of God’s remnant family, you and I are also involved with the nations. That seems like an ominous task. Staggering. It is. Impersonal, remote, impossible. It isn’t.

A boat sinks in the South China Sea. Those victims were precious to God. Did they know about Him? Fourteen die in Kosovo. Those are my brothers and sisters. Did they know Jesus? A flood forces thousands from their homes in Central America. Do their hearts have hope even in the midst of their tragedy? The answer to that question is our business, yours and mine. Because we belong to Him, they belong to us.

 Granted, the job is immense. Our world is so enormous, the needs so measureless, the crowds so unfathomable. Can you grasp the very concept of 6 billion anything?

But because we cannot do everything, we do not have license to do nothing. Let me be specific.

1. You and I must pray, regularly, for those who do not know Jesus. Praying makes a difference that only eternity will disclose. Nearly every day we receive letters in our AWR studios that begin “I was tuning across the dial and heard your program by accident...” What that listener doesn’t know is that it wasn’t an “accident” at all. Someone, perhaps at that moment, was praying that God would lead men and women to know His Son. God had His hand on theirs as they moved across the radio dial.

How can I know that my prayers for the lost are answered? God has asked us to pray for the spread of the gospel, and just as we accept His offer of salvation by faith, so we accept His ability to answer those prayers, by faith.

2. We can personally enthuse over the good news. The joy that Jesus gives is not only contagious, it is conspicuous. In the Beatitudes Jesus taught that the most obvious outward characteristic of the Christian is an irrepressible joy. Joy in sorrow. Joy in disappointment. Joy in rebuke. Joy in mistreatment. Joy through tears. That kind of response earns us the right to talk to people about where that joy comes from. It also often prompts them to ask.

3. We can give. The giving I do can accomplish things in places I can’t go.

One of my responsibilities to those I cannot otherwise reach is to provide tools for those who can. India has 500,000 villages where there is not a single Christian. Nearly half the world’s population live where laws totally prohibit evangelistic activity. One out of every 10 people on earth is a Muslim woman. While we have only a few avenues to reach them, radio is one.

The British Broadcasting Company estimates that AWR has 20 million listeners worldwide. In range of AWR’s 18 transmitters are more than 4 billion potential listeners. That’s not 6 billion, but it’s getting close. And the exciting thing to me is that as I give to that ministry I am helping to reach those who otherwise may never know. Why should anyone hear twice till everyone has heard once?

So 8:24 p.m., October 12, 1999, was a milestone. For me, it writes “Urgent” across everything I do for the kingdom.

Don Jacobsen is president of Adventist World Radio.
I see Career Day is coming up at school,” said Mom as she pulled papers out of Brian’s backpack.

“What’s Career Day?” asked Brian.

“It’s a day different people come tell the kids about their jobs—what they do, why they chose that career. That sort of thing,” Mom answered as she took a handful of papers to the trash.

“Are you going to come talk about being a physical therapist?” Brian asked.

“Think I should?” Mom asked with a twinkle.

“I dunno,” said Brian. “Why did you become a physical therapist?”

“Well,” Mom answered thoughtfully, “I guess it’s because a physical therapist made a big difference in my life.”

“Who? When? How?” Brian was suddenly full of questions. “How come I never knew this before?”

Mom laughed. “Slow down, son!” She opened the refrigerator and took out a pitcher of lemonade. She poured two glasses and sat down at the kitchen table.

“You know I was in a car wreck when I was 17. It was a very serious accident, and I had a lot of broken bones. The doctors weren’t sure I’d ever walk really well again. I had surgery to put the pieces back together. That’s why I have those scars you’ve seen. I was in casts for a long time, and when I finally got them off, my muscles had, well, forgotten how to walk. They hadn’t been used in a long time, and it hurt to move them.”

Brian knew his mom had been in a wreck when she was younger, but he had never heard this part of the story before.

“That’s when I met a physical therapist named Sherry,” Mom continued. “She worked with me every day for months to teach my muscles how to work again. At first she just massaged and stretched my legs to help them move some. After a while she got me up and moving a bit. Then she taught me how to walk again. It would have been easier for me to let my muscles be lazy and to walk with a limp, but Sherry was determined I would walk and run as well as I did before the wreck.”

“She did it, too!” exclaimed Brian. “You walk great!”

Mom smiled. “But that’s not all Sherry did. She prayed for me and asked God to give me the strength and determination to walk well again. She helped me see that God had saved my life for a reason, and that He had a plan for me.”

Mom took a sip of her lemonade. “I decided to become a physical therapist because I wanted God to use my life to help others the way Sherry had helped me.”

Mom finished her drink and set down her glass. “So,” she asked, “should I offer to come and talk at Career Day?”

“You bet!” exclaimed Brian.

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**Career Day Questions**

**Family Time**

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

☛ Ask the adults in your family if they can think of a time God has used them to help others, or if God has used someone else’s life to reach them. Who? How?

☛ Read a Bible story about someone God used in Daniel 5. Do you think he wanted God to use him this way? Would you like God to use you like that?

☛ With your family’s help, think of three ways God can use your life right now. Think of three ways God can use you when you are older.

☛ Cut a piece of paper about 3 inches wide and about 8 inches long. Punch a hole in one end and tie a piece of yarn through the hole. Write the words “Use Me” on the paper and decorate them with crayons, markers, glitter glue, scraps of fabric or felt, or anything else you have at home. Hang your creation on your doorknob. Every time you see it, ask God to use your life.
Meanwhile, Back in Bethlehem

Christmas Eve: The shopping is finally done. The gifts are beautifully wrapped and sitting beneath the elaborately decorated tree. A cozy fire is blazing in the fireplace. The room is fragrant with candles and potpourri. A CD of Christmas carols is playing softly in the background. The family is lounging on chairs and sofa, dreamily staring into the depths of the Christmas tree.

Meanwhile, back in Bethlehem: Oh no, the time has come. What do we do now? Quick, run to the inn and see if by chance a midwife is available. No bed, only straw. No bright sunlight to fill the room and guide the helpers. Only dark shadows and flickerings from a small oil lamp. No warm blankets and soft receiving gown. Only rough woolen cloth and strips of clean rags. Dust in the air, the smell of cattle, the sound of animals chewing and snorting. A cold draft of air running across the mud floor and between the piles of hay that form a makeshift bed. I hope help comes soon.

Christmas morning: Joyful squeals, tearing paper, oohs and aahs, laughter and shouts fill the morning air. The smell of a special breakfast wafting from the oven, trying on new clothes, assembling new toys, testing new games. Finally, family marshaled around, scraps of paper and ribbon carefully picked up and thrown away, cleanliness and neatness restored, everyone ready for a day of small talk and big meals.

Meanwhile, back in Bethlehem: The thin wail of a newborn in the early morning air. The Baby is wiped and wrapped. The exhausted mother is streaked with dust and perspiration. Just as sleep finally begins to overtake the little family, visitors at the door. Shepherds, they say. From the hillside, they say. Angels sang, they say, and told them to come see the Baby. The Baby must be presented to the priest at the Temple for dedication. As substitute for humanity, Christ must conform to the law in every particular. The officiating priest goes through the routine of his work, seeing before him only a poor couple dressed in humble Galilean clothing. After holding the Baby up before the altar, he hands Him back to His mother and inscribes His name “Jesus” on the roll of the firstborn. But the old ones, Simeon and Anna, know. They know this Child is different from the rest. They know He is the promised Messiah. They thank God they have lived to see the Saviour of the world, Christ the Lord, the Light of life.

T hey know H e is the promised M essiah—the Light of life.

Meanwhile, back in Bethlehem: Routine begins to settle in. Waking, feeding, cleaning, sleeping. It is all so inconvenient here in the stable. Yet there is a sweetness here. A sweetness that only a new baby can bring. He is a good baby, yet a normal baby. He cries when He is hungry or tired or cold. And yet He is good, so good. He is special, the angel said. He is the Saviour. We don’t really understand. We are just caught up in the joys and trials of raising a child.

A month or so after Christmas: No trace of the holidays anywhere. All decorations are boxed and returned to the attic. Cards and letters have been burned in the fireplace. Busy schedules and the rush to keep up the pace of a new year have crowded out peace and goodwill toward all. Visitors have returned home, children are back in school, life has taken up its frantic routine. Christmas is over.

Meanwhile, back in Bethlehem: Mother, father, and Baby make the short trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. The Baby must be presented to the priest at the Temple for dedication. As substitute for humanity, Christ must conform to the law in every particular. The officiating priest goes through the routine of his work, seeing before him only a poor couple dressed in humble Galilean clothing. After holding the Baby up before the altar, he hands Him back to His mother and inscribes His name “Jesus” on the roll of the firstborn. But the old ones, Simeon and Anna, know. They know this Child is different from the rest. They know He is the promised Messiah. They thank God they have lived to see the Saviour of the world, Christ the Lord, the Light of life.

Christmas is just beginning.

Betty O’Ffill writes from Winter Park, Florida.