

ADVENTIST Review



December 19, 1996

Cutting Edge

The Third Flute

**Andy Nash:
Forgetting Our
Family History**

**God's Christmas
Card to Dilbert**



Left to right: Andy Nash, Carlos Medley, Bill Tymeson, William G. Johnsson, Jean Sequeira, Mary Maxson, Stephanie Kaping, Steve Chavez, Kit Watts, Alan Forquer, Ella Rydzewski, Roy Adams, Chitra Barnabas.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!” (Rev. 19:7 NIV)

Quite honestly, we doubt whether our music would make anyone's spirits bright. But we hope our work has. Throughout 1996 it's been our pleasure to serve you, our readers. We're eager to do so again in 1997. We remain human, and there's bound to be a sour note or dissonant chord now and then. But the only composition that truly matters is God's. And it's glorious, flawless, and guaranteed to climax in eternal harmony. Merry Christmas from your friends at the *Adventist Review*.

LETTERS

Pocket Witness

Regarding Roy Adams' "Dedicate a Pocket or Purse" (Oct. 10), I suggest that the most natural and logical literature to carry is a pocket-size Bible course enrollment card.

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I can't think of a more effective and easier way to win souls than through our Bible schools.

—Lillian R. Guild

NEWBURY PARK, CALIFORNIA

Overpaid, Overwatched

Regarding the "incredibly obscene" salaries paid to people in the entertainment world, such as Michael Jordan, Shaquille O'Neal, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, I could not agree more with William Johnsson's "How Much Is a President Worth?" (Oct. 17).

But what shall we say about Adventists who go to these displays or spend time watching them on TV? Aren't they giving tacit approval to them and the worldly values they represent? What about Adventist churches that have Super Bowl Sunday parties and display the "exciting" panoramas on big screens?

Years ago I learned that watching competitive sports on TV had an adverse effect on my spiritual values.

—Donald E. Casebolt, M.D.

FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO

De-bait-able Method

Thank you, thank you. I have finally found a kindred spirit. I refer to Andy Nash's subtle but unmistakable poke at "seeding" Ingathering cans (Growing Up Adventist, Oct. 17). In my part of the country we always referred to the seed money as "bait."

This may be hard to believe, but never before had I encountered anyone who saw anything wrong with this deception.

—Ray Minner

CALHOUN, GEORGIA

Macarena Mania

Congratulations to T. Lynn Caldwell on the uplifting article on the latest American craze, the Macarena ("Hey, Macarena!" Oct. 17). My 14-year-old actually picked up the *Review* and read something in it! Wow! Great coup . . . except that what she read was direct criticism of her. She took it personally. She liked the song. She danced to the song, never considering the words or anything else—except that it was fun.

Like other Christian youth, she is sensitive—and starting to criticize back. When will the church realize that its self-righteousness is turning kids away in droves? The God we serve accepts us all. He makes the changes needed in us as individuals. Our criticism is terribly damaging.

—Name Withheld

Caldwell's intent was not to condemn those who like the Macarena, but to share her own struggle with the "persistent collision" of personal convictions and popular culture.—Editors.

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Traumatic experiences occur without warning, altering our plans and upsetting our routines. How to survive?

ADVENTIST Review

"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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40 Years of Changing Lives...Healing Hearts

Born to Be Wild

STEPHEN CHAVEZ

By now you're probably getting tired of Christmas. I know I am. Since the "holiday season" began—just after Labor Day for us here in the U.S.—the shepherds, the reindeer, the Wise Men, the gifts, the angels, the elves, the chestnuts roasting by an open fire have all gotten jumbled and blended into so many trite symbols and clichés.

For a large number of people the central figure of the celebration—the Baby—has been shoved off center stage in favor of the ubiquitous characters from the North Pole.

It's not surprising.

From His obscure birth, noticed by just a few, to His nondescript journey through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood, there were not many reasons to embrace Jesus of Nazareth more than any number of other Israelite youth—certainly nothing that would dictate a world-wide celebration to honor His birth.

But when Jesus began His public ministry, what a radical difference He made. Jesus shattered stereotypes. He demolished preconceptions and slaughtered sacred cows. He dismissed the conventional wisdom of the world (and institutional religion) with unconventional deliberateness.

And what radical demands He made (and continues to make)! He claimed that we gain wealth by giving it away; that we gather honor by stooping to serve; that the least in society are the greatest in God's kingdom; that we experience real life by dying. No wonder His place on Christmas's center stage has been usurped by a reindeer with a red nose.

The truth is that many people prefer it this way. They'd rather worship Jesus from a distance. They'd rather let the shepherds, the Wise Men, Mary and Joseph, run interference between them and the One who might change their lives.

In the U.S. presidential race, recently concluded, a lot of the debate seemed to center on how much the government should be expected to solve society's problems. Too much violence on TV? The government will fix that. Crime turning cities and suburbs into war zones? No problem; the government has a solution. Kids turning on to drugs? Ditto.

That same mentality has seeped into the church.

Apathetic youth (young adults, boomers, seniors)? The church has a program. Boring, lifeless worship services? A new resource is available from the Adventist Resource Center. Divisions in the church? The General Conference has just issued a policy statement . . .

Meanwhile, Jesus is not often (or regularly) consulted by those of us who should be playing a part in creating real solutions. Why? Because He's too radical. Because His mandates are too wild; they don't take into account life in the "real world." They might even involve life-altering commitments.

Like you, I have my routine—the things I do day in and day out; month in and . . . well, you get the idea. And most of the time I get along just fine doing the things I've always done, just the way I've always done them—without a lot of divine assistance, thank you.

Oh, I know Christ's number. I can get Him on-line whenever a deadline looms, or a personal, professional, or family problem gets out of control. But most of the time I can get by on my own.

However, it's become increasingly apparent to me that Christ wants to do more than just handle my crisis

calls. He wants to be involved in my life on days other than Sabbath. He wants to be an influence not just when the Christmas decorations are up, but throughout the rest of the year as well.

But do I have enough courage to let Christ be more than just a baby in a manger; more than just a picture I hang on my wall? Can I trust Him with my career? Will He make me a better husband and father? Will He get me through a future obscured with all kinds of insecurities (both real and imagined)? Will He guide me to a life of radical discipleship that will actually make a difference among the people I touch for the here and hereafter?

Stay tuned.

And keep your seat belt fastened. Because Jesus is not a baby anymore.

*Many people
would rather
worship Jesus
from a distance.*



Answering the Call

CARLOS MEDLEY

It was 14 months ago (October 16, 1996) that hundreds of thousands of African-American men made their historic pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. From Oakland and Orlando, from Savannah and Salt Lake City they came. From the Tennessee Valley and America's heartland they came.

More than 400,000 Black men made their way from small rural townships, overcrowded ghettos, and posh, secluded neighborhoods to join this unusual throng. By plane, bus, and even by foot, they came. Like kindred spirits their minds, bodies, and souls connected in the rarest display of Black unity ever seen—the Million Man March.

From the steps of the United States Capitol the massive crowd extended 16 blocks along the national Mall. They cried, shouted, hugged, and bonded. These men responded in unison to a clarion call to rediscover the true values of manhood, to become the moral and spiritual leaders of their families and communities.

With colorful, fiery rhetoric march organizer Louis Farrakhan, the spiritual leader of the Nation of Islam, encouraged the men to protest Black-on-Black crime and stop the relentless flow of drugs and alcohol into Black neighborhoods.

That was 14 months ago.

On the march's first anniversary many pundits are asking pointed questions, such as "Will history mark the occurrence as a watershed event that galvanized the Black community?" "Will the march have a lasting impact?"

Critics who believe the movement is short-lived often point to Farrakhan's controversial actions over the past year. Farrakhan alienated many American Black leaders when he visited several nations hostile to the United States—such as Libya and Iran.

Michael Eric Dyson, professor of communication studies at the University of North Carolina and author of the book *Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line*, describes the "forays on foreign soil" as "bizarre missions that have produced miscalculations and mistakes that certainly betray the spirit of the march."¹

Perhaps the best evidence of the rift is seen in the fact that national Black leaders like Jesse Jackson and members of the Congressional Black Caucus boycotted Farrakhan's

World Day of Atonement, which commemorated the first anniversary of the march. Held outside the United Nations building in New York City, this event brought more than 20,000 participants together on October 16, 1996.²

Despite the storm of controversy swirling about Farrakhan, there's mounting proof that African-American men are taking the call to responsibility to heart and galvanizing their communities for positive change. Consider the following events that have occurred as a direct result of the march:³

■ On the day of the march 150,000 new voters registered at the march site.

Thousands of other voters registered at several of the march's organizing centers

throughout the country.

■ The National Association of Black Social Workers received 15,000 new applicants from families seeking to adopt Black children. The queries led to more than 300 adoptions.

■ In Philadelphia and Memphis 19 and 33 men, respectively, joined the local mentoring programs.

■ In Atlanta, march organizers report that as a result of a community-based campaign \$3 million in deposits were transferred to Black-owned banks.

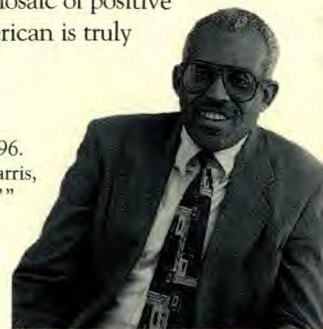
Beyond these outcomes, the real legacy of the march is seen in the lives of Black men who have reordered their priorities. Charlie Calvin, of Dolton, Illinois, said he had made a commitment to talk with his children every day. Greg McKinley, a cabinetmaker in Philadelphia, organized tradesmen to do volunteer jobs in the Black community.

Unheralded stories like these are being duplicated throughout the country. They provide substance and definition for the march's message. Taken together, these scattered acts of kindness create a mosaic of positive change for which this African-American is truly thankful.

¹ Michael Eric Dyson, "Black Men Triumphed," *Washington Post*, Oct. 13, 1996.

² Michael A. Fletcher and Hamil R. Harris, "Farrakhan Denounces U.S. for 'Genocide,'" *Washington Post*, Oct. 17, 1996.

³ Gary Fields and Maria Puente, "A Movement or Just a Moment?" *USA Today*, Oct. 11, 1996.



GIVE & TAKE

THE TOP 10 STATEMENTS PASTORS WOULD LIKE TO HEAR

10. "Hey, it's my turn to sit in the front pew!"
9. "I was so enthralled, I never noticed the sermon went 20 minutes over."
8. "Personally, I find witnessing more enjoyable than golfing."
7. "Pastor, I've decided to give our church the \$500 a month I used to send to the TV evangelists."
6. "I volunteer to be the permanent Sabbath school teacher for the earliteen class."
5. "Forget the denominational guidelines—let's pay our pastor a good living wage."
4. "I love it when we sing hymns we've never sung before!"
3. "Since we're all here, let's start the worship service early."
2. "Pastor, we'd like to send you to a Bible seminar in the Bahamas."
1. "Nothing inspires me like the annual business meeting."

—from *Exchange magazine*, summer 1996

ADVENTIST LIFE

For many years I worked in the kindergarten and cradle roll divisions. One Sabbath the leader was talking about prayer—and how we could pray anytime, anywhere. "Why," she said, "you can even pray when you're driving your car!"

"But Teacher," said a 4-year-old girl with tears running down her cheeks, "I can't drive a car."

—Lois Thompson, Chilliwack church, British Columbia



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

ADVENTIST QUOTES

"When you dislike a person, you are in his control. All he has to do is show up."

—Bruce Blum, theology student at Pacific Union College, speaking at the Vacaville, California, church

"Jingle Bell! Jingle Bell!"

—excited 3-year-old Alex Czerkasij, when asked to name the wicked queen who was the wife of Ahab

"I cannot think of a worse church in the world to be in than the Seventh-day Adventist Church and not be born again. On the other hand, I can't think of a better church to be in if you *have* been born again."

—Clifford Goldstein, editor of *Liberty*, at the 1996 Redwood camp meeting

"Can't we just switch to Sprint?"

—a student's response after Donn Leatherman, religion professor at Southern Adventist University, told his students that each class minute costs 38 cents

STILL WOWING 'EM

DOWN, BUT NOT OUT:

When former baseball star Dave Dravecky lost his pitching arm to cancer, his fan appeal didn't diminish. If anything, it increased. A Christian, Dravecky has written several inspirational books (including *When You Can't Come Back* and a children's book, *Today's Heroes*) since retiring in 1989. Here, he greets one of 200 admirers at a May book signing held at the Potomac Adventist Book Center.



Book signings, says associate manager Paul Glenn, "are a good opportunity to reach out to the community. The authors promote a positive, Christian testimony." Past authors include Ben Carson, Rosa Parks, and Oliver North. Earlier this year *Christian Retailing* magazine ranked the Potomac ABC as the number one Christian bookseller in the country.

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PHOTO BY DEBBIE BRYAN

The Third Flute

Each of my three flutes has its own story, and each captures a part of my spiritual journey.

BY NANCY COHN

WHEN I WAS IN GRADE SCHOOL MY MOTHER BOUGHT me the desire of my heart, my first flute, a student Bundy—on the condition that if anyone ever asked me to play it and I was able to do so, I would.

Oh, I thought, *that's easy enough. Who'll ever want to hear me?* Anyway, I just wanted it for band, so I said OK.

That casual promise has kept me playing the flute long after most mediocre musicians, no longer under the demands of high school or college bands, would have given up playing their instruments.

I was in the seventh grade. Something about the flute and its sound intrigued me, though at the time I thought I made the final decision because the flute was small and would be easy to carry about. Now I think the choice was inevitable. Some things just run in the bloodlines. One of my sisters plays the flute, and so does a niece.

Then I learned that my great-grandfather had played the flute. My second flute was his. It's an antique wooden flute

handmade in England about 1820 especially for him. This particular flute is made of wood molded over a metal shaft. Typical of wood as it dries, it shrank and cracked.

He had carried it with him to America and on



to the deserts of northern Nevada. Its makers never expected it to be transported from damp England to dry Nevada.

The cork dried out so that it wouldn't stay together. The keypads fell out. Some became stuck over the holes, and some of them were lost. No one thought the flute could be played again, but it was a family heirloom, so it was kept.

Somehow my grandfather, the youngest of 11, inherited his father's disabled flute. Because I played the flute and because I was now a student at his alma mater, Grandpa gave it to me. I hadn't known of its existence until then, but I treasured it, even though I couldn't play it.

Then one day I discovered a wonderful little shop with a repairman who specialized in flutes, a real artist in his trade. He filled in the cracks and replaced the cork and keypads—a work of love, he called it—and made my antique flute whole. Only because I know where to look am I able to see where the repairs were made. It plays now—a rich, woody, mellow tone. Some of the fingerings are different from modern flutes, and I haven't figured them all out, but someday I fully intend to play special music somewhere with my second flute.

Once I began teaching school, music became a part of everything I did outside the classroom. I can't sing, but playing the flute was one way I could praise God musically. My little first flute and I made some wonderful music together. I grew as a musician, and I was content.

Glimpse of Gemeinhardt

Then my daughter's best friend

walked into my life carrying a solid silver Gemeinhardt flute with a B foot. The B foot is a little longer, permitting one more key and one more note—the B below middle C. This note is seldom used, but the extra



length mellows the tone of the flute and gives the player more subtlety of expression. She left the flute with me for a week one time. I nearly wore it out. It was wonderful.

I wanted a solid silver Gemeinhardt flute!

Meanwhile I had students who played the flute. We played duets and trios. We'd use guitars and whatever other instruments were around to accompany song service. The students loved to spend Sabbath in the Sequoias, and the flutes and

guitars were easy to carry up there. I kept playing—at schools, churches, special events, and singles' gatherings. The flute took me places I never would have gone otherwise. With the flute I met people I'd never have met otherwise.

I still wanted a solid silver Gemeinhardt! But they are expensive, and I was raising two kids alone. My budget was tight. So I made do with the first flute, remembered my promise, and kept playing.

By now I was listening to the real masters of the flute such as Rampal and Galway and working on my own tonal quality and phrasing. They had gold head joints, even gold flutes, but I knew those were for real musicians. I'd settle for the silver. Even that was more than my talent deserved.

Love Gift

One morning just as my free period was about to start, the principal called me to the office. My daughter, a junior that year, was in the outer office. So were my son and a half dozen of my other students. I wondered why they were there, but started to walk past them without comment.

When Becky said, "Mom, Happy Birthday!" I was totally blank for a minute or two. My birthday was still two months away. Then she handed me my

third flute.

A solid silver Gemeinhardt.

"You sounded so good at Sequoia with your old flute that I knew you'd be wonderful with a silver flute, so here it is."

I cried.

I still reach out and touch this flute with trembling. Never have I ever received another love gift to equal this one. This is my ultimate human love gift. I cannot describe to you the emotions that surround this gift.

She had cleaned out her savings account to buy it for me. She'd gone down to the music store and special-ordered it. The owner thought she was so cute, buying a flute with everything she had, that he sold it to her for just over his cost. Still, it cost her all she had. For me.

I play this flute with my heart.

My first flute tells me how life can be really enriched when we share whatever we have. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10).

The humblest little drop of talent, when used to bring pleasure to others, will do. My little Bundy and I made a lot of music together and traveled a lot of miles together, and I've been the one most blessed for playing it.

Detour

Then in January 1986 I played at the wedding of a former student. I

didn't know then that it would be almost 10 years before I would play in public again.

About that time, like some of the travelers in *Pilgrim's Progress*, I began a journey down one of the side roads, one of the detours.

Oh, I didn't leave God. I left my church family. But knowing my stubborn heart, God let me go my own way. I had some very big and bitter lessons to learn. Because no one on that side journey knew I played the flute, no one asked me to play. I didn't quit playing altogether.

*To get my first
flute I promised
Mother I'd play it
if anyone asked.
I was sure no
one would.*

I just played less, and it was in private, when no one else was around. I played just for me and for Becky. And for God.

This past year God decided I'd been gone from my church family long enough. God turned me around and set my feet on the rocky climb back to the road He means for me to travel.

Like the master repairman who worked diligently with my second flute, God is restoring my self, giving me back to me, repairing me where I've shrunk and dried and become inoperative. The work is still in progress. I'm still in the shop. But I trust God to do a masterful job, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

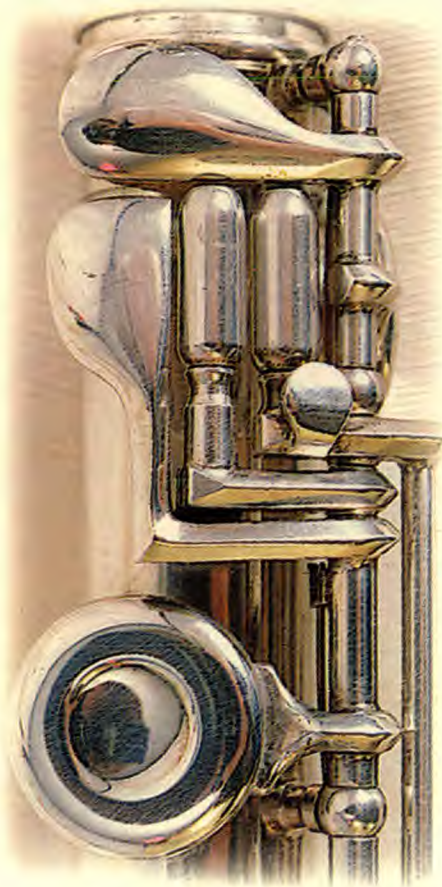


So it came to be that on Christmas Sabbath morning, nine long years later, I stood in front of my new church family with my third flute, a love gift from a daughter who gave everything she had to buy it for me.

The third flute symbolized perfectly the Christmas Sabbath we were celebrating.

We were honoring the Ultimate Love Gift to me and to you, the Love Gift that cost heaven everything it had: Jesus Christ. I look at that Gift with total wonder. The greatest Love Gift ever. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). ■

Cattle rancher and former teacher, Nancy Cohn is secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Reno, Nevada.



Escaping Emotional Bondage

Human beings are often on different wavelengths. We think differently. We have varying capabilities of analysis and insight. We view things from the perspective of art or science or logic or sheer simplicity. In our deep entrenchment in our own way of seeing things, we often expect others to think the same way we do.

And while we desperately seek to make others into the image of our own thinking, we sometimes trample on their feelings. We have the paradigm backward. We act as if people think the same, but feel differently. In actuality the opposite is true. People experience the same emotions, but think very differently.

This is true on a number of levels, the most obvious being the parent-child relationship. How many times do parents assume that children are capable of abstract reasoning that is beyond their developmental level, yet underestimate their range of emotions?

Fairness and justice, for example, are concepts that are not fully understood until the elementary school years. But we assume that children have all of the reasoning powers available to us as adults, forgetting that while they do not think the way we do, children possess the same capacity to be hurt, intimidated, confused, or embarrassed.

Similarly, people of varying intellectual capacities are all driven by the same emotions. A quantum physicist and an individual labeled as "intellectually challenged" can both experience joy and sorrow, love and loneliness. They *think* differently, but they *feel* the same. Both are equally deserving of respect and attention.

My mail represents a wide range of human emotion. People are hurting. People are angry. People feel separated from family and friends. And too many, it seems, are expecting reconciliation to spring from a meeting of the *minds* rather than a meeting of the *hearts*.

There are many issues upon which we will never agree. There are many things about one another that we can never change. As parents we may have to accept the fact that our grown children will pursue lives other than those that we would have chosen for them. As children we may have to realize that our parents are not capable of extending to us the measure of understanding and acceptance that we had hoped for.

But that acceptance is half the battle. Releasing others from

our tightly defined interpretation of who they should be, we free ourselves from an exhausting battle. By freeing others, we free ourselves.

Do you have a rift with a church member, a family member? Is it hard for you to understand how they could possibly *think* the way that they do? Is it difficult to grasp how anybody in their right mind could be so stubborn, so blind? It may not be

necessary for you to figure out how an individual could possibly arrive at a particular conclusion.

It may be enough to know that while people *think* differently, they *feel* the same. And while you are feeling hurt and embarrassed and isolated, in all likelihood so is your offender. You are in emotional bondage to each other that will never be released until one of you has the courage to

look beyond the logic of details.

A friend of mine, a family therapist, told me about a client of hers who spoke vehemently about the disparaging ways in which his father had treated him since childhood. He wanted his father to understand his hurts. He wanted to be free from the emotional bondage that had been tightening around his neck since he was a boy.

The therapist suggested he bring his father to the next session. She looked out of her second-floor office the next week to see her client—a six-foot-two-inch, 210-pound man—helping a frail old man up the steps. After the joint session, she spoke to her client alone. "Your father is an old man," she said. "He's just an old man."

Somehow her words exploded the sense of power that this full-grown adult had invested in his father. His father was not a symbol. He was a person. He was an old man. Full of his own failures, anger, and disappointments. Incapable of meeting the needs of his own son. An old man.

With that knowledge came the release of an expectation. For the first time the noose of emotional bondage was loosened. People think differently, but they feel the same. Even those who hurt us.

*By freeing
others, we free
ourselves.*

Sandra Doran is currently conducting research on families with difficult children for her doctoral degree in special education at Boston University.



Be Merry! Christmas Is Here

And you don't have to feel guilty about it.

BY PAUL J. LANDA

IT HAPPENS EVERY CHRISTMAS SEASON. SOME well-meaning saints get all worked up over the fact that so many church members are choosing to follow the rest of the world by embracing the merry spirit of the season and celebrating Christmas.

Such members are quick to remind us that it's unlikely that Jesus was born on December 25; that Christmas is an old pagan holiday that has become even more paganized by crass commercialism, unbridled excess, empty sentimentality, and saccharine wishful thinking; and that proclaiming the imminent Second Advent is far more important than commemorating the First Advent. And church leaders, pastors, and educators are forced to do some quick thinking in order to come up with some acceptable "Adventist" reasons to justify (and maybe sanctify) the celebration of Christmas.

In this vein we may suggest the following:

1. We need Christmas *because it brings so much goodwill into our homes and into our social relations*. Calcified habits in our daily routine are set aside for a while as we get out of the rut of our unconcern and apathy. Prejudice and selfishness give way to tolerance and sympathy. Our eyes are opened to the needs of others, and we actually find joy in sharing and serving them, in expressing worthy and tender feelings that normally lie buried under a veneer of callousness and formalism. We need the Christmas season because of the way it stirs up the spirit of goodwill among us and moves us to radiate it in all directions. It's good for our Christian experience.



2. We need Christmas because as individuals, *we need a time for merriment, revelry, and celebration*. In a chaotic society in which madness, badness, and sadness are so evident everywhere, we need a season—no matter how brief—to feel good, to have a good time, to laugh, and to forget the dreariness and tragedy that surround us so often. What a sad world it would be if we had to go through a whole year without the month of December, without parties, carols, trees, tinsel, lights, presents, and laughter. We need the Christmas season for the sake of our psychological and emotional well-being. It's good for our nerves.

3. We also need Christmas *because, living as we do in a world of international tensions, turmoil, and terrorism, the message of "peace on earth and goodwill among men" must be heard as our collective wish for all*. On almost every continent thousands grieve the loss of loved ones because of humanity's

inhumanity. For them Christmas is the contemporary equivalent of the old medieval "Truce of God"—a short respite from fear, violence, and bloodshed. It is like a meteor on a dark night, lighting up the sky with the hope of what could be if people would choose to exercise *goodwill* in coming to terms with their national, ethnic, and religious differences.

So we need the Christmas season for the sake of international relations. It's good for world peace.

Good for our Christian experience, good for our nerves, and good for world peace—three seemingly worthy reasons for us to be merry this Christmas season.

On second thought, however, those three reasons begin to pale because of their somewhat ephemeral character, just like the ornamented trees that brighten so many of our homes during these days, but that will soon be dismantled and discarded. As one writer has put it: "When the tree goes out, it takes with it too many spiritual things. . . . Toss the tree out, and you toss out rudely the symbols of faith, love, and generosity." And it doesn't take long for us to find ourselves right back in the same old rut again, fighting in a selfish way through a cold and cruel world in which there's too little room for the Christmas spirit of goodwill, consideration, and kindness, and even less room for charity, trust, and peace.

These are good reasons. But unless we can muster better reasons, old Scrooge may have been right after all in dismissing Christmas as a lot of bah and humbug!

Fortunately, there are more compelling reasons, and they become apparent when we reflect upon the very *first Christmas*, when the Son of God came to this earth to become the Son of man—to take up our human nature, with its limitations and frailties. He chose to live our life, share our joys as well as our sorrows, die our death and be buried in one of our graves; He willingly suffered the humiliation and alienation, the misery

and hatred, the pain and sadness that were His lot from Bethlehem to Calvary. In short, He gave up the glories of heaven for a miserable world. *That's what Christmas is really all about!*

Is it reasonable to suppose that He would have chosen to go through all that just to give us a bit of goodwill and a breath of peace among the nations? Did He need to go through the whole painful and shameful condescension just to provide us a yearly season of cheer and a break from the tensions of our time?

Three biblical passages offer themselves for our consideration at this point.

In Matthew 1:20-23 Joseph of Nazareth's reverie about his favorite girl, Mary, is interrupted by a startling angelic message: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us' (Jerusalem).

The purpose of Christmas is to bring us *the gospel*—the good news that, despite the tragedy of sin, God still wants to be *with us*. Despite our rebellion, He remains in love with us, and that love has followed us through time into the estrangement of our own making. For centuries God was preparing the world for Christmas. Despite all appearance and despite persistent human defiance, God was never far from us. But on that very first Christmas, He chose to come closer than ever before. He became *one with us*. And in so doing, He told us, in the words of an old country preacher, that "He ain't mad at us." In spite of everything, He has not cut us off. He is still on our side; He still wears a friendly face.

By choosing to be one with us, the eternal, omnipotent One became *one of us*—someone with whom we could



identify. And by so doing, He enriched our prosperity, our joys, our smiles; He gave meaning to our childhood, manhood, and womanhood; He rejoiced at our weddings and wept at our funerals; He played with our children and suffered the afflictions of our older folks; He was with us in Bethlehem, in Cana, at Lazarus' tomb, and on Calvary's hill. He wanted us to know that His love is not so small that it can handle only the good things of our lives. He does not always deliver from calamity, but He weeps and grieves with us, and He gives us the strength to cope.

With Emmanuel—*God with us*—the world is a friendlier place, despite its seeming madness, and we can know and experience joy, laughter, and hope. What reason have we to be merry this Christmas? *God is with us.*

But there is more. In his account of the Christmas story, Luke informs us that to a group of shepherds came "news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the city of David a *saviour has been born to you*; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11, Jerusalem).

The story of Christmas is about Emmanuel, who came to be with us in order to do something for us that we could not do for ourselves. Plainly put: He came to save us from our sins. Thus, He was announced as a *saviour* rather than a teacher. Teachers change people by their lives. As Saviour, Christ would change people by His death. The experience and effects of sin could not be neutralized by wise exhortations and social reforms. "The wages of sin is death," and therefore it was by death that sin had to be dealt with. This is what made the first Christmas unique. Everyone else who has come into the world has come to live. Christ came into the world to die. The cross was the goal and fulfillment of His coming. When the angelic messengers announced the arrival of a *saviour*, God was saying that Christ's death would be more important than His life.

What made His death unique is that it was designed to give life—a

special kind of life, a forgiven, reconciled, wholesome life, with an eternal dimension. This is the gospel of Christmas—Christ as Saviour, *God for us*. By accepting this truth, we are forgiven for our rebellion and alienation, and we are accepted back into the divine family. We are no longer at enmity with other human beings, because through the common bond of redemption we share the same Saviour, and we now belong to the same family of the redeemed. And we are no longer living at odds with ourselves, longing to be healed while being afraid of the Healer. We

For centuries God was preparing the world for Christmas.

are now at peace with ourselves because we have seen the Healer's loving face and we have experienced His forgiveness and His welcoming embrace.

What reason have we to be merry this Christmas? We know that *God is for us* because Christ as *Saviour* has given us forgiveness, reconciliation, and acceptance. But there is yet more.

In describing Christ's first advent, John tells us that "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, *he gave power to become children of God*" (John 1:11, 12, RSV). This is another facet of the Gospel of Christmas. The God who came to be *with us*, who was born in order to die *for us*, is the same God who offers to do something *in us*, that we may become transformed into the likeness of Christ and be energized in our service for others, experiencing and sharing the spirit of Christmas every single day of our lives.

While it may sound almost too good to be true, all the way down the 20 centuries since the first Christmas there have been all kinds of ordinary people who have been so empowered by their relationship with Christ that they became not simply His followers, but the bearers of His life, giving arms and hands and legs and feet to the virtues of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23, RSV). And the world has been a better place because of the Christ-empowered lives of a William Carey, an Albert Schweitzer, a Mary Slessor, a Maximilian Kolbe, a John N. Andrews, a Mother Teresa, a Desmond Tutu, and countless others who continue to proclaim that in Christ, there is the power of God to bring light into our darkness, to make people whole, to give a new quality of life to anyone who opens himself or herself to Him in faith.

What reason have we to be merry this Christmas? God is ready and willing to offer us the Spirit of Christ to be *in us* to transform us to empower us to serve others.

Yes, there are some splendid reasons to celebrate Christmas and to be merry at this special time of the year. Emmanuel has come—*God is with us*. A Saviour has given His life *for us*. And thanks to His transformative power *in us*, we can experience the reality of His salvation and the joy of service. These are not ephemeral reasons for celebrating Christmas. They spring from the very heart of the gospel, and they focus upon the most important aspects of the Christian life, enabling us to keep alive the spirit of Christmas throughout the new year.

Merry Christmas! ■

Paul J. Landa is professor of the History of Christianity in the School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.



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gifts they'll
open every
day*



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PHOTO BY GEORGETTE REED

THE WINDUP: Very few of Lilo's throws come in front of large crowds and public-address announcers. Here she practices the discus at Minoru Park in Richmond, British Columbia.

LILO'S VISION

Six times blind, the Canadian superathlete lives one simple message: It's what's on the inside.

BY ALEX BRYAN

A YOUNG GIRL STANDS IN A GYMNASIUM alone. She hopes her feet are somewhere near the volleyball service line. After all, it's hard to tell in a *dark* gymnasium. She cradles a volleyball in her left hand. Her right hand, now a clenched fist, hangs just below her waist ready to deliver a blow that will send the volleyball into the air, over the net, and onto the opponent-less court.

The routine began two weeks earlier when her physical education teacher, Mrs. Henderson, insisted that Lilo try sports. Such an idea shocked Lilo. To that point, she had always spent recess and physical education period studying alone in the library. After all, she was blind.

But Mrs. Henderson convinced Lilo that athletics weren't exclusively for the sighted. After a crash course in volleyball serving, Lilo determined to perfect her newly acquired skill. Every day she practiced in the gymnasium alone. Every day she gained confidence.

But if Mrs. Henderson's initial idea—serving a volleyball—seemed crazy, her second idea—playing in a real game—seemed even crazier.

First the teacher modified two rules. Lilo would serve *all* the time for her team, and Lilo would do nothing *but* serve.

Two captains were chosen to pick teams. As expected, Lilo was picked last. But her team was up to serve first, meaning the blind girl would have to serve.

A frightened Lilo prepared to hit the volleyball. As she had done hundreds of times before, she cradled the volleyball in her left hand. She clenched her right hand at her waist. If there were ever a time to back out, it was now.

"I just wanted to vanish from that gym," she recalls.

Taking a deep breath, Lilo brought back her hand and swung. Complete silence accompanied the ball as it passed through the air.

Thud! The ball had landed.

"What happened? Where did the ball hit?" Lilo waited anxiously for an answer.

"One to nothing!" someone shouted. "An ace!"

Again Lilo prepared to serve . . . and minutes later her team claimed victory, 15-0. Fifteen straight serves had sailed over the net and onto the court. Lilo, the blind girl, had shut out the other team.

Long, Hard Journey

Not every game has been that easy for Ljiljana Ljubisic. Yet that first game began an athletic journey that has covered five continents and most recently landed her in Atlanta for the 1996 Paralympic Games.*

The Atlanta games were Lilo's *fourth* Paralympics. In the 1984 Los Angeles games she won a silver medal in team handball for the blind. In the 1988 Seoul games she won a bronze medal in the shot put. In the 1992 Barcelona games she won gold medals in the discus *and* shot put. In this year's Atlanta games she broke two world records for the totally blind (shot put, 10.99 meters; discus, 40.40 meters), earning her two bronze medals. (This summer partially sighted athletes competed against totally blind athletes in the shot put and discus.)

In addition to four medal-winning appearances in the Paralympics, Lilo has medaled in several world and national



SPECIAL GUEST: In August, Lilo spoke to students at Carman Adventist School in Marietta, Georgia (left)—and then got mobbed for autographs (right).

events, including a victory at the 1994 Berlin World Championships, where she broke a world record and earned a gold medal in discus. Over the past decade Lilo has been one of the most successful Paralympic athletes in the world.

Lilo's physical condition has daunted her from an early age. As a baby, Lilo came down with chicken pox, but was misdiagnosed by her doctor. The drug she was given caused Stephen Johnson's syndrome, an allergic reaction that nearly killed her. Although she survived, Lilo was left nearly blind.

Lilo has undergone a long battle to regain her sight, including five corneal transplants, all of which failed. The

unsuccessful surgeries gave and took Lilo's sight *six times*. She is now totally

blind, with little hope of ever seeing again. "This has been an emotional roller coaster I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy," she says.

As a child Lilo had a tough time enrolling in the public school system in Yugoslavia. In the sixties and seventies blind children were usually institutionalized. Still, Lilo's parents went to nearly every school pleading for someone to accept their daughter. Finally one teacher said yes.

Lilo remembers school—both in Yugoslavia and later in Canada—being hard on her. "Kids loved to make fun of a five-foot-eleven blind girl wearing big sunglasses," she says. "To read a book I had to press my nose up against the page. At the end of the day I would have a big black ink mark on my nose from the dark print."

But the pain didn't stop at the emotional level. Even a limited amount of light hurt Lilo's eyes. "It was unbelievably painful," she says. "Many times tears would come streaming down my face."

Outside, Lilo held a dark umbrella over her head to shield the light. Every day she struggled to conquer



STANDING TALL: For years an outcast at her own schools, Lilo is now hugely popular at every school she visits.

both the normal challenges sighted people face and the overwhelming physical challenges of being blind.

Lilo's blindness makes athletics particularly difficult. "Throwing the discus for me is different in a lot of ways than for sighted people," she says. "I can't mimic my coach. I can't see where I'm throwing. I can't study videotapes to enhance my performance. Also, when you're blind it causes some tentativeness. Your sense of balance and your memory of past falls bruising your face or hitting your head make you cautious."

Lilo's coach helps her every step of the way. To compete, Lilo needs assistance from home to the airport to the hotel to the training area to the stadium to the throwing circle. Her coach tells her the proper direction to throw the discus or shot put. After she throws, he verbally guides her back out of the circle.

Lilo's incredible resolve transcends her physical disability. An immigrant from Yugoslavia, she lives in Coquitlam, British Columbia, and competes for the Canadian national team *full-time*. Her 50-week-a-year training regimen includes 11 practices a week, one to two hours of weights, and four to five hours of throwing. Lilo's never-say-die attitude, world-class athleticism, and gift for communication have given her hundreds of invitations to speak around the world. Her next big goal? The 2000 Sydney, Australia, Paralympic Games.

Witnessing Through Sport

This athlete's six-day-a-week training does take a break: on Sabbath. A third-generation Seventh-day Adventist, Lilo is a member of the New Westminster church in British Columbia.

Lilo says she has many opportunities to talk about God in the sporting arena, adding that "when you mix friendships and sport, it gives you times to share your faith." Leading by example, says Lilo, is the most important way to witness.

In August Lilo spoke at Atlanta

Adventist Academy. After her presentation a female student came up and asked if Lilo could tell what other people looked like by touching their faces. "Can you tell what I look like?" she asked.

"One of the good things about being blind," says Lilo, "is that you can't tell what other people's exteriors look like."

"One of the good things about being blind is that you can't tell what other people's exteriors look like."

You can be tall or short, fat or skinny. It doesn't matter. When you're blind you develop a keen vision for what a person's interior looks like. What matters is what's inside."

And that's Lilo's vision for her church: focusing on what's on the inside. "No one is born a winner," she says. "No one is born a loser. We're all born choosers. The Bible says we have the power of choice. I choose to be positive. I choose to have goals. I choose to do the best with what I have."

Alone Again

One young woman stands on a podium alone. She's confident that her feet are squarely on the stand reserved for medalists—although it's hard to tell in a *dark* stadium.

Hours earlier she had walked into the massive stadium packed with 75,000 people. Her coach screamed, "Lilo, wave to the crowd!" She did. The crowd erupted with applause. Again she waved, and again the crowd cheered.

Now it was her turn to throw the discus. As she stepped into the throwing circle, the huge crowd suddenly became quiet. Lilo could hear "Shhhh!" coming from all directions, but thought it must be because the 100-meter sprint was about to begin. The crowd always got quiet before the starting gun sounded.

Lilo wound up and threw the discus. Complete silence accompanied the discus as it passed through the air.

Seconds later the crowd erupted with applause. Lilo wondered, *Could the crowd's attention be for me?* She prepared for a second throw. "Shhhh!" again echoed around the stadium. Lilo wound up and threw the discus again. Seconds later the crowd exploded in cheers.

"What happened?" Lilo screamed to her coach.

"You broke the world record, Lilo," her coach screamed back. "You broke it *twice*. The crowd is cheering for you!"

And like a massive choir, 75,000 voices honored the young girl from Coquitlam, who stood alone in a gym, practicing her serve. ■

* The Paralympic games are held every four years in conjunction with the Olympic Games. The "Para-lympics" are so named because they run parallel to the Olympics in the same city and venue. Unlike the Special Olympics, which are held for the mentally disabled, the Paralympics are comprised of world-class athletes who are either sight-impaired, wheelchair-bound, amputees, or with spinal cord injuries or cerebral palsy. Technology and specialized training have enabled these athletes to make tremendous gains in the 17 events in which they compete.

Alex Bryan is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who is church-planting in Atlanta, Georgia.



NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION YEAR-END MEETINGS

NAD Recaptures Vision for Evangelism

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, ADVENTIST REVIEW NEWS EDITOR

Seventh-day Adventists in North America are getting excited about evangelism. Whether it's in Orlando or Oakland, Bermuda or Boulder, Colorado, in small rural townships or large urban centers, Adventist churches are becoming more active in outreach ministry.

This undeniable fact was driven home in numerous stories shared at the North American Division (NAD) year-end meetings, held November 3-7 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The year-end meeting is where the North American Division executive committee votes policy items and resolutions, hears reports, and approves next year's division budget. As a result of a 1995 committee action, this year's committee has grown to 265 members from 240 last year, with nearly 40 percent of the committee being lay members, pastors, and teachers.

NAD president Alfred C. McClure underscored the division's mission of

evangelism by starting the meeting with evangelistic reports. "I'm excited about what's happening," McClure said. "We have a lot to praise the Lord for. I don't think it's possible to exaggerate the life of evangelism in this division."

Cyril Miller, NAD vice president for evangelism, introduced three pastors who had ministered in the Adventist church in Arlington, Texas. The church grew from an attendance of 60 members to a membership of 1,200 in 10 years. The congregation also produced the first Korean church in the Southwestern Union, with 150 persons attending, and a Hispanic congregation, with 100 attendees.

Referring to the church's satellite evangelistic series in North America, Miller said, "One of the exciting

things about NET '96 is the fact that college and university churches are leading the way."

At the Sligo Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, the campus church for Columbia Union College, more than 100 persons are expected to be added to the



LEADERSHIP TEAM: NAD president Alfred C. McClure (left) chairs the meeting, with Harold Baptiste (center), secretary.

church as a result of NET '96. There were also NET '96 meetings in the campus churches at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas; La Sierra University in Riverside, California; and Walla Walla College in College Place, Washington.

Ebony Evangelism. Alvin Kibble, Allegheny East Conference president, told the committee that 1995's Ebony Evangelism thrust, supported by the nine regional (Black) conferences and the NAD, resulted in 1,600 baptisms and nine new congregations for the Southwest Region Conference. However, Kibble expressed dismay that funding for 1996's meetings was delayed until 1997.

The regional conferences represent 28 percent of the North American membership and 37 percent of growth, says Ralph Peay, South Atlantic Conference president.

Hispanic Growth. Manuel Vasquez, NAD vice president for multilingual ministries, told the committee that



DIVERSE DELEGATION: More than 200 lay members, pastors, teachers, and administrators attended the year-end meetings.

Two Church Leaders Reflect on Church Planting

Church planting is becoming a major evangelistic thrust of the Adventist Church in North America. More than 50 new churches have been planted in 1996, and the division has sponsored two summits to raise planting visibility and to teach techniques.

Conference and union leaders met three days before the year-end meeting for a mini summit on church planting. The mini summit started with a Thursday night keynote address by Alfred C. McClure, president of the Adventist Church in North America.

On Friday Robert Logan presented an all-day seminar on church planting; Logan is an independent church growth consultant specializing in church planting. Sabbath featured a sample Sabbath school lesson led by Ron Gladden, ministerial director, of the Oregon Conference. Ron Halvorsen, church growth director for the Southern Union, presented the morning sermon, which was followed by an afternoon discussion on how to implement the concepts.

We asked two leaders to share their impressions of the church-planting mini summit.—Editors.

Overlooked Gems. My first thought upon hearing the term church planting was *Is this a new semantic to try to breathe new life into North American evangelism?*

Alfred C. McClure's passion for soul winning through church planting was evident from the first moments of his keynote address. He pointed out the need to change with his most memorable line: "If we keep doing what we've been doing, we'll keep getting what we got." He left no

doubt that we are going to have to change our thinking.

Robert Logan's greatest contribution was giving us a non-member's perspective on our efforts and attitudes toward church planting. The research he did that supported the principles and practices of church planting was impressive.

I could not help feeling a little embarrassed that he was pulling these gems from the writings of Ellen White, which we obviously overlooked and neglected.

One question that concerned me about the presentations was *Where are the pastors and evangelists who are planting churches within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?* Theory is good, but leadership by example is indispensable. Several pastors are planting churches, and I would have liked to hear from them.—*Samuel Green, Southwestern Union Conference secretary.*

The Sincere Skeptic. Just a few days before coming to Maryland for the church-planting mini summit, I met with three elderly ladies and an elderly couple to close their church and sell it to another denomination. Their faces expressed an eloquent abandonment. I still see it clearly.

Now I was at a summit on how to plant more churches! I was skeptical. How can we do church planting when we can't adequately supply pastoral support to existing churches?

I was inspired by the sincerity and challenge delivered by our division president in his keynote address. But I was still skeptical. The church-planting seminar presented by Robert Logan the following day taught me more about church planting. But I was still skeptical.

Now as I reflect on the summit I remember a quote by Robert Logan: "We can do it. Because God commands it, then it is possible." I may still be skeptical, but I believe that we must find a way!—*Wayne Coulter, Illinois Conference president.*

Hispanic Adventists are actively involved with evangelism. With 86,570 members, or 10 percent of the division membership, Hispanics generated nearly 25 percent of NAD baptisms in 1995. This year Hispanic leaders expect Hispanic membership to increase to 90,000, with 9,000 baptisms.

Church Planting

McClure used the meetings to sound a call to move the church toward a major church-planting strategy. This theme was echoed in his keynote address and in a church-planting summit meeting held October 30-November 2 (see p. 21).

The committee voted a resolution that calls for every union and

conference executive committee in North America to make the organizing of new churches a high priority. The measure also encourages unions and conferences to develop strategies for church planting. McClure said, "The data is very clear: Newer churches grow at 10 times the rate of older churches."

Russell Burrill, director of the NAD Evangelism Institute, told the committee, "We feel that church-planting is important. Every denomination that has a church planting strategy is a growing denomination. Those conferences that are growing are planting churches. Those conferences that are not planting churches have leveled off or are declining."

New Growth

NAD secretary Harold Baptiste reported that church membership in North America totaled 843,691 as of June 30, 1996, representing a 2.5 percent increase over the same period last year. During the first six months of this year there were 14,628 baptisms, an increase of 42.5 percent over the same period last year.

Baptiste explained that the figures do not include the anticipated church growth from NET '96, which ended November 9. Last year's baptisms totaled 36,122, an increase of 6 percent over the 34,097 total in 1994.

Gross tithe during the first six months of 1996 also increased significantly, Baptiste said. As of

June 30, tithe in North America totaled \$223,049,070, nearly 5 percent more than the same period last year. One reason for the increase is that there were more Sabbaths in the first six months of 1996 than in the first half of 1995.

Financial Concerns

In his report, division treasurer George Crumley said the 1997 division operating budget totaled \$58,806,561, an 8.2 percent increase over the \$54,340,000 budgeted for 1996. "The major reason for the significant increase is because administrative oversight of the Adventist Media Center was transferred to the division from the General Conference, adding \$3,130,000 to the budget."

The above figures include the division's in-house operations and all appropriations. Crumley said the in-house operations budget totals about \$5 million, approximately 1 percent of gross tithes for North America, which is \$491,795,455.

Donald Pierson, an associate treasurer and retirement fund administrator for NAD, sounded a word of concern regarding the church's retirement fund. Pierson noted that while the fund is currently stable, it could run out of money in the next 10 years, unless adjustments are made to strengthen the fund.

As of July 31 the church's retirement fund totaled \$189 million

NAD Committee Briefs

In other business the North American Division (NAD) executive committee:



Rose Otis

■ Elected Rose Otis, a General Conference field secretary and director of the GC Department of Women's Ministries, NAD vice president for ministries and women's ministries director.

In the newly created post Otis will supervise and coordinate the division's Adult Ministries, Children's Ministries, Family Life and Pathfinders, Health and Temperance, Stewardship, Youth and Young Adult, and Women's Ministries departments.

As women's ministries director, Otis replaces Elizabeth Sterndale, who will retire in February 1997, after 15 years of service to the Adventist Church.

■ Voted to receive the Total Commitment document, which was approved by the General Conference Executive Committee at Annual Council in Costa Rica (see *Adventist Review*, Nov. 14).

The document is a pastoral appeal calling church leaders to spiritual accountability. The call involves a self-evaluation of personal spiritual growth and an evaluation of local congregations, hospitals, colleges, academies, food factories, publishing houses, media centers, radio stations, conferences, unions, missions, and the General Conference staff.

Committee members expressed caution about the document, especially the call for self-assessment. However, Washington Conference president Lenard Jaecks said, "The whole philosophy of our church is mutual accountability."

The committee also voted to refer the document to division health and education bodies for suggestions for implementation of the proposal.

and the hospital fund more than \$700 million. There are currently 13,000 retired denominational employees, and about \$56 million was paid into the fund in 1995.

Pierson says there will be significant increases in the number of retired church employees over the next 10 years, causing a drain on reserves.

Church leaders are studying several funding and benefit options, including "defined contributions" plans in which employees contribute to their funds.

After much discussion, the committee voted to increase the contributions made by conferences and unions from 10.25 percent of tithe in 1996 to 10.50 percent in 1997 and 10.75 in 1998 as a first step in strengthening the fund.

"We need to understand that retirement is part of our responsibility as employers," said Lake Union

Conference president Don Schneider. "I'm more convinced that we're going to have to pay more."

Peter Bath, president of the Kettering College of Medical Arts in Ohio, said, "I strongly urge the steering committee working on this to carefully consider how employee education [about retirement] is handled. This is the hot topic at workers' meetings and on college campuses."

NAD officials will visit each union to discuss various funding options in the first six months of 1997. A master plan for the fund will be presented at a special meeting of the North American Division executive committee on July 28 and 29.

The Adventist Review will print more on the North American Division year-end meetings in the December 26 Newsbreak.



SHARING A WORD: T. A. McNealy, a pastor from Florida, gave the opening devotional message.

For Your Good Health

Easy Go, Easy Come

Nearly 200 dieters following one commercial weight-loss program's diet of formula and prepackaged foods lost an average of 48 pounds. But three years later only 12 percent of those dieters had kept off at least 75 percent of the lost weight. And 40 percent gained back more than they had lost. Regular exercise was the strongest predictor of maintaining weight loss. The best predictor of weight regain: frequent television viewing.—*UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*.

On Your Feet

Seniors who walk for 20 minutes or more each day experience significantly less age-related deterioration in reaction time than those who walk less strenuously or not at all. Faster reaction times help seniors respond more effectively to unexpected problems that crop up, particularly during driving or in situations that could result in a fall.—*Health and Fitness News Service*.

"Grounds" for Concern?

Should you worry if your children consume drinks

containing caffeine?

There are no established guidelines on caffeine consumption for children, says a Baylor College of Medicine professor. But on a pound-for-pound basis, a 40-pound child drinking one 12-ounce cola a day is consuming about as much caffeine as a 150-pound adult drinking two cups of coffee.

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system and in adults causes nervousness, irritability, insomnia, and disturbances of heart rate and rhythm. Iced coffees and soft drinks are popular with children.—*Children's Nutrition Research Center*.



PHOTO DISC

—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.

A Theory Beyond Belief

BY BECKY LANE SCOGGINS, GRADUATE STUDENT AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Evolution hit the best-seller lists this year. Americans paid millions for recent books by evolutionary scientist Stephen Jay Gould. *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and other popular magazines carried major articles about Charles Darwin's theories. And in London, England, 300 people were turned away from a packed hall where two men debated the question "Does God exist?"

Many scientists say prehistoric evolution is no longer a theory but a fact. Why then are so many people still arguing about where we came from?

On one side of the London debate was Richard Dawkins, an Oxford professor, "ultra-Darwinist," and devout atheist. He spoke confidently of the "miserable logic" of using God to explain a complex universe. His opponent, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, was described by skeptical reporters as digressive and vague. It appeared that atheism had won.

But even Richard Dawkins loses sometimes. Critics say he puts too much faith in science and fails to address its

limitations. Others point to unexplained gaps in his evolutionary system.

Dawkins' biggest frustration? People who refuse to understand him. He can't believe that smart people would choose unproven theories over the simple logic of evolution. Despite his many lectures and best-selling books, some folks just don't get it.

Dawkins writes, "It is almost as if the human brain were specifically designed to misunderstand Darwinism, and to find it hard to believe."*

Maybe he's on to something.

Could it be that humans—deep inside—want to believe we're more than an accident? Humans long to know not only where we came from but why we exist in the first place. In the search for meaning, atheistic evolution fails.

Yes, Mr. Dawkins, Someone did design our minds, and we'll never find peace without Him. You'll find that truth in the best-selling Book of all time.

* Quoted in *The New Yorker*, Sept. 9, 1996, p. 45.

NEWS COMMENTARY

GOD'S CHRISTMAS CARD TO DILBERT

A little comfort to get him (and us) through the year.

BY DAVID B. SMITH

Dear Dilbert:

For the first time in quite a while I'm sending a Christmas card to a person who doesn't exist. YOU. Dilbert—the imaginary comic strip victim whose empty little life in an office cubicle resonates with millions of tired workers around the world.

There's no such person as Dilbert . . . and yet I—God—am the friend of those same anonymous millions who push aside the piles of unfinished work on their cluttered little desks for 10 seconds while they sneak a peek at your wildly popular comic strip, read the punch line, and then say with a resigned shake of the head: "Man, that's me! Dilbert is me." Creator Scott Adams, the 39-year-old whiz kid who currently rules the cartoon world, claims that Dilbert is 37 percent him . . . but in your heart you know better, don't you?

And so, Dilbert, whoever you are and



wherever you are, reading about your own abuse in 1,100 newspapers, this is your Christmas card from God.

This Is Personal

I know you. I know about your cubicle and how it keeps shrinking. I know about your paycheck and how it's shrinking too. I know about the rules and corporate policies that come down to you from the fifteenth floor, how they're designed to get more out of you while at the same time rewarding you with less.

I saw the strip in which your boss, with the two Lucifer-horn tufts of hair poking out of his bald head, muses to himself, "Theoretically, if I cut costs enough we'll be profitable without selling any products." And of course he wants to cut costs by squeezing a little bit more life right out of you. This is the same man who renounces the former motto: *Employees are our most valuable asset.* "Actually, they're ninth," he says. "Right behind carbon paper."

And I take note of how some of the hardest workers, those who really have pushed to improve their skills—because of union rules and fuzzy thinking from upstairs—are the ones who are let go. "We get rid of our best

people," says one technician. In fact, there's a word for it now: they call it *brightsizing*.

Magazine feature writer Stephen Levy puts it all in a memorable nutshell with his four D's: "Downsizing. Dumb bosses. Double talk. Densification." Then he adds: "That's office life in America's favorite comic strip. Too bad reality is even worse."

I know that Christmas is a hard time for all the Dillberts of the world. In another December another fictional character represented the underrepresented worker, the abused laborer. His name was Bob Cratchit, and he got off just that one day: December 25. His paycheck wasn't really enough to buy much of a Christmas, except for a smallish bird for dinner. There weren't many gifts. There wasn't even enough money for Tiny Tim's medicine. And even amid the spartan joy of that one day, that one brief respite from the piles of work and the villains named Dogbert and Catbert and Ebenezer Scrooge was the relentless reminder that December 26 was just a few short hours away. Tomorrow at sunrise the cubicle grind would start right up again.

So, Dillbert, I know about your hard

life. I see copies of every downsizing memo, every exploitive boardroom decision. I know about the cold cynicism when your boss remarks to an underpaid secretary: "I've decided to use humor in the workplace. Experts say humor eases tension, which is important in times when the workplace is being trimmed." And then he goes to one helpless victim with a mean smile on his face: "Knock, knock." "Who's there?" the man innocently responds. And the smile gets a little bit broader. "Not you anymore."

For 6,000 years the Dillbert people have been crying up to Me: "How long, O Lord, how long?" I see that there's a Web site now where tortured people just like you can report their horror stories. So you can shake your fist at Me, or you can shake your fist at www.myboss.com. And Dillbert, I understand your anger this December. I know that the Dillbert Zone Web site accumulates 1.5 million hits every single day and that yours has been recorded there. Your cry has been heard.

And maybe you've wondered why I don't ever seem to answer. Oh, true, you grumble, the Bible sets forth the principles of heaven. Yes, it does say in Luke 10:7: "The labourer is worthy of his hire."

WHOA! DO YOU THINK IT'S SAFE TO JUMP RIGHT INTO THE PREMEETING WITHOUT PLANNING IT?



7/5/96 © 1996 United Feature Syndicate, Inc. (NYC)

OKAY, LET'S GET THIS PRELIMINARY PREMEETING MEETING GOING.



YOU THINK YOU'RE FUNNY, BUT YOU'RE NOT.

DILLBERT REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE, INC.

"But my boss doesn't seem to read the book of Luke very much," you tell Me in your bone-weary prayers at the end of a 13-hour day. "Nobody in the glass towers at AT&T and Bank of America seems to care what God says about treating workers with respect."

In fact, it was ironic to read in *Newsweek's* cover article about Dilbert back in August some of the code expressions that try to sugar-coat a batch of layoffs. Bell Labs: "Involuntary separation from payroll." Clifford of Vermont: "Career-change *opportunity*." Digital Equipment Corporation: "Involuntary severance." Tandem Computers: "Reducing duplication or focused reduction." Wal-Mart: "Normal payroll deduction." And ironically, *Newsweek* even told on itself. Here's its own spin-doctored slogan: "RIF—reduction in force."

So you wonder: "Why does God hear . . . but not act?" Why are the corporate monsters still up there in their helicopters, padding their bonuses and gloating over their golden parachutes while you've just been rified?

Heaven's Way

Dilbert, I hope you can understand something that's always been heaven's way. I let the sun shine on the good and the bad alike. The weeds keep growing right along with the wheat. Unlike in Hollywood's tight little one-hour dramas, here in real life the bad guys win a lot of the time. *Until the very end of the story*—that's when I step in.

You know, back in the Old Testament there's a psalm that we might suggest was written by Dilbert himself. It's got your name on it. Oh, the Bible you've got in your bottom drawer probably says instead: "Psalm 73: A psalm of Asaph." But he was a Dilbert if there ever was one.

Here's what he types into the Web site of biblical protests: "My feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They

are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth" (NIV).

That's your boss he's describing, isn't it, Dilbert? And just one verse later this arrogant tycoon with his mountain of stock bonuses actually looks up scornfully at the sky and laughs to his friends. "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Ha! There's nobody out there to call me on my little power schemes."

But then in verse 17 things finally turn around. After years of abuse in the Wall Street jungle this bedraggled worker, Asaph/Dilbert, still hangs in there, and he writes these words: "This recent struggle went on until I went to your Sanctuary. Then I realized what will happen to the wicked and got a different perspective on things. . . . When the end comes, how quickly they will disappear. They will be gone in a moment, consumed by their own sins" (*Clear Word*).

I'm With You

Well, Dilbert, even though it's tempting, we certainly don't want to end on that note. Christmas—celebrating the birth of My Son—is almost here, and I want to tell you right here and now how much I love you. I'm aware of you; cramped as things are, I'm there *with you* in that cubicle. When the woman next to you gets laid off and you wonder, *Will I be next?* I'm with her and with you. I'm there, Dilbert.

And I can promise you this. Even when heaven seems as silent as a cold December night, my promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 is as real as the coming of Christmas morning. "God is faithful; He [that's Me] will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

But when you *are* tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (NIV).

Dilbert, I'll never let it get worse than you can stand; I promise you that. Your bread and your water will be sure (see Isa. 33:16); I promise you that, too.

Don't forget that despite earthly flowcharts, you really have a straight-line relationship directly to Me. Sure, your boss down there may give himself a big raise while you do without. On Christmas Eve he may lay on your desk some of the work he should have done. He may take four-week vacations while telling you that you have to come in this Saturday. But hang in there, because you really work for Me.

And the day's going to come when, just like the good boss did in the parable of Matthew 25, I'm going to say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (NIV). And then the great Christmas line: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Merry Christmas, Dilbert. Your work shift's almost over.

Your Friend, God

"God's Christmas Card to Dilbert" is part of an annual Voice of Prophecy radio tradition. Recent Christmas cards "from God" to convicted murderer Susan Smith (1994) and grieving father Fred Goldman (1995) received Angel awards from Excellence in Media, a Hollywood media group.

David B. Smith is the writer and producer of the daily broadcast of the Voice of Prophecy, an international radio ministry.



Except as We Forgot

With this installment the Growing Up Adventist series concludes. Some of you will be glad to hear that. From the beginning (March 1995) you haven't understood the point of a column about a typical Adventist kid's typical Adventist childhood.

Fair enough. There certainly isn't anything sacred about my family's experiences in small-church, small-town Minnesota. You won't be held responsible for knowing how old I was when I played a firefly in the Christmas play¹ or where the Kleins sat in church. There will not, at any point, be a quiz.

But there's another family whose experiences we *must* acquaint ourselves with, but too often don't. The Adventist family, all six generations of us.

The statement is so familiar, so often repeated, that it's lost most of its impact: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

Maybe Ellen White knew something. Maybe she knew that we would dutifully pass on the doctrines and the standards and the counsels—but neglect to pass on the stories. Maybe she sensed that without continually reminding ourselves where we've been, we'd forget where we are and where we're going. She's right; we have. And a whole generation, my generation, is floundering.

They've floundered before.

Judges 2 finds a whole generation of kids who know the standards, but don't know the stories. "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. . . ." (Judges 2:10, NIV).

Growing up Adventist, growing up Israelite—it's all the same. We've got to pass on the stories of God's leading, or we'll find ourselves asking How did we get here, anyway? If the Old Testament life of faith can be boiled down to one thing—remembering the mighty acts of God—our life of faith should be no different.

While the most recounted story must be Jesus' death and resurrection, we can't ignore His most recent leadings: Miller's reluctant proclamation, Edson's cornfield revelation, a weak woman's undeniable gift, a post-

Disappointment splinter's astounding growth, and on and on until we reach the mighty acts God performs today.

So I ask you:

Parents, are you using Ellen White stories—or felts—with your children? Why not?

Collegians, are you taking Adventist Heritage? Are you taking it seriously? Why not?

Lifelong members, are you reading books like George Knight's *Anticipating the Advent* to keep before you the "spirit of the pioneers"? Why not?

Loyal *Review* readers, have you bought 1997 gift subscriptions for those you care about? Why not?

How can we connect with the Adventist family when we neglect our family history?



A few weeks ago I phoned my sister Angel at her Chattanooga apartment. I don't see Angel much these days. We no longer sit in church and eat raisins, chase butterflies on our three-wheeler,² or ice-skate on the pond we found (see photo). When we do get together, though, the discussion inevitably turns to our childhood. It did again during this call.

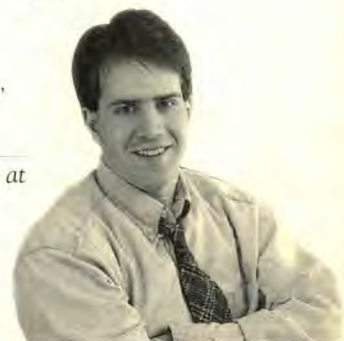
We were discussing dogs, and I mentioned the time she wanted to give our new puppy the ridiculous name "Dairy." No, she said, *you* were the one who wanted to name it "Dairy." No, I said, *you* were. Before long we were both hysterical. What a stupid conversation. Fifteen years later and we're talking about something that makes absolutely no difference in our lives. No difference at all.

Except that it reminds me how much we've been through together—and how glad I am that we're brother and sister.

¹ No, it wasn't last year.

² "I'll drive, Angel; you hold the net!"

Andy Nash is assistant to the editor at the *Adventist Review*. This series will make up one third of his *Growing Up Adventist* book to be published by Pacific Press this spring.



BOOK

• M A R K •

Prayer Warriors



Celeste Perrino Walker, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1996, 320 pages, US\$12.99, Cdn\$18.99, paper. Reviewed by Becky Lane Scoggins, of Elkridge, Maryland.

She is a freelance writer and a graduate student in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University.

She's old, frail, and bedridden. Illness shuts her off from the world. But when Ethel Bennington prays, the universe moves.

And lives change. As the pivotal character in *Prayer Warriors*, Ethel uses daily prayer to touch a multitude: the wife of an injured logger, a childless couple, a withdrawn amputee, a pregnant teenager considering abortion, a bitter mission doctor haunted by memories of war in Rwanda.

Author Celeste Perrino Walker weaves a page-turning epic of spiritual war. She writes about two levels of life—the visible world of humans and the invisible sphere of angels and demons. Between scenes of struggling missionaries and lonely wives, we read the scheming plans of Satan's forces. Behind a miraculous healing, we glimpse the intervention of angels.

The story's point is clear: prayer is not optional for God's believers. And it's not a spectator sport. Walker moves prayer from the civilized

sidelines of Christianity to the fierce center of the battle.

I haven't read many Adventist books with a more engaging plot. Along the way we encounter multiple settings and enough characters to populate a Russian novel, although the author includes a list to help us keep them straight. Action moves briskly, and I was only tempted to skim during some repetitive passages.

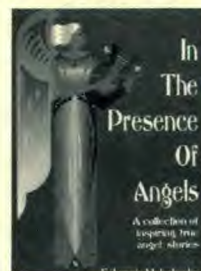
Occasionally the author uses characters to facilitate the plot in ways that don't ring true; they might speak in lengthy sermons or experience artificial leaps in personal growth. And a few scenes seem too convenient for me to swallow, such as when two missionaries make an emergency flight in an abandoned plane that hasn't been touched for ages (no mention is made of where they found fuel). But overall the book sounds warm and believable.

Walker writes with vision, and her imaginative look at Satan's strategies will appeal to fans of C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. She also alludes to Christianity's most disturbing questions: Does God cause pain? Does He just allow it? Does He not care at all? Or perhaps there is another explanation, one of a loving God who cries with His children and longs to help them, if only they would ask.

A major theme of *Prayer Warriors* is the great controversy as understood by Seventh-day Adventists. However, Walker does not specifically mention the denomination, and you may find this book perfect for sharing new concepts with friends.

Like a pair of three-dimensional glasses, this story could change the way you see reality. In *The Great Controversy* Ellen White writes, "There is nothing that the great deceiver fears so much as that we shall become acquainted with his devices" (p. 516). *Prayer Warriors* throws a spotlight on those devices and on our own sin of prayerlessness. Just off the press, the book is in most Adventist Book Centers this month.

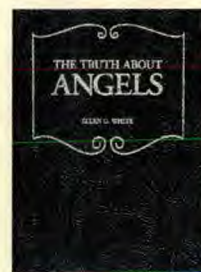
Angels, Angels



In the Presence of Angels: A Collection of Inspiring, True Angel Stories, E. Lonnie Melashenko and Timothy E. Crosby, Pacific Press Publishing

Association, Boise, Idaho, 1995, 256 pages, US\$10.99, Cdn\$15.99, paper.

Even after a year this collection of angel stories remains a top seller. These true stories give hope and evidence of God's protection and guidance in a world gone out of control. Unlike most angel books in today's market, the authors give a biblical overview of the subject. They also attempt to struggle with the hard questions that arise when angels seem to be absent. It is the first Seventh-day Adventist book included in the *Guideposts* catalog.



The Truth About Angels, Ellen G. White, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1996, 314 pages, US\$12.99, Cdn\$18.99, hard cover.

"Angels of God are all around us" begins one statement in this collection of many Ellen White made on the topic of angels. Compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate, the book is a valuable resource and treasured devotional. In these readings we find comforting assurance that God has not left us alone.

Ellen White portrays angels as more than protectors in times of crisis—they work with us to help others, they impress, they console, they change the events of history.

This volume makes a good holiday gift for friends and family as they contemplate the Christmas story and the angels that sing "on high."

Nativity

ROSY TETZ



Have you ever made a Nativity scene? A Nativity scene shows how things might have looked the night Jesus was born. Inside the stable we find shepherds and Wise Men (usually three of each) and some sheep and maybe a cow and a donkey. Mary and Joseph sit or stand near the manger, where Baby Jesus lies wrapped up tight.

Nativity scenes can be made out of lots of things. Some are made of brightly colored plastic so that kids can play with them. Some are made from delicate and expensive glass, and no one can play with them. Some are carved out of wood. Some are made out of cloth or paper or stone. Sometimes real people dress up in bathrobes and pretend they are characters in the story—they create a living Nativity.

A Nativity scene can even be made of words and music. Do you know the

song "Silent Night"? It tells about the Nativity.

The Nativity has been drawn and painted hundreds of thousands of times, with pencils and ink and crayons and all kinds of paint. What a wonderful picture! We never get tired of making it. We never get tired of looking at it.

Sometimes when we see a Nativity that we've never seen before, it helps us realize something new about the birth of Jesus. That God's Son came to our world amazes us all over again.

When we unpack our old Nativity scene to decorate our house for the Christmas season, we remember why we celebrate Christmas. We think about why Jesus was born.

Jesus came to save us. Jesus came because He loves us.

This Christmas maybe you can make a Nativity scene. As you draw or paint or create each figure, think about why that person is in the scene.

The shepherds had just seen a skyful of angels and heard them sing. What a night they were having! (Read about it in Luke 2:8-20.)

The Wise Men weren't actually at the stable. They were on their way to worship the baby King, following the star, and bringing gifts. Because they belong in the story, we like to include them in our Nativities. (Read about them in Matthew 2:1-

12).



It's nice to think about the animals that must have been there. After all, Jesus was born in their house. Maybe the donkey that Mary rode to Bethlehem was there. Maybe the shepherds brought along some sheep. Maybe the Wise Men had camels. There might have been birds. There might have been cows.

How do you think Mary and Joseph looked? Holy and peaceful? Tired and worried? Happy and excited? What a lot they had to think about!

Then, of course, we see Baby Jesus. In your Nativity, will He be awake or asleep? Will He be smiling or serious? In some Nativity pictures everything is quite dark (because it is night), but Baby Jesus glows. He is the Light of the world. Would you like to show something like that in your Nativity?

The Nativity is the most beautiful picture, the most wonderful idea, that has ever come to the world. Aren't you glad we have Christmas every year?

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BY JAMES A. DITTES

Joseph—Christian Number One

When I was growing up, the church Christmas pageant was the year's equivalent of Star Search. Not only did the children have to be able to sing and follow stage directions, but there were also times we had to be perfectly still and—even worse—act serious.

The prettiest and most talented girl in the church always got to play Mary, leaving the rest of the girls to play angels or heavily disguised shepherds. The guys tried for the parts of singing Wise Men or the number one shepherd, who got to say: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass!" Even the part of the innkeeper ("Nope, no room here!") had some status to it.

Wordless Part

The part nobody wanted was Joseph. He had to be serious through the entire performance, staring lovingly at the doll in the manger or welcoming the shepherds and the Wise Men. The part of Joseph was somewhere on a par with shepherd number 6, whose part was merely to kneel at the manger. Joseph had no song to sing, no Magnificat. He simply stared solemnly at the manger and welcomed his guests.

But is Joseph's part in the Christmas story just an excuse to let the big, quiet kid have a part in the Christmas program? Or have we missed something? Was Joseph just a compassionate carpenter who added some support and legitimacy to Mary's pregnancy, or does he symbolize something we overlook?

To really understand Joseph, we must first look at the difficult situation he faced. A widower with children of his own, Joseph asked Mary, a young, unattached woman, to be his wife. He was an established carpenter with a solid reputation. She, on the other hand, seems to have been ignored by younger eligible men.

Perhaps it was out of charity that Joseph proposed to Mary; and perhaps it was out of pity that he chose to divorce her quietly, finding that she was pregnant. Matthew says that he "was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace" (1:19, NIV); but we must also realize that Joseph had a reputation to protect. Joseph,

business owner, respected citizen of Nazareth, and member of the royal line of David, had everything to lose because of Mary's untimely pregnancy.



The untold details of the Christmas story include Joseph's loss: the shame he quietly incurred as his fiancée showed signs of her pregnancy, the innuendos that tarnished his reputation in Nazareth, and the blow to his carpentry business that the long exile in Egypt must have cost him.

The unasked question regarding Joseph's part of the Advent should be: What did he get from the Christmas story other than a wordless role in thousands of Nativity scenes down through the ages?

The answer lies in Joseph's decision.

Matthew tells us that an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, reassuring him about Mary's child and giving him the responsibility of naming the child Jesus, which means "the Lord saves." And Joseph believed.

That's right. Instead of giving in to his shame, Joseph believed. He believed that the child growing inside Mary, the child that by custom he should have publicly disowned, was the child of God. He believed that this child, whom he would hold in his arms, would someday "save his people from their sins." He believed that through this child, Immanuel, "God is with us." For that Joseph gave up a great deal.

Before John the Baptist or the disciples Andrew and John, there was Joseph. Many months before the Christ child was born, he became the first Christian. He was the first to pass the litmus test of John 3:16—the first to believe in Him and the first to sacrifice for Jesus.

This year as we watch Joseph plod quietly and somberly through the Christmas pageant, let's remember the decisions he made months before the first Advent and the costly gifts he laid down at the manger. Let's remember he was the first to believe. ■

James A. Dittes is an English teacher and writer living in Superior, Arizona.



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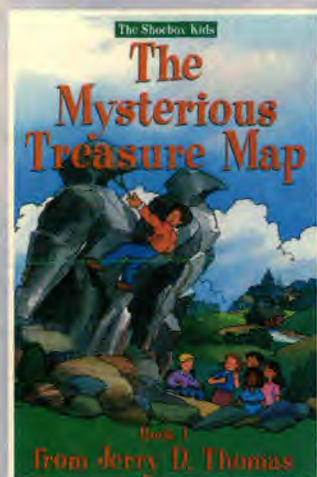
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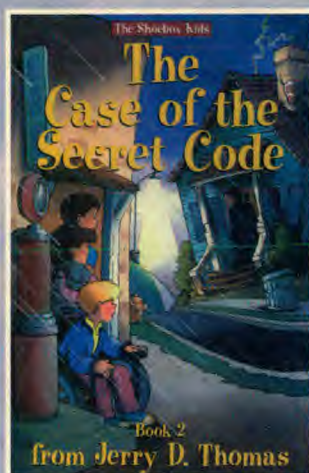
THE SHOEBOX KIDS

MYSTERY SERIES



The Mysterious Treasure Map

SNAKE CREEK PASS has a hidden treasure! There is one big problem: the mysterious writing on the map! The Shoebox Kids are on a wild chase to find clues about the buried treasure. In their search they find answers to questions about baptism and treasures in heaven.



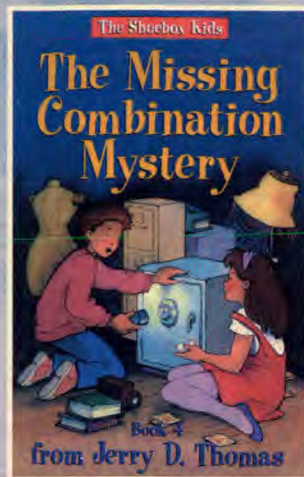
The Case of the Secret Code

Coded messages, a missing library book, a mystery person and a disappearance! How can this all happen in two days? A clue-finding mission reveals the truth about the disappearances and about prayer. But watch out! There are messages to decode and who knows when the mystery person may show up!



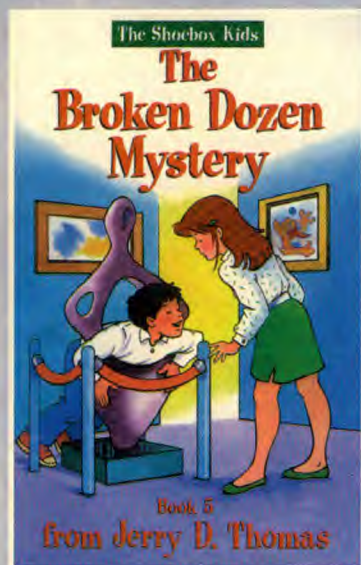
Jenny's Cat-napped Cat

Winning the blue ribbon at the church's Family Day pet show was all Jenny could think about. But now her cat, Butterscotch, is missing! Who is to blame? As Jenny searches for clues she learns a big lesson in forgiveness.



The Missing Combination Mystery

In a dark corner of the basement there is a hidden safe. The old safe contains answers to many mysteries. But what's the combination? The Shoebox Kids search for ways to open the safe and almost end up losing a dear friend. Can the missing combination tie it all together?



The Broken Dozen Mystery

Sheffield Matheson, Mill Valley's most famous artist painted twelve pictures of children, but when he died in a mysterious fire, one painting disappeared. Was the painting burned in the fire? Can it be found? Can the Shoebox Kids solve a mystery the police could never figure out?



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Mabel R. Miller

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