

# ADVENTIST Review



May 8, 1997

World Edition

**Who Prays First?**

**Spring Without Mother**

**Lessons From the Tan-tan Tree**

**Beaten but Not Broken**

**The faithful witness of Kazil Shemkov**



# LETTERS

## South Mexico

I enjoyed William Johnsson's "South Mexico—Baptisms and Bloodshed" (Mar. 13), which focused on the growth of the church despite religious persecution.



In August Maranatha volunteers will

be constructing an urgently needed school in the Pacific coastal region of Chiapas. On a recent visit I found that the violence is centered in specific locations in the large state of Chiapas and is virtually nonexistent in the Pacific coastal regions. Maranatha hopes that these geographic differences will be recognized and that many people will help further expand the Adventist Church in this area.

—**Kyle Fiess**, MARANATHA  
VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL  
(KFIESS@MARANATHA.ORG)

"South Mexico—Baptisms and Bloodshed" caused me to join Robert Folkenberg in shedding tears of joy and sorrow.

As members of Mission Projects, Inc. (supporting member of ASI), we have since 1989 financially and emotionally sponsored a lay ministry in Chiapas. These dedicated people joyously share the Adventist message at great sacrifice to themselves and their families. More than 8,000 baptisms and 100 church groups have resulted.

—**Velma Beavon**  
DAYTON, MONTANA

## Keeping Ellen White Current

It's time somebody said it, so I will: Enough is enough!

According to Kit Watts ("Keeping Ellen White Current," March NAD Edition), it's time to modernize Ellen White's writings because she quit writing an intolerable 85 years ago and we can't handle such ancient English. Never mind that middle school kids still read eighteenth-century pieces in

### Clarification

"Are Homosexuals God's Children?" (April NAD Edition) is bringing heavy mail. Some readers expressed concern that the article seemed to condone homosexual practice. It was not intended to do so, and we apologize for any misunderstanding. We draw a sharp distinction between homosexual *tendencies* and homosexual *activity*: on biblical grounds we support people who struggle with the former, but we reject the practice.

Look for readers' reactions to this article beginning with the June NAD Edition.—Editors.

literature class or that people still pay to hear what Shakespeare wrote in the 1600s.

*Steps to Jesus* was a fine book, done to help people who are learning English—far too worthy a project to be used as an excuse for a wholesale translation of Ellen White's writings.

—**Lewis R. Walton**  
GLENNVILLE, CALIFORNIA

We've found that Ellen White is hardest to understand when she quotes (sometimes long) passages from the King

James Version. Simply changing those quotes to a modern translation would help readability—and there might be less resistance to such changes.

—**Byron and Dawn Burke**  
VIA E-MAIL

## Women and the Church

Carlos Medley should be commended for his excellent "Groundbreaking Steps" (Mar. 13). Indeed, getting more women into leadership positions will bring more balance to the church and is, therefore, "good for the King's business."

However, just to keep history from gradually becoming skewed, please correct one inaccuracy. The editorial refers to "the General Conference session vote not to ordain women to the gospel ministry."

The 1995 General Conference session did *not* vote to not ordain women. It voted to not allow individual world divisions to make policy decisions apart from the world body.

—**Madeline S. Johnston**  
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

Thanks to Carlos Medley for his thoughtful and thought-provoking editorial.

Getting representation in the church must begin at the local level. It means having women active on the local church board. It means electing women to serve as delegates to constituency meetings at both the conference and the union level. It means all boards and committees carefully checking that they have gender—as well as economic, ethnic, and



age—representation and balance.

—**Ardis Stenbakken**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, GENERAL  
CONFERENCE WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Sexist attitudes die hard. Carlos Medley writes: "As a church we must tap our growing pool of female talent."

In what sense is the "female talent" in our church a "growing pool"? Our church has always had more women than men. The only way the pool of female talent can grow relative to the total pool of talent is for today's women to have more talent than before. This is an insult to the women who have borne an unrecognized share of our church work for many decades.

It's not the pool of female talent that has changed, but that even male Adventist leaders are forced to recognize that women have talent—that they can lead and manage and speak and write.

Praise for a few outstanding women selected to fill token positions while the majority of leadership and management positions are filled by men of mediocre talent doesn't cut it.

—**Joyce Griffith**

CALDWELL, IDAHO

## The Commandment-challenged

In "The Commandment-challenged" (Mar. 13), Gary Krause reports on 200 British clergy, of whom two thirds could not remember all ten commandments.

Last quarter, in a midterm examination, I asked 47 first-year seminarians a surprise question worth bonus points: Write the Ten Commandments in correct order. They could write them according to any translation, but all the pieces needed to be there.

Eight of the 47 could do it. Another 18 could write them in summary form (e.g., "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"—period). None of the others got them right, including six who did not even try.

These are seminarians. I don't know how our ministers or church members would have fared, but I have the strong

impression that Adventists are becoming increasingly biblically illiterate. What we call Bible study is doctrinal study or something else. In Sabbath school we are supposed to be studying books of the Bible, but most people just study the quarterly, if even that.

We are developing a terrific delivery system but have less and less to deliver.

—**Robert M. Johnston**, CHAIR

NEW TESTAMENT DEPARTMENT  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

## Review Online (cont.)

Serving here at Adventist World Radio for four and a half years, I haven't subscribed to the *Review* because it takes up to two months to arrive. Today I downloaded the *Review* and want to thank you for making it available electronically. Keep up the good work!

—**Gary Benton**, ASSISTANT ENGINEER

ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO-ASIA

I really appreciate the online edition of the *Review*. When younger I would read the *Review* over Sabbath breakfast. This Sabbath morning my notebook computer was my breakfast companion as I read the *Review* again. My thanks to the *Review* and to the Health and Temperance Department for sponsoring.

—**Dave Jeffrey**

TRINIDAD, WEST INDIES

## Omission

While you have had changes in your staff, William Johnsson's "What the New *Review* Taught Me" (January NAD Edition) omits the most amazing thing about the new *Review*. It is largely produced by the same people who produced the old *Review*. That is a lesson to all of us about what God can do.

—**L. Fraser Jackson**

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

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# 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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# Going for the Jugular

ROY ADAMS

I had just dictated the first draft of the editorial you're reading now and was flying back to Washington, D.C., from California. Next to me sat 72-year-old Ruth Underhill Andrew, of Fullerton, California—alert, pleasant, self-assured. Toward the end of our flight together I put away my office work and she her reading, and we fell into conversation. Had I ever visited Savannah (Georgia), she wanted to know (quite out of the blue), and if so, what had I thought of the place?

My answer somehow included mention that I work for the international paper of the Adventist Church. Her eyes lit up upon hearing the church's name. "I want to thank the Seventh-day Adventists for helping me quit smoking many years ago," she interrupted. "The cramps in my hands and feet completely disappeared after I attended their Five-Day Plan [to Stop Smoking]. I've seen many of my friends die of [lung] cancer." And, she added finally, "I sold my stock in Philip Morris."

I could hardly believe my luck—running into a testimony like that while preparing an editorial on tobacco! So you understand why I changed my lead, don't you?

This happened back in March—a bad month for the tobacco cartel in the United States. First came news that the Florida Supreme Court had given the green light for the state to proceed with lawsuits against the tobacco companies, to recover the cost of treating residents with tobacco-related ailments.

Then American Airlines announced a total ban on smoking on all its flights worldwide.

The third bit of news was by far the most dramatic. "In an extraordinary admission," trumpeted the *New York Times* on its front page (echoing the headlines in every major newspaper and the lead story on all the big television networks in the United States), "one of the nation's major cigarette makers acknowledged today that tobacco is addictive and causes cancer."

The concession by Liggett Group, Inc., accompanied by the acknowledgment that the "tobacco companies had for decades consciously marketed their products to children as young as

14," came as part of a deal to settle lawsuits brought against the company by 22 states, seeking "compensation from the industry for the estimated \$6 billion in annual state health-care costs tied to smoking."\*

After decades of lockstep denials by the industry, this was an amazing development. And given our historic position on smoking and health, it ought to bring us a sense of satisfaction and gratitude.

Remember when we were the lone voice out in the wilderness on this issue? How daunting the task seemed then! Ten million puffs of smoke, twirling upward from as many stubborn lips, seemed to mock our feeble efforts.

Meanwhile, however, forces unknown to us were building. And in a way that no one quite understands, those forces have now come together, producing what we witness today.



**The image of the camel, a beast that for centuries has been a symbol of life, is now used by Big Tobacco as an enticement to death for thousands of youth in America.**

This is the World Edition of the *Review*, and I have a concern for what's happening outside North America. Everywhere I travel beyond the United States and Canada, smoke blows in my face—while waiting for my ride in a London hotel lobby, while sitting in a restaurant in Mexico, while waiting at an airport lounge in Accra, or Amsterdam, or Santiago, or Paris. People light up as if we're still living in the forties and fifties. How often have I wished that we might begin to see the same developments in these countries as we now do in North America!

Instead, the situation in some places is becoming worse. As the tobacco cartel comes under legal and economic pressure in North America, these predators have begun shipping their deadly business to easier markets elsewhere, targeting youth in particular—fully aware of the lethal poison they're peddling.

Such behavior is truly subhuman. And the goal of decent people everywhere should be nothing less than the total dismantlement of the industry, worldwide. It's time to go for the jugular.

\* *New York Times*, Mar. 21, 1997, p. A-1.



PHOTO © PHOTODISC



# Treasure in a Brown Paper Bag

**T**o his friends and family he was the personification of stability: hardworking, conscientious, predictable.

He lived a farmer's lifestyle—long hours; back-breaking work; the heart-break of unpredictable weather (not enough rain during the planting season, too much during the harvest); the endless battle against the rocks and weeds in the field he leased.

But lately they noticed a certain compulsiveness creeping into his life. What formerly they saw as eccentricity they now viewed as mental instability.

He began neglecting his family, consumed in coaxing a crop from the marginally fertile soil.

Then he came home one evening babbling, incoherent. His wife struggled to make sense of his mumbling: "It has to go! All of it! The quicker, the better!"

"What on earth are you talking about?" she wanted to know.

Her queries were met by frantic activity as he pulled clothes, food, furnishings from their house, dumping everything into the front yard, where neighbors quickly appeared and began handling the stuff that sat in piles under the hastily scrawled words: "For Sale."

His wife's friends tried to comfort her while their husbands searched for bargains. By the end of the following day the only clothes the family owned were the ones they wore on their backs. There was no furniture to cover the bare floors, no food in the cupboards, there weren't even cupboards.

So the neighbors were understandably confused when a few days later the man and his family began living the lifestyle of royalty, rather than that of dirt farmers. Until they heard the story of a man, working alone, uncovering a long-buried treasure, and making every sacrifice to procure the field and make the treasure his own (see Matt. 13:44).

The moral of the story? The kingdom of heaven is worth any earthly sacrifice. (Let's stand for the benediction.)

But wait. There's at least one more application to be harvested from this story. Just as the farmer was agonizingly close to an incredible fortune without realizing it, so we daily rub shoulders with fellow pilgrims who, on the outside, appear plain, even less than desirable.

One of the great ironies of the gospel is Paul's statement "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we

were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8, NIV). While we still looked (and lived) as rebels, God saw the treasure that had been obscured by centuries of sin.

*It's not just for us  
that Christ paid  
the ransom.*

And it's not just for us that Christ paid the ransom. He died also for those who seem least likely to respond to His grace: the derelict who sifts through dumpsters looking for half-eaten food; the white-collar worker lost to materialism; the addict who prostitutes her body to buy another "hit"; the bigot who uses religion as a cloak to cover his violent schemes; the secularist whose self-sufficiency

prevents her from looking for divine solutions to society's problems.

They work in the next cubicle, wait for the same bus, sit in the same waiting room, stand beside us in the supermarket checkout line. We often don't recognize them, because we can't penetrate their rough exteriors.

I'll never forget going to a house one day, following up a lead someone had passed on to me. The house needed paint, and the yard was littered with broken toys and broken-down cars. Inside the modest and neat home I met a woman and her unemployed husband. They wanted Bible studies, they said. They seemed like lukewarm prospects, but I left them a couple lessons to work on and made an appointment to meet them the following week.

When I returned, we reviewed the first lesson about surrender. I got to the last question: "Do you want to give your life to Jesus and accept Him as your Saviour?"

"Yes!" they both answered in unison.

"You do?" I asked, surprised at their enthusiastic reply.

They responded that they not only wanted to accept Jesus as their Saviour, but also wanted to get baptized. And shortly afterward, they were.

The prophet Isaiah said of the Messiah, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2, NIV). Yet however unappealing His outward appearance, His specialty was (and is) to look for, and find, the treasure in everyone.

And if we're to accomplish all that He asks of us, we have to do likewise. Happy hunting.





# GIVE & TAKE

## SOLID GROUND

When God runs the church, it will always be on solid ground.

This can be illustrated by the blending of the words "God" and "run," which will form solid "Ground."

However, if "I" try to run the church, the result is "ruin."

—Dr. Freburn L. James, Zillah, Washington

### WE NEED YOU

Give & Take is your page. Send your "Adventist Quotes," top-quality photos, "Adventist Life" vignettes, "Readers' Exchange" items, and other short contributions to: Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; CompuServe: 74532,2564.

## ADVENTIST LIFE

I was a missionary kid for all of my teen years. While I had many rare opportunities to interface with other cultures, I'll best remember the "culture" created by a group of missionaries living in close proximity. Like family, we would often eat together, play together, work together, and laugh together. Inevitably, the closeness also gave rise to occasional tensions.

It was at one of these times that I recall first learning the time-hallowed and solemn hymn: "For all the saints, who from their neighbors rest . . ."

—B. Adams, Springfield, Oregon



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

## READERS' EXCHANGE

In this feature, Adventists request correspondence on a specific topic. (Note: This is not a general "pen pal" or classified ads feature.) Send replies to the writer, not to the Adventist Review.

**WINGS AND PRAYERS:** I'm seeking believers in the aviation/airline industry who love God's Sabbath day. I'd like to start an informal ministry and share each other's burdens and victories in this area.

—Liam Lang (UPS), 9317 Villa Fair Court, Louisville, KY 40291-1492; 72012.707@compuserve.com

**SPECIAL EDUCATION HOPES:** I have been looking at a special education teachers' degree program in hopes of specializing in cognitive development. How do I make the transition from working full-time and studying part-time to studying full-time and working part-time? If you've faced this dilemma or have any information about special education studies, I would love to hear from you.

—Marni Rogers, 6 Indian Ridge Drive, West Lebanon, New Hampshire 03784; Rogers@neesnet.com

## KEEP ON TRUCKING



### HOW ROMANTIC?

It is if you know the background. For three years Emma Davison worked at ADRA/Trans-Europe and ADRA/United Kingdom transporting clothing, food, and medical equipment to Albania, the former Yugoslavia, and the Baltic countries. The program gripped the imagination of many young

church members throughout Britain. One of those members, Nathan Stickland, began driving an ADRA truck, even risking his life on mercy missions to Sarajevo. The plight of the poor and helpless war victims made an indelible impression on both Emma and Nathan—and, in the meantime, drew them together. Following their recent wedding in the Stanborough Park church in Watford, England, 400 well-wishers watched the Sticklands roar away in none other than a 38-ton ADRA juggernaut (though some suspect that the couple may have transferred to a more comfortable vehicle just around the corner). Story by John Arthur, ADRA/Trans-Europe.



# Beaten but Not Broken

BY RAE PATTERSON

**I**S TODAY FRIDAY OR SATURDAY?" ONE of the inmates asked the guy next to him in the prison lineup.

"I don't remember for sure myself," he answered, "but if you see Shemkov in a clean shirt getting jerked out of line, you'll know it's 'Shemkov Day.'"

Of all the stories that came out of Bulgaria during those dark years of Communist control, this story of Kazil Shemkov stands out. Although his father was an Adventist pastor, he was able to attend school—a privilege not regularly given to our believers—and excelled at the university in Scorpio, Macedonia. In fact, for a period of time he taught classes at the university while he was preparing his dissertation for a doctorate in the sciences.

Dissatisfied with this life, however, Shemkov began to seek other challenges. He was offered scholarships at universities in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France, but he began to realize that what he really wanted to do was to become a pastor like his father.

At about this time World War II broke out, and Shemkov was drafted into military service. When the war was over, he returned home looking for work. He had many friends in the area, and before long, with his natural charisma and leadership talents, he was elected the mayor of Velus, Macedonia.

Some years after becoming mayor, however, Shemkov heard that the nearby city of Varna in Bulgaria was needing a pastor. The need for pastors was so great that the Bulgarian Union Conference leaders were not requiring any specific training for their pastors. What they needed was a consecrated Christian who could lead a church and inspire its people to worship God, even in the face of great adversity. Shemkov saw this opening as an opportunity for him finally to realize his long-postponed dream. It took very little persuasion to convince the church leaders to hire this popular young mayor as pastor of the Varna church.

Shemkov was not the type of man who could quietly

THE FAITHFUL



move into an area and go about his pastoral duties unnoticed, however. He had dreamed of pastoring for too long merely to sit by tending a church flock. He fervently felt the call to hold meetings in the nearby town of Pleven, since he had found many interested people in the area.

The activities of this enthusiastic young pastor in Pleven were not welcomed by some, however. The city council had already been looking for an excuse to arrest Shemkov when he came to them asking for permission to use a little house in town for meetings. "You cannot have a house to hold meetings in," they answered, "and if you continue spreading your beliefs in this town, we will give you Belene."

Now, everyone in Bulgaria knew what Belene meant. It was the location of the most notorious concentration camp on the northern border, which the Communists operated during their years in power. The tales of hard labor and cruel treatment had long been whispered from one terrified compatriot to another.

Shemkov was shocked by their threat, but refused to be daunted by it. "I am willing to go to Belene if need be, because I must continue to do the work of a pastor."

The council sent him away that day, but they began to lay plans for his arrest. Not long after—when Shemkov was out of town—the police came at 5:00 in the morning and broke into his house looking for subversive (religious) literature. When he returned later, the police were waiting for him.

"Come with us for a little while," they said as they led him away from his

home and family. "We want to talk to you." They actually spent very little time in the local police station, because they had already made plans to transport him to Belene.

Life in the concentration camp soon settled into a monotonous rhythm. Every day was a workday.



Every able-bodied prisoner was given a shovel and made to dig up five cubic meters of earth a day and move it 300 meters. There was so little food for the inmates that, tired as they were, it was still difficult to sleep at night because of their constant hunger.

But in addition to these hardships, Shemkov had another problem. He would not work on the Sabbath day. The prison guards could hardly believe it when that first Saturday morning rolled around and Shemkov respectfully refused to take a shovel. "I cannot work today," he told them. "It is my Sabbath."

Angered by this challenge to their authority and confident of their ability to force him to change his mind, they immediately jerked him out of line and dragged him to the center of the square, where they severely beat him in front of all 3,000 prisoners in his unit. After the beating he was in no shape to work, so he would be allowed to return to his sleeping quarters.

Week after week this scene was repeated. The prison authorities doubled his workload. But no matter what they did, each Saturday morning Shemkov would appear at line call in a clean shirt and once again respectfully refuse to take up his shovel and go to work.

During the summertime there was a stretch of about four months when there were no holidays or breaks in the schedule, and sometimes the inmates would begin to lose track of the days. It seemed only Shemkov could remember what day it was. In fact, many

began to call Saturday "Shemkov Day," since the pattern was nearly always the same. Once in a while a compassionate guard would hide Shemkov on Saturday and give an excuse for his absence.

But then one day it happened. Shemkov lost track of the days. He had even remembered to start the Sabbath on Friday evening, but when he awoke on Sabbath morning, he got caught up in the routine of things and forgot what day it was. He lined up in his dirty worn shirt and accepted a shovel as they were being handed out. He didn't notice the





startled looks on the faces of the inmates around him. He had worked about half the morning when he finally sat down for a bit of a rest.

One of the inmates working next to him said, "Shemkov, how come you are working today?"

Shemkov was puzzled by the question. "I have to work just like the rest of you," he said.

"But Shemkov," the man spoke now in a lowered voice, "don't you remember that today is your Sabbath?"

Suddenly Shemkov felt his whole body flush with a fiery perspiration. Was it true? Had he forgotten the Sabbath day? Just to be sure, he asked a couple other inmates nearby what day it was. They assured him that it indeed was Saturday. Mumbling an apology, he slipped away from the working units so quietly that the guard didn't even notice his hasty exit. Back in the barracks Shemkov spent the day asking God to forgive him, and planning for a better method of keeping track of the passing days.

Ultimately it became apparent to the prison authorities that they were getting nowhere with this method of punishment. In fact, Shemkov was becoming somewhat of a hero in the eyes of some, so they settled on a new strategy. Shemkov was sent to a solitary cell unit in the high-security section of the prison. Here he was held for two weeks in a cell that had no place to sit or lie, except on the concrete floor. It was the middle of winter, and the temperature would often go as low as 5°F (-15°C). It was so cold that even the soup brought for his supper would sometimes be frozen by the time they got it to him.

Shemkov will never forget New

Year's Eve 1958. That night as the guard came through checking all the prisoners, he came to Shemkov's cell and saw him sitting there on the concrete floor trying to wrap his coat even more tightly around himself. With a wicked sneer the guard snatched away Shemkov's coat,

*Suddenly Shemkov  
felt his whole body  
flush with a fiery  
perspiration. Was  
it true? Had he  
forgotten the  
Sabbath day?*

leaving him shivering there all alone.

Through the long night Shemkov forced himself to stay awake by walking back and forth in the tiny cell in order to keep from freezing to death. "All I could think of was *Please, God, how can I get my coat back?*" Shemkov said. "That seemed like the greatest blessing I could hope for in the new year."

When the guard who had taken the coat came in with the food tray the next morning, January 1, 1959, Shemkov was armed with righteous kindness: "Happy New Year, sir! May God bless you. And may God bless your wife and your children in this new year."

The guard looked a bit surprised, but said nothing in response. Instead he turned to one of his aides and said, "Go get this man's coat and give it back to him."

Shemkov wisely said nothing aloud, but in his heart his joyous prayer of thanksgiving began warming him more than even the coat could do.

**I**n the high-security prison Shemkov began to be subjected to intense interrogation sessions. Every day he was called before the prison authorities, and when his answers weren't what they wanted to hear, they would threaten to kill him.

They tried to get him to sign various confessions or to agree to become a government informer. Shemkov was not the only Seventh-day Adventist Christian who had been sent to Belene. And some of the others did not stand for their beliefs the way Shemkov did. One of these Adventist brothers who had given in under the pressure was brought in to try to reason with Shemkov.

"It could be so simple," the Adventist brother entreated. "If you would just agree to be a government agent, they will quit harassing you. You don't have to do much if you don't want to; just say what they want to hear. Agree to go back and infiltrate a congregation, and they might make you a pastor again. They may kill you if you don't give in. Which way will you be of more use to the church—dead or alive?"

The argument was quite persuasive, but Shemkov knew this was not the Spirit of the living God speaking through his brother. "I cannot deny the God I worship," he said, "nor can I falsely accuse my brothers and secretly plot their

S H E M K O V



downfall. If they choose to kill me, then that is what it must be. I cannot compromise my faith."

One Friday at the end of a particularly heated interrogation session, the guards started leading Shemkov back to his cell. Looking over his shoulder just before he went through the door, Shemkov calmly informed the prison officials, "Do not call me for questioning tomorrow. Tomorrow is my Sabbath day of worship, and I will not be available to speak with you."

Finally after two weeks of this harassment, the prison officials knew they had failed to crush the indomitable spirit of Shemkov, and some even suspected that it was because he had the Lord of the universe on his side. Shemkov was released from Belene soon after.

Life in Bulgaria was not easy during these years even if you weren't in jail, and though freed from prison, Shemkov was a marked man. Finally one of the guards who had been able to help Shemkov on a few occasions during those long years in prison looked him up.

"Would you like to leave the country and go to Yugoslavia?" he asked Shemkov.

"Of course I would very much like to go," Shemkov replied in amazement, "but I have a family. What about them?"

"I can help you get the papers," the man assured him. "When can you go?"

It was with great relief that Shemkov and his family left Bulgaria, but for 26 years he would live in exile. Then when the government changed in 1990, he was finally able to return home.

Only God in heaven knows all the people whose lives were changed by the witness of Shemkov during those years, but here is one story. Prime Minister Kosta Muraviev, the last minister of Bulgaria before Communists took over the government, had been quickly arrested by the new regime and sent to Belene as a political prisoner. After

he was released from prison many years later, he happened to run into a friend of his who was a member of the Adventist Church.

"How are you, my friend?" our member asked as he warmly greeted Mr. Muraviev. It was the first time he had seen him since the long

*Through the long night Shemkov forced himself to stay awake by walking back and forth in the tiny cell in order to keep from freezing to death.*

years of imprisonment.

"Oh, I am better now than I was before," Mr. Muraviev replied.

"Ah, so. And why is that?" our member wanted to know. He was rather surprised by Mr. Muraviev's enthusiastic response.

"Well," Mr. Muraviev said, "I am better now, because I am now also a believer."

"How interesting," our member said. "What caused you to become a believer?"

Mr. Muraviev stood thoughtfully a moment and then recalled, "When I was in the concentration camp in Belene I watched while the guards threw Shemkov into solitary confinement in an unheated cell when it was -15° C outside. When I saw him walk out of there alive two weeks later, I knew there was a God. I have been a believer ever since."

Now when Shemkov is asked how he kept going during those seven long years in prison and how he could find it in his heart to forgive those who had beaten him, he gets a faraway look in his eyes.

"They didn't know what they were doing," he says. "The most important thing for us to do is love our enemies. We must feel that if we are tormented, it is only for the glory of God. It is a special honor to take part in the sufferings of Jesus."

"One thing that kept me going was that I knew that as long as they had me, they wouldn't go after my fellow pastors. Sometimes after being beaten and thrown in the dirt, I would return to my barracks and think, *How can I ever restore my spirit so that tomorrow I can resist once more?* I knew that if I became angry and depressed, I would not be able to resist over a long period of time. So I would begin to sing. As I sang—and sometimes it would take many songs—my soul would gradually become calm, and I would begin to feel peace filling my heart. Then I would just drift into sleep and sleep in peace."

Sometimes the guards would come by to see what condition he was in, and they would find him sleeping. "Shemkov, are you sleeping?" they would ask. "You were just beaten. How can you sleep?"

"My response was always the same," Shemkov says. "I would tell them, 'I must prepare for tomorrow.'"

And the guards would go away shaking their heads in wonder at the peace of God in this champion. ■

*This story is excerpted from Frontline Bulgaria, a soon-to-be-published Global Mission book written by Rae Patterson.*

Rae Patterson is assistant director of the Office of Mission Awareness.





# Who Prays

BY LOREN DICKINSON

**I** CAN STILL QUITE clearly picture Tiffany. She bounced into a beginning speech course one fall in the early seventies—an upbeat,

composed, well-mannered first-year student.

Her speeches? Clear, fluent, graceful, coherent. Kind of a B+, all-American kid, I mused. But all those fetching qualities set me up for a life-sized shock one Friday evening about 9:00 when she—I think it was she—called, incoherent.

For what seemed like a very long stretch of minutes, she—I think it was she—babbled into the phone in an unknown, unknowable tongue. Eventually I caught on. It was Tiffany. What grew still clearer in the ensuing monologue was that Tiffany was reaching the end of her line.

In her college dorm room all alone and falling into a deep psychological chasm, Tiffany had set up herself to end her life. She had stashed in her room, she confessed, the instruments to cause her life to cease, and cease soon.

“Please stay where you are,” I pleaded. She agreed. She would meet me in the Conard Hall lobby—if I didn’t wait too long. I didn’t. Within minutes—quicker than I had ever covered that mile to the campus—I burst into the lobby of Conard Hall. Tiffany was waiting. She had calmed a bit by now.

That night began a very long journey for Tiffany. The journey included a burgeoning friendship for all of us—Tiffany, our family, and a sharp psychiatrist who understood her religious moorings.

That was nearly 25 years ago. In the intervening decades, what’s happened to Tiffany? She finished college, married, had a family, divorced, and now is well into a successful health-care career.



# irst?

*The lifeline  
we depend on can also  
be the means of rescuing others.*

So why a story about Tiffany? I'll tell you.

In countless chats in my office in the old ad building, it was Tiffany who was the first student ever to ask me, "Can we pray?"

I had been teaching for more than a decade, and it's embarrassing to admit that the idea was hers, not mine. "And who prays first?" I usually asked.

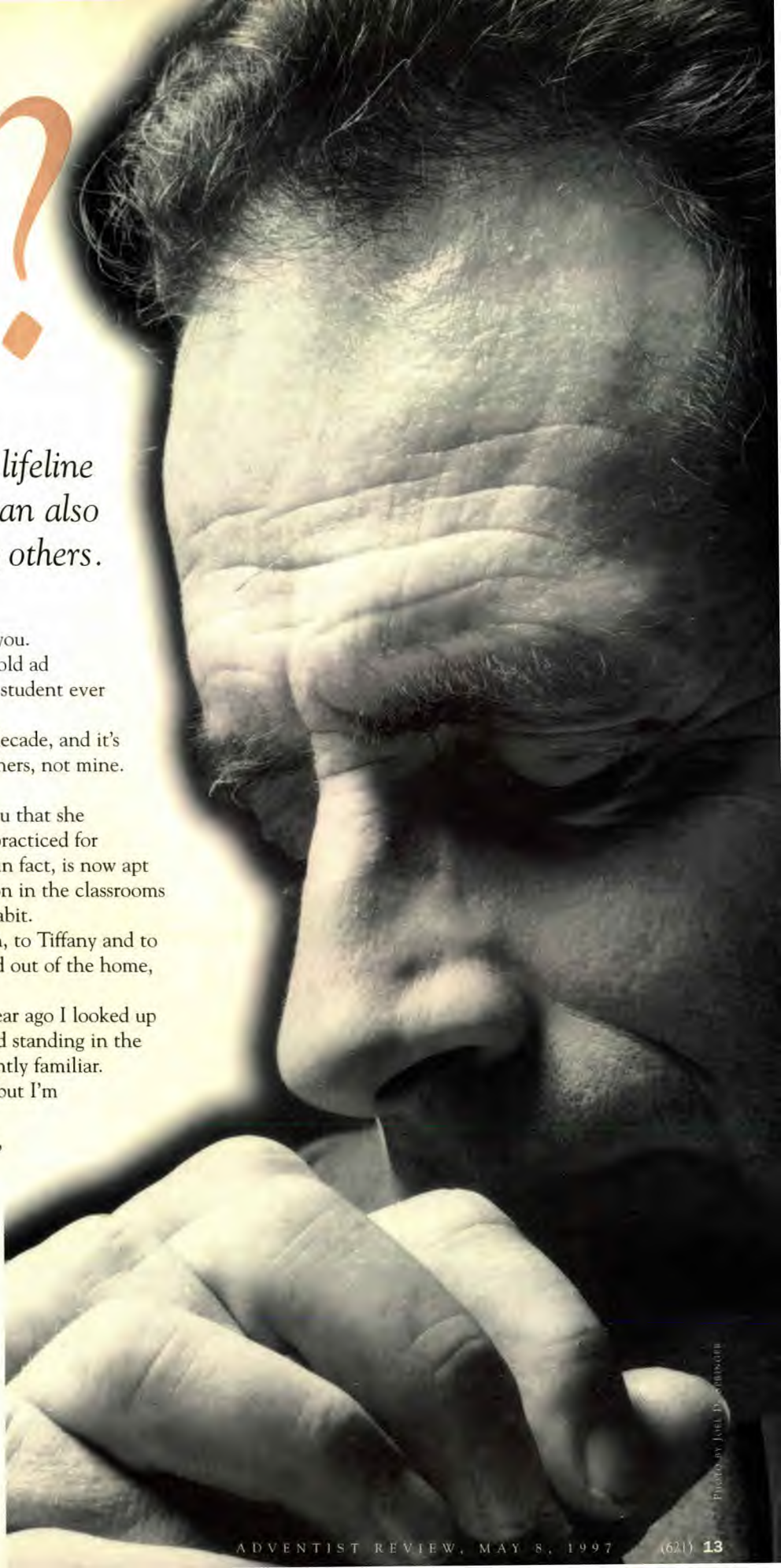
But I'm not too embarrassed to tell you that she invited me to begin a practice that I've practiced for decades since that first question. Prayer, in fact, is now apt to break out virtually without provocation in the classrooms in which I appear and in the office I inhabit.

It's no credit to me at all. It is, though, to Tiffany and to the One who inhabits all our lives in and out of the home, the shop, and the hoary halls of ivy.

I must append a postscript. A scant year ago I looked up from my desk to see a demure 18-year-old standing in the doorway. She startled me; she looked faintly familiar. "Hi," she chirped. "You don't know me, but I'm Gini, Tiffany's daughter."

Suddenly I wanted to shout, "Oh, yes, I do know you. And who prays first?" ■

Loren Dickinson is a professor of communication at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.





# Faith and Practice

**I**n a recent sermon our pastor said that principles don't change, but rules or standards do. However, I've always been taught that our standards are also sacred and immovable. Can you explain what he means?

The very best way to know what your pastor meant is, of course, to inquire of him. Pastors are usually not offended when questioned respectfully about points made in their sermons. I suspect that yours will be happy to unpack his remarks for you, and delighted to know that you are listening so closely.

As for the role of principles and standards in Christian lifestyle, I find it helpful to view them both as levels in the hierarchical progression from belief to moral agency, or from faith to action. One's beliefs about God is where it all begins. These include whether or not one believes there is a God, and if so, who that God is and how that God wishes His creatures to perform.

From our beliefs regarding God we acquire our values, i.e., our concepts concerning that which is enduringly sacred. From these values are spawned principles, or the moral directives that undergird values. The principles, in turn, suggest the standards or rules that we observe as we implement behavior.

One example of this flow from belief to action is the practice of not serving flesh foods in the cafeterias of Adventist schools. The belief is that there is one God; the value is that human life resulting from His creatorship is sacred; one principle that eventuates from this value is health reform; and the standard or rule employed in our schools is the prohibition of flesh foods in our cafeterias and dorms.

From this perspective it's easy to see how changing one's beliefs, values, or principles is a fundamental repositioning; whereas a change in rules or practices, while quite possibly traumatic or unsettling, is of a different category.

Some rules, such as the one cited above, ought not, in my opinion, change. However, others should and do change, for the better. Our greatest need is to know when, if ever, to accept new ways of implementing principles. That would be easier if we remembered not to elevate rules and practices to the level of principle in the first place.

**I**'m confused by the contradiction that surfaced in the letter to the editor in the February 27 issue of the *Adventist Review*, in which a well-respected Adventist figure disagrees with your statement (Faith Alive! Dec. 26, 1996) regarding the imminence of Christ's return.

According to him Adventists believe Christ's return is *near*, not *imminent*. Your position is that we proclaim the latter. If our leaders can't agree, what are we members supposed to believe?

Leaders do sometimes disagree regarding positions of scriptural emphasis—we do not all see things

alike. Clearly this is one such instance. I respect the author of the letter to the editor to which you refer, and I am certain that he is commenting very sincerely.

However, in our formal position *imminence* is, and has always been, associated with our stance regarding the Second Coming. The official wording is: "The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. . . . The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is *imminent*. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times" (Fundamental Beliefs, No. 24; italics supplied).

Perhaps we do not really believe that, or at least always live like we believe it, but it is clearly our position. Nearness is not strong enough an adverb to express our hopes and expectations regarding Christ's return.

The tension involved in planning for the future while expecting an "imminent" end is resolved only via total trust in the providences of God. Because of this, our belief in Christ's return, so generously fueled by the signs of the times and our hopes for a better world, is sustained at a level that transcends both the logic and ridicule of society. And that is primarily the function of a faith that finds its anchor not in the material lure of "the promise" but in the matchless love of "the Promisor."

*One's beliefs  
about God is  
where it all begins.*

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ethics and ministry.





# Super Ants

ROSY TETZ

**H**ave you ever seen a tiny little ant dragging something absolutely huge? (Well, it's huge compared to the ant.) Ants can carry things like a piece of cracker or a big dead bug over huge cracks in the sidewalk (they seem huge to the ant) and even straight up the side of the porch.

How do they do that? If we were able to carry things that much bigger than we are, we could carry cars and small buildings. Do ants have gigantic supermuscles that are way stronger than human muscles?

No. Ant muscles are no stronger than human muscles. Ants use their muscles differently. Ants don't weigh a lot, so they aren't affected as much by

gravity as humans are. Ants don't need to use many of their muscles to hold themselves up, as humans do. Ants can use most of their muscles for hauling stuff around, while humans can't.

Another reason ants can haul incredible loads is because they work in teams very well. They know how to work together so that whatever they are carrying as a team is balanced perfectly on all of their backs. They know how to walk in step so that as many legs as possible will be on the ground to bear the weight of the load.

We can't carry cars and buildings by ourselves. But we can do amazing things when we work together. When we cooperate, things have a better chance of working out.



The Bible says, "Two people are better than one. They get more done by working together. If one person falls, the other can help him up" (Eccl. 4:9, 10, ICB).

We need each other. We need to cooperate to get things done, and we need to help each other.

That same Bible passage says, "A rope that has three parts wrapped together is hard to break" (verse 12). Just like a rope, we are stronger when we work together.

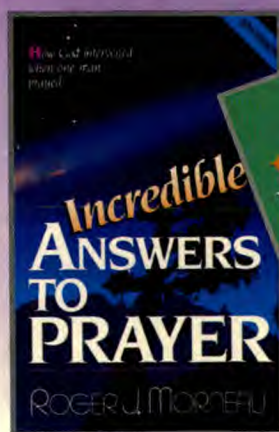
And did you notice that the first text talks about *two* people, but the next one talks about *three*? Who do you think the third part of the "rope" is?

I think it is Jesus. When people cooperate, they can do a lot. But when Jesus helps too, when people are "wrapped together" with Jesus, incredible things can happen.

Jesus can help you learn to cooperate with other people. Jesus can help your team really make a difference.

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# Lessons From the Tan-tan Tree

*Tough to eradicate, this noxious weed highlights a spiritual problem that dogs our steps.*

BY DENISE AND GORDON RUTLEDGE

**O**N THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND OF ST. CROIX THERE IS A SMALL TREE

called the tan-tan. (In Hawaii they call it the falso koa, and in Dominica the zang-zang, a local name that describes how one feels after trying to uproot the plants for an hour.) In 10 years of landscaping on the island of St. Croix, we never encountered a yard that didn't start out with some of these noxious weeds. We got calls all the time from people asking, "How can I get rid of them?"

Usually by the time people got around to



**THAT'S THE WEED!** The beautiful tropical surroundings of the tan-tan tree mask the kind of obnoxious pest it is.



# Tools for Building Relationships

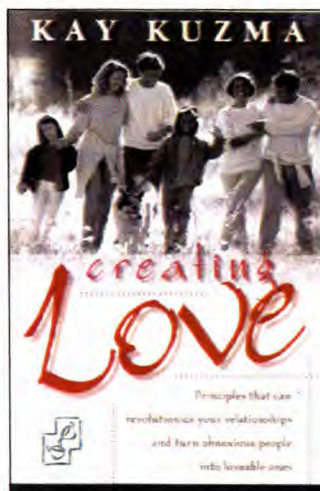
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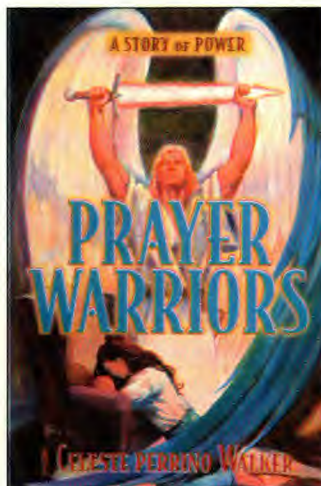
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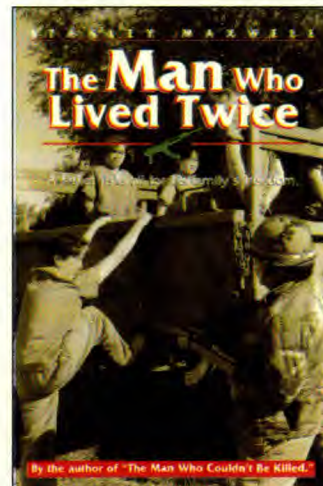
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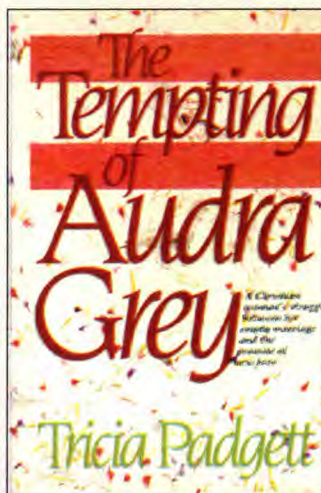
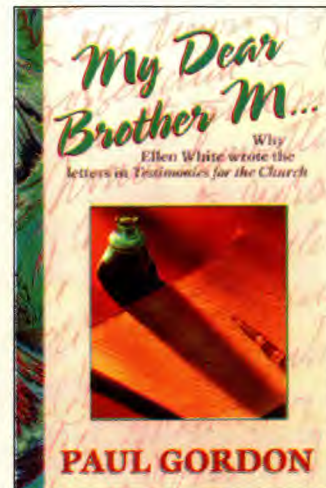
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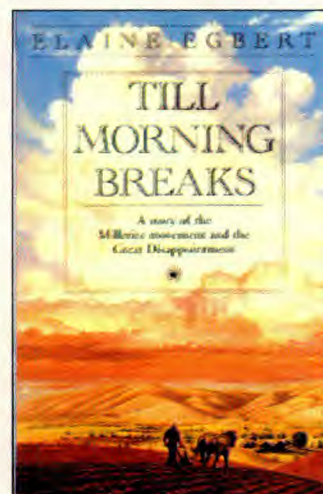
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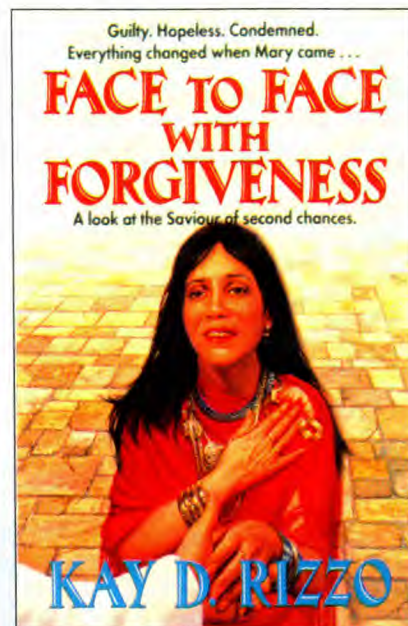
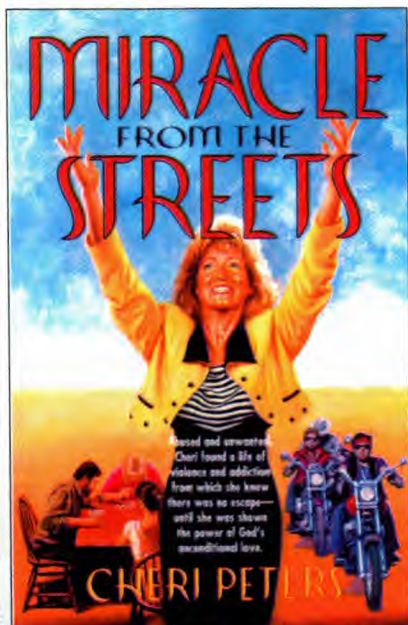


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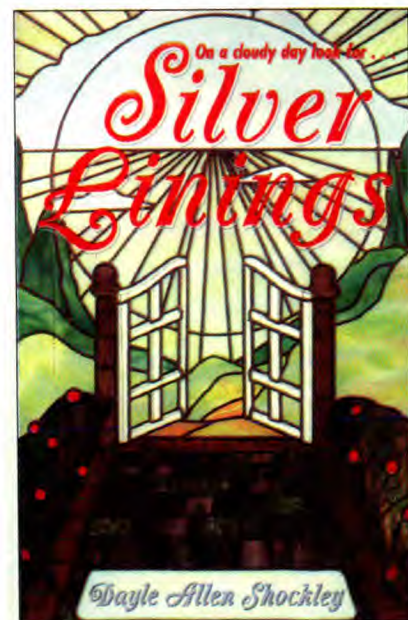
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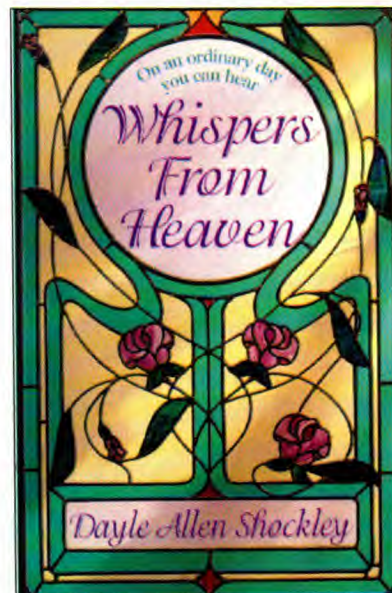


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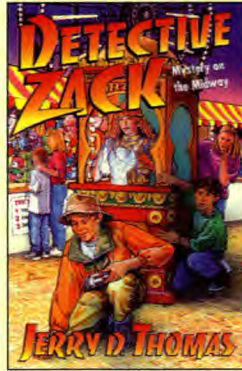
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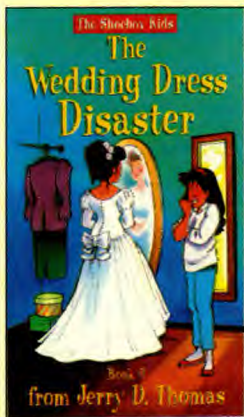


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calling our company, they had tried everything they could think of, finally admitting, sometimes after years of painful effort, that they just couldn't rid their yard of the stubborn weed. Desperate and at their wits' end, they were now ready for professional help.

We are a lot like these people. We try year after year by ourselves to get rid of our own weeds—those sinful habits in our lives. Piecemeal we try to control our temper, to be kind when provoked. We chop and chop, but we never experience lasting success.

In their desperation, some people with the tan-tan problem turn to pseudoprofessionals for help, to individuals or outfits falsely advertising themselves as professionals. Those who put confidence in such masqueraders are soon disillusioned and

discouraged. For sooner or later the hated weeds come back, thereby shaking their victims' confidence in the true professional. "Perhaps this is just the way it is," the deceived person concludes. "I'll always have to put up with these weeds, since even the professionals can't eradicate them. I might as well accept reality and try to live with it."

This attitude encroaches on the spiritual life as well. Oh, the pain we cause the True Husbandman when we react this way to the weeds of sin in our lives! Eventually some of us say, "Hey, look, I just can't do it. I'm just the way I am. I can't change even when I want to. I look at the Bible and all those



**PERSISTENT:** The only permanent solution is to get the pest by its roots. Roots a half inch in diameter and smaller must be pulled with pliers or vice grips, as coauthor Gordon Rutledge demonstrates here.

books that Ellen White wrote, and I can't even read them all, let alone follow everything in them!"

If you are to that point, praise God! Thank Him that the Spirit has brought you to just the point He wants you. For God says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).<sup>\*</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Jesus says, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

Could it have been feelings of inadequacy that prompted some of the Jews to come to Jesus and ask, "What

shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28)?

Just the thing we want to know, right?

Notice closely, however, that Jesus does not give them a list. Many feel that Jesus should have told them more, that there is more to it than He gave them. But we need to give heed to this divine answer: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29, KJV).

Might that answer address our problem too? Certainly we are not also lacking in faith, are we?

Let's look again at the tan-tan weed. It's not a small tree. It can grow as tall as 20 feet (six meters) in two or three years, producing thousands of seeds, which in turn produce thousands more tan-tans. And the bigger the plant gets, the harder it is to kill. What's even worse, the more often you chop down the tree, the bigger the roots get and the faster the plant springs back.

The tan-tan illustrates our problem with sin perfectly. And it may give us a clue as to why it sometimes seems that we are ready to give up the struggle, concluding we can never "make it." Satan, the false husbandman, the masquerading professional, is more than pleased to



**VICTORY AT LAST!** That one's up and will never come back again.

PHOTOS BY DENISE RUTLEDGE



see us concentrating our effort on branches. "Yes, yes," he whispers, "that's it! Cut those branches off. Look, here's one. Don't forget that one. Whoops! There's another one popping up. Here, I'll help you get rid of that one. See, you're doing just fine. Just keep this up all the way to heaven. Trust me. I know what I'm doing."

And all the time we could be thinking we're hearing the voice of the Lord, when in fact we're tuned in to the lord of darkness.

Satan knows very well what he's doing. If he can't use ministers and other leaders to accomplish his distractions, he will use vitriolic voices from the fringes. He's content as long as the message is "Show those hypocrites for what they are. Show

them those ugly branches of sin. Get them to start whacking away. Go ahead, cut every last one off, then they can feel good about themselves."

That approach does not work for all, of course. So the devil tries to overwhelm others with the vigor and size of the sin problem in their lives so they'll get discouraged and leave the church. He really doesn't care *how* he gets us. He is concerned about only one thing: "*Just don't touch that precious little root, that throne of self I've established in your garden.*"

This approach by the evil one should not surprise us, for we know that Satan masquerades as an angel of light, setting himself up as lord. This has been his work since the beginning: "I will ascend into heaven," he once boasted, "I will

exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation. . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14). This has always been the devil's goal, and he is doing all he can to accomplish it in the spiritual war zone we inhabit.

There is only one way to get rid of the tan-tan tree. It is also the only effective way of getting rid of sin in our lives. We have to get at the root—and that often calls (and in the case of sin, *always* calls) for the professional.

Paul summed it up this way: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by

faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Paul considered this crucifixion to be a historical fact. For he says, "If One died for all, then all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). "Knowing this," he said in another place (as we interpret the text), "that our old man [the root] was crucified with Him, that the body of sin [the branches] might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:6, 7).

This is what believing on the Son of God is all about. This is the great battle we have to fight. There is no harder work ahead of us than making the commitment to a life of "not I, but Christ." We may stumble as we learn to "reckon [ourselves] to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). But if we are willing to learn the lesson, we have the assurance "that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

**T**he only way to keep those terrible tan-tan weeds from cropping up again is to kill the root of the tree. After accomplishing this, a true professional then applies a strong herbicide to the soil to prevent the seeds that have already fallen from sprouting.

Let us allow the True Husbandman to apply the only herbicide ever known to be effective against sin—the blood of Christ—to the soil of our hearts. ■

\* Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture passages are from The New King James Version.



**LATE, BUT NOT TOO LATE:** Once the tan-tan is grown, simple cutting will never do. It must be cut, but also treated with special chemicals.

Denise Rutledge manages a bakery and D. Gordon Rutledge manages a farmers' cooperative on the island of Dominica in the West Indies. Gordon is also a professional weed eradicator and pursued that line of work while living in St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands.





## SPRING MEETING REPORT

## Spring Meeting Convenes in California

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, ADVENTIST REVIEW NEWS EDITOR

**W**hen more than 100 Adventist administrators, educators, pastors, and lay members gathered for Spring Meeting on April 1, the world leaders got a firsthand look at the hub of the church's medical ministry.

Meeting at Loma Linda University in California—the Adventist Church's primary medical school—members of the General Conference Executive Committee experienced the university's picturesque campus, warm sunshine, and dedicated students and faculty members.

The meetings were held at the newly built Peterson Conference Center in the Coleman Pavilion (see adjacent picture), which houses the university's School of Medicine.

General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg said the meetings were held at LLU to give the leaders an appreciation of the university's

ministry and the unique health mission of the Adventist Church. This was the first time since 1974 that the GC Committee has met on the LLU campus. To open the meetings, university president B. Lyn Behrens read a letter from United States congressman Jerry Lewis, who praised the church for its investment in educational and health institutions.

During the meetings committee members heard several testimonies from medical students and faculty members on how God is using the complex to establish His divine purpose. The world leaders were also given free physical examinations.

**New Statements.** As the business session started, the committee voted one of its most significant actions, a new statement expressing the church's concern that children be protected from sexual abuse.

The Statement on Child Sexual Abuse calls on church members and institutions to aid in the prevention of child sexual abuse and to assist victims, abusers, and their families in the recovery process.

According to the statement, "the Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention."

The statement calls on Adventists to "help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused."



**DOWN TO BUSINESS:** General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg (left) gives opening remarks.

The document also calls for the creation of guidelines and policies to help church leaders hold abusers accountable for their actions and to treat those accused of sexual abuse with fairness.

While one committee member also felt that the church should set up procedures to screen potential abusers, committee member Hilda Flores-Rendon, of San Antonio, Texas, said, "I want to commend the church for this document. This is the best the church can do under the circumstances."

**Youth in Mission.** In addition to the child sexual abuse statement, the Spring Meeting approved a document urging Adventist youth to take an active role in the church's Global Mission thrust.

The Youth in Mission Emphasis statement requests church leaders to promote mission service among youth leaders and young people throughout the church. The document calls on church administrators to train young people—through mission conferences and festivals—to use their spiritual gifts and specialized skills in volunteer service. World leaders hope that



**WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT?** Senior medical student Sarah Uffindell shares a testimony with committee members.



2 million youth volunteers will be ready for service by the year 2000.

"I'm happy about this new direction," says Baraka Muganda, director of the General Conference Youth Department. "We want to make mission the trademark of the Youth Department."

The *Adventist Review* will print the entire Youth in Mission Emphasis and Statement on Child Sexual Abuse documents in upcoming issues.

**Adventist Global Communication Network.** With the dramatic success of the NET '96 satellite evangelistic series, the Adventist Church is exploiting satellite technology at an unprecedented pace. Increasing numbers of programs are being uplinked from outside of North America, and satellite downlink sites are increasing rapidly in the church's world divisions.

To facilitate distribution of Adventist programming to the church's intercontinental audience, the committee approved the formation of Adventist Global Communication Network—a service agency of the General Conference.

"Already there are plans for NET '98 at Andrews University in Michigan and a satellite series in Soweto, South Africa," Folkenberg says. "How do we help other world fields participate in these meetings? AGCN is the answer."



**COLEMAN PAVILION:** The meetings were held in the newly constructed Coleman Pavilion and Cancer Research Pavilion. The 139,700-square-foot facility houses Loma Linda University's School of Medicine, a professional library, faculty center, and dining areas. Built with private donations, the structure contains an 18,190-square-foot conference center that can seat up to 1,000 persons.

AGCN personnel will provide a broad range of services for divisions, technical assistance in fund-raising, promotion and awareness-building, formation of standards and protocols for denominational entities, and facilitate the networking of denominational production entities.

"This proposal provides a structure to do what we're already doing," says Philip Follett, a General Conference vice president. "Many divisions are asking how they can get involved [in satellite evangelism]."

After approving the agency's formation, the committee appointed Brad Thorp, director of the Euro-Africa Division Evangelism Institute, as AGCN director.

**Budget Oversight.** To utilize full-time missionaries around the world better, the committee approved an action that provides for ongoing review of expatriate workers. The action empowers the GC Administrative Committee to appoint a budget oversight committee to do strategic planning and evaluate personnel requests from the world field.

As part of the oversight process, division leaders must evaluate the role and function of each full-time missionary. If a position is labeled *vulnerable*, the funding for the position will be recaptured at the GC when the worker ends his or her term of service. This funding will become available to finance new requests for workers from other divisions.

Folkenberg says the new plan provides for more flexible redeployment of resources and allows the church to take advantage of new opportunities around the world.



**GENERAL CONFERENCE WEST?** This was the first time in more than 20 years that the General Conference Executive Committee met at Loma Linda University.

**Church Finances.** An extraordinary \$7.6 million payment to the Adventist Church in North America was the major reason for the General Conference's \$5.1 million operating shortfall last year, say GC treasury officials. World church leaders voted the payment at the 1996 Annual Council session in Costa Rica.

According to audited statements, the payment equalizes working capital percentages between the GC and North American Division as of 1991 when the division formally separated from the GC.

World mission offerings from North America decreased by 5.67 percent, from \$23.2 million in 1995 to \$21.9 million in 1996. The same offerings received in territories outside North America also decreased from \$30 million in 1995 to \$29.5 million last year. However, contributions earmarked for specific projects continued to rise.

GC undertreasurer Martin Ytreberg also reported that the GC in-house operating expenses for 1996 totaled \$23,169,238, more than \$1.5 million below the 1996 operating expense cap. The expense cap is set at 4.85 percent of gross tithe for the world church.

*Watch for more Spring Meeting actions in next week's Newsbreak.*



# They Came Together With One Thing on Their Mind

*Leaders of two divisions meet to grapple with the state of mission in Europe.*

BY MIROSLAV PUJIC, COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR FOR THE TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION, ST. ALBANS, ENGLAND

*The wonderful thing about a mission conference such as this is that it focuses the minds of members and leaders alike on witness and growth. It tells all that mission is not only high on the agenda of the church, but is the agenda of the church!*—Jan Paulsen, vice president, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

*"This conference has provided me with the motivation to pursue more deliberately and vigorously a program of enablement for the fulfillment of the vision among the leadership and membership of the church."*—Cecil Perry, president, British Union Conference.

*"I hope that this conference will help our church to understand the importance of accepting Christ's call to be a maker of disciples."*—Daniel Belvedere, personal ministries director, Euro-Africa Division.

**T**he date: January 8-12. The place: Hoevelaken, the Netherlands. And the delegates gathering for the conference had one overriding burden on their minds: "Revisioning Adventist Mission in Europe." The first European conference on mission, the meeting was attended by 70 church leaders representing two of the Adventist Church's territorial divisions—Trans-European (TED), with headquarters in St. Albans, England; and Euro-Africa (EUD), located in Bern, Switzerland. Others came from outside these two divisions—as advisors and facilitators.

The purpose of the conference was to create a vision and to develop a strategic plan for the church in these divisions. It

examined three fundamental questions: (1) the current status of mission in Europe and related territories, (2) the challenges facing European mission, and (3) the availability of resources and methods for the task.

Opening the conference, the two division presidents, Ulrich Frikart (EUD) and Bertil Wiklander (TED), presented the state of mission in their territories. Besides the explosion of information technology, cultural diversity, socioeconomic developments, and migration in many areas, they pointed out, epochal political changes have occurred. Among them are the fall of the iron curtain, the movement toward European unity, and the war in the Balkan Peninsula. At the same time, we are facing strong post-Christian secularism, nationalism, and nominalism among Christians and

among a high percentage of the general population, especially in the cities.

"The primary mission challenges in Europe," said Wiklander, "are slow growth or lack of growth, a small membership base (which limits financial resources), and a vast culturally diverse and geographically dispersed target population."

"The membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe is about 226,000, with a mission to 500 million people," said TED secretary Reinder Bruinsma, "which makes for a ratio of one member for every 2,212 people!" That is a great challenge affecting the financial and personnel resources for mission.

**A**mong those attending the conference from outside the two divisions was Jon Dybdahl, head of the Department of World Mission at Andrews University. Dybdahl laid down a biblical foundation for the conference, indicating that Adventists have always turned to the Bible as the charter document for mission.

Bruce Moyer, a sociologist with the Institute of World Mission at Andrews University, emphasized the importance of evangelizing the cities. We must return to the New Testament model of urban evangelism, he said. The approach used then was to plant house churches or cell groups throughout entire metropolitan regions. Every urban congregation should be in the cell-group-planting business. We need to pray for the multiplication of congregations and cell groups in



**DREAMING BIG THINGS:** On the final day of the conference Bertil Wiklander shared "A Vision for Mission Renewal in the European Church."



apartment buildings and city blocks in urban areas.

Along with the explosion of knowledge and the wealth that accompanies urban expansion and development comes the blight of "the most significant minority group in any nation, the neglected poor," missiologist Borge Schantz said. A steadily increasing number of jobless and homeless people are crying for relief. The command of Christ to preach the gospel to the poor is as relevant today as it was in the first century, he said.

The conference adopted a series of recommendations for future study and consideration, including the need for targeting specific people groups in Europe, church growth, and the need to develop specific mission programs to nurture leadership in youth and women.

Plenary presentations and panel discussions grappled with such issues as the need to encourage and support church planting. There was also strong emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit and prayer in all mission initiatives.

A unique highlight of the conference came with the testimony of Johannes Smink, a Dutch Mennonite pastor whose church membership grew from 17 members to 500 within only a short period of time. Smink's approach to ministry included an outreach program that focused on the critical needs of individuals and specific groups in the community surrounding his church.

### A Vision for Europe

On the last day of the conference, with all the participants feeling the strong presence of the Holy Spirit, Wiklander (who is also a biblical scholar) elaborated seven guiding biblical

principles for the development of Christian mission. The following were his main emphases:

1. The local community of worshipers is the body primarily responsible for mission (Acts 11:19-26). The aim of the early apostles was to establish new Christian communities that would continue the task of baptizing and teaching. Likewise, the local church today is to be the medium of God's mission in Europe. As Ellen White describes it: "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9).

2. The relation between our local congregations in carrying out God's mission plan should be one of communion and cooperation. The whole book of Acts is a description of how the early church, notably the apostle Paul, pursued a strategic plan to create a network of local Christian communities, each responsible for mission in its vicinity. Our vision is that the church in Europe will follow

this example. It is our vision that every viable congregation in Europe will have planted one more new congregation before the year 2000. We must pray and expect that God will act. We must work with God who can do the impossible.

3. Cultivating leaders is of vital importance in planting new churches (Eph. 4:11-13). The church needs to discover and develop church planters, trainers of laity, and lay leaders, implementing the excellent vision of dynamic leadership presented in this conference by Erich Baumgartner, professor of leadership at Andrews University. The business world has a way of detecting these gifted persons and paying them well. Why doesn't the church care much more about this?

Our vision for mission renewal in Europe is a new generation of bold, creative pastors and leaders, who dare to walk with God into the unknown and, like Moses, will lead God's people out from Egypt into the desert, where they will meet and worship the Lord.



**DISCUSSION TIME:** Erich Baumgartner (standing), union presidents, and Global Mission coordinators from Europe (both divisions) grapple with some of the issues.





**GETTING INPUT:** Key elements in developing a local "vision and strategy" was the subject of the panel with moderator Peter Roenfeldt, TED Ministerial Association secretary and Global Mission coordinator (standing). Sitting (left to right): Daniel Belvedere, EAD personal ministries director; Martin Anthony, TED personal ministries director; Ulrich Frikart, EAD president; Jan Paulsen, General Conference vice president; Bertil Wiklander; and Joaquim Dias, Portuguese Union of Churches president.

4. The varying needs of the different culture groups must be met (see Acts 15). The early church would have remained a small and insignificant Jewish sect if the mission had been limited to the Jews. God told the church, however, that their mission was also to the Gentiles. That shift of focus made Christianity into a world religion. But as the church became multicultural and directed its mission to all people, there were internal obstacles that had to be removed. A council was held in Jerusalem to remove these obstacles. Do we need a new apostolic meeting to liberate the church locally and regionally from old ways that foster cultural exclusivity?

Our vision is that the church will be a place where all people will feel at home. Our vision is an open church in Europe, where boundaries of nation, race, and gender are bridged by the saving power of the love of Christ, a church living by the recognition that what we have found in Christ is worth so much more than anything that makes us different.

5. Strategic thinking for directing the use of mission resources must be developed (see Acts 13). Every itinerary of Paul had a strategic purpose. He wanted to present the

gospel so that it could be noticed and could have maximum impact. He selected the centers of Roman administration, cities with Greek civilization and Jewish influence, and centers of commerce and communication. From such key centers the gospel had the greatest chance of spreading everywhere.

Our vision is that our church will grow strong in the large cities of Europe and that we will be known in Brussels at the office of the European community. Our vision is that each division in Europe will plant one seriously contextualized church in the top three urban areas of our territories.

6. Aggressive mission always results in conflicts with spiritual powers opposed to God (see Acts 13:6; 16:16). Europe today is a post-Christian, increasingly pagan continent. A good part of popular entertainment consists of superstition, ghosts, witches, occult practices, evil spirits, magic, and astrology. We need to prepare our leadership for the spiritual struggle that is involved in mission today.

Our vision is that the church in Europe will meet the kind of hardship that gives evidence that we are walking God's way, that we have caught the vision of God's mission and will hold on to it even when we

face counterreaction. When the church sinks into a state of apathy, which it has in many places, no difficulties will occur, because we are where the devil wants us to be. The death of a church is a quiet thing. Nobody takes much notice of it. But the growth of a church causes alarm, with consequent hardship for its leaders (see 2 Cor. 6:9-13).

7. Mission demands that all places and all people will be served by a witnessing community (see Rom. 15:19-24). Paul's mission plan was to establish a network of witnessing local communities that would cooperate and spread the gospel in each place. Our vision is for Europe to implement a similar plan, preaching the gospel everywhere, particularly where Christ is not known. And once that is done, and opportunities to know God and the power of His Spirit exist in all major places, we can then move on to a new place.

**I** pray that we have already committed ourselves to this task," Wiklander concluded, "and that as we proceed toward God's future, we would rather die than give up our commitment to mission renewal."

The future of the church in Europe depends on that decision.





L I F E S T Y L E

# Spring Without Mother

BY MYRNA TETZ

**S**HE WASN'T JUST ANOTHER MOTHER. No, not mine. I've thought a lot about who she really was since her death several years ago. My two sisters and I cannot think of anyone's mother who was so

characteristically predictable and predictably unpredictable as she. She did not look as though she was hilariously funny, but she was just that. And we adored her for her humor in affirmation as well as in rebuke.

Had you met her for the first time, you might not have sensed in this woman the warmth and sensitivity you would come to know and love as your friendship grew. You may have thought she was a bit reserved, unfriendly perhaps. Later you would marvel at her charm.

She was married to a Norwegian, and he may have appeared to you, an onlooker, very much in charge. Did this rather quiet, reserved woman acquiesce to his every demand? Those who knew her learned that she was inexplicably able to make this strong-willed man do, sometimes in disappointment at his weakness, exactly as she wished.

You would have loved our mother's passion for the simple and the homegrown, the natural and the home-stewed, the pretty and the homemade. Yet she had a touch of class and a love for elegance. No boxes, bottles, or jars were ever allowed on the table. When she wasn't looking, her grandchildren loved to place every cereal box, jar, and bottle on the table. They waited for her exasperated gasp as her hands moved to her hips and she made the exaggerated run to the table to remove them all.

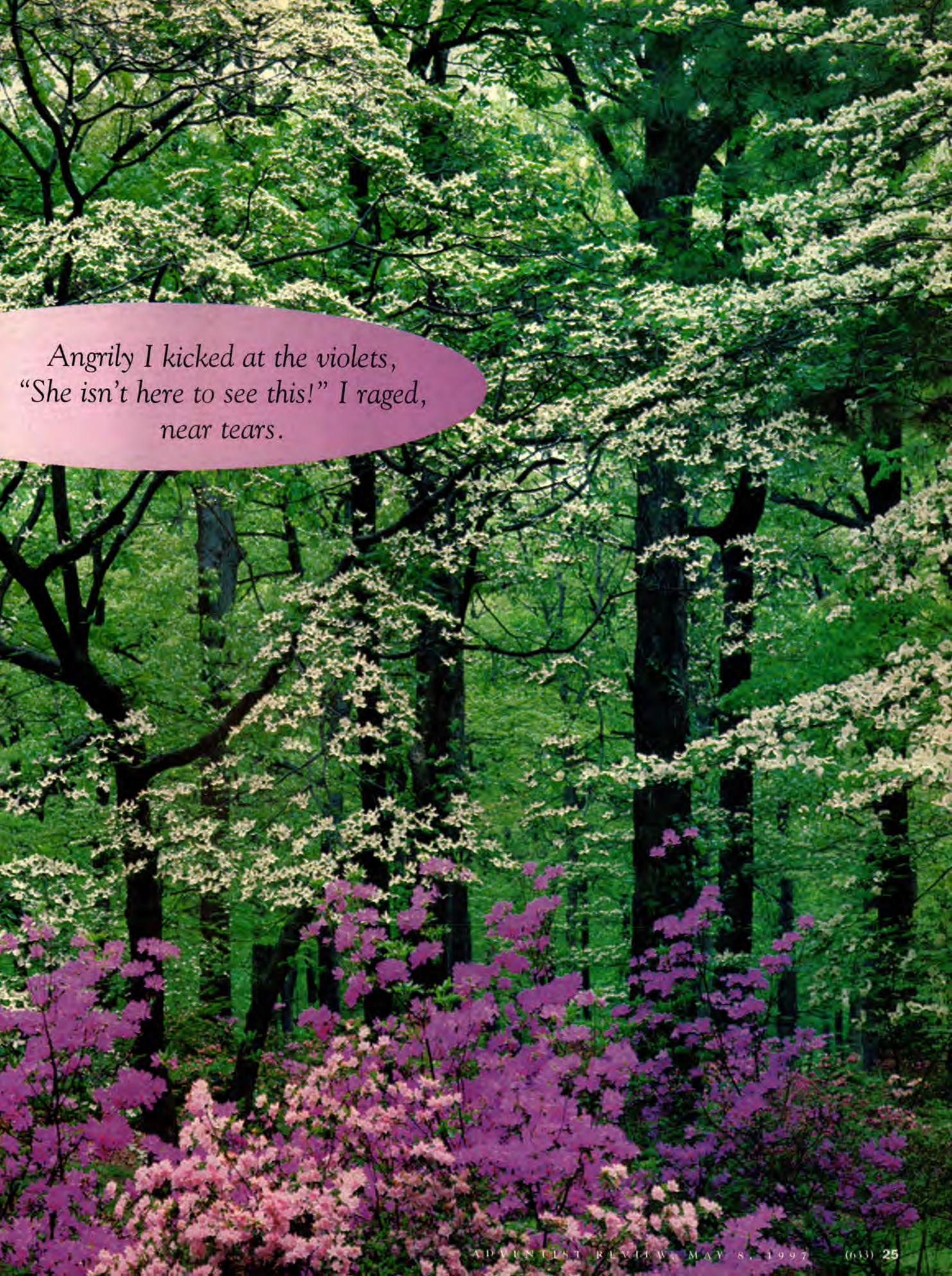
Her grandchildren could also tell you about all the silly games she played with them, such as Tease the Cat and Poor Pussy. She played football, although she never knew the rules of the game, and the play always ended in fits of laughter at her antics. She watched hockey with them and observed that if every player were given a puck, they wouldn't have to fight over that one black round thing.

She had an uncanny way of substituting some attention-getting device for the punishment she could see coming to her daughters' offspring. Many laying-on-of-the-hands occasions were interrupted by this intrepid grandmother who hated to hear her grandchildren cry.

As you spent more time with her, you would have learned that thrifty was her byword. When we were younger, we thought she carried this too far too often, but all of us now know that our planet would be in a better condition if everyone had followed her example. For instance, many of us now wash plastic bags, use paper towels sparingly, and make our own bread crumbs.

Admiring her thoughtfulness, you would have observed





Angrily I kicked at the violets,  
"She isn't here to see this!" I raged,  
near tears.



how masterfully she could change the topic of conversation if the discussion turned to criticism or to some form of hilarity of which she did not approve. While we were growing up, many times we received disapproving glances or a kick under the table, and we did not have to second-guess the meaning of the rebuke.

Mother led a one-person campaign to eradicate the word "yeah" from the English language. She never gave up on anyone during any conversation—ever. Her sons-in-law were there for the training, and it was amazing how conscious they became of her wishes. Of course, they were not beyond using the forbidden word just to test her endurance. It never wavered.

If you were one of her friends, you played Scrabble with her, you laughed at her wit, and you loved her love for children. You also appreciated her being sure that people who were not as verbal as others were included in conversations. We were all recipients of her best—her flower beds, her unrelenting high standards, her delicious garden dinners, her sense of humor, and her love for her church.

Death was a forbidden conversational topic under ordinary circumstances, but she did make one exception. She told us long before she died that when the funeral was over, she did not want everyone to gather for a meal. She wanted us all to go home and cry.

Going back now to where she once lived, I mourned as we drove in. She should be standing on the front porch to greet us. Or have dinner ready with flowers on the table.

But she is gone. I wandered through the yard, enchanted by the fruit trees swollen and inflamed with pink blossoms. I touched the camellias in full, white bloom with flowers embedded in green branches.

Imperceptibly my mood changed. Angriily I kicked at the violets bravely blooming between tufts of grass. "She isn't here to see this," I said to no one as in my rage tears neared.

"It's not fair," I mentally screamed.

Then came a voice. As audible, firm, and tender as though the Speaker walked beside me. "Spring is the promise of the resurrection," the voice explained. "She'll see them again."

I was startled. Who am I that a holy Being would converse with someone very angry at Someone who could have prevented my loss? But the message was

clear, and I was comforted.

And now, spring means everything. ■

Myrna Tetz was vice president for advancement at Canadian Union College, Alberta, Canada, when she wrote this article.



## Just for Teens



**Bible-based Answers to Questions Kids Ask About Love and Sex**  
Using principles from God's Word, Charles Mills answers questions about love and sex asked by Adventist preteens and young teens, and encourages them not to settle for anything less than God's plan. Paperback. US\$7.99, Cdn\$11.49.



**Who Loves Alex Best?**  
BEST FRIENDS, book 5, encourages teen girls to date only guys who share their commitment to Christ. By Trudy J. Morgan. Paperback. US\$5.99, Cdn\$8.49.

**The Final Game**  
Bucky strikes out with his new coach for not playing Friday night ball games. But God uses the situation to help Bucky witness to his whole community. By David B. Smith. Paperback. US\$5.99, Cdn\$8.49.



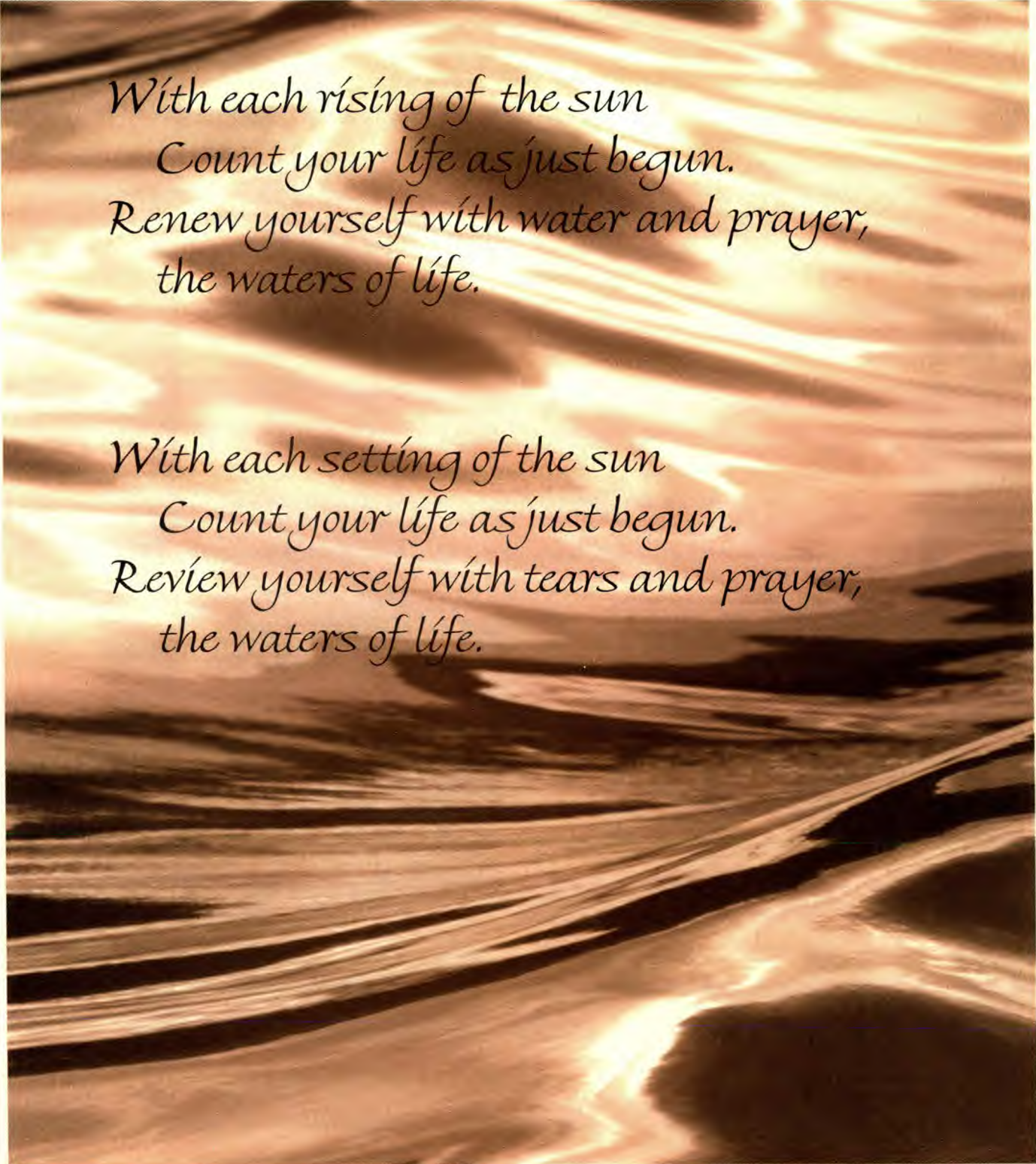
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# The Waters of Life

BY W. STEVE BASSHAM



*With each rising of the sun  
Count your life as just begun.  
Renew yourself with water and prayer,  
the waters of life.*

*With each setting of the sun  
Count your life as just begun.  
Review yourself with tears and prayer,  
the waters of life.*



# Cosmic Conflict

ANGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

**I**s Revelation 12:7-12 describing a battle that took place in heaven? Or one that took place on the cross when by His death Christ defeated Satan and his angels?

My reading of the passage leads me to conclude that there is possibly a third alternative.

First, some general remarks. A reading of chapter 12, verses 1-6 and 13-17, could easily suggest that 12:7-12 is parenthetical. Verse 13 picks up the narrative where it was left in verse 6. Yet the transitional sentence "And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth" in verse 13\* indicates that 12:7-12 have been nicely integrated into the flow of ideas of the chapter. They are a development of verses 4 and 5, in which the dragon is described as trying to destroy the Messiah at His birth. The idea of a conflict is already present.

Some of the information found in our passage seems to suggest that the battle described here took place at the moment of Christ's death and resurrection. This is what the chronology of events found in the chapter suggests. The dragon is described as waiting for the birth of the Messiah in order to "devour" the child (verse 4). But the child is removed from the sphere of action of the dragon and enthroned as king with God. Then the church is described as in need of divine protection for a period of 1,260 days.

In a kind of flashback the reader is given a more detailed description of the conflict between the dragon and Christ. This is followed by his wrathful attack against the woman (verse 13), showing that the battle took place *after* the woman gave birth and *before* the dragon persecuted the woman. We are also told that as a result of Satan's defeat "the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come" (verse 10; cf. Matt 28:18).

The best historical moment for these events to have occurred is at the cross. The idea that at the cross Christ defeated the evil powers is common in the New Testament (e.g., Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). And Christ Himself stated that as a result of His death Satan would be cast out from heaven (Luke 10:18; John 12:31).

However, if we examine the language and images used by John, it becomes clear that he is using, as a point of reference in his description of the war that took place at the cross, the primeval conflict between the preincarnated Christ and Satan.

Scholars generally recognize that John is using images found in Jewish literature describing a conflict that took place in heaven as a result of Satan's attempt to place his throne where

God's throne is located. The conflict resulted in the defeat of Satan and in a limitation to his access to heaven.

This Jewish belief has its root in the Old Testament, and it is the Old Testament itself that provides the background for our passage.

In Isaiah 14:12-15 a celestial being is cast *to the ground* after attempting to

make himself like God. John uses the same Greek expression found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, suggesting that he may have had that passage in mind. The Scripture further indicates that even after Satan was cast out of heaven, he still had limited access, and that his primary function was to accuse the servants of God (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1). But in Revelation 12:7-12 we are informed that even that limited access came to an end at the cross.

We must also notice that the passage makes a connection between the dragon and the Garden of Eden by identifying him as "that ancient serpent" (verse 9). After the primeval war in heaven and the casting down of Satan, he attacked the woman (Eve) in the garden. Now after his defeat by Christ, Satan attacks the woman (the church). The parallels are intriguing.

John uses the language and imagery of the primeval war in heaven between Christ and Lucifer to describe their battle at the cross. His purpose is to demonstrate that Christ has always defeated the evil forces, that we also can overcome the dragon through the blood of the Lamb, and that the dragon now has a limited time of activity before he is finally destroyed.

Although the primary reference of the passage is to the conflict on the cross, by describing it in terms of the original war in heaven John provides significant information about the origin of the great controversy.

\* Bible references are from the Revised Standard Version.

*Christ has always  
defeated evil.*

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference.





# Bulletin Board

## They Still Go

### Adventist Youth on the Move

*During the last part of 1996 the following young adults left their homes to minister in other cultures. They served and they learned. May God richly bless their experience. Schools represented: AU: Andrews University; LSU: La Sierra University; PUC: Pacific Union College; SAU: Southern Adventist University*

**Krista LuAnn Wolcott** (SAU), to serve as nurse, Maluti Adventist Hospital, Lesotho, of Federal Way, Washington.

**Wendy Annette Worthey** (PUC), to serve as librarian, Majuro SDA School, Marshall Islands, of St. Helena, California.

**Deborah Ann Yoder** (PUC), to serve as grades 2-4 teacher, Arno SDA School, Majuro, Marshall Islands, of Paradise, California.

**Kristine Michelle Young** (SAU), to serve as grade 1 teacher, Ekamai International School, Bangkok, Thailand, of Redlands, California.

**Desiree Yesenia Zorrilla** (AU), to serve as teacher/evangelist, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of New York, New York.

**A. Alexander Zuccarelli** (LSU), to serve as grade 7 teacher, Pohnpei SDA School, Pohnpei, Marshall Islands, of Colton, California.

### Adventist Volunteer Service

*The following persons left their homes to work as volunteers in other parts of the world in the latter part of 1996 and early 1997. We thank God for their dedication.*

**Calvin Clifford Acuff**, to serve as health educator, Mission Health Promotion Center, Saraburi Province, Thailand, of Glen Alpine, North Carolina.

**Christopher C. Ault**, to serve as field coordinator, ADRA/Azerbaijan, Gyandzha, Azerbaijan, of Loma Linda, California.

**Iva Nellie Baasch**, to serve as elementary teacher, Grianach House School, Galway, Ireland, of Fulton, Maryland.

**Phyllis Eileen Collins**, to serve as nurse practitioner, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**Nancy Kaye Campbell**, to serve as director of operations, Adventist Health Center, Moscow,

Russian Federation, of Kirkland, Washington.

**Tammy R. Clark**, to serve as elementary teacher, Ebeye SDA School, Marshall Islands, of Marion, Ohio.

**Jean Marie Drake**, to serve as elementary teacher, Saipan SDA School, Mariana Islands, of Shawnee, Kansas.

**Gordon William Franklin**, to serve as family practice physician, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and **Marjorie Helen Franklin**, of Northome, Minnesota.

**Marcia Jane Franklin**, to serve as family practice physician, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and one child, of Two Harbors, Minnesota.

**Lisa Ann Frankovich**, to serve as elementary teacher, Ekamai International School, Bangkok, Thailand, of Walla Walla, Washington.

**Heidi Rae Halvorson**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Mission, British Columbia, Canada.

**Carol Elaine Hearn**, to serve as musician, Cambodia Attached District, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and **Richard L. Hearn**, of Cocoa, Florida.

**David Stanley and Melinda Ruth Hill**, to serve as teachers, Ebeye SDA School, Ebeye, Marshall Islands, of Gentry, Arkansas.

**Camille Suzanne Knudson**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Boring, Oregon.

**William C. Kreger**, to serve as physical education/social studies teacher, Jeh SDA Elementary School, Marshall Islands, of Chico, California.

**Susheela Nellie Krishnasami**, to serve as computer science teacher, Adventist Vocational Institute, Ghana, of Madison, Alabama.

**Beverly Dawn Laird**, to serve as English teacher, English Language Schools, Moscow, Russian Federation, of O'Neals, California.

**Verlin August Leer**, to serve as principal, Yap SDA School, Colonia, Yap, and **Joy Louise Leer**, of Chowchilla, California.

**John Roy Lohr, Jr.**, to serve as director, ADRA/Kyrgyzstan, of Longwood, Florida.

**Cheryl Faye Magnant**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**Raymond Leslie Mayor**, to serve as OB/gyn physician, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and **Wilma Louise Mayor**, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**Diana D. Mitchell**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Raynham, Massachusetts.

**Cindy Yukjung Oh**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of San Jose, California.

**Chae Hui Olson**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Roseville, Minnesota.

**Phyllis Lee Brown Andrews Potts**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Loma Linda, California.

**Clint Mario and Anthea Jane (Rippin)**

**Ratliff**, to serve as teachers, Guam Adventist Academy, Talofofo, Guam, of College Place, Washington.

**Joanne Ricketts**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Silver Spring, Maryland.

**David Lee and Nanette Elaine Sample**, to serve as assistant for health projects and elementary teacher, respectively, Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital, Hong Kong, of Spangle, Washington.

**Mark Clifford Schwisow**, to serve as construction engineer, Cambodia Attached District, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of Kirkland, Washington, extended his assignment.

**Melissa Lynne Smith**, to serve as English-Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Holbrook, Arizona.

**Sherly Selvi Sondakh**, to serve as business teacher, Kosrae SDA School, Tofol, Kosrae, of Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**Ernest and Carrie Lee Staats**, to serve as elementary teacher and secondary math teacher, respectively, Guam Adventist Academy, Talofofo, Guam, of Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

**Joseph Earl and Jennifer Ann Strunk**, to serve as maintenance worker and accountant/secretary, respectively, Yap SDA School, Colonia, Yap, and two children, of Owensville, Ohio.

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# His Eye Is on the Crow

BY SAM MONTEZ

*"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father"*  
(Matt. 10:29, NIV).

I had been slightly annoyed lately by the loud scolding of two large crows every time one of us ventured into the yard. Early one morning as I was watering the garden, I became aware of the reason for the scolding.

Hopping about under the bush was a baby crow trying desperately to jump up and fly. The poor creature had fallen out of its comfortable nest and was now floundering about in a hostile environment of countless dangers. High above in tall trees the parents kept a constant vigil.

Even the neighbors noticed the loud racket as the two large birds carried on their unending cawing. A dog here, a cat there, people walking about—the watchful parents kept busy warning the little bird of impending dangers. For indeed, it was a desirable morsel.

For several days I didn't see the small bird, and thought it had succumbed to the chilly nights or found an eternal resting place in a cat's belly. But I couldn't understand why those two large birds kept up their constant racket. Couldn't they comprehend their small one was gone—dead? Were they still hopeful, still waiting?

Several days later as I was working in the garden, I looked across the street, and there, hopping about in the neighbor's yard, was the little black bird. Although bigger and stronger, it still couldn't fly. *How and why*, I asked myself, *has it crossed the busy street and not been touched by a speeding car?*

The answer came immediately when the little bird ventured too close to the street and the parents chattered loudly and swooped down at it. Somehow the big birds had coaxed the young one from our busy wooded property, full of cats, dogs, and squirrels, into a much safer environment. The

property across the street was for sale and vacant.

I spotted a large cat crouched under a nearby bush. "Oh, no," I gasped, "this is the end!" The cat ran for its life amid the chatter and flapping of wings as both birds dove madly at it. The young crow clumsily flew into a low tree.

"That's it; you can do it!" the mother seemed to say as she flew down and landed nearby.

The large bird floundered on the ground flapping her wings earnestly. "This is the way. Don't be afraid—I am near!"

Suddenly, with a burst of energy and flurry of wings, the young one took to the wind and landed on a higher limb. Resting awhile, it again threw itself into the unknown. Higher and higher it soared, finally landing atop a towering pine tree. On each side were the proud parents, chirping loudly. In full splendor and majesty stood the product of their labors.

There, high above, the young crow surveyed its vast domain. A master of the skies, a conqueror.

And suddenly out of nowhere appeared countless crows joining in a chorus of loud celebration.

There in my garden, I sank to my knees. "Oh, thank You, Lord," I cried. "Thank You for the opportunity to witness this noble spectacle. I am that young crow! I am he who has fallen from grace. Lost and confused, I needed You to save me from the clutches of death. When the dangers of evil licked at my heels, You reached out. When I tried Your patience, You waited and never gave up."

Where are you today? It is not too late. For if His eye is on the crow, how much more is it on you and me? ■



Sam Montez was a freelance writer living in Cherry Valley, California, when he wrote this article.





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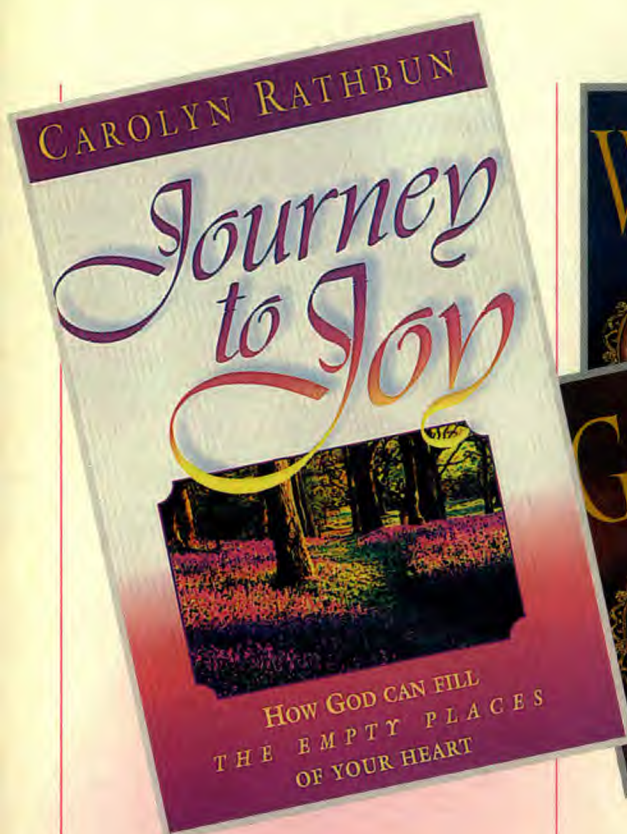
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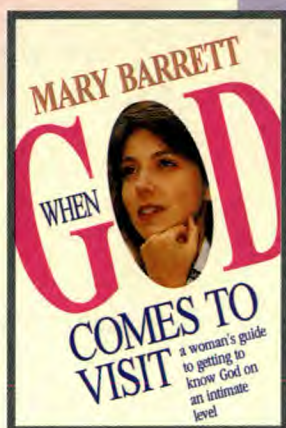
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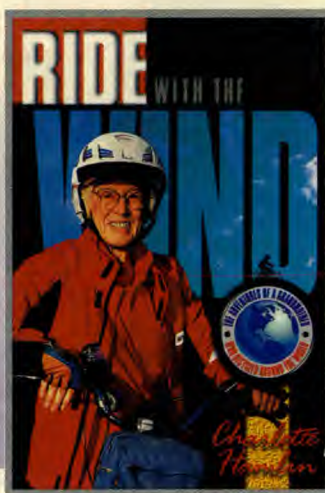
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