

SOARING HIGH

**Inspiring Stories of Sabbath Keeping
(Book 2)**

Compiled by

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By Steven E. Behrmann

Trial Copy

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many hostesses of my youth and pastoral experience who together with their husbands have made their homes a sanctuary for a delightful Sabbath experience both in the food they served and in the general comfort they faithfully provided their loved ones and guests. There are many names that should be mentioned. A few that come to mind in my own experience are my own mother, Jeanne Beerman, a consummate cook and hostess, my sister, Anita Shultz, also of the same genre, Sue Shepley, Jean Ham, Verona Schnibbe, Sunnie Casebolt, Lola Hunter, Robin Lindsey, Gloria Beerman, Wanda Johnson, Carolyn Evans, Alice Ames, Geneva Wysong (my aunt), Carol Hardin (my cousin), Helynn Brown, Kathy Wesley, Marion Hoel, Ingeborg Liebold, Marcia Falk, Kay Cooksley, Pam Stewart, Marjorie Koenig (my mother-in-law), and a host of other faithful "Marthas," that have provided for me at distant speaking appointments or in general Sabbath fellowship with my family. May every blessing abound to them now, and in the world to come!

Foreward

This book, *Soaring High*, is compiled as an addition to the first volume, *Riding High*. In both of these volumes the blessings found in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath are recounted in the form of a story collection. This present volume is still in formation and the editor would welcome additional stories and vignettes of a similar nature to complete the book.

In the first volume the point was made that keeping the Sabbath, when done right, is not a restrictive drudgery, but a delightful blessing. The following stories exonerate the same truth. Hopefully they will speak for themselves. May each reader find this blessed Sabbath experience in their own lives, as they rest in the love of their bountiful Creator and Redeemer.

----Steven E. Behrmann

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A BOTTLE OF OIL

By Ruth Fillman Arias

The tile floor felt cold to my knees as I knelt to take a brief inventory of my kitchen cabinets. It did not take long to see that there was almost nothing to eat—a little rice, a one-pound sack of beans, a can of tomato sauce, a couple cups of flour. From this small store my husband and I would have to find the night's supper, morning's breakfast, and tomorrow's lunch before he would receive his small paycheck and be able to buy groceries.

Bitter thoughts began to lash out inside me. I was out of work, and my husband had had to accept a low-paying job to keep from having to work on Sabbath. Hunger had a way of outlining sharply both our necessities and frustrations. It is not easy to be kind and patient when you see the man you love work for less than half the salary he had been offered if he would work on Sabbath just once or twice a year.

Because I was kneeling on the floor already, I was in the proper position to ask for the help I needed. The cold floor brought my mind back to the contents of the cabinet. I could cook the rice and the beans, make some sort of bread out of the flour, and make it last for one more *day-but* there was no oil, no shortening, no margarine.

I thought about Elijah and another woman who had faced cupboards that were nearly bare. Because I was kneeling on the floor already, I was in the proper position to ask for the help I needed.

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As I began my prayer, asking the same God who likewise had helped Elijah and Elisha by supplying oil, I had trouble concentrating because someone walked up on my front porch, made a noise at the door, and walked away rapidly.

As soon as I had said Amen, curiosity led me to the front door. There hanging in a plastic bag with a circular hole at the top that fit over the doorknob was a brown bottle. A printed tag proclaimed, "HERE IS YOUR SAMPLE BOTTLE OF OIL."¹

¹ When written, Ruth Fillman Arias was a homemaker living in Grand Prairie, Texas. *ADVENTIST REVIEW*, Feb. 26, 1981. "A bottle of oil"

AND THEN MY RED SEA OPENED

By Robert L. Thorpe

I WAS NOW a registered, certified diagnostic radiographer with a new baccalaureate degree in business administration. The Lord had blessed my wife and me tremendously, and we were ready for new ventures. I was hired by a large banking institution into a promotion-qualification program. We had a new baby girl, a new degree, a new career in banking, and a new salary-substantially more than we had ever seen. Surely nothing could go wrong with this picture.

At the bank I decided to start on the credit side as a commercial credit analyst. I was placed in a department with MBA graduates from the top schools of business in the country. I soon understood that the road to the top went through the credit department. Surely I was in the right place at the right time, and nothing could go wrong with this picture.

After six months of leading the entire credit department, even the MBAs, in securing and analyzing new commercial loan applications, I received a call for an appointment with the executive vice president of the prestigious department known as the "National Division."

Upon hearing of the appointment, my assistant supervisor asked me what had I done wrong. I could think of no errors. But I began to wonder if one of my analyses had caused the bank to make questionable loans or if the bank had lost a large sum of money due to my recommendations.

As I entered the waiting area of the executive vice president's office, I was visibly shaking with fear. It was all I could do to keep my knees from knocking together. He came out to greet me and to invite me into his ostentatious office. "Tell me something about yourself," he said.

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"I am Robert L. Thorpe, a 1971 graduate of the ..."

"No," he interrupted. "Tell me about your upbringing and where you are from."

After hearing my short story, he remarked that he was a young man about my age when he started his banking career. We exchanged pleasant conversation for a few additional minutes, and then he asked if I had any questions.

"Sir, have I done anything wrong? Have my analyses caused any trouble for the bank?" He quickly assured me that my work had been excellent. Furthermore, because I had done so well in such a short period of time, I would be "tapped" in about six months for a higher position.

Within six months I got an invitation to head my own branch bank. I would be fully in charge of all banking operations. Only one "minor" thing came to my mind amidst all of the excitement. The sun sets earlier than the bank's closing hour of 6 p.m. during the months of November and December.

Perhaps I could leave just a little earlier on Fridays during this time of the year, and I could have my assistant close up for me. Surely the Lord would cause them to understand.

To my utter surprise I received no accommodation. The executive vice president stated empathetically that I could not leave the bank on any Friday evening before closing time. He advised me to talk to my rabbi, priest, or minister for Sabbath clearance. He gave me two weeks to make a decision.

I prayed that the Lord would open my "Red Sea," as he had done for Moses.

Two weeks later I was summoned to his office to give my decision. My mouth told him I would not take the new position because of Sabbath observance. However, my heart could not believe that the Lord did not open the "Red Sea," nor did He change the banking hours to accommodate the Sabbath.

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After hearing my final decision, the executive vice president told me I now had two strikes against me. I asked to know the first strike. Without hesitation he said it was that I was black, but by my superior work had overcome this initial factor. The second strike, of course, was being a Seventh-day Adventist and my unwillingness to compromise even in the face of great personal opportunity for my family. He said the company had great plans for me in future managerial positions. However, they could not trust me to make important banking decisions if such decisions conflicted with my religion. Therefore, he told me, I had no future in top administrative positions.

Although I had said "no," my heart desperately wanted the new opportunities. For all of the month of December I questioned and pleaded with the Lord for some type of response. I received nothing. I became deeply disappointed and troubled with my sudden rise to the top and the equally sudden fall to the bottom. Why did the Lord bless us and then take all the blessings away? Why, why, why, Lord? No response.

The first working day of the New Year, in my small office, I bowed my head in prayer and said, "Lord, I said no to the position of opportunity a month ago with my lips. I now, today, say 'no' to the position with all of my heart. Please forgive me for my initial response to You. I thank You for all that You have done for me and for all that You will do in the future. I am back, and I want to be the very best commercial credit analyst again. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

At that very moment, before I could open my eyes, I felt complete peace, restoration, and calm. I felt as if a very heavy burden had been lifted off of me and I was at peace with my Lord. My entire office became very bright, and I heard, as clear as day, a voice that said, "Go back to Chapel Hill, North Carolina."

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I opened my eyes to see who was in the office talking to me, and no one was there. In my ears rang the words, "Go back to Chapel Hill." It was now 1972. I had not been to Chapel Hill since graduation in 1967.

I hurried into my supervisor's office and apologized for my unproductive conduct over the past month. I assured him I would once again lead the department in all indices of productivity. I made one request to go to Chapel Hill the next day. Without hesitation he granted my request, and he handed me an envelope. It contained a salary-increase notice on the inside. He had held the salary increase because he was confident I would leave my job.

I hurried home to apologize to my wife for my moody conduct and to let her know I was going to Chapel Hill, but I did not know why. She offered no opposition or inquiry.

In the next 24 hours, during my visit to Chapel Hill, I had a very successful day of job interviews (organized by my Lord), an opportunity to go to graduate school (with assurance of a full scholarship and a biweekly dependent-spouse income check), and a near-certain academic appointment upon completion of graduate studies. My Lord had opened the "Red Sea" for me after I completely and wholeheartedly yielded to His will. For whatever reason, He opened, not the world of banking, but the world of allied health education and administration instead. Halfway through my graduate studies, I accepted an academic position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a salary nearly double what I had been making in banking a year earlier.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the

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Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:29-31.²

²*When this was written, Robert L. Thorpe was an associate professor of allied health sciences in the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a member of the Immanuel Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Durham, North Carolina.*

AN EARTHQUAKING TEST

By Steven E. Behrmann as told by Milford Taylor

When I was a pastor in Valdez, Alaska, my first elder, Mr. Milford Taylor related to me an amazing story. At that time, Milford was retired. But the story he told me happened in 1964, in the same town where I was pastoring. Milford, once a successful Seventh-day Adventist pastor, had spent the latter part of his career as an educator and principal of the Valdez, Alaska, Public High School.

During his tenure as principal and member of the local school board, Milford faithfully kept his Sabbath, on the seventh day of the week. But as time continued tensions began to build among the staff members at the school. The staff wished for the school board meetings to occur on Saturday, and they also wished, or sought to require, that the school board chairman, or principal, be present at these Saturday meetings. Finally one day Milford was faced with the decision, either come to board meetings on Saturday or lose his position. Mr. Taylor pled with the board for some accommodation or change in the meeting time, in that he simply could not agree to come to board meetings during the sacred hours of his day of worship. Finally a vote was taken aimed to relieve Mr. Taylor of his position as principal. He was forced to resign.

Not a vindictive man, Mr. Taylor calmly accepted his ouster. But when the vote came down in the public meeting he felt impressed to speak. According to the story he told me, he stood to his feet and addressed the constituents with the words, “The Lord is going to judge this town.” Surprised and

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dumbfounded at his own words he sat down, and then finally left for home after the end of the meeting.

The next day, or immediately the following week the state of Alaska was rocked by one of the most violent of modern earthquakes, 8.3 on the Richter scale. The town of Valdez stood at the end of a long fiord, or narrow inlet into the Alaskan mountains. The earthquake generated a hundred-foot tidal wave that swept up the narrows and virtually destroyed the homes, businesses, and schools of the town. I have personally visited the site, many years later, and all that still remained of the town was some twisted metal, a few man-hole covers, and buckled and broken asphalt. The Taylors, who lived several miles up toward the mountains were still safely protected in their modest home among some beautiful trees, and I believe some of the expanded family still live on the same property, though Milford has now gone to his rest.

The new town was built five miles up the inlet on the north side and is now a thriving town, which has a small Adventist church that I pastored for a short time, almost two years. It was my privilege to preach in that community and to share with those interested that God cares about his Sabbath, and he is watching those who faithfully keep it. Though God does not delight in punishing those who trifle with His commands, he sometimes removes his protection from those who persecute God's faithful people in regard to their conscientious adherence to His important truths. The seventh-day Sabbath just might be one of those important truths!³

³ Steven E. Behrmann is a pastor in the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE

By Steven E. Behrmann

While the stories in this book are usually speaking of the *seventh day* Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, a specific day that is symbolically important in what it stands for, and that is carefully ordained to be respected by God's own instruction, it is also true, that sometimes God rewards the motives of even Sunday-keepers when they seek to honor God by respecting His day, at least, in the best way they know how.

In 1981 a movie was produced based on a true story of two British athletes who competed in the 1924 Summer Olympics held in Paris, France. In the movie, Englishman Harold Abrahams, who was Jewish, overcomes anti-Semitism and class prejudice in order to compete against the "Flying Scotsman", Eric Liddell, in the 100 meter race.

The thematic contrast in this now famous story is the two different philosophies exhibited by the two young men. In 1919, Abrahams sought his own personal glory by attending Cambridge University and competing in and winning "the college dash," a race that involved running around the court before the clock finished striking 12. Meanwhile, Liddell saw running as a way of glorifying God before traveling to China to work as a missionary. He represented Scotland against Ireland, and after one meet preached a sermon on "Life as a race."

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At their first meeting (in the cinematic version), Liddell cordially shook Abrahams' hand to wish him well, and then later beat him in the race. Abraham took it badly, but Sam Mussabini, a professional trainer that he had approached earlier, offered to take him on to improve his technique. Thus using these humanistic advantages Abrahams became an even more successful runner. Liddell on the other hand ran with “terrible abandon,” untrained, and wild. Yet he ran with “heart,” and was extremely fast. “In 1924 he won the British AAA Championships in athletics in the 100 yards (in a British record of 9.7 seconds: this record would not be broken for the next 35 years).” (*Wikipedia*) The two men became publicly known as national rivals.

Eric's Liddell's sister Jenny, who was set to accompany her brother back to the mission field, worried that her brother was too busy running to concern himself with their mission, but Eric repeatedly told her that he felt inspired to run: "I believe that God made me for a purpose"... he said of their mission plans, “ but He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure." Liddell did indeed become an extraordinarily sacrificial missionary in China for the next 20 years, where he later died of a brain tumor. The rest of his story is an interesting one.

The crowning moment of Liddell's career came at the 1924 Olympics. He was to run the 100-meter race in the Olympics along with his rival, Harold Abrahams. All of England, in fact all the world, anticipated this showdown between these two runners and the other competitors as well. The problem for Liddell was that the race was on Sunday, Liddell's Sabbath.

Despite pressure from the Prince of Wales and the British Olympic committee, Liddell refused to run a heat of the 100 meters (his best event) at the Olympics because his Christian convictions prevented

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him from running on Sunday. Abrahams won his race while Liddell sat it out-- away from the stadium. In the movie, Liddell attends church on Sunday and is seen quoting Isaiah 40 verse 31:

“Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength... they shall run and not be weary.”

Providentially, it turned out, that Liddell was allowed to compete in the 400-meter race instead, on a different day. In this race he scored an unexpected gold medal (a world record as well, 47.6 sec.), and in symbol a second gold medal, since many believed he would have won the 100 meter race anyway, like he had before. Just prior in the finals, Liddell had beat Abrahams in the 200 meter, finishing third, Abrahams finishing sixth. But beyond all of this Eric Liddell scored a “moral victory,” which is always the sweetest victory of all.

Fifty-six years after the 1924 Paris Olympics, Scotsman Allan Wells won the 100-meter dash at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. When asked after the victory if he had run the race for Harold Abrahams, the last 100 meter Olympic winner from Britain (in 1924), Wells quietly replied, "No, this one was for Eric Liddell."⁴

⁴ Steven E. Behrmann is a pastor in the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

LEE HO AND THE “JUDAIZING” DOCTOR

By DAVID LIN

(Excerpt from a report given from mainland China)

Mr. S, a Sundaykeeping Christian, broke his leg in an accident and was laid up in a cast. During this time his daughter asked an Adventist friend to visit her father. He did so and lent him some books about the Sabbath.

After reading them Mr. S remarked, "Now I know why the Lord permitted the accident that broke my leg. He wanted me to find the truth." Before long he was up and walking and went to another city on a business trip. There he took time to find his Christian friends and tell them about the Sabbath. To his surprise he found that two of them already were keeping God's holy day.

One of these Christian friends was a woman who had a dream that she was struck down by a horned beast and fell into the water. When she was about to drown she was saved by a man who told her his

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name was Lee Ho. After that she went around asking people whether there was anyone in the neighborhood named Lee Ho. Eventually she was told that there was an old woman who was a Christian. She sold frozen suckers for a living, but did no business on Saturdays. The woman who had dreamed found this woman and, sure enough, her name was Lee.

As they talked Mrs. Lee, seeing that her visitor was ready to listen to the gospel, said to her child, "Go call Auntie Ho." At last these two names, Lee and Ho, combined to form the name of the man who saved the woman in her dream. As a result, she listened eagerly to what Auntie had to say about keeping God's commandments and has been keeping the Sabbath ever since.

The other Sabbathkeeper is a well-to-do pediatrician who began keeping the Sabbath simply because she knew that the Jews observe it in obedience to the Ten Commandments, the same commandments that Christians should observe. But she did not know why most people keep Sunday. One day she asked a woman who had received theological training to explain things to her. This woman was horrified to learn that the pediatrician was keeping the Sabbath and strongly urged her never to "Judaize" anymore, because it was "such a grievous sin for Christians to keep Saturday."

After that conversation the pediatrician was not sure whether it was right to keep the Sabbath, but she continued to eat kosher foods and pay tithes. Upon meeting Mr. S, who provided information about the Sabbath, she began to see the light again and said, "It looks as though the Lord is determined to

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find His own people!"

Yes, that is exactly what the Lord is doing in China. Many persons who love the Lord but who have not heard about the Sabbath rejoice to know that this is His sign of sanctification and are ready to follow Him all the way. The Lee Ho group have established a little company of Sabbathkeepers in their community. Several leaders of cottage meetings also have accepted the Sabbath and are telling others about it.⁵

⁵ *ADVENTIST REVIEW*, #47, November 19, 1981, p. 18. David Lin, a former secretary of the China Division, now lives (1981) in Huainan, Anhui, China, where he is employed as a translator.

MY GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEED

By DENNIS B. CRABBE

"Get that book out of my sight! I don't need to be saved !"

"But, sir."

"No '*but's*;' get that Bible out of here, soldier!"

"Yes, sir." And with an about-face, Jim left the commander's office to place his Bible in the next room. Moments later, Jim returned. "Airman First Class Coyle reports as ordered, sir!"

"Airman, you're going to work Saturday, and I don't want to hear any more reports of your trying to get out of it. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. You're dismissed."

But for some reason Jim just stood there. The squadron commander, who was a colonel, and the first sergeant both looked at Jim, perhaps wondering what he was about to do. Then Jim spoke up. "Sir, I can't work Saturday because it's the Sabbath, and I can't work on the Sabbath."

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"My sabbath is Sunday," said the commander, "and I work then. Are you saying that I'm not a Christian because I work on my sabbath?"

"No, sir. God will have to decide that. I can't judge you," Jim said calmly.

Immediately the colonel threw another question at him. "What do you mean, you won't work Saturday? That's disobeying an order!"

"I didn't say I won't, sir, I said I can't."

Ever since Jim had heard and accepted the Sabbath truth he had been determined to obey both God and man, but in that order. Each Friday, however, it was the same confrontation: "Coyle, you've got a detail Saturday."

"But they know I can't work on Saturday!"

"Don't tell me--tell the first sergeant." And for a few weekends the crisis passed without incident. But there was something different about this particular Friday: "Airman Coyle, the first sergeant said he wants you to report to Colonel Sindron on Saturday morning for open-ranks inspection and a squadron detail."

"Thank you, Sarge," Jim replied.

Going to the nearest telephone, as his pattern had been on previous Fridays, he called the first sergeant's office, asking to be excused from the Saturday detail and inspection. This time the sergeant wouldn't give in. Instead he snapped,

"You've got 15 minutes to report to my office!"

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The first sergeant was all prepared for Jim when he arrived. The Air Force regulations were open on the desk and another sergeant was present as a witness. As soon as Jim arrived, the first sergeant read to him the regulations concerning "disobeying a lawful order." Then, in the presence of the witness, the first sergeant ordered Jim to report for the detail on Saturday.

But Jim was not his usual nervous self. Before entering the office, he had asked God to send an army of angels to help him in his great moment of weakness, and by faith he claimed the promise that God would supply his need. Now, in his great moment of need he could almost see the angels standing in the room with him. His fear vanished. By the grace of God he was able to smile.

Jim didn't work that Sabbath, nor any other. If you talk to him about this experience, he will smile softly and affirm that "the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:6).⁶

⁶ *Review and Herald*, AUGUST 12, 1976 , p. 7.

MOUNTAINTOPS

At the end of a week filled with disappointments and clouds, the Sabbath returns.

By EUGENE LINCOLN

Mountains have a strange fascination for me. One of my most thrilling experiences took place on a mountaintop early one morning.

My brother and I had camped on the summit of Taum Sauk Mountain, the highest point in Missouri, and I had risen early and climbed to the top of a fire tower to watch the sun come up. Never before had I realized what the poet Emily Dickinson meant when she said:

"I'll tell you how the sun rose--

A ribbon at a time "

Perhaps it was an optical illusion, but the sun seemed to move above the horizon, not smoothly, but in little jerks--"a ribbon at a time." No one has ever explained this phenomenon to me.

As I watched the tops of the hills, then the valleys, lighted up, I could almost hear the thunderous voice of the Lord proclaiming, "Let there be light!" And--at Creation--"there was light."

That memorable morning occurred several years ago, but as I engage in the frenetic hustle of busy life, the longing often comes to relive those moments--to be sitting on top of the world (or at least on the top of Missouri) and to watch the sun come up again, giving me renewed faith in a dark world

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made light again by the power of God.

In a partial way, though, those moments can be relived. At the end of a week often filled with disappointments, frustrations, doubts, and clouds, the Sabbath returns.

On this day it seems I am above the troubles of the week, sitting on a mountaintop and watching the Sun of Righteousness arise in all His glory. The fog of the past week is dispersed, and things viewed dimly before are seen more clearly. I can see beyond those things that are close by and crowd around me on other days--beyond to the world and even beyond the world.

At the end of the Sabbath I come back down again to the weekday world, refreshed and strengthened for another six days. Each Sabbath can be a mountaintop in one's religious life.⁷

⁷--At this writing, Eugene Lincoln was a copy editor at the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

SU NING'S SABBATH TEST

By Alyssa Zima

Su Ning squinted again at the paper containing the test dates, hoping that somehow she'd read them wrong. But the dates were still there, staring back at her: August 11 for the English Essay section and August 14 for the English Comprehension section. August 11 was a Wednesday, and August 14 was a Sabbath.

As she stepped out of the school building and into the hot, humid air, Su Ning impatiently brushed a lock of hair from her sweaty face. Why, oh, why does the test have to fall on Sabbath? she thought. Why can't it fall on any other day?

Su Ning was in her senior year of high school. In the Singapore educational system that meant that she needed to pass the English language tests in order to graduate. The tests had two parts—an essay section and a comprehension section. If a student failed the test, he or she would not graduate, and Su Ning was no exception. But as a Seventh-day Adventist, Su Ning did not want to break the Sabbath by taking the test.

Back in her home, Su Ning sat at her desk. "I have two options," she said to herself. "Either go ahead and take the test on Sabbath, or don't take the test and face the consequences. She really desired to honor God's Sabbath, but taking the test on that day seemed to be the most logical way to proceed. After all, if she didn't take the test, she would not become a high school graduate. God would not want her to do that, would He?"

As Su Ning lay in bed that night, she decided to talk to her pastor about her predicament. Maybe

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he would have an answer.

The next week at church Su Ning approached her pastor and explained her situation. Pastor Sim was very kind and offered to pray with her. "Maybe if I talk to your principal, she would let you take the test another day," he suggested.

Su Ning agreed.

As she left church, Su Ning felt convinced that the right thing to do was not to take the test on Sabbath. She felt that God was testing her faith, and she would not compromise. Perhaps if the principal heard of her beliefs from her pastor, she would be convinced that Su Ning really had convictions that could not be broken.

A few weeks before the test Su Ning and Pastor Sim went to see her principal. Pastor Sim explained the situation, and they waited for an answer.

"No way," the woman said harshly. "Did you really think that we would honor your request? The test date has never been changed and never will be. If you don't take the test with the others, we will have to fail you in English."

Su Ning was stunned. Fail me in English! Why, if I don't pass English, I won't be able to graduate! Though disappointed, she knew which path she was going to take. She decided to keep praying and studying as if she were going to take the test. If at the last minute she was allowed to take it, she wanted to do her best. When August 11 came, Su Ning was ready for the essay portion of the examination. As she entered the testing hall, she was filled with a sense of calm that enabled her to do well on the test. Although the questions were difficult, Su Ning was sure that she had scored well.

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During the rest of the week, Su Ning's classmates learned of her decision about the remaining portion of the test. At first they were shocked. Then they were upset with Su Ning for breaking the laws of the government. When they started calling her names and asking her why she wished to defy the school authorities, Su Ning adamantly answered, "The Bible says that Sabbath is on Saturday, and I can't go against the word of my God."

Her classmates were stunned into silence. They could not believe her bravery, for they also knew that without taking the test, Su Ning would not graduate.

August 14 arrived, a peace filled Su Ning's heart. She knew that she was doing the right thing. Calmly she went to church, thanking God for giving her serenity.

At the end of the day as Su Ning prepared for bed, she wondered what would become of her future. Would God impress the principal to make an allowance for her?

On Monday Su Ning's classmates and teachers met her with a kind of awe. By the end of the day she was known as the girl who risked not graduating for her God.

However, no one confronted her about missing the test. The suspense was almost unbearable as she waited to have the principal call her into her office.

Finally on Thursday Su Ning received a message to report to the principal's office. Trembling, she went to see her and was surprised to notice that the principal had a halfsmile on her face. Is she about to ridicule me as well as fail me? Su Ning wondered. "Su Ning," the principal said, "we have never had a student refuse to take this test before. We are amazed that you would rather risk not graduating than go against your beliefs." Solemnly the principal continued, "Because of your good score in the essay part of the test, we can't afford not to graduate you. Instead we are going to award you 50 percent of your essay score for your comprehension grade."

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Su Ning's heart leaped with joy. She was going to graduate!

Later Su Ning learned that the test she had missed had been extremely difficult. None of her classmates had gotten a good grade, and some of them had not even passed. Because of the arrangement that her principal had given her, she had gotten one of the best grades in her class!

A couple of months later, the day before Su Ning graduated, she began to think about how God had led her through her ordeal. He not only had made it so she could graduate, but also had rewarded her faith with an acceptable grade.

Suddenly a verse popped into her mind. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). Yes. There was no doubt. God is always true to His word.⁸

⁸ *Guide*, June 24, 2006, pp. 16-20

FOUR POUNDS OF FLOUR

Mervyn C. Maxwell

Joseph Bates, a pioneer founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is particularly known for his promotion of the Sabbath. He early on wrote concerning the message and the importance of recognizing the Sabbath. In the following citation, C. Mervyn Maxwell recounts a particular narrative taken from the life of Joseph Bates that pertains to the subject of Sabbath observance:

-----It was a booklet that Bates wrote in 1846 called *The Seventh Day Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign* that won James and Ellen White, and many others, to the Sabbath. In 1855 he (Bates) told J. N. Loughborough an experience he had while writing one of his three books on the Sabbath. It is a famous story and well worth retelling.

Prior to the development of western silver mines in the 1870s, silver was a scarce commodity in the United States, and English and Spanish coins were in common use. When the event in this story occurred, Bates's cash reserves were reduced to a single York shilling. Let us reconstruct the story as if he were telling it himself:

"While I was praying one day, the conviction came over me that I ought to write a book about the Sabbath and that God would provide the means. So I seated myself at my desk with my Bible and concordance at hand and began to work. After about an hour Mrs. Bates came and said, 'Joseph, I

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don't have flour enough to make out the baking.'

"How much do you lack?' I asked.

"About four pounds,' she replied.

"I went out and purchased the flour, brought it home, and sat down once more at my desk. Soon Mrs. Bates came in again and exclaimed, 'Where did this flour come from?'

"Why,' I asked, 'isn't there enough?'

"But I don't understand,' she said. 'Have you, Captain Bates, a man who sailed vessels out of New Bedford to all parts of the world, been out and bought *four pounds* of flour?'

"Up to this date Mrs. Bates [who was not yet a Sabbath keeper] did not know my true financial condition. Recognizing that I must now acquaint her with it, I said calmly, 'Wife, I spent for this food the last money I had on earth.'

"Mrs. Bates began to sob bitterly and asked, 'What are we going to do?'

"I stood to my feet as if I were a captain still directing my vessel and said, 'I am going to write a book and spread the Sabbath truth before the world.'

"But what are we going to live on?'

"The Lord will open the way.'

"Oh, 'The Lord will open the way! The Lord will open way!' That's what you always say.' And bursting into tears, she left the room.

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"I went on writing for about half an hour, when an impression came over me to go to the post office. I went, and sure enough there was a letter-but with the five cent postage not paid. It humbled me to tell the postmaster, Mr. Drew, a friend of mine that I did not have even five cents, but he was kind and said, 'Take it along, and pay some other time.'

"'No,' I replied, 'I won't take the letter until the postage is paid. I'm of the opinion, however,' I went on, 'that there is money in it. Would you please open it? If there is money there, take the postage out first.'

"The postmaster complied-and found a ten-dollar bill. It was from a person who said the Lord had so impressed his mind that Captain Bates needed money that he had sent it to me immediately.

"With a light heart I then went to a provision store, bought a barrel of flour for \$4.00, and some potatoes, sugar, and other necessary things. When I explained where the groceries should be delivered, I warned, 'Probably the woman will say they don't belong there, but don't you pay any mind. Unload the goods on the front porch.'

"I then went to Benjamin Lindsey, the printer, and arranged for publishing my book on the understanding that I would pay for the work as fast as I received money, and that the books would not be mine until the bill was paid in full.

"I knew that no one owed me anything, but I felt that it was my duty to write the book and that God would move on people to send the means. I bought some paper and pens in order to give time for the groceries to get home ahead of me. Then I went on, entered the house quietly by the backdoor, and sat down again at my work. Soon Mrs. Bates came into my study and said excitedly, 'Joseph, look on

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the front porch! Where did that stuff come from? I told the drayman it didn't belong here, but he insisted on unloading it.'

'Well,' I said, 'I guess it's all right.'

'But where did it come from?'

'The Lord sent it.'

"'The Lord sent it. The Lord sent it.'" That's what you always say!'

"I handed her the letter I had received. She read it and had another cry, but a very different one from the first. And then she sweetly asked for my forgiveness for her lack of faith.

"And the money did come in, sometimes from persons I never met. In fact, the final amount that we needed-I never found out where it came from-arrived on the very day that the books were finished."

Although Joseph Bates never found out where that final payment came from, J. N. Loughborough, in 1884, found out. He learned that H. S. Gurney, Joseph Bates's singing blacksmith friend of a Kent Island (missionary) trip, had provided it. When Gurney had set out on that journey, his employer had fired him and angrily refused to pay him his back wages that were due. Now, just in time, the Lord led the employer to relent.

God's providence in helping Captain Bates spread the word about the Sabbath in 1846 and 1847 strengthened early Sabbathkeeping Adventists in their sometimes sorely tested belief that God was indeed with them.

The fuse had ignited the gunpowder. A radiant new light about God's holy day was bursting upon

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them!⁹

⁹ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell it to the World*, pp. 81-84.

THE FREEDOMS OF THE SABBATH

The battle for a living on the seventh day is one that the Lord does not require us to fight.

By RITCHIE WAY

"If you become a Seventh-day Adventist you will be giving up your freedom in Christ and will go into bondage," warned my friend Barry. Barry and I, both engineers, had worked together during the summer holiday period overhauling machinery in a New Zealand biscuit factory. At that time I was a Christian in name only, whereas Barry loved the Lord and obviously enjoyed a vibrant experience. Often in our discussions he would pull out his "engineer's manual," as he called his pocket New Testament, from his coveralls and would turn to a text. In the few short weeks I was privileged to work by his side, he lighted a fire in my heart that eventually was to consume my life.

But now, only a few months after I had completed my contract with the biscuit factory, I was seriously thinking of joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church. An Adventist evangelist had come to town, and I, hungry for more of the Word of God, attended his meetings, drinking in the wonderful truths he presented. Filled with enthusiasm, I called on Barry to share with him what I had learned, but his negative reaction fell like a wet blanket upon my burning zeal.

"Why?" I asked incredulously. "What gives you the idea that Seventh-day Adventists are in bondage?"

"They are in bondage to the law, Ritchie. Like the Jews, they are rigorous Sabbatarians. But Christ

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freed us from the bondage of the law when He nailed it to His cross, and in place of the old Sabbath, which enslaved men, He has given us a new day to signify the new freedom we now have in Him."

Although I did not say so to him, I wondered whether Sundaykeepers enjoy a freedom in Christ that Sabbath keepers do not. But this thought conflicted with Christ's statement "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

One thing I was thoroughly convinced of was the truth of the seventh-day Sabbath. It therefore followed that if I observed the true Sabbath as I should, I would be free, not in bondage. It is error that enslaves, not truth. I decided then and there that I had to find out in what ways the Sabbath would free from bondage. What I discovered follows:

Mental freedom

The first freedom I experienced, as an observer of the true Sabbath, was mental freedom. It was a great relief to me when I made my decision to obey God and keep the fourth commandment. I no longer felt obliged to justify, both to myself and others, why I observed a "Sabbath" that could not be supported from the Bible.

I never did know for sure which activities were permissible and which were forbidden on Sunday. But as a Sabbathkeeper this problem no longer troubles me, for my Sabbath obligations are clearly spelled out in the fourth commandment and enlarged upon elsewhere in Scripture. Now I can lay down my tools with a clear conscience each seventh day, even though one hundred and one jobs may be calling for my attention. I can rest untroubled because God has commanded it. As a Sundaykeeper

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I had no such authority for rest on the first day, but the authority I now have for my Sabbathkeeping has given me a sense of security, a peace of mind, and a calm of conscience that I did not enjoy before. It truly is a blessed privilege to be a Seventh-day Adventist.

Physical freedom

There is no slavery quite like the slavery of leisure without work, or the slavery of work without rest. The fourth commandment saves me from both. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Ex. 20:9, 10).

The Sabbath commandment has brought a sensible balance into my life, a healthy balance between activity and rest. It teaches me that no matter how pressing and urgent my other commitments, each seventh day there is something more important for me to consider than my own wants and activities.

There are many things that, while good in themselves, if not regulated by the fourth commandment would keep us from that which is better. Each of us needs "to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48).

Many people work on the Sabbath, as well as on all other days of the week, because they trust in themselves more than they trust in God. The Bible, however, teaches that my continued existence depends on a great deal more than my own labors. The God who clothes the lilies of the field, and who feeds the sparrows of the air, will also provide for me if I seek to follow His plan for my life. Therefore, the Sabbath frees me from the foolishness of relying solely upon what I can achieve for

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myself.

The battle for a living on the seventh day is one that the Lord does not require me to fight. His message to me is "Ye shall not need to fight., this battle: . . . stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

Spiritual freedom (*Freedom From Bondage*)

As Moses left his home in Midian to deliver his people from slavery, so our great Deliverer left His home in heaven to free us from bondage (Luke 4:16-18). And to all whom He has freed He says: "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15).

God appointed the Sabbath as the memorial of our deliverance from bondage. When I was liberated by Jesus from the oppression of sin, I entered into His rest. It is written, "There remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his" (Heb. 4:9, 10, R.S.V.). Upon the sixth day of Creation, our Lord looked with satisfaction upon all that He had made, then rested on the Sabbath. Adam and Eve rested with Him secure in the knowledge that their creation was perfect and complete. Again, on the sixth day, our Lord hung upon the cross. Looking back upon His work of redemption, He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished." He then

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rested on the Sabbath in Joseph's new tomb. Each Sabbath that I observe witnesses to the fact that I am resting in Jesus' finished work. My Sabbath rest signifies that I am resting completely in Him who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The rest that He offers me from soul slavery is soul rest (see verse 29). The seventh-day Sabbath, therefore, stands as a sign, not of my bondage, but of the mental, physical, and spiritual freedom I enjoy in Christ. It signifies the precious relationship that now exists between me and my Lord. Far from being a burden, it is a "delight." Far from bringing me into bondage, it has made me "free indeed."¹⁰

¹⁰ ---Ritchie Way served as secretary of the Papua New Guinea Union Mission.

ADVENTIST REVIEW, #48, OCTOBER 23, 1980, p. 5

MY GOLDEN SABBATH

Rosemary Bradley

SABBATHS in my memory are as round and golden as the sun that marked their entrances and exits. With 52 of them a year they spin around and tangle one with another so that often I can't be sure whether we went to our own church 11 times on Sabbath the year I was seven, or whether it was the other way around and we went only seven times the year I was 11.

Those were the days when Daddy was a Bible teacher at an academy in California's San Joaquin Valley. And that meant that he was also preacher at the small surrounding churches.

But Sabbath memories begin long before that. I suppose if I were to sift through and find the earliest memory of a specific Sabbath, it would have to be one that happened when I was just a little girl in Africa. With Daddy as the missionary we traveled a lot from school to school and small church to small church. But I remember one Friday evening-- and I have no idea where we were --going out to the rock outcroppings where my younger brother and I played during the week. We climbed to the top and watched the sun go down. As a child I was amazed that it was possible to see the sun move, but that evening I saw it. And somehow a magic overtook me as I realized that one moment was mine and the next moment belonged to God. It was Sabbath, a very special time.

When we came back to the States, Sabbaths began to begin on Thursday night. That was grocery shopping night and the whole family went. Morn had the Sabbath menu well in mind, and when we got home she put the beans on to soak overnight and cooked the potatoes.

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Then we began to get the house "presentable," as my mother always said. On Thursday night, that meant mostly putting things away. On Friday afternoon getting things "presentable" meant that I dusted, my brother emptied the trash, Daddy vacuumed the rug and mopped the kitchen floor, and Mom did everything else.

Then it was into the bathtub for the Friday bath. And along with clean pajamas--and later, clean sheets--Friday meant that we got bath powder. It was wonderful. Soup for supper had been simmering on the back of the stove all afternoon. Often there were homemade rolls. But always there was cake and ice cream. Sabbath was the only time of the whole week that we had dessert. Mom had baked the cake on Friday morning before she fixed breakfast. And it got frosted Friday afternoon when we all came home from school. With both parents teaching church school, it was no wonder that our house had to run with computer precision.

But there was no precision at our house on Friday night. All of us were in our night clothes, relaxed and easy. We enjoyed our musical instruments. The rest of the week my brother and I dodged practice, but Friday night playing was pleasure. Mom and I played the piano. Dad and my brother played the trombone. My brother and I both played the accordion. We alternated the instruments, and all of us sang.

Then it was time for a romp. Daddy would be on the floor with us and what a wonderful frolic we had. He would tickle us until we'd beg for mercy. And we would tickle him until he thought he had had enough. We looked forward to Friday night when all the schoolbooks, the grade books, the bulletin board ideas, were put away, and Mom and Daddy shared their time with us.

Sometimes the phone would ring. And when it rang on Friday night, there was always an air of

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mystery. So many times a small church would suddenly need a pinch-hitting preacher. And Daddy always said "Yes." That meant something good. We would be invited out to dinner at someone's house. Maybe they would have children our age. Maybe they would live on a farm and have some baby animals. Our minds were full of excited "maybes." And the potatoes that had been boiled on Thursday night would come out of the refrigerator and become potato salad. And by this time the beans had been baked and were ready for almost any eventuality. Mother wouldn't think of going to a small church without enough food to go potluck.

Happy Sabbath Mornings

Sabbath mornings we children awoke to the familiar strains of the King's Heralds and Del Delker singing on our well-worn 78 rpm records. Often my brother and I ran and got in bed with Mom and Daddy. We'd talk or sing along with the records. We were happy and looked forward to getting dressed in our best clothes for Sabbath. And if we were going to another church that day, it was so much the better.

Sabbaths when we did stay home and go to our own church and eat our own food were also special. Often as soon as dinner was over Daddy would say, "Who wants to see if we can get lost?" And that meant we were going for a ride somewhere on the back roads, sometimes to places we had never been before. We sang as we drove, stopping the car whenever we saw something interesting to look at. Daddy would break open rocks to see what was inside, reminding us that we were the very first to ever see that piece of nature. It was like a real discovery. He taught us to collect and properly press wildflowers. He knew the trees and helped us to identify them. And he was a wonderful detective as he sorted the tracks left by little animals that drank by quiet water. Birds refused to stay still and so

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did we, so we never learned much about them. But their songs provided a counterpoint for the mind as we poked around on Sabbath afternoons. And no matter how long we were gone or where we went, we never really got lost.

Sometimes on Sabbath afternoon friends would drop in. By Sabbath night we had a whole houseful of company, and then we had worship. What a lot of singing we did. Daddy used to say we would make the rafters ring. But since I didn't know what a rafter was in those days, I couldn't say for sure. But I did know that the music was about the most beautiful I had ever heard. Then came the part of family worship that I liked most.

If we had friends who had never been with us for Sabbath worship before, Daddy would explain the tradition. But if everyone knew what was coming, he would simply say, "What did you enjoy that was beautiful today?" And we were never hurried as we went all the way around the circle, each person telling about a lovely moment during the Sabbath hours.

Always a Tradition

No one really remembers when that part of our worship tradition began; it was always there. But whenever we had first-time visitors, Daddy reminded us again of the "Why." Because Sabbath is a memorial of Creation and because God created all things beautiful, Sabbath is a time to remember again the loveliness that God intends His people to enjoy. And the world is full of loveliness that can be forgotten the other six days of the week. Each Sabbath is a time to look forward to God's re-creation in the new earth when perfection will be restored.

When I was 13 we moved away from the valley, and that changed our Sabbaths. Daddy didn't go

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away to preach very often and we went to a big church instead of a small one. But on Sabbath afternoons we still wandered around in out-of-the-way places. And we still had many friends for Sabbath evening worship. Through academy and college my school friends were welcome by the carload to share Sabbaths at our house.

Once a good friend said to me, "I like Sabbath with your family. We never did anything special at home for Sabbath--just went to church and slept all afternoon." I remember thinking, *Special? We don't do anything special for Sabbath. We always do the same thing.*

But now at a distance of several years and a whole continent between my family and me, I remember how special those Sabbaths at home were. And Friday evening after the sun has set, as the scent of bath powder is lingering in the bathroom and the *King's Heralds* are singing on my stereo, I slide into the clean sheets then reach for the phone to call home.¹¹

¹¹ Rosemary Bradley is an editorial secretary on the *REVIEW* staff.

REVIEW AND HERALD, October 12, 1972, p. 10

BLESSINGS FINALLY DELIVERED

By Mark A. and Ann Kellner

The following story is presented in the news-article format in which it was found:

United States: Federal Court Rules For Sabbath-keeping Worker

June 30, 2006 Fayetteville, Arkansas, United States [Mark A. Kellner/ANN]

A United States federal district court in Fayetteville, Arkansas, has ruled for a Seventh-day Adventist who sought accommodation for his Sabbath-keeping beliefs. The worker was awarded U.S. \$311,166.75 in lost wages and punitive damages. It is believed to be one of the few such cases in which punitive damages - designed to "reform or deter the defendant," as one definition puts it - have been awarded to a Sabbath-keeper.

Todd Sturgill, age 41 and a resident of Springdale, Arkansas, was a 19-year driver for United Parcel Service when he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in May of 2004. In July of that year, Sturgill asked his employer for accommodation on Friday evenings during the upcoming holiday delivery season. After three months, Sturgill was told he would receive no accommodation.

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Though Sturgill was happy to perform his job, his conviction about observing the Biblical Sabbath on the seventh day of the week - which begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on the Sabbath, or Saturday - would not allow him to perform work during that time.

Despite these roadblocks, Sturgill was able to make arrangements with his coworkers to adjust his schedule and keep the Sabbath until Friday, Dec. 17, 2004. On that day, despite repeated requests for assistance and accommodation, managers at the firm took no steps to enable Sturgill to complete his work before sundown, and he returned to the UPS center with roughly 35 undelivered parcels, and then went home. He was fired the following Monday for what UPS called "job abandonment."

The resulting hardships hit Sturgill, his wife Judi and their two children directly. Finding work as a mortgage broker, Sturgill saw his salary cut by two-thirds. He said he had to "cash in" his retirement savings, and borrow money to make ends meet during this time.

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Seventh-day Adventist Church members Judi and Todd Sturgill smile after Todd's federal court ruling June 30, 2006, in favor of his rights as a Sabbath-keeper. [Photo courtesy Kester Law Firm]

However, he added, the course of events did not diminish his convictions in obeying God.

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"Through all of this, my faith has grown. Maybe a lot of people might want to try and blame God for what happened, but I wouldn't change a thing. If I had lost [in court] today, I still would have been thankful for what I'd done, standing up for what I believe," he told Adventist News Network in a telephone interview.

The June 30 ruling supports an earlier federal court case in which an auto salesman in Arkansas, who was not a Seventh-day Adventist, won the right to have his Sabbatarian beliefs accommodated.

"While we are gratified over today's outcome, one message is clear," said Todd McFarland, associate general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist world church. "The United States needs to enact the Workplace Religious Freedom Act to safeguard the rights of working people."

Joining McFarland in this case were Fayetteville attorney Charles M. Kester of the Kester Law Firm, and now-retired associate general counsel Mitchell A. Tyner, who previously handled religious liberty issues for the world church. Tyner noted that offerings from Seventh-day Adventist members in North America played a part in bringing the Sturgill case to this victory.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church takes an annual religious liberty offering throughout North America," Tyner said, "and part of it goes into a litigation fund for church members with religious liberty difficulties. Todd lost his job, and two-thirds of his income. If we had not been there to carry the ball, UPS would have gotten away with it."

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From its founding in 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has vigorously sought to defend religious freedom for all people, including Sabbath-keepers. Today, the church works globally to protect those rights.¹²

¹² **Copyright (c) 2007 by Adventist News Network.** 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA 20904-6600 phone: (301) 680-6306. e-mail address: adventistnews@gc.adventist.org.

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Attorneys Charles M. Kester of Kester Law Firm, Fayetteville, Arkansas; retired Adventist associate general counsel Mitchell A. Tyner and (far right) associate general counsel Todd McFarland flank former UPS driver Todd Sturgill, who won a civil rights case in a United States federal court on June 30, 2006. [Photo courtesy Kester Law Firm]

A SMALL MIRACLE

Retold by Kathleen Mavournin

NOTE OF EXPLANATION:

The Jewish people are among the greatest storytellers. Judaism is rich with stories, parables, and allegories. The Jewish people are also preservers of the Sabbath tradition. The following two stories are not included as examples of genuine truth particularly. They are included to demonstrate the broad context of Sabbath blessing and to reflect on the theological meaning of the Sabbath.

Hasidic Judaism is a reform movement in Judaism that occurred in the eighteenth century in Eastern Europe. It was founded by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, also known among Hasidic Jews as the Baal Shem Tov, or “Master of the Good Name.” For the sake of application, a Christian perhaps can put Christ, their true Rabbi and Master in the place of the Baal Shem Tov.

On the day before the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah, the last Sabbath of the year, the Baal Shem Tov and some of his followers went out of the city in a horse and carriage. They journeyed through several smaller towns and then out into the forest. Eventually they stopped at a small run-down farm in a clearing among the trees. Before they got out of the carriage, the Baal Shem said, "Promise me that no matter what happens here, you will not reveal by word or gesture who I am." The hasidim trusted their rebbe implicitly, so they agreed to this.

The Baal Shem knocked at the door and it was opened by the farmer, a poor and plain man named

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Avi. Behind him stood his wife, Sarah, and their four daughters.

"We are hungry," the Baal Shem said.

"Please come inside. We are honored to serve you," Avi said. Then he turned to his wife and whispered, "We'll have to kill the cow."

"But ... the cow's milk is all our children have to eat."

"We have guests. It's an honor to have guests. We must kill the cow."

So, with the Baal Shem to say the blessings and ensure that all was properly done, they slaughtered the cow. Sarah cooked the cow. And the Baal Shem ate the cow. His followers, knowing how important the animal had been to the family, couldn't bear to eat. The Baal Shem sat up all night, eating and eating, and he never even said, "Thank you."

The next morning, he announced what he wanted to eat for the Sabbath: six loaves of challah, six kinds of vegetables, two kinds of meat, two kinds of fish, ten desserts and three kinds of wine.

The hasidim were appalled. This was the Baal Shem Tov, the Master of the Good Name. The very heart of his teaching was loving-kindness. Honor and respect and kindness to all people, he said time and again, were more important even than study and learning. The hasidim thought their rebbe had gone crazy. But every time one of them began to speak, the Baal Shem would look at him and he would remember his promise.

If the hasidim were horrified, imagine how Sarah felt? She had watched this man eat all night long, and she was full of fear and anguish. Avi tried to comfort her and tell her not to worry. "Worry! I'm

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beyond worrying. What about our children? Who is thinking about them? That's what I want to know."

There was nothing else to be done, so Avi went into town and sold his farm to the banker to get money to buy food. He asked only that they be allowed to stay in the house until Monday. And he returned home with a cartload of food.

Sarah prepared everything the rebbe wanted. At sundown they lit the candles and sang the blessings and sat down to the Sabbath table. The rebbe began to eat. He ate and he ate and he ate. His followers were so worried and unhappy that they could scarcely swallow. It seemed to them that all they did for that entire Sabbath was sit in the little hut and listen to the rebbe's chewing. The meals seemed all to run together and the time passed very slowly.

At last, it was over. The sun went down and the first stars appeared. They lit a braided candle and sang the songs and prayers that close the Sabbath, looking forward to the coming week and the joy of another Sabbath. Then, as the Baal Shem and his followers were climbing into their carriage to return home, the rebbe turned suddenly and called out to Avi, "I am the Baal Shem Tov. I bless you to ask for whatever you need." The carriage door closed and the hasidim drove away into the forest.

Avi was astounded. The Baal Shem, the holy Baal Shem Tov, had been a guest in his house. He had dreamed of going to see him someday, of sitting near him for a while and listening to him teach. To think that he had been honored to share the Sabbath with him in his own house. Avi was filled with joy and turned toward his wife. A look of joy came into Sarah's face also but was quickly replaced by one of worry. That night the family went to bed without food.

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The next day Avi got up very early. He went out into the yard, recited his prayers, and then walked into the forest. What could he do now? The banker would be coming the next morning to take his farm. Who would help him? Then he recalled that the holy Baal Shem had said, "I bless you to ask for what you need."

He stopped there on the path and began to rock back and forth. And he prayed, "Creator of the Universe, I have never asked you for anything before, so please listen. My wife and children have no food. We have no house. I need money to feed them. I need money to buy back our farm. And Sarah, my wife, she would be so happy if there was money for dowries for our daughters and to pay for the weddings. Four weddings! And, Creator of the Universe, one more thing, since I'm asking: please make a small miracle. Let my house and my purse be large enough to provide for others who need."

Then Avi began to sob. He fell down flat on the ground, weeping and praying, praying and weeping. He lay there for a long time. Finally, Ivan the town drunkard came wandering by. "Oh! Oh! please don't cry. Whatever it is, don't worry. Maybe I can help. You have always been kind to me. Every one else in the village makes fun of me and treats me miserably, especially my own children. And I don't feel so well. If I die, I want you to have my fortune. Come, I'll show you where I hid it." Ivan led Avi to a big stone nearby and showed him a box hidden under it.

On Monday, the banker came and took Avi's farm. That same day, Ivan the drunkard died. Avi went into the forest and pulled out the hidden box. It was full of coins. Gold coins. Enough gold coins to buy a house in town even bigger than the banker's.

Exactly one year later, just before Rosh Hashanah, a fine carriage drew up before the house of the Baal Shem. The rebbe's followers did not recognize Avi and Sarah in their new clothes. "We've come

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to see the master," Avi said.

They were led inside to the Baal Shem, who knew them immediately and invited them to sit down. "Tell us, what has happened since we last saw you?" And all the hasidim crowded around to hear the story.

Avi told them about his prayers in the forest, about meeting Ivan the drunkard, and the box of treasure. "Now we have a house in town and everything we need," he said. "We are able to provide for our daughters. One is already married, and preparations are underway for another wedding."

"We have heard also," said the Baal Shem, "that you are truly a friend to those in need. Those who come to you for help are treated with kindness and respect. There is joy in heaven because of this."

"It is due to your blessing that our good fortune came to us. We have come to thank you."

Then the Baal Shem said to Avi, "You know, a year ago it was decreed in heaven that you were to become a rich man. But you were so humble and would never ask for anything. I had to come and eat you out of house and home so that you would ask for the blessings that were waiting for you. Mazel Tov! my friend. The very best of years!"¹³

¹³-----The Hasidic Stories Homepage. www.hasidicstories.com

THE THREE LAUGHS

Adapted by Doug Lipman

Once, the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov decided to prepare him a special Sabbath. They worked for days to make sure that everything would be just as it should be, so that the spirit of the Sabbath would descend as it never had before.

At last, a few minutes before sundown on Friday night, they were all seated around a long table with the Baal Shem Tov at the place of honor at the head. The disciple who had been chosen for the special honor of lighting the Sabbath candles stood up and began to light the candles and say the blessing.

"Ha! Ha-ha!" Suddenly, the Baal Shem Tov gave a loud laugh.

The disciple lighting the candles looked around to see what was wrong--if there was something amiss with his clothing, perhaps--but everything was as it should be.

Later, they began the Sabbath meal. They gave the Baal Shem Tov the first bowl of the soup that they had labored so long over.

He tasted it.

"Heh, heh, heh, heh!" He laughed and laughed.

The disciples were appalled. They rushed to taste the soup, but there was nothing in it that

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tasted...humorous.

Still later, they were singing the Sabbath songs.

Oh, what strength a righteous woman has!

There is no treasure rarer than this!

Happy is the heart that relies on her,

For such a heart can lack for nothing....

Yai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai....

As they sang, the Baal Shem Tov began to laugh and laugh, as though he could not contain himself.

It was the custom of the disciples that, on Saturday night, after the spirit of the Sabbath had departed, they would choose one question between them, and present it to the Baal Shem Tov.

This Saturday, there was no debate as to what question they would ask. "Holy master, why did you laugh during the Sabbath--three times?"

In answer, the Baal Shem Tov said, "Come with me."

All the disciples crowded into the Baal Shem Tov's carriage. He drew the curtains over the windows, and they began to travel swiftly.

Several hours later, when he opened the curtains, they were in a distant village. None of them had ever been there before.

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The Baal Shem Tov went to the leaders of the village. "Bring everyone to the village square. Now."

When the Baal Shem Tov stood looking out over that crowd of faces, he said, "There is still one family missing."

After a few minutes, the people realized, "It must be the old bookbinder and his wife. They live on the edge of town; they must not have gotten the word."

When this old man and this old woman entered the village square, and the old man saw who it was who was calling for him, he began to wring his hands. "Oh, Holy Master. I know I have committed a great sin. I only ask forgiveness."

"Bookbinder, tell my disciples and these people gathered here how you spent your Sabbath."

Fearfully, the old man glanced at the illustrious students of the Baal Shem Tov and began to speak. "I am an old bookbinder. In my youth, I could earn enough that we had what we needed during the week, and something special to greet the Sabbath. But as I have grown older, there has been less and less.

"Finally, this Sabbath--for the first time--we had no Sabbath candles--and only a few crusts of bread for a Sabbath meal.

"My wife was determined that we would observe the Sabbath as well as we were able. And so, just before sundown, she went through the motions of lighting candles that were not there.

"As she did, I saw...a flash of light. And I understood for the first time that the light that I had thought came only from the candles was also coming from her. I shouted out, 'I love you'--in the middle of

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the holy blessing!

"I got control of myself, and went back to observing the Sabbath with due respect.

"But then later, we were beginning our humble meal. We had only warmed water for soup. But I tasted it. I felt...nourished.

"At that moment, I realized that the nourishment--which all these years I had thought came only from the soup--actually came also from her, from our being together through so many Sabbaths.

"And before I realized what I was doing, I jumped up. I kissed her!

"Shocked at my own behavior, I sat back down. I stayed in my seat properly until later, when we sang the Sabbath songs.

Oh, what strength a righteous woman has!

There is no treasure rarer than this!

"Singing these words, I realized what a great strength she was in my life.

Happy is the heart that relies on her,

For such a heart can lack for nothing....

"Suddenly, I knew that, in spite of our great poverty, while I had her in my life, I lacked for nothing.

"And then, before I knew what I was doing, I jumped up. I grabbed her by the arms. We began to sing and dance together.

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Yai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai;

Yai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai, dai....

"At last, I got control of myself and sat back down.

"Holy master, I know I have defiled the Sabbath. Please, tell me: what must I do to be forgiven?"

The Baal Shem Tov looked at his disciples. "When this man and this woman spent their Sabbath in such deep and holy love, I was there with them, and I shared in their joy.

"And when he spoke his love for that woman, not only I but the angels in heaven heard--and they smiled. And when he got up and kissed that woman, acting on that deep love--the angels in heaven saw them, and they laughed.

"And when the two of them joined their hands and sang and danced their joy, the angels themselves began to sing and to dance. And the Eternal Heart itself heard them, and it was warmed.

"On a Sabbath of such perfect joy, who wouldn't laugh?"¹⁴

¹⁴ The Hasidic Stories Homepage. www.hasidicstories.com

A HALO OF LIGHT

Mervyn C. Maxwell

Note: The following account describes how the prophetic voice spoke to the early Adventist believers regarding the Sabbath commandment. The Sabbath was introduced to modern Seventh-day Adventists by Seventh-day Baptists and by such enthusiasts as Joseph Bates and C. L. Crosier. The following vision was given in a confirmatory sort of way and post-dates the introduction of the Sabbath truth to the Adventist believers. However this vision along with a number of other circumstances demonstrates to those who are open to the prophetic voice as manifest in Ellen White how important God views the Sabbath truth and the blessings inherent in it. The following is quoted from Mervyn C. Maxwell's book, *Tell it to the World*:

Let us imagine the scene, reconstructed from early accounts:

Welcome spring was on its way at last to Topsham, Maine. Undoubtedly the snow was melting, crocuses were blooming, and robins were hunting worms in the grass. Indoors at Stockbridge Howland's place in Topsham, the believers were kneeling in prayer on Sabbath, April 3, (1847) seeking God's light and truth. All at once Ellen, in her warm, pleasant voice, cried out, "Glory! Glory!" Everyone knew she was having another vision.

A sense of thrilling reverence settled over the group. Already their prayers were being answered. They knew that when her vision was over, Ellen would have something helpful to tell them.

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While still in vision Ellen rose to her feet and walked over to the table. There they had placed their Bibles and other books before kneeling. At this the rest of the group rose also from their knees and sat in their chairs to watch and to assist with their prayers.

With no hesitation, Ellen picked up a Bible and held it above her head. Keeping it there, where she could not possibly read it, she turned to a Bible promise. Then she walked over to someone who needed the encouragement of that particular text, quoted the verse while looking toward heaven, and pressed the-Bible gently against his chest. As the person took the Bible to read the passage for himself, Ellen returned confidently to the table, picked up another Bible, and repeated the process for a different person. This she did a number of times. Then she sat down. The vision continued.

After a time she inhaled deeply, her first breath since the vision began.

Everyone was eager to know what she would have to say. She gazed around the room while her eyes grew accustomed to earth's dimness after heaven's brightness.

"Can you tell us now what the Lord has shown you?" James asked quietly.

"Yes, yes, I can," Ellen replied.

"I saw an angel flying swiftly to me. He quickly carried me from the earth to the Holy City. In the city I saw a temple, which I entered. Then I passed into the holy place.

"Jesus raised the veil and I passed into the holy of holies. There I saw an ark, covered with purest gold. Jesus stood beside it. Inside were tables of stone folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and as He did so, I saw the Ten Commandments. On one table were written four commandments and on the other, six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six, but

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the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all. The holy Sabbath looked glorious. A halo of glory was all around it."

At this, the people looked at each other in surprise, and Ellen noticed their reaction. "I was amazed too," she agreed. "I had no idea that the Sabbath was so *very* special in God's sight."

After a pause she went on. "I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the great question to unite the hearts of God's dear, waiting saints."

Again looks of surprise passed around the room.

Ellen thought for a moment struggling to find the best words to express what she had seen and wanted to tell. "I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and *proclaimed the Sabbath more fully*. This enraged the churches and nominal Adventists, as *they* could not refute the Sabbath truth. At this time God's chosen all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they came out and endured the persecution with us."

"Was there anything else, Ellen?"

"Yes, there was," she replied. "It was about the third angel. I saw that it represents the people who receive the Sabbath and go out to warn the world to keep God's law as the apple of his eye. I saw that if we gave up the Sabbath, we would receive the mark of the beast. I also saw," and she smiled, "that

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in response to the warning, many people would embrace the true Sabbath."¹⁵

¹⁵ Mervyn C. Maxwell, *Tell it to the World*, pp. 87-90

“Ellen White wrote out this vision immediately, and within days Joseph Bates had a thousand copies printed as a "broadside" (a single sheet printed on one side). James White raised \$7.50 to pay off Bates's expenses. Soon afterward White republished the vision, along with several other items, in a tract called *A Word to the Little Flock*. Later (in 1851) he published the visions in a booklet entitled *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*. (The word "views" here means "visions.") It is available today in *Early Writings*.” -----Maxwell, p. 90.

SUB-ZERO SABBATH

By Byron Reese

It had been a cold winter in Helena, Montana. One January morning Martina Hickman and her two sisters were helping their father do the chores on their small 10-acre farm near the forest where Martina's father worked as a lumberjack.

"Dad, do you think it's going to get as cold as they say it will this coming weekend?" asked Martina with a shiver.

"If it does, I don't know whether we'll be able to get you girls to church this Sabbath." Mr. Hickman pulled his cap down to cover his ears from the biting cold.

"But, Dad, we've always gone to church before," insisted Martina. "Why would we let the weather stop us now?"

"It's not that we wouldn't want to go to church," explained Martina's father. "But when the oil in our car gets too cold, it becomes somewhat solid, and the moving parts on the engine just won't turn. Then the car won't start."

"But Dad, we're having a special program at church this week." Martina looked at her father with pleading eyes.

"Now, I don't think I can do anything about the weather!" said Mr. Hickman with a grin. "We'll just have to let the good Lord take care of that."

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Martina kept looking for signs of warmer weather, but just as the weatherman had predicted, the temperatures dropped lower and lower throughout the week.

Friday night the Hickman family gathered in the living room for sundown worship. At the end of worship Mr. Hickman asked, "Would anyone like to have prayer?"

"I'll pray tonight," offered Martina. The family bowed their heads as Martina began. "Dear God, You know how we would love to praise Your name in the special musical program we're giving in church tomorrow. Please, Lord, help it not to get so cold that the car won't start. And please help us to be a blessing to those listening in our congregation. Amen."

After the prayer it was time to practice the three songs they were planning to present to the church. Martina, her younger sister, Betina, and their father played the guitar, while her youngest sister, Christina, accompanied them on the piano. Mrs. Hickman didn't play an instrument,

As the family finished practicing, Martina felt confident that they would make it to church the next day, but then she overheard a conversation her parents were having in the kitchen.

"Oh, Curtis, what are we going to do?" spoke her mother in a worried tone. "The weatherman said it could get down to 30 degrees below zero tonight. You know the car won't start in the morning if that happens."

"I know, dear," Martina's father agreed. "But these girls have been planning on this special event for so long."

Martina went to bed hoping that the next day would bring warmer weather. However, as she stepped into her bedroom slippers the next morning, she realized that her wish had not come true. When she entered the kitchen, her mother was already serving up steaming bowls of oatmeal to her two sisters.

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"The weatherman was right, wasn't he, Mom?" Martina stared at her mother through the steam rising from the bowl her mother had just placed before her.

"Oh, he was more than right, honey," said her mother. "The thermometer says it's even colder than the predicted. It's 42 below."

"Where's Dad?" asked Martina.

"He went out to try and start the car, but he hasn't come back since," answered Mrs. Hickman.

Martina finished her oatmeal and went to look for her father. She first went to the garage, but he wasn't there. Seeing his footprints in the snow, she followed his tracks out to the barn. There she witnessed a strange sight. Her father had built a small fire outside the barn and was carefully removing hot logs from the flame and placing them underneath the engine of his logging truck.

Reading the blank expression in his daughter's eyes, Mr. Hickman responded, "I'm warming up that oil in the engine a little bit. I tried to start the car, but even with the dipstick heater and the radiator heater both plugged in, there was no hope for it. But this is an old trick your Grandpa Hickman taught me years ago. The only thing is, you've got to have a vehicle with a bit of clearance off the ground so you can get plenty of wood beneath the crankcase."

Martina had to admit the old logging truck definitely had clearance! She watched as her father continued piling smoldering lumber beneath the engine of the old Chevy truck. Finally, after there wasn't much room left, Mr. Hickman hoisted himself up into the cab and put the key in the ignition. He bowed his head, closed his eyes, and prayed in tones Martina couldn't make out.

After Mr. Hickman's short prayer, he turned the key on the old truck. The truck engine had an awfully hard time turning over, but finally it roared to life-ready for a rather different chore than it was accustomed to throughout the week.

Because there was room for only three people to ride in the truck at a time, Mr. Hickman had to

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make two trips to get everyone to church that day. Martina and Betina went on the first trip, and then Mr. Hickman returned and picked up his wife and Christina.

Church was special that day for the Hickman family and many others because of the wonderful music. But for Martina church was especially meaningful because of the way God had helped her family get there. He hadn't made the weather warmer. He hadn't even allowed the car to start. But God had used an old logging truck-and her father's creativity-to help the family make it to church that frosty January morning. And for that she was grateful.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Guide*, February 24, 2007, pp. 1 21-24.

THE BLESSINGS OF MOTHERS AND THE SABBATH

By Steven E. Behrmann

One of the most erudite, eloquent preachers to grace the pulpit in modern times is Charles D. Brooks. Brooks is a powerful evangelistic and television speaker who has blessed thousands if not millions. Elder Brooks has raised up numerous churches, is known to have baptized over 12,000 people into the Seventh-day Adventist faith, and has inspired many a religious gathering. C.D. Brooks is an ardent advocate of the Sabbath truth. Some of my own Sabbaths have been “blessed” by him.

When asked which person, experience, book, or commentary had the greatest impact on his preaching, Brooks replied: “Believe it or not, my godly Mother, who now sleeps in Jesus, is the person who has had the most profound impact on my preaching. When I was about six months old God appeared to her as she laid on a hospital bed and told her that she should keep God’s commandments. When she asked the Lord which one she was not keeping, she was shown the fourth commandment. My mother lived to see me ordained to the Seventh-day Adventist gospel ministry, and I think of her every time I enter the baptistry to baptize someone. I am, by grace, and extension

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of my mother's ministry."¹⁷

At least two observations seem appropriate from this testimony. The first is that God obviously wishes to promote the blessings to be found in keeping the Sabbath day holy with others in the world. He commissioned this very powerful preacher to do so in a very dramatic way and has so commissioned thousands of others.

The second is that God expects mothers (and fathers too, of course) to play a vital role in teaching the observance of the Sabbath. The same is the case with my own mother and father, who consistently made the Sabbath special for our family and who instilled a deep love and joy for the Sabbath in their children. In doing so they drew all of us closer to God and to his kingdom. What a blessing a good mother or good father is, and what a blessing is the blessed Sabbath!

¹⁷(R. Clifford Jones, *Preaching with Power*, p. 41).

SABBATH MANNA

By Steven E. Behrmann

This chapter is not a “Sabbath story,” *per se*, and yet it is. It is the story of how God directly provided for the physical needs of the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness. It is really one of the most extraordinary of stories of all time.

God promises to supply honest Sabbath keepers with temporal sustenance for the day on which they rest. The promise is that he will “feed them with the heritage of Jacob” their father. (Isaiah 58:14). This promise comes directly from God’s own mouth.

While the giving of the manna to Israel in the wilderness is a well-known story, it is seldom appreciated for what it really was. Of course, those who refuse to believe the legitimacy of the story itself have no appreciation of it whatsoever. But those who are fair in their consideration of this providential blessing given by God should at least be ready to observe a few things about this miracle of God and what it might represent to them.

The first consideration we should observe is the astounding **MAGNITUDE** of this miracle. While our hearts are warmed because Jesus fed 5,000 people (in the wilderness), and this was indeed a marvelous providence, it is really small when compared to the provision of the manna to Israel. The manna, likewise described as “bread,” was provided for not just 5,000 men (plus women and children), but was provided for multiplied thousands if not millions of people. Not only did it feed

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them for one meal, but supplemented “all their meals” for at least 38 to 40 years. Not only did it continue for exactly as long as they needed it, but it continued *without interruption* for the entire time. It was as regular and sure as the morning sun. The TIMING and CONSISTENCY of the falling manna could not be an accident. Edibles do not normally fall from the sky every morning at 5:00 AM!

Mathematically, the manna was provided to this enormous crowd for a period of about 14, 610 days. Without even multiplying, then, the number of *individual meals*, we are still talking about a minimum of 14,000 **major** miracles, just as miraculous as was Jesus’ “one time” feeding of the five thousand. What’s more, this food was mysteriously “delivered” to the very doorsteps of every Israelite, every day, at the same time---an incredible *logistical accomplishment*.

Another significant part of the miracle was the SABBATH PROVISION of the manna. The manna was normally designed to be a “daily,” kind of bread for Israel. It had a shelf life of about one twenty-four hour day. The extra, left on the ground immediately “melted” and was gone. Some of the Israelites, of course, tested how long the manna could be kept and found that it could not be “stored.”

Yet every week there came a clear exception, beginning on Friday. On this day a “double portion” was given, and this portion was kept fresh and ready to eat (by God’s providence) for up to 48 hours. This particular miracle occurred consistently on the right time in the weekly cycle for something like 2,087 consecutive times. God’s direct supervision over this phenomenon can be the only sensible

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reason to explain how food that normally deteriorated in a few hours time could still remain fresh on the Sabbath (otherwise a day like any other day) in the same natural conditions.

Another consideration is the apparent LEGITIMACY of this miracle. It was not something that happened to a solitary person or family in a remote place in Africa. It was a factual occurrence with available testimony of thousands if not millions of witnesses to vouch for it. Certainly this claim could not have been made repeatedly in the hearing of the Israelites by Moses and Joshua and others if it were not true. But there is no reported contest to this claim. Even the heathen knew that God provided Israel with the shelter and rain of the cloud, the water from the rock, and the manna from heaven. Jesus taught that the giving of the manna was a divine miracle, in fact, he said that he was in fact “the bread which came down from heaven.” Jesus was indeed the provider of this benevolent sustenance, and it was through this provision that the Lord taught that “men do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

The fact that God so regularly and consistently provided not only Israel’s daily needs for bread, but also so directly supported the Sabbath provision, is very informative about how God feels about his Sabbath (Exodus 16). The promise of Sabbath benefits pre-dated the giving of the Sabbath commandment on Sinai (though Israel was obviously keeping the Sabbath before this). God made sure to first promise sustenance to faithful Sabbath keepers, and to indicate that he would have many ways to provide for it. God also provided a miraculous substance in the manna (despite the fact that Israel complained about it—yet its extended provision being necessary because of their own fault), since it was apparently a very *versatile* food, and could be prepared in a variety of ways.

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Today, every Sabbath table is the table of the Lord. Just because it seems the food is placed there as a result of man's labor and effort does not mean that God is not ultimately supplying it, as he did the manna.

God usually supplies much more than common bread for our meals on Sabbath. This author's memories can select many wonderful repasts, literally hundreds and hundreds of sumptuous Sabbath meals. All of these are part of the Sabbath blessing God has delivered to our doors. Sometimes, for some, the meal may be simple bread, and other times a feast, but it is all "Sabbath Manna," provided straight from the Creator's hand. God cares about our temporal needs, and about his Sabbath, and he will conveniently supply, through our efforts and his providence, the sustenance necessary to continue life until we have all run our race. God himself, through Christ will always be the ultimate, miraculous provider.¹⁸

¹⁸ Steve Behrmann is a pastor in the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

LEO'S DROWNING PRAYER

As told to Michele Deppe by Leo Aganio

Grandmother may I go with my cousins to the river? We just want to give the carabao a drink."
My

heart raced as the lie slipped from my lips. Sure , the water buffalo would get a drink, but we planned to go swimming too. I didn't mention that part, because I knew Grandmother wouldn't approve, especially on the Sabbath.

My grandmother answered, 'Yes, Leo, if you think the animals need more water than they can drink from the trough in the field.'" Like all the other children in our Filipino Village, I got up every morning at 4:00 to take care of our carabao (our name for water buffalo).

Grandmother trusted me to know when the animals needed a deep drink. The carabao pull our heavy across the fields, helping us plant crops of rice, corn, bananas.

I wheeled away from her to dash out of the house, but Grandmother called me back. She gently pinched my chin between her thumb and finger and looked into my eyes.

And remember what I always tell you: the river can be a dangerous place, and I don't like for you to go there on the Sabbath. But if you must go, then be very careful." Her warning dampened my excitement. "And Leo, you go straight to Sabbath School as soon as the carabao have been returned

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to the field!"

"Yes, ma'am," I said. My heart squeezed with guilt. In all my 10 years I'd never lied to my Grandmother before. She wasn't an easy person to lie to. Grandmother's love surrounds you like a hug, making you want to be a good person.

But I really wanted to go swimming. A little lie, I thought, would be worth the fun.

I ran from the house and met my seven cousins in the lane. My lie lost its sting in the summer breeze. The sun shone through the trees, making inky dancing shadows on the water. We laughed as we splashed into the river, riding on the backs of our carabao.

This was so much fun! My cousins started swimming around, each holding thin ropes attached to their animals. Straddling the broad back of my water buffalo, I swung my legs back and forth, splashing water at my cousin Nelson.

"Leo, look at me!" Nelson yelled. He stood up on the back of his water buffalo, made a silly face, and then jumped into the chest-high ' river water. I laughed as Nelson bobbed out of the water and scrambled back onto his carabao. "The water is so cold!" he said, giggling. "You've got to jump in and get wet!"

I was just about to copy Nelson's jump when suddenly my carabao lurched forward. Another of my cousins, nicknamed NoNo, suddenly screamed with surprise. "They're fighting, Leo! Watch out!"

The animal that NoNo was sitting on tried to ram his sharp horns into my carabao. My carabao reared up into the air, avoiding the attack from NoNo's mount, his front legs jabbing furiously into the sky I couldn't hang on. I let out a frightened yelp, and my mouth filled with water as I was thrust into the river from the back of the twisting, fighting animal.

Underwater I could hear the roaring noise of the carabao and the muffled screams of my cousins. I

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hit the riverbed and expected to rise instantly back up to the surface. Just then a fierce kick rolled my body along the river bottom. The sunlight in the river water disappeared, and my face was smashed into the sand. Horror gripped me, and I felt terrible pain as my carabao stepped onto my back, pinning me down.

I was drowning! I tried to wiggle loose from beneath the massive weight of the water buffalo, but my efforts only ground me deeper into the sand.

Desperately I prayed.

Lord, I am sorry I lied.

Help me live! I'll never disobey Grandmother again.

The water buffalo shifted his weight from my back. At last I rose to the surface of the water. I felt as if I were moving in slow motion.

But I still couldn't breathe. - I knew God wasn't finished saving me yet.

My cousins saw my body floating a few feet away. "Look, there he is!" NoNo shouted. They jumped from their carabao and swam toward me as quickly as they could.

"Drag him to the grass," Nelson ordered, grabbing me under the arms. NoNo picked up my legs and helped hoist me out of the water. I could hear their voices and feel them tugging on my body, but I couldn't help them. I was dizzy and weak.

My cousins dragged me up onto the riverbank and gathered around. "Leo! Leo!" they screamed frantically.

As I tried to answer them, to tell them I wasn't dead, I started to gasp. Someone pushed my shoulders and sat me up. I coughed hard. Pain gripped my chest. Warm river water gurgled from my lungs, trickled out of my mouth, and spilled down my chin. I sucked air in short desperate draws. The painful throbbing between my shoulder blades was excruciating.

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"My back!" I moaned.

NoNo rolled up my shirt. My cousins were silent as they marveled at the large bruise forming on my back. It was in the shape of a carabao's hoof.

"Wow," someone murmured.

"You almost died, Leo," whispered Nelson. He wiped tears from his eyes.

We sat there for a minute, dripping and staring at one another. Then we got up. Each of us knew what would happen next. We would return the carabao to the field and run a mile as fast as we could, all the way to Sabbath school.

God doesn't give us rules to stop us from having fun, but to protect us from danger. When I finally told Grandmother what happened, she smiled: She hugged me tight and said, "You've learned a lesson the hard way, Leo."

That's just like Grandmother. And just like God. They always love me, no matter what.¹⁹

¹⁹ *Guide*, April 3, 2004, p. 2-6.

THE MAIL CARRIER WHO FOUND PEACE

By Crystal Earnhardt

I once heard a minister say that in the secular world, surrender means defeat - but in God's world, surrender means victory. Such was the case of Ron.

Ron Suden listened with interest as the evangelist read text after Bible text proving that God's ten commandment laws are valid and important to mankind today. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," he read in John 14:15.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:17-18

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For a while, the idea of following God lifted Ron's spirits. Something deep within him yearned for a relationship with the Creator of the universe. To be at peace, complete peace, would be the ultimate experience, he thought.

During the next four weeks this young man delved deeper into the Bible, discovering scriptures that had been obscure and meaningless before. He came to the conclusion that God's laws had been pushed aside by man. Particularly the fourth commandment.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8

Having been raised a Catholic, Ron knew the Roman Church had instituted Sunday as the day of worship in place of Saturday. That was explained clearly in the Catechism. To confirm the fact that Saturday is the Bible Sabbath, he looked up the word "Saturday" in the dictionary. "The seventh day of the week," it read.

How could he go to church on Saturday? He loved his job as a mail carrier. The U.S. Postal Service's motto promised that not even rain, sleet, or snow prevents the mail from being delivered. He had never heard of a mail carrier receiving Saturdays off. What was he to do?

For weeks Ron agonized and prayed that somehow God would work a miracle. His wife and two small children depended on him to make the house payments and provide food and clothes. How could he let them down? Was poverty the reward for obedience?

SOARING HIGH

As he agonized on his knees, the parable of the treasure hidden in the field came into his mind. In the story, a man, who was probably leasing the field, found a treasure buried in the ground. He sold all that he had to purchase the field so that the treasure could be lawfully his. In Ron's mind, the Sabbath was the treasure and he would have to sell everything in order to keep it. Yet he wondered, would God honor His word and feed His children? How could God cause this postal carrier to ride on the high places of the earth as promised in Isaiah 58:13-14?

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

"Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Stepping forward in faith, Ron approached his superior and informed him of his decision to honor the Sabbath.

"If you don't work on Saturday, you will lose your job," came the tart reply.

SOARING HIGH

Ron said nothing but went home to pray. He reminded his boss on Friday that he would not work the following day.

"Suden, you know that the mail has to be delivered on Saturdays," he answered. "You've delivered mail faithfully for 13 years. Why are you forcing me to dismiss you now?"

A hard punch in the nose wouldn't have felt any worse.

Ron couldn't eat at the dinner table that night. Instead, he sat quietly surveying the scene before him. Their house was spacious and well built. Three-year-old Jenni sat on the carpet dressing a doll while the baby slept peacefully in his bassinet. His children never lacked food, clothes, or toys. What would become of them if the house payments couldn't be met? What would they do if it took a month to get another job - or longer?

"Honey, we are all in this together," his wife told him. "It will be all right. I'm behind you all the way."

"Faith is believing in something that you can't see," said Ron, quoting the evangelist. "Right now I know how a blind man must feel. How can you walk forward when you can't see anything but darkness?"

Ron spent the next three weeks using vacation time so he could worship on Sabbath. The devil stayed

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on one shoulder to discourage him, but the Holy Spirit kept leading him from one Bible text to another that answered his questions. Isaiah 48:18 clinched his decision.

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

He needed the peace of God more than anything. Somehow God would provide for his family. He couldn't enjoy his material success if he were willfully disobeying God's word. He fasted and prayed for God to intercede. In the process, he lost 30 pounds.

Concerned, the evangelist phoned the postmaster general, who arranged a district meeting to decide the case. Ron was asked to appear before the committee when the meeting was ended.

The chairperson motioned for him to sit down. "Your records show that you've been faithful with your work," he began. "But as you know, the mail has to be delivered on Saturday. I'm afraid that mail carriers aren't exempt. We'll have to find someone to take your place. I'm sorry, but this is one job that you can't keep if you persist to worship on Saturday."

"I understand," Ron replied. He held his head high and breathed deeply. So it had come to this. What now?

The chairperson cleared his throat and smiled. "There is a little post office in the western part of the

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state that needs a postmaster. You know, they don't have to work on Saturdays. We'd be honored if you would accept that position."²⁰

Epilogue: Ron continued to serve the U.S. Postal Service as a postmaster.

²⁰ Crystal Earnhardt, *Trials and Triumphs - Miraculous Stories of Sabbath Victories* (Roseville CA: Amazing Facts, 1999).

THE LONGEST DAY

By Warren Bigford as told to Evelyn Bigford Lutz

My wife, Arbutus, gave the cloth one last flourish and then stepped back to admire her highly polished dining-room table.

“Perfect,” she said aloud. “The polish makes it like just like new. Now for the chairs.”

She began rubbing the back of one chair as though she had a grudge against it. Suddenly she stopped.

A voice seemed to be saying, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy----“ All morning she had been trying to push that phrase out of her mind. She just didn’t want to think about it. If her husband and her sister were going to work, she had reasoned, how could she keep the Sabbath? She might as well work too. Besides, she was going to be hostess for the neighborhood party that evening, and the house had to look just right. She had thought the work would keep her from thinking, thinking that today was Saturday. “The Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” the voice was saying again. “In it thou shalt not do any work.” Arbutus was learning that work doesn’t keep one from thinking.

When she finished the chairs she went into the living room, sat down wearily, and looked at her watch. It was a few minutes before twelve. Church would soon be getting out. Why hadn’t she been there? Why had she broken the Sabbath by cleaning house? As the tears filled her eyes and spilled down over her cheeks Arbutus wondered how it had all begun.

She and her sister, Esther, had been reared in the Adventist faith. As children they had never missed Sabbath school at the little church in a small Wisconsin town. Growing up, they had been

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baptized, and gradually had taken on various responsibilities in the Sabbath school and Missionary Volunteer Society.

One Sabbath a new face appeared at church—mine. I had been an Adventist for only a short time and had come from Illinois to work for an Adventist family in the community. Arbutus and I were attracted to each other from the start, and in due time our friendship ripened into courtship and marriage.

Eventually I had decided to return to Michigan, my home State. I had hopes of obtaining a better paying job in Flint. Shortly after our arrival there, my wife's parents and sister came also. Esther too was hoping to get a good job, since she longed for the clothes and the little luxuries so dear to the heart of young women.

Things had been disappointing, however. I was a carpenter, but the local builders hired only men whose work they knew. They seemed unwilling to take the chance of letting me prove what I could do. I tried several other kinds of work, None were steady or lucrative.

Esther had found thing no smoother. Doing housework for an irritable old woman was the only work she had been able to obtain, though she had filled out innumerable applications.

Looking after the little rented house and caring for our baby had kept my wife busy enough, but living in the city certainly wasn't the adventure she had thought it would be.

Even the church had been disappointing. We were used to a small church group, and we thought the atmosphere of the larger church cold and the members unfriendly.

The one bright spot had been the neighborhood parties. Not long after we moved in, the neighbors had invited us to the get-togethers held in a different home each Saturday night. We decided to go, although we knew they would probably not be the sort of thing we should attend. At least the neighbors had been more friendly than the church members, we told ourselves.

SOARING HIGH

There was no drinking at the parties, I had feared there might be, so we overlooked the other features that were not according to our standards. In the beginning the smoke bothered Arbutus, but she soon got used to that. We looked forward to these gatherings, which were the only social life we had.

One day I applied for work at an automobile factory. I much preferred working outdoors to working within the confines of a factory, but I had heard they were hiring, and I was desperate. Naturally I was jubilant when the clerk in the employment office told me, “You can start work tomorrow morning.”

His next sentence chilled my exuberance, however.

“You’ll be glad to know,” he said cheerily, “that you’ll get in plenty of overtime, for we’re working seven days a week.”

“But I—I can’t work on Saturday,” I stammered.

The clerk’s friendly expression suddenly changed as he stated flatly, “You’ll have to work every day, Saturday included, or you don’t get the job. There are plenty of other men who’ll be glad to get the work. Make up your mind—take it or leave it!”

My heart said, “No, you can’t work on Sabbath,” but my head said, “You have to support your family.” The struggle with my conscience was brief as the clerk waited impatiently for my answer.

“I’ll take it,” I said.

Strangely enough, my sister-in-law’s “luck” had changed that same week. Esther had been notified that her application for work at a new variety store had been accepted and she was to begin work on their opening day—Saturday. She had hoped to begin during the week and prove herself so diligent that the manager would be willing to grant her Sabbaths off. But now it would be impossible to do this.

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What could she do? She certainly didn't want to work on Sabbath, and yet here was an opportunity for steady employment and "a chance for advancement for those willing to accept responsibility," according to the newspaper ad she had answered. With this glowing opportunity at hand she felt she couldn't bear to face the scrubbing and dusting for that crotchety old woman any more. Perhaps later on, when she had become established at the store, the manager would be more willing to let her have Sabbaths off. She must be there on opening day, she reasoned.

As my wife sat pondering the situation we were all in, she tried to remember just when our spiritual experience had begun to deteriorate. It was a gradual. First we neglected family worship and the study of the Sabbath school lesson. From there it was easy to skip Sabbath school, and finally we were staying away from church much more often than we attended. Now we were even breaking the Sabbath.

"If we had been living as we should, this would never have happened," Arbutus sobbed aloud. "We mustn't go on like this or we'll be lost." Dropping to her knees, she began to pray. She poured out her heart to her heavenly Father, begging Him to forgive her for drifting away from Christian principles and asking for strength to bring her life into harmony with His will.

At the factory that morning my day had begun like any other—by punching the time clock. But somehow as I saw the abbreviation for Saturday—Sat—over the date, the letters seemed to leap out at me. As I stood staring at them, a voice seemed to say to me, "Remember the Sabbath day. . . . In it thou shalt not do any work."

"But I must work," my mind was answering, "or I'll lose my job." I shoved the time card back into the rack and stalked over to my place on the assembly line.

Some of the men I worked with were quite religiously inclined. They were members of churches. One was a Sunday school teacher, but he had been excused recently because his pastor understood

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that he had to work on Sunday now. That was reasonable. A man had to support his family. I vaguely wished I could somehow be as conscience free to work that day as they would be to work the next.

On of the men began to whistle. Why did it seem to annoy me? I often whistled at work myself. I just didn't feel like whistling today. Oh, why didn't he stop that—

Suddenly I realized why his whistling bothered me—he was whistling a hymn.

The work we were doing was oil sanding. After the automobile bodies were spray painted they were dried in a large bake oven. The next operation was the oil sanding. Naturally the paint fumes were strong in the whole department. "Strictly No Smoking" signs were clearly visible in many places. Still some of the men would go behind the bake oven and have a smoke when the foreman wasn't around. It hadn't bothered me too much, however, until that Saturday morning I overheard one of the older workmen swearing at them for sneaking back there to smoke.

"You light a match at just the right time in these paint fumes and you'll blow this place to pieces," he said.

That made me do some serious thinking. Probably nothing like that would happen. But if a disaster should occur, I certainly wasn't ready to die. Why had I broken the fourth commandment? Hadn't I proved in the past that if I kept God's commands He would take care of me? Why had I doubted Him? Filled with remorse, I silently prayed that if God would protect me that day and give me another chance, I would never work on another Sabbath, come what may.

Across town in the new store Esther was surrounded by the holiday atmosphere of an opening day. The store was crowded with customers, and she was kept busy waiting on those who made purchases at her counter. In the excitement she could almost forget that it was the Sabbath—almost,

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but not quite. She seemed to be hearing the fourth commandment repeated, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy—“ But she wouldn’t listen.

Trying to drown out that inner voice, she began to hum along with the tune coming from the nearby music counter, at first not noticing what it was. With a start she realized that it was “Nearer My God to Thee.” Tears came to her eyes. How could she be nearer to God clerking in a store on Sabbath? Instead she was drawing away from Him. Oh, why wasn’t she in church singing that hymn instead of listening to it blaring over a crowded store?

There must have been other songs played that day. To Esther it seemed that “Nearer My God to Thee” was the only tune coming from the music counter. The words beat upon her brain. It was the longest day she had ever spent and the shortest job she ever had. When at last it came time to close the store, she knew what she must do.

“I cannot come to work on another Saturday,” she told the manager.

His answer was just as final. “Then you will have to be replaced.”

She left the store with mixed emotions. Discouraged and disappointed about losing the job that had seemed so promising a few hours before, she was happy that she had decided never to work on Sabbath again.

When I reached home that day I at once told my wife of my decision not to work on another Sabbath, regardless of consequences.

“I’m so happy for that, dear,” Arbutus beamed at me. “Now we can make a fresh start together.” Then she told me of her own thoughts and feelings of the morning and how in the afternoon she had prayed for me and for Esther.

Hardly had we finished exchanging the day’s experiences when Esther came in.

“I was fired,” she stated. She looked tired, but her eyes were shining.

SOARING HIGH

Learning about Esther's day in the store, I remembered that annoying" hymn my fellow workman had been whistling that day was also "Nearer My God to Thee." The fact that the hymn was "popular" at the time had certainly "worked together for good" in impressing our hearts.

Did all the events of that day just happen? We don't think so. None of us were surprised to learn that my wife's mother had also spent much of the day on her knees praying for her wayward children.

This happened thirty-five years ago. None of us ever again worked on the Sabbath. There have been many evidences through the years that our heavenly Father has rewarded us with His blessings.²¹

²¹ *The Youth Instructor*, November 23, 1965.

FAITHFUL AT ANY COST

By Maria Bogdanciukiene

Attending school on Sabbath was required by law in the country of Lithuania. But Maria and her brother, Vytautas, never went to school that day. Instead they worshipped with the handful of Seventh-day Adventists in their father's church.

Their parents encouraged them to obey God no matter what the cost. But taking a stand for the Sabbath was risky during Communist times.

One day 11-year-old Maria returned from school and found her parents deeply troubled. "What's the matter?" Maria asked.

"We have received a notice to appear in court for not sending you and your brother to school on Sabbath," Father answered. "God has protected us all this time, and we are grateful. Yet disobeying the law is a serious offense."

"Papa," Maria asked, "what will happen?"

Father answered slowly, "I don't know Maria. But we must ask God to protect you and your brother, no matter what happens."

Several days later Father answered a heavy knock on the door. It was a police officer. He had come to take them to court. "Get your coats quickly," Father told Maria and her brother. The family was herded into the police car and taken to court.

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Inside the courtroom the parents sat in the defendants' chairs. Maria and Vytautas were told to stand in the back, where they listened to the accusations.

"I see that you have not been sending your children to school on Saturday. Do you know what the penalty is for disobeying this law?" the judge asked, glaring at Father.

Maria's father stood to answer the question. "Your Honor, we are committed to obey the laws of the land. But we also obey God's laws. God's law says to worship Him on Saturday, the Sabbath."

"But the law requires your children to attend school on Saturday," the judge reminded Father.

"Your Honor, I do not wish to be forced to choose between my God and my country," Father stated respectfully.

For the next few minutes the judge asked Father and Mother questions, and they answered each one carefully. After what seemed like a long time, the judge looked at them and asked, "Will you now permit your children to attend school on Saturday, as required by law?"

"Sir," Papa answered politely but firmly, "my children have chosen to obey God's commandments. I will not force them to break those commandments."

The judge looked at Maria and Vytautas, then at their parents. He announced loudly, "These people refuse to obey the laws of our country. They are not fit to raise these children. The children will be placed in a home for orphans immediately!"

"No! No!" Maria ran to her mother and hugged her tightly. The family held one another for several minutes until a police officer pulled Maria away. "Stay faithful!" Father shouted as Maria and Vytautas were taken from the room.

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The court sent the children to a nearby children's home. At first their parents were allowed to visit them. But when the school year ended, Maria and Vytautas were moved to another city 100 miles away, and their parents were forbidden to visit.

But Maria's mother came to the children's home anyway, hoping to see her children. She walked along the schoolyard fence, searching for two familiar faces in the crowded playground.

Maria saw her mother first. "Mother!" she squealed. Maria's heart pounded as she ran toward the fence. But before she could reach her mother, strong boys caught her and dragged her back inside the school.

"Mother!" Maria called out, crying. "Mother, I love you!"

"Be quiet or you'll be punished," the boys told Maria. "You cannot speak to your mother-or father," they reminded her as they dragged her to the classroom. Oh, Mother! Maria sobbed. Will I ever see you again?

Maria and Vytautas determined to keep the Sabbath and avoid going to school on Saturday. Early every Sabbath morning they hid in a closet or under beds as the other children left for class. But often they were found and sent straight to their classes.

One Sabbath they decided to try something else. They ran deep into the forest and spent the Sabbath singing and praying. When they returned about sunset, they found that police officers and search parties had been looking for them.

After that the children were closely watched. They were escorted to classes on Saturdays and not allowed to leave. Maria was a good student, but on Sabbath she put her head in her arms and did not take part in class discussions.

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Maria's teacher scheduled exams on Sabbath, thinking that Maria would eventually give in. But Maria refused to take the exams. In spite of excellent grades on her daily work, Maria was forced to repeat the fifth grade because she would not take the exams on Sabbath.

When Vytautas left the children's home to attend a technical school, Maria was left alone. Although her parents wrote to her every week, the school did not give the letters to her. She survived on memories of home and the assurance that others were praying for her in her struggle to remain faithful to God.

When Maria was 16, she was allowed to return to her parents. She had been away for five years! Soon after she arrived home, she and her brother were baptized.

Maria was so thankful to God for helping them remain strong, even when their faith was severely tested. She vowed to serve God her entire life!²²

²² *Guide*, May 7, 2005, pp. 20-24. (Reprinted from *Teen Mission*, Third Quarter 1997.)

MEDALS OR CROWNS?

By Susan Carol Scharffenberg

"Hey, Susan, here's a letter for you."

Pausing a moment as I typed, I reached up to take the long white envelope my sister Julie was handing me. I glanced at the return address but didn't recognize the name. Only the Mount Vernon postmark was familiar. Quickly my fingers tore the envelope open and pulled out the letter.

"Dear Susan, As coach of the Knox County Track Team, I would like to invite you to run in the A.A.U. Junior Olympics. We need some older girls to participate in this meet. Because you go to school in Knox County I thought you might like to enter the 15-17 age group. The meet will be held in Columbus on August 14, which is a Friday. I'm enclosing an application form and a list of the scheduled events. Please let me know if you are interested in entering. Sincerely, Mr. Deurieux."

"Read this, Julie!" I exclaimed.

Taking the letter from me, she scanned it hurriedly. "Sounds great! But how did he get your name?"

"Maybe he talked to Mr. Jarvis. I don't know who else would've suggested me." That seemed to be the most logical solution. Mr. Jarvis was our academy physical education teacher and knew of our interest in track.

SOARING HIGH

"That's probably it," Julie agreed, "especially since we hold almost all the girls' track records at the academy."

"Too bad you'll be 18 before the meet. It would be fun if you could enter too."

I looked at the long list of events and discovered that the 880-yard run was the longest race. That would be the one for me. Here was my chance to enter a big race. My dream was coming true! I just might find my place in the world of track! As I thought of the honor and the medals that come with winning, the idea of running became even more appealing. Eagerly I filled out the application form and mailed it.

The morning of the race I awoke early, tense and excited. Dad had agreed to drive the hour journey from Kettering to Columbus. For moral support my younger sister, Barbara, and my new roommate, Joyce, went along too. When we arrived at the stadium, rows and rows of empty benches stared at us.

"Are you sure the meet is today?" Dad asked.

"Yes, I'm sure," I replied. Maybe the time's been changed.

Sure enough, the meet had been delayed and wouldn't begin for more than an hour. My nervousness increased as I went to look for the coach.

"When do I run, Mr. Deurieux?" I asked.

"Here's a schedule of the events," he replied.

Three or four heats were scheduled for most of the events, followed by semifinals and finals. When I discovered that my event was the last one, my heart began to sink, for it was Friday. If the first events took too long, I wouldn't be able to run and would've made the trip for nothing. As the harder events were called, there were fewer contestants, so only one or two trials had to be run for each race.

SOARING HIGH

Suddenly rain began to pour down, accompanied by thunder and lightning—a typical Ohio thundershower. The meet abruptly ceased as everyone ran for shelter. As I watched the raindrops form small pools of water on the track, my hopes almost died. But the shower was short-lived. A brilliant sun soon dried the track, and the meet was on.

"First call for the 880-yard run," announced one of the officials.

Only three girls had signed up for the event. *At least I can place third*, I thought. When I took my position at the starting line I learned that one of the girls had dropped out at the last minute. That meant only two of us would be running. My chances were getting better! I quickly sized up my opponent. Her long legs were no encouragement, and neither was the emblem on her red track suit, which signified that she was a member of the State team. I resolved to do my best.

At the sound of the gun we were off. My long legs stretched out in an even stride, but my opponent's stride was just as long. Don't start out too fast, I cautioned myself. If you do, you'll wear out before you finish.

At the end of the first lap my opponent was in the lead. I sped up, but it was too late to catch her. Her training and experience had paid off. Not wanting to tire early, I had waited too long to close the gap and was unable to catch my opponent before she crossed the finish line. I realized I wasn't even tired.

When I went to the winner's platform to receive my silver medal, Mr. Deurieux was waiting for me. "How do you feel?" he asked.

"Full of energy!" I laughed. "Too bad this meet didn't include the mile. That's my race!" "Your endurance is great! You look as if you could run that race all over again. Our team needs good distance runners. How would you like to try out for the State cross-country track team?"

"I'd love to. When are the tryouts?"

SOARING HIGH

"Some time this fall," he replied. If you train between now and then, I'll be able to use you on the team. We travel all over the United States for meets. You wouldn't even have to miss school, because all the meets are held on weekends."

I could hardly believe that I now had the opportunity to join the State team. Of course, it would take lots of hard work. The many hours of training would result in sore, tired muscles. But I knew I could make my dream come true if I really tried.

I was almost ready to accept the offer when I realized what Mr. Deurieux had said. The races were on weekends, which meant anytime from Friday to Sunday. "On what day are most of the events held?" I asked, hopeful that he'd say Friday or Sunday.

"Usually Saturday," he replied. "Now, I know you're a Seventh-day Adventist, but you can still run on Saturday, can't you? I'm sure your church wouldn't object under the circumstances."

I'm sure your church wouldn't object. The statement startled me. "Sir," I said, "it's not a matter of what my church thinks. It's what the Bible teaches and what I personally believe. Saturday, my Sabbath, is the day I set apart to honor God. I don't feel that I can participate in sports events held on Saturday. I wouldn't be honoring God if I did. My mind would be on personal honor and glory."

"But I'm sure it's OK," coaxed Mr. Deurieux. "By running you would be helping the team, and God wants us to help others. I've had other Adventist young people run for me here in Columbus in past years when the meet was held on Saturdays. So I know it can be arranged. You think about it and let me know your decision."

I did think about it. Why did other Adventist young people participate on Sabbath? They only made it harder for others--for me--to do what was right.

SOARING HIGH

The silver medal I'd just received tempted me to try for more medals. As I fingered the glistening medal lying in the palm of my hand, I thought of the possibility of earning many more, of becoming the great runner I wanted to be.

Then I thought of another race-the one I must win-the race of life. Other young people could run on Sabbath if they chose. I was determined to win something greater than a gold medal-a golden crown presented by Christ Himself.²³

²³ Helen Lee, *Guide's Greatest Sabbath Stories*, p. 68.

THE XOCHIMILCO EXPERIENCE

*By Myron Widmer
(A journalistic report from Mexico)*

And miracles are happening. I had heard about one in nearby Xochimilco (So-chee-Mil-co), a suburb of Mexico City, and asked if I could get further details. My host and interpreter, Pastor Milo Ramirez, communication and education director of the North Mexican Union, said yes, and arranged for an early Sunday meeting with the 45 to 50 members on the site of their proposed new church building to be built by Maranatha volunteers.

When we arrived, the women already had the coals stoked up in their barbecue-type outdoor stove, and soon we were eating a traditional Mexican breakfast of tortillas with beans. Ummm, good!

Then I talked with Felicitas and Elias Lozada Alcantara, a mother and her 26 year old son, who in January and February 1985 had had dreams that had literally led them into the Adventist Church.

Both were non-Adventists who had asked God for help in resolving a local political problem. Once a solution was found, they started visiting various churches, but never felt quite satisfied they were Bible-based. They continued to pray earnestly to be guided and directed to a church like the primitive, God-fearing churches of the New Testament. If need be, they felt they would start their own.

From that point on they began having a series of dreams. Sometimes each would have the same dream; sometimes each had complementary dreams. In the first dream a voice told them that God's Ten Commandments still needed to be kept. The next two told them of the specialness of the fourth commandment. The next directed them to believe in the Second Coming of Christ.

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From these they concluded that God wanted them to start a church that kept the Sabbath and preached the second coming of Jesus. But another dream put an end to their plans to start a new church when it added that the church would be guided by a prophet.

In the sixth the son saw himself as part of God's church, walking through a desert just before thunder, lightning, and an earthquake struck and a voice declared that God's church was at last free.

One more dream showed the son a great green gate, a small garden, and a room with chairs and with people singing. That same night the mother saw in a dream a simple house, a green gate, and a white-haired pastor with pronounced eyebrows and a light coming down from heaven on his head when he preached.

By morning they had put the two dreams together and realized it was the final answer to their prayers. But where was this church? When Saturday morning arrived, the son decided to get on his bicycle and ride all around the town, looking for the little house with the green gate in front or for someone carrying a Bible.

After riding the streets for hours, he was about to give up when he noticed a woman with a black book in her arms. He stopped and asked if it was a Bible. "Yes, it is," she answered, and proceeded to tell him that she was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Upon his further inquiries she invited him to the little home where their congregation was meeting—a home with a great green gate, an entry garden, a large room on the side of the house where they worship, and, yes, a preacher with bushy eyebrows—veteran pastor Enrique Salvador.

You already know the ending! Both mother and son and other relatives soon became Seventh-day Adventists and now worship with other members in the little church of their dreams.

SOARING HIGH

Miracles? Yes, they still happen, in Mexico.²⁴

²⁴ *Adventist Review*, March 1, 1990, p. 15.

A DREAM OF THREE ANGELS

The story of how Kawahine Kiikane found Christ

By Charles W. Hartwick

While I was serving as mission director on the island of Hawaii and as pastor of the Hilo church, a Hawaiian woman had an experience that emphasizes the importance of God's last warning message to the world.

Kawahine Kiikane, who was 78 years old, lived with her granddaughter, Mrs. Hiapo, and her family. She was a genuine Hawaiian and spoke only Hawaiian. She gave me a stone ax her ancestors had used to hollow out logs for outrigger canoes for their trip to Hawaii from the islands of Polynesia.

She was a professional priestess kahunist. In early Hawaiian history there were many branches of skilled kahunas: priest of idol making, boat building, volcanoes, fishermen, weather prophets, and even of medical practice by the use of herbs and poisons.

Satan used these kahunists to further his nefarious work. Anyone with an enemy he wished to liquidate would pay the kahunist to pray for his death. If the enemy didn't die, the kahunist would have him poisoned. Such was Kawahine Kiikane.

In 1934 I held a series of evangelistic meetings in a large tent in Hilo near where Kawahine lived. As a result of those meetings her granddaughter and her three daughters were baptized into the Hilo church. Later the husband and father was baptized. Mr. And Mrs. Hiapo were faithful Christians who practiced their faith. Morning and evening they conducted worship in their home.

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Kawahine was addicted to plug-tobacco chewing. She bought it in large wooden boxes. The spirit that controlled her resented the family worship services. While the family was kneeling in prayer she would, in anger, pace the floor, cursing and swearing and spitting tobacco juice all over the floor. This went on for a number of months. Then something unusual happened.

One night God gave her a dream that profoundly impressed her. In the morning she said to Mrs. Hiapo, “I had a wonderful dream and I am sure that it has some meaning for me, but I don’t understand it.” Speaking in Hawaiian, she said, “I saw three angels flying in the sky, carrying scrolls. They had a message for me in those scrolls, and I saw your pastor standing by with an open Bible in his hands, and I was told that he had a message for me from that book.” She added, “What do you suppose it means?”

Mrs. Hiapo understood the dream immediately and proceeded to give her a study on the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14: 6-12. Kawahine saw the meaning in it all and received a full series of Bible studies. She was thoroughly converted, gave up tobacco chewing, which she had carried on for many years, and stopped cursing and swearing. She joined the family in their worship and Sabbath keeping.

Even though she couldn’t understand my preaching in English, she attended Sabbath school and church services every Sabbath without fail. Speaking through Mrs. Hiapo, I asked her why she always came to church, since she couldn’t understand what was being said. She replied, “I come because I believe God’s truth, I feel God’s presence, and I am in God’s house.”

I had been baptizing in the ocean, since we didn’t have a baptistry in the church. Now we had a new baptistry installed, to the left of the rostrum, with water running through a tropical scene into the tank.

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This particular Sabbath I led Kawahine Kiikane down into the baptistry. Before I could baptize her she clasped her hands together in an attitude of prayer, her lips moving as she looked up in prayer. Then she immersed herself. I was taken off guard, but then baptized her according to the usual procedure. After the service I asked her what she was praying about. She answered, “I was asking God to forgive me for being such a hardhead.”

After leaving the islands I attended a General Conference session in San Francisco. While there, I met Lawrence Skinner, who had followed me as pastor in Hilo, Hawaii. I asked him how it was with Kawahine. He said, “She was always faithful in church attendance and service until the day of her death.”

The Meaning of Kawahine’s Experience

Three things seem clear from this woman’s experience: (1) Those who use tobacco can overcome the habit with God’s help. (2) We should attend church services regardless of who the speaker may be, for God meets with us. We are in His presence, in His house. (3) The very fact that God gave a dream of the three angels’ messages to this woman, to turn her away from her sins, reveals the importance that God attaches to these messages.²⁵

²⁵ *Review*, October 27, 1977.

CAMPMEETING CLOUDS

By Steven E. Behrmann

This is not a particularly dramatic story of Sabbath blessing when compared to some of the others that are presented, and yet it may highlight a facet of God's ways that is notably significant. This is the concept that God often blesses us in spite of whether we notice it or appreciate it. Yet God still is faithful in his care. Often God intervenes and helps Sabbath keepers and other honest Christians----even when they are vaguely or not at all aware of it. These are "unseen" blessings that God still gives.

During an annual campmeeting in Portland, Oregon---I believe it was in July of 2006, some particularly hot weather descended upon the campground. This was not entirely unusual, for I as a pastor have been a participant in many such gatherings where the weather was unseasonably warm. But the temperatures were quite severe during the week leading up to the final services of the weekend. People from the community had been invited, and the Conference personnel and the pastors expressed concern for the effect that such scorching temperatures would have on the overall program. Prayers were offered to this effect.

Of particular concern was the Sabbath morning service, because while most worshippers could sit under the large tent, many attendees would be forced to sit on the wings, many benches being right out in the blazing sun. This could be uncomfortable and even dangerous to the elderly or those vulnerable to heat exhaustion or stroke.

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I remember personally praying about this situation. I was also aware that the conference leadership and many other pastors and workers were likewise praying that the day would be commodious for the important subjects being addressed by the speakers.

As the morning continued it seemed to me, at least, that an overcast or heat haze began to creep in. By the time of the church service there was enough of an “overcast” over the encampment that one could even sit in the open without the heat being too oppressive. There was no visible cloud overhead, yet the conditions were tolerable enough for the meeting to continue to its close. I, for one, sat in some of the benches on the wing so I know how it was. Having tried this before on other days (at noon) I have found that the brightness of the sun and its direct angle were almost unbearable. Therefore it seems to me that God directly sheltered the meeting just as he must have sheltered many such gatherings from the days of Israel in the wilderness to the present moment.

While all kinds of weather can at times surround worship gatherings, it does seem that God does intervene many times to aid the worshippers at religious meetings. Sometimes the rain is withheld for a few minutes. Sometimes a storm is delayed or passes without damage. Sometimes warmth abides in the room in the wintertime, even though the furnace has failed. It would be interesting to know in what ways God miraculously intervenes when we are not even aware of how blessed we are as a people. Seldom if ever have I heard of a tornado, or storm totally disrupting a religious

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gathering.²⁶ This is no doubt because God in most instances protects those circumstances in which his love and power are preached and shared.

Sometimes, for reasons God only knows he may not choose to intervene. But when God mercifully protects his people, his blessing should be acknowledged for what it is. It seems to me that the “campmeeting clouds,” or *whatever* they were, are just such an example that represents how God’s Sabbath blessing rests upon his congregated people.

²⁶ The Adversary does try and sometimes succeeds in bringing distraction to sacred meetings. But God’s purposes always win in the end.

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WINNING THE GOLD

By Deanna Kerr

Lindsey Henning was just about to walk out the door after practice when her gymnastics coach stopped her. "You're ready to join the competition team."

"Really?" said Lindsey.

"You'll have to practice three hours after school."

"That's OK," Lindsey said.

She couldn't quite believe what Patty was saying. For five years she had been working hard on her back springs and flips so that someday she could join the acrobatic gymnastics team. The day had finally arrived, and the excitement overwhelmed her.

Patty smiled. "We'll start Monday."

Lindsey ran outside and hopped into her mother's car. Mrs. Henning sat behind the steering wheel. Kayla, Lindsey's younger sister; and Candace, a friend from Lindsey's Adventist school, were in the back seat stuffing gym clothes into their duffel bags. The three girls all took gymnastics lessons.

"Guess what," Lindsey said to her mom.

"What?"

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"Patty said I could be on the team."

"Your hard work has paid off?" Mrs. Henning said. Candace patted her on the back, and Kayla cheered.

It was Friday afternoon, and the three girls chatted all the way home about what it would be like to be on the team. They spent the rest of the afternoon doing cartwheels and handsprings on the front lawn. The girls groaned when the sun went down and Lindsey's dad called them inside.

Usually Lindsey looked forward to Sabbaths, a day of rest from school and training, but this Sabbath seemed to drag on forever. She felt a little guilty for counting the seconds until the sun went down on Sabbath evening. She wanted to squeeze in some extra practice.

On Sunday she watched the national gymnastics competitions on TV and knew that if she worked hard, she would be there-someday.

When practice did finally roll around, Lindsey jumped out of the car and ran to the locker room to change into her gym clothes. She couldn't wait to learn how to do new routines. She went out on the mat to warm up. She did the splits and stretched from one side to the other. She put her legs together and bent forward. She did a couple of cartwheels. Two other girls who were going to be her partners joined her. Lindsey knew Julie and Joule from other practices. They were good athletes and dedicated to the sport.

Patty entered clapping her hands. "Let's get started," she said. The three girls did jumping jacks, ran in place, and stretched some more. Then they started with a few basic moves-back bends, front rolls, cartwheels. They ran across the mat, raised their hands above their heads, and tumbled and twisted.

"Lindsey, do a flip," Patty said.

Lindsey bent her knees slightly. With her arms straight out in front of her, she leaped back, tucked

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her body into a tight ball, and landed on her feet.

"OK," said Patty, "let's put on the safety belt."

Lindsey's heart pattered in excitement. The real fun was finally beginning.

"Jonie, do a back bend," Patty said.

Jonie leaned backward into a perfect arch. The muscles in her arms and legs flexed.

"Lindsey, stand on Jonie."

Lindsey stepped onto Jonie's body and tottered back and forth slightly before gaining her balance. From there Patty wanted her to do a flip. Lindsey's heart raced from adrenaline, but she wasn't afraid. The safety belt around her waist would catch her if she made a mistake. Lindsey bent her knees slightly and did the trick, landing solidly on her feet. She raised her arms above her head.

Patty then instructed Julie to stand on top of Jonie's arched body and told Lindsey to get on top of Julie's shoulders. Lindsey paused briefly. Patty wanted her to do a double flip from 10 feet off the ground. Lindsey swallowed hard as she climbed on Jonie and then stood on Julie. It took her a couple of moments before she was balanced well. She told herself everything was OK. She was wearing a safety belt.

She stretched her arms in front of her, bent her knees slightly, and took one more deep breath. With all the power and energy she had, she leaped backward and tucked her body. Before she knew it, she was standing solidly on the mat with her heart pounding in her chest. She was exhilarated and amazed at what she could do.

Now Patty told Julie to stand on Jonie's shoulders. Lindsey climbed to the top of the stack, and Julie tossed her 15 feet into the air. She flipped head over heels with her body straight as a board before landing on her feet. Then Patty wanted her to add a twist.

After a few more tricks, Lindsey felt comfortable with the height. She climbed the two-person-

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high tower with more and more ease, and thought less and less about her form. She was eager to try as many new tricks as she could.

"Be careful," Patty said. Lindsey only nodded her head while she stepped on Joule and then into Julie's arms. Julie threw her high into the air. Lindsey twisted her body, but something went wrong. She felt as if she was going to land on her back. The safety belt caught her right before she hit the mat.

Lindsey's blood pulsated through her veins. It took a couple of moments before she realized she was OK. After getting back on her feet, she took a deep breath and resolved to concentrate more on her technique.

Lindsey and the other two girls spent months practicing three hours a day three times a week. They competed at local meets. The excitement of being on the team was wearing off, and practice was becoming routine and almost boring. One day, though, Patty informed them, 'You've earned enough points at the local competitions to go to state competitions to win medals!'

Lindsey was so excited she felt as if she would burst. If they did well at state competitions, they could go on to the Western regional competitions. And if they did well there, the next step was nationals.

"When's the competition?" Lindsey asked.

"The first Saturday of next month," Patty said.

Lindsey's heart dropped into her stomach. She couldn't compete on Sabbath. God had said in the Ten Commandments not to do any work on the seventh day, and gymnastics competition was hard work! She wanted to do God's will, even if it meant she couldn't go to the competition. She felt

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disappointed, though, and wondered what Joule and Julie would say. They had worked hard, too, and if they found out they couldn't compete because of Lindsey's convictions, they might get angry.

Lindsey got into her mother's car after gymnastic practice. Mrs. Henning looked at her and said, "What's wrong?"

Lindsey's sister, Kayla, and her friend Candace stopped talking in the back seat.

Lindsey said, "Patty told us we're ready for state competitions."

"That's great," said Candace.

"It's on Sabbath," Lindsey said.

Everybody was silent for a couple of moments.

Mom shifted in her seat and faced Lindsey. "You don't want to compete on Sabbath, do you?" she said.

"Of course not," said Lindsey.

"I'm proud of you for wanting to do God's will," Mom said.

Lindsey stared out the window. She didn't think it was a big deal. She just wanted to please God, even if she was disappointed.

"Maybe God will work something out," Kayla said.

"Let's go talk to your coach," Mom suggested.

Patty looked up from her paperwork when they entered her office. "Did Lindsey tell you the good news?" Patty said.

Mrs. Henning smiled. "She's very excited."

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"She should be. She's worked hard. I have high hopes for the competition."

"We have a conflict," Mrs. Henning said. "We're Seventh-day Adventists, and we believe God wants us to rest on Saturdays."

"But that's when the competitions are held," Patty said.

"I know. Is there anything we can do?"

"Couldn't you make a donation to the American Sports Acro and Gymnastics organization that sponsors the event? Consider it a good deed, and then Lindsey could go," Patty said.

Mrs. Henning shook her head. "Even if we did donate money to the ASAG, it wouldn't make it right for Lindsey to compete."

"What about Jonie and Julie?" Patty said. "They've been working hard, too."

"Lindsey feels bad about that, but she doesn't feel right competing on Sabbath, either. That's why we were hoping some other arrangements could be made."

Patty glanced at Lindsey with a wrinkled forehead.

Lindsey looked down at her feet. She really wanted Patty to be happy with her, but she knew if she had to choose between God and her teammates and coach, she had to choose God.

Patty sighed. "I understand. I'm a Jehovah's Witness, and our beliefs aren't always convenient for other people, either. I'll see what I can do."

Lindsey's tension eased a little. She wasn't looking forward to telling Julie and Jonie about the situation. If they could figure out another way, she wouldn't have to ruin their chances of participating.

"I can't make any promises," Patty said. Lindsey's heart sank again, but she put her faith in God and silently prayed for His will to be done. She hoped His will included going to the state competitions!

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The next day Mom parked the car outside the gym. Kayla and Candace jumped out to go to their practices, but Lindsey paused. She wasn't looking forward to facing Julie and Jonie. Silently she prayed that her coach had figured something out.

As soon as Lindsey and her mom entered the gym, Patty called them into her office. "I contacted a couple of the judges, and they said you could petition to perform on Sunday, but we won't know until the day of the competition if they will let you participate."

Lindsey nodded. At least there was still a chance, but Jonie and Julie might not want to ride two hours to the state competition without knowing whether or not they would be able to perform. Mrs. Henning squeezed Lindsey's shoulder. "That's good news, right?"

Lindsey smiled weakly and nodded.

"Have you talked to Julie and Jonie yet?" Patty said.

Lindsey shook her head. Patty stepped out of the room to get the girls. Lindsey sighed. It was one thing to refuse to go to a competition if it only affected herself, but when it made it impossible for her teammates to go, she felt bad. She resolved to remain firm in her beliefs, though. God's will was God's will, and she wouldn't go against it. At least all hope wasn't lost-yet.

Patty returned moments later with Julie and Jonie and motioned for Mrs. Henning to explain.

"I don't know if you girls are aware that we are Seventh-day Adventists. We believe God doesn't want us to compete on Saturday, His Sabbath."

Jonie and Julie looked at each other. Lindsey wondered what they were thinking. She hoped they weren't going to be mad at her.

"What about the state competitions?" Jonie said.

Patty said, "I've talked to the judges. They said we could petition to perform Sunday, but we won't know if they will accommodate us until we get there. Are you willing to go anyway?"

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Lindsey swallowed hard. She didn't have the nerve to look at her teammates.

Julie and Jonie were silent for a couple of moments. A sense of peace filled Lindsey. She knew God was pleased with her. No matter what Julie's or Jonie's reaction might be, she was doing the right thing.

Jonie shifted in her chair and glanced at Julie. 'If that's our only choice, we'll have to go and see what happens.'

Lindsay smiled. 'You don't mind?' she said.

"There are some things that are more important than gymnastics," Jonie said.

Relief swept through Lindsey. She had the support of her coach and teammates. Now, if only God could convince the judges ... Lindsey stopped her thoughts. God could do anything. She needed to have a little more faith. No matter what happened, everything would turn out for the best.

That evening she worked harder than ever to master her moves. She sensed that God was blessing her talent, and if God had brought her this far, He must have a plan.

Lindsey sat in the back seat of the car with her sister, Kayla, and her friend Candace. They were on their way to the acrobatic gymnastics state competition, without knowing if Lindsey and her team would be allowed to compete.

Dr. Henning, Lindsey's father, drove the car, and her mother sat in the passenger's seat. Mrs. Henning looked back and gave Lindsey a hopeful expression.

Lindsey smiled weakly. Her teammates, Julie and Jonie, had been understanding when she told

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them that her belief in honoring God's Sabbath might prevent them from participating. Lindsey hoped, for their sakes, that the judges would allow them to perform on Sunday. She prayed during the entire two-hour drive. 'God, please let us compete. Please let us compete.'

When they arrived, Lindsey went into the locker room and changed into her costume. She stepped onto the warm-up mat and gazed at the audience watching the team that was performing. The judges sat at a table. The scoreboard flashed points above their heads.

Lindsey gulped down her nervousness. The other athletes warming up next to her were really good-their bodies solid, their tricks complicated and flawless. Lindsey felt inadequate. She knew she wasn't as good as the other gymnasts around her. She wondered why Patty had thought they should even come.

Lindsey turned to Julie, who was doing a backbend. "These people are so good," Lindsey said. "We can't compete." Julie smiled. "They're two levels above us. Don't worry."

Lindsey felt part of the tension drain from her shoulders. Maybe they had a chance. She watched the other competitors and attempted to make her form look as good as theirs while she warmed up.

Jonie went to see if the judges had accepted their petition. She was gone for so long that Lindsey started wondering if she was ever coming back. After a couple more teams performed, Jonie finally returned.

"Can we compete?" Lindsey asked.

Jonie nodded. "We're up next."

Lindsey grinned. God had answered her prayers just as she'd hoped! The three girls took their places and waited for the music to begin. Lindsey closed her eyes, blocking out the people watching her. She reviewed the routine in her mind. Once the music began, the tricks were automatic. Her muscles moved easily. The girls almost danced from flips to precarious

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balanced positions. The performance flowed without a snag.

When they finished, the three girls stood on the mats with their hands raised above their heads. Lindsey's chest rose and fell. Adrenaline pulsed through her body.

Her parents, Kayla, and Candace sat in the stands cheering. She smiled and waved at them as she ran off the mat with Jonie and Julie. Their score flashed on the board above the judges. They were good. Good enough, in fact, to win a medal!

At the end of the competition Lindsey stood in front of the audience with a gold medal hanging around her neck. As the crowd applauded, she marveled at how well God had worked everything out. She was glad she had stayed true to her convictions.

Lindsey's team went on to win more medals. Eventually they qualified for the national competitions. There TV cameras were aimed at the athletes. Lindsey had been watching the national competitions on TV for years, and now she was one of the competitors.

As she warmed up for the big performance, Lindsey searched the stands for her family. Mrs. Henning, Kayla, and Candace sat in the second row, but her father was missing. She scanned the gym and spotted him talking to one of the judges. For a brief moment she wondered what they were saying, but she quickly got distracted by perfecting one of her moves with Julie. Then the judges announced that their team was next.

During their performance Lindsey felt confident with the tricks. Julie and Janie were solid, and the girls seemed to move as if they were one body. Lindsey relaxed and enjoyed the moment. When they finished, she held her breath and waited for their results. Their score flashed on the board. Lindsey cheered. They had won a bronze medal at the national competitions!

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During the drive home, Lindsey sat in the back seat with Kayla and Candace. The three girls took turns passing the medal back and forth and talking about the highlights of the day.

Lindsey's father interrupted them. "I had a nice chat with one of the judges," he said. "I told her my daughter was competing. She asked me who my daughter was, and I said 'Lindsey.' Immediately the judge said, 'Oh, the little Sabbathkeeper.'"

The day was already great, but knowing that the national judges had taken note of her commitment to God made it even better. Lindsey's chest warmed with pride. More important even than the bronze medal was knowing that she'd won a spiritual gold medal in God's eyes.²⁷

²⁷ *Guide*, December 16,23,30 (presented in three parts).

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