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For God & Country

*A Journal for
Military-related
Seventh-day Adventists*





by **Gary R. Councell**
Director, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries
Chaplain (Colonel), U.S. Army (Retired)

TRANSITIONS

Military life spawns transitions. While stationed at Fort McClellan I observed the transformation of civilians into soldiers, perhaps as challenging a transition as moving from single to married. Long hair, sleeping in and just “hanging out” and “cooling it” in casual clothes were exchanged for early morning PT, uniforms and drill. Every hour of every day was dictated. I also watched dads and moms hardly recognize their proud soldier son or daughter standing in formation at graduation from Basic Training.

After basic training, the tempo of transitions increases. These come in the form of PCS (permanent change of station), mobilization for exciting adventures in the “Sandbox,” training schools, or promotion with increased

responsibilities. If you survive and stay in long enough, another huge passage is retirement from the military and return to civilian life.

Perhaps the most difficult transition is overcoming battle wounds that disable physically and emotionally. Putting combat experiences behind and moving through PTSD into another reality is an essential transition. If you are having trouble making that passage, contact your chaplain or pastor. The acceptance of genuine grace and God’s unconditional love and forgiveness is what really helps bring peace.

The Children of Israel experienced the trauma of numerous transitional changes: leaving Egypt, facing the uncertainty of life in the wilderness, conquering their former homeland of

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Canaan; establishing the monarchies, civil war, foreign invasions, returning from captivity, and rebuilding the Temple. Two factors helped enable stability and security through all those changes: God's Word spoken through their leaders and prophets, and God's presence manifested in the cloud, the Temple, and through miraculous deliverances.

God gave one other important means of assistance. When Israel crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land, Joshua was commanded to erect a memorial (stone monument) in memory of God's care, power, and love for them "that all peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever" (Joshua 4:21-24 NIV). Not only was the memorial a reminder about the past, but it also served as an effective witness to others. When we actively serve the Lord, our focus shifts from our personal troubles and ourselves to that of doing

good for others. The Israelites were also commanded to "repeat them (God's commands) again and again to your children, and talk of them..." continually (Deuteronomy 6:7 NLT).

Stone monuments and tablets come alive by humans telling their stories. Tell your story of how God has saved you and cared for you. "There is greater encouragement for us in the least blessing we ourselves receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 100). Sincere gratitude is heaven's antidote for the poisoned past, and love drives away fear for the future. Thankful love heals bitterness and praise replaces cynical pessimism. No wonder Ellen White wrote about her life experience, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except if we forget our Lord's teachings and His leading in the past" (*Life Sketches*, page 196). I am looking forward to the greatest transition of all—eternal life with Jesus. How about you?

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Many Seventh-day Adventists have faithfully served God and country through military service. This is a legacy that should be shared with family, friends, and the church at large.

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries is seeking stories about Adventists serving on Active Duty, in the Guard or Reserve, or from veterans about their service experiences. Please contact the editor at Deena.Bartel-Wagner@nad.adventist.org to learn how your story can be told.



LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY



“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father’s household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name. So Abram left, just as the Lord had told him to do, . . .” (Genesis 12:1-4—New English Translation).

It is always very difficult to leave an area where one has lived for many a year and go to an unknown place or location. Going into an unknown is a challenge. I remember well when the moving truck came to pick up our household goods. We were moving from southern California to the Washington D.C. area. From the West coast to the East coast. We were leaving behind grandchildren, relatives, and friends. Oh, that was hard.

When you enter military service, that is an *unknown*. When you leave your homeland and move overseas, that is an *unknown*. When you make a permanent change of station, that is *unknown*. When you leave the military, that is an *unknown*.

The question is, how do we handle the *unknown*—the many transitions

that surface in our lives? First of all, we need to understand, according to Scripture, that God leads and directs our lives. Solomon once wrote, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:6 KJV) The question is, will we make Christ first and last in our lives? When we do that, the promise is that He will lead and direct our life. No matter where life takes us and no matter how many unknowns there may be in our path, He will lead and direct.

Secondly, God will bless us and also bless those with



whom we come in contact with, just as He did in the life of Abram. “. . .and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing.”

We live in a world where sin abounds all around us. What a joy to know that God could be leading and directing you to an *unknown* place so that you might become a blessing to someone who otherwise might not have had the opportunity to receive such a blessing. “He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.” (*Prophets and Kings*, pg. 16).

“Today, as never before, the dissemination of Bible truth by means of a consecrated church is bringing to the sons of men the benefits foreshadowed centuries ago in the promise to Abraham and to all Israel,—to God’s church on earth in every age, —“I will bless thee, . . . and thou shalt be a blessing.” (*Prophets and Kings*, pg.703).

So when you face the *unknowns* in your life, remember that God is in control of your life. Remember that He is leading in your life. And above all, remember that the Lord will bless you and through you, He can and will bless those with whom you come in contact.



By Ernest Castillo

Chairman, North American Division

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Committee

WELCOME NEW

The decision has been made. Military life—a least for a season—is your new normal.

Whether you are a recruit or a spouse/fiancé/girl/boyfriend, the adventure is beginning, probably with some fear and trepidation on your part. Learning early to adapt to the demands of this lifestyle will increase your satisfaction.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Being a part of the military isn't for the faint of heart. Life itself is full of the challenges of relationships, careers, family, and finances. The addition of long separations, training, PCS, and deployments can all take a toll. It's at this point you should make a conscious decision to be successful in this transition.

If you're significant other is the newly-minted recruit or service member, right now is the time to begin showing your full support for their decision. Recognize that there will be ups and downs, but determine that you will keep open, honest communication a priority. Things will not always go as you plan. That's when you accept the unexpected can be the best part of the adventure.

For the single service member, keep ties to family and friends

strong. Let them know how they can best support you. Help them understand what you are experiencing and share both the good and the bad.

BASIC TRAINING MEANS SEPARATIONS

The day is circled on the calendar and it seems as though time has sped up. Basic training is coming and that means you are going to be apart. It will be long, hard, and at times frustrating. This is just a foretaste of future deployments and separations. Your attitude will make all the difference. It's time to begin mentally preparing for the separation.

Staying behind while your loved one goes off to military service brings with it responsibilities you may not have thought of before. You've signed up for duty whether you know it or not. The number one task is to show your support through the next few weeks.

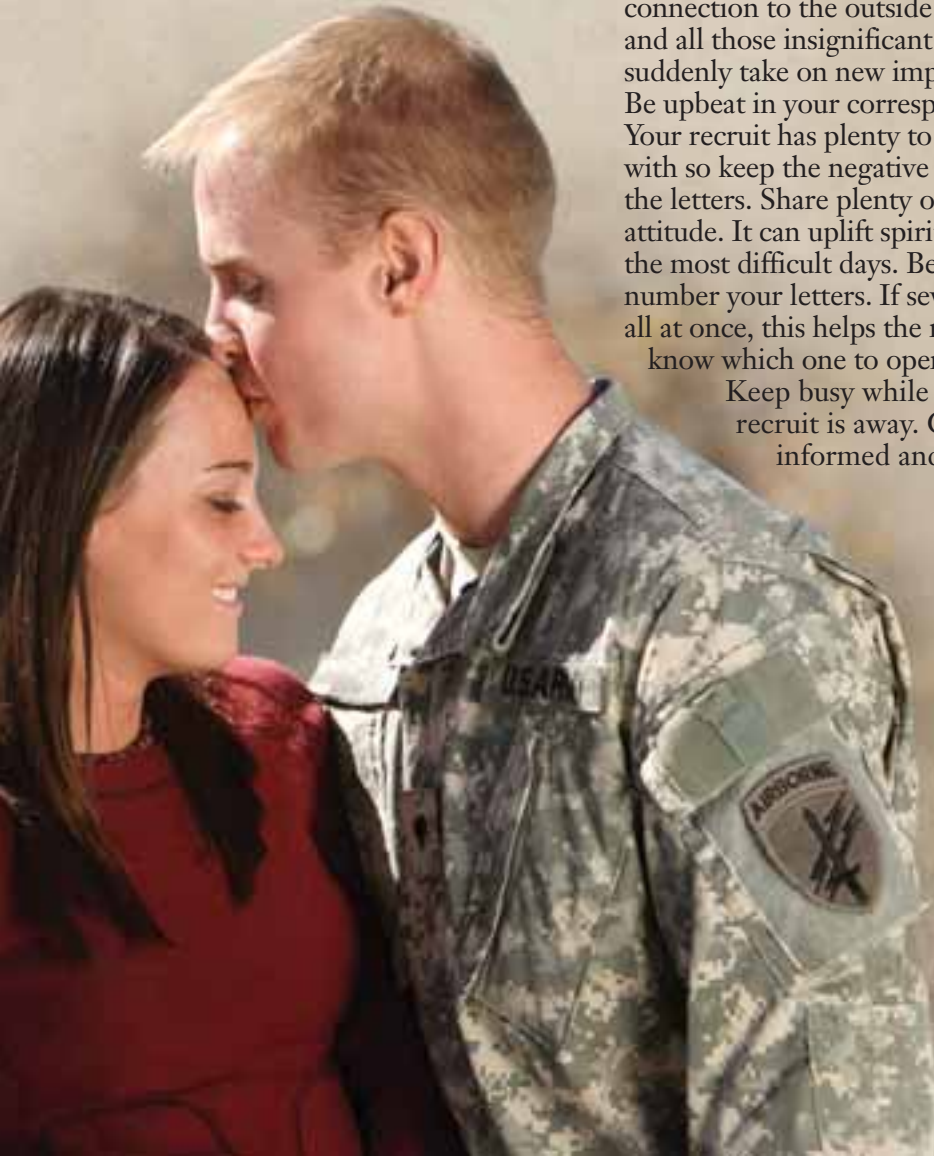
You will be out of daily contact but that doesn't mean you can't communicate. Sharpen your pencil, pull out your best stationery, and let the writing begin. Daily

to the NORMAL

letters can make a world of difference to a recruit at the end of a grueling day of training. Cell phones and emails may not be readily accessible.

Write about everything happening at home, current events and all the mundane things you think he/she won't care about. You are the only connection to the outside world and all those insignificant details suddenly take on new importance. Be upbeat in your correspondence. Your recruit has plenty to deal with so keep the negative out of the letters. Share plenty of positive attitude. It can uplift spirits, even on the most difficult days. Be sure to number your letters. If several arrive all at once, this helps the reader know which one to open first.

Keep busy while your recruit is away. Get informed and excited.



Use the time to learn about the branch of the military he/she is entering. Study the rank structure, or learn one new word of military jargon daily. Learn about military protocol, which is really common sense etiquette. You should also learn about flag protocol. For instance, you'll want to know that if you are on base at 5 p.m. and you hear music being played, that means the flag is being retired for the day. What do you do?

If you are a spouse, you will soon learn that you are going to have to take care of yourself and your family with minimal outside help. You can do it, but having a plan makes it so much easier.

You have a new, larger "family" now, which includes others who have been doing this for a while. Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek resources.

"My husband was in the military when we got married," says Beth Michaels. "I had no direct experience with military life before that. None of my family members had ever served."

As Beth made the transition to this new life she looked for the positives. "When I moved into base housing it was an adjustment at first," admits Beth. "It was a little bit like living in a college community. I liked having others around me who understood military life and what families face." The downside can be that sometimes you are living in a fishbowl existence.

Beth and her husband, John, also

recognized the regular moves would play havoc on any career Beth might choose to have. "When we made our first PCS I had just given birth to our first son," says Beth. "I chose to work from home at that time. With each move we made, it was an adjustment to start over in a new job."

Even if your spouse isn't deployed, there will be periods of separations. "I became very empathetic with single parents when John had to be away for an extended period of training,"

said Beth. "Even though you have other moms around you, it's not the same as having your spouse."

"Keeping your relationship strong with God is one of the most important things a military

spouse can do," says Beth. When the challenges of moving, loneliness, and separation overwhelm, this relationship provides a strong foundation that gives stability in the midst of upheaval.

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?

The goodbyes have been said. The final hugs given. Now the training begins. For the next few weeks the processing, education, and training will be intense. Days of physical and mental weariness will begin to merge into one. Recruits will learn the military code of conduct, how to march, wear their uniform, perform PT (physical training), receive marksmanship training, and much more.

There will be little communication as cell phones are surrendered at the beginning. Eventually physical

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exhaustion will be replaced with tougher, leaner recruits who walk with a military bearing and are trained in attention to detail, discipline, and teamwork.

By weeks three and four, the separation from family and friends will begin to take its toll. It's during this time that letters from home make an even bigger difference.

GRADUATION AT LAST

At last the BEAST has been tamed, BCT is finally over and your recruit is ready to "Pass in Review." Keep your expectations flexible. Even though you have been apart for what seems an eternity, remember two things. Your service member has just gone through extensive training, which has been physically and mentally challenging. These will be the first free hours they have had in weeks. Sleep may be high on his/her wish list.

As you adjust to military life, continuing to grow in knowledge, enthusiasm, and support will play a key part in your personal satisfaction. There are a number of blogs written by military spouses that provide plenty of advice and encouragement.





PCS. Do those three letters fill you with happiness and anticipation? Or are they more likely to create a sense of foreboding and stress-filled days and nights? With the right planning, your next permanent change of station can be easier than you might imagine. Just remember, there's nothing permanent about PCS—it really is a military oxymoron!

First, remember that you aren't the only family in the military doing this. Each year approximately 600,000 service members are going through a PCS. That's like packing up all the residents of Denver, Colorado and moving them to a new location. Of course, that number doesn't include family members that make the move also. When you think in those terms, it's amazing that moves can go as smoothly as they do.

When the new orders come you don't have to do the other PCS—Panic-Cry-Scream. Take a deep breath. Tell yourself, "I can do this." Then begin to make your transition a positive one. Organization is a key element of a less complicated move.

Start a file or notebook for your move. Every thing PCS-related should go in this. Include several copies of the orders. Add contact names and numbers. When you are in the midst of packing the house, you don't want to have to track down a stray note scribbled on the back of an envelope.

You and your spouse should decide on a moving schedule, including potential packing/loading dates, etc. Don't skimp on the days. Something always happens that can slow things down. At this time you should also decide if you are going to tackle a DITY (Do-It-Yourself) move. You can find useful information at <http://www.military.com/money/pcs-dity-move>.

With dates decided, turn in your request to the base transportation office. Remember there will be other families trying to schedule their move too. The sooner your move is scheduled, the better.

Once you know you are leaving, begin the clean-out and de-cluttering process. Tossing things now means you will have less to pack later. Do your really need to move all those

It's PCS Time Again

back issues of magazines you haven't had a chance to read? And why would you want to move that chair with the broken leg? Encourage your kids to also clear out belongings they no longer need.

Take pictures of valuable items. You may also want to snap fun photos of the moving process. These will be part of the memories your family will enjoy recalling later. While on the subject of pictures, consider taking photos of groupings you have on your walls, etc. These can be a useful reference in your new home when you are settling in. At the same time, make a list of serial numbers for electronics. You never know when you might need that.

Make a list of contacts/companies that you need to notify of your change of address. This list should go into your folder/notebook. Don't forget to include magazine subscriptions, utility companies, local business, family, and friends.

You know where you are going, but what do you know about the community? It's time to begin doing

research. Take the time to learn about your new duty station. Make a list of places in the area you will want to visit. Learn about the history of the community. Begin to check out schools, local housing, and shopping. When you have an overview of the community, it's easier to know what to expect when you arrive.

Don't forget to check out the Adventist churches in the area. If the pastor's contact information isn't listed on the website, you can call the local conference, and explain you are moving into the area. They will put you in touch with the pastor.

WE'RE HAVING A BABY AND MOVING NOW?

Change-of-duty stations can occur at the most inconvenient times. A PCS during a pregnancy can add to the stress levels that already seem high. Again, planning ahead will make the transition easier.

Discuss things with your physician. He/she will probably tell you to avoid standing for long periods of time, to limit bending, and avoid lifting

anything heavier than 20 pounds. This means to pack your household goods, you are going to need help, especially if you are attempting a DITY move. Family and friends are priceless at a time like this.

Schedule a final visit with your doctor before your move. At that time pick up a copy of your medical records. These will be helpful if you run into any complications during the trip.

On the road keep hydrated, take plenty of breaks to get out of the car and stretch. This is important for blood circulation. If you are making an overseas move, discuss the fact with your physician that you are going to have to fly. Even though you might have a normal pregnancy, flying after 36 weeks is not normally recommended.

Once you arrive in your new location, you'll need to find a new physician. Some women recommend also hiring a "doula." The doula will know the hospitals, procedures, and physicians, which can help you feel less alone.

Give yourself permission to take things slower after the birth of your baby. All the boxes don't need to be unpacked immediately. Taking care of yourself and the baby is the most important consideration.

CHILDREN IN TRANSITION

Packing the boxes is sometimes the easiest part of a PCS move. Children cope with stressful experiences in different manners. If they are experiencing fear or anger over the move, encourage them to talk about it.

Providing information can help children adjust and adapt more quickly. Share what you have learned about your new community. Encourage them to get excited about exploring their new home.

After the move, the entire family will have to make new friends. Talk about how this can be just as hard for adults as it is for kids. Are there playgroups for younger children? Encourage older children to get involved in Pathfinders or other organizations at school.

Keeping in touch with old friends is as important as meeting new friends. Surprise your older children with a prepaid calling card just for them or consider increasing their cell phone texting plan. Old-fashioned letter writing is also a great way to help them stay in touch. Don't forget to supply interesting stamps for those letters.

After your household goods arrive, make it a team effort to unpack. Ask your child how he/she would like the new bedroom arranged.





Before school starts, visit the campus and meet the teachers. If it is a large school, make sure your child knows where their locker is and that they can work the combination on the lock. It can be humiliating on the first day of school if you can't get your locker open!

MOVING THOSE EXTRA FAMILY MEMBERS

Traveling with pets can add to the stress of a PCS move. Thoughtful preplanning will help prepare both you and your furry friend for the trip. A meeting with your vet should be high on your list, especially if you are moving overseas. Arrange to acquire any necessary health certificates, which will list your pet's vaccination history. You may want to consider microchip identification for your pet. This can help in their recovery if they are lost.

Help your pet become acclimated to being in the travel crate before moving day. Have Fido spend some time in it on a regular basis prior to the trip. If you will be flying, research the rules for the airline you will be using. Don't assume all airlines have the same requirements.

Traveling by car with overnight stops means you will need to find pet friendly lodging. Browse www.bringfido.com to find pet-friendly destinations worldwide.

If you are checking into temporary lodging on base, will your pets be allowed or do you have to find other accommodations for them? If both spouses are deploying, what are your options? It may be time to look for long-term boarding facilities.

When looking for a kennel find out how many pets they have boarded long-term. Are dogs allowed to exercise outside? Do they have referrals of satisfied pet owners who have used their facility? Is providing mental stimulation for pets an important part of the kennel's routine. Not all kennels are suited for long-term boarders.

Netpets is a nation-wide and global network of foster homes that will house, nurture, and care for all pets belonging to military personnel. You can learn more about them at <http://netpets.com>.

SAYING GOODBYE

Dr. Seuss wrote, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." When it's time to leave a place you've lived and the friends you've made, this is good advice. You've created memories that you can take with you to your next location.

Use the anticipation of what your new experience will bring to keep your optimism high. Even if you don't feel like smiling, do it anyway. Research indicates that your mood will change just by breaking out the grin. Put everything about this move into perspective. What seems like a catastrophe today may well be just a bump in life when you look at the larger picture.



WE'RE MAKING AN OCONUS

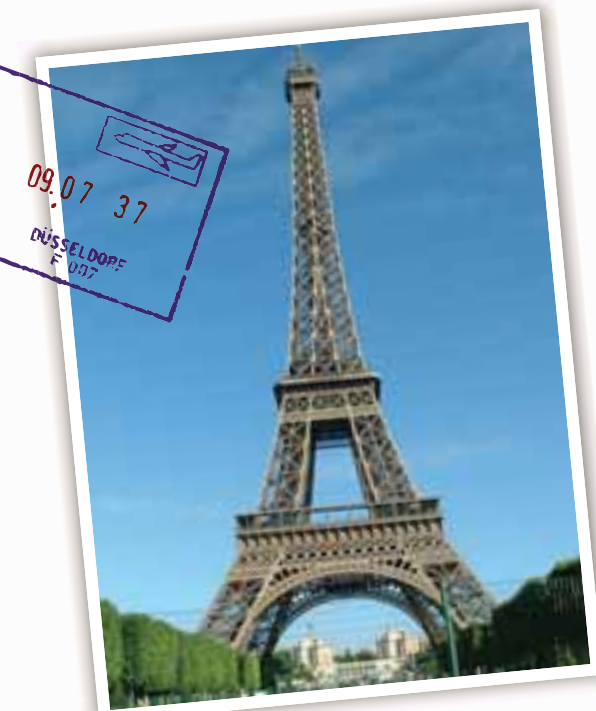
A duty station in an overseas location immerses you and your family in new cultures, experiences, and adventures and will open avenues in your life you never expected. Making a move outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) is much the same as a move within the continental United States (CONUS). You still must pack up hearth and home. Addresses change and you have to learn your way around a new base, a new city, new schools. There are friends to whom

you must say good-bye and there are new friends to be made.

An OCONUS move may seem daunting at first. The thought of moving your entire household across an ocean does take some special care. Organization, forethought, and planning will ease the transition. You should be provided an info pack by your spouse's command that includes all the necessary forms required for the move. Read through everything and use this information to begin making a list of what you need to do. Break the move down into smaller tasks, and make it manageable and less intimidating.

As soon as you know which country you are moving to, take the time to begin learning about the culture, the people, the food, and the places you will have an opportunity to visit. Find information online and at your local library. Consider purchasing travel guidebooks here in the U.S. before you leave. Spend time as a family learning about your new home. You might even want to try to learn a few key phrases in the local language. When you have a crying toddler, it's always good to know how to ask where the nearest restroom is located!

Find out if a class or workshop about moving abroad is offered through your family support center. Classes such as these can help you with



MOVE?

paperwork, find answers for questions, introduce you to the cultural and language differences, and in general help you begin to understand more about your new home.

Delvin and JoAnn Hansen experienced a move to Germany where Delvin served as a dentist in the Air Force. "It really helps if you can make contact with several families who have already lived in the area for awhile," says JoAnn. "Use them as a resource to find out what housing conditions are like, what kinds of shopping is available, what is available at the commissary, etc."

You will also want to learn what household goods you should or should not ship, such as furniture, bookcases, etc. Determine some of this by asking what the typical room size is in local housing. You might not be able to fit your king size bed in a room that is only 8 feet square. Many housing situations overseas may have narrow stairs to negotiate with very little room to make turns when you are attempting to move a large wood hutch or a seven-foot long couch.



During their four years in Germany, Delvin and JoAnn Hansen took the opportunity to explore many parts of Europe, including Neuschwanstein Castle.



You might find that shipping less is actually more. “Living overseas is a great time to pick up treasures that you would never be able to purchase at home,” says JoAnn. “You can choose to furnish and decorate your overseas home with items purchased locally. When you return these same items can lend an exotic touch to your stateside residence.”

As you plan to make the move carefully decide what will go in each of your two shipments—“unaccompanied baggage” and “household goods.” What is important to you to set up your household in the first weeks and months you are in a new location? All of that should be packed as “unaccompanied baggage.” You will be told approximately how long it should take for your household goods to arrive but keep in mind that this is just an estimate. Don’t be surprised if the delivery is slower than anticipated. When this happens, what you have

placed in your unaccompanied baggage shipment becomes all-important.

Shopping in another country can be both exciting and frustrating. Perhaps one of your first encounters with culture shock will be the lack of a Target or Wal-Mart just around the corner. Instead of a one-stop shopping experience typical here in the U.S. you may have to scour tiny shops looking for just the right item. Imagine having to visit the bakery for bread, the fish market for today’s catch and the local market for fresh veggies and fruits.

Generally you will be allowed to ship one vehicle to your new duty station. Even though this may seem to be an advantage there are several factors to consider. How will you transport your car to a military car shipment port? Where is the closest one located from your current duty station?

“If you are thinking about shipping your vehicle, there are several practical things to think about,” says Delvin. “When we were in Germany several people had large American trucks or cars. They had trouble fitting in parking places or navigating the narrow roads and lanes. Sometimes it is better to stow a car stateside and buy one in the country where you will be living.”

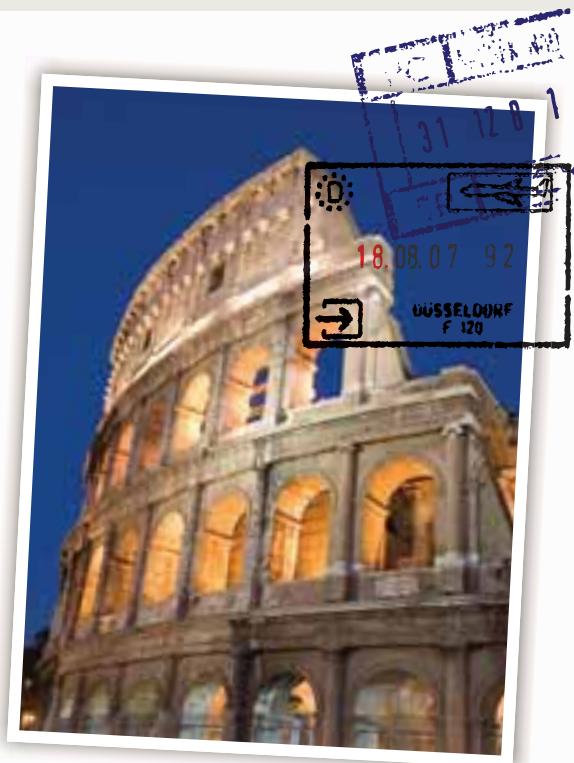
If you ship your car, it will have to meet the legal requirements of the country you are entering. Shipping will take at least 90 days for the car to arrive. Do you want to wait that long for your own local transportation? If you are planning to stow your car, storage lots are often available on most large bases. Ask for details on how it will be maintained while you are away.

An international move for families

who have a member with special needs is absolutely possible. This will require some extra legwork, which will be invaluable during and after the move. In completing the overseas screening process, provide all medical and educational records that are relevant along with other significant information.

Hand-carry copies of your child's educational paperwork including any Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Section 504 Plan, assessment information done by the current school, progress reports and information about any adaptive equipment are assistive technology. This will help the new school provide appropriate education services.

Connecting with church family in your new location overseas is important too. "We really grew to appreciate our new church home and made new friends," says Delvin. For the Hansens this connection with



like-believers was an important part of their adjusting in a culture that was different from home. "We had some common ground in our beliefs and could share in the things that were truly important to us—our love for our God and hope in the soon return of Jesus," says JoAnn.

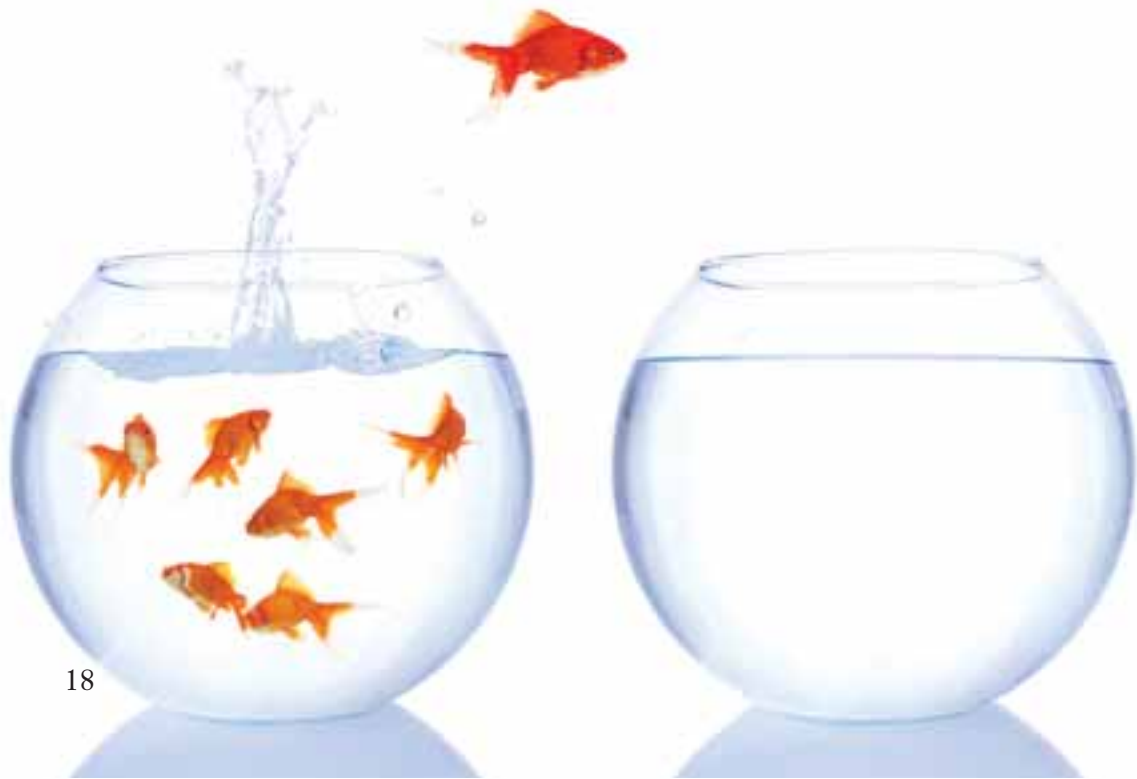
Once you are settled in your new location, begin your foray into the region. "We took full advantage of our time in Germany and Europe. We put 40,000 miles on our car during the three years we were in Germany," says Delvin. "We visited sites in many countries, took hundreds of photos, and enjoyed every minute of exploring places that were filled with history. A good digital camera is a great asset and will capture those moments your family will remember long after you've left your host country."



MISSION TRANSITION

Mission transition. Retirement or separation will be one of the biggest transitions to make during your time in the military. You've navigated the road of military life and now it is branching off to another route. As with everything else, an unknown future can be made easier with some advance work.

As you begin to think about this transition, don't be surprised at the variety of emotions you will experience—sadness, excitement, fear, and maybe even anger. You'll feel a sense of loss at some point. These emotions are all okay to have. In fact, not having any of them would be worrisome. Take them for what



they are, work through them, and try to identify what is causing each particular emotion.

As you near retirement or separation, take stock of personal finances, skill sets for future job possibilities, and timelines of how this change might work out.

It's time to examine how to make a military resume reflect skills that will translate into a civilian job market. Highlight traits and qualities such as discipline, skills of working as a part of a team, leadership and integrity, as well as being able to work and make decisions under pressure.

to live in a climate where there is snow and winter or only where the sun shines every day of the year? Is being near a major airport important? What kinds of recreational facilities do you want to have access to? Is public transportation a requirement? If you or your spouse plan on going back to school, are there colleges nearby that offer the degree/field of studies you are interested in pursuing? Do you want to live near family? If you are considering moving back to your hometown, are job opportunities available?

Even though you make this move successfully, you may notice after two



TAKE TIME TO CELEBRATE THE PAST AS YOU LOOK FORWARD.



You should also find a way to include how your military responsibilities can translate into civilian skills. This is best done in a cover letter, on job applications, and during any interviews. When you help your potential employer understand how your military skills can crossover into civilian life, your chances of receiving an offer are increased.

The decision of where to settle down after so many years of moving also needs forethought. If you are going into the civilian workforce, this will dictate where you live. Calculate your retirement housing budget. This can make a difference on the destination where you can afford to live. Besides the mortgage don't forget expenses like property taxes, homeowner's insurance, and a fund for housing repairs.

Make a list of wants. Do you want

or three years that you are getting the itch to move again. This is natural. They will diminish the longer you stay in one place.

Remember that you and your spouse are going through changes that may cause you both to feel a loss of identity. You will each need to work through this transition in your own way, but keep the communication open. Identify the good things that were accomplished. Take time to celebrate the past as you look forward.

Habits from work won't disappear overnight either. If there are relationship issues that need to be worked through, take the time to clear them up. You have years ahead of you that you want to enjoy together. Now that you are spending more time together, don't allow little irritations you are beginning to notice sour an otherwise healthy marriage.

WHAT'S NEXT?



by Bob Davidson, M.Div., M.Ed., LMFT, CSAT
Director, Family Institute, P.C.

Have you ever wondered *What's next for my life, career, and family?* When it looks like you are going to get orders for another deployment or rifted, fears of unknowns are common for those on Active Duty, Reserve or National Guard components.

What we know is this: Some things can be quantified, which can help relieve some fears. Adjusting back into civilian life can be more difficult than adjusting to the structure of Active Duty service. There are several reasons for this.

1 Military structure helps a person “know the chain of command, who’s the boss.” In the civilian sector, there is frequently confusion and limited structure.

2 Many individuals hold the expectation that things will be the same at work when they return following an absence. They won’t be. Multiple studies with POWs and combat veterans indicate when returning home, they expect the family and situational environment to be the same as when he/she left. However, the family has changed and adapted, but the veteran wants to pick up where they left off.

3 The fear of the unknown. Will there be a job for me? Will the needs of my family be provided? Will I be happy with the changes? Will God provide and take care of me?

Psalm 91 is a great place



to start. Here is a formula for protection, safety, and hospitality. I personally know from experience that the formula works.

“He who *dwells* with the Most High (what we do) *will abide* in the *shadow of the Almighty* (what God does).” Psalm 91:1

Peggy Joyce Ruth tells a childhood story about her dad who played football in college, but interrupted his education to serve in the military during World War II. While he was gone, her mother was pregnant and they were staying with her grandparents in San Saba, Texas. Peggy remembers one very happy day when her dad was relocating from Long Beach, California, to Virginia Beach, Virginia. Unexpectedly, while she was playing in the living room, the door opened and Peggy’s dad walked in. Before that eventful day Peggy had been tormented with fear. Some neighborhood children had told Peggy that she would never see her dad again. Like kids

telling a frightening ghost story, they taunted Peggy that her dad would come home in a box. When Dad walked through the door, a sense of peace and security came over Peggy and stayed with her for the rest of his time in the Army.

Those same feelings of security, safety, and shelter are the promises in Psalm 91.

There is a secret place for God’s people! We have no innate built-in shelter. Alone we stand—unsheltered with no protection. We must run to the Shelter. In doing so, God offers us protection and hospitality all in one. But there is a condition. For us to “*abide in the shadow of the Almighty*,” we must first choose to *dwell* in the shelter of the Most High.

How do we do that? Daily reading of the Scriptures; a Bible Study; a prayer in the midst of a disaster or crisis; while in a personal prayer closet; beside the bed when you get up; around the kitchen table before you pursue the day; in a foxhole; as you start a trip; before an interview; before surfing the Internet. It’s letting God know that you depend upon Him and need His guidance and protection.

In 1967 while on an 18-hour flight to Vietnam, I wrote a prayer to God. Here is an abbreviated form of those thoughts: “Lord, I’m just asking that You will send me to a job/position (as a medic) where You can use me and where I can honor You. That’s all I ask.” God answered that prayer.

Read Psalm 91 daily. Read it out loud. Memorize it. Make it part of your daily actions. God will bless.

It's been 44 years since Bill Fitts worked in the surgical intensive care at the 91st Evac Hospital at Tuy Hoa, Vietnam. He had no idea that his experiences in that remote part of the world would prepare him for ministry in the Nebraska State Penitentiary.

"I arrived in Vietnam after being drafted in 1967 and completing training at Fort Bliss and Fort Sam Houston," says Fitts. "By early 1968 I was at Tuy Hoa and working with surgical cases."

to perform on Armed Forces television," recalls Fitts. "At the same time a talent show was being planned and auditions were being held for soldiers to have a chance to be in the show. I had gone to the air

He Ain't Heavy,

Fitts and the other soldiers looked forward to the different performers who came through to lift morale and provide entertainment. "One day a singer by the name of Chris Noel arrived

base to sing and play my guitar for my audition."

That audition turned into what some would call being in the right place at the right time. "Chris needed a guitar player and I was



tapped to perform with her,” says Fitts. “We rehearsed for 10 minutes and then went on live television to perform for the troops.”

Bill couldn’t believe it when he was later asked to accompany and perform with Miss Noel on a 10-day tour of remote firebases throughout what was then South Vietnam. “Chris took chances to go out and meet the soldiers,” recalls Fitts. “When the USO asked her to travel to Vietnam to perform for the troops, Chris agreed. While standing in the middle of a chopper pad, Chris knew intuitively that she was going to be performing for the soldiers in



He’s My Brother

Vietnam for the rest of the war. And she was, even though she had two helicopters shot out from under her.”

Fitts returned to the States at the end of his tour. After being discharged in 1969, he decided to try and make it big in Nashville. “I never got past the front desk,” chuckles Fitts. So life continued and he married, started a family, and graduated from college. Eventually life led him to Africa to teach at what is now Babcock University.

“One day I heard that Chris Noel had lost her husband,” says Fitts. “I remembered him as Green Beret Ty Herrington, the soldier who had been assigned as Chris’ personal body guard during her Vietnam tours.”

Fitts penned a condolence letter to Chris. “When a response to my letter came, Chris asked me what she should do with her life now that it seemed as though she’d lost everything with the

death of her husband. I told her to go back to what you did in Vietnam.”

Twenty years passed. By this time Bill had moved to Lincoln, Nebraska where he is currently a professor of English at Union College. “One





Sunday I picked up a copy of the *Lincoln Journal Star*,” says Bill. “I looked at the photo and exclaimed, ‘I know her!’”

Chris Noel was in Lincoln to perform for the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion. “Chris’s first words to me when she saw me in Lincoln were, ‘Where’s your guitar?’” says Bill. Without any rehearsal the two sang several songs together at the banquet for the attendees.

During the performance Bill realized that people had tears streaming down their cheeks. *We may be bad but surely not that bad*, Bill thought to himself. *Boy, we’ve really ruined the party now.*

“At the close of the banquet, the director of the Veterans Center in Lincoln spoke with me about our music,” says Fitts. “He told me this was the best banquet they had ever had.”

Fitts had been praying for a ministry that would take him outside of Adventist circles. Following the banquet, several opportunities presented themselves for Bill to use

music as a means of outreach to other veterans. Eventually he had an opportunity to visit the veterans club the state penitentiary in Lincoln. “I knew going in that I wouldn’t be able to sing gospel songs or pray without someone requesting it,” says Fitts. “So I decided to sing songs that were popular during the Vietnam era.” Songs like “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother” and “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” are message songs that reach into the lives of men who some may see as unreachable.

The inmates began to open up to Fitts about things that were going on in their lives. “I was cautious at first,” admits Fitts. “I know how inmates like to play games, but I began to see there was a genuineness to their reaching out to me.”

After one visit an inmate approached Bill and told him, “Singing with you is what keeps me alive until the next time you come.” It wasn’t long before Bill committed to going to the prison on a weekly

basis. Every Friday night Bill is there with his guitar. “We sing together and visit,” says Bill. “I can’t do formal Bible studies but when an inmate asks me directly about something spiritual, I can provide an answer.”

Bill struggled with going to the prison on Friday nights. “I sat in my truck that first Friday night and asked, ‘Lord, am I breaking the Sabbath?’” admits Bill. “Then I realized that the songs and the personal connections I am making with each of the men is ministry. I am helping these guys to open up parts of themselves that had been hardened for many years.”

Bill has seen openness in some prisoners that he wouldn’t have expected. “The club president is a

him. “While we were talking it became apparent that the inmate realized he was providing me with information that I didn’t know. You could see the thought of ‘Wow, I have value because I have knowledge.’”

The chemistry of the group changes as people move in and out, but there is a lot of bonding going on during the weekly meetings. “I am learning about adapting material for changing situations,” says Bill.

“Although I have taught at Union College since 1985 it never occurred to me to do anything with vets on campus until the Iraq war,” admits Bill. “Then I began to have returning vets in my classes.” This was a wake-up call. Bill helped the students organize

I AM HELPING THESE GUYS TO OPEN UP PARTS OF THEMSELVES THAT HAD BEEN HARDENED FOR MANY YEARS.

Daoist follower,” says Bill. “One day he said to me, ‘I want to know what a Seventh-day Adventist believes.’” With that request Bill was able to begin a discussion about his belief in Jesus. Another time, during the Christmas season, the inmates were given permission to have a Christmas party. “We expect you to sing Christmas carols,” the inmates told Bill. He responded that he didn’t have permission to sing religious songs. One of the inmates who has pagan beliefs told him, “Aww, we can sing Jesus songs for one night.”

Bill has taken the opportunity to learn from the inmates themselves. One night he was speaking with the inmate who claims to be a pagan. “I wanted to understand better about runes,” says Bill. “He became the teacher and I became the student.” During that interaction, Bill saw something in the inmate that moved

a week of veterans’ recognition. As the week progressed Bill recognized this was another area of ministry he could become involved in. “This was something we needed to address with the veterans with whom we were in contact on a daily basis,” says Bill. “We organized a campus club and now have regular activities and meetings, which benefits the veterans themselves. It also helps to bring an awareness to others who haven’t been involved in military service.”

As Bill reflects on his time in Vietnam and now his work with veterans both in the prison and on a college campus, he better understands the importance of listening and building friendships as a means of sharing the gospel. “It’s easy to unload on a person with the doctrines,” says Bill. “But this means you are not investing in that person and taking time to listen.”

ACM BIDS FAREWELL TO LES RILEA



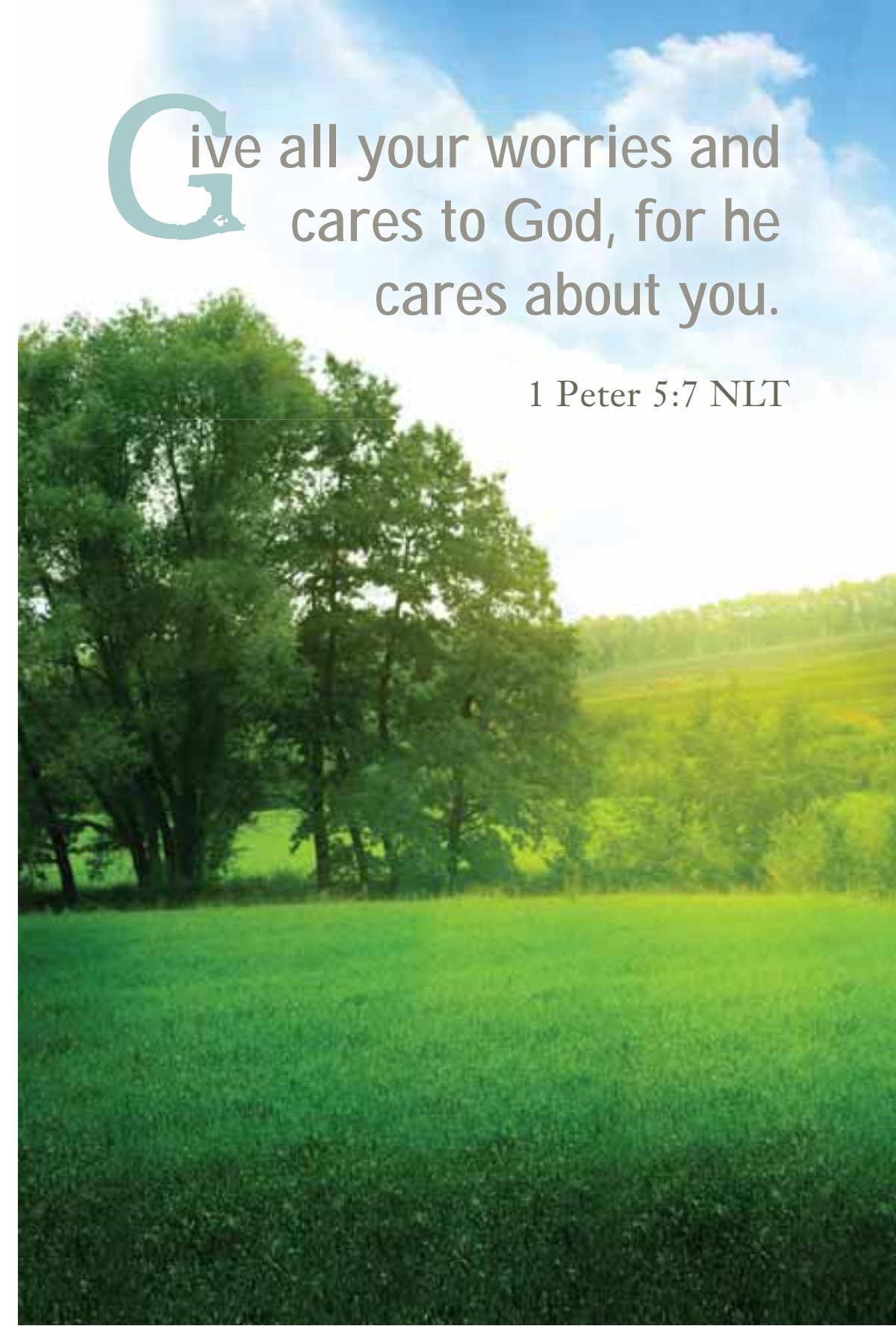
Elder Les Rilea, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, assistant director, Southeast Region, will retire with 57 years of service for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Following graduation from Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University), Rilea and his wife LaSina began their ministry at Mount Pisgah Academy. From there the Rilea family has lived and worked at Forest Lake, Cedar Lake, and Adelpian Academies.

In addition to serving as a dean, teacher, and even running a print shop, Les also was active in the Medical Cadet Corps program, which prepared young men in case they were drafted for military service. Les also served on the national staff of the Medical Cadet Corps and was involved with training at Camp Desmond T. Doss, Grand Ledge, Michigan.

Later Rilea was a youth director in the Wisconsin and Michigan Conferences. He continued to be involved in counseling young people about military issues, as well as assisting those who faced religious accommodations difficulties. Les has also assisted Seventh-day Adventist military service members who were facing court-martial proceedings.

In 1987, Les was invited by the North American Division Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries to be the representative for the Southern Union territory. Eventually this role expanded into that of Field Representative. His current title is ACM Assistant Director for the Southern Union. In this capacity for ACM, Les has worked to educate and provide assistance to Adventist youth regarding military matters, provided assistance to pastors who seek endorsement as chaplains, and provided ongoing support of Adventist chaplains in their field of ministry.





Give all your worries and
cares to God, for he
cares about you.

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

COBBE BARRACKS CHAPEL IN FINAL PHASE OF COMPLETION

A place to formally worship God is an important part of the military community. Seventh-day Adventist military service members in Malawi are looking forward to the final phase of construction on their chapel. Located at Cobbe Barracks, the headquarters for the Malawi Defence Force, located in Zomba, the chapel can accommodate 300 members. Currently more than 200 individuals are attending services there.

Chaplain Noah Tsoka oversees ministry at the chapel. "Along with weekly services, I give Bible studies and am able to speak with many of the soldiers and their families," says Chaplain Tsoka. "We are grateful to Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and others who have shown their support of our chapel project, both in word and through financial means. Our greatest need now is to finish the chapel."



Total funds needed to complete the Cobbe Barrack Chapel Project are US\$6000.

If you would like to participate financially, you may do so through ACM's online giving site. <https://www.adventistgiving.org/?OrgID=AN11AD>. Mark your envelope for ACM Special Project.

Online Giving

Honoring God through faithful stewardship is encouraged of all Seventh-day Adventists. In the Bible rich blessings are promised to those who return an honest tithe and are generous with offerings to support God's work.

In response to requests from Adventist members in the United States military, the NSO has made arrangements for members in the U.S. Armed Forces serving outside the United States to be able to send tithes and offerings through the North American Division, and thus qualify for a receipt for tax-exempt contributions.

For your convenience go to www.nad.adventistchaplains.org and use the drop-down menu to make your contribution online.

Chaplains and members are encouraged to support ACM/NSO as their "conference" that provides pastoral care and religious materials for their spiritual well-being. Also, please remember to support your base chapel program. Military members serving in countries in other world divisions should contact their conference/union leadership or the division ACM director for further guidance in this area.



**RICH BLESSINGS
ARE PROMISED
TO THOSE WHO
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NAD MILITARY CHURCH

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If you are assigned overseas for six months or longer in some type of official government or military-related service for Canada or the United States (active duty in the armed forces, civilian employee, teacher, AAFES worker, contractor, or family member), then you are eligible to join the NAD Military Church. To request a transfer of your membership, visit <http://nad.AdventistChaplains.org>. Click on the link "NAD Military Church."

Membership transfer request forms are available under "Membership."

**Your NAD Military Church
staff and board look
forward to serving you!**



Seventh-day Adventist veterans' headstones are now permitted to include the official Adventist logo. In 2005, Michelle Miracle, the communication director of the Iowa/Missouri Conference answered a phone call that would begin a six-year approval process.

"Rosalee Dye, a church member in our conference, called and asked for a copy of the Adventist Church logo to be sent to the Missouri Veterans Cemetery," recalls Miracle. "She wanted to have it included on her late husband's tombstone."

Miracle immediately followed up on the request and faxed a copy to the cemetery. A few days later Miracle answered another phone call. This time it was from the cemetery director. "He told me that they couldn't include the logo on Dye's headstone because it was not on the Veterans Administration's (VA) official Emblems of Belief list," says Miracle. "I then learned that I would need to provide very specific documentation for the approval process."

Miracle learned that the request could only come from the next of kin of a deceased veteran and not from an organization. "Since Mrs. Dye had already made the request, we supplied a letter certifying that the emblem was widely used and was recognized as the church's official emblem," says Miracle.

Then the wait began. During the next two years, Miracle made phone calls and sent emails to the Emblem of Belief contact person at the VA. "I continued to receive assurance that our paperwork was being reviewed," says Miracle.

In 2007 Miracle learned that the VA was changing the review and approval process for Emblem of Belief requests. "It was then I learned that our initial request had been set aside," says Miracle. "During this process, I had talked with my dad, Mike, about the lack of progress."

Mike is himself a Vietnam veteran and works at the VA Center in Citrus Heights, California. "He assured me that even though the wheels sometimes turn slowly, it doesn't mean

they aren't turning," says Miracle.

Another two years passed and Miracle continued to contact the VA. "In 2009 I was ready for a new strategy," says Miracle. "My dad suggested enlisting the help of a senator. I wrote to Iowa Senator (and U.S. Navy veteran) Tom Harkin."

Harkin's staff followed up with a request for detailed information about the original submission. In turn, they contacted the VA about the status and reason for delay of the emblem request. The VA responded that until the changes to the Emblem of Belief evaluation process were approved, no decision would be forthcoming.

A glimmer of hope came in March 2010. Rosalee Dye received a letter from the VA stating that any emblem, whether official or not could be requested to be etched on a headstone. Again, only the decedent's next of kin could make the request.

Less than a year later the Seventh-day Adventist logo was etched on Army Lt. Burton Dye's headstone. Dye served in the United States Army for 16 years, four of which were overseas during World War II. "To the best of my knowledge his is the first headstone to receive the Adventist logo," says Miracle.

But as the saying goes, now for the rest of the story. Miracle stopped checking the VA website for updates on the official Emblem of Belief list. "In March 2011, I visited the site again," says Miracle. "My eyes filled with tears when I saw that the Adventist logo was on the official list." With this final approval the logo can now be etched on the headstone of any Adventist veteran buried in a national, state, veterans', or military post/base cemetery. For more information on the process visit: www.cem.va.gov.

Executive Editor:

Gary R. Councell
Chaplain (Colonel) U.S. Army, Retired

Editor:

Deena Bartel-Wagner
Deena.Bartel-Wagner@nad.adventist.org

Layout and Design:

Emily Harding
HardingDesign

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Gary R. Councell, Director/Endorser

Mario Ceballos, Associate Director

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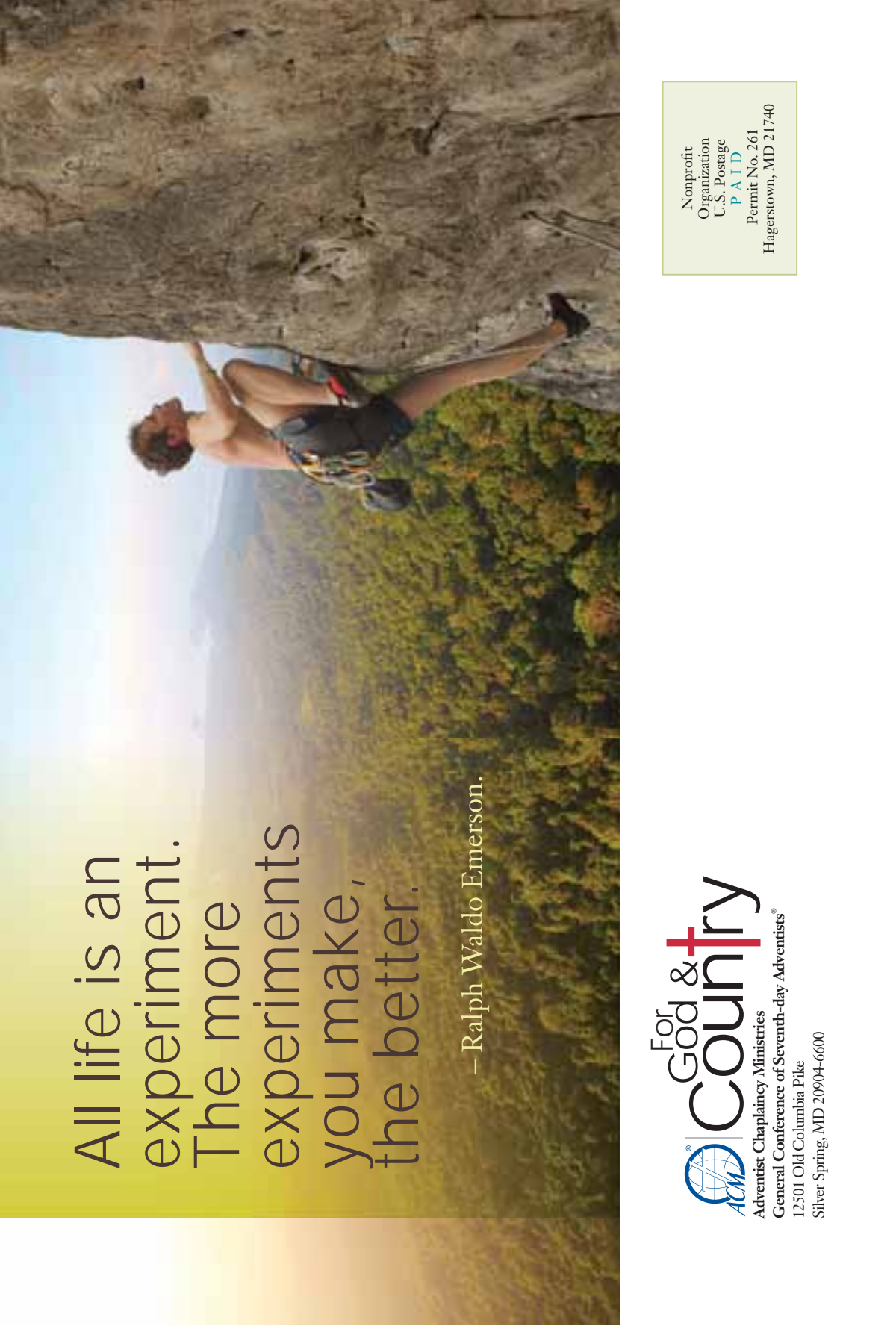
If you would like to be added to the mailing list, e-mail ACM or call 301-680-6780. Comments and/or articles are welcome and should be sent to the editor at Deena.Bartel-Wagner@nad.adventist.org. Include your full name, complete mailing address, telephone, e-mail address, and current digital photos with all submissions. Items submitted by mail will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

CONTACT US: Adventist World Headquarters National Service Organization/ACM, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Phone: 301-680-6780; fax: 301-680-6783; e-mail acm@gc.adventist.org; URL: <http://nad.AdventistChaplaincy.org>.

The National Service Organization is the official military-relations office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its primary mission is to provide pastoral care and religious resources to support the spiritual well-being of Seventh-day Adventist military-related personnel.

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All life is an
experiment.
The more
experiments
you make,
the better.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson.



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