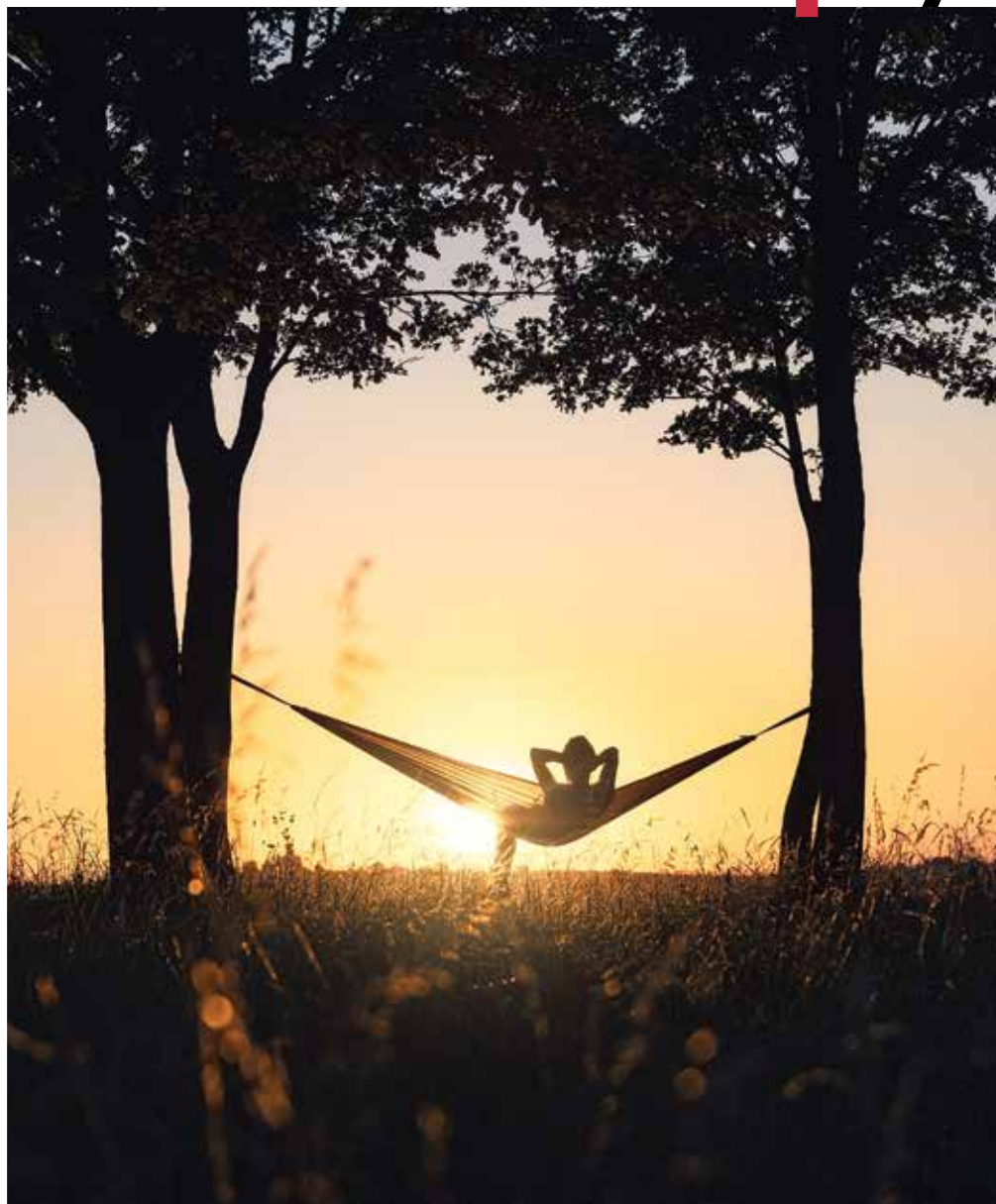


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*A Journal for Seventh-day
Adventists in Military and
Public Service*

For God & Country





TAKE CARE

By Mario E. Ceballos, D.Min., BCC

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Take care!" is a departing phrase we commonly use. What do we mean by those words? It is a parting wish and desire of the person leaving that his/her friend will do what is necessary to take care of themselves. Why? Because we "care" for their well-being.

Because we care, we are dedicating this issue of *For God and Country* to ideas that will help you "Take Care" of yourself. Our contributions to our God first, our families, and our country depend directly on how we take care of ourselves.

Let us remember that we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."¹ We are warned against the results of not

practicing adequate self-care. "Your trouble comes because you are so anxious to run things yourself that you do not wear the yoke of Christ."² So, as we make resting in God's presence a regular practice, He is faithful to refill our tanks and equip us with the strength to meet the challenges of each day.³

Self-care is not a suggestion. It is not a nice thing to do. It is not a recommendation or a luxury. It is a discipline and requires a strong will and understanding of the essential priorities for success.⁴ It is vital for your spiritual life, family life, your responsibilities at work, and everything you do in life. But a balance, as in anything else, is vital.

Self-care is not something you do when and if you have time or when the world gets crazy. But it is:

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Self-care is vital for your spiritual life, family life, your responsibilities at work, and everything you do in life.

1. Something that you do every day, every week, month in and month out, repeatedly.
2. Something that is part of your routine, and it is scheduled and planned.
3. Taking care of yourself in a way that doesn't require you to "indulge" to restore balance.
4. Making a commitment to be healthy and balanced as a regular practice.

When you truly care for yourself, you are better positioned to provide and give of yourself to those around you. You will be a happier spouse, parent, son/daughter, and a better, more fully-engaged worker, team player, and leader. If you take care of yourself, you will have the energy to take care of others joyfully because that caregiving doesn't come at their own expense. Those who take care of themselves can work with more energy and success toward a worthy goal. The result is that you are also the person most likely to make the world a better place for all of us.⁵

FINALLY, LET ME SHARE A FEW PRACTICAL POINTS WITH YOU.

- A. Have self-awareness when you are facing irritability, low mood, exhaustion, disengagement, anxiety. In other words, burnout.
- B. Take a short break to recharge. Do something that lifts your spirits. Take a short walk, practice deep breathing, etc. If you lose track of time when you're busy, set a reminder.
- C. Create a positive environment. It's important to lift each other up. Let's remember that we're all in this together. Let your co-workers and family know you appreciate them. Notice their achievements. Be helpful and kind. Be generous with praise for others' accomplishments.

May the ideas, suggestions, and guidance in this issue be a guiding lamp in your life.

¹ Peter 2:9, NIV

² Ellen G. White, "The Cause of Perplexity," *The Gospel Herald*, Apr. 23, 1902.

³ <https://www.adventistreview.org/1610-50>

⁴ https://www.pathforward.org/self-care-is-not-an-indulgence-its-a-discipline/?gclid=EAlalQobChMlg8TXysXh7AIV3YVaBR3y5gCVEAAYAiAAEgLDI_D_BwE

⁵ Ibid.



IT'S CRITICAL! *PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST*

by Chaplain John R. Logan,
Captain (CHC) United States Navy

Each time you travel on the airline of your choice, the flight attendants give the in-flight safety brief immediately before take-off. They point out the locations of the emergency exits. They demonstrate how to fasten your seat belts. They also show you how to inflate your life vests located under your seat. But one crucial part of the safety brief is unique. They mention, "In the event that the aircraft loses cabin pressure, the oxygen masks will

automatically drop from the ceiling.” The instructions are to “put on your oxygen mask first, before attending to your child and assisting others.” They always tell you to do it first before helping others. But why?¹

A NASA researcher reported he “was able to see for himself how vital it is to actually follow that instruction. The experience of being in a depressurized airplane cabin was replicated for his benefit, triggering hypoxia-like symptoms that left him weak, disoriented, and unable to help save himself. Passengers have seconds to put on their oxygen masks before oxygen-saturation levels drop to a perilous point.”² “By helping others first, or ignoring the mask, a person will begin to lose his or her ability to recognize faces and shapes, and eventually pass out. Passengers are told over and over to take care of their own mask right away.”³ In other words, take care of yourself first before you assist others.

A similar parallel to this scenario relates to our lives. Chaplains are clergy in a specialized profession. With such a demanding vocation, ministering to people in their most critical need is expected. Yet despite the counsel we give others about taking care of themselves, we too can neglect the importance of our very own self-care. Self-care is defined as “the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s health.”⁴ In

other words, “it is the mindful taking of time to pay attention to you, not in a narcissistic way, but in a way that ensures that you are being cared for by you.”⁵

Some of us work long hours, sacrifice time with the family, neglect taking time off from work and vacation, doing all this at the expense of going about the Lord’s business. We are prompted to care for those entrusted to our spiritual and pastoral care while putting in the long hours and unending multitasking. Such workaholicism and drive are not without its repercussions. If we are not mindful, lack of self-care can leave us overworked, burnt out, and useless. If you do not impart self-care as part of your routine maintenance, you run the risk of these three detrimental aspects to your life.

1. YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH IS AT RISK.

Stress has been linked to some chronic illnesses and mental health disorders. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, chronic stress “over time, may contribute to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other illnesses, including mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.”⁶ Over time as the job stressors intensify, if we do not incorporate self-care into our schedules, we risk succumbing to burnout, therefore

If we are not mindful, lack of self-care can leave us overworked, burnt out, and useless.

putting our body and mind at risk. Burnout is simply “a state of emotional, mental, and often physical exhaustion brought on by prolonged or repeated stress.”⁷ We also need to be cautious of being so fulfilled and gratified by what we do that we miss the warning signs of stress build-up on our bodies and minds.

2. NOT TAKING TIME FOR SELF-CARE CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT YOUR JOB AND DECISION MAKING.

One contributing factor to poor job performance can be traced to a lack of self-care. In a pediatric surgical nursing

journal, an article related to nurses’ self-care asked the question: What are the risks if they do not take time to care for themselves? The answers were “performance deficits; an increased risk of errors; a decline in short-term memory; a reduced ability to learn; a negative impact on divergent thinking, innovation, and insight; an increased risk-taking behavior; and impaired mood and communication skills.”⁸

These particular questions and answers can apply to just about anyone in most professions. Not taking time for self-care can jeopardize our careers and everything it took to get to us where we are.



If we are not careful, it is easy to be about our Father's businesses and be spiritually lost.

3. LACK OF SELF-CARE CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT YOUR FAMILY LIFE AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Licensed, professional counselor, Robert Paul, who is also the vice president of the Focus on the Family Marriage Institute, notes that “roadblocks to self-care affect marriages, because a spouse who isn’t cared for comes to the marriage depleted instead of ready to give. A marriage can thrive only when each spouse is seeking his or her own care.”⁹ The same applies to those in courtships and long term commitments. To improve one’s self-care, consider the following:

A. MAKE THE MOST OF THE SABBATH AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LEAVE.

God gave us the Sabbath with a command to remember it. He specifically chose a day where one can rest and retreat from all the week’s cares and concerns. He took a day off, which was meant to recharge and reconnect with Him. Sabbath observance has been linked to longevity and beneficial to both physical and mental health. Just as God took a day off from His work after creation, taking paid leave from work is essential to one’s wellbeing.

How often have I heard of co-workers bragging about the amount of leave they have saved up. I had a co-worker who mentioned that he had not taken a vacation in five years.

It is incredible how time flies, and milestones we’ve missed out on with family and our children. You do not get those precious moments back. Rarely on one’s death bed would you hear someone say, “I wished I had spent more time at the office or work.”

B. SPEND TIME IN DAILY DEVOTION AND PRAYER.

If we are not careful, it is easy to be about our Father’s business and be spiritually lost. A pastor friend of mine mentioned this statement in a sermon, “If the devil cannot get you to sin, he will sure make you very busy.” The New Testament gives six different accounts where Jesus separated Himself from people to connect with our Heavenly Father. Mark 1:35 tells us that “Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and slipped out to a solitary place to pray.” Jesus made it a continual habit to seek solitude to commune with His Heavenly Father to prepare for the most significant undertaking in saving humanity. It was this type of spiritual discipline that gave Him victory over sin and temptation and also gave Him the endurance to bear God’s ultimate will, to lay down His life as the sacrificial lamb for our salvation.

C. TAKE TIME TO RECONNECT WITH OTHERS.

When was the last time you contacted a long-time friend or

Self-care is something that should routinely be part of our everyday living.

relative? It is easy to get so inundated with work that we forget to keep in touch with the people who saw us through our humble beginnings. When I was a child, AT&T had a commercial jingle that said, “reach out, reach out and touch someone.” Do not underestimate the value of connecting with other people and your loved ones. However difficult and challenging you think your work is, some people want

to see us succeed. Thanks to social media, you can just say hello without having the chore of having to write a letter and post it.

4. COMMIT TO A HEALTHY DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

As Seventh-day Adventists, our reputation precedes us with our 28 Fundamental Beliefs steeped in Christian doctrine and a health



message with a lifestyle that is also in line with our beliefs. In the book *Mind, Character and Personality, Volume One*, Ellen G. White, noted, "The health of the mind is to a large degree dependent upon the health of the body, and the health of the body is dependent upon the way in which the living machinery is treated. Eat only that food which will keep your stomach in the most healthy condition."¹⁰ Studies will show that many of the chronic diseases that are terminal could have been prevented had healthy eating habits been incorporated.

As for physical activity, working out or the idea of going to the gym can seem like a chore, not to mention trying to fit it into the schedule due to the long hours and commutes. There is also the other aspect of a sustained chronic injury that makes it difficult as well. Try to find an activity that is fun and fulfilling, yet keeps the heart rate going. It can be your favorite sport, hobby, or walking. Brisk walking has been linked to many health benefits. After being sedentary for a while, it is best to break away from sitting down and walk around to get the circulation going.

Signing up for classes at the local gym can also boost your commitment level. However, with COVID-19, you can do various exercise programs and routines without ever going to the gym. To stay on task, get with a friend or find a workout buddy to commit to one or several activities several days per week, whether it's walking, running, cycling, swimming, or playing your favorite sport. See which one of these activities fits your fancy and work it into your schedule. A couple years ago, I got into road cycling. It is low impact, and I can take in the scenery of where I am

going. Also, I get the needed sunlight and fresh air.

Self-care is something that should routinely be part of our everyday living. The challenge, at times, can be consistency coupled with effective time management. There are many things that we hold sacred, and self-care should be one of them. If you think about it, we are replaceable and not indispensable in the workforce. So let us learn a valuable lesson from that pre-flight safety brief. Put your mask on first. Develop a solid self-care plan that is conducive to your schedule and lifestyle. We have only but one life to live until Jesus comes, so make it count. Let us work on taking better care of ourselves first, so we can, in turn, take care of others.

¹ *Why you should put your oxygen mask on first before helping others*: <https://www.traveller.com.au> (Accessed August 1, 2020)

² Erin Donnelly, *Why You're Instructed to Put Oxygen Masks on Yourself First* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-youre-instructed-to-p_b_11201778 (Accessed August 1, 2020)

³ Ibid

⁴ Selfcare: Oxford Dictionaries: www.laguages.oup.com (Accessed August 5, 2020)

⁵ Maria Barratta, Ph.D., LCSW, *Self-care 101: 10 Ways to Take Better Care of You*. Psychology Today, May 27, 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/skinny-revisited/201805/self-care-101> (Accessed August 5, 2020)

⁶ NIMH: *5 Things You Should Know About Stress*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>

⁷ Burnout: Workaholic, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/burnout>

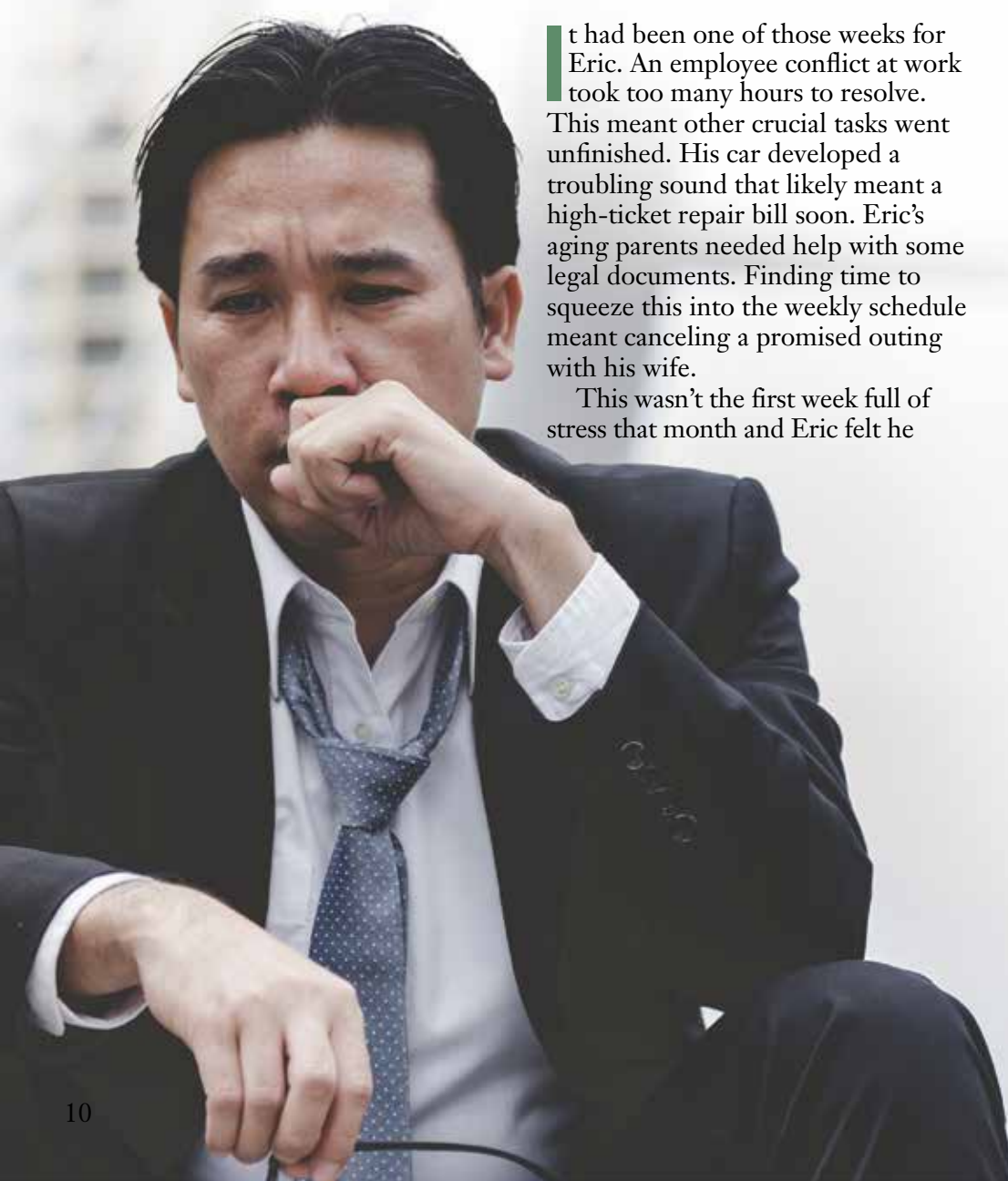
⁸ Barbara Bratton, MSN, PNP-BC, *Self-care for the Caregiver. What Are the Risks If We Don't Care for Ourselves?* Journal of Pediatric Surgical Nursing: 1/3 2018 - Volume 7 - Issue 1 - p 3

⁹ Robert Paul, *How Self-Care Can Turn a Good Marriage Into a Great One*. March 24, 2018, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/how-self-care-can-turn-a-good-marriage-to-a-great-one/> (Accessed August 5, 2020)

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Mind Character and Personality* Vol. 1 pg. 18 https://egwwritings-a.akamaihd.net/pdf/en_2MCP.pdf (Accessed August 7, 2021)

WHEN I RELAX, I FEEL GUILTY

By Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.

A photograph of a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is sitting and looking down with a stressed or thoughtful expression, his right hand resting near his mouth. The background is a blurred cityscape.

It had been one of those weeks for Eric. An employee conflict at work took too many hours to resolve. This meant other crucial tasks went unfinished. His car developed a troubling sound that likely meant a high-ticket repair bill soon. Eric's aging parents needed help with some legal documents. Finding time to squeeze this into the weekly schedule meant canceling a promised outing with his wife.

This wasn't the first week full of stress that month and Eric felt he

needed to do something for himself. He decided that binge-watching a television series that he'd missed offered the ideal solution. After a Saturday night and all-day Sunday marathon, Eric felt even worse. The lethargy and dissatisfaction didn't seem to lift. Eric dreaded facing Monday morning. He wondered why his self-care plan didn't live up to the hype that he'd heard about how taking care of yourself re-energizes you. And worst of all, he felt guilty for having "wasted the time to take care of himself."

CREATED TO CARE

In Genesis 1, God outlined that humans are created to care for creation, and all that is in it. This includes caring for themselves. But there is a difference between self-care and self-indulgence. Using temporary man-made solutions to help you escape reality and responsibilities only offers momentary pleasure resulting in self-indulgence. This doesn't provide long-lasting benefits of renewal and restoration.

There is a difference between self-care and self-indulgence. When we live only for ourselves and seek to gratify our earthly appetites, this keeps us from living for Christ. This is self-indulgence.

Often, proper self-care is equated with soul-care. When Christians base their self-care on biblical principles, they find a restoration more fulfilling

than mind-numbing activities that offer no relief. We can find evidence in the Bible to practice self-care. John the Revelator wrote to Gaius, "Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit."¹

Why invest in self-care? Exhaustion and overwhelm deplete our resources of calm, patience, and compassion with others. Unrelieved stress remains stored in our bodies and can lead to muscle tension, chronic pain, and fatigue. Caring for our physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and relational health allows us to provide better care to and for others.

However, it's essential to avoid the temptation to become obsessed with caring for ourselves. When we become caught up with this, our ability to care appropriately about others diminishes.

LIVING ABUNDANTLY

What does biblical self-care look like? While He lived here on earth, Jesus modeled this in His life. He said, "I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure." Imagine that. God wants us to have a life where we reach for newer, deeper, and richer life-changing experiences. Using biblical principles in our self-care, this is precisely what we can experience. As you tend to your self-care daily, you'll discover that your coping ability increases when stressful events come.

When Christians base their self-care on biblical principles, they find a restoration more fulfilling than mind-numbing activities that offer no relief.

You've laid the foundation to deal with the unexpected.

SPIRITUAL

During His three-and-a-half years of ministry, crowds often surrounded Jesus. They sought to have their needs met. Some wanted to touch Him. Others would rather have a confrontation. All of it could be draining if Jesus hadn't maintained His spiritual health. In the Gospels, we are told that He often retreated to pray and seek quiet. (Mark 1:9-13, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:30-32).

Connect with God daily. Make it a part of your morning start-up routine to read the Bible and pray about your day. Guard that quiet time to

become energized and set the day on the correct path. If you like structure, choose a Bible reading plan. This could be one that guides you through the Scriptures chronologically. Some programs take you through parallel passages. Other reading plans are based on a specific theme. Another option is to use a Bible app on your phone.

Whatever plan you choose, commit to daily reading time. Even if you only have 10-15 minutes a day, make the most of it. You will discover that this time you take helps to add a framework to your day. It prepares you for what lies ahead.

PHYSICAL

Physically relieving stress and tension is equally vital. What is it that restores you? It might be a gym workout or a walk through the silent woods. For some people, it's baking or cooking a favorite meal. Moving and stretching stimulates receptors in your nervous system. This slows the production of stress hormones. It also increases blood flow to the brain, helping you have a clearer mind and a more cheerful mood.² It lifts your mood and enables you to refocus.

Enough sleep is another aspect of physical self-care that you can control. Sleep helps promote mental wellness. It also aids in stress reduction and helps your brain reset for the next day. As a part of your overall self-care routine, developing a bedtime routine of unwinding, turning off your electronic devices, and going to sleep at a consistent time nightly provides healthy sleep. It also helps you wake up at a regular time in the morning. This will allow you to carve out

time for your spiritual focus of Bible reading and prayer.

EMOTIONAL

Jesus said, “Abide in me, and I in you.”³ Abide means to rest. What Jesus says here is that we are to rest in Him. Then He says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Don’t take these words to mean that Jesus becomes a dispensing machine to give us whatever tangible item we want this week. Instead, we have a connection with Him that makes us also dependent on Him.

Without this abiding, our emotional health can suffer. Fear and worry about daily events or the unknown can overwhelm us. Our connection with Christ means that we can rely on Him, and He will be faithful to carry us through the troublesome times we may face.

One of today’s most significant dangers to emotional self-care is social media. Currently, the long-term consequences of social media use are unknown. However, there is evidence that heavy use can increase the risk of depression and anxiety. You can feel increased loneliness. Some individuals are so affected that they harm themselves. Others struggle with suicidal thoughts.

If you struggle with any of these, consider tracking your time on social media. It might surprise you. Disable

notifications. Don’t feel like you have to grab your phone every time a notification comes through. Limit how often you check your accounts. Try to increase the amount of time between when you check your phone or tablet.

You may want to take a complete social media fast for a while. Use the time you spent on social media doing other things, such as more exercise, pursuing a hobby, or reading a physical book. Find an option that works for you and jump in.

RELATIONAL

Relational self-care provides many benefits. How we interact with family, friends, and co-workers does affect us. During this year of pandemic, our relationships have either grown more robust, or they may have been affected by not being connected enough.

Building strong, healthy relationships takes work. They don’t just happen. Have you taken advantage of keeping your relationships vibrant through phone and letter writing and sharing updates? Do you have a friend or neighbor who would appreciate you bringing them a meal? How are your listening skills? Do you need to work on being an active listener, rather than allowing your thoughts to wander while someone is talking to you? Do you express appreciation to a co-worker for their input and support?

Investing time and energy in

Our connection with Christ means that we can rely on Him, and He will be faithful to carry us through the troublesome times we may face.

relationships can give you a sense of well-being, make you happier, and even help you live longer.

WHEN YOU WORK THE PLAN, IT WORKS

After his TV-watching marathon, Eric regrouped and began to study how best to implement a biblical self-care plan based on the ideas mentioned here. It wasn't easy at first. It took discipline and there were days when he failed. But he continued to develop the habits. Over time, Eric saw the difference it made in his life.

Stressful events and interactions

still occur in Eric's life. But today, he's caring for himself as he cares for those around him and he's able to cope. As he built his self-care routine, Eric understood there is a difference between biblical self-care and earthly self-indulgence. Eric no longer feels guilty when he uses the proper tools to implement biblical self-care in his life. He's following the biblical principles and it's paying off. It can for you, too!

¹ 3 John 1:2

² <https://resilienteducator.com/lifestyle/body-stretch-exercises/#:~:text=Stretching%20stimulates%20receptors%20in%20the,can%20also%20help%20your%20mind%3F>

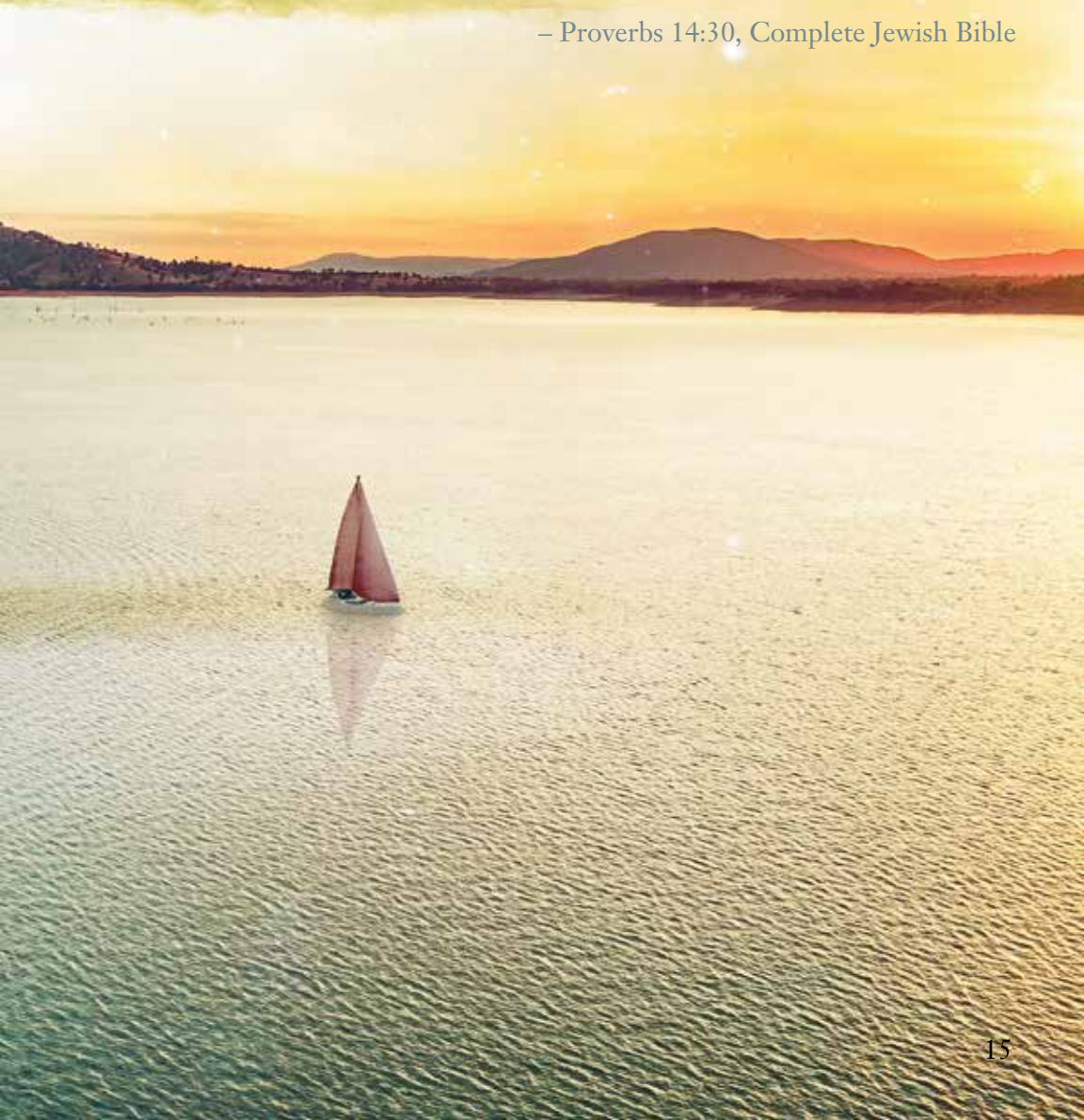
³ John 15:4

During this year of pandemic, our relationships have either grown more robust, or they may have been affected by not being connected enough.



A TRANQUIL MIND GIVES HEALTH TO THE BODY.

– Proverbs 14:30, Complete Jewish Bible



PRIORITIZE YOUR WELL-BEING

By CH (LTC) Dan Bray, U. S. Army, Retired MS, MDiv.
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In what may seem to be a strange statement, there are multiple times in our personal lives when we ought to be selfish. And this should be done on a regular and consistent basis. We're referring to taking care of ourselves physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

Ideally, this is not accomplished just so we can appear to be superior to others or larger than life. Instead, the theory is that we might be better equipped to handle life and its various stressors if we take the required time to ensure we have what we need.

Many of us already know the value of regular exercise or attending worship services. Like everything else we do, these actions are a matter of our choices. Do I choose to do these things, and why do I make the decisions to do them?

Perhaps another way to look at this is to ask the question, "What do I need?"

The answers here will be as varied as the individual. For some, self-care could potentially be just taking an hour out of

We are not at our best if we fail to prioritize the importance of our own well-being.

the day and relaxing in our favorite chair at home without feeling the need to explain what we are doing to anyone else.

Others may sense the need to actively participate in strenuous activity or to indulge their brain energy by working on a word puzzle.

I often ask my patients what they like to do for themselves. Sometimes the response is, “I don’t know” or “I used to do something, but I don’t do it anymore.” I try to encourage them to return to enjoying those things once again.

Some will add that just physically moving can have ripple effects across the spectrum of their daily life. Find a move you enjoy doing. It could be as simple as walking for a short bit.

One of the hallmark principles with this topic is that we cannot help others if we do not care for ourselves. We are not at our best if we fail to prioritize the importance of our own well-being.

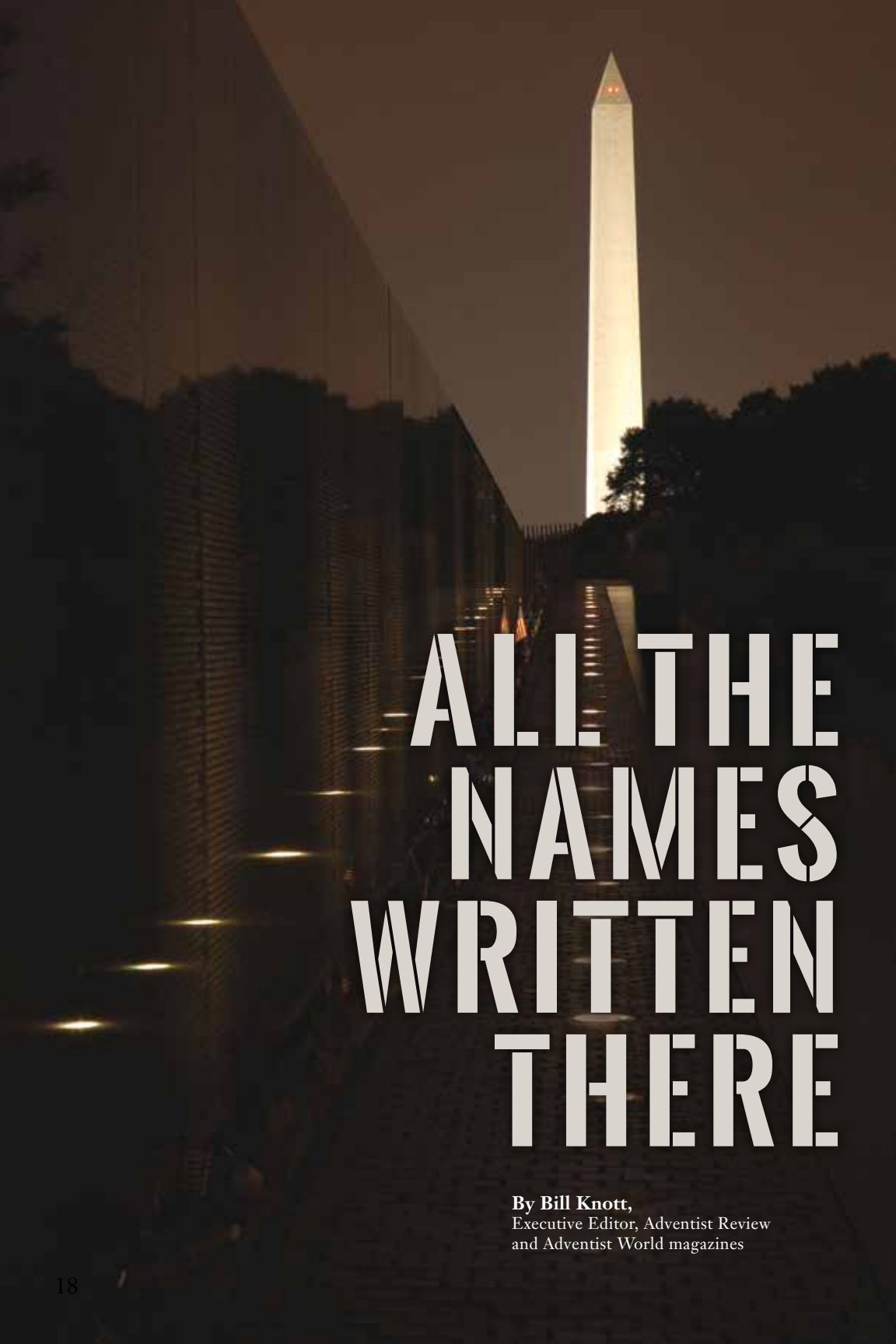
There are other considerations, such as the food we eat and or the

sleep we should get. Then, there is even the thought that the amount of water that we drink plays a vital role in our self-care.

If we truly would focus on taking better care of ourselves, we might be the beneficiaries of these results: better productivity; having an improved resistance to disease; enjoying better physical health; and experiencing an enhanced sense of self-esteem.

Practicing self-care requires thinking about what we really love to do. The exercise of figuring out what makes us feel passionate and inspired can help us understand ourselves a lot better. Sometimes, this can even spark a change in career or a reprioritization of previously abandoned hobbies.

When we’re good to ourselves, what once may have been viewed as being selfish can, in fact, give us the resources we need to be compassionate to others as well. Remember, we are unable to give to others what we ourselves don’t have.

A nighttime photograph of the Washington Monument, illuminated and standing tall against a dark sky. In the foreground, the Reflecting Pool is visible, with its surface reflecting the monument and the surrounding lights. The pool's edge is lined with a low wall, and the water is dark with some light reflections. The overall mood is solemn and reflective.

ALL THE NAMES WRITTEN THERE

By **Bill Knott**,
Executive Editor, *Adventist Review*
and *Adventist World* magazines

If there is a sadder file folder anywhere in Adventism, it's hard to imagine what it might contain.

In a movement used to celebrating successes—new hospitals, more radio stations, thousands baptized in a day—we find it hard to fully notice facts that go against the stream. But here they are, dozens of official documents, newspaper clippings, and obituary notices that make our losses real.

We look into the confident and steady gaze of handsome young men who are no more; we read the posthumous citations for bravery in battle; we hear the witness of their buddies, the heartbreak of their wives, the stoic grief of parents mourning for their sons.

Something in us doesn't want to turn the pages, to engage the memories of a bitter conflict about which our collective house is still divided. But 45 years after the last young Seventh-day Adventist soldier died in Vietnam, the church to which they pledged allegiance—from faith, from habit, who knows how?—owes each of them a moment of remembrance.

ASSEMBLING THE RECORD

Like so many other things about the Vietnam War, the folder in the archives of the General Conference is unfinished. The latest entry, a cumulative list of Adventist soldiers killed in action, is dated more than two years before the last known Adventist death in Vietnam and 27 months before the negotiated end of hostilities. The reasons for the partial list are unclear: a change in office personnel may have left the unwelcome task of assembling such sadness to someone reluctant to keep up the work.

Across the neat, typewritten list are terse notations from several hands: "*Awards: 17 Bronze Stars; 4 Silver Stars; 4 oak-leaf clusters.*" "*One oak-leaf cluster to TP Md [Takoma Park, Maryland] boy.*" Names are added, others deleted, as information is assembled from parents, local church Missionary Volunteer societies, and conference youth directors. Fragments abound: a name only, a name with a date, a name with

**WE LOOK INTO THE
CONFIDENT AND
STEADY GAZE OF
HANDSOME
YOUNG MEN WHO
ARE NO MORE...**



a hometown. Other listings are more complete and thus verifiable: “*Meek, SP4 James, Forest City, Florida, 28 November 1967.*”

The 90 names on the church’s list must be set alongside 116 names from the Department of Defense data bank of those who identified themselves as “Adventist” on their military registration. When the two lists are merged and compared with unique names identified in Vietnam-era letters to church headquarters and present-day e-mails (responding to a request in the February 14, 2002, *Adventist Review*), a clearer picture emerges: At least 148 American Seventh-day Adventist military personnel lost their lives in the Vietnam War, though the actual total is probably higher. As several ex-servicemen have observed, a number of young Adventists probably didn’t identify themselves with their denomination at registration—some because they had made choices about combat participation that the church didn’t recommend, others because they didn’t wish to get a visit from an Adventist military chaplain. Still others chose the broader category of “Protestant” when asked for church affiliation.

An ethic of inclusion must surely guide all efforts to assemble a record of American Adventists who served

and died in Vietnam. Some who registered as Adventists may have meant to indicate only the faith they grew up in: for dozens of others, it was clearly a passionate, living experience. Some who practiced Adventism, lived it in the muddy bomb shelters of hilltop outposts, were never baptized, or made a public profession. Their letters home give ample evidence, though, that even in a kind of hell unimaginable to most civilians, they sought “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10, KJV).

The list assembled and available via the link below,¹ apparently the first of its kind in the church’s history, is built on a generous understanding of what makes for an Adventist. Any name identified on government lists, church lists, or from parent and relative sources that can also be found on the official government list of those who died in the war is included. These are also names that can be located on the somber black granite tablets of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

GROUP PORTRAIT

No accurate count of Adventists who served in the Vietnam War is known to exist. Church records at the time refer to “thousands” having

AT LEAST 148 AMERICAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MILITARY PERSONNEL LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE VIETNAM WAR, THOUGH THE ACTUAL TOTAL IS PROBABLY HIGHER.

served. A note for 1967 suggests that some 450 Adventists were in the combat theater; a year later, near the height of the conflict's intensity, the estimate reached 600. If Adventist participation was comparable to the general U.S. population participation, approximately 5,400 Adventists saw at least one tour of duty there. Anecdotal reports suggest the obvious: as American military involvement in the war dramatically expanded from 1967 to 1970, the number of Adventists known to military chaplains, National Service Organization personnel, and other Adventists grew rapidly.

The number of Adventist fatalities in the war seems modest when compared with the 58,226 names recorded on "The Wall."² Yet losses are measured most by their impact on communities of people, and as a percentage of the U.S. Adventist

community in 1970, the known 148 fatalities point to a greater and keener sacrifice than was experienced by the general population.³ More Adventists probably either knew or were related to a young man who died in Vietnam than was true for Americans generally.

Information available from government sources provides significant detail about the church members who died. Identification number, branch of service, rank, occupation, age, hometown, birth date, race, marital status, and religion can all be determined, as well as numbers benignly labeled "casualty date"—the date on which these soldiers died.

We learn that the vast majority of Adventists who died served in the Army, almost all as draftees. A small handful spread through the Air Force and the Navy; a larger group enlisted



in the Marines. They came from all across America: 36 states, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam; the home of one Adventist soldier is mysteriously listed as “Jamaica.” California and Florida saw the greatest concentrations of Adventist fatalities, even while the overall East-West geographical distribution was remarkably balanced.

Fifteen percent of those who died (22) were African American. A sizable group of soldiers identified as “Caucasian” bear clearly Hispanic surnames and given names, and would be listed in a separate category in today’s military classification scheme.

Slightly more than a quarter of those who died (38) were married, some for several years, others for just weeks or months. One sees that too-familiar image in the mind’s eye: the crisply dressed officer and chaplain approaching the suburban house,

noticing the bright curtains in the living room window and the small American flag on the porch, heavy at the heart for what they must tell a young bride, now a young widow. A few actual photographs of war widows can be found in the church’s archive: most widows are simply listed among “survivors” in obituary notices, between the parents and the siblings.

FOREVER YOUNG

The serene, clean-shaven faces that stare out at the reader from the obituary notices in the North Pacific Union *Gleaner*, the *Southwestern Union Record*, the *Southern Tidings*, and the *Lake Union Herald* underscore the painful point: these men were young, some hardly looking old enough to leave home, let alone die for their country. They ranged in age from 18 to 45;



the typical Adventist soldier was 22 years old at time of death.

A great and sad “bell curve” can be traced for the years in which they died. The first known Adventist to die, Kenneth Dale Johnston of Pueblo, Colorado, lost his life in a nonhostile air crash on August 27, 1965—just 27 days after going to Vietnam. The last known Adventist fatality—James Lewis Craig, Jr., of Jacksonville, Florida—died when the helicopter he was riding in crashed as a result of enemy fire on October 16, 1972, just three months before the Paris peace accords. In between those points the numbers of young men lost swell and then recede: 1965—2; 1966—10; 1967—33; 1968—41; 1969—33; 1970—16; 1971—8; 1972—4. One Adventist Air Force officer, missing in action for more than 12 years, was declared a casualty in 1978.

The records sometimes tell too much: a 33-year-old Adventist Army sergeant, killed on his first full day in Vietnam. Numerous other names appear who died in the first month of combat duty. Others were within days of finishing their tour when the mortar, the Claymore mine, or the enemy sniper put their name on the casualty list. Among the Adventist soldiers who died in Vietnam, the average length of tour was 151 days—slightly less than five months.

HANDS OFF—OR ON?—THE GUN

The most publicly conspicuous feature of Adventist participation in the Vietnam War was the noncombatant “conscientious objector” status claimed by many who were drafted. (Some soldiers and church leaders, concerned about popular images of war protestors, preferred the term “conscientious cooperator.”) Dozens, probably even hundreds, of local newspaper accounts throughout the United States during the Vietnam War years glowingly described these “soldiers without guns,” and a 1968 volume about Adventist soldiers in Vietnam (*No Guns on Their Shoulders*, by Herbert Ford) celebrated only the stories of those who chose to follow the church’s official recommendation about not carrying weapons.

Adventists had struggled with the U.S. government for a century—since the Civil War—to achieve official status as “conscientious objectors”—persons opposed to bearing arms in combat, but willing to participate, usually as medical personnel, in efforts to save lives on the battlefield. Some Adventist soldiers in World Wars I and II were court-martialed for their principled refusal to carry arms or do non-lifesaving work on the Sabbath. By the time of the Korean conflict (1950-1953), the rights

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of Adventists as non-combatants had been assured by presidential directive, and thousands of Adventists drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War claimed the status available to them. All Adventists who claimed 1-A-O status were placed in the Army; non-combat status was not generally available in the other military branches. Their basic training, usually at Fort Sam Houston, differed from that of their weapon-carrying peers. As noted in another *Adventist Review* story (“A Coat of Many Colors,” Sept. 24, 1998), hundreds from this group volunteered and served in the Army’s Whitecoat project at Fort Detrick, Maryland, during the Vietnam era.

The national debate about U.S. policy in Vietnam during the 1960s also produced another kind of Adventist conscientious objector, one who believed that they could not participate in the U.S. military effort in any way, even as a battlefield medic. Church leaders struggled to maintain the government status already achieved while also affirming the antiwar choices of individual young men. Late in the Vietnam War, at the General Conference Autumn Council of 1972, church leaders voted a policy that, while recommending noncombatant participation, also affirmed church support for those who felt they

could not conscientiously serve at all. A consequence of this action was an extension of church support to those who chose to carry weapons as well. The church clearly had a recommended course of action, but it offered its support to those draftees and enlisted men who made other choices about combat.

CHOICES

The record of Adventist medics and other noncombatant participants in Vietnam is impressive: another folder in the General Conference archives lists dozens of military citations and awards given for heroic service on the battlefield and identifies many Adventists as recipients of the Purple Heart award for battlefield wounds. Newspaper clippings mount up with amazing stories of medics, often wounded, risking their lives to save men in their unit while under deadly enemy fire. None should doubt the heroism of hundreds of young Adventists who faced the most frightening time of their lives armed only with bandages, a field medical kit, and faith in the will of God. As one highly decorated Adventist medic summarized his belief: “One thing I’ve found is you never have to worry about Jesus jamming on you like an M-16.”⁴ Of

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS MOUNT UP WITH AMAZING STORIES OF MEDICS, OFTEN WOUNDED, RISKING THEIR LIVES TO SAVE MEN IN THEIR UNIT WHILE UNDER DEADLY ENEMY FIRE.

these medical personnel, 52 lost their lives in combat.

But many other young Adventists who died in Vietnam made other choices about carrying weapons, as revealed by the Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) codes attached to their record. While medics are the largest single group among the known 148 fatalities, the sizeable number of Adventist names in the regular infantry and Marines suggest many men who chose to carry weapons on either a regular or exceptional basis. Noncombat status was almost never available to soldiers in those areas of service. Forty-three Adventist deaths among regular infantry and another 17 from the Marines indicate that many young men either didn't agree with the church's official recommendation or felt that carrying a weapon was crucial to their hope of surviving the war.

ONE MEDIC'S STORY

Specialist Five James Oliver, a conscientious objector serving as a medic, well illustrates the moral dilemma faced by Adventist soldiers in Vietnam. Pinned down in a firefight near Kontum by a sniper while trying to help a wounded American paratrooper, Oliver watched helplessly as the sniper killed another wounded man who was waiting to be airlifted out by helicopter.

"There wasn't anything else I could do," Oliver told an Army reporter. "I saw the sniper, picked up an M-16 off the ground, sighted, and fired once." Oliver's shot knocked the sniper out of his tree. "I hope I don't have to do it again," the medic said, "but if I must, I will."⁵

Other Adventist men, faced with equally terrible situations, chose differently from Oliver: some no



doubt gave their lives through their principled refusal to pick up a weapon in either self-defense or to protect their buddies.

What emerges from both the data and the numerous heartbreaking stories is the need for a greater charity toward all Adventists who served and died in Vietnam. That some died while carrying weapons should not suggest that they were second-class Adventists. That others gave up their lives rather than defend themselves should mark them as neither foolish nor, alternatively, as a better kind of believer. The finely tuned ethical sensitivities of the classroom and the Sabbath School fade away in the presence of the real-life horror faced by thousands of young Adventists in the jungles and on the hilltops of Vietnam.

WHY WE CREATE MEMORIALS

I live just minutes from Washington, D.C. I previously attended classes at a university just blocks from the site of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Each time I passed by, I noted the never-ending stream of persons moving slowly past the thousands of names; the dozens of cards and floral tributes left by surviving family and friends; the men and women, the children, the siblings, the parents who have

discovered a sacred spot where they can weep if they want and no one will tell them to get over it.

Chamber of Commerce types inform us that “The Wall” is now the most frequently visited site in a city full of memorials to dead heroes. It seems to have achieved an ageless, nonpolitical status: both supporters and those who protested the war in Vietnam come here to talk and think and pray.

But it was not always so. The origins of “The Wall” were steeped in controversy and litigation, as is the current plan to build a memorial a quarter mile away to honor all Americans who served in World War II. The act of building a memorial—or printing one—inevitably arouses emotions some would rather leave alone. But memorials, if we allow them to, take us past the piercing hurt—of assassination, of catastrophe, of losing those we love in war—and help us find a greater, calmer meaning than the sharpness of our grief.

There will undoubtedly be those who think the Adventist memorial⁶ a foolish waste of precious space, an unnecessary evocation of a war and a time that is better forgotten. Others will wish that even more was here, that some new category—Adventists wounded in Vietnam, for instance—was given equal treatment. And some, perhaps most, may find in these

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records, pictures, and names a sense of somehow coming full circle.

A generation ago, we heralded these young men going out as Adventists and soldiers. Now, sadder and wiser, we remember them—all of them—as both.

Each May since moving to this region, my family and I have attended the annual Memorial Day concert on the west side of the U.S. Capitol or else watched the broadcast on public television. Of all the sights and sounds my wife and I gladly shared with our sons each year when they were young is one that never ceases to amaze and move me.

Between the songs, the military bands, the well-scripted narration of servicemen's letters, there's a moment when a lone bugler directly up against the face of the Capitol plays "Taps." Thousands of people stand silently, swallowing hard, remembering.

This year, when the tears again come to my eyes, they will be for the dozens of young Adventist men who

a generation ago paid a price I pray my sons will never have to pay.

Forty-five years later, with all my heart, I salute them.

¹ <https://www.adventistreview.org/archives/2002-1521/story1-2.html>

² Most U.S. residents are unaware that some thousands of Canadian citizens served alongside U.S. troops in Vietnam, even while Canada remained officially neutral in the conflict. Canadian government records officially list 93 as killed in action and another seven as missing in action. No information is known to exist as to whether any Adventists are included in this number.

³ The percentages are .035 to .028. Adventist population in the United States in 1970 was approximately 410,000; the U.S. population in the 1970 census was 203,302,031.

⁴ Letter of David Chedester to Clark Smith, Oct. 12, 1968, archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

⁵ "What Else Could I Do?" in *Fire Base* 173, NSO Folder 124, archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

⁶ <https://www.adventistreview.org/archives/2002-1521/story1-2.html>

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the *Adventist Review* on May 23, 2002. It can be accessed at <https://www.adventistreview.org/all-the-names-written-there>



NAD Director's Thoughts I NEEDED A JUMP-START



He gives power to the weak, and to those
who have no might He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and
the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the Lord shall
renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40: 29 – 31 NKJV

Recently, I had a moment that every driver dreads. I went into the garage to start Debra's car, and nothing happened. Usually, I turn the key to the right, all the way, then release it. Immediately, the car would crank, then purr. Not today. I tried it again. I pressed the horn, and nothing happened. We had driven the car the day before, and there was no hint of trouble. I was perplexed, but I knew what to do.

For such a time as this, I had bought a policy with the American Automobile Association (AAA) that would allow me to call for assistance if ever I had a problem with our cars. When I called the Customer Care

Line, the phone was answered quickly. The attendant asked my name. When I responded, he called me by my name and asked me if I was safe. I replied, yes. He then asked, "How may I help you today?"

When I explained the problem, he said that he understood and would dispatch a service truck to help me. He asked me to wait patiently and gave me an approximate time when my help would arrive. I waited and tinkered on some other tasks while waiting. Before too long, the AAA truck was at the house. Frank, the mechanic, was polite and accommodating. When he asked me to turn the key, nothing happened. He knew just what to do.

Frank had a portable device that he called a Hot Shot. He thought that it would give me enough power to jump-start the car. It did not. We laughed while musing about the good old days when you could jump-start a car by putting the transmission in neutral and pushing the car until it was going fast enough to “pop the clutch.” Not this car!

He had another option. He connected a long set of cables to the battery in my car. Then he plugged the cables into a contraption on the bumper of his truck. He said, “Turn the key.” I did, and the car started, without hesitation. I remarked that I wished there was something like that to get me going when I feel tired and depleted.

His eyes lit up, and Frank smiled as he said, “There is something you can use.” I asked, “Really?” Frank replied, “Yes, the Bible says in Isaiah 40:29–31 He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

I joined him as he was quoting the verse. His eyes and smile brightened further. He said with enthusiasm, “You are a believer?” I responded affirmatively, and we ceremoniously bumped elbows. I told Frank that that verse was one of my favorite verses of scripture.

Frank told me that when he was younger and a track athlete, that verse was in his mind as he would sprint the last quarter of his races. He said that

he rarely lost a race when he focused on that text as he ran.

We reminisced about times when we felt depleted, emotionally, spiritually, or physically, and intoned that verse. Invariably, we found renewal. Before he left, Frank paused and said something profound to me. What did you do while you waited for me to arrive? My response was, “I worked on some other projects.” He said, “That is what you should do when you are waiting on the Lord to renew you. Work on some other of His projects. Waiting on the Lord is not idleness. It is service!”

“You knew I was coming, so you did not just sit and pout or sulk. You did something productive while you waited. Likewise, you know God is going to show up, at the right time, with just what you need to jump-start you. Just keep doing well, and your help will always show up. You might have to wait a while, but your renewal is assured.”

I said, “Frank, you have made my day. Not just because you jump-started my car, but because you have given my faith a jolt too. Thank you.”

Strangely, but thankfully, since then, Debra’s car has started every time that we have needed it.

If you, dear reader, are feeling depleted, burned out, run-down, or dispirited, turn your mind to the Word of God. If you don’t have a favorite verse that restores your soul, may I commend you to the verse that Frank and I claim? Isaiah 40:29 – 31! Wait on the Lord, and He will jump-start your heart, your vision, your enthusiasm, your potential, and your reality. Do something positive for someone else

while you wait. Waiting on the Lord is not idleness. It is service.

Doubtless, many of you are tired, drained, and impacted by the stress of an invisible marauder causing mayhem, myriads of death, isolation, a paradigm shift in worship methodology, economic instability, and despair among many in our

society. The social unrest and the political climate may also have taken a toll on you. Be of good cheer. A jump start is available.



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YOUR LEGACY NEEDS TO BE SHARED WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND THE CHURCH-AT-LARGE.



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An empty lantern
provides no light.
Self-care is the fuel
that allows your light
to shine brightly.”

– Unknown



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