

A NEWSLETTER FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MILITARY-RELATED PERSONNEL

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# FG&C

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY



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

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*I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.*

*The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

*I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies*

PSALMS 18:1-3

# Persevering

While commuting three hours daily, I usually listen to audio books such as the Bible or autobiographies like, *His Excellency – George Washington* by Joseph Ellis. Recently, my selections related events about how great leaders overcame seemingly insurmountable odds to accomplish lofty goals for the greater good of church and country. Their achievements that benefited many cost much personal sacrifice, just as your sacrifice in serving your country insures liberty and security for countless others.

George Washington preferred farming to fighting and politics. Yet he left the comforts of Mount Vernon twice to serve his country; first, as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, and later as the first President of the United States. Twice, the causes he led seemed hopeless. After his tactical blunders defending New York during August 1776, the American army of 20,000 men dwindled to barely 6,000, of which only half were equipped or healthy enough to fight. Yet, from Valley Forge Washington surprised the Hessians at Trenton and began the chain of campaigns that eventually defeated the British at Yorktown in 1781. Later, that victory appeared pointless with the collapse of the first central government under the “Articles of Confederation.” Again, George Washington left his home to chair the Constitutional Convention. Opposing ideas nearly prevented the formation of a federal government. During his presidency, the “Father of His Country” was used by friends and even vilified in the press.

In the 1864 presidential election during the “unCivil War between the States,” George McClellan, the Napoleonic general removed by President Abraham Lincoln, seemed likely to win. He advocated peace with the Confederacy and ending the conflict. A Union victory was needed to rally public support for the war. In October General Tecumseh Sherman drove Southern forces from Atlanta, opening up a “path to the sea.” Lincoln easily won.

Following his appearance before the Diet at Worms, Martin Luther was banished as an outlaw by Emperor Charles V, yet lived to translate the New Testament into the common language and lead the Protestant Reformation. The Apostle Paul stood alone before Nero (II Timothy 4:16-18) and David’s own son Absalom led a rebellion against him. Paul and David typify Bible characters from the New and First Testaments.

What do these short history lessons have to do with us today? Consider these three points:

First, character counts. Those we think as great today started as common people like you and me. Once legends and myths are brushed aside, closer examination of great leaders reveals their humanness. Like the notables from the Biblical Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 and the Gospels, American “icons” like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln had flaws. The fact that they erred, made mistakes and felt the gamut of emotions only makes them and what they did all the greater. But one characteristic stands out. When opportunity arose, they persisted and prevailed in doing right for the greater good by acting in accordance with their beliefs and values.

Second, God permits the vicissitudes of life to reveal our characters and need for His strength and care, whether as an individual or as a nation. Our walks “through the valley of the shadow” can teach us vital lessons about life. Before the dawn is the darkest night. We are not alone, even when death comes. We know of three Adventists who have been killed in the Global Response to Terrorism; several more have been wounded, including a chaplain. We regret each loss and take comfort that each died honorably while serving their fellow man. May we always remember the Lord is by our side and suffers with us when we experience trials, troubles and tragedy. Ultimately, truth, right and good will prevail. We have reason to hope. Though evil may seem temporarily to have the upper hand, God will reign victorious and His people will share the blessings of His victory throughout eternity.

Third, I believe faith is greater than circumstances. If circumstances, comfort, convenience or even pride of opinion dictate faith, then those factors are greater than faith itself, and that is simply not true. I may not fully comprehend all the intricacies or depth of faith, but neither must I to be saved, for salvation is dependent on the good grace of God, not my imperfect faith or practice thereof. God only asks for our spiritual integrity, endurance and trust. Those who persevere to the end shall be saved. Matthew 24:13. Most of us may die before all the promises of God are realized in this life, but we must die in faith believing they will come to pass and trusting in a Sovereign God who alone knows all things, can do all things and remains with us unto the end of the age.





# MY CHRISTIAN JOURNEY AS A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST

BY DR. TOM WATERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is Part One of a four part series that For God and Country will feature during 2007.

## Part I - Trial Number One – Tithing - Joining the Church

When I first became acquainted with the SDA Church in January 1971, I decided to visit several different SDA Churches to see if they truly were a “Universal” church with one message. John and Florence Dennis of Battle Creek, Michigan, and their daughter Ellen introduced me to the church. Having been raised in the Baptist church (my father and both grandfathers were Baptist ministers) I continued to have many questions that remained unanswered, or unanswered using scripture. The main question was, “Why do we go to church on Sunday, the first day of the week, when the Bible clearly states that the seventh day is the Sabbath?”

Also, different Baptist churches had different messages depending on the whims of the pastor. So, I visited many different SDA churches in the Chicago area where I found the music, the message, and the people all consistent in ONE message. Fortunately (or unfortunately), every church I visited had a delicious vegetarian fellowship meal after the service that I thought was part of being an SDA church. I later learned that I just “happened” to attend when the meal was being served.

So, I actually considered becoming a Seventh-day Adventist. I knew I needed to study because I wanted to make a life-changing commitment. Understanding the *Sabbath, along with the health and tithing* message was easy but not as easy to commit to. Refraining from alcohol was the easiest of all because, as a recovering alcoholic, I knew I needed to avoid all alcoholic drinks. My last drink was in January 1971 because I knew that Jesus had a better plan for my life. Avoiding “unclean” foods was also a fairly easy task because I had already avoided eating most of them. Although I regularly attended the SDA church, I had not actually joined and still considered myself a Baptist searching for the truth.

At this time I lived on the Southside of Chicago, Illinois and worked as a Sales Service Representative at Continental Can Company (Corrugated Division) on 47<sup>th</sup> Street. I wanted to begin “keeping the Sabbath holy” and mentioned it to my supervisor, Mr. John Butler. He acknowledged that it was admirable but not possible since all office workers are required to work one Saturday each quarter for inventory and the next inventory was two weeks away. I had already worked several inventories in the past and advised him that I needed to be in church as part of my religious beliefs. He

stated to me, and later put out an office memo to all workers, that anyone failing to report for the inventory without an emergency for an excuse would be terminated. My co-worker “Joe” also stated that he had made plans and could not attend the inventory. The Friday before the inventory came and we all worked as usual. Mr. Butler asked me if I would be at the inventory and I replied, “No, I will be at church.” He asked if I remembered his memo and I replied, “Yes sir, I do.”

### PINK SLIP

At church the congregation prayed for Divine Intervention on my behalf. On Monday morning I reported to work and Joe and I walked in from the parking lot together. I acknowledged that I was in church on Saturday and he stated that he didn't come in either. We both expected to be terminated since Mr. Butler was a man of his word. As we approached our desks, Joe acknowledged that he had a “pink slip” on his desk. Within an hour, he had cleaned out his desk and was escorted out of the building. I looked for my “pink slip” but figured I would receive it later. I worked all day while praying to the Lord to be with me and

help me accept whatever happened. To this date, I've never received the “pink slip” and nothing was ever said to me. I never attended another inventory so I have to believe that the Lord excused me from all future inventories. I learned to really trust the Lord that day.

### TITHING

The most difficult was tithing because, as an economics major in college I was barely able to pay my bills with 100% of my pay, I could not understand how I would be able to pay my bills with 90% of my pay. So, I read the Bible and prayed. It was Malachi 3:10 (...prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing ...) that gave me the courage to “prove” the Lord. This also proved to be a life changing experience for me. It was after my experience that I re-read Judges, chapters 6 and 7 where Gideon did almost exactly what I did (especially Judges 6:36-40). Gideon said basically, “Lord, if you want me to trust you, then you have to perform some miracles for me.”

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# CARE PACKAGES EASE LONELINESS OF TROOPS

Action begins with a single idea and grows from there. That's what Joan Gebhard, a member of the Rolling Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in California, has discovered in her ministry to military personnel serving in Iraq. During the Christmas season of 2004, Joan was talking with a family member about the loneliness that those serving in Iraq must be facing during the holiday season. Joan contacted a family friend who was serving in Iraq as a chaplain during that time. When she learned that care packages were needed and highly desired, Joan began to put her plan into action.

"We decided we would ship fifty care packages," recalls Joan. "We accepted donations from anyone who was interested in participating." That first set of boxes contained prepaid calling cards, snacks, candy and gum, toiletries puzzles and harmonicas.

As word spread throughout Joan's church, community, family members and friends, the participation level grew. "It seemed like everyone wanted to be involved," says Joan.

With the increased level of participation, more help was needed to pack the boxes, address them and deliver them to the post office. Sami Anderson, co-coordinator of the project, mentioned the need to her husband. He recruited members of his local Lion's Club to provide hands-on assistance with the packing and addressing.

Joan has been amazed at the response by both her local community and the troops receiving the packages. "When I first emailed the chaplain, I had no idea where this would lead," says Joan. "He was willing to distribute those boxes and they went to military members who didn't receive packages or mail on a regular basis."

Another chaplain reported that he gave one of the care packages to a soldier who was receiving Bible studies. The soldier was so impressed that someone cared enough to head up such a project that her response was, "I want to be a member of that kind of church."

As the project has continued, Joan and her team have expanded the contents of the box to include pocket editions of the book, *Messiah*, a picture card of the church with a prayer, amenities from local hotels (soap, shampoo and lotion) batteries, etc. They've also begun packing boxes especially designed for the female service members, with special items for them.



Students from the local private and public schools have also been included in the project. "We've had students from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through high school write letters and draw pictures to be included in the boxes," says Joan. "Some of these pictures have been put on the walls of the field hospitals to cheer up the wounded."

Miracles along the way have occurred too. "We researched what types of calling cards needed to be sent," says Joan. "We were offered a discount and were able to buy 250 cards at a significantly lower price. These cards are a great help in keeping the troops connected with their loved ones."

"It's so rewarding to hear reports of how the boxes have helped make life a little more comfortable for someone," says Joan. "I received a card from one soldier who wrote, 'Your packages meant a lot to the soldiers serving here in Iraq.' Another wrote, 'I received a care package today via my chaplain. I assure you the items will be put to good use. It really means a lot to us here.'"

From the first shipment of 50 boxes the project has continue to grow. "We've sent over 1000 boxes to date," says Joan. "When the local newspaper carried a story about the project we had a great response." Joan and her team plan to continue the project and will continue shipping the care packages. "People in the community call with in kind donations and we are happy to be able to brighten the lives of our troops."





# News Notes

Our family of eleven gathered together for the first time in 26 years on 18 Feb 2006 in Tallahassee FL. Our family's military service started with our Father and now with over a 117 years combined in service, we are still committed to much, much more.



The order from left to right:: Commander Roger Isom, 16 years Navy-Naval Academy Graduate-Submarine commander; SFC John Isom, 24 years Army, 19 FY's in USAREC- Chaplain Recruiter 1st Brigade, retired; SFC Ronnie Isom, 20 Years Army; Dianne Isom; SGM Kenneth Washington, 26 Years Army Retired- GS-13 over mortuary affairs in the Virginia area; Mary Isom, mother of all 9 children; John Isom Sr., 2 Years Army and father of all 9 children; Reggie Isom, 8 Years Army; Margaret Isom ; SSG Jeffery Isom, 13 Years Army; Clara Isom, 8 years Army. -The Isom Family

Christopher Fritz is the Director of the AMSC-Korea. He and his wife Gold have served there 30 months, during which time he completed an MA in Education and Counseling with an emphasis on Family Ministry at Sahmyook University, Seoul, Korea.



My last 2 years of active duty were the best of my career. I was assistant director for our comprehensive dentistry residency. This was the same residency I was taking



at Fort Hood. I enjoy teaching, so I got plenty of it.

I'm working 3 days/week in Kaimuki, Hawaii. I began working in the office and am hoping to build up a patient base. I do believe we are supposed to be here now. Too many things fell right into place to get us here for that to not be the case. We have to go on faith. Jeremiah 29:11 gives me hope. -Myron Severin

We celebrated a very special event within the Adventist military community in Europe.

The first-ever induction ceremony of the American Pathfinder and Adventurer Clubs in Europe took place on Sabbath, 20 January 2007 in Kaiserslautern, Germany.



Three Pathfinders and nine Adventurers joined a full staff in making history as the first American Pathfinder and Adventurer Clubs in Europe.

Through deployments of parents and normal obligations to duty, all are working hard towards the Investiture ceremony to take place at the 2007 AMSC European Retreat in June.



We have 6 active duty staff members dedicating their valuable time and sharing their love of God with eager young people. We have a strong, hard working club with great support from our Adventist community overseas.

**Conference Official:** Chaplain Gordon Weidemann, Director of the Adventist Military Support Center-Frankfurt  
**Local Official:** Chaplain James Drake, Daenner Chapel-Kaiserslautern

**Area Director:** Dr. Thomas Waters

**Daenner Chapel Eagles Club**

**Pathfinder Deputy Director:** Pablo Santiago

**Pathfinder Staff:** Fe Waters, GeAnne Garrity, Richard Lipphardt, Rosemary Kubi

**Pathfinders:** Tatiyana Zvosechz, Zhane Prudent, Jordan Bailey, Jacob Lipphardt

**Adventurer Associate Director:** David Zvosechz

**Adventurer Staff:** Jocelyn Zvosechz, Dylan Weeks, Esther Weeks, Jason Logan

**Adventurers:** Melina Logan, Aubrie Whittaker, Jazmin Prudent, Joshua Lipphardt, Zoë Zvosechz, Madison Logan, Tyler Whittaker, Maya Logan

**Eager Beavers:** Jaedyn Zvosechz, Matthew Logan



Continued from page 4

I lived in Chicago Heights, Illinois (a southern suburb) but worked the midnight shift as a Security Officer at Norwegian-American Hospital on the north side of Chicago. My weekend was Thursday and Friday with my workweek beginning Saturday night at midnight. This allowed me to attend college classes each weekday and attend the SDA services each Sabbath. The situation arose where I decided to trust the Lord and return an honest tithe and a faithful offering to force absolute dependence on the Lord. I went to Sabbath services, attended a fellowship meal with members of the Chicago Heights SDA Church, and then went home to sleep and prepare for work at midnight. This situation, plus two others after this one, left me with no funds for gas and other necessities through Monday.

**Situation #1** – As I prepared to leave for work, I realized that I would need approximately \$20.00 to “survive” until Monday. I prayed and asked the Lord to be with me and to provide my needs as He promised. Once at work and because of my doubts, I realized that I might have to “hitch a ride home” or borrow some survival money from someone on my shift. I decided to concentrate on my job and allow the Lord to “open the windows of heaven” for me. At approximately 2:00 am, a nursing assistant named Norman approached me. He often spoke to me as I made my rounds so this was not unexpected. What was unexpected was that he handed me a \$20.00 bill. I asked what it was for and he said, “Tom, you did my income tax and I forgot to pay you.” Since I did income taxes for many of the people on my shift, the only surprise was that I had forgotten that Norman had not paid me. I returned to the security desk, said a prayer of thanks to the Lord and then said, “Lord, thanks for having Norman pay me what he owed me but that was NO miracle. That was MY money. So Lord, if you want me to accept this tithing thing, we’ll have to try this again.”

**Situation #2** – This was a similar situation to Situation #1 but this time I needed only \$5.00. As I prepared for work, I put on my uniform that had just come from the cleaners on Friday. As I straightened the pants I put my hands in the pockets. In the right hand pocket was some paper. As I took it out, it was a five-dollar bill. Again, I thanked the Lord but said, “Lord, this is MY money in MY pants pocket. Obviously the cleaners did a poor job but this is NO miracle. I need to know for sure that you want me to accept tithing as a way of life so we’ll have to try it again.”

**Situation #3** – I know that Gideon stopped at TWO trials and I was pushing the Lord for number three. However, I needed to be sure that this was the journey He had for me. So, a similar situation to Situation #1 & #2 but this time I wasn’t sure just how much I needed but I had the feeling that the Lord would NOT let me down. However, I ensured that no one owed me any money and that there was no money in my clothes or around the house. I prayed during Sabbath services and more during the fellowship meal.

When I went home I was very excited because I wanted to know how the Lord was going to show me His will for my life. Again, as I prepared for work, I checked my uniform pants – NO money! I wondered how the Lord would respond and tried to figure a way to make it happen. Not a clue!

I left home at approximately 11:15 pm and as I backed my car out of my parking space, my headlights passed my mailbox with mail sticking out of the top. I realized that, in my excitement, I had forgotten to check my mail earlier. I pulled back into my parking space, ran to gather my mail, sat back in the car, turned on the dome light to see if there was anything important that required my attention. The one envelope that caught my eye was a check from the Illinois Air National Guard ... one week early. The Illinois ANG never paid early before that and never paid early after that. (*In checking with other members of my unit later that month, I found that I was the only person that received an early check*). I said a prayer and promised the Lord that He would never have trouble with me again. I also realized that it was not MY money but His money because He owns the world and all that is in it. Once tithing began, I was able to pay my bills without struggle plus add to a savings account.

I also learned that, as an economics major in college, I can’t tell anyone HOW tithing works. But I can tell anyone, from my experience, that it definitely DOES work.

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*Dr. Tom Waters is currently serving as the Assistant Principal of Ramstein American Middle School at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.*



## RESOURCES

### **Online Sabbath School Resources**

Sabbath School Network – [www.ssnet.org](http://www.ssnet.org)  
Collegiate Quarterly – [www.cq.adventist.org](http://www.cq.adventist.org)  
Sabbath School University – [www.ssu.adventist.org](http://www.ssu.adventist.org)  
Adult Bible Study Guide – [absg.adventist.org](http://absg.adventist.org)  
Cool tools for Sabbath School –  
[cq.adventist.org/cooltools/cooltools.htm](http://cq.adventist.org/cooltools/cooltools.htm)  
Sabbath School resources – [www.creativeministry.org](http://www.creativeministry.org)  
Ministry-driven Sabbath Schools –  
[www.sabbathschool.org](http://www.sabbathschool.org)  
Resources for Sabbath School –  
[www.adventistbookcenter.org](http://www.adventistbookcenter.org)

### **Marriage and Family Matters**

Hope for the Family- <http://www.lovetakestime.com/>  
Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage-  
<http://www.laughyourway.com/>

### **Finances**

Crown Financial Services - <http://www.crown.org>

### **Church services online**

Pioneer Memorial Church - <http://www.pmchurch.org>



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# COURAGE

*You gain strength, courage,  
and confidence by every  
experience in which you  
really stop to look fear in  
the face. You must do the  
thing which you think  
you cannot do.*

BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT