

Final Pages

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

For God & **C**ountry

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Military Families



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The Real Heroes: Military Families

Deployments. Many times deployments bring out the best in our military families. And sadly, many times this best goes unnoticed. Long separations have been and will continue to be a part of military life.

It seems that every year the military's operational tempo increases due to global commitments. Multiple deployments within in a short time period are not uncommon. All branches of the service realize the stresses that our military families face during these times. And they have put into field resources to help our families cope.

What is the best that deployments bring out in our military families? The answer

for me is their ability to adapt, to improvise, and to overcome!

This is especially true when the absent military member is the head of the household and/or the primary caregiver. Often the nondeployed spouse has to assume multiple roles along with the responsibilities associated with those roles. The list on the next page is far from complete.

And the list could go on and on. Military families are real heroes. Many times, especially during deployments, they perform above and beyond the call of duty and do it without complaint or reward. They wear many hats and handle a schedule that would intimidate the most talented executive aide.

Table of Contents



- Perspective 2
- Strong Marriages, Strong Families 4
- Facing Deployment With a Plan 6
- Building Family Ties During Deployment 8
- Footsteps to Future Generations 10
- Iraqi Adventists Found Faithful 12
- A D-Day Birthday 14
- The Lord's Army, Part 2 16
- Christmas Cards to Veterans 20
- News Notes 21
- Calendar 23

- ★ Chief executive officer
- ★ Chief financial officer
- ★ Growth consultant
- ★ Nutritional expert
- ★ Mediator
- ★ Mechanic
- ★ Plumber
- ★ Electrician
- ★ Sports injury specialist
- ★ Coach
- ★ Life coach
- ★ Stylist
- ★ Psychologist
- ★ Travel agent
- ★ Real estate agent
- ★ Contractor
- ★ Cheerleader
- ★ Nurse
- ★ Pastor
- ★ Domestic engineer
- ★ School counselor
- ★ Interior designer
- ★ Landscape and sprinkler technician
- ★ Photographer and video artist
- ★ Author
- ★ Mentor
- ★ Tutor
- ★ Teacher
- ★ Buyer
- ★ Inventory management expert
- ★ Costume designer
- ★ Systems analyst
- ★ Efficiency expert
- ★ Public relations expert
- ★ Home movie director
- and producer
- ★ Mailing and packing expert
- ★ Mover
- ★ House painter
- ★ Environmental engineer
- ★ Hazardous material specialist
- ★ Hygiene specialist and counselor
- ★ Parent

The family members of Active Duty, Reservists, Air Guard, and National Guard do it all, many times while their loved one is stationed overseas away from family. Their faithfulness and dedication to duty make it possible for the military member to do their jobs and to do them well.

It's not always easy, especially during the holidays, birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, proms, and those milestones that all military members have missed. These may include events such as a child's first steps and first words, and participating

in their first organized sports.

So in this issue of *For God and Country* we honor our military families. We salute those who keep the candle burning and home and family together while loved ones fulfill their duty. Know that you serve just as much as your military member does, even when they are in harm's way and on station overseas. Although your service many times goes unnoticed, it is truly appreciated by your country and your church.

God bless you and all that you do.

LETTERS TO FOR GOD & COUNTRY

Your letters to For God and Country are always welcome. Please share short, specific, and timely thoughts with us. You should include your complete address and phone number—even in e-mail messages. Letters will not be published unless we have this information. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only.

Please note that any inclusion of a letter to this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of For God and Country, the directors of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, or the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Internet: editor@VerbalOxygen.com

I like the new format of *For God and Country* and its emphasis on members that are currently serving. It has been a great blessing.

Perry F. Loudon, Jr.
SFC, Military Police
U.S. Army Reserve (Retired)




Strong Marriages, Strong Families

On your wedding day, it is hard to imagine a time could come when the romance and love you feel for your spouse might die. Then life comes at you full speed and the dream of living happily ever after can seem to dim. Children are born, career decisions are made, deployments separate you, there are more bills than what your paycheck covers. If couples are not careful, life can become a series of events that tear down rather than build up their relationship. Building a strong marriage is possible in spite of the stress from daily life that impacts families.

Marriage is a mission. The target objective is to build a strong relationship with your spouse that will last

throughout your lives, in spite of challenges that you may face as a couple. There is no fail-safe formula that can be followed to ensure a successful marriage, but being proactive and intentional helps to build your relationship.

It may sound like a cliché, but a strong marriage needs to be a party of three. When a couple relies solely on themselves, they immediately weaken the bond that ties them together. Making the spiritual foundation the strongest part of your life together allows you to deal with everything else that is thrown at you. Pray together. Pray separately for each other. Remember that Jesus gave Himself for His bride. Both the husband and wife should be willing to give of themselves



to each other in this same manner. Make it your primary goal to do everything you can for the happiness of your spouse.

What does a statement like that mean? Do you have to go out and buy all the latest big-boy toys for your husband? Will your wife only be happy with the latest designer fashions? Material goods never bring the long-term happiness that couples seek.

Learn about your spouse by observing the little things that bring them pure joy. Listen for the dreams and expectations that your spouse expresses in conversations. Are there ways you can help make those dreams be realized? Practice thinking first of your spouse before thinking of yourself.

Don't categorically impose your opinion. Remember your spouse is an individual. Each of you has a right to your opinion and your own individuality. Part of the fun of being married is learning to find common ground when you do have differences of opinions.

Communication between spouses can happen in many ways. Do a status check on where you are as a couple in this area. Have you allowed yourself to fall in a rut and only talk about surface issues? Do all of your conversations revolve around your children and the mundane checklist of daily family life? Spice up the conversation a bit by beginning to dig deeper with thought questions that will create intimacy. Thought questions can help lead to discovering more about each other in a constructive manner.

Ask questions such as: What are ways that we can make our relationship a priority, when there are so many things pulling for our attention? Are

we as happy as any couple could possibly be? If not, what are ways that we can improve our happiness?

Demonstrating to your spouse that you are giving full support to them will contribute to a stronger relationship. Explore your strengths and weaknesses. Use these to support each other rather allowing them to become divisive.

Communication doesn't always mean talking. When you spend time together engaged in an activity, your communication level can actually increase. Doing things together cements a bond between you that can encourage respect, love, and continued commitment. Consider becoming involved together in outreach to others. When you focus on others, you will feel a satisfaction.

Remember to inject fun, spontaneity, and romance into your relationship. Don't allow complacency to take root in your relationship. It can become deadly and will kill commitment without you even realizing it. Do the unexpected and never allow your spouse to grow bored. A handpicked bouquet of wildflowers can often mean more than two-dozen roses delivered by the local florist. A spur of the moment picnic for two can be more exciting than an expensive dinner out.

When you do hit the doldrums, and all marriages do at some point, it's time to reconnoiter to learn what areas you need to improve. Take some time together to look at your wedding photos and revisit the joy and expectations you had that day. This can serve to move you past the rough patch and renew your vision of completing the mission: living happily ever after.

Facing DEPLOYMENT With a Plan



deployment a success for the entire family. By tending to practical issues that the stay-behind spouse will face, stress can be relieved and attention focused on the larger picture.

The first item a couple must address are the feelings that each is facing. It is helpful to understand the cycle of emotions that are typical when this

kind of event happens. Both adults and children will experience some if not all of these emotions. It is important to work through each stage and resolve any of the feelings that either spouse may experience.

The cycle includes:

- denial—feeling numb and that this can't be happening to you
- anger—being frustrated about the demands placed on you by a separation; for the nondeploying spouse having to assume the role of a single parent
- guilt—because you may have feelings about the military and/or the job of your spouse; feelings of guilt after your spouse deploys because you didn't say enough or give enough encouragement
- depression—can be manifested as intense sadness, fatigue, loss of appetite, or not following a regular routine
- acceptance—accepting the reality of the situation, deciding to have a positive attitude, and meeting day-to-day activities head-on

You knew it was coming and now you have received the official orders. Your spouse will be deploying. Emotions are running high and you aren't sure what to feel or say right now.

Marriages feel the impact when a spouse is deployed. To lessen the brunt of the situation, proactive planning can help ease the transition. It's important to break down the deployment into three categories and address the feelings and issues that will occur during each segment of the deployment.

Pre-deployment

During this time you, as a couple, can lay the foundation to making the

After you have recognized and begun to examine your feelings, there are practical steps that will give you a sense of accomplishment:

- Work together to compile important information and contact information that the nondeploying spouse may need. This could include name and contact information for plumbers, electricians, and car mechanics. Include banking information with names and account numbers for checking and savings accounts. Compile contact information for members of the deploying spouse's unit.
- Make sure beneficiary forms are in order. Update your will and power of attorney if needed. Make sure your spouse has access to credit card information and is listed with the credit card companies as an authorized point of contact.
- Discuss finances and establish or reaffirm any debt-reduction plan. You should go over this weekly until the actual deployment.
- Identify if a bill-pay service through your bank would be a stress reliever for your spouse. If so, enroll and make sure you both understand how it works.
- Make sure the spouse who is staying home has a strong support network in place.
- Compile medical records on all family members, especially children. Include all prescriptions and vaccination information.
- Make a list of family members' birthdays and Social Security numbers. Gather birth certificates, marriage certificates, and all military records, etc.
- Plan for the unthinkable—injury or death. Make sure you know

each other's wishes in case of death. Remember, talking about death doesn't mean it will happen.

Deployment

Before the actual day of deployment arrives, discuss how you will handle it. Will the nondeploying spouse and children be able to say goodbye that day? Would it be best for the family to do something special after saying goodbye?

What will the family routine be while they are waiting for the homecoming? How will you cope with behaviour issues, the cycle of feelings mentioned previously, and the stress of daily living?

Do you have a plan to stay healthy, including eating nutritiously and getting enough exercise and sleep?

What will you do to keep yourself occupied? Do you have a project you can become involved in, and can the entire family participate?

How will you avoid going on spending sprees or running up large phone bills?

How will you take advantage of the support that is offered through the military community, friends, family, and neighbors? Are you prepared to ask for help? Remember that you shouldn't try to do everything yourself.

If you need to seek professional help for feelings of fear, doubt, anger or depression, do you know whom to call?

Post-deployment

Good news! The long time apart is over and there's going to be a homecoming! Making the transition to becoming a couple and a family requires planning too.

“We keep **pictures** of Daddy throughout the house.”

“I’ve recorded stories for my children to listen to every night while I am gone.”

“We have a bowl of **chocolate kisses**, which we use to count down the days until Mommy comes home again.”

If a military couple has children, they are always seeking ideas to help their children cope with the stages of deployment.

Children are resilient, but they need a framework to help them mold and express their feelings during a parent’s deployment. This can act as a buffer, which allows them to release some of the internal tension they may feel while their parent is away.

For planning purposes, break down the overall event into the natural sections of pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. This helps as you tailor the process for your family.

What shall we do during pre-deployment?

Use this time to break the news to your children in a manner that is appropriate for the ages of your children. Make sure they actually understand what the word deployment means.

As a family, look at a globe and show your children the general area where the deploying parent will be going. Show different routes that you can take to get there. Talk about the similar-

ties between your home and the country where Daddy is going. For example: There are boys and girls there who go to school everyday. They play soccer (or whatever sport is popular). They have mommies and daddies that love them and want good things to happen in their lives too.

Be open with your children that as a couple you are going to miss each other. Let them know that you are sad about having to be apart. Reassure them that it is important to honor promises that you made even though it means being apart for a time. Tell them that you have trained hard for this assignment. If possible, find a way to show them how training takes place. Let them know that you are prepared to be deployed.

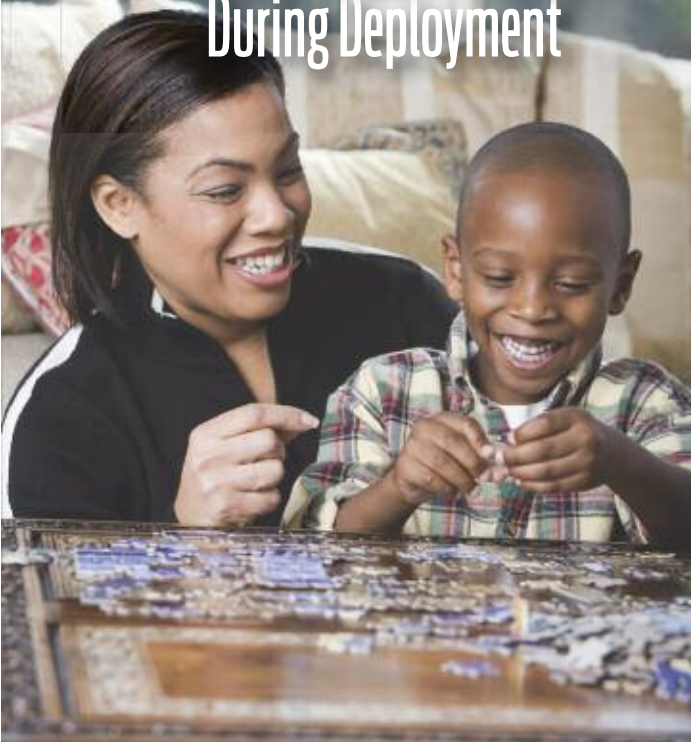
Create special one-on-one times for each child and the deploying parent. Do something that your child enjoys, whether it is going to a hockey game or having a tea party with all the trimmings.

Make sure you let your child know how much they mean to you during this time. Talk about how life



BUILDING FAMILY TIES

During Deployment



will be different at home while you are on your mission. Ask your child if he/she has any questions. Answer them as honestly as possible.

If you have children older than toddlers, it is important to discuss their roles during deployment. Ask how they see that they can contribute to helping the family work together. Let them choose from a list of age-appropriate tasks for which they will be responsible.

Teens need lots of information about deployment. They want to know

where their parent is going, what they need to do during this time, and reassurance about how much they are loved. Don't allow them to bury their emotions now. Encourage them to talk about the anger, fear, and sadness that they are experiencing.

Again, plan for the actual day of deployment. How will you make this a time that is full of happiness and yet also allow your children the space to grieve the separation? Will you allow your children to take the day off from school? How will you say goodbye? Will you have something to give each child to help remember Mommy until she comes home?

After the hugs, tears, and goodbyes are said, what does life bring next? Be prepared for some changes in behavior—in yourself and in your children. Remember as the parent you set the tone for the atmosphere of the home. Don't allow your fears and feelings to run amok. Your children will sense this and

may react through negative ways.

Most families find that having a schedule helps them adjust to this season of their lives. Sit-down meals build family togetherness. Statistics show that children, and especially teens, who have regular family mealtimes are less likely to have behavior issues, become involved in risky behaviors, or suffer from depression or suicidal thoughts.

Family mealtimes can also keep

Continued on p. 18



Footsteps to FUTURE GENERATIONS

An unknown author once wrote, “Grandparents are the footsteps to the future generations.” In times past, extended families, often including grandparents and even great-grandparents, lived near each other. This allowed grandparents frequent access to their grandchildren. They were also able to provide support and encouragement to their children and grandchildren.

Families were able to inherit the legacy of wisdom and insight that older generations had to offer.

In today’s mobile society it can be difficult for grandparents and grandchildren to have the opportunity to be near one another. It’s still possible for your children to have a close and growing friendship with their grandparents, even if you live across the country or around the world.

Your children’s grandparents have so much to teach them. They can nurture an understanding about your family his-

tory and heritage. Memories created that will last your child through their lifetime are a heritage that they will in turn pass on to succeeding generations.

One of the most important parts of creating family ties is to be intentional. Planning how your children will have opportunity to interact with their grandparents is a key element to successfully developing their relationships.

As in any relationship, communication is a key part of bonding between grandparents and grandchildren. Make sure that there are frequent conversations. Sometimes this may be by phone or Web cam. It can be by e-mail or even snail mail.

If your child is too young to talk on the phone, hold the receiver up to their ear so they can hear Grandpa’s voice and begin to develop a recognition of it.

For older children and teens, you might want to have times when they choose to ask their grandparents about things from their childhood. One family

promoted this concept by keeping a glass jar filled with strips of paper by the phone. On each strip was a question that the child could ask the grandparent. You will want to have a way to record the answers, either in writing or voice recording. To develop the questions your children will ask, have a family time where your family writes them down. You can begin with simple questions such as, "How did you meet Grandpa?" "Who was your best friend when you were my age?" "What was your school like when you were in the same grade as me?" If you need help in coming up with ideas for questions, do a Web search using the term "journal jar questions."

Another practical way to help grandparents be involved is to take pictures of a typical day in the life of your family. Don't forget the little things, such as eating breakfast, playtime, and getting ready for school or bed. Make use of both still photos and videos to show growing children and their milestones.

Make a photo journal for each of your children that contains pictures of family members who live far away. It doesn't have to be fancy. Buy plastic photo sheets and put them in a three-ring binder. Add photos to the pages throughout the years, and someday this will be a treasured keepsake for your children when they are grown.

Involve your parents by having them send notes or cards that can be tucked in backpacks or coat pockets. Everyone, no matter what their age, loves to receive a letter by mail, complete with address and stamp on the envelope. It creates a feeling of being loved

that e-mails don't often foster.

Send artwork and crafts that your children create to their grandparents. Children will want to show off their talents and grandparents are an appreciative audience, often recognizing a budding artist where others might just see scribbles.

Encourage your parents to tell stories from their past. Children will begin to develop a sense of being part of a larger picture as they internalize the family history that has gone before them. If they are Christians, ask them to share their spiritual legacy as well, including how they learned to love Jesus and have a relationship with Him.

When your children have intergenerational contact with grandparents and other extended family members, it helps them to see that you place a high value on the family connection. Interaction

with grandparents can also help children relate better with other elderly people.

Keeping grandparents close and a part of the family circle, even when the miles home are many, will help your children feel a sense of belonging, security, and history.

Bridging the gap that distance creates is possible when you make a plan and execute it.



Iraqi Adventists Found Faithful

By Major Samuel J. Duplessis

Kirkuk is a city that is 5,000 years old. Its population consists of Kurds, Turkomen, Arabs, Assyrians, and Chaldeans. Christians in Kirkuk refer to themselves

as either Assyrian or Chaldean and are the people of the Old Testament.

The city of Nineveh, from Jonah's story, is located 150 miles northeast of Kirkuk. Mosul is the modern-day city of old Nineveh. Today, it is the last bastion of the insurgency in Iraq. Over the centuries, Kirkuk was invaded by various world powers, including Alexander the Great of Greece, the Turks (Ottoman Empire), the British, and the United States.

In this city of antiquity the burial sites of the



Major Samuel Duplessis (left) and Ayoub (right) standing in front of the Citadel. Ayoub is a Christian and Assyrian. He works for the Coalition Forces at the Kirkuk Government Building (KGB) as a bilingual interpreter/translator. The Citadel is located outside of the burial tomb of the prophet Daniel. It has been a synagogue and a Christian church, and it is now a mosque.

prophets Daniel, Ezra, and Hananiah are located in a mosque on the Citadel. Another historical and biblical site of interest is the Eternal Flame, located on the North Oil Fields Company's (NOC) land in Kirkuk. It is claimed to be the location where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made their stand in refusing to bow down to the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar.

My contact with the Adventists of Kirkuk occurred in a way that I believe was an appointment made by God. I first met

Hadassah Fatou* at the Kirkuk Government Building (KGB) during the early months of my deployment. She has the sweetest of personalities and exemplifies the

Christian demeanor and attitude.

A few months later I learned from Mr. Edwardo Oraham, the governor's assistant for administration, that there is a small Adventist community and church within Kirkuk.

I was elated to hear the news about kindred believers in the city of Kirkuk. Mr. Edwardo told me that there was an Adventist young lady working in the Economic Development Center. When Edwardo mentioned a young lady, I immediately thought of Hadassah Fatou.

Later that same day I stopped by Hadassah's desk and inquired about the Adventists in Kirkuk. She was hesitant to give information at first. When I identified myself as a practicing Adventist, she shared the joys and trials of being a Seventh-day Adventist in modern-day Iraq.

Hadassah comes from a family of 13 siblings, six of whom are Seventh-day Adventists. Hadassah is the youngest of the 13 children and is a graduate of the nursing program at the University of Kirkuk, having graduated in the top 5 percent of her class. She is fluent in several languages and speaks English perfectly. Currently she is the subject-matter expert on women NGOs in Kirkuk.

Hadassah's older sister Rebekah is the matriarch of the church and guardian of it too.

Rebekah is married and has a 7-year-old daughter, Leah. Several years ago she was baptized into the Adventist faith in Baghdad and later moved to Kirkuk to be with her family in Northern Iraq.

Rebekah shared with me her concerns and needs for the Kirkuk Adventist Church. The present-day church building was formerly a school and was donated to the Adventist Church along with other buildings and surrounding lands. The church structure

has been damaged by insurgent bombings. The government of Iraq (GOI) has made reparations, but shoddy repair work was done. To prevent any more harm or damage to the church, Rebekah has taken up residence in another building on the church property.

Rebekah is small in stature but huge in spirit and belief. She provided me



Major Samuel Duplessis

with pictures of the needed repair areas. She has also asked for church reading material, songbooks for children, and the *Testimonies for the Church* in both English and Arabic. For those interested in learning how they can help with necessary materials, information is available through Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.

There are several Adventist families in Kirkuk that Rebekah visits regu-

larly. She also provides Bible lessons to new believers. The Adventists of Kirkuk have their roots in the Assyrian culture—the ancient people of Nineveh. Because of security issues, the church members must remain at their homes on Sabbaths instead of gathering at church for fellowship. It is extremely unsafe for the Adventist church or any Christian church to have their doors open. Threats are made to disrupt worship services and toward worshippers by those who do not believe individuals have the right to freedom of worship. It was also due to the security risk that I was unable to meet with other Adventist believers.

The persecution of Christians is not contained to the disruption of worship services. Rebekah shared with me her personal hurt in terms of her 7-year-old daughter and the absence of religious freedom in Iraq. Leah, a first grader, is her only child and attends a public school at which Christians are the main student body.

The Kirkuk public school system requires examinations to be administered twice a year. Because the exams are given on Sabbaths, Leah missed the first exam and did not obtain a passing score. The head-

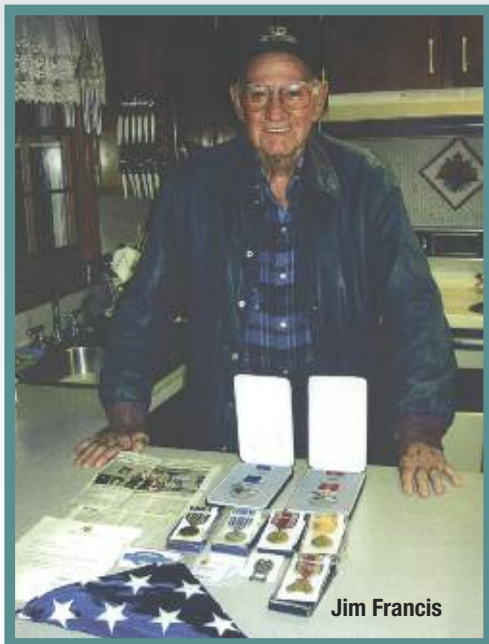
Continued on p. 19



WW 2 photos © PhotoDisc



A D-day Birthday



Jim Francis

By the time Jim Francis found himself on a troop transport headed to Europe during World War II, he'd already led a pretty exciting life. "I left home when I was 17 years old," says Jim. "I spent time hitchhiking, hobbing, and living in transient camps. I joined the carnival and ran a hamburger joint."

All of those events paled in comparison to what he was facing now. After his ship landed in Belfast, Ireland, Jim and the others waited for further orders. "We had spent six months in Ireland when we finally learned we would be part of a large invasion on the coast of France," says Jim.

What he didn't know at the time was that he would be taking part, on his

birthday, in what is now known to the world as D-day. "That was some birthday present," says Jim.

As his company struggled to make landfall on Omaha Beach, everywhere they looked there was death and destruction. Jim and his company had the job of firing off mortars over the tops of the infantry. "This was supposed to clear the way for them to advance," says Jim. "We weren't supposed to be the front line, because we were following the infantry, but that is where we ended up."

Suddenly Jim heard what he describes as a "popping sound" and he felt a whoosh go by his face. "My instincts took over and I leaned back," says Jim. "At that moment another bullet

whizzed by right in front of me. An enemy sniper in a tree was using me for target practice.” Jim and the others spent three days dug into foxholes before they were able to move on.

There were just two things on each man’s mind: stay alive and keep advancing in the effort of driving the enemy forces back. Jim and his companions finally moved further inland.

“One day some shrapnel from an enemy mortar grazed my head,” says Jim. “Fortunately, the medics were able to stop the bleeding. They wrapped my head and sent me on with my company to fight another day.”

The soldiers began to make their way into and through Paris. From Paris they moved down through Brittany. The patrolling was exhausting, but there was no other option but to move on. “Some days you’d be so tired you were sure you couldn’t take another step,” says Jim. “But at the end of the day you would have covered territory.”

One day Jim and his company were pursuing the enemy through a dense forest. “We knew they were there, but we couldn’t see them,” says Jim. “The area had been mined and so we were moving carefully, but I wasn’t careful enough.”

Jim tripped a mine and it exploded, throwing him into the air. As his buddies gathered around him, they asked him if he was OK. “I thought I was until we started looking at my legs.” Blood was soaking his pant leg and both his legs and feet hurt.

Jim was taken to a field hospital where doctors removed 21 pieces of shrapnel from his legs. Upon further examination, it was also discovered that the blast had ruptured both of his eardrums.

Soon Jim was flown back to England to convalesce and receive rehabilitation

and physical therapy. “It took time for me to be able to walk again,” says Jim. “I was told that I’d be sent home when I was healed up.”

The day finally came when Jim was dismissed from the hospital. “We were told to go to a certain set of barracks,” says Jim. “When we went in there was a row of barber chairs for us to get haircuts. Then we were told our orders had been changed and we were being reassigned to return to combat in France.” Jim and the other soldiers boarded a B-17 and were flown south to Casablanca and then to Dakar, North Africa.

At last the war had ended and Jim was headed home. It wasn’t long after that he met Ruth. “We were married and have been together for the past 63 years,” says Jim.

“I lived a pretty fast life at times,” says Jim. “There were times when I drank, played cards, and spent time in honky-tonks.” After his war experi-



ences, Jim was looking for something more in life and eventually gave his heart to Christ and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Throughout the years he has faithfully served his church just as he served his country, with perseverance, honor, and a sense of mission.

The Lord's

Things are really moving at the SDA group that meets at the Post Chapel in Vilseck, Germany. Being in an overseas assignment, it's difficult to have all of the programs that Adventists are used to in the States. The Vilseck community SDA group has developed a very creative program to try to reach out to the local community as well as provide some Sabbath fun for the congregation. A special program was designed to supplement the weekly worship service with an Adventist Youth/Pathfinder-type program over this past summer. This article is the follow-up to the summer's program that was featured in a previous issue of *For God and Country*.

The "Lord's Army" program that the Vilseck congregation hosted this past summer was a complete success. Many hours were spent on Sabbath afternoons with the youth in our community having a marvelous time. They learned basic outdoor skills in context of the biblical record. The skills were taught from various people in the com-



Faces are covered with huckleberries as the Lord's Army participants received an edible plants and herbs class from Ken Peterson (not pictured). Participants included: Armando, Yesinia, and Jermaine Barkley; Sarah Roberto; Erica, Josh, and Jeremy Hall; Emmanuel and Gabriel Torres.



Kids learn survival skills and camping skills as taught by Shellie Roberto. Featured: Erica, Josh and Jeremy Hall; Jermaine, Yesenia and Armando Barkley; Sarah and Jonathon Roberto.

munity and included: basic first aid, knot tying, edible and medicinal plants, orienteering, and camping. One of the best facets of the program wasn't the skills that were taught, but rather the creative

Army, Part 2

By Chaplain (CPT) James Hall



SSG Daniel Roberto teaches Lord's Army kids to make a bow and arrow during the end of summer campout. Featured in picture: Zach, Armando, Sarah, Jonathon, Josh, and Jeremy.



The culmination of the Lord's Army program was a campout during which they used all the things they learned over the summer. At the campout there was an awards ceremony. Awardees are: Jermaine Barkley, Erica Hall, Yesenia Barkley, Armando Barkley, Josh Hall, Jeremy Hall, Zach, Sarah Roberto, Jonathon Roberto, and Shellie Roberto (program organizer).

woods and picked wild huckleberries and raspberries. Then the next week they went to a local member's home and picked apples and plums from an orchard.

The program finale was a weekend camping trip. Along with the worship, s'mores, singing, and playing, the children were tested in all the skills they learned. They not only put up their own tents and built fires, but they also participated in an afternoon of activities that tested the skills they had trained on all summer. The culminating event was a tug-of-war followed by an awards ceremony. Each child was recognized for participation, and they received a sash with patches for the events that they had earned during the summer. There were 10-16 children who participated, as well as several adults.

The program reached all of its goals and more.

venues that were used. Rather than sitting in the chapel fellowship hall all Sabbath afternoon, the children and adults alike went outside. When they learned of the edible plants, they went to the

Not only did the children participate in life skills training events, but also the adults had an opportunity to interface with the youth in our community in a nonthreatening environment.

doors of communication open and raise grades. Involve the kids in the cooking and listen to what they are saying. When parents and their children are engaged in an activity, the children are more likely to share what is really happening in their lives.

Plan ways to keep the parent who is away involved in the family circle. Make use of electronic means of communication to keep in touch. Encourage your preteens, tweens, or teens to write e-mails. Don't forget that it's also great to be the recipient of a handwritten letter that arrives by snail mail.

Have your children scan different school assignments and e-mail them to Dad. If you are mailing care packages regularly, allow the children to plan what they want to include.

Engage the entire family in regular physical exercise. Shoot some hoops together. Plan a mini-Olympics with a couple of other families and train together. Begin training as a family to participate in a local charity run. Find some activity that will get you moving together as a family. You'll feel better physically, and exercise can help overcome depression.

Be aware that your teen children will be more attuned to your stress levels. Don't burden them down with all your feelings, but have open conversations and discuss how to cope.

Most important, be flexible as a parent. Encourage your children to be

flexible. Life is much easier to face when you don't expect everything to go exactly as planned. When it doesn't, find the humor in the situation and laugh together. There are too many places in the world where the laughter has died. Don't allow your home to be one of those locations!

It's homecoming day!

The months of waiting are over and you are going to be together as a family again. Guess what? The family dynamics are about to change! When a family member has been away and steps back into the family circle, the adjustment takes some time. The family has

adapted and learned to function in a different way.

The returning member needs to recognize this and allow time and space as needed for the readjustment period. Remember that your family

lives a life that includes children and their needs. If

the family has a schedule that is working for them, don't try to fix it to suit you during your first week home.

Spend time doing some fun things together but also schedule downtime at home. Don't be going out so much that no one has the time to enjoy quiet times snuggling and reading together. Also remember that every minute doesn't have to be filled. Allow some spontaneity to take over.

Families can survive and even enjoy their time during deployment. With careful planning and thoughtful inclusion this can become a time of family growth, learning, and memory-building.



Continued from p. 13

mistress at the school did not allow Leah to take a makeup exam.

I made arrangements to meet with Mrs. Fowzia, the deputy directorate general of education, to ask for consideration on Leah's behalf. Mrs. Fowzia is also Christian and shared with me the desperate plight of the Christian community. Her husband was an accountant and professor at Kirkuk College. Saddam Hussein had her husband imprisoned and executed. After this tragic turn of events, Mrs. Fowzia raised her three children alone. Today her two daughters are medical doctors and her son is a pharmacist.

Mrs. Fowzia feels that the Christian community should advocate for a religious liberty kind of law in Iraq. She indicated that on a monthly average five Christian families leave Kirkuk for various reasons, but mainly to escape religious persecution.

During our meeting about Leah's plight, I had the privilege of explaining our belief about the Sabbath and why Leah could not sit for exams on that day. The situation was escalating to the point that Leah might have been placed in a school where Muslim students were in the majority, which would

possibly exacerbate the problems. As a Christian Mrs. Fowzia was sympathetic to the situation and promised to discuss the issue with the headmistress and find a resolution.

There were other oppor-

“Let us pray for the Adventists in Kirkuk and the greater Kirkuk community.”

tunities to meet and work with other Christians. Each one was an inspiration for their dedication and hard work. One such person is Ms. Silvana Boya Nasir, the only Christian on the Kirkuk Provincial Council (KPC). As the sole voice for the Christian community, she takes her responsibilities very seriously. Ms. Silvana, a lawyer by profession, holds several other positions, including the deputy head of social and religious affairs committee; manager of human rights basics organization; and manager of Bet Ashtar Center for Women. Her commitment to serving her country and her people has caused her to make personal sacrifices. The University of Egypt in Cairo

has offered a full scholarship to Ms. Silvana to pursue a master's degree, but she has deferred the opportunity until Kirkuk achieves more stability.

During my deployment in Kirkuk I was blessed with the services of four highly skilled interpreters. Ms. Azheen, office manager extraordinaire; Ayoub, a Christian and Assyrian; Assos, a Kurd; and Ismail, a Christian from Basrah. Azheen is the older sister of Assos. Ismail holds Canadian citizenship, and with the order of President George W. Bush he received his green card in the U.S.A. His translation and interpreter services were invaluable. Through Ismail I was able to serve the Kirkuk Christian community and raise visibility on their issues and concerns.

It was an honor and privilege to serve the United States Army in Kirkuk, Iraq. I thank our heavenly Father for the blessing to serve in the land of beginnings and to walk away with a fresher and deeper insight to His prophetic message. Let us pray for the Adventists in Kirkuk and the greater Kirkuk community so that they may enjoy normal lives.

*Some names in this article have been changed for security purposes.

Christmas Cards to Veterans

By Sam Renzi

Hundreds of Christmas cards with personal messages were sent to the Loma Linda VA Hospital, according to Patsy Sogioka, chairperson for this special project. “For

some veterans this may be the only Christmas card with a message that they will get,” said Patsy.

“I feel that we have forgotten how to be grateful for what these men and women have done and are doing for us.

We live our lives as if our freedoms and way of life are a sure thing that we somehow deserve. We forget the price that is paid by a few brave men and women and their families for what we take for granted

every day. We need, each day, to thank God and these courageous men and women for what we enjoy.”

Brigadier General Michael Walter, chairperson of the Support Our Troops (SOT) Committee, also sent his thanks for the sacrifices these veterans have made for our freedoms.

Members of the SOT Committee who manned the two special decorated tables were: Dr. Norman and Patsy Sogioka, Marianne Walter, Sam Renzi, and Lorna Beeson.

The messages from these Christmas cards were inspiring. For instance:

“You’re not FORGOTTEN! During

WW II, I stepped on a mine in France. I know the feeling of loneliness during Christmas. I want to thank you for your serving our country and preserving our freedom. May God heal you.”

“Your sacrifice is the reason we can enjoy our freedoms. Thank you very much.”

“I’m 5 years old and my mom and I say we thank you.”

“Thank you so much for your service to our country! We appreciate it so much.”

Last year when Christmas cards were delivered to the Loma Linda VA Hospital, Pat Moreno, acting chief, Voluntary and Community Resource Services,

sent the following letter of thanks:

“Dear Ms. Sogioka and carolers, On behalf of the Loma Linda health-care system patients and staff, we would like to extend our appreciation for the wonderful Christmas carols sung to our veterans and the Christmas cards that were given to the veterans. Your music and the cards were enjoyed by both the patients as well as the staff.

Your thoughtfulness reflects the concern that you feel for our veterans and the service they provided to all of us. Thank you for your continued support.



Photo: Don Monette

Eight-year-old Tiana Campbell signs a message on a Christmas card for veterans in the Loma Linda VA Hospital. “I’ll be 9 years old on Christmas day,” she said proudly. She is clutching an American flag in her left hand. Looking on are (R to L) Marianne Walter, wife of Michael Walter, Brigadier General (Ret) chairman of Support Our Troops Committee, Loma Linda University Seventh-day Adventist Church; Patsy Sogioka, wife of Norman Sogioka, plastic surgeon; and Sam Renzi, combat-wounded medic.

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servants

News Notes

Congratulations to the following chaplains who have been granted ecclesiastical endorsement from Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries:

Ruben Ortiz, Health Care, Veterans Affairs

Emmanuel LaPorte, Military, U.S. Army Reserve

Paul Vance, Community Chaplain, Civil Air Patrol

Luis Acosta, Military, U.S. Army Reserve

Roger Hagen, Military, U.S. Navy

Congratulations to the following chaplain candidates who have been granted ecclesiastical endorsement from Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries:

Jorge Baez-Ramirez, U.S. Army

Freddy A. Sanchez-Valerio, U.S. Army

Brian Carlton, U.S. Navy

Marcus Rivera-Acurio, U.S. Army

Charles Noles, U.S. Navy

The following individuals have been appointed as Distinctive Faith Group leaders by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries:

Michael Lambert, Greater Kaiserlautern Community, Germany

Renee Francis, Sasebo, Japan

LT Gregory Norris, USN, Misawa Air Base, Japan

CW2 Gerardson Nozea, Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan

SSG Clyde Rainey, USA, Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan

Congratulations to the following military chaplains who have been selected for promotion:

Jonathan McGraw to Colonel, U.S. Army

Paul Anderson to Commander, U.S. Navy

John Hakanson to Commander, U.S. Navy

John Logan to Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

For God and Country is designed for you, our readers. We are looking for news, stories from the field, and other items of interest. Your contributions can be sent to the editor at: editor@VerbalOxygen.com. Include digital photos (as JPEG files) as well as identification of people in the photos.

Have an idea for an article but writing isn't your forte? No problem. Send us the information and we'll write it for you.

C“Choose for yourselves this day
whom you will serve. . . .

*But as for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD.”*

Joshua 24:15, NIV





★ Calendar

JANUARY Curriculum Focus for the Month—Friendship Evangelism*

January 2 Day of Prayer
January 17-23 Religious Liberty Week

FEBRUARY Curriculum Focus for the Month—Family Life*

Black History Month
February 7-13 Christian Home and Marriage Week
February 20 Health Ministries Sabbath

MARCH Curriculum Focus for the Month—Women in the Church*

March 6 Women’s Day of Prayer
March 7-13 Adventist Youth Week of Prayer
March 20 Disabilities Awareness Sabbath

Designated Offerings



JANUARY

January 23 Religious Liberty
January 30 GC Session Project—Silk Road 10-40 Window

FEBRUARY

February 13 Adventist Television Ministries
February 27 Local Conference Advance

MARCH

March 13 Adventist World Radio
March 27 Local Conference Advance

*Curriculum resource materials are published in NAD church resource journals—*LEAD*, *Kids’ Ministry Ideas*, and *Insight Youth Resource*.



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In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.

—Alex Haley

For
God & **+**
Country

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