

**1. The Waco, Texas, Church Group known as the "Branch Davidians,"** involved in the tragic February 28 shoot-out with police in which 6 people were killed, has no connection with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Victor Houteff, who belonged to an SDA Church in Los Angeles, was disfellowshipped in 1929 after he launched an offshoot group named "The Shepherd's Rod." In 1935 Houteff and 11 followers migrated to Waco, Texas, where they established a colony on a farm which they named the Mt. Carmel Center.

Several hundred followers sold all and moved to Waco in 1959 when Mrs. Houteff, appointed by her husband as leader prior to his death in 1955, called them to be ready to move to Palestine as soon as providence should indicate. Disappointed when the April date passed, they scattered. When Mrs. Houteff publicly acknowledged, on December 12, 1961, and January 16, 1962, that their teachings were not sound, they closed the center and put the property up for sale.

A few offshoots from the Shepherd's Rod party struggled to exist. Benjamin Roden stayed in Mt. Carmel and proclaimed himself the antitypical David. When he died in 1978, his wife Lois became president. In 1987 a shoot-out ensued between Lois' son George, whom Lois believed should become the new leader, and Vernon Howell, who thought he should be the leader. A jury acquitted Vernon Howell, but George Roden went to prison in May, 1988, on unrelated charges. According to defectors, Vernon Howell (known also as David Koresh) thinks all women belong to him, that he has a divine right to procreate; now he claims to be Christ. He was baptized but disfellowshipped from the Tyler, Texas, church in 1981, and calls his group the "Branch Davidians of Seventh-day Adventists."

**2. On a personal note:** February was busy (27 days away from home, 50 hours in an airplane, and preaching 9 times), but March should be better. The second week is GC Staff Colloquium, followed by the Pacific Press Board meetings the third week. From the 23rd to the end of the month, the Commission on World Church Organization will meet to work its way through a rather complete agenda; but more on that later.

**3. Dateline India:** During this trip I met with members in 2 of India's 4 unions.

Central Union (70,000+ members/242 churches): On arriving in Bombay, the first weekend (Feb. 20) of this trip, we flew to the central India city of Hyderabad. There I spoke to our believers, who gathered from the far corners of this large territory, shortly after arriving Friday evening (after back-to-back all-night flights) and again on Sabbath.

We spent the mid-week days in Nepal, about which I reported in the last edition. Thursday afternoon we flew from Kathmandu to Calcutta and Friday continued our journey to Aizawl.

Northeastern Union (19,000+ members/108 churches): Our destination was Aizawl, capital of the fascinating Indian State of Mizoram. Located at the lowest tip of the apparent northeastern "appendage" to India, Mizoram shares an 1,800 mile border (3,000 Km) with Bangladesh and Burma. Its population shares both language and a cultural heritage with a significant segment of the Burmese population.

Prior to 1893, when the conquering British brought Christianity, the Mizo tribe people were head-hunters. Today, virtually 100% of the population of 700,000 are Christians. Thus, 1993 celebrates not only the centenary of Christianity but also the golden anniversary (50 years) of Adventism in Mizoram. During the weekend, I had a pleasant, hour-long visit with His Excellency Pu Lalthanhawla and his wife at their home. As a Christian and state Chief Minister (equivalent of a prime minister at a federal level), he is an exception in India. For that reason we have invited him to address briefly the opening session of the October Annual Council, to be held in Bangalore, India.

Friday evening and Sabbath I met with almost 2,000 of our 6,500 members in this field. The primary purpose of the visit was to celebrate the Mizoram Section [Mission] becoming a self-supporting conference, the **first** in the Southern Asia Division.

It was inspiring to listen to lay leaders report of their soul-winning activities and commitment to preach the three angels' messages in the 600 as-yet-unreached-villages in the state of Mizoram.