

1. DATELINE SOUTH PACIFIC: Our itinerary through the South Pacific Division continued with a stop in . . .

! **New Zealand's South Island.** This island, with its spectacular snow-capped peaks, narrow fjords, and fertile eastern plain, is home to some of the country's 60 million sheep. Of the 880,000 population, about 2,000 are Seventh-day Adventists who worship in 22 churches. That their faith is strong, in spite of divisive element pockets was made evident during interviews with pastors and other leaders and by evangelistic crusades currently under way.

! **Kingdom of Tonga:** A three-hour flight north brought us to Nuku'alofa, capital of the Kingdom of Tonga and headquarters of the 3,000-member Tonga/Niue Mission. In 1995 our believers in Tonga will celebrate the centennial of the arrival of the three angel's messages on their beautiful island. With a population of about 94,000 (living on the 36 populated islands of the 150 islands in the country), one out of every 31 citizens is a Seventh-day Adventist. A musical highlight of the two-day visit was Beulah College's world-class brass band.

Activities included two evening services, broadcast live to the nation by radio, and a Wednesday morning audience with His Majesty, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. Though the hours on Tonga were brief, they were sufficient to understand why Captain Cook, who visited Tonga over 200 years ago, wrote that the Tongans were the friendliest people he had ever met.

! **Samoa:** The Samoan Mission includes the six islands (pop. 161,000) of Western Samoa (6,100 members, 52 churches and two schools) and the four islands (pop. 51,000) of American Samoa (1,700 members, eight churches and one school).

It was an unusual experience for us, during the late night flight from Tonga to Apia, Western Samoa, to cross the international dateline and begin our second Wednesday of the week (replacing the day we lost on our outbound flight)! We crawled into bed about 2:30 in the morning. After a few hours rest, we visited our mission office and spoke to the students at our school. Just after noon we flew about 60 miles (100 Km) west to Pago Pago (pronounced Pango Pango), capital of American Samoa, where our flight was met by Church leaders and the Island's Governor, A P Lutali. Afternoon and evening activities included a sumptuous Samoan feast, traditional welcoming ceremonies, and an evening meeting.

Early Thursday morning we flew back to Apia, Western Samoa, for a morning meeting with the Head of State, Malietoa Tanumafili II, and a luncheon with the Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana, members of his cabinet, and religious leaders of Western Samoa. Our visit to Western Samoa concluded with a worship service, followed by a moving farewell ceremony on the lawn behind the church in which hundreds of believers sang as they gradually moved closer to us. We bade a sad farewell and prepared to leave, on our 2:15 am flight to our next destination...

! **Cook Islands:** On landing in Rarotonga at 6:30 am for a one-hour pause, we were surprised to be met by about 100 of our members, including a youth choir. During this short stopover, I learned that 1 in 20 of the Cook Islanders is a Seventh-day Adventist. Frustrated by our brief time together, we said goodbye to our new friends and departed for French Polynesia.

! **Tahiti** and its neighboring island of Moorea rise about 2,300 meters (7,000 ft) in lush green but dramatically rugged volcanic splendor, surrounded by reefs wrapped in an azure blue sea. Well-known to Adventists as the departure point of the *HMS Bounty* whose mutineers populated Pitcairn Island, Tahiti today is home to 2,000 Seventh-day Adventists. These, joined by several hundred from Moorea (a one-hour boat ride away), worshipped Sabbath morning and afternoon in a sports stadium and were blessed by the majestic music of a mass choir. Lovingly welcomed and cared for, we were sent on our way home by these gracious islanders.

Our memorable South Pacific itinerary concluded with an all-day flight Sunday and an all-night flight Sunday night bringing us home Monday morning.

2. MALAYSIAN PASTOR KILLED: Elmo See, an Adventist pastor in Malaysia, was stabbed to death by unknown assailants early April 25, in the kitchen of the Johor Bahru (Malaysia) church fellowship hall, next to the guest room he had been using. The initial police investigation indicated he had tried to defend himself with a stick and a pillow, but to no avail. Although a motive has not been established, some believe the assailants were robbers, since Pastor See's car was taken. A recent graduate of Southeast Asia Union College, See leaves behind a mother and a sister.

3. MASANGA LEPROSY HOSPITAL EVACUATED: Patients and staff were evacuated from Masanga Leprosy Hospital after an outbreak of violence in the West African country of Sierra Leone, according to J J Nortey, president of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division (AID). Rebels entered Magburaka village April 18 and attacked the hospital, though Glenn St. Clair, hospital administrator, reported that the hospital staff shut down the hospital before the attack. Patients were moved to a government-provided house in Makeni. Among the 19 international personnel evacuated to the capital Freetown were three volunteer doctors and another Adventist Volunteer Service worker.

The volunteer doctors were scheduled to return to the US. As a precautionary measure, AID plans to reduce the number of foreign staff in Freetown should further evacuation become necessary.

Hospital property suffered limited damage, although houses were broken into and electronic equipment, money, and clothing were stolen.