

From the G.C. President

May 4, 1998

Robert S. Folkenberg

■ **A Meaningful Journey to Iran:** Given the news from the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years, you may not be surprised to know that I was feeling a bit apprehensive when Anita and I arrived in Tehran at 1:30 a.m. last Wednesday. However, the apprehension disappeared as we were warmly welcomed by friends. The purpose of this trip was to participate in a series of interviews with several high-level officials to discuss ADRA/Iran and the Seventh-day Adventist Church's relationships with the government of Iran. I am hopeful that these substantial meetings will lead to positive and mutually beneficial results in the near future. Of course, another reason for this journey was to worship with our believers there and share with them a progress report on the world church.

Although my schedule required that this trip be a short one, Anita and I did have opportunity to see a few historic sites that can be directly related to Biblical history. Allow me a few sentences to set the historic stage of Iran for you. Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria were many centuries old when a vigorous people appeared on the eastern border of the ancient civilized world. They came from the grasslands of Turkestan in Central Asia and made their home on the mountain-walled plateau between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The newcomers called themselves Irani (Aryans) and their new homeland Irania. About 2,500 years ago Cyrus the Great, fulfilling the role prophesied by Isaiah, formed the Persian Empire which extended from the Indus Valley in what is now Pakistan, to the Nile River and parts of present-day Libya in northern Africa. Last Friday we visited Persepolis, a capitol of the ancient Persian empire. Walking through the ruins of the palaces of Darius I and the throne room of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) brought to mind the stories of Esther and Daniel who may have walked between the columns of these once majestic structures. The opportunity to be in Iran was a rare and meaningful experience, not only for the historical understanding it imparts, but most importantly, for the future growth of Adventism in this isolated part of the world.

■ **Historic Adventist Village:** This week I received a very exciting e-mail from Lenard Jaecks, executive director of Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan. Recently, Lenard and other Adventist leaders were given an advance tour of Cereal City, the new tourist attraction that tells the Kellogg cereal story. Part of the Cereal City exhibit is dedicated to an explanation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen G. White and the development of our health message. Regarding the content and quality of the exhibit, Lenard wrote, "...I was so pleasantly shocked I could hardly believe my eyes!" The following is an ending quote from the exhibit: "But Ellen White's most enduring legacy is her gift for illuminating Christ, the Great Physician, and His divine laws for moral, spiritual and physical health." Cereal City is scheduled to open on June 1, 1998. It is located just four blocks from Historic Adventist Village which is still under construction and development. Cereal City estimates that 400,000 people per year will visit their attraction with approximately 100,000 choosing to visit Historic Adventist Village. For more information, please call Pastor Lenard Jaecks at 616-966-0104 or 616-968-8101. ■ **Heads Up! A Survey is Coming:** In the next several days you will be receiving an FTP survey asking for your thoughts and opinions about this publication. Your opinion matters! Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and return it as soon as possible. Thank you in advance for your help.

Segment #112: In *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 671, Ellen White has written, "As the Lord has manifested Himself through the spirit of prophecy, 'past, present, and future have passed before me. I have been shown faces that I had never seen, and years afterward I knew them when I saw them.'" An interesting example of this precognition occurred at the time of the second General Conference session held in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1864.

Actually, the story starts several years earlier in Tunbridge, England, where the family of John and Susanna Sisley left the Church of England. In company with several others, they were endeavoring to live according to the best light they had. Their eldest son, John Jr., at the age of sixteen, migrated to the United States where he settled with relatives in Convis, Michigan, about twelve miles (19 km) east of Battle Creek. They had just become Seventh-day Adventists. John, Jr., soon accepted their new beliefs. He then wrote home to his parents, sending them literature and encouraging them to accept the Sabbath. After careful investigation, the Sisley's were convinced. At that time, there were no other known Seventh-day Adventists in England.

Soon after accepting the Sabbath, John Sisley, Sr. sickened and died. His last request to his wife was that if she was truly convicted about the Sabbath, she should take the children and move to the United States where they could have fellowship with others of like faith. In 1863, Susanna Sisley closed up her husband's business, and moved her entire family to Convis, Michigan, where they settled among their Seventh-day Adventist relatives.

The following spring the Sisley family attended the General Conference session in Battle Creek. It was their first visit to that city. On the Sabbath as the mother and her seven children entered the rear of the tent, Ellen White called the attention of her husband, Elder James White, to them. She told him that the family had come from England to keep the Sabbath, and that the children would grow up to be workers in the cause of God.

This interested Elder White, so he invited the family to the front of the tent where he introduced them to the congregation as one of the first families from a foreign country to embrace the truth. Ellen White then told the congregation about this family having come recently from England. Although she had never met them before, she described the family as she saw them six years earlier in England, how the father had become sick and died, and she then repeated her prediction that the children would become workers in the cause of God.

So what happened to those seven children? The eldest, John, Jr., for fifteen years was a minister. He died while in the midst of a series of meetings in Illinois. Richard, the second son, was for a time president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association. As a builder, he erected college buildings and sanitariums in the United States, Australia, and Africa. Maud Sisley, who eventually married Elder Charles L. Boyd, worked in Europe with Elder J. N. Andrews. She was the first single woman sent overseas as a missionary by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Later she worked in England, and then with her husband she worked in the United States, South Africa, and Australia. Martha and Susanna Sisley consecrated their all to the Lord and remained faithful Christians. Nellie, the youngest, worked with her husband, Elder G. B. Starr, in the United States and Australia. (This story is based on an account included among papers from Elder G. B. Starr located in White Estate Document File 496-c.)