

From the G.C. President

June 15, 1998

Robert S. Folkenberg

A Report from Iraq: On Sunday, June 7 Anita and I, along with Israel Mission President Richard Elofer, left Jerusalem to begin our journey to Jordan and then into Iraq. At the border of Israel and Jordan, we loaded our suitcases onto a shopping cart and walked across the Allenby Bridge into Jordan. There we met Pastor Basim Aziz, Religious Liberty Director for the Middle East Union (MEU), and ADRA Director for Jordan and Iraq. During our short stay in Jordan we visited the church facility in Amman which will become the MEU headquarters in October, 1998, if final approval is granted by Jordan's prime minister.

Very early Monday morning we began the 600 mile drive across the desert from Amman to Baghdad. Ten hours later (including a two-hour stop at the border) we arrived in time to attend the afternoon session of the Third International Christian Conference. Imagine my surprise on arriving in the auditorium, to be invited to chair that session! Several hundred Christian clergy from many denominations attended this conference, many of whom presented papers or made brief statements on topics that ranged from relationships between Christians and Moslems to the effect of the international embargo on the nation of Iraq. This session continued until 9:30 p.m. Tuesday the Adventist delegates took a short break from the conference and had lunch at the home of Ghanim Fargo, an Iraqi businessman who is a member of the GC Executive Committee.

I was invited by the organizers to address the conference regarding the embargo. The TED and MEU leaders who were attending the conference provided valuable assistance drafting a statement on this delicate matter. In this statement I clarified for the conference attendees the pure, non-political nature of Adventism and noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world-wide movement, not an American Church. It is part of the Seventh-day Adventist system of beliefs and traditions to reach beyond political divisions, and to help others, wherever there is a need. After the statement, I met with Abdel Mneem Ahmed Saleh, the Iraqi Minister of Religious Affairs.

On Sabbath the Adventist delegates gathered to worship at The Baghdad Central Church, by far the largest of the four Adventist Churches in the country. This church is strategically well-placed and well-known in the city. More than half of the young people who make up their choir are not Adventists, but regularly attend church services. This choir was invited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to sing at the close of the Christian Conference which is evidence that the high quality of their music is recognized by the Christian community in Baghdad. This choir is one of the most successful evangelistic endeavors of the church in Iraq. A more complete report (with pictures) is available under "Travel Highlights" at: http://www.adventist.org/gc/presidential/travel_highlights.

The Jerusalem Bible Conference: Of course, during the Iraq meetings the Bible Conference in Jerusalem continued and concluded. Papers presented at the conference can be found at: www.adventist.org/gc/presidential/bibconf/index.htm.

recollections from some who actually saw Ellen White in vision. One of these was Nellie Sisley Boyd, the youngest member of the Sisley family that I referred to in Segment #11(K). She was fourteen when she witnessed Ellen White in vision in Battle Creek on June 12, 1868. You can find that vision written out in *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 112-199.

Here is Nellie's account: "While living in Battle Creek my mother and I were attending a . . . prayer meeting. . . . Elder [James] White conducted the meeting and asked Sister White to speak, which she did in a most impressive and solemn manner. . . . She had been talking about a half hour when unexpectedly she fell backward to the floor. . . . The congregation supposed that she had fainted. The evening was warm, and her anxiety for those present we feared had been too much for her. . . . Elder White said, 'Cause yourselves no uneasiness; my wife has not fainted, she has fallen in vision.' Immediately a quiet, peaceful solemnity fell upon the audience. It seemed that heavenly beings were filling the building, but we felt no spirit of fear.

"Brother White suggested that. . . some [might be] present who had doubts in regard to Sister White's inspiration. . . . If there were any . . . he would be glad to have them come forward and try the physical tests as given in the Bible. . . . I was sitting by Mother, and knowing that she occasionally had doubts, I suggested that we respond to the invitation. . . . Brother Aldrich . . . and Brother Woolsey stood close by [Sister White's] shoulders, and several others were surrounding her. Elder White . . . wished us to see if she was supernaturally strengthened. Her hands were lying lightly clasped on her chest when he asked these brethren, who were large men--to see if they could release her hands. They endeavored to do so but failed. Then Brother White suggested that they take one finger at a time and try to pull them apart, but this too was impossible. . . .

"A few minutes later she took her hands apart and began to wave them . . . gracefully. . . . Brother White again suggested that they now hold her hands, which they tried to do with the same results. Though the motion was light and airy, they were not able to control her movements in the least.

"She was steadfastly looking upward with a natural expression of the eyes except that the eye-lids never closed. It was suggested that we take the large Rochester lamp from the stand and see if we could cause the lids to close. This we did, but it had no effect whatever upon her. . . . The eyes were not starry or glassy, but the lids never closed.

"We then sent for a mirror to see if there was any breath in the lungs. Holding the mirror closely over her nose and mouth, we found that there was no moisture collected. . . . During the vision she spoke a few sentences. . . . At times she looked animated with rapture at what she beheld, and at other times her face was sad and she seemed to be shrinking back from the view.

When she came out of vision, she took three deep, long breaths, filling her empty lungs with air, and Brother White helped her up. . . . After coming out of the vision, she apparently was blind, not able to see anything at first. . . . Her sight was not injured, but it required some time to regain her normal vision. . . . Her husband and her son Edson led her home" (Condensed from Nellie Sisley Starr's

Off the Back Burner

Segment #118: For the next two segments, I want to quote personal

March 12, 1928, statement. A longer version of her story, given in 1931, is quoted in Arthur L. White's *Ellen G. White, The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, pp. 232-236.)