

*Come and hear,
all ye that fear
God, and I will
declare what
he hath done for
my soul.*

Psalm 66:16

The FIFTEENTH MEETING

Sylvia Pereyra Shasky

Lucile C. Lacy

Charles J. W. Hass

Don Johnson

Stephen Chavez

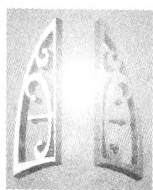
Debbie Lloyd Foote

Eugene Roddy

Thomas R. Neslund

Roy Drusky

Bill Knott



SEND ME

By Sylvia Pereyra Shasky

I AWOKE with a start to the ringing phone. Bleary-eyed, I looked at the clock and saw that it was 5:30 a.m. on my only day to sleep in. Who would be calling at this hour?

"This is the police. We are with a woman in crisis. I understand you are a counselor. Could you come over?"

I had missed my counseling work and had been toying with the idea of starting a practice. Since my pastor-husband had been transferred to a small community, I had relied on my physical therapy, since it was easier to find work in that profession.

I thought for a minute. I might find anything in that home. I had no liability insurance. I had a busy day planned. I had lots of excuses.

My devotional time had not been what it should have been lately, and in the previous month I had recommitted my time to my Lord. I had been praying that God would use me and that I would be sensitive to His voice.

"I'll be right there."

As soon as I arrived, the police made a quick exit. Dave, my husband, waited for me in the car.

The woman had been through a messy divorce and was now a single parent with three kids, a low-end job, in bankruptcy, and about to lose her home. She was numb, depressed, potentially suicidal.

"God," I prayed, "I think You got me into this mess. You will see me through."

With the intervention of two physicians the woman was admitted into the small local hospital. A friend of hers took the kids. We filled in the gaps when she couldn't keep them. Our well-planned week disintegrated. We made adjustments daily.

Fortunately the medication helped very quickly. We took turns visiting her in the hospital. I did counseling, and Dave shared Jesus and the assurance of His love and saving grace.

Her physician asked me to follow her after discharge. I gave her my pager number, just in case she needed it. She used it often, with a 911 after her number. We met once a week, and many times I fell into discouragement. "We're not getting anywhere, Lord." But somehow I heard a voice telling me to stay with it.

Every week I encouraged her to return to church. She had been faithful in the past, but her bad choices haunted her. I prayed for her and with her.

At last I began to see changes. She found a church family, she confessed her sins, and recommitted her life to Jesus. She felt a need to obey and follow Him. She had some amazing answers to prayer. God saved her home. She had found joy and purpose in her life, and she thanks God every day for us.

What a blessing we would have missed had I said “No.”

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isaiah 6:8.

Sylvia Pereyra Shasky is a counselor and physical therapist in Mountain Home, Idaho. She is a member of the Mountain Home Seventh-day Adventist Church.



PROFESSOR X AND THE LIBRARY BOOK DROP

By Lucile C. Lacy

WHEN I was a teenager, a high school teacher told me that I would never be a success in my life and that I'd be a detriment to society. It was the first time anyone had made such a sweeping negative evaluation of my potential, and I was devastated.

After completing a master's degree in music education from George Peabody College for Teachers, I taught college for several years. Then I prayed, “Lord, if it is Your will for me to pursue a doctoral degree, prepare the way.” Unexpectedly I was awarded a United Negro College Fund Teaching Grant for \$10,000, renewable annually. To me this seemed a notable honor for one who had been told by a professional educator that she had no future.

I wanted to get my doctoral degree from Ohio State University. From a pool of 400 applicants, I was one of the 10 accepted into the program. Soon I met Professor X, who told me that as a Seventh-day Adventist I had no chance of succeeding as a doctoral student at OSU. The graduate music program was impossible to complete while missing Friday night and Saturday sessions. He said I should either attend the classes as required or withdraw from the program. I left his office determined to complete the program *and* keep the Sabbath.

One Friday afternoon at the end of one semester, Professor X gave the class an almost impossible “take home” final examination. It was due the following Monday and would require exhaustive research in the library all weekend.

Two hours before sunset on Friday I closed up all my studies and prepared for the Sabbath. Saturday evening some of my classmates called to wish me success. They had spent all Friday evening and all day Saturday in the library and were far from finished.

By Sunday evening, after 10 hours of research, I had answered three of the exam's ten questions. I stopped and communed with God for one hour. Then, one hour before the library closed, I was impressed to walk down the stacks.

Praying silently and with tears running down my cheeks, I felt nothing but despair, when suddenly in front of me, a book dropped from the shelf and fell open to a page of information I needed. I quickly picked up the book and continued to walk down the aisle when another book fell from the shelf. Books began falling from high and low, faster and faster. Each book was opened to an exact answer.

I grabbed a cart and moved quickly down the aisle picking up books. The library assistants heard the sounds of the books falling from the shelves and asked if I knew who was throwing the books. I just smiled through my tears, rejoiced in the Lord, and kept on picking up those books.

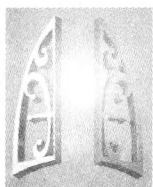
I was the only student in the class who completed the entire exam.

Professor X was shocked.

I have found that people cannot set limits for us when we pray and completely depend on a loving God who honors those who trust in Him.

Thou hast commanded thy precepts to be kept diligently. O that my ways may be steadfast in keeping thy statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all thy commandments. Psalm 119:4-6, RSV.

Lucile C. Lacy is associate professor of music at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. She is a member of the Oakwood College Seventh-day Adventist Church. This story originally appeared in More College Faith (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Worthy Books, 1997).



A BOY, A BICYCLE, AND A DOLLAR BILL

By Charles J. W. Hass

TITHING has been an integral part of my life from my earliest recollection. From the start I was taught that tithe always was returned first. And, as my father often told us, the nine tenths always went farther than the 10 tenths would have.

As World War II drew to a close, I began to wish for a bicycle. However, as with many civilian goods, bicycles were in short supply at exorbitant prices. My parents finally agreed that if I earned all the money for it, I could purchase my heart's desire.

By the end of the summer I had managed to save just over \$40 after faithfully returning tithe. I had earned that huge sum by weeding vegetables while on my hands and knees at several truck gardens, mowing and trimming lawns at 25 cents each, and by baby-sitting.

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With cash in hand, I headed for the local hardware store, where I found a beautiful, maroon Roadmaster priced at \$44.45. My heart sank. Had I not paid my tithe first, I would have had enough money to buy it then and there. But now I was several dollars short.

Instead of riding home triumphantly on a shiny new bicycle, I trudged home with a heavy heart. After considerable negotiation, my parents advanced me the necessary amount, with the stipulation that I get a newspaper route to justify my huge expenditure.

I couldn't work for the regular local paper because that would require deliveries on Sabbath. Fortunately, I was able to secure a Sunday route with the *Milwaukee Journal*, earning one cent each for 100 papers. However, I was required to pay nine cents each, whether or not I was able to collect from customers.

Following school one autumn afternoon, I was riding my prized possession home after having paid for my papers. Great piles of leaves were heaped along the street curbs, ready for pickup by city work crews. I'd seen my friends blast through the leaf piles on their bicycles, so I decided to try it for myself. It was great fun.

My joy was short lived. When I got home, I discovered my dollar bill was missing. I panicked. By now it was dark, too late to retrace my route of several miles. With great despair I remembered that hundreds of students passed that way several times daily. My first chance to search for the lost bill would not come until after school the next afternoon.

I fell to my knees and presented my plight to the Lord in prayer. I promised that if He would help me find the lost dollar, I would surely return a double tithe on it. The next day at school seemed interminable as I waited for the chance to begin my search.

To this day I have not found words to express fully the joy and gratitude in my young heart when I *found my dollar bill*. Twenty-four hours after I had lost it, it was still resting in plain sight on one of the piles of leaves. With a grateful heart I returned the promised double tithe to the Lord the very next Sabbath.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. . . . In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Charles J. W. Hass is a criminal justice administrator for the First Judicial Circuit of Florida, Department of Corrections, in Pensacola. He is a member of the University Parkway Seventh-day Adventist Church.



FROM THANKSGIVING TO CHRISTMAS

By Don Johnson

KON-BAN-WA [good evening],” the well-dressed businessman called out as he approached our sadly dilapidated building. We recognized Tanaka-san, the father of one of our English school students. When we arrived at this long-abandoned laymen’s project on Mount Akagi the previous year, we had started English schools as a means of meeting and making friends, and helping pay living expenses.

Tanaka-san had often visited us in the evening after he closed his engineering company. He always seemed interested in progress on the two training homes we were building. We had arrived in Japan with only \$3,000 to begin the ambitious project of building a lay-training center on this abandoned property. Recognizing the urgency of getting homes for the three families and the students who had already arrived, we pooled all our personal resources, trusting that the Lord would take care of our needs. We had just enough to pour the foundations and basements.

As we sipped mugi-cha (toasted-barley tea) on that blustery fall evening, we discussed progress on the buildings, which now had nearly complete subfloors over the basements.

We sat with him in our general-purpose meeting room of the old building. It also served as a dining room, classroom, and chapel. Glancing around the room, Tanaka-san noted our innovative use of tatami mats covering the walls to help insulate against the cold wind swirling around the broken-down building. Plastic covered the windows where glass was broken out, and scraps of plywood covered holes where the floor had rotted away. We drew closer to the little oil heater as we visited.

Tanaka-san pointed to the blackboard, where our morning prayer and thanksgiving list was written in a corner. “Why is the word “okani” [money] written there?” he asked. (For some reason, it was the only Japanese word on the list.) Not wanting to embarrass him, we tried to divert his interest, but a little later he asked again and insisted on a straight answer.

Reluctantly we explained that three 40-foot containers, containing all the building materials for three homes, sat on the dock at Yokohama, but we didn’t have the money to pay for the duty. When he urged us to tell him how much the duty was, we told him 1.3 million yen, or about US\$6,000.

Thanksgiving Day was cold, with snow flurries swirling and the threat of heavier snow. We worked hard to nail on the last of the floorboards over the basements in the two houses. These floors eventually would provide shelter for the building materials, which were still on the docks.

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A big, black car drove up through the snow toward our building. Tanaka-san and his wife got out and called for us.

Not now! I thought. *We just don't have time to visit. We have to get the floor on before this snow piles up too deep!*

But love for our friends prevailed, and we went down to see why they were visiting us in the middle of the day.

Without explaining why, they insisted that we come with them. Half an hour later we were seated in their bank while they took out a personal loan to give us a gift of 1.3 million yen.

We spent Christmas Day unloading the trucks from Yokohama.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19.

Don Johnson is president of Eden Valley Institute in Loveland, Colorado. He is a member of the Eden Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loveland.



THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT

By Stephen Chavez

MAC WAS a former Adventist, and he called me "Padre."

I was a young district pastor in northern Nevada, and my two churches were 72 miles apart. Twice a week I'd make the 144-mile round trip to the smaller of my two churches, once on Thursdays to visit my members and have prayer meeting, and once on Sabbath mornings to preach at 9:00 before returning to preach at my other church at 11:30.

I became acquainted with Mac and his wife, Shari, after I had asked that congregation of about a dozen members for names of former Adventists to visit. I visited with them sporadically for a year or two. Then they began inviting me over for Thursday-evening supper. At that very first meal Mac handed me a \$20 bill. "Here, use this to buy yourself a hamburger, or a tank of gas, or something."

"Thanks," I said, "but my travel expenses are taken care of." When he insisted that I take the money, I slipped it under the place mat at the table when they weren't looking.

The next week Mac met me at the door with two \$20 bills. "Take this," he urged, "and no more monkey business."

But instead of spending the money on me, my wife, or our two small children, I put those two bills into a tithe envelope and dropped them into the offering plate when it was passed around at church the next Sabbath.

This went on for several months. And frankly, sometimes I gladly would have used that money for something truly important—like food or gas. My wife didn't work at the time. But I didn't think I should profit personally from the generosity of my parishioners.

One weekend found us particularly low on funds. Thursday's supper at the McPherson's had brought another \$20 bill. But that Sabbath, after I drove my usual 144-mile trip to preach at two churches, I had to return to the first town for a funeral that afternoon. I had met the bereaved family just the previous Thursday. They were from out of town and weren't Adventists, but the deceased relative had some Adventist background, and they asked me to officiate at the funeral.

When I got to the chapel, the funeral director handed me an envelope with a copy of the obituary and an honorarium. When I saw the check, I saw that the amount was three times larger than usual. "Why such a large honorarium?" I asked the funeral director.

"I don't know, but the family specifically asked me to give you that amount." He shrugged.

I'm not a worrier. I've never been destitute. And I've never been rich. But I have had occasion to rejoice in the small tokens of God's care that I've received from time to time.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:12, 13, NIV.

Stephen Chavez is assistant editor of the Adventist Review at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland.



MACARONI AND CHEESE, JIFFY MUFFINS, AND A REFUND CHECK

By Debbie Lloyd Foote

I DON'T know which we had less of, time or money. Dave, my husband, was in medical school at Loma Linda University and did odd jobs on Sundays. I was working for the medical center and finishing graduate school at night.

We enjoyed our pastor, Jim Walters, and our church family and were sorry that we could return only tithe. We car pooled with another med-school family, and

whoever had gasoline drove to church. On weeks when neither did, we walked to a local church.

We lived on two dollars a day for meals. Dave made English muffins, and lived on the wild side by buying day-old bread at a store in the gang section of San Bernardino. Instant macaroni and cheese was 22 cents a box and lasted for two meals. Jiffy muffins were 11 cents a mix, and to this day I will not eat one.

One week we had no money left for food. Months before, I had ordered a miniature sewing contraption through the mail. It looked like a Dustbuster and sewed about as well. I had returned it for a refund and had forgotten about it. The \$12 refund check came the week we had no food.

Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24.

Debbie Lloyd Foote is a medical buyer for Family Practice Associates in Hudson Falls, New York. She is a member of the Kingsbury, New York, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



A REVISION AND A BLESSING

By Eugene Roddy

I GREW up on a farm and was a farmer myself for 40 years. Early in life I was taught Bible principles, particularly Sabbath observance and tithing. No matter whether the weather was too wet or too dry, too hot or too cold, for the work to be done as originally planned, we never felt the need to plow, plant, or harvest on Sabbath. This principle stayed with me through my entire life.

Of course, as a farmer, I was never sure how much, if any, profit I'd realize at the end of a season. So I always figured my tithe and taxes after the crops were harvested and sold. Paying for land and equipment many times required all the income received. In a farming operation it is common to have taxable and tithable "income" with no actual cash to pay it. When that happened, as it often did, I'd have to go to a lending institution and borrow the money for these items. I didn't like that.

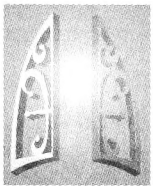
One year, partway through the harvest, I looked at the remaining crops to be harvested and estimated I would be approximately \$5,000 short of the funds needed to take care of my obligations for land and equipment. But I decided to go ahead and return as tithe \$500 of the crop money I had already received. This would be easier than later trying to convince a lending institution to loan me money to give to the church.

To my surprise, when the last portion of the crops was harvested and sold, I received approximately \$5,000 more than I had first estimated—just the amount

I had returned tithe on. After that experience I revised my plan of returning tithe. I gave it on a projected income, before I had no cash left, and I have been blessed ever since.

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Proverbs 3:9, 10.

Eugene Roddy is a retired farmer in Obion, Tennessee. He is a member of the Dyersburg, Tennessee, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



A BAG OF PENNIES AND AN EMPTY CUPBOARD

By Thomas R. Neslund

IT WAS Thirteenth Sabbath. In our home, and in our college life, that meant it was time to square up all our financial covenants with the Lord.

That might be a fine thing to do if one were experiencing normal college life, but ours had been a little abnormal lately. My wife was confined to bed rest in an effort to bring our first pregnancy to term. The kitchen cupboards were empty. I was in school on the GI Bill, and the government was three months behind in sending my checks.

Our refrigerator held half a loaf of bread and about two glasses of orange juice. I badly needed a haircut. We had only \$1.50 in the house, if we didn't count the bag of pennies we had been saving for many weeks and had pledged to give for the Thirteenth Sabbath offering.

What should we do? Certainly the Lord would understand our extremity. Surely He would release us temporarily from our commitment.

My wife and I talked about our problem, and then we decided to honor our commitment. We wouldn't use the bag of pennies to buy groceries. We would turn it in for the Thirteenth Sabbath offering as pledged. I took it to the local market to have it changed to four \$1 bills and larger denominations of coins.

As I stood in line I wondered what would happen when we were totally broke. How would we get through the weekend? When my turn came at the register, I told the clerk that I had 480 pennies. Would she kindly give me four ones and 80 cents in coin?

"I'm sorry," she said. "I'll have to count them first."

Someone in the line behind me muttered: "I would have to get behind

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someone like you!” Embarrassed for the trouble I was making, I told the clerk: “I’m going next door to get a haircut, and I’ll be back in a half hour or so.” She said she would have my money ready.

After the haircut, and now down to the last quarter of our own money, I collected the money from the clerk. That evening I went to the vesper service, where the offering would be collected. With a sense of great meaning I put our \$4.80 into the basket as it passed my pew.

When I returned home after the meeting, I was stunned to find four large boxes of groceries on our doorstep. I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was show-and-tell time! My wife was speechless as I fixed dinner. All we could say was, “Where? Who? How?”

The next morning when I returned home after church I found three more boxes of food. And we found even more boxes at the close of that incredible Sabbath. Our refrigerator and cupboards were filled to capacity; we stacked food on the countertops and on the floor.

We never learned where all that food came from. All we know is that God had kept His famous promise in an astounding and literal way.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Malachi 3:10.

Thomas R. Neslund is executive director of the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of the Rolling Hills, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church. This story originally appeared in College Faith: 150 Adventist Leaders Share Faith Stories From Their College Days (Pacific Press, 1995).



JESUS ON THE FIRST ROW

By Roy Drusky

HAVING made my living in country music, I have written and performed many of the typical songs that made country music popular.

Before I made a commitment to follow Christ, it didn’t bother me to sing songs that failed to glorify our Lord. I never thought much at all about the message of the songs I sang.

After I accepted Christ, I realized that I could no longer sing quite a few songs with a clear conscience. So I quit singing many of my songs at the Grand Ole Opry. I felt impressed that God wanted me to perform only those songs that would have a positive influence on people.

O V E R A N D O V E R A G A I N !

Some of my fellow Opry members asked me why I wasn't singing certain songs that I had recorded. I replied that I no longer agreed with the message that they told. They said that my fans expected me to sing the songs that had brought me to the Grand Ole Opry and that if I didn't sing them, I wasn't really being fair to them, because they were paying to hear them.

I continued to sing positive love songs and gospel songs week after week with apparently nobody noticing what I was singing.

One Saturday night on my way home from the Opry, I said, "Lord, does it really make any difference what I sing? Does anybody notice or does anybody really care one way or the other?"

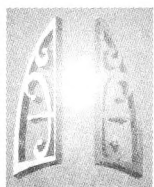
The very next week I received a letter from a lady in Indiana. She wrote, "I've noticed that you sing only songs with the true message of love and songs that are about our Lord. I've also noticed that you don't sing those songs that have a negative moral to them. Thank you, as this means a lot to me."

I said, "Thank You, Lord, for giving me an answer to my question."

I no longer sing anything that I wouldn't sing if Jesus were sitting in the first row. To me, He is.

Sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Psalm 96:1, NKJV.

Roy Drusky, a country singer, has been a member of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, for nearly 40 years. He is a member of the Highland Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland, Tennessee.



RAINY DAYS AND FRIDAYS

By Bill Knott

LIGHTENING our load." "Getting ready for a move." I sat at the kitchen table crafting the 28-word announcement that would maximize the \$5.95 I was willing to spend on our yard sale classified ad. It was not a project for which I had much enthusiasm.

"No one will come," I told my wife in that pessimistic tone she had learned to ignore through 16 years of marriage. "What if it rains? How do we know that people will even see the signs we posted along the road?"

Our decision to hold three yard sales before our cross-country move was motivated less by the attractions of the simple life than an even starker reality: a moving van will hold only so much. So long as we could fit our aging blue Escort on the truck, I was content, even happy, to live among the outgrown baby furniture, the unused garden tools, the suits now embarrassingly too tight. Why let the world know that even the preacher had become an accumulator of things?

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That night I mumbled an obligatory prayer that God would bless tomorrow's sale—at least enough to justify the hours we had expended in preparing for it. As long as God would see to it that I had back the \$30 and change I had invested in the ad, in screaming orange YARD SALE signs, and a cheap staple gun, I would call it even.

Friday morning dawned with gray indistinctness. From 5:00 to 7:30 we arranged strollers out on the driveway, hauled armloads of hanging clothes to outdoor racks, and pawed through boxes of ceramic figurines and homely clocks. Before the 8:00 a.m. start the garage door would come down, hiding the underworld of things we couldn't bring ourselves to sell.

At 7:45 the rain began—not monsoonal, mind you—but just enough to bead up on the furniture polish we had applied to aging heirlooms and to make the colors run on checkered sport coats from the seventies. Within five minutes our yard sale had become a garage sale as mad rearrangement and artistically draped bedsheets hid a multitude of sins.

I settled into that bleak frame of mind I usually reserve for bouts of bronchitis and all-day committee meetings. Nothing would come of this, or even to it.

But come they did—in battered pickups, sparkling SUVs, and a cavalcade of Caravans. Wave after wave of “stay-at-home” moms and second-shift die cutters descended on our dark garage, sweeping all before them. Soon my wife and I were combing through the house in search of used (but clean) handtowels, shirts with frayed collars, and—oh yes—more garden tools to satisfy the demand in the strange economy that had emerged in our garage.

An hour before sunset we counted \$627 in scrawled checks and cash, and a total of more than \$2,700 by the time our three sales were through. Even in the absence of my faith, God had done exceedingly abundantly, above all that I could ask or even think.

With the extra income, we retired an overworked credit card, saved a little, and readied ourselves for the higher costs that would come in a new region. More important, we found the joy that comes from living with less—a wonderful, echoing sense of sparseness and release. More than we had known, things clutter up the spirit as well as the house.

Months later the words I had written for the moving ad came back to grace me in powerful new ways: “Lightening our load,” “Getting ready for a move.” In His own and inimitable way, God began preparing us to hold the things of this world lightly, so we would not hesitate to let them go when the hour comes.

**A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.
Luke 12:15.**

Bill Knott is associate editor of the Adventist Review in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is a member of the Beltsville, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist Church.