I. Ralph Watts & Arlind Hackett Visit Vietnam
   (8th of 9 installments)
   Arlind Hackett <arlind.hackett@yahoo> June 27:

   Travel Report No. 8
   Well it is now almost 6:00 PM on Thursday, June 19, and I am safely back in Ho Chi Minh City. Our plane landed less
   than an hour ago, and I am at my hotel. It will be a short night, as my flight is scheduled to leave at 5:30 tomorrow
   morning. I’ll finish this report and try to get to bed early, so I can get a few hours of sleep.

   Our "last supper" at the Hyatt-Regency went well last night. One of the young ladies on the hotel staff drove Khoi,
   Ralph, Giao, and I around the grounds in a golf cart. It is quite a complex with several blocks of condos, a regular hotel,
   bungalows, swimming pools, and of course restaurants. Since it was our last night together Ralph sprung for the meal.
   Ralph got a grilled cheese sandwich, Khoi got a pizza and some fried rice, and Elder Giao got some Vietnamese noodles. I
   wasn’t very hungry, so I just ordered a fruit plate and some bread. The fruit plate included mango, which our morning
   buffet breakfasts didn’t have. The bread was thinly sliced French bread, and with it they served garlic cloves in olive oil.
   For desert Ralph ordered ice cream. He had chocolate, Giao had vanilla and I had strawberry.

   The strawberry was very refreshing!

   Elder Watts got a DVD marketing the hotel and explored room costs. After supper we went back to the Sandy Beach
   Club and showered off the day’s sweat and hit the sack. Ralph had to leave early this morning to get to the airport, so I
   didn’t get up to see him off. When I went over for breakfast about 6:45, Khoi and Pastor Giao had pretty much finished
   eating. Khoi got up to see that Ralph got a taxi OK, and was on his way. At 9:00 AM we got a taxi and headed back
   through Danang to see a special church that Ralph wanted me to see. It is kind of the model for what they want the
   "house"

   churches to look like. A former pastor of this church had gone to the U. S.

   and when he died he left about $25,000.00 in his will to build a church in the Danang area. The timing was perfect,
   because the SDA Church had just been recognized by the government, and had given us some land back so we had a
   place to build. The mission and the congregation raised another $10,000, and with that they had enough money to build
   a beautiful little church and provide lovely benches to sit on. The deceased pastor’s family put in some more money so
   they could buy a nice keyboard, a large screen TV, and a good PA system.

   They did a really nice job of building. The pastor is a woman who was a very successful LE before 1975, when she was
   forced to quit because of not having any literature. I took pictures, so you’ll be able to see it. The pastor was so pleased
   to see Elder Giao, because as the head of the publishing house he was her boss. She served us drinks and two big plates
   of fruit. One was lychees and the other lanzones. That isn't what they call them in Vietnam, but that is the name I know
   them by.

   After prayer with the pastor we returned to our hotel and cooled off and rested for a while. We had to check out at
   noon, so we just went out to the airport. We were a couple of hours early, but they let us check in. We went right to
   the departure lounge and got something to eat. Khoi and I got food from the Burger King, and Elder Giao ordered food
   from a Vietnamese restaurant. I splurged and got a Whopper without meat and the full meal deal. They put grilled
mushrooms on the sandwich in place of meat. It was almost identical to the meal I got at the food court in Saigon on Sunday, but this cost me a whopping 130,000 Dong vs 36,000. Guess that was because it was a Whopper. I felt I could afford it, because so far I have spent very little of my own money, and it was only about $6.50. After eating, Khoi worked on his computer and I looked around at the shops to see if I could find a gift for Marleen. It seemed to me like the airport prices were pretty steep, so thought maybe I could look around a little tonight in Saigon.

Our plane left right on time, and after an hour's flight we arrived in Ho Chi Minh City. Khoi got us a taxi and brought me to my hotel. This one is not exactly a five star, but has air conditioning, a good bed, and a nice bathroom. So it is fine with me. I won't be spending a lot of time here anyway. The price is only $32.00 versus over $100.00 at the Caravelle, so you know that makes me happy!

Well, I think I'll close and go see if I can get a bite to eat. I won't be eating breakfast right away, since I have to leave my hotel by 3:30 AM, so I probably should eat a little tonight. I'm hoping I can find some more good fruit before I go. No doubt the next time I write I'll be in the U.S.A.

I've had a fabulous trip, and I want to give a shout out to Ralph for including me on this itinerary. There is no way I could ever have booked a trip like this through a travel agent, and almost all of my expenses have been paid for! Hope I'll be included again sometime.

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II. Raising Fruit & Praising God at Mission College

by Otelai A. Pangan
from the current women's morning devotional book, "Breathe"
(Psalm 113: 2,3)

"My husband and I had volunteered to work at Mission College [now Asia-Pacific International University] in Thailand, he as the senior pastor of the college church and I as an ESL [English as a second language] teacher. Arriving there, we didn't know what kind of dwelling would be given us, and we were joyfully surprised when assigned one side of a duplex. It was the last house near the water tank, and the setting with its surroundings was just like country living. Right away we thought of creating a vegetable garden and planting papaya trees and banana plants. So we worked on doing just that as soon as we could.

"When we arrived at the site chosen for our project we found that our immediate neighbors had already planted many fruit trees, including papaya and banana. The papaya trees were already bearing fruit, and as soon as they were ready to pluck our neighbors shared with us. But that did not deter us from planting our own trees as well. Soon my husband was hard at work putting in five banana plants and 25 papaya trees. During the height of the papaya season, because of the ripe fruit, many birds flocked to our backyard to peck on those papayas. Very early in the mornings and through out the day, the birds would sing beautifully as if to say, 'Thank you for sharing your food with us.' I mentioned to our neighbors how melodious the birds' symphony sounded. It inspired me to hear the birds sing their praises to the Creator-God who daily provided them with food.

"As I listened to the birds' sweet singing their praise to our heavenly Provider, they truly reminded me of how grateful I should be to Him. I shouldn't be short in giving thanks and praise to our wonderful God, for He daily provides all my necessities in life. Indeed, if the birds of the air can sing praises to God, how much more should I who receive His benefits daily without fail."

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III. Karen Church Opened in Nebraska
from the Adventist World
by John Treolo, Communication Director, Kansas-Nebraska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

A new congregation has opened in Omaha, Nebraska, to provide a worship place for a growing inflow of Karen refugees - many of whom have grandparents or great-grandparents who were baptized by missionary storyteller Eric B. Hare.

Refugees from Myanmar started resettling in the U.S. under a government program in 2006, and Omaha is among three cities in the church's Kansas-Nebraska Conference that welcome them.

"Estimates suggest there are 5,000 Karen people in Omaha, with more arriving each month," said John Sweigart, vice president for the conference.

"Nearly 100 of these are Adventists. Many are direct descendants from the baptisms long ago by Dr. Hare."
At camp meeting, a special offering was announced to fund a part-time pastor. The goal of $12,000 was to be matched by conference funds of an equal amount. More than $18,000 was received on Sabbath at camp meeting, with the additional $6,000 going to establish a building fund. Sah Kler, who was trained as a Bible worker in a refugee camp in Thailand, has been hired to pastor the Omaha Karen Company.

During the organization service, prayers and praise were expressed by the more than 100 Karen adults and children present. "This new company has a goal of bringing 10-20 new members into the group each year," adds Virgil Covel, ministerial director. "Our conference celebrates the incorporation of this new company of believers into the sisterhood of churches."

IV. Report from Laos for October 2014

Khamsay Phetchareun <KhamsayP@apiu.edu> Oct. 12:

As I dig into the past I am humbled to learn how God has kept His church in Laos alive through decades of isolation. Again, I am reminded that, like in the time of Jesus, unskilled young people were used by God to keep His church going and even to expand His work. If one or two young pioneers could do such a big impact for the Lao church then, how much more impact if we have 10 or even 20 young people giving their lives in unselfish service to Jesus today? We are delighted that some of you have shown interest in helping the Lao church build the first Youth Hostel in Vientiane to accommodate our young people who have nowhere to go. Just imagine 20 or 30 years from now, if the Lord has not come then, what these young people can do and will do to spread the gospel message in Laos! We are certainly living in an exciting time of the Lao church history. We are planning to build our first headquarters. But we have yet to have our first Adventist school, first Adventist clinic, first Adventist seminary, and many more first Adventist institutions.

Now, that there is peace and safety in Laos, it is time for us to resume our work with more intensity, more commitment, more efforts, and more dedication. We are thankful that you stand shoulder with shoulder with us in this important work of God in Laos. Surely, the Lord is pleased to see His rice field being attended to, laboured on, and harvested. We surely need more labourers. Please continue to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send us more labourers. And if you feel like being one labourer yourself or sponsor one to go to study to become a pastor or teacher in the Lord’s field in Laos please don’t hesitate to let us know.

--Khamsay Phetchareun, Lecturer & LAF Supervisor/Trainer, Asia-Pacific International University, Muaklek, Saraburi, Thailand ~~~~~~~~~~~~ V. Life Sketch of Dr. Douglas Thoresen
--by Jim Herman and given at the memorial service in Collegetdale

"In the 1930s, Doug and Laurel first met in sixth grade when Laurel's father, Cyril Palmer, was headmaster at Longburn College in New Zealand. A decade later Doug and Laurel became sweethearts while attending Australasian Missionary College (Avondale College) in Australia. They married in 1948 after they graduated from college, Doug with a Theology degree.

"The newlyweds moved back to New Zealand where Doug began working as a gospel minister. Their oldest child, Nelson, was born at that time. In the early 1950s Doug, Laurel and young Nelson traveled to the United States where Doug attended Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University). While there Doug felt strongly called to study to become a medical doctor.

"The family travelled to Loma Linda University where Doug enrolled in the School of Medicine. Four years later he was class pastor of his graduating class. During their stay in Loma Linda, children Rozanne and Garth joined the family.

"Doug completed his residency as a General Practitioner in Portland, Oregon. Immediately after completing his residency he received a call to the Far East to serve as a medical missionary. The family of five departed for their mission appointment in the Spring of 1961.

"Although Doug was under appointment to serve at the Adventist hospital in Penang, Malaysia, their plans were to change during a scheduled layover in Saigon, South Vietnam. The Vietnam Mission president approached Doug and pleaded with him to stay in Vietnam and serve as medical director of the fledgling Adventist hospital there. The mission president was adamant that the needs in Saigon were far greater than the needs in Penang. After considerable prayer and consultation, the decision was made for Doug to remain in Saigon to serve as medical director of the Saigon Adventist Hospital.

"After an exciting five years in Vietnam, Doug and his family returned to Oregon to practice medicine at Portland Adventist Hospital. However, a former classmate from Loma Linda, Bill Hardy, convinced Doug to visit his practice in Asheville, NC where he needed another partner to join his practice. Doug agreed to move to western North Carolina where he practiced medicine for thirteen years in Fletcher, Franklin, and Bryson City.
"Doug and Laurel returned to the mission field where they continued their medical ministry in Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. After that they moved back to the United States to Collegedale, TN in order to be close to their children and grandchildren.

"Even in retirement, Doug continued to care for medical needs during mission trips to Ecuador, Nicaragua, and other places. During his final years Doug devoted himself to caring for Laurel who had contracted Parkinson's Disease."

VI. SULADS Story -- Hermenia Stands Firm
   by Bernadette Magbanua, Gospel Outreach Evangelist, Dumarao, Palawan

When Hermenia Valoroso heard the Good News from the word of God she decided to accept Jesus as her personal Savior. After her baptism, her sons, especially her eldest son began persecuting her. He mocked his mother and called her bad names.

He said, "You Adventists are plagues in this place. We used to have unity in the family but now we do not. You no longer eat the flesh of swine, crabs or shrimp and you no longer drink wine."

Hermenia did not retaliate with harsh words to her son but prayed that one day he would understand the word of God.

Early in 2014 we participated in the Ten Days of Prayer in Operation Global Rain. We prayed particularly that God would change Hermenia's son and that he would understand the truth of the Bible.

Hermenia continues to participate in all our church activities. She joins in our bayanihan (work bee) and cleans our little temporary church before our Sabbath services. The good news is that her son no longer is persecuting her. We believe this is an answer to our prayers. Sister Hermenia continues to serve the Lord gladly.

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