Flying high

Today will be the third time we plug the Adventist Aviation Jubilee in the introduction to these weekly emails. Overkill? Hardly, especially when you consider the tremendous service and sacrifice of the Adventist Aviation Services (AAS) team over the past 50 years.

Here are just some of the compelling aviation stories that have come our way in recent times:

• **Sky cowboys?**
• **Adventist Aviation opens airstrip**
• **Highlands airstrip rededicated**
• **My story—Bennett Spencer**
• **Love more: The story of Linden and Bri**

If you're near the Cooranbong (NSW) area this weekend, be sure to check out some of the Jubilee festivities.

For a full program of events, [click here](#). And for yet more exciting Adventist news and views—including a [must-watch video](#) on the problem of high protein diets—keep reading this week’s edition of Record eNews.
Video: Celebrating 100 years in Solomon Islands

Dr Barry Oliver, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific, reflects on the sacrifice and commitment that has led to the growth of the Church in the Solomon Islands to the 45,653 members it has today.

Cyclists raise $194,000 to fight poverty

More than $AU194,000 was raised by 90 riders who took part in the 25,000 Spins Great Ocean Road Ride earlier this month.

Lest we forget

The opening of the new Fulton College campus headlines the first "Chuang" edition of Adventist Record.

Watch/download InFocus

Making headlines:
* Churches offer help for Manus Island
* Calls for a national alcohol summit
* And an 84-year-old nun goes to prison

Fashion photographers Heath and Jacqui Bennett share some inside secrets of the modelling and fashion industry that reveal it’s not quite as glamorous and perfect as it seems.

And don't try losing weight on a high protein, low carb
Peter Knopper. Shirley, Ronny and Jean Ferris. These are just some of the names listed on the South Pacific Division's online memorial. Where there is great tragedy, there is also triumph in God.

Radical Jesus

Jesus the rebel: it's an interesting concept. But, if you think about it, that's what He was—a revolutionary, rebelling against the status quo.

Train up a child

Jarrod Stackelroth looks back at his parents' 30 years of marriage, and what their relationship has taught him about love and legacy.
I don’t like flying on small planes. It’s not that I’m afraid of flying. And it’s not even that there is something particularly distasteful about small planes. What I don’t like about small planes is that everyone I’ve ever known who has died in a plane, has been in a small plane. Yes, when a big one goes down it is spectacular and it makes world news. But the truth is, it simply doesn’t happen that often. Small planes? They seem to crash with alarming regularity.

So

when South Pacific Division president, Dr Barry Oliver, told me we’d be travelling around the nether regions of Papua New Guinea in a single prop eight-passenger plane, I was unenthused.

Think

about it. What kind of pilot spends his or her life flying small planes in the wilds of PNG? You’d have to be some kind of adrenalin junkie to take that on. And when it comes to the serious business of flying, I’m not interested in having a sky cowboy at the controls.

An Adventist Aviation Services plane on the Oksapmin airstrip in Papua New Guinea.

When we met Bennett Spencer and Philip Glendrange from Adventist Aviation Services (AAS) in Rabaul on the island of New Britain, I wasn’t particularly happy to see them. Well, not them in particular, but the small plane standing behind them. At that moment, it was a bit too late to say, “no way am I flying in that piece of tin foil!”

But

I was about to have all my assumptions challenged. What impressed me immediately? Their professionalism. Everything, and I mean everything, was done by the book. Every passenger and piece of luggage was weighed. Woe unto you if you tried to sneak a large fish into the cabin undeclared—as one passenger did. He soon found himself on the end of a very stern lecture. These guys run a tight ship and if
you plan to fly with them I recommend you fall into line. Before each flight, they test and retest a wide variety of functions. There is nothing slap dash about this operation.

I was also impressed by their use of technology. Philip heard about an aviation GPS navigation program available in Australia, so he contacted the company and convinced it to expand its coverage to PNG. As a result, we were flying between islands with no phones, no running water and only sporadic electricity, but with every movement tracked perfectly by satellite.

The professionalism goes hand in hand with their spiritual dedication. It was so heartening to see Philip sitting quietly each morning reading his Bible. How many 24-year-old guys do that? Similarly, Bennett ensures that every flight begins with a word of prayer (yes, it's true, I was praying a little harder than usual myself...). The impact of Christ on their lives is impossible to ignore.

**AAS pilot Bennett Spencer.**

During our travels they landed us on a grass airstrip on the small tropical island of Eloaua. They put us down on an abandoned World War II US airbase on Emirau. They even flew us safely into the notoriously difficult airport at Goroka—surrounded by mountains and subject to low clouds and fog. All with less drama than your average trip on the Pacific Highway in Sydney—actually, substantially less drama...

The Adventist Aviation hangar in Goroka is a masterpiece to behold. It's the cleanest hanger I've ever seen, with not one tool out of place. After we landed, the crew swarmed around to clean the plane from top to bottom. When we returned the next day, the cover of the engine was off and the pilots were working on the engine. What were they doing? Apparently when a plane lands near the ocean, salt deposits build up so they were doing all the maintenance necessary to remove it. Everything at the hangar works with military precision. It's a superb operation and a credit to all those involved—particularly Roger Millist, the retiring CEO.

"I came to fly with the team here because we go where no-one else does," Matt said.

When we left, they were preparing to deliver ballot boxes for an upcoming election to remote areas. It's just one of the many services they provide—ranging from medevac to hauling agricultural goods that are the economic lifeline to remote communities. They even transport the deceased for burial. They fly evangelists to meetings, teachers to schools, pastors to remote fields and they transport tonnes of Adventist material around PNG every year.

Talking to Matt one of the Adventist Aviation pilots who come from Hamilton, New Zealand, it's clear that the services our team provide are vital. "I came to fly with the team here because we go where no-one else does," Matt said. That's true. But they are able to go where no-one else goes not because they are sky cowboys flouting the rules of physics and hoping for the best, but precisely the opposite: they are an aviation dream team—dedicated,
smart, hardworking and completely professional. And they are a credit to the Church they serve.

There will be a special celebration marking 50 years of Adventist aviation in the South Pacific Division at Avondale Memorial church on March 1. For more details, please visit: <http://aviationnsw.adventist.org.au>

James Standish is editor of RECORD.
Adventist Aviation opens airstrip

Sandaun, Papua New Guinea

The people of Sisimin in Oksapmin, Sandaun province, have welcomed the opening of a new airstrip in their village.

Captain Bennett Spencer, an Adventist Aviation Services (AAS) pilot originally from the United States, officially cut the ribbon to open the airstrip.

With Captain Bennett were Western Highlands Mission president, Pastor Max Zaccias, Sandaun District director, Pastor Luke Tanop, and other church leaders and people from villages around Oksapmin who came to witness the opening.

With no road infrastructure available, the people of Sisimin have been deprived of all basic services, such as schools and hospitals, for the past 40 years. The only way of getting in touch with the rest of the country was by walking 20 hours to the nearest airstrip in Oksapmin.

The Sisimin people, both church and community members, decided to build an airstrip in 2009 so AAS could extend its services to this very remote area.

The project took them three years to complete using both traditional and modern tools.

The guests arrived in an AAS aircraft and landed on the newly-built airstrip to the delight of the local people who had gathered there to celebrate the official opening.
Kainantu, Papua New Guinea

An airstrip dedication ceremony at Omaura School of Ministry (OSOM) has seen the first mission planes land at the site, despite the airstrip being cleared 25 years ago.

Omaura was established in the highlands northeast of Lae in the 1950s as a training school offering pastoral training at a certificate level. Since then the school has produced thousands of church pastors, administrators and ministry volunteers. But tribal fighting at the site in the 1980s saw Australian staff evacuated and the newly built airstrip officially closed before it could be used.

The freshly rehabilitated airstrip was opened as two Adventist Aviation Services aircraft touched down. The dedication service featured a reconciliation ceremony where tribal and community leaders expressed their regret for the past conflicts that hindered Omauru’s operations.

Pastor Kosmeier with some old friends.

Retired missionary, Pastor John Kosmeier, who helped to clear the original airstrip, was present at the dedication. “OSOM continues to meet a major need for more workers in the Pidgin speaking areas of Papua New Guinea,” he said. “It was wonderful day. Praise be to God.”
I come from an interesting bunch—my dad was an undercover cop in Texas, my oldest brother is a serious skateboarder and my younger brother is a Hollywood stunt man. He was a stunt double for Spiderman in the latest film. None of us has travelled the usual office job route, that’s for sure!

I worked as a commercial airline pilot in Memphis, Tennessee, flying 50 seat jets. I loved the work and a bonus was we lived in a nearby development with its own private airport. So I wasn’t short of opportunities to enjoy my passion for flying that started when I got my private pilot’s licence in high school and continued through my study of aviation at Andrews University.

As much as I loved commercial flying, I wanted to fly for God. My wife, Dalena—who is a missionaries’ kid—and I began looking into what was available. I wanted a program that was run professionally and was serious in the way it approached aviation. I don’t believe in cutting corners. I found the approach and mission of Adventist Aviation Services fitted perfectly into what we were praying to find.

We’ve been in Papua New Guinea almost four years. After praying about it, we’ve decided to stay for another year beyond our four-year term, then we’ll see.

We live in Goroka, which is a wonderfully rich place to live, but it does have its challenges. We have three young children, and there’s no school that fits what we’re looking for. And, of course, we miss our family back in the US.

I love flying in PNG. What we do is just very meaningful. In virtually every flight, we are helping someone in a very tangible, practical way. It is the way I find most satisfying to express my Adventist faith.

Bennett Spencer is acting head pilot for Adventist Aviation Services.
When she walked into the large, airy aircraft hanger at Goroka Airport, Papua New Guinea, she was certain of one thing: the guy she was about to meet wasn’t for her.

It was obvious. After all, Bri’s mum had flagged the handsome pilot and aircraft engineer as a love prospect, and nothing kills a romance like a parent’s recommendation! If that were not enough, Bri promised herself one thing early in life—she’d never get serious with a guy in the mission aviation business. There were shadows there. Shadows no-one outside her family could fully understand.

Linden was hunched over an engine he was rebuilding when Bri walked in the hanger. He’d seen pictures of her. Heard stories. But nothing prepared him for Bri’s sky blue eyes, her fine features and her effortless elegance. She was breathtakingly beautiful. But, he reminded himself as he wiped the grease from his hands, there’s a lot more to a person than beauty.

It was no secret that taking the job with Adventist Aviation Services (AAS) wasn’t going to do much for a young bloke’s love life. For the years he’d been in Goroka, Linden hadn’t been in a single romantic relationship. And he wasn’t looking for one now. Growing up as a kid in PNG, he learned early how to be emotionally self sufficient; he was content within himself. Still, it was hard to ignore the beautiful American girl with her carefree style and exotic African and South American history.

Out of the Goroka hanger, AAS brings supplies to remote clinics spotted throughout PNG; conducts medevacs in emergencies; and transports pastors, teachers, aid workers and building supplies to places that would otherwise take weeks to trek in and out of. And it provides an economic lifeline to the poorest people by hauling produce to market in the cargo pod of the planes. Grass landing strips, steep mountains and the unpredictable weather so prevalent in the region are all part of the daily rhythm of service. It was where Linden believed God wanted him and he was the rare kind of person who thrived on all of it. Working with him was Bri's dad—an experienced mission aviation pilot.

As the two months of Bri’s visit passed, bit by bit, day by day, word by word, look by look, something started to build. Eventually, Linden couldn’t resist any longer and asked her out on a date.

"There are only two places to take a girl in Goroka," he laughs, "so I didn’t have to think too hard!" They became regulars at these places, rode dirt bikes in the nearby hills and spent hours upon hours hanging out in the aircraft hanger after work. Somewhere between the grease, engine parts, noise and fumes, something very precious and just as fragile began to grow. When Bri flew out of Goroka in August 2009 to complete her last year of studies at Union College in Nebraska, she took Linden’s heart with her.

Not that he said too much about it. "I’m not a big talker," Linden says simply. For the next few months, he played the waiting game. Patient. Unflappable. He knew that what had started was unstoppable. At least he thought he knew.

When Bri arrived back in Goroka after graduating the following year, Linden beat a trail to her door. He walked in the front gate carrying a
large bunch of bananas. "It's Goroka," he recalls, "not a lot of fresh roses around, so you have to make do." However, the woman he found waiting for him on the front steps was strangely different. She was reserved, uncertain, the smiles and the bounce were gone. After some awkward pleasantries, she blurted out, "I don't think this is working anymore."

Linden couldn't believe it. He pulled back, a thousand things going through his mind. But all he could say was "OK." After a minute's silence, he turned and walked slowly back home.

He spent the night tossing and turning. It all seemed so improbable. What about the past 12 months of long distance communicating? What about the Christmas break spent together? What had happened in those months in Nebraska? Why the change? How could she be so completely cold and withdrawn?

What he didn't know was that Bri was up all night as well. Crying her eyes out. How could she be so totally in love with a guy who couldn't verbalise anything? It's one thing to be strong and silent, it's quite another to be indifferent. "I had just broken up with Linden, and he had simply acknowledged it and walked off," she remembers. "Where was the fight? The depth? Where was the driving desire to be together? Obviously I didn't mean that much to him after all."

Linden couldn't accept the break up. It seemed so vague. So totally random. A few days later he mustered the courage to go back and see Bri. This time he was there to talk business. He spoke from the heart and heard her concerns, writing them down in a list. Over the next few days they sat together working through the list of Bri's concerns and Linden's list of all things important to him, to determine what they each wanted out of life, what they needed and where they could find common ground. "The intensity in his eyes gave me the assurance he was serious about me," Bri remembers with a smile. Linden, sitting next to her, looks on silently. But she's right—there is intensity in the way he's looking at her.

Love had died, been reborn and life was on track—even if it was a very uncertain one divided down the middle by 12,000 kilometres that were soon to separate them again. After Bri graduated she applied for 30 different jobs in the US. She didn't get a single offer. Linden encouraged her to move to Perth (WA), his Australian base. Within three days of arriving, Bri got the first job she applied for. And a few months later she accepted a job in the service department at Lexus. Linden came home to Perth every other month, and on a September evening in 2012 he asked Bri to marry him. She said yes, and they began dreaming and planning for the day when they would marry and begin life together.

Everything seemed so perfect. Hopes were high. Linden had gone back to Goroka to complete his commitment; Bri was enjoying life in Perth and looking forward to a wonderful future.

But then it happened.

Bri was at work when a call came. But she was wrapped up with a customer. The receptionist sent her an urgent email. And then another. And then another and another and another.

All the echoes of the pain in Bri's childhood were about to catch up with her. Her grandfather's death flying mission planes in Mexico when her dad was only 16. Her aunt and uncle's disappearance a few years ago flying mission planes in Venezuela. The fear her mother had every time her father took to the unpredictable PNG skies in the single engine turboprop plane. The unrelenting grief her father carried with him for the father who never came home and the survivor's guilt he lived with for his missing brother. She had promised herself she would never repeat the life her parents lived. Love had forced her to be untrue, first to herself.

By the time she got back to her desk, Bri's inbox was full of urgent emails. Her heart fell through the floor. This was what everyone in her family expected, sooner or later. As soon as she looked at the screen, she feared she was the next widow of mission aviation even before she was married.
When she returned the call to Linden’s father, the news was as bad as she had anticipated. "There’s been an aviation jet fuel explosion in the hanger at Goroka. Linden’s been terribly burned and he’s being airlifted to Brisbane." While doing maintenance on AAS’s newest P750XL aircraft, a tool malfunctioned and let off a tiny spark. That tiny spark ignited fumes in the empty fuel tank. And in a split second, Linden had been bathed in white-hot flame.

With help from her kindly manager and a co-worker at Lexus, Bri was on a plane to Brisbane a few hours later. When she arrived at the hospital, she was warned, "We aren’t sure if he’ll pull through. Be prepared, when you see him you will be shocked. He’s been burned over 50 per cent of his body . . . ."

Linden was bloated, bandaged and unconscious when Bri walked into the ICU. But he was alive. And with life, there was hope.

For five long weeks, Linden remained in a coma.

During those weeks, Bri flew back and forth from Brisbane to Perth, working three days a week and spending four days at Linden's bedside. "The worst part for me," remembers Bri, "is I just missed him so badly. I would sit by him and talk to him every day but it's really hard to have a one-sided conversation day after day."

Three weeks into Linden’s coma, Valentine’s Day arrived. "Because of our bi-continental relationship, we only managed to be together on Valentines once, but Linden faithfully sent me flowers and chocolates every Valentines and every birthday," remembers Bri. "He is amazing at remembering special dates. I’m absolutely shocking—if his birthday wasn’t on New Year’s Day I’d probably forget it! On 2012 Valentines he sent me beautiful orchids at work. I happened to be back in Perth at work on Valentine's Day 2013. Coincidently, there was another girl named Bri at the dealership and all her flowers kept getting delivered to my desk. So I’d call her and she’d come and get them; there must have been at least five bouquets. It was really hard.

"Finally these beautiful roses arrived, and I called her to come and collect them," Bri recalls. "She picked them up and looked at the tag and said: ‘No, these are for you.’ I knew she must be wrong. But I had a look and sure enough, they had my last name on them. I was really baffled because Linden is the only person who has ever sent me flowers and of course he was in a coma. I opened the note and it had the most beautiful message from him saying how much he loved me and was looking forward to seeing me soon. I ran into the bathroom and cried for an hour. When I came back to my desk, I burst into tears every time I looked at them. It was so sweet and totally unexpected. I later found out Linden organised them just a few days before his accident."

"Linden was really smug when he finally woke up and I told him that he had sent me flowers on Valentines even though he was in a coma," laughs Bri. "I don't think many guys can top that!"

But it wasn’t easy when Linden came out of the coma. "The first thing I can remember on the acute burns ward is when I realised I couldn’t do anything. My mind was working perfectly, but I was trapped in a completely disabled body. It was terrifying," remembers Linden. "I’ve always been an active person. In the matter of a split second, I had everything I took for granted snatched from me."

After months of painful treatment, skin grafts and rehabilitation, Linden was informed by his medical team he would be discharged. He was still profoundly disabled. He couldn’t dress himself. He couldn’t cook for himself. He had difficulty walking. He couldn’t drive. But all of that wasn’t going to be a problem. The woman who had broken up with him because she thought he didn’t need her, was waiting for him with arms wide open.

"I couldn’t move in with Bri without being married," says Linden. "I wanted our lives together to start off the right way. We were planning a full-blown church wedding with her family in the US, but the accident put all of that on hold. So when I was ready to leave the hospital we had a simple service with a few friends and family members. Unexpectedly, several of the retired pastor/pilots from Adventist Aviation organised a little wedding reception. A civil wedding isn’t my idea of a proper wedding. But you deal with what is dealt to you. I moved from the hospital to the little apartment Bri organised in Brisbane. That’s how our married life began."

PrintFriendly.com: Print web pages, create PDFs
http://www.printfriendly.com/print?url=http://record.net.au/items/love-m...
Today Bri sits, her bright blue eyes, refined features and slight frame poised delicately in her chair as she talks easily. Her husband of three months sits next to her, wrapped in compression garments covering his arms, legs and entire head except for his eyes, mouth and the lower part of his nose. The garments are designed to help his skin heal without ugly raised scars. In a way, Linden and Bri are like any newly married couple. Laughing together, tender touches, sharing stories and planning their future. In other ways, they are profoundly different.

Life hasn’t been easy. Linden needs Bri to button his shirts as calcification in his joints has made it impossible to bend his elbows and difficult to bend his knees. Joint calcification can occur in extreme burns cases as part of the body's distress reaction to trauma. Linden’s joints are continuing to calcify, but the reaction is expected to stop eventually, and when it does he will be able to have corrective orthopedic surgery. Bri also changes his compression garments every night. And does the 101 other time-consuming things needed to keep a burns patient’s recovery and the family on track. “I’ve always been the one taking care of others,” says Linden. “It’s been really hard to be on the receiving end and to accept the generosity of others. It’s been a good lesson to learn. But I have to think there must be an easier way to learn it!”

“I’m a procrastinator,” laughs Bri, "and Linden worries I’ll forget something or let another slip. So he makes lists. He’s a firm believer in lists! Between the two of us, and the support of family, friends and local church members, we’re making it all work. So many people have stepped up to the plate to help us out financially, physically and emotionally, and our families have been so encouraging and supportive. God has been very close, looking after us through His people, and we feel very blessed.

“We love being married—it’s our excuse to stay home,” Bri continues. "Most couples get a week or two of honeymoon. Because of what we’ve been dealt, we have had a year together, just focusing on each other. It’s wonderful. We’ve gotten to spend more time together this year than the previous three combined."

But didn’t she think twice about marrying Linden after the tragedy? "Not once. True love is a choice. You stick by the person you love. You want to spend every day with them. They become your best friend. Being married is fantastic. Our relationship just keeps on getting better, the more we’ve chosen to commit. If we’d known how good it would be, we would have gotten married earlier! I signed up to live my entire life with my best friend and ironically, this has been the best year for us—I’ve finally gotten to spend as much time with Linden as I want. He’s stuck with me and I’m taking full advantage of it! Life is what you make it. Linden’s first thought was that it was a terrible way to start our life together, but I told him ‘It can’t get worse than this, so it’s all up from here!’ And it is. It gets better every day,” Bri says, as she lightly touches Linden’s arm.

“What happened to me isn’t so exceptional,” observes Linden. "I got conditioned to tragedy in PNG. Life is very raw. You deal with life and death all the time. My story is only one of thousands every year, all around the world."

"Tragedy like this is just part of life on this sinful planet. It’s not always nice," adds Bri. "We really are in the battle of good and evil. When something like this happens, you know you’re on the frontline of that battle. We’ve seen God work in so many ways. He’s been so good to us through all of this."

"You have a choice," concludes Linden, "let something like this destroy your faith, or you can use the experience to go on trusting God and allowing Him to work in your life. Faith is like physical exercise—and we’re running an ultra marathon right now. But when we’ve finished this phase of our lives, as tough as it is, our faith will be all the stronger for it. Just like our relationship."

To financially support Linden during his rehabilitation, go to: <www.gofundme.com/1wssao>. To follow Linden's recovery, go to: <www.facebook.com/PrayerForLindenBri>.
James Standish is editor of RECORD.
Aviation has played an important role in spreading the gospel to many parts of our globe. 50 years ago Adventist Aviation commenced in the South Pacific Division. March 1, 2014 will be a special celebration of how God has used Aviation in the SPD for hastening His Coming, over the past 50 years. Come and join in the weekend celebrations.

**Venue** - Avondale Memorial Church, 586 Freemans Drive, Cooranbong

**Full Weekend Program**

**Friday**

7:00pm    Vespers – “What God has done”  
Venue: Avondale Memorial Church

**Sabbath**

9:00am    Sabbath School, Dr Leigh Rice

10:45am    Church, Dr Barry Oliver

12:30pm    Pot Luck Fellowship Lunch  
Please bring a plate of food to share if you are able.

2:30pm    The Best of 50 years of Adventist Aviation
Venue: Avondale Memorial Church

6:30pm  Dinner – “Refuelling on the runway”
Join us for a 3 course sit down meal and a fun night of Trivia
Venue: Avondale School Multi-Purpose Centre, 119 Avondale Road, Cooranbong
Cost: $30 per head
Tickets: Click here to purchase your tickets now
RSVP: 21 February 2014

Sunday

9:30am  Fly & Feed
Achieve Aviation (Gary Fraser) Hangar, Cessnock Airport
BBQ Lunch provided

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Cyclists raise $194,000 to fight poverty

Great Ocean Road, Victoria

More than $AU194,000 was raised by 90 riders who took part in the 25,000 Spins Great Ocean Road Ride earlier this month.

The money raised by the three-day ride from Geelong to Warnambool will go to support the work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and three other charities.

Fifty riders took part on behalf of ADRA, raising $AU106,000.

New Zealand will play host to its first 25,000 Spins event from March 9 to 11. The money raised from the Queenstown Challenge will help support families in the Tay Ninh Province of Vietnam—one of the poorest regions in Asia.

Visit <www.25000spins.com> for more opportunities to pedal against poverty in 2014.
For three years, Pastor Peter Knopper and his family had served the people of Homu in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. They were the ideal missionary family in the prime of their lives. They didn’t just get to know the locals; they loved them. And in return, the people loved the Knoppers.

Then, on March 16, 1988, it all came to a most brutal and abrupt end.

Peter was outside his Homu home when a group of assailants fired a shotgun blast at him, striking him in the head. Peter died on the way to hospital, leaving behind a wife and three young children, along with a truckload of questions (the killers were never caught). He was 32—far too young.

It’s impossible to imagine the kind of impact Peter’s murder would have had on his family and close friends. What we do know is the pain of the tragedy is still very real.

“I was very close with my brother,” Eddy Knopper says. “While I’ve had some really healing experiences since his death, there are things that keep bringing the pain to the foreground.

“Things like the hymns that were sung at his memorial service. I still struggle to sing them. It makes it all come flooding back.”

Despite the pain, Eddy says when he looks back he can clearly see the leading hand of God. For example, after Peter’s murder, the highlands community had a massive baptism, with approximately 2500 people giving their lives to Christ.

Still, that doesn’t prevent thoughts of what might have been.

“You could tell he was always missionary material,” says Eddy. “I can’t help but wonder about where my brother would have ended up.”

It’s safe to say the Knopper family will always remember Peter’s life and sacrifice. But what about Peter’s church family—are we going to remember? Jesus said “greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Will we allow the selfless love of Peter and our other fallen missionaries to fade into obscurity?

No. Never.

To help all of us remember these ultimate expressions of love, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific has set up an online memorial. It’s a page dedicated to the men and women who paid the supreme price while in active service in the mission fields of our Division; a place to remember the Peter Knoppers, Pearl Tolhursts and Terai Solomons of our church family.

“We feel very honoured to be able to provide a permanent public memorial to those from our church family who gave their all in service for
Jesus, and the enormous sacrifice of their families,” says South Pacific Division Communications director James Standish. “We believe this memorial is the first of its kind in our church community.”

The memorial page doesn’t just recognise our fallen brothers and sisters. It also pays tribute to the faithful heroes who suffered so much loss, yet remained committed to “preaching the gospel to the entire world” (Mark 16:15).

Ask any parent who has suffered the grief of losing a child and they’ll tell you it’s heartbreaking—but imagine losing three.

In a span of six years, Pastor Walter and Christina (Chrissie) Ferris lost three infant children—two girls (Shirley and Jean) and one boy (Ronald Bobbie, aka “Ronny”)—while in the service of the Church.

Shirley passed away at birth in Euroa, Victoria, in 1931, shortly before the Ferrises were called to mission work overseas. Ronny and Jean both died while Walter served as a deep sea captain in Fiji.

Pastor Walter Ferris.

The circumstances surrounding Ronny’s death were particularly tragic.

In June 1933, the Ferrises decided to return to Suva from the outer eastern Lau Islands (where they were serving) to get a heavily pregnant Chrissie to hospital. However, strong trade winds struck the little mission boat during the voyage and in the midst of rough seas Chrissie was thrown from her bunk onto the floor. The company reached Suva a few days later, where Chrissie gave birth to a stillborn Ronny.

But for Walter, the tragedy didn’t end there.

In 1955, Chrissie passed away in Wahroonga, NSW, while the Ferrises were on furlough from Fiji.

One might assume such loss would be enough to break your spirit, or at least persuade you to give up a life of mission. Not Walter.

After Shirley’s death in 1931, Walter would go on to spend 32 years in active service overseas (24 years while married to Chrissie; nine years while married to his second wife, Myrtle).

“He was loyal to his maker,” says Elwin Ferris, Walter and Chrissie’s fourth and only surviving child. “It was in his blood to serve in the mission field. The Ferrises are a family of service.”

Shirley, Ronny and Jean Ferris are among the dozens of children whose names are listed at our online memorial. Their names serve as both a reminder of tragedy and a “thank you” to the parents who pushed through the sorrow for the sake of mission.

But the memorial page is not just about recognition.

As I gathered the list of names and read some of the stories, I couldn’t help but wonder about my own life and what I would be willing to give up in order to share the Gospel. Christians are called to “forsake all” and follow Christ (Luke 14:25-33). But how many of us have truly considered what that means? How many of us have given “I surrender all” an actual shot?

Visit it, interact with it, and be inspired by those who have given up so much in sharing the Gospel of Christ.

Finally, to those who know of other names that should be on this list, please get in touch. We owe it to those who gave up so much in the service of our Lord, to remember.

Linden Chuang is assistant editor of Record—digital.
I recently came across a conversation on the online blogging platform Tumblr that has been doing the internet rounds. The conversation went like this:

“Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say’ (John 8:43).

“Wait, did Jesus just say the equivalent of ‘Did I stutter?’ Jesus is such a rebel.”

Jesus the rebel: it’s an interesting concept. But, if you think about it, that’s what He was—a revolutionary, rebelling against the status quo. The conversation got me thinking: if Jesus were around today, what would He be saying? Because—well, let’s face it—Jesus was a pretty radical nonconformist.

If you’re like me, you’ve grown up learning about Jesus and the Pharisees. We’ve heard the children’s stories that paint the Pharisees as the bad guys while Jesus is the Hero. We even had kids' songs about it, like “I Just Wanna be a Sheep” (my childhood favourite), where the third verse says “I don’t wanna be a Pharisee / they’re just not fair you see.”

But like many realistic villains, the Pharisees had good intentions. They sought to obey the Scriptures and follow their God. They prayed daily, went to church and spent their lives trying to become more holy. However, their fundamental problem was that they were putting doctrines before people. As a result, traditions and symbols had been stripped of all their meaning and became mere rules, to be obeyed under threat of condemnation. Don’t walk long distances on Sabbath. Don’t light fires. Don’t associate with diseased people or you’ll become unclean.

The Pharisees were known for the things they didn’t do.

Jesus was known for the things He did.

Outside of our church walls, Christianity doesn’t tend to have the greatest rap sheet. Type "Christian" into Google News and you’ll likely find a host of stories on the things we’re known to be against. Anti-gay parades, rants about women and their "place", articles on Christian oppression. As Christians—Adventists even—we’re known more for the things we stand against than the things we stand for.

Sound familiar?

“How can I make this any more simple!” Jesus might say today. “Love the Lord your God, your Creator, and love those around you. You have been created for so much more than this ritual-following, straight-line walking, closed-minded lifestyle that you’ve been living.”

But loving people takes time, and time in today’s fast-paced world is particularly precious. It’s so much easier (and quicker) to abide by rules than to reach out and form relationships. Dare I say it, but without those relationships, maybe we too are missing the point?
How many non-Christians do we associate with on a regular basis? I’m ashamed to say that for me, I can count that number on one hand. I live with Christians, work with Christians and go on social outings with Christians. It’s easier that way. There are fewer explanations required, it’s far more comfortable and it’s easier to remain "clean". But that’s not how Jesus did it. Radical Jesus, bold Jesus, spent His life hanging out with tax collectors and adulterers, being the Friend and the Confidant they needed.

If we’re called as Christians to be Christ-like, then we too are called to radically love those around us. No exceptions. Gay and straight. Those for and against women’s ordination. Those who want drums in worship and those who don’t. That means people in and out of the church doors: coffee drinkers and Milo lovers, vegans, vegetarians, carnivores, and the ones who eat bacon and egg McMuffins on the way to Sabbath School. It doesn’t mean we have to agree with them. It does mean we should love them—really love them—anyway.

It’s easy to put our Christianity in a box, to take it out only on Sabbaths and in small groups. But unconditional, radical love can’t be boxed. Maybe that’s what makes it so difficult. And if Jesus was a radical in His day, what makes us think He wouldn’t be a radical in ours?

Let’s give the media something positive to talk about by following our radical Saviour—loving people, not just our rules.

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Train up a child

Surprise! Emotions flickered across their faces—shock, joy, tears. My parents had no idea we were coming to visit, no idea we’d managed to invite everyone at church to their surprise 30th anniversary dinner. My wife, the master organiser, had somehow planned, decorated and thrown the party from interstate, with the help of my siblings and I. It was the least we could do and a small token of our appreciation. Too rarely in our lives do we come together to celebrate those who mean the most to us—too often it’s too late.

In an age when so many relationships end, forever means “until the feelings wear off”. But my parents have so far weathered the storms of life. This was a milestone to celebrate. After all, I owe everything I am to them and to God, who they modelled to us.

They’ve showed me commitment, loyalty and conditional love, unconditionally. They taught me that two people with different interests, personalities and ways of doing things could live together in (relative) harmony. (Someone asked if that’s harmony until the relatives get involved?)

That’s not to say they didn’t fight. Of course they did. Different people clash. But they showed me that a fight is never as important as a person, that petty differences pale beside commitment and that reconciliation is always the best option. They showed me that tensions and trials were best withstood together and that it’s important to “leave” your birth family and “cleave” to your spouse. That was not always easy for our family but since our extended family was spread far and wide, we had to rely on each other.

My parents have had a number of stressful situations over the past few years, yet they have been solid rocks for their family, their friends and their church. Reflecting on their 30 years of marriage helped me to appreciate just how much they have done.

So much of what I learnt from them wasn’t taught but shown—in their actions, beliefs and relationships.

They taught me to be physically affectionate, playful and unafraid to show emotion. They taught me that it was OK to be first at church in the morning and last to leave because church was family and if things needed doing, then they had to be done. There they taught me the importance of hospitality to visitors, respect and appreciation for elders at church (even though I was scared of them) and the importance of making church like a family, a multigenerational, multi-ethnic family who carried each other through.

My dad taught me a healthy respect for things, my own and other people’s. He showed me practical problem solving and personal satisfaction with a job well done. I spent many hours not being very helpful, but watching him fix things, get things working again or tidying up the garden.

My mum introduced me to books, those glorious portals where mysteries can be unlocked, burdens lightened, faith grown and knowledge watered among their pages. But she also taught me to be a discerning reader, highlighting the importance of filling my mind with the right kind of images. We had many deep spiritual conversations and she read us My Bible Stories faithfully.
The most important thing my parents gave all of us was a love for God and by His grace my siblings and I are all still involved in church.

I pray I will have a marriage like theirs—that lasts, learns and leaves a legacy.

Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of Record.