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~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ I. Death of George Francis Edwards

Viola Khan Edwards <vi24edwards@yahoo.com> February 11:

George Francis Edwards, born in Newcastle, Wyoming, passed away February 2, 2012, in Oviedo, Florida. A veteran of WWII, George lived a full life, living and working throughout the United States before moving overseas to further his engineering career. As a civil engineer, he was able to live in the countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, and Vietnam. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Viola Khan Edwards, and children Paul, Scott, Carolyn, George Jr., Michael, and grandchildren Abby, Drew, Dylan and Noah.

The family will be having a private memorial February 8, 2012. In lieu of flowers, the family is asking that donations be made to the Central Florida Zoo, where George volunteered as a docent. For donations please contact Brenda New at 407-323-4450 extension 117.

George F. Edwards, Jr.
407-310-9828
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II. Letters

   1. Dalbir Plaha <dalplaha@hotmail.com> February 7:

After reading about the River Water experience, that Br. Jonathan Lovitt went thru after consuming Ganges water, it reminded me of the camping trip that we went for while I was studying at Roorkee. I think the name of the place was Cheela, located some where between Haridwar and Rishikesh. We used to go to the Ganges river bank for bathing etc. Pastor Bill McHenry took us on a long hike along the Ganges. I had taken my dad's military canteen and had some jaggery with me. The hike was rather long and tiring and I filled up the canteen with water from the river and added some jaggery to it. It was the coolest and freshest drink the I ever had. Nothing happened to me.

The river water in those days was fresh and clean and very cooling. Having an Indian stomach didn't hurt either.

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   2. Don Bankhead <drbankhead@gmail.com> February 11:

Thank you for your "labor of love" with the newsletter. It is a real blessing. We are still in AIAS, Philippines. I teach Supervision of Instruction and am the administrator in their academy. Marge helps in the ESL classes in the elementary school.

We are busy and happy here. It got so cold the other night that we had to put on a blanket. Clear down to 70 degrees!

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III. Dr. Samraj Addresses UNESCO

Adventist Media Centre <amc3@vsnl.com>

The World Peace Centre invited Dr. Edison Samraj for a round table conference to speak on the role of science and its relationship to education. The conference was held in the World Peace Center on 30th of January, 2012 and distinguished democrats, bureaucrats, vice chancellors and leaders of thought were present on the occasion. The presentation was well received by the gathering and the response received were also edifying. The UNESCO chair of
South Asia has its headquarters in Pune and Dr. V. D. Karad, the president for UNESCO for South Asia, coordinated this event.

--Maureen Dkhar, secretary to Dr. Samraj ~~~~~~~~~~~ IV. The Karen People as "Warehoused Refugees" from "Dr. Rabbit's Mission Field" by Terri Saelee in the current "Adventist World" Review

"Many Adventists have fond memories of "Dr. Rabbit," the beloved Adventist missionary, author, and storyteller, Eric B. Hare. His many riveting audio stories include 'The Big Yellow Truck,' 'Silver and the Snake,' and such books as 'Clever Queen,' 'The Haunted Pagoda,' and 'Curse Proof.'

"Fewer Adventists remember the name of the ethnic group to which Hare devoted his life. Fewer yet know about the incredible long-term impact of his mission service. Today an estimated 3,000 of these Karen--former spirit-worshippers from Myanmar (Burma)--are devoted Seventh-day Adventists as a result of the work of Eric B. Hare and his small team of missionaries.

"Sadly, because of political issues impacting their once-peaceful jungle, multiple thousands of these gentle people have had to flee for their lives and are now trapped in a situation that has become one of the hottest human rights issues in the world today, refugee warehousing. According to 'World Refugee Survey' editor Merril Smith, 'warehousing is the practice of keeping refugees in protracted situations of restricted mobility, enforced idleness, and dependency--their lives on indefinite hold--in violation of their basic rights.'

"According to the Refugee Rights Report Card, part of the Refugee Survey, the camps in which Karen, Shan, and Chin refugees from Myanmar are warehoused are among the worst in the world.

"Many Karen Adventists are among those who 'have been trapped in limbo for 10 years or more, confined to shoddy, degrading refugee camps, where they are unable to move freely, work to support their families, or living anything resembling a normal life. These refugees are forgotten by the international community, governments, and media.' . . .

"In 2006 the United States began to help the Karen people by allowing a limited number of refugees each year to resettle and rebuild their lives in the United States. Many of our Karen brothers and sisters are coming to our shores. Some may live near you.

"Life for Karen refugees in the States is far from rosy. The Karen, like most Southeast Asian refugees, usually arrive in North America with fewer personal belongings than most flood victims can salvage from their ruined homes, and with limited language skills. Having been warehoused for decades, they have nearly lost even the gardening skills their people had honed for centuries. Nor have they had educational opportunities to develop other marketable skills. They find themselves in a declining economy with increasing unemployment even among native English speakers, faced with the task of trying to provide for their families while struggling to learn English. . . .

"Lacking transportation, they are often unable to attend an Adventist church, even if they manage to find one. When they do, they often find that our members are unfamiliar with their background. Not wanting to offend, church members hesitate to ask about the Karen language or cultural background, or find out where they live, much less visit their homes to ask what they might need or get personally acquainted enough to understand their situation. . . ."

[To read the entire article, look in the February issue of Adventist World.] ~~~~~~~~~~~ V. Blind Preacher Speaks at Kanuru S. D. A. Church

Cecil Samuel Marandi <cmarandi@rediffmail.com> February 8:

We were delighted to hear Pradeep Pandey (23), a blind young man, speak to 40 nursing students of Nagarjuna School of Nursing, S. D. A. church, Kanuru, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, on January 21. Elder Manick Kisku and Mr. Ranjithan Kisku, principal of nursing school, have arranged for Sabbath off for SDA nursing students.

Pradeep Pandey interviewed by Jeffrey Biswas: <davidjeffrey37@yahoo.com>

Question: How did you lose your sight?

Answer: I was blind from birth. My eyes were under-developed. My parents were very concerned about my life. I did not know that I was blind. I played with my friend's marbles. I use to fall often. I thought other boys also fall like me while playing. One day while playing marble I lost it and was trying to search with my hands. Pastor Alfred Kisku happened to see my plight and handed me my marble. He later asked my parents if they would like to admit me in the S. D. A. integrated school at Karmatar.

Question: Where did you have your education?

Answer: I was brought by Pastor Alfred Kisku to the S. D. A. integrated school at Karmatar, Jharkhand. I was fully sponsored by Asian Aid. I was only 5 years and 6 months old when I was brought to the school. My first night at the school I was missing my mother. My father saw sixteen other blind students living and studying together at the school. He was comfortable to know that there were also other blind children in the school. My first teacher was Mrs. Salomi
Mum. She taught me Braille and was our resource teacher. My principal, Pradeep S. Marandi and other teachers loved and taught us. I did well in my studies like the sighted students. I had many friends in school. One year I was selected to be the boys' general monitor.

I was also selected as the president of the boys' social club for a semester. Upon completing the 7th standard I joined the Asian Aid SDA school for the blind at Bobilli, A. P. There too I did well in my studies. Principals, Pastor Christianraj, Pastor Prabhudas and Pastor Paulson and many teachers taught us with love and devotion. After completing my 12th standard I joined Spicer Memorial College. I repeatedly saw dreams urging me to leave Spicer College and do ministry. So I left college. And today I am here to share my experience with you.

Question: Tell us how you were converted to Adventism?

Answer: I come from a staunch Hindu family. When I was brought to SDA school, Karmatar, I found the students and teachers very helpful, loving and caring. I got a lot of thoughtful attention by all. The environment of the school was very conducive for my spiritual growth. Morning and evening worships, Friday vespers, Sabbath School and divine services were spiritually uplifting. I liked the stories of Jesus and learned about loving God. Early in life I gave my life to Jesus. Later I was baptized at Asian Aid S D A school for the blind at Bobilli. A. P. Here too, teachers and principal provided for my spiritual nurture and growth. I love my Jesus. I want to be like Him. I want to do what Jesus did, teach and preach!

Question: Now that you became a Christian, how do your parents feel about it?

Answer: My parents are unhappy. They sometimes express their anger. However, my changed behavior do not leave much room for their complaint. I show respect and love for them. They still have concern for me. I help them whenever I can.

Question: As now you are grown up, is there any proposal for marriage?

Answer: Not really! But something amusing happened. After completing my 12th standard, I went home. There was a proposal for my older brother. The girl’s party had come to see my brother. I was seated outside on the porch.

The girl saw me and liked me instantly. She talked to me. I told her that I was not the person they had come to see and not me. And further I was a Christian now and could not marry her. I had no interest. I had decided to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Question : What are you doing now?

Answer: At present I am at Kadlipal, Sambalpur Dist., Orissa. People have requested me to be the principal at Kadlipal S D A school. We have one hundred students, 75 of these live in the hostel. We are all together eight teachers.

Question: How are you involved in the ministry?

Answer: On the weekend I preach in different churches. I get invitations to preach by different denomination and groups of people. I conducted meetings at Borji, Bobili, AP May 1-3, 2011. I preached in Bidar, Karnataka to non-Christians May 26- 28. I have received an invitation again to preach to them. Recently I preached at Rajivnagar, Vijayawada on two different occasions. Pastor and members are convinced of the Sabbath message. Lives of drunks are being changed. I had an invitation to preach to them. People listened to me and asked many questions on Sabbath. My messages are centered on Christ and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. He is coming back again to take those who believe on Him and by His grace keep the commandments in loving response to his offer of salvation.

Question: What is your message for the young people?

Answer: Tell everyone what Christ has done for you! Prepare for life and ministry. Share the good news of salvation with everyone, everywhere and every opportunity you have. Jesus is coming soon!

VI. Cathy Jensen & the Women's Ministry in Nepal

Umesh Kumar Pokharel <umsan@wlink.com.np> February 10:

Women are very busy of doing creative things which will help them raise money at Gathaghar SDA Church, Katmandu. Mrs. Cathy Jensen, Women Ministry Director of the Nepal Field has been working very hard to help the women of our churches in Nepal.

Mrs. Jensen has started tailoring classes for the women of our church at Gathaghar, Katmandu and for the first group there are 8 ladies learning how to stitch, and Mrs. Jamuna Shreatha, one of the strong ladies in our church, is teaching, and Mrs. Durag Rijal, Director of the Women Ministry Department of the Gathaghar church is coordinating the program. At the Gathaghar church there are 65 women members who are very active in church related activities.

Mrs. Jensen has provided sewing machines and some funds for the tailoring classes and right now and it would help the ladies to get trained and later to start on their own business which will help them to run their home without any
financial burden; later we are planning to teach arts and crafts also. We need more sewing machines and funds to help our ladies who are in real need by providing small amount of money to start their own business.

Kindly pray for the work in Nepal and the women's ministry work which is growing day by day.

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VII. Dr. Johnny Thomas' Contribution to La Sierra University

Justin Singh JUWYL@aol.com February 10:

In the Pacific Union Recorder, January 2012 issue, Darla Martin Tucker, wrote an article about Dr. Johnny Thomas and his contribution to the School of Business, La Sierra University.

Dr. Thomas taught for the School of Business for ten years before becoming its Dean in 1999. "It's record-breaking year at La Sierra University when its School of Business jumped ahead last fall with a new enrollment high of 444 students, the largest pool of registrants in the school's 25-year history."

Dr. Gary Chartier, Associate Dean of the School and an alumnus of La Sierra University, says, "Aside from the enrollment increase over the years, the substantial increase in the quality of the faculty is something for which Johnny gets lots of credit." The School of Business offers nine undergraduate degrees and nine Master of Business Administration degrees, with new MBAs in medical management and dental management. The School also houses the Center for Philanthropy, the Edward C. Allred Center for Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship, the Center for Conflict Resolution, and the University's Student In Free Enterprise team, or SIFE.

On January 9, 2012, the School of Business held the ground-breaking ceremony for a 16 million 60,000-square-foot business education center, named in honor of pioneer Seventh-day Adventist philanthropists Tom and Vi Zapara. The building project is expected to be completed within a year. It will be the largest Adventist business education center in North America.

"The new business complex will help the school live out its dream of fostering transformative business education, and it can be expected to serve as a powerful draw for new students, faculty and staff members committed to creating value and making a difference," Thomas said.

The Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist community in North America and abroad can be proud of one its sons rising to the heights of an outstanding educator in a world renowned Adventist educational institution. We give praise to our Lord for Johnny Thomas and a host of other Southern Asians who have made major contributions to the worldwide work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

-Submitted by Drs. Justin and Juanita Singh who supplied the following background:

Dr. Johnny Thomas' father and mother worked most of their lives in Gifford Memorial Hospital, Nuzvid, and retired there. They both are from Kerala. They had three sons: Sunny Thomas (died by drowning in a local lake while studying at Loma Linda University 1980), Johnny is next, and Leslie Thomas is the youngest and he is a dentist, also lives locally. Johnny's mother and the late K. P. Mathew's wife are sisters. They are all Malayalis. They are wonderful people. Juanita and I had the privilege of teaching Johnny at Spicer High School--Juanita taught him maths and I taught him Bible in the ninth standard. Later I baptized him also and still have the picture of his baptism with us. Johnny appointed Juanita as the director of English as a Second Language in 2003 and became her boss, as he housed the ESL department in the School of Business building. Johnny married Kimberly Borg, a wonderful American girl, whose parents are members of the Palm Springs Church. Johnny and Kimberly have a 15-year-old son (Jonathan) and a 10 year old daughter (Natasha). Johnny earned his PhD degree from Claremont Graduate University in Economics and Politics and serves on the board of LLBN, KSGN among others. He also led the fundraising for the 3,000 seat Nuzvid Church in 2006 and the recently completed Nuzvid Community Hall.

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