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I. Pastor Christo Celebrates 90th Birthday

John M. Fowler <FowlerJ@gc.adventist.org> Sept. 14:

On September 11, 2014 Pastor Christo, our veteran and venerable leader and pastor, joined the exclusive club of those few Adventists in India who have reached the 90s. His 90th birthday was celebrated in the garden of his home-beautifully decorated, lighted, and above all decorated with overflowing love of his children, grandchildren, relatives, former students, colleagues, and current workers and believers at the Southern Asia headquarters. Pastor Christo, a pearl from the clay mines of West Bengal, has been a giant who marched across the Adventist history in India for over seventy years from the time he began his service as an office secretary to the time he retired in 1990. His service accomplished many great firsts:

first national youth leader for SUD, first national secretary of the Division, first national president off the Division, first evangelist to Goa-and in addition and above all, first servant of the Lord he loved, as a missionary to Mongolia, as an acting president of Bangladesh union, and more belovedly to all of us as pastor and builder of the Hosur Church. What a life he led!

In a simple and beautiful service, surrounded by his wife, sons and daughters and children, the celebration paid tributes to God who leads those who devote themselves to His service at all times and in every way. Two main points of the service, in addition to the lovely meal: Pastor Christo spotted in the group that met to honor him all those who were under his care in Spicer Hostel in the 1940s-A. T. Thomas, N. Devaraj, David Poddar, George Thomas, etc-and gave to each one of them a token of his remembrance, a shawl. Secondly, almost in the style of Jacob, he read a particularized blessing to each of his children-Glenn, Gordon, Sonia, Lorna, John-and expressed his hope that when God gathers His jewels, He will look upon his children with kindness. Mrs. Christo of course was here angelic self, beaming with justifiable pride, sang a song in his honor-a song she learnt some 77 years ago.

A friend and an onlooker like me could only say: "What God hath wrought."

--John M. Fowler, Editor-at-Large, Adventist Review ~~~~~~~~~II. The Wilson Family & the Southern Asia Division

In the last newsletter we told you of Dr. D. S. Williams' book, "Highly Committed", about the Wilson family. Chapter 8, Neal Wilson: The Early years, contain several paragraphs about Vincent Hill School which he attended. SUDites will find these descriptions of this long-defunct institution of interest.

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"When the Wilson family left the United States on April 23, 1935, bound for India, Neal was 14, Clarice was 12, and Ruth was 9. When they arrived in Poona in late May, Neal and Clarice had an Indian tutor for a few months. Ruth was taught at home by her mother. The last Wilson boy was born in Poona, India January 9, 1938 and was named Donald Wallin Wilson.

"Neal was coming into full manhood and found sports to be his new interest. He devoted every spare moment to this challenging activity. He became involved in track and field, polo, soccer, mountaineering, swimming, and other sports. He soon found that he excelled in sports. His shelves and walls were decorated with medals, ribbons, trophies, cups, and pictures reminding him of his athletic ability. The 15-year-old lanky youth really felt proud when he won a national title in the regional sport of badminton in the Western Indian Championship... At his baptism in 1935 he gave his heart fully to Christ and the church.

"Neal and Clarice attended Vincent Hill School and College from March,
1936 until the end of the school year in November. (They were on the British system and the school year began in March and ended in November.) Vincent Hill School and College was a coeducational Adventist boarding school on the senior high school level, with a basic American/British curriculum.

"William Johnsson, who was a teacher there in the 1960s, gives this wonderful description of the place. 'Situated in the first ridge of the Himalayas, at 6,500 feet, the school was above the malaria line. It was at the end of the town of Mussoorie, a long, sprawling, up and down settlement that featured several high-class schools, and attracted many tourists during the hot summer months. It was a grand, wild location.... Access to Vincent Hill School was by train, bus, and foot--train from Delhi to Dehra Dun, at the foot of the mountains; bus on the long, winding, switch-back road to Mussoorie, then by foot up the road to the top of Vincent Hill and down to the school several hundred feet below. The school owned no motorized vehicles. There was no access road to the school.

"The school had been cut from the rock. Everything was up or down. In the center was a large flat area holding the administration building, girls' dorm, cafeteria and play area. Up and down from the center were small cuts for staff housing. At the very bottom, on another large cut, was the boys' dormitory....The school had a reputation for academic excellence. One year the average IQ tested at 117."

"The student enrollment of about 100 was made up mainly of children of missionaries and workers scattered across India, Asia, Canada, the United States, and Australia who had made significant financial contributions toward the founding of the school. It had gone through several name and site changes before the Wilson family arrived and at the time they were there it offered grades one through twelve and two years of college. For students who wanted it, the high school curriculum prepared them for the Cambridge Senior School Leaving Certificate. Neal enrolled in his final two years of high school and then did his first two years of college.

"Neal had the opportunity to honor Vincent Hill School with his athletic ability. A number of other schools were located in that area, but because this school was the smallest and served only vegetarian food in the dining room, it was the subject of ridicule.

"The other schools would challenge us in all kinds of sports,' reflected Neal. 'but we always had to decline because of school policy. They said it was because we were scared of them.'

"There came a time when a few students grew tired of the ridicule. The area schools held an annual competitive run to a mountain about 20 miles away that required crossing huge gorges that were spanned by rope bridges and scrambling steep mountain sides. The Vincent Hill students were again forbidden to compete.

"Three students, however, decided that they would enter the contest to demonstrate to all who criticized and taunted them that there was an 'Adventist advantage'. When the race had ended, Neal was a quarter of a mile ahead of the nearest competitor. And the two others from Vincent Hill School took third and fourth place, positions. 'After that,' said Neal, 'there was never any question about the "grass eaters" and the Adventist advantage.'

Vincent Hill School and College agreed with Neal. He was chosen as president of his junior college senior class, and he looked forward to graduation. The class members spent a great deal of time on speeches and plans for graduation, which took place on Saturday night, November 25, 1939.

He gave the president’s address and sang in the mixed quartet. Clarice gave the farewell address. Neal's grades were excellent. He was among those who averaged above 90 percent for the fifth period of 1939. He also played the trumpet and trombone in the school orchestra and took a course in the fundamentals of hymnology. He indicated that he personally owned his trumpet and trombone.

"Commencement exercises in 1939 were marked by simplicity and dignity which will long be remembered by the members of the class as well as by students, teachers, and friends who were present. Pastor J. C. H. Colett had charge of the Consecration Service on Friday evening, and Pastor N. (Nathaniel) C. Wilson delivered a timely message from the book of Esther in his Baccalaureate sermon on Sabbath. The Class Night program contained well prepared speeches and music numbers presented by members of the class. The words of the motto, Honourably and Courageously, and the words of the aim.

To Finish the Task, were beautifully shown in the decorations of Royal Blue & Tangerine. Neal graduated from the junior college and Clarice from the high school. The two graduation services were combined.

"Having had a pleasant year in bookkeeping at Vincent Hill School and College, when he graduated, Neal secured jobs working as an accountant and bookkeeper in the Treasury Department of the Southern Asia Division office for one year, and then he became acting treasurer of the Oriental Watchman Press, the publishing house for the division.
"The Wilson family left India in 1940 and Neal and Clarice enrolled in Pacific Union College."

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III. Life Sketch of Norma D'Sena Shires

October 28, 1932- September 7, 2014
Reg Shires <RegShires@aol.com>

Norma was born at her spacious home at No. 10 Beawar Road at Ajmer in Rajasthan, a rugged city, almost biblical-looking, with its landmark Taragarh Hill and its ancient fortress. Her mother was Annette Hodges and her father Pat D'Sena worked at the Ajmer Railway Workshop building railway carriages. It was a prosperous and loving home. Looking at her then one would never have thought that she would face setbacks in her young and happy life.

Norma, a bright student, had to drop out in the 6th standard and start working to help support her family. From babysitting, to working in the coffee shop, to staying at a Maharaja's palace near Agra to help his wife, Norma made sure her earnings went to her mother to get food on the table. After a neighbor taught her shorthand and typing she ventured out to busy Bombay to find a better-paying job to help her family. At Glaxo labs they hired her immediately. In Bombay she enjoyed the social life and was even featured as a singer at the Times of India ball.

It was at Bombay that she met an Anglo-Indian pastor, Bob Ritchie. He encouraged her to finish her high school education and directed her to Spicer College near Poona which had a high school that would take her into 9th Standard even though she was 19. To help her with the fees Pastor Ritchie introduced her to an Adventist missionary, Garland Hoag, who trained her to work that summer selling books to earn a scholarship.

The first time I saw Norma I was a theology student at Spicer College working my way through college. I was planting zinnias along with some Bangalore boys, all of us working barefoot in the black garden soil in front of Spicer's administration building. She had come through the main gate, walking tall and sure of herself, in a beautiful dress, her dark hair well styled. "Who's that?" I asked a friend. "Don't know!"

Norma graduated from high school near the top of her class and went down to Andhra Pradesh to work and study for a nursing degree at a rural hospital. I didn't think I'd see her again. Two years into her nursing I heard that she had lost her mother who had died delivering a baby girl name Juanita. I wrote to her expressing my sympathy. She told me how she had journeyed back to Ajmer and on seeing the newborn baby decided on a bold step: she'd ask her nursing superintendent if she could bring her baby sister back with her to care for her at the hospital until she finished her degree. Word came back immediately in a telegram: "Come." Our correspondence continued, often two letters a week. I was nearing my internship as a pastor in Madras. After she graduated we were married at Bangalore, my hometown, in 1957. She was now Norma D'Sena Shires. We started life with Nita and soon added three sons, Michael, Donn and Robert.

Norma has served faithfully at my side in several churches in India at Madras, Vizag and Hubli. In the U.S. at Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. The best years of our life were at a beautiful school for rare tribal students in West Bengal near a village called Falakata. "The Leopard's Call, An Anglo-Indian Love Story" is set there.

Norma's greatest trial came to her in the U.S. My Bangalore heart was fast failing, weakened by childhood diseases. Listening to my heart's feeble and erratic beats she said to me: "Reg, I'm taking you to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore where they do heart transplants." She got me to a transplant specialist who immediately put me in the hospital. There I waited under their care for three and half months. Norma was in my room one October when doctors and nurses rushed in with the good news. "We've found a new heart for you," the doctor announced. I can still see Norma running behind my gurney toward the surgery with the team and leaving me at the door. A whole night and day went by before I saw her by my side again, holding my hand and whispering, "You have a new heart, my darling." It's been 16 years since that miracle. In these last few years of Norma's life I was able to be at her side, day and night, as she has patiently dealt with her illness, supported by our loving children. - Reg Shires ~~~~~~~~~~~~ IV. Adventist Media Center Interfaces With United Board & AIACHE

Edison Samraj <adventistmediacentre@gmail.com> Sept. 10:

The Adventist Media Centre has been invited to interface with All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) in New Delhi and United Board for media outreach to India and the neighboring countries. United Board is an organization that enhances and empower Christian leaders for growth and development. It acts like a catalyst and governmental body that empowers leadership to become matured organizations of our society. The high profile meeting
was convened in the AIACHE headquarters and it resulted in decision taken to interface Adventist Media Centre regularly in the shortwave, FM and TV production. We have come up with an understanding that we will work together as partners to transform the world. We are thankful to God for the opportunity that AMC has in interacting with a bigger body reaching out to many Christians in Asia. Dr. Glenn is the vice president for programs for United Board and Dr. Daniel is the secretary of AIACHE coordinating this effort with AMC. They have expressed their gratefulness and thankfulness for our interaction with them in assisting them in our major programs especially of HPDP programs which is human values development programs. This program was initiated as a result of the crisis that emerged in the Indian constitution and I am thankful that AMC is able to play a critical role in shaping the future of our region.

-- Dr. Edison Samraj

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V. Remembering Evangeline Masilamony

John M. Fowler. <FowlerJ@gc.adventist.org> Sept. 14:

In the passing away of Evangeline Masilamony we have lost a true saint.

From her young days to the day she breathed her last, she was a living testimony to what an abiding trust and an enduring faith can do to a person.

She has lived a long and full life, and during the course of her life she has touched many persons with the love of Jesus. First and foremost she was a great mother, and only those of use who know her children and her family will know the hardship, the endurance and the absolute dedication that characterized the way she managed the family, and saw to it that every one of her children was as though he or she was the only child she had: she cared for each one, loved each one, plotted the course of their commitment to Christ with a passionate heart, and did everything within her power and upon her knees to see that her children walk the way and talk the faith.

Today, those children rise up with a character and a motivation reflecting the character of Christ and call her "Blessed." Indeed she lived the life of Solomon’s ideal mother portrayed in the book of Proverbs. Secondly, she was a great mother in Israel. She and her late husband were my colleagues at the Oriental Watchman Publishing House in Salisbury Park. During her service there and in her contribution to the Church there and to the Tamil Sabbath School Class, she brought an endearing quality of mercy and grace. If you would step on her toes, she would turn around and say "sorry" to you. Such was her own Sermon on the Mount. She was gracious, kind, helpful, never one to get angry, forgiving-and many other qualities I wish I could have a tenth of those. Possibly she inherited such a Christ-like character from her father who himself was an exemplary Christian. Thus goes life-and all we can say is simply to be the echo of Revelation: "Blessed are they that die in the Lord." Our comfort goes to the bereaved children and grand children and the siblings.

Maranatha.

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VII. SPECIAL NOTICE (Repeated)

We are changing the way we distribute the SUD e-News. In the future it will be posted via Yahoo Groups. Our daughter-in-law, Lila Tidwell, is currently sending invitations to each of you to sign up to the SUD e-News Yahoo group. I encourage you to accept the invitation if you wish to continue to receive my newsletter. You can request to join by sending an email to the following address: sudnews-subscribe@yahoogroups.com ~~~~~~~~~~~ To remove your name from the mailing list of this newsletter, simply reply to this e-mail and put "REMOVE" in the Subject line.