

About this time, Roger McFarland, coach of the team at La Sierra, became interested in competitive acrobatics. Contacts McFarland had made, combined with an article he had read about two other Adventists competing, prompted him to take six of his students to the 1987 U.S. National Championships held in Hawaii. By 1988, La Sierra was hosting the national championships, with 26 Adventists competing. In 1989, Adventists took another turn, with Kalua hosting the National Championships at Andrews University. Adventist participation had now reached 86.

At this point Robb White, Mark Velasco, Jon Velasco, and John Greenidge began training at Andrews University. They competed and won the elite national men's four title for two years.

In the third year the group picked up Rick Schwartz—head coach at Spring Valley where they were now training—after losing partner John Greenidge. This group held their title at nationals and even scored enough points to move on to international competition. It was this group that placed sixth at the 1992 world championships.

During Friday's finals at the 1992 world championships, the group ran into difficulty with sundown, and unanimously chose not to perform one of their routines. The group came out sixth all around, scoring higher than any other U.S. group at the competition, and higher than any other U.S. men's four at an international competition. This score secured the United States a spot in this division at the 1993 World Games, at which acrobatics will be included for the first time. They, along with Vanny Dye, are the only Adventists to reach this level of competition.

Rick Schwartz, the fourth and newest partner, also coaches Spring Valley Academy, which is the largest Adventist competitive team, sending more than 20 competitors to the national competition each year. Spring Valley has become a very strong team, winning medals for almost every entry they make.

Other Adventist schools are now becoming involved. Union College and Columbia Union College have sent teams to the last three national championships. These two colleges combined have managed to take home two team awards and 15 medals.

It is now estimated that one fourth of all acrobats competing in the United States are Adventist. Nine hundred Adventists are competing members of the federation, with more than 200 of these competing at the national level. Not surprisingly, Adventists are moving into leadership positions. La Sierra coach Roger McFarland is a member of the United States Sports Acrobatics Federation Board and Executive Committee. Spring Valley coach Rick Schwartz serves as regional director for the Mideast.

Diplomat & Missionary: Pilgrims on the Road

by Roy Branson

Two recent visitors to Washington, D.C. came from countries with very few Adventists, Albania and Turkey. They updated two stories previously printed in *Spectrum*. Megan Shehu and David Dunn also embody the health and creativity of the Seventh-day Adventist community.

Diplomat in Albania

Megan Shehu is a member of the foreign ministry of Albania. Three years ago, she was marching with fellow university students in the streets of Tirana. They could have

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all been shot. Instead, their demonstrations helped overthrow the remnants of the most repressive dictatorship in Europe.

Enver Hoxha, first secretary of the communist party, ruled Albania for 40 years, from 1946 until his death in 1985. Loyal to Stalin and enemy of all Soviet liberalization, Hoxha closed more than 2,000 places of worship, tortured and executed thousands of believers, and wrote into the nation's constitution that "the State recognizes no religion whatever and supports atheist propaganda." Hoxha's successor clung to power until 1990.

In the spring of 1992, Megan, at 21, graduated with honors from the University of Tirana and its program in linguistics and literature (her thesis was on the nature of double-negatives). After scoring among the top 2 percent in a government examination, she was invited to join the foreign ministry. Her university-long practice of teaching herself English—three hours a night—then proved critical. The United States Department of State arrived in Tirana and, after conducting a round of competitive interviews, invited Megan to be the youngest of only 10 Albanian officials to attend a month-long seminar at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C. Other invitees included the president's chief-of-staff and his principal foreign policy advisor.

That was not all that happened to Megan in 1992. In September, after studying many months, she was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist, one of only about 100 in the entire country. She confirms *Spectrum's* 1991 report (Vol. 22, No. 1) that her home congregation in the capital, Tirana, includes the pioneer Adventist Meropi Gjika (now 88), and her two sons, Thanas, a professor of literature at the University of Tirana; and Viktor, one of Albania's most prominent filmmakers.

As soon as she arrived, in February 1993, for the State Department seminar in Washington, D.C., Megan's instructors fulfilled their promise to find fellow believers. Her first Sabbath in

America was spent with the Adventist congregation in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Her second Sabbath she greeted worshipers at the 11 a.m. service of the second-largest Adventist congregation in North America, the 3,200-member Sligo church in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Megan told amazed churchgoers, and a Sligo discussion Sabbath school class, that she comes from a Muslim family (although not formally religious). Indeed, Megan's paternal grandfather was a muezzin, the cleric calling pre-war Albanians to prayers at a mosque. Her maternal grandfather was a professor, imprisoned by the Hoxha regime for his democratic ideals.

Megan began studying the Bible when three American boys, speaking English, arrived at the University of Tirana. Later, when she decided to become a Christian, her family initially had problems, but are now reconciled. "They see that my Christianity has made me much more joyful. Besides, they love me." Before the Sabbath school class was over, Megan was saying how proud she was of her Albanian culture—"as ancient as Greece's"—and smilingly asking about differences in lifestyle between Albanian and American Adventists—the latter seemingly more rigid.

Both Albania and Adventism can rest assured that in Megan Shehu they have an accomplished and winsome diplomat.

Modern-day Livingstone in Turkey

David Dunn loves being a missionary. He also loves adventure, so he makes certain they always go together. The key, as for Megan Shehu, is linguistic ability. At the famous Berlitz language school in Washington, D.C., David became something of a legend for his rapid mastery of Arabic. He now teaches in a Turkish high school.

During Megan's first week in America, David was completing arrangements to bring up to 100 non-Adventist Turkish students to Columbia Union College for a summer of English-language instruction. He also told some of his story to a Sligo church Sabbath school.

Partly because of his language skills, the General Conference sent David and his family to Kuwait. While he pastored a congregation made up largely of non-Kuwaitis, David cultivated Kuwaiti friendships. He chatted easily in cafes, and was beginning to become acquainted with members of the ruling families. The son of missionaries, David planned to stay in Kuwait with his family for years.

Then the Iraqis invaded. David was the American Adventist caught behind Iraqi lines in Kuwait City (reported in *Spectrum*, Vol. 21, No. 2). He survived through the efforts of Muslim Kuwaitis who had stayed in the country to work in the underground resistance. He had spent time getting to know them; they now helped their friend.

After a brief respite in the United States, David returned to the Middle East on a special mission with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). This time he traveled to Istanbul, then trekked through eastern Turkey, not stopping until he had penetrated into Iraq, indeed to its northern capital, Mosul. There, under protection of the United Nations, he helped the Kurds survive the months after the Gulf War.

Then in 1991 the church had a new assignment. Despite decades of effort, and the purchase of a large building near the famous Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey—according to David—still has only eight Seventh-day Ad-

ventists. The denomination wanted him to start work in new areas. So, David retrieved his family from the United States, and took them to Iskanderun, a port in Southern Turkey, near Syria.

The Dunn family knew no one when they arrived. They sat down in an outdoor restaurant and David and his wife began doing what they do best—getting acquainted. In that first conversation, they learned that the high school to which the well-to-do business and government leaders sent their children needed an English teacher. After the first candidate left the country, David was employed (he turns his salary over to the Middle East Union). He and his family are now part of the life of Iskanderun. The Muslim parents who have come to know and trust him for his work at the high school are the ones who will be paying for their children to be taught at an American Adventist college.

Now the church wants David and his family to move again—this time to Istanbul, where David has been invited to become a faculty member at the well-known Roberts College, founded early in this century by American Presbyterians.

No one ever questioned the commitment to Christian missions of David Livingstone, the famous Scottish missionary to Africa. But Livingstone the preacher was also driven to be Livingstone the adventuring explorer. Those who have heard the 20th-century David, and who find themselves, for some reason, in Turkey, should be prepared, if they are in some sidewalk cafe, to look up, recognize a round, quizzical American face, and say, "Pastor Dunn, I presume."