



Remember, You Heard It Here First

Spectrum led in the reestablishment of an early Adventist tradition of candid reporting and lively analysis.

TWO AUTHORS AND TWO STORIES DOMINATED *Spectrum's* first years of reporting. Tom Dybdahl and Bonnie Dwyer were the reporters. The Pacific Press discrimination case and the Davenport financial scandal were the stories. These were the first of many topics for which *Spectrum* was the denomination's most reliable (and sometimes only) source of information.

After Tom Dybdahl received an M.Div. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, he became the first Adventist to receive an M.A. from the top-ranked Columbia School of Journalism. After running an inner-city program and a U.S. Congressman's office as an administrative assistant, Dybdahl joined Rodale Press, where he is an editor and executive.

Dybdahl's first carefully researched examination for *Spectrum*—just how the General Conference invested millions of dollars in the stock market—helped establish the journal's reputation for accuracy and fairness. However, it was his extended report, "Merikay and the Pacific Press: Money, Courts, and Church Authority," (Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer 1975)

which permanently identified *Spectrum* with investigative reporting. Based on meticulous study of the public record and extended interviews, Dybdahl gave Adventists detailed information they could find nowhere else. Dybdahl also introduced the denomination to the full implications of a burgeoning scandal in his long report, "Bad Business: The Davenport Fiasco" (Vol. 12, No. 1, September 1981).

Installed the following year as *Spectrum's* first news editor, Bonnie Dwyer reported on so many topics she became the most frequently published author in *Spectrum's* 25-year history. Dwyer kept an eye on the Pacific Press case, and significantly expanded *Spectrum's* coverage of the scandal that wouldn't go away. Among her many articles was "Disciplining the Davenport Offenders" (Vol. 13, No. 4, June 1983). A writer and editor at La Sierra University, and the recipient of a journalism degree from the California State University at Fullerton, Dwyer remained the news editor of *Spectrum* for six years. Her reports included the financial condition of the Adventist Media Center, retaining of

Worthington Foods in Adventist hands, inter-scholastic sports on Adventist campuses, and problems in the denomination's ministry to homosexuals. Dwyer now works as a development consultant in Northern California, and continues to write for *Spectrum*.

Spectrum helped to reestablish a journalistic tradition established by Adventism's pioneer editors, James White and Uriah Smith: reporting not only the official actions of denominational councils, but the debates that lead to the final votes. Somehow, this practice faded from official church publications. In the January 1979 *Spectrum*, Donald McAdams, then president of Southwestern Adventist College and now head of an international consulting firm, named names, provided quotes, and analyzed just how church leaders arrived at key decisions in the 1978 Annual Council. Years later, the *Adventist Review* and *Ministry* followed suit and began providing detailed coverage of Annual Councils.

In 1980, on a Colorado campground, the most controversial theological consultation of the past quarter-century took place. The General Conference's Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee brought together 115 church leaders and theologians from around the world to examine and debate the views of Desmond Ford. Shortly afterwards, Raymond Cottrell, who had recently retired as associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and the *SDA Bible Commentary*, published a 25-page report in *Spectrum*. Cottrell clearly articulated the tangled theological issues, precisely quoted participants in not only the full sessions but also some of the smaller breakout groups, and

carefully recorded the committee's conclusions. It quickly became the definitive account by which to judge reports in official journals.

More recently, on the assumption that denominational leaders and committees are accountable not only to God, but also to church members, *Spectrum* expanded coverage of General Conference Sessions beyond floor debates to deliberations in key committees and caucuses. "The making of a General Conference President, 1990" was Ronald Graybill's blow-by-blow account of the forces

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that converged in the nominating committee's selection of Robert Folkenberg. David VanDenburgh wrote a parallel story on how the North American Division caucus chose its division president (Vol. 20, No. 5, August 1990).

Just as wage discrimination dominated *Spectrum's* early reports regarding women, ordination of women has been the focus of more recent coverage—more than 30 pieces since 1984, by a variety of authors. They reported on developments within North American conferences, special commissions, Annual Councils, and General Conference Sessions.

Spectrum's reporting has included not only accounts of events, but analyses of organizations. The denomination's most complex institution, Loma Linda University, has been covered in two special sections and many other articles. Several pieces reported details of the separation of its campuses into two universities. Others provided information on disputes within the school of medicine, as well as accreditation accomplishments and recent moves to participate in reorganizing health

care in the nation's most populous state.

In 1985, Mike Scofield wondered if the Adventist Health Systems in North America could carry a billion-dollar debt (Vol. 16, No. 1, April 1985). Many reports over the past 25 years examined the dramatically changing shape of Adventist publishing in North America—everything from relocation of the denomination's three major printing plants to the shift by major unions from colporteurs to electronic methods of marketing, from doctrinal books to videotapes.

Spectrum also informed its readers of important, but little-noticed institutions. Bonnie Dwyer examined the role of the one Adventist publication that reaches the home of every church member in North America—the union paper. Joy Fuller described the work of Risk Management Services, the multimillion-dollar insurance institution at the General Conference headquarters. Harrison John provided financial and marketing data about Adventist food industries, and showed how in parts of the world the financial fortunes of Adventist food industries can propel or nearly destroy church activities.

The steady flow of reports on the international church—from Albania to the Caribbean to the former U.S.S.R.—have included facts and debates not reported elsewhere. Africa, one of the most rapidly growing parts of Adventism, received considerable attention. Readers heard the leading lay Adventist in Uganda, a physician, movingly explain why he raised money for the armed forces that overthrew genocidal dictators, and after the revolution felt an obligation to accept the prime ministership of his country. *Spectrum*

subscribers read fierce debates over whether the church in Africa should distribute condoms as part of the continent's battle against AIDS. Readers also read reports that Rwandan Seventh-day Adventist church members may well have killed hundreds, if not thousands of their neighbors (quite possibly including fellow church members). Other Rwandan members heroically risked their lives to protect others.

Reporting on the Caribbean, *Spectrum* published a profile of the leader of the governing party in Barbados who is also the country's most successful Adventist lay evangelist. In Europe, *Spectrum* found courageous Adventist responses to Marxist-Leninist dictatorships that went largely unreported in other Adventist journals. The contribution of Sabbathkeeping True and Free Adventists to the human-rights struggle under Communist dictators from Stalin to Brezhnev was even disowned by Adventist denominational leaders. *Spectrum* was able to also spotlight the courageous actions of certain Adventist youth in the largely peaceful overthrow of Communism in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

Spectrum began as a means for Adventists to share with one another their study and creative ideas, and gradually expanded its role to include reporting on the church's actions. After all, church members must receive information if they are to participate in and take responsibility for the life of the church. Accurate reporting and analysis therefore became integral to *Spectrum's* mission of encouraging a sense of community and involvement in the Adventist Church.