

Roy Branson: Friends Pay Tribute at Memorial Service

Ancestry and Youth

BY RONALD NUMBERS

Roy and I are first cousins on his father's side, and grandsons of William Henry (Will) Branson (*below*). Since the late nineteenth century our branch of the Branson family has been tightly intertwined with Adventism. In the 1870s, various collateral relatives joined a little Adventist church in rural Wayne County, Illinois. Will's mother, Mary Anne (Dicky) Branson, joined the Keenville church when Will was "about five or six." Franklin, Will's father and a skilled carpenter and farmer, became an avid student of Adventism, but apparently never embraced Ellen G. White, preferring to remain with the Primitive Baptist church of his parents. Family members later recalled that young Will and his father would argue heatedly late into the night about the Bible—and the anti-Adventist charges of D. M. Canright, the author of *Seventh Day Adventism Renounced* (1889) and, twenty years later, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White: Her Claims Refuted* (1919). Their arguments, I strongly suspect, became the outline of Branson's 1933 *Reply to Canright: The Truth about Seventh-day Adventists* (later titled *Defense of the Faith*).

Soon after moving to Florida, Will, age thirteen, left for Battle Creek, where for three years he worked as a cook in the kitchen of the Battle Creek Sanitarium



W. H. Branson with his parents, Mary Anne (Dicky) Branson and Franklin Parker Branson, Orlando, 1928.

and attended Battle Creek Academy, apparently completing elementary school. At Emmanuel Missionary College, he took just two courses in the winter term of 1904: baking and vocal music.

After passing a course on grape culture, he topped off his college education in the spring term with a class in canvassing. He returned home in the summer of 1904, fell in love with the considerably older Minnie Shreve and, at the ripe age of seventeen, married her. Ordained at twenty-three, young Branson became president of the South Carolina conference the following year. At twenty-eight he was elected president of the old South-Eastern Union. Five years later he became the first president of the African Division, a position he occupied for ten years.

In 1930, Will and Minnie Branson returned from Africa with their two children—Ernest, Roy's father, and Lois, my mother. Will then became a vice president of the General Conference, but in 1935 Minnie died. The very next year—to the consternation of his associates—Will married Elizabeth Hilton Robbins, an attractive, well-to-do widow from North Carolina. This may have cost him the GC presidency in 1936. In 1950, Will finally became president of the world church. This came as something of a last-minute development after the front runner, and Will's close friend since their days in Africa, N. C. Wilson, got caught up in a scandal.

Roy Branson was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1937, just weeks before his family sailed on the *Queen Mary* on the first leg of their journey to become missionaries in the Middle East. His earliest memories of living in Egypt dur-



Roy's father and mother Ernest Branson and Ardice (Detamore) Branson

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ing World War II, where his father Ernest had gone to be superintendent of the Egyptian Mission (largely because of his archaeological interests), were of air-raid sirens and soldiers.

During the war, to escape from the German General Rommel’s incursions in North Africa, the Branson family escaped from Egypt to Ethiopia for six months. While there, Roy’s mother, Ardice Detamore Branson, opened a small school for Emperor Haile Selassie’s grandchildren on the palace grounds. Four-year-old Roy tagged along with his mother every day to the school. Ernest loved the excitement of his wartime experiences; Ardice grew increasingly depressed staying “home” with the kids. Their marriage seemed to have been always troubled. From the time he was about nine, Roy saw himself as the family’s mediator, a role that left him with a lifelong aversion to strife and conflict. After the war Ernest moved the Middle East headquarters to Beirut, Lebanon, where the Bransons lived for four years.

Roy and I first met during the summer of 1950, when his family returned permanently to America and when he turned thirteen and I turned eight. Uncle Ernest, Aunt Ardice, and Roy met my mother, sister, and me in Miami, and for weeks we crossed the country with our grandparents, stopping at camp meetings on the way to the GC meetings in San Francisco. In St. Louis, Uncle Ernest took us to see the Cardinals play the Boston Braves, my first major-league game. While riding in the back seat of the car, Roy taught me how to read box scores, and Aunt Ardice coached us in giving impromptu speeches.

After a short stay in Oakland, where Roy attended Golden Gate Academy, Ernest became president of the Greater New York Conference, and Roy moved with his family to New York City. The early years there were probably the worst of Roy’s life. His father threatened to quit the ministry and divorce his wife. Ernest’s father, then president of the GC, panicked, insisting that such action would force him to resign the



Baby Roy in the arms of his step-grandmother, Elizabeth Robbins Branson, before departing for Egypt in 1937. Others, from left to right, are Jack Robbins (Elizabeth’s son), W. H. Branson, Ray Numbers, Bruce Branson, Lois Branson Numbers, Ernest Branson, and Ardice Branson.

presidency and turn in his ministerial credentials. Ernest had long concerned his father. Washington Missionary College had expelled his son for eloping with Ardice. As a young minister he had then gone through a crisis of faith, questioning not only Adventism but also the existence of God. Ernest seemed to right himself when he became immersed in graduate study at New York University and in starting the New York Center; but he never regained his belief in the verbal inspiration of either the Bible or Ellen White. (For reasons I didn’t fully understand at the time, as I was growing up, family members would say I was just like my Uncle Ernest.) Ardice meanwhile pursued a master’s degree at Teacher’s College Columbia. Shortly after retiring to southern California, Ernest died at age fifty-four from a (second) massive heart attack.

To compound matters in New York, Roy was encouraged to skip the eighth grade and enroll directly in Greater New York Academy. He arrived a month late, just in time to take a round of tests. Under pressure to perform, he flunked them. This threw him into a terrible psychological state: “a kind of nervous breakdown . . . a disassociation . . . a total nightmare,” Roy would later say. He could neither sleep nor excel in class (though he did eventually pass his courses.). What finally brought him out of his funk was becoming, as a sophomore, an actor on the net-

work television show, *Faith for Today*. Elaine Giddings, who wrote the scripts and cast the people, put Roy in about ten episodes, and always, to his great chagrin, as the “good kid,” not as the more interesting villainous characters he would have preferred.

When Roy was about fifteen his mother saw an advertisement for an upcoming Dale Carnegie course on public speaking, with the first session free to the public. Lots of ambitious young professionals showed up; the organizers were offering a door prize, which gave a big discount for the full course. Roy won—but had to confess that his family couldn’t afford even the reduced fee. So they waived the fee. After a few terrifying sessions Roy became an accomplished impromptu speaker, which is not surprising given his mother’s tutoring in the summer of 1950.

Even equipped with his Carnegie speaking skills, Roy was hardly a young man of the world. Before graduating from academy, Roy took a date to a party in some Adventist’s home. To his utter horror, the young people were playing Spin the Bottle. Having never kissed a girl, he couldn’t believe that people were kissing each other just because of where the bottle ended up. He ushered his date out in a righteous huff.

After graduating from academy, Roy took up canvassing, selling Bible stories and our grandfather’s *Drama of the Ages* (a book we both confessed we had never read). He continued doing this for nine summers, even while he was working on his PhD at Harvard. By contrast, I lasted only half a day as a canvasser.

Growing up Adventist was very different for Roy than it was for me. The Bransons read novels, went to movies, and ate meat; the Numbers did not. The Bransons asked risky questions; only one Numbers did, and not till he was in his twenties. (I should also note that the Bransons kept the Sabbath, shunned alcohol, and didn’t dance.)

Roy had a big influence on me from the time we first got acquainted in 1950. As adults we nonetheless had our significant differences on theology and history. Our mutual friend, Jonathan Butler, who thinks of us as more like “brothers” than cousins, says we were “sibling rivals.” I have always disagreed with him; I loved Roy like the brother I never had.

During the last decade or so of his life, especially after his first two heart attacks, Roy thought a lot about death, which he found terrifying. He especially feared dying

alone. For Roy the future was a theological toss up between annihilation (never hell) and eternal bliss. Let’s hope he found the latter. ■

Ronald Numbers, professor emeritus, History of Science and Medicine, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Note: Details of Roy’s life are based on an extensive interview I conducted on March 17, 2002; Jonathan Butler edited the presentation made at the memorial service for *Spectrum*.

Growing Up in the Middle East

BY LARRY GERATY

Speaking for both Gillian and myself, the name Branson has been a part of our earliest memories—even though our earliest lives started half way around the world from each other.

I grew up in inland China behind Japanese lines during World War II. W. H. Branson, Roy’s grandfather, was our division president and a confidant of my father’s. When we were kicked out of the country by the Communists, we moved to the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. There we assisted Roy’s uncle, his mother’s brother, the world-famous evangelist, Fordyce Detamore, with his nightly meetings attended by multitudes who wondered what the movements around them portended. By this time, Roy’s grandfather, W. H. Branson, had become the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Washington D.C. Knowing the value of several of his so-called “China hands,” Branson arranged for many of them to be transferred to the newly-organized Middle East Union under the leadership of his own son, Roy’s father, E. L. Branson, who had been serving in Egypt.

Adventist history will always remember W. H. Branson as the forward-thinking administrator who brought together the first world-wide Bible conference, in 1952, to tackle several doctrinal and prophetic issues, on which there were various and differing views being espoused in the church. In contrast to what we’ve become used to in our day, Branson chose as his speakers and experts—imagine this (!)—

professors and scholars, rather than preachers and evangelists! Among them were names like Siegfried Horn, Edward Heppenstall, W. G. C. Murdoch, Leroy Froom, and W. E. Read! The outcome was a two-volume work entitled *Our Firm Foundation*, whose biblically-researched articles guided the church down the middle of the road through the next generation.

By this time, thanks to W. H. Branson, our family had moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where my Dad (having attended the 1952 Bible Conference as a friend of Branson) became the president of Middle East College, the Adventist institution founded in 1939 by G. Arthur Keough (who later became my father-in-law). Later on, the chairman of the College Board was E. L. Branson, Roy's father, who was then serving as the President of the Middle East Union. By the time the Geraty family moved into their new home on the Lebanese mountainside overlooking the blue Mediterranean, the Branson family had just left for a new assignment in New York City, where E. L. Branson became the president of the Greater New York Conference and where Roy then attended Greater New York Academy. Thereby was established a pattern in which Larry always followed Roy—to Atlantic Union College, to Harvard, to involvement with the *Forum* and *Spectrum*, to the Seminary faculty at Andrews, and even to the Inland Empire where he often repaired when his

older brother, Bruce, his mentor, was here.

At Atlantic Union College, Roy came under the influence of his English professor, Otilie Stafford, who was still there when I came much later as college president. She never let me forget that Roy Branson was one, if not the most illustrious, of AUC's alumni!

Before this, when I got to Harvard to do my PhD, true to form, Roy had just left for a faculty position in ethics at Andrews. However, because he, along with other graduate students mentored by a young Harvard faculty couple, Alvin and Verla Kwiram, were still there when Gillian and I came, we often had the pleasure of Roy returning to Cambridge for some reason, and at that time, involving me in *Forum* as well.

When we finished at Harvard we followed Roy to a faculty position at the Seminary at Andrews. Roy talked me into becoming president of the Association of Adventist Forums. In turn, I involved an undergraduate student there named Eric Anderson (later president of Southwestern Adventist University) in editing the *Forum* newsletter. One of the topics that we researched and were about to publish was the remuneration pay scale within the denomination. Wanting to be accurate (as *Forum* and *Spectrum* have always tried to be), I asked Eric to make an appointment with the General Conference treasurer so we could get the pay scales "straight from the horse's mouth," so to speak. That quickly resulted in a threat to me that came through the Seminary Dean: If I were to allow the pursuing of this issue and its publication, I would lose my new teaching job. The topic continued to be thoroughly researched but I preemptively sent in my resignation to *Forum*, recommending that they never elect a denominational employee for president again; and that policy was followed up until just recently.

It was at the Seminary, however, where Roy and I had our first opportunity to work together on a daily basis and, as might be expected, I came to greatly admire his intellect, his ability to read widely and write courageously, his unique ability to foster disciples—particularly in the field of ethics—and especially his enthusiasm for the

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Roy and his mother with Haile Selassie's princess granddaughters in Ethiopia.

Seventh-day Adventist Church as he had come to see its role in the world. As we all know, he walked the talk, even during those tumultuous days, joining Martin Luther King's march across the Pettis Bridge at Selma! Who else do you know personally who did that?

I have to share an incident that happened shortly after I arrived at Andrews—one we never tired of telling. In the registration line, the photographer came up to me and said, "Your portrait photos are ready." Looking puzzled, I said, "What portrait photos?" "Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that you stood in front of me while I was taking those photos and you don't even remember me?" "No," I said, "I really don't." Looking at me incredulously, he responded, "You're Roy Branson, aren't you?" "No," I said, "I'm Larry Geraty." He quickly moved away in disgust! But ever since, neither Roy nor I could tell you how many times we've both experienced similar incidents! We used to enjoy regaling each other with the latest such episode of mistaken identity. I don't know whether it was our facial similarities, our red beards, our red Harvard robes at graduations, or just what it was, but we were constantly taken for the other person! This even continued here after Roy moved to the Loma Linda University School of Religion. The most recent such incident happened when Roy ran into someone over in Loma Linda who was lauding him for the great job he had done at La Sierra and how transformative the Riverwalk Project was, etc. He just said it was easier to say, "Thanks; I appreciate that!" "Besides," Roy said, "it just made me feel so good!"

As many of you know, Roy had always wanted a beautiful big house in which he could invite sizable groups of his friends over for discussions. He was so excited when Donna helped him find just such a house in what he liked to call the "Colton Hills" section of town! One such evening he called me over and said, "Larry come out here with me." He took me out on the balcony just as the sun was setting. Pointing to the Mediterranean-like flora west of his house, he said, "Can't you just imagine being on the mountainside there in Lebanon!" Then he pulled me around to the left corner of the balcony and exclaimed, "You can almost imagine the beautiful blue Mediterranean just around the corner over here!" It was almost as though Roy had achieved a lifelong dream!

The last time Gillian and I saw Roy was at a Harvard reunion at our home just ten days before his death. Who of us could have imagined that he would have been taken away from us so soon, so unexpectedly! I heard the news in

San Antonio at the beginning of the General Conference Session. My first thought was, "At least he's been spared some of the devastating developments in his beloved church that are taking place here this week." As we all know, Roy loved the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was always so positive about it and the potential of its impact on society and the world. He authored seminal articles, putting it in its best light, and prodding it to fulfill its mandate for present truth. We can recall the last two books he edited, one on the Sabbath, and the other on the Second Advent. I've always said, "If Roy ever gets discouraged about the church, there will be no hope for it!"

If Ted Wilson makes it to the pearly gates, I can imagine Roy there, asking him some pretty incisive questions! All of us who ever had our manuscripts for *Spectrum* edited by Roy, know what will be in store for the son of Neal who was such a close friend and neighbor of the Bransons in Egypt! Wouldn't we each love to overhear that inquisition? All I can say is: Hasten that day! ■

Larry Geraty, president emeritus, La Sierra University

The Roy I Knew in Egypt

BY GILLIAN GERATY

When the E. L. Branson family went to the Middle East Union headquarters in Beirut, they moved into a four story building with two apartments on each floor. The ground floor was where the offices were located and the families who worked there lived above. Each family was assigned an apartment according to the number of children, and since my family had four children we were on the second floor. The Bransons had only Roy with them, so they were on the fourth floor. The children quickly picked their favorite place to play games, which was the top landing of the stairwell. Roy had most of the games, so of course we played ones which tested our knowledge of Bible, geography, famous authors and nature.

That top landing led out onto the roof where washing was hung out to dry, because of course we had no washing machines or dryers. A lady from the local Palestinian camp

came once a week to wash our family's clothes, sheets, towels, etc. and her daughter, who was in her late teens, came daily to help prepare food, iron, and clean.

Of course we had to have school. Across from the Bransons lived the Funds, and Mrs. Alice Fund turned one of her bedrooms into a school room. Wooden desks were made, painted apple green, and Mrs. Fund taught us (only five or six of us). After school we would play outdoors or on the landing.

The Bransons had to go to the United States for meetings, so Mrs. Branson offered to bring back items the families might want to order from the Montgomery Ward catalogue. The catalogue made its rounds, orders were placed, and what excitement when the Bransons returned. We all crowded into the Bransons' apartment and happily opened packages. The women tried on dresses they'd ordered. So exciting. In those times we couldn't just run down to Beirut and buy clothes, you had to make them yourself or find a dressmaker.

One day I walked into the Bransons' apartment and was startled because when I brushed my teeth, I always stood over a sink while doing so; and here was Roy brushing his teeth while walking all around his apartment. I didn't know you could do that.

Another day, Roy decided that, because we were friends, we should be able to tell each other things we couldn't share with just anyone. We could be honest and truthful with each other. He decided we should tell each other our faults—so we could improve ourselves! I remember Roy sat at one end of the sofa and I sat at the other end. He went first and told me what my faults were (I don't remember what he said were my faults), but when it was my turn our relationship became strained. I could not for the life of me think of any faults that Roy had—not one. He became so exasperated with me; I had let him down. But it didn't last long.

He asked me if I wanted to go with him to the USIS library—just the two of us, by ourselves! I had never gone anywhere that far without an adult. It was quite the adventure. We caught a “service” taxi, a taxi that picked up and dropped off passengers along a designated route, and went all the way to downtown Beirut, all by ourselves, picked up library books and came back all by ourselves. I remember that as we started out I felt self-conscious about being a boy and girl out by ourselves. I wondered if people would think we were “boyfriend” and “girlfriend”; but I decided they would look at us and assume we were brother and sis-

ter, and then I was comfortable and fine with our momentous outing.

On Saturday nights the families would gather out in the garden where it was cool. The adults would talk and the children would run around and play. On one of those evenings, the boys decided they wanted to have a boys' club—a secret boys' club. And I have to say that out of ten or twelve children most were boys, only three or four of us were girls. I was the only older girl. Pretty soon Roy came to me and said, “We want you to be in the boys' club. Do you want to join?” And so I was inducted into the Boys' Club. And that was Roy, big hearted, inclusive, not wanting anyone to be left out of the fun. That was who Roy was; that was who Roy always was. ■

Gillian Geraty, retired elementary and piano teacher and childhood friend

Greater New York Academy and Atlantic Union College Days

BY ROBERT E. SODERBLOM

A longtime, highly respected friend of myself and scores of others, a giant for God and society, has fallen asleep in Jesus. Yet, all of us take courage in the promise that “He that is yet to come, will come!”

This afternoon I have been asked to paint a picture in words of Roy's years at Greater New York Academy and at Atlantic Union College, 1953 to 1955 and 1955 to 1959, respectively.

In accepting this assignment and honor, I felt compelled to contact a number of his classmates who journeyed together during those foundational years of yet-to-come stellar careers. You will likely recognize some of these classmates: Dr. James Londis, Dr. George Chonkill, Dr. George Petti, Dr. Edwin Krick, Dr. Virgil Wood, Dr. Norman Farley, Donald Yakush, Dr. Ana Parrish, to name a few. The following words that I share will be a compilation of their fond remembrances of this brilliant but humble



"Faith for Today" photo from 1952.

individual. My thanks to all of them.

I first became acquainted with the Branson name in about 1952 when Elder Ernest Branson, then president of the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, preached in my home church in Middletown, New York. Just one year previously, as a teenager, I had accepted the Adventist message and been baptized. Little did I then know I would make further acquaintance with Elder Branson's two sons, Bruce and Roy.

At that time, Roy and his family had recently returned to the United States from the mission field of Egypt, and Roy had begun attending Greater New York Academy, while I had matriculated at South Lancaster Academy on the campus of Atlantic Union College.

Dr. James Londis, also a student at Greater New York Academy at that time, comments on his observations of this young teen: he was an unusual teenager, by any standard in the school; he was bookish, creative, and passionate about causes; he was fascinated by his father's conference presidency (and grandfather's General Conference presidency) and the politics and decision making therein; he was a very popular student leader (and president of his senior class) though he was only at Greater New York Academy his last two years; he always had, as the poets' say, "a different angle of vision".

Dr. Londis commented on the day Roy decided to attend an NBC orchestra rehearsal con-

ducted by the famous Arturo Toscanini and wrangled a short interview with the conductor which, with post haste, Roy turned into an article for the Youth's Instructor magazine.

Don Yakush, another Greater New York Academy classmate, shares:

Almost all the students attending the academy came by elevated subway, which would drop them off each morning about six blocks from the school. Many would meet up on the train in the morning. Roy would scour the subway car to find a discarded newspaper to read. . . his prime interest, The New York Times. He would then search for the World News section, fascinated by world and political happenings.

"Faith for Today," the first Seventh-day Adventist-sponsored, religious television broadcast, was at this time headquartered on Long Island. The founder, Pastor Fagal, frequently used Greater New York Academy students to act in their "skits". Roy was often part of this pioneer television project.

Roy then transitioned to Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, a small Adventist school with enrollment of about 400-500 students.

Dr. Ann Parrish, an English major at Atlantic Union College during Roy's years as a student, shared this:

Roy came to Atlantic Union College in September 1955. He was short, healthy looking, alert, enthusiastic and, it turned out, very bright indeed. He had attended Greater New York Academy, but fitting in there had, at least from his parents' viewpoint, been difficult, so they had enrolled him in a Dale Carnegie course in winning friends and influencing people.

This fact, and Roy's attempts to practice Carnegie's teachings, amused his classmates mightily, and the amusement continued, at least through his first years at Atlantic Union College. He would be excited about something discussed in a class and would continue discussing it after class, even in groups where some had no knowledge of the subject. Then, noticing a glazed look, he would stop his

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word flow quite suddenly. "What a beautiful tie!" he would say winningly to the glazed friend. Or, "Are those new shoes? They look great!" His listeners would look at each other, roll their eyes, and smile indulgently. You couldn't help liking him. "Our boy, Roy," they called him. Despite his eager, grasping mind, he seemed very young to be in college.

His freshman English teacher, Otilie Stafford, always eager to find and encourage good writers and thinkers, was delighted with Roy and, in his sophomore year, hired him as a reader, mainly of freshmen compositions. She had enough work to employ two student helpers: Roy was one, I was the other, and we graded papers in her office. A major in theology from his start in college (this was the Branson and Detamore vocation), Roy added a second (but equal) major in English.

From his freshman year on, he was a staff member of the college newspaper, *The Lancastrian*. In his junior year, he became editor-in-chief. He wrote thoughtfully, often eloquently. He even tried poetry. Did it trouble his parents and brother that our boy Roy, headed for the ministry, was becoming increasingly political? Writing poems for the literary magazine *Contours* on such subjects as Russian oppression in Eastern Europe?

Later, at Harvard Divinity School, he joined other graduate students in Civil Rights marches and, as an Adventist, traced and publicized the anti-slavery, anti-racist views and actions of the Adventist pioneers.

While Roy was at Harvard, I was a graduate student at Boston University, so I was present when he initiated the idea of Adventist Forums; meetings of Adventist graduate students on Sabbath afternoons, for potlucks, special speakers on knotty religion-related topics, lively arguments or other responses to the presentations, and to connect with our roots and to branch out. This Adventist Forum idea was copied in intellectual centers across the country, and the journal *Spectrum* was developed to share with a larger audience the stimulation that the forums provided.

Roy's grandfather was a president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. His father returned from the mission field in the Middle East to become president of the Greater New York Conference. It seems that Roy's family—and most certainly his elder, physician brother—expected Roy to become the second Branson General Conference president. That did not happen. But our boy Roy's accomplishments and his legacy should have made any family proud.

Roy went on to be the president of his graduating class at Atlantic Union College (1959). I went on to medical school; he to Harvard and other universities of higher



Greater New York Academy Graduation

learning; on to accomplishments and a career of unsurpassably effective service to contemporary society. Our paths did not cross again until Roy joined the faculty of religion here at Loma Linda University a few years ago.

In the words of Dr. Nathan

Farley, a former classmate at Atlantic Union College, long-time pastor, and most recently retired president of the North American Religious Liberty West: "He was named President of AUC's graduating class of 1959, the largest class in the history of AUC till that time. He was a leader to be enjoyed and respected. An extraordinary person; the visionary scholar of AUC. In his life he fulfilled the most important tasks of life . . . justice, mercy, and faithfulness. In the hall of "wisdom" his name will appear on the eternal plaque."

Roy's senior yearbook at Atlantic Union College had this summary, by him, of his classmates:

This year's senior class, the largest in history, could easily establish a new, Utopian society by utilizing the talents and skills of its own members. Essentials such as housing utilities could be arranged by the engineering majors, meals planned by home economics majors and medical needs cared for by the premed and pre dental class members.

Several institutions could be established. A church with several ministers would be a possibility, with music majors providing the vocal and instrumental numbers for the services. Experienced leaders would be available for the Sabbath school, missionary volunteer, home missionary, and temperance departments.



AUC Graduation, 1959

A school could give instruction in art, biology, chemistry, economics, education, history, languages, literature, mathematics, and music. A library could be staffed, and a newspaper or two edited. In the necessary civic government that would arise, a number of tested leaders could assume responsibility.

Conceivably, an autonomous community governed by distinctive Adventist principles could be established by this class. Such colonies sprang up right here in New England during the transcendental movement of the last century, and our own denomination, beginning at about the same time, fostered a distinctively Adventist community in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Today, such an idea sounds not only bigoted, but ludicrous. The class has no intention of limiting its scope of activity to conform to such a narrow philosophy. This is not its aim. Effective service to contemporary society is. ■

Robert Soderblom, nephrologist and college classmate

Heady Days at Harvard

BY ALVIN L. KWIRAM

I am not pleased to be here. It is too soon. Roy needed more years to explore, to question, to propose. Today, more than ever, we need his ebullient, creative and visionary spirit.

Roy was almost too intellectually curious for his own good. Possessed of an expansive mind, he was far too restless to be comfortable as an indentured servant in any hierarchical structure. Consequently, his deep passion for transformation within the church was often unrewarded. He sought to usher in a new era of openness and inquiry, and to search for new strategies. He labored to create a new paradigm that could speak to a contemporary society in compelling ways, one that would expand the horizons of the

church so that it could become a force for positive engagement in society at large. He struggled to achieve such goals throughout his life, not within the power structure of the organization but inevitably from the sidelines, where at best his views could safely

be deflected and his proposals marginalized. It is exactly voices like Roy's that are desperately needed to reverse the growing trend of disaffection among the younger generation. His was a prophetic voice heavily seasoned with perpetual questioning of the status quo. One is reminded of Robert Frost's rejoinder in "Mending Wall" when his neighbor says "Good fences make good neighbors," Frost responds:

*Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall . . .'*

Roy had a knack for putting notions in our heads. His was a prophetic voice. We desperately need such voices today—voices that get a respectful hearing, voices unhampered by suffocating constraints. Voices that can help the community see with fresh eyes, voices that can speak with clarity and compassion and can be heard over the drumbeat of anachronistic mantras. Again, Frost says of the neighbor:

*He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'*



Harvard Graduation with his mother, 1968

**For many
he provided a
beacon of
hope that
pointed the
way to a
better place.**

I first met Roy in Pasadena around 1959 when I was in graduate school and he would come home in the summer and stay with his mom, Ardice. In no time we had a discussion group going. Of course, this sort of thing was part of the Zeitgeist in those years. Several of us who were at Caltech had been having our own weekly discussion group on the growing tension between science and religion. So, it didn't take long after Roy and I met until we decided to engage in similar conversations with friends on more theological topics.

Roy moved to the Boston area around 1961 to enter the Divinity School at Harvard. But whenever he was back in Pasadena, we would end up at his home in some discussion group. In 1964 Verla and I were married and Roy was one of my groomsmen. That fall Verla and I moved to the Boston area as well and joined up with Roy. This was a period of intense national unrest. The Vietnam War, the civil rights battles, and the fight for women's rights were all part of the intellectual cauldron that was at the point of boiling over. The Adventist community was not immune. Serious discussions of the church's role in these matters found their way into Sabbath School classes and were topics of discussion at virtually every social gathering. It seemed only natural that we should organize a discussion group in Cambridge. We started with individuals we already knew. Verla remembers that besides Roy and the two of us, Ann Parrish, Carol Peterson-Haviland and Jim Londis rounded out the group at that first meeting. Verla decided there must be many more students and young professionals in and around Boston, which is such an educational mecca. She set out on a relentless quest to find them, and the group grew rapidly thanks in large part to Verla's efforts. Some were easy targets because they were already established members of local congregations; the Asgierrsons, the Baklands, the Hardins, the Graysons and the Rushings come readily to mind. With the arrival in Boston of the Geratys and Teels, the Elders and Vandermolens, the Coxes and Bushnells, among others, attendance continued to grow rapidly, and these events became not-to-be-missed "happenings".

Roy had arranged for us to meet monthly in the very elegant Braun Room of the Divinity School. At our peak in the late sixties, Verla had over one hundred and fifty names on the mailing list and attendance sometimes hit one hundred. It was a very active and stimulating group.

It was a remarkable convergence of people and events.

In time we discovered kindred spirits in a few other locations in the country: Stanford, Berkeley, Seattle, Michigan, and New York. We even organized a couple of regional conferences. At some point a few of us in the Boston group decided it would be important to form a national network of such groups and maybe even create a formal organization. This, of course, dovetailed perfectly with Roy's long-held dream of launching an independent journal. We discussed whether we had the wherewithal to succeed in such a venture. Eventually, we decided to bring representatives from each of the existing groups together to form an organization. But the goal was to do



Roy and Neal Wilson

this with the blessing of the General Conference (GC) and not as a rump group at the margins of the church.

To this end we arranged to meet with Neal Wilson

as head of the North American Division. A key question was whether this organization would be a GC sponsored activity with control over the operations in their hands or an independent entity, but one that had the GC imprimatur. After an initial general session with the 'brethren' in which everyone participated, the formal negotiations somehow landed on my plate. After several tense sessions going back and forth between Neal and a few of his NAD officers and our "delegates", Neal signed off on an agreement for the "independent" arrangement.

That initiated a very intense period of strategic planning. We drafted a constitution and bylaws, formed an organization with officers and job descriptions, decided on what it would be called, and what the communications vehicle would be, how frequent, what tone, what content, who would serve as editor, and so on. That was the beginning of the Association of Adventist Forums. The name "Spectrum" was suggested independently by

Roy's mom and Verla. Roy identified Molleurus Couperus as editor and the rest is history. Molleurus served as editor for six years followed by Roy for roughly two decades.

Roy's role in this development was critical; but his focus on launching a journal represents just one of the many ways in which he promoted new ideas, proposed a larger vision and promulgated a more inclusive community. His engagement in the civil rights movement, his work at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown, his fight against the multinational tobacco companies, his relentless advocacy for women's ordination, all reflect both his passion for justice and his boundless energy.

Such is the legacy he has left for us who remain. His unwavering goal was to make Adventism so relevant, attractive and meaningful that those who caught the vision would spontaneously proclaim that message to anyone who would listen. And although he may have been impatient with the glacial pace of change, for many he provided a beacon of hope that pointed the way to a better place. There are no doubt many who continue to engage with this community of believers because of his labors. Those of us who were privileged to know him could not help but be influenced by him. We will not soon see another like him. Treasure your memories of him.

This encomium is not intended to lay the groundwork for an effort to recommend Roy for sainthood. He, like the rest of us, had his flaws. Roy and I had our differences. That is normal in any human relationship. But any objective evaluation of his life must surely recognize a lively mind, a powerful mind, a generous mind, a playful mind, a creative mind. That mind is now silent. Nonetheless, terabits of his ideas, his vibrant personality and his vision will pervade the ether for years to come. We honor that life today. Rest in peace, dear friend. ■

Alvin Kwiram, professor emeritus of chemistry, University of Washington

Passionate Teaching at Andrews University

BY GERALD WINSLOW

My first glimpse of Professor Roy Branson was at the end of summer, 1967. Roy, I was told, was a *wunderkind* who had just completed his PhD at Harvard, and had joined the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Roy was in a hurry to get to the summer graduation ceremony. He grabbed his crimson Harvard academic robe from the back of what I recall was a metallic blue Chevrolet Impala and ran toward the church, the robe, like a flag, flying behind him. Months would pass before I recall seeing him again, the second time in person.

I had moved to Andrews to study for an M.A. in Pastoral Counseling. It took me about three weeks to discover that this was *not* the right field for me; but, if not that, then what? I didn't know. I scoured the bulletin looking for options and discovered that the only degree I could finish in the one year of sponsorship I had from my conference, was Systematic Theology. Well then, that's what it would be.

During that autumn quarter, my wife and I both contracted mononucleosis. It was debilitating for both of us. We were also poor, so I signed up to be a substitute teacher for Berrien County schools, but this meant I had to save at least three days a week for work. This combination of factors was what led me to Professor Branson's office. I needed an evening course that would meet a requirement for the degree. Roy's advanced seminar in ethics fit the schedule perfectly.

His answer? It was *No*. The course, he explained, was for second-year students; I was in my second *quarter*. What's more, the semi-

**In his life
he fulfilled
the most
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justice,
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nar the previous quarter was a pre-requisite, and I hadn't taken it. So he said he was sorry. I will admit that I begged. Finally, he relented, but only to this degree: I could come to the seminar for the first couple weeks, read the books, write the papers, then he would decide if he would make an exception and sign the add slip.

It worked. That seminar was the single best educational experience of my life, either before or after the time. We read a book and wrote a paper every week, and the books were not chosen for simplicity or brevity. Then there was the paper to write—and no place to hide. There were, as I recall, eight of us in the seminar; imagine the likes of Charles Scriven, Ron Graybill, Dan Day, Sy Saliba, and Jim Coffin, preparing papers to be read to the seminar. The discussion would often go late into the night, and often it was so intense, Roy had difficulty adding his questions or comments. Once I remember seeing Roy raise his hand, as if looking for the professor to call on him and, I believe, it was Ron Graybill who *did* call on him.

This quarter-long episode began a journey of friendship and mentorship that has lasted for nearly five decades. To tell you that I will miss Roy really does not capture my feelings today. Yes, I *will* miss him. But I know his influence will so often be present in thoughts, in writing, and in work. He gave something that typically only one person can give another in this life—a passion for an intellectual discipline, the courage to follow that passion, and the first steps into a life in the academy.


Only in more recent years have I come to realize that Roy did this for scores, if not hundreds, of his students. He taught us that our scholarship should make a difference, not only for the church we love, but also for the world. He moved us in the direction of social justice, and not just in words, but in deeds. He helped us see not dread, but joy in the Apocalypse, as he would remind us, “for the healing of the nations.” In all these ways, and countless others,

he vivified the story of Jesus, as the One who saves and also serves. What a great blessing it is today to remember and to thank the Creator for the amazing gift of Roy Branson. ■

Gerald Winslow, vice president of mission and culture,
Loma Linda University Health

The Washington Years

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

 n August 21, 1971 Roy Branson wrote in the guestbook at our house: Thank you for “a friendship I hope never ends. It’s what makes the Andrews years worthwhile.” A few weekends ago, when my children and I were in Takoma Park, together in that same house, we came across the guestbook, and those words struck me: *Friendship is “what makes the Andrews years worthwhile.”*

Roy Branson befriended students, often for life. To a substantial degree, befriending students was his life story—whether he was formally on a faculty or not.

During the school year 1967–68 I enjoyed what some ten or so of us recall as the very first ethics seminar Roy taught at the Andrews University seminary. We met, at least some of the time, in his apartment, which for sparse furnishings resembled a prison cell, and yet was as warm as a Friday evening dinner table. Reading, and writing about, our book a week, we learned, among other things, that great teaching can consist of great conversation; and the best conversation, as we also learned, is conversation among friends.

For many people in this room, a life-long friendship with Roy began in a seminary classroom. But in just a few years, after church and university leaders attempted and failed to re-educate him into a more conventional Adventism,

Roy left the seminary and came to Washington, D. C., where he worked as a scholar in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University. An article he finished there, on “The Secularization of American Medicine,” appeared in 1973 in the journal *Hastings Center Studies*. To this day it appears as the first collected article in the immensely influential bioethics anthology, *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives on Medical Ethics*.

For several years Roy carried the title “senior research fellow” at the Kennedy Institute, but by the mid-1970s he was also otherwise involved. In 1975, when Molleurus Couperus’ founding editorship of *Spectrum* ended, Roy became, along with me, one of the co-editors of the magazine. A bit later he married Viveca Black, although the marriage would be somewhat short-lived. By 1978 he was the sole editor of *Spectrum*.

His editorial tenure lasted until 1998. During that time he was inadequately paid—substantially less than an Adventist minister. Yet he was, without ever, it seemed, a let-down, passionately engaged. During most of that time he worked out of a *Spectrum* office located on the second floor of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church office building, just down the hall from the senior pastor’s office.

His friend from New York City and Atlantic Union College, James Londis, was the church’s



The Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University

senior pastor, and the two of them would talk often and sometimes share lunch together. Jim left that position in 1985 to become a co-founder, with James Cox, of The Washington Institute. This was an entity, partly funded with General Conference money, whose mission involved addressing Washington thought leaders by looking at contemporary issues through the lens of faith.

From the start Roy participated in the conversations about the Institute’s work, sometimes at the Tropicana, a Cuban restaurant further up Flower Avenue from the church and its sister institution, Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University). The question of how Adventism can serve the wider world usually animated the discussion. This was Roy’s passion, and when funding for the Institute pretty much dried up in the later 1980s, he tried, while editing *Spectrum*, to keep it alive on little money by focusing on anti-tobacco advocacy. By now I had succeeded Londis as Sligo Church pastor, and I helped a bit and can say that his advocacy made a difference. He founded the Interreligious Coalition on Smoking or Health, and became well connected with many leading figures in Washington. Senator Richard Durbin, then an Illinois congressman, was one; another was Richard Cizik, Governmental Affairs Vice President for the National Association of Evangelicals. Still another was Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Roy was down the hall from me, too, and in several respects I knew him really well. But it dawned on me slowly—such was my cluelessness and his refusal to complain—that he was making payments on a house that, after the ending of his marriage, he could no longer live in. And in part for that reason, he was sleeping in his office and taking showers in the men’s residence hall at the college. Jim Londis and I were chatting on the phone the other day, and Jim, who knew also how little Roy had lived on at Harvard, remarked: “I

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At Columbia Union College, now Washington Adventist University

have never seen anyone live such a Spartan existence for a cause he believed in." His passion for Adventist faith—for its maturation and well-being—was simply amazing.

This came through, too,

in his commitment to great Sabbath School conversation. During most of his time in the Washington area, he led a class whose flavor I tasted the day I realized, early on as the Sligo pastor, that we were having a discussion in which the Big Bang was a *premise*. Highly successful Adventist scientists like Don Ortner and Pete Hare were members, and Roy took it for granted that a viable Adventist future requires a welcoming and grateful attitude toward members who think themselves out of ordinary Adventist conventionality.

All the while, he was continuing to nurture students, who often came over from the college to do part-time work for the magazine. One of these, who began assisting him in 1995, was Alita Byrd, who later earned a master's degree at the London School of Economics and married an Irish diplomat, and who continues to assist Bonnie Dwyer on the magazine. Alita has written in a tribute: "There is no one who has shaped my thinking more." At first she kept *Spectrum* "paperwork up to date," but was soon writing stories, as, to this day, she continues to do. Roy "listened to people," she says, "especially students—never talking down to them. I never felt he tried to convince me of anything, either. He just kept asking questions and kept listening, letting me talk my

own way through sticky issues."

It was, again, conversation—and friendship: Roy spoke at Alita's wedding. In 1998 he left *Spectrum* to teach topics in political science at Washington Adventist University, where he again entered into the kind of relationships a faculty member has with students. To enhance interest and draw students into the pre-law program, he set up the Institute for Law and Public Policy, which became a space for informal conversation as well as classroom teaching. He also set up a mock trial team, which was soon defeating similar teams from schools like the University of Maryland and the University of Dayton. The first "star" student litigator later earned his law degree at Georgetown University. During his ten years at Washington Adventist, students of Roy's went on to law schools at Harvard and Duke and other fine institutions. One earned a doctorate in education at Harvard. A couple of these are now active on the Washington Adventist University board.

Kristel Tonstad, whom Roy met while he was a guest-teacher in a classroom at La Sierra, assisted him at the Institute for Law and Public Policy before going on to earn a master's degree from the School of Government at Harvard University. In 2008, from her perch as an official for the country of Norway, she prepared a tribute to Roy for his combined 70th birthday and farewell party as he was about to leave for Loma Linda University. Here is a bit of what she said:

"Hundreds of students have found their voices in your classes and seminars; as a result of your prodding questions...they had to speak or burst....You are more idealistic and hopeful than many people my age. Your sense of purpose and movement continues to inspire. Your refusal to sit back and 'shut up' does, too."

"Listen. Don't lose hope. Never shut up." It could be a mantra for all of us. ■

Charles Scriven, former president, Washington Adventist University

**For many
he provided a
beacon of hope
that pointed
the way to
a better place.**

The *Spectrum* Years

BY BONNIE DWYER

While the narrative about the birth of *Spectrum* that Alvin Kwiram has shared includes details about graduate students meeting with church officials and creating an organization as well as a journal, I would like to suggest that *Spectrum* was truly born at the Branson family dinner table in the vigorous discussions of current issues and church politics that took place there. Roy's mother, he told me, often took an opposing position just for argument's sake, or would challenge her sons to argue the other side after they had made a passionate case for an idea. She set a lively conversational standard that Roy would relish for the rest of his life, that charmed us all, and that influenced his editing.

Later, after Roy's college dream of an Adventist scholarly magazine was beginning to take shape under the auspices of Adventist Forum, it was again Roy's mother who came up with the name *Spectrum* during a Sabbath dinner-table discussion of the venture.

But even though the idea for the magazine had come to him in college, Roy was not *Spectrum*'s first editor: Mollerus Couperus was chosen for that spot. Roy first served as the secretary of the Association of Adventist



Sharon Fujimoto Johnston, Charles Scriven, Bonnie Dwyer, Roy Branson, Les Pitton, Bronwyn Larson, Dave Larson.

Forums, the carefully crafted organization for Adventist graduate students that had the initial blessing of church leaders such as Neal Wilson. Roy supported the journal by writing articles and helping AAF make its way within the church. He managed a number of social action projects for the association, as well.

Truth be told, there are reports of contention between some church leaders and the journal, even before the first issue was released. That contention became very real during the second year of publication when discussion of Ellen White quickly became a flash point. Roy and Herold Weiss made the case for historical consideration of her in the context of her times. William S. Peterson suggested that Ellen used anti-Catholic historians in constructing her views of the French Revolution for the Great Controversy, and that she accepted proven errors in the writings of these authors, in spite of her claim that visions formed the basis of her views. This brought a fiery response from the White Estate, to which Editor Couperus expounded on the stated purpose of the journal "to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject", which meant that the editors did not always agree with all of the articles that were published.

Thanks to Alvin Kwiram, the Forum had been set up as a truly independent organization, and the journal did not have any official or financial ties that limited its publication policies. This proved to be key to the long-term success of the journal as an independent voice within the church.

Six years of the political, financial and editorial chal-



Roy with Branson men

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From *Spectrum* to Columbia Union College (Washington Adventist University)

lenges proved to be enough drama for Dr. Couperus; he stepped down as editor but continued to be a supporter. He was responsible for bringing the “Minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference” to the journal, which were published to much acclaim. An editorial board was named to replace him, with Roy Branson and Charles Scriven responsible for the actual production of the journal. Roy and Chuck redesigned the magazine for a more general audience, which helped expand the membership base. After two years, Chuck’s graduate studies needed to take precedence over the production of the journal, so Roy continued as the editor; a position that he held for twenty-two years.

Spectrum’s pages during those years were filled with the ideas, theology, art, arguments, and people that Roy cherished. It was where he set the table for discussions that helped shape the agenda for the church that he loved. Granted it was sometimes a misunderstood love, particularly by church officials who felt that the General Conference was meant to control everything. But that love persisted and gave hope to so many of us.

His editorship did occur in extraordinary times. Ellen White underwent a significant historical makeover. Next up was the Davenport bankruptcy that brought to light conflict

of interest charges for investments made by church officials at every level from local churches and conferences to the General Conference. There was pending bankruptcy within the church’s publishing industry, as well

as the equal employment lawsuit of Lorna Tobler and Merikay Silver.

After significant reporting on all this bad news, Roy turned the attention of the church to the Sabbath by publishing an issue celebrating the gift of the Sabbath. It was a very special issue, embellished with four color art, and was later turned into a small book. It differed from most previous Adventist discussions of the Sabbath, which tended to focus on the change of the Sabbath to Sunday and the rightness of the seventh day. Instead, this issue focused on the joys of the Sabbath. “The Sabbath was never a haven of solitude, but always an invitation to fellowship,” Roy wrote.

Later, an issue and book were produced on the apocalypse that similarly found new meaning in a specific point of historic Adventist theology, because Roy believed that the best way to honor tradition was to see it with new eyes. His present truth lesson from Revelation was not about timelines for the end or the beasts, but about worship. Worship takes us out of this collapsing world and into the next. It reminds us that God is above the bickering and woes of his people. In Him there is rest and peace and joy.

In addition to the honest reporting on the various troubles within the church, Roy faced down the challenges that come from being an

independent non-profit organization living on a razor thin financial edge. I've heard rumors that at one point he was literally living in his office, donated to the organization by Sligo Church. The brilliant scholar and teacher, who could have had an impressive academic career outside the church, gave the better portion of his professional life so that Adventism would have a free press. His sacrifice still awes me.

One of the ways in which the financial challenges of *Spectrum* were met was through the creation of an Advisory Council, pioneered by Dr. Ray Damazo. Supporters of the magazine were invited to meetings, where the case was made for significant financial gifts. Those meetings became a listening post for Roy, and given the extraordinary things that were happening within the church, more in-depth news about the church was what people wanted.

Roy's response was to very carefully expand the news section of the journal, checking and double-checking assertions that were made. Lawsuits became particularly significant stories, because the official church press could say little if anything about them. He also sent a reporter to Annual Council; coverage of the General Conference was a must. As the news stories multiplied, so did the requests for investigations. In one story, Roy described the "all-purpose confessional called the *Spectrum* telephone".

As the years rolled by, new issues appeared on the Adventist landscape—the sanctuary debate and Des Ford, ordination of women, the existence of the gay community within the church—there never seemed to be a shortage of topics to cover.

In 1995, the General Conference Session in Utrecht promised to be a watershed moment for the church. Just like this year in San Antonio, it proved to be a major disappointment to the women who had begun pastoring as they were given permission to baptize and do more and more pastoral work. However, ordination was still frustratingly out of reach; in the late 1970s, ordination of women had seemed immi-

nent. There was great hope that the request by the North American Division to be given permission to ordain, even if the rest of the world did not want to do so, would be approved. When it was turned down, depression and gloom blanketed the church. Never one to be stifled by official actions, Roy began a discussion within his Sligo Sabbath School class that eventually led to the first ordinations of Adventist women pastors by a local church. Reports of the event in *Spectrum* inspired other churches to follow suit. Roy demonstrated the principle of being the church you want to have.

As a reporter, I know that I can tend to focus on the bad news. And from this list of "issues" you might think that the *Spectrum* office was a tension-filled place. But to know Roy, to work with Roy, was to laugh, often and heartily. He even wrote about the significance of laughter in one of the last issues of the journal that he edited. "In laughter we hear the sounds of the sacred," he wrote in 1998. "Laughter responds to the pleasure of creation, recognizes the complexities of the human condition, and experiences the exultation of redemption. At the heart of our merriment, we discover the holy."

Through laughter, a brilliant theological mind, a determined missionary spirit, a love for justice, and an understanding of the importance of the free press, Roy left a legacy of excellence. It is a legacy that the Weniger Society for Excellence in Adventism is set to honor at its next awards ceremony in February. As a member of the Weniger Board, I know it gave us great pleasure to have communicated the news of that honor to Roy earlier this year.

Roy brought us all to the table for significant conversations. There he bore witness to the present truth in Adventism, and gave voice to all who wished to speak. May his legacy of a free press in Adventism continue to bless this church family that he loved. ■

Bonnie Dwyer, editor *Spectrum* magazine.

**Truth be
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Summing up a Legacy

BY DAVID R. LARSON

More than
most people
must, he
had to choose
between
fostering his
own success
as an individual
or working
closely with
others and
contributing to
the success
of them all.

These remarks are drawn from one portion of my reflections at Roy Branson's memorial service. The other two were about his extraordinary contributions as a friend and as a mentor. I begin this time with two stories that I did not tell the afternoon of August 8.

The first story is about Roy's PhD oral examination at Harvard University. "Mr. Branson," asked one of his questioners, "if Thomas Aquinas were alive today and on our faculty, in which department would he be teaching?"

This was a serious query for which there was only one truly correct response. Roy got it right. Aquinas would be teaching in the Department of Social Relations led by Talcott Parsons, a descendant of Jonathan Edwards from a Congregationalist minister's family in Colorado, who always thought of himself as a "Cultural Calvinist."

Although I do not know if Roy took any courses from him, some of Parsons' many scholarly contributions influenced Roy immensely. Like Aquinas, Parsons had an academic interest in almost everything. This is why Harvard had difficulty finding a permanent place for him in one of its existing departments; a "problem" it solved by authorizing him to create one of his own. Like Aquinas, no one remembers Parsons for doing meticulous quantitative and qualitative empirical research. His passion was finding similar patterns, forces and tendencies in apparently dissimilar intellectual worlds. Like Aquinas, Parsons cared more about the integration of knowledge than the ever widening separation caused by increasing specialization. Like Aquinas, Parsons did theoretical work that was practical through and through.

This bore fruit in his "Action Theory." Part of it highlighted the importance of voluntary



Roy at the Larson wedding, 1997, with Charles Scriven (left) and David Larson (center).

endeavors and collaborative efforts in "civil society," something that Alexis de Tocqueville had noted about American life several generations earlier. Apart from such voluntary associations, Parsons thought it difficult entirely to account for positive social change.

The second story is about the approval of Roy's PhD dissertation. One of his advisors was James Luther Adams, a Unitarian social ethicist at Harvard from eastern Washington. He had grown up in a family of fundamentalists who constantly proclaimed the soon and fiery end of the world. (They were not Seventh-day Adventists.) Like Parsons, Adams was interested in the role of voluntary associations; however, he made them front and center in his overall interpretation of positive social change.

Roy and Adams worked well together, except for one thing. No matter how much and how well he wrote, Adams cheerfully asked him to look into something else too. It is impossible to know how long this would have continued if Ralph Potter, a younger social ethicist, hadn't intervened while Adams was away.

Potter informed Roy that he was taking his dissertation to the committee of examiners before Adams returned. Roy objected that it was not yet fully ready. Potter retorted that it was good enough and he took it to the committee anyway. Its members, which included a historian from across the campus, heartedly approved it. In this way, thanks to Potter, Roy

completed the requirements for his doctorate before Adams had a chance to come up with something more for him to do!

An affable man, Adams seems to have thought it funny too. Years later Roy, Charles Scriven and I, spent a splendid evening of conversation with him in his home near Harvard. His stories about what he saw as a theological graduate student in Germany as the Nazis gained power were by turns humorous and frightening.

Surprise: Roy's dissertation was about voluntary associations!

It argued that, among the founders of what is now the United States, James Madison made a distinctive but often overlooked contribution to discussions about the proper role of religion in society. He differed from those who wanted to use the coercive power of the state to enforce religious beliefs and practices; however, he also differed from those who believed that religious people should influence the state only as individuals. Madison held that citizens could form what we now call voluntary associations. These freely established collaborative endeavors would allow them to have more influence in public life than they would have had as individuals, while also preventing them from becoming tyrannical.

Early in his career, Roy had to decide how seriously to apply to his own life what he had learned about voluntary associations. More than

most people must, he had to choose between fostering his own success as an individual or working closely with others and contributing to the success of them all. In street language, he had to decide whether to be "The Sage on the Stage" or "A Guide by the Side".

For several reasons, including his convictions about voluntary associations, Roy chose a career of collaboration. Despite his great ability, he determined that he would accomplish more by working closely with others than he would on his own. His life unfolded accordingly, albeit often painfully.

The various voluntary associations with which Roy worked testify to the importance of his choice. These include the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Kennedy Institute for Bioethics at Georgetown University, the Center for Law and Public Policy at Washington Adventist University, the Interfaith Coalition against Tobacco (which he founded), the Center for Christian Bioethics at Loma Linda University and, most importantly by far, the Adventist Forum, which he co-founded.

It is impossible to exaggerate the powerful and positive contributions of the Adventist Forum, its journal *Spectrum*, and now its very frequently visited website, to Adventism. Roy might have moved to Vermont and become a widely known successful author. Or he might

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Some Seventh-day Adventist Theological Transitions (1965–2015)

Creation	From Timing to Meaning
Humankind	From State of the Dead to Whole Person
Gender	From Hierarchy to Equality
Sin	From Personal Pettiness to Oppressive Structures
Salvation	From Our Faith to God's Faithfulness
Sanctuary	From Furniture, Compartments and Dates to Immanuel: God Always with All of Us
Church	From Persecuted Minority to Prophetic Movement
Sabbath	From Obligation to Celebration
Prophecy	From Predicting to Protesting
Ellen White	From Unquestionable Authority to Fallible but Helpful Guide
Apocalyptic	From Inside Knowledge about the Future to Coded Resistance and Living Now as We Will Then

Early in his career, Roy had to decide how seriously to apply to his own life what he had learned about voluntary associations.

have become a professor of social or bioethics. Instead, he devoted most of his life to working for positive change in the church and in society through voluntary associations.

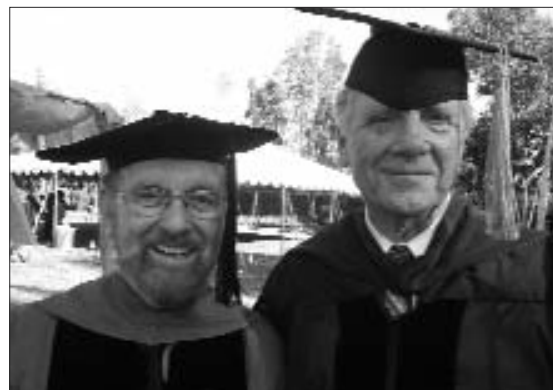
The organization to which Roy contributed most of his life was initially known as the “Association of Adventist Forums.” The word “association” had two meanings for him in this context. On the one hand, it meant “society,” “affiliation,” or “group.” On the other hand, it meant, as an expression of what Talcott Parsons and James Luther Adams had taught him and others about voluntary associations, a “freely entered collaborative endeavor on behalf of the common good”. This has nothing to do with whether its participants are paid.

I was disappointed when the organization dropped the word “association” in favor of “Adventist Forum.” I hope that someday it will return it for Roy’s sake and ours. Yet no matter its name, the organization, plus its journal and website, have served precisely as Parsons and Adams would have predicted.

Although he suffered enough “Great Disappointments” to justify not being so upbeat, by temperament and self-discipline Roy was an unusually cheerful and positive person. Yet during the last year or so of his life he was sometimes briefly pensive and frustrated.

This was especially so as he watched the stormy clouds of divisive Adventism darken the denomination’s sky. For a person who loved the church, a person who was a fourth generation Adventist on one side of his family, and a seventh generation on the other, this needless discord pained him. It was tempting in such moments for even him to be somber about the denomination’s future.

Roy characteristically resisted the temptation of pessimism by recounting the accomplishments of the past. More than once, when things started to become too gloomy, we listed positive ways important sectors of Adventism have changed between 1965 and 2015, partly because of his collaborative efforts. We were always astonished and encouraged by the length of these lists and



2015 Loma Linda University Graduation with Dave Larson

the importance of their contents.

The accompanying table (page 55), which focuses on doctrinal transitions, exhibits one such list. Many others could join us by making similar lists of their own. The results make it difficult to be intensely pessimistic about the denomination’s future. Roy wasn’t!

Three men changed Adventism more profoundly and positively over the last half century than any other trio that we might mention. Their names are Talcott Parsons, James Luther Adams and Roy Branson. Where would we be without them? ■

David Larson, professor, Loma Linda University School of Religion

Roy Branson and Loma Linda

BY RICHARD HART

When I saw the list of speakers and my place on the roster, I knew two things would be true; there would be few stories or aspects of Roy’s life that hadn’t been told, and it would be very late. So let me be brief.

I can’t remember, as I search the archives of my mind, when and where I first met Roy—some

time and some place long forgotten—but I will never forget his message. Then, and subsequently, it was usually embodied in one word: advocacy. He felt clear that anyone involved with public health should be guided by advocacy, whether it was a tobacco issue or some other issue that was bothering him at that point in time.

So it was with some excitement that I supported the recruitment of Roy Branson, at age 70, to come and join the faculty at Loma Linda University. Here was a theologian, scholar, and advocate joining our faculty. This began a sojourn with Roy over the last seven years at Loma Linda that has been both fascinating and challenging.

I'm sure that one of the phrases I have heard more than anything else from Roy is "the healing of the nations", because Roy, as Associate Dean of our School of Religion, would look for times when Jon Paulien was out of town and he could come and attend dean's council. And it seemed to me that almost every issue we were discussing, the solution was always somehow "the healing of the nations."

So we would talk, and Roy appreciated the perspective that Loma Linda brought because he was a "natural" Loma Linda person, in my view. He had a perspective, worldview, and an inclusive nature about him that fit so well on our campus; with the storied Roy Branson name, he

became a regular part of our campus setting. When he took over as director of the Center for Christian Bioethics, he reactivated a tradition on our campus, which has frankly been invaluable, by bringing speakers, usually on a Sabbath afternoon, to talk about a variety of different topics. We are



The Branson family—Roy, Betty, and Bruce

indebted to Roy for bringing that aspect of Loma Linda back to life again, and I am delighted that we are starting a Roy Branson Lectureship to continue that tradition.

He also had a flare for art, as has been referred to here, and many of us have appreciated the various displays that have been placed on the third floor of the Centennial Complex. Roy had a knack for that.

The final comment I want to make is centered on that artistic talent of Roy's. I'll never forget, probably two years ago, Roy walking into my Magan Hall office, with a roll of papers under his arm. He sat down with a little bit of a sheepish grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye. He said, "Dick, I'd like to get rid of this building, and your office." After a pause, I said "well, ok", and he rolled out his papers. Many of you know the story. Roy had photo-shopped a picture of the Loma Linda Campus. It had this beautiful layout, from several different angles, showing Magan Hall gone, the Faculty Reading Room over the breezeway gone, the Heritage Room gone, the old library stacks gone, and a beautiful open campus view from the hospital to the Centennial Complex; a beautiful vision.

The first time I saw it, I kind of laughed inside and sent him on his way, but the idea kept growing, and Roy kept coming back. He enjoyed pointing out, in only Roy's fashion, that the long sidewalk going north to south, with the cross sidewalk in the quad going east to west, made a perfect cross. What could be better, connecting the healing arts on the south end with the academic world on the north end? I don't think he missed the point that at the foot of the cross was the School of Medicine, while at the head of the cross was the School of Religion. That plan is now under active consideration. One of Roy's greatest legacies will be if we can indeed pull that off and unite our campus in that way. So Roy, my friend, you will be missed. We valued your contribution. Thank you for being part of Loma Linda. ■

Richard Hart, President, Loma Linda University

I don't think he missed the point that at the foot of the cross was the school of medicine, and at the head of the cross was the school of religion.

Revolutionary of the Imagination

BY JOHN BRUNT

I first met Roy Branson in 1962 when I was an undergraduate student at La Sierra and he was a doctoral student at Harvard. We met in the Southern California Conference Office in Glendale where we both were to pick up our colporteur supplies. Roy and Larry Geraty are probably the only two Harvard PhDs in the history of that institution to work their way through by colporturing.

The last evening I spent with Roy was about two weeks before he died. Thanks to the hospitality of Dr. Joan Coggin we sat together a few rows behind the Dodger dugout at Dodger Stadium. It was the fourth time this summer that I had sat next to Roy at a Dodger game. They won one and lost three. Two things that I always found consistent with Roy, whether he was colporturing, or watching the Dodgers, or anything in between; first, Roy cared deeply. He didn't just go out colporturing to earn money; he cared about what he was doing. And I can tell you that when he was at a Dodger game, he cared deeply.

Roy had been a Dodger fan from their Brooklyn days. And though much of his life was lived across the country from the Dodgers, he still knew the lineup everyday and whether they had won or lost. Roy loved the Dodgers so much that it literally brought him pain when the manager would do things that made no sense. He had a great deal of advice for Don Mattingly, the Dodger manager. Unfortunately, Mattingly couldn't hear it. I'm sure if he'd been able to hear Roy the Dodgers would have won all four of those games.

Roy also lived joyfully. When he was colporturing, he could go out to face the day of knocking on doors with joyful enthusiasm,

something I have to admit I found a lot more difficult (which is probably why he sold a lot more books than I did). And at Dodger games he was joyful. He never gave up. No matter how far behind they were, there was still hope as long as there was one more inning.

There was one thing he loved to do at the Dodger games: he loved to predict what the next batter was going to do. Now, batters can do so many things that most of the time Roy was wrong, and when he was wrong he was silent. But once in a while Roy would be right. He would jump up with ecstasy and high five everybody and say, "See, I told you that's what he was going to do, didn't I tell you that?" Roy was never happier than when he got the prediction right.

Roy cared deeply and lived joyfully. Some people can care deeply, but they care so deeply that they miss the joy of life. Some people can live joyfully in a trivial or shallow way without seeing the real issues of life. But Roy cared deeply and lived joyfully and he did it because of a central vision in his life. The Apostle Paul sums up that vision well with just one short verse. It comes in Romans 1:14. The people of Rome were engaged in some petty disputes about what they ate and when they ate it. Paul tried to raise their vision. He told them the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drink, but of justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Roy lived by a vision of that kingdom—a kingdom of justice and peace and joy. He loved the visions of the book of Revelations. He did not consider that book a codebook of past events or future predictions, but a vision of what God has in store for us in the future and a vision of what God wants us to do right now, in this world, to give people a taste of the kingdom so that they will long for it.

We are going to look at some of the things Roy said because I think that is a great way to remember him. Thinking of that vision of justice and peace and joy, which Roy especially found in Sabbath, he said, "The greatest gift of Adventists to humanity is not 'hastening the end'

**Roy lived by
a vision of that
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a kingdom of
justice and
peace and joy.**



St. Petersburg, Russia

through moral purity of our lives, but embodying God's just and peaceable kingdom and inviting all to share in celebrating Sabbath worship at the culmination of every week."¹

Justice and peace and joy; that vision motivated all the varied activities of Roy's life. It propelled him to be a social activist. He did not just pray for justice and peace; he worked for justice and peace. You saw that in 1965. He was in Selma, Alabama when Martin Luther King Jr. led a march that changed the direction of this country. That was not just a walk in the park. There were people from the north who died going down to Alabama, and Roy was there. And of course he enjoyed going back for the fiftieth anniversary of that occasion just this past March.

That vision of the kingdom propelled Roy's social activism to take on the tobacco industry, and all the work that he did in his Center for Law and Public Policy. It also propelled him in his engaging work as a teacher. Roy was a dynamic, demanding, engaging teacher. Unfortunately, his tenure at the seminary was cut short, but in the short time he taught at Andrews, he changed the face of Adventist theology and ethics for the next couple of generations. His students truly changed the face of ethics in the Adventist church and brought the study of Christian ethics into prominence.

He believed that teaching was actually a part of the apocalyptic vision. Here is what he said about teaching:

*Great teachers are totally undaunted. They do not drone on with endless facts about the long ago and far away. They shock the present with the past. They ridicule commonplace assumptions, rescue imaginations from the trivial, bring students into the presence of the wisest, most fascinating personalities the world has known. Great teachers overwhelm the trash of the present with the vividness of humanity's most enduring visions. In the presence of great teachers, the forgotten and dead live again. Students are astonished and transformed. In the presence of great teachers, students experience nothing less than resurrection.*²

You see what made him such a great teacher? He had a vision for what teaching was all about.

It also propelled his work as editor. Roy loved nothing more than getting his friends to write the things that would make a difference in the church, and he inspired so many to write. He had a vision of a kind of writing and journalism that would make a difference, and it has. Now, I will say that as an editor, Roy sometimes blurred the lines between editing and writing. As an editor, he did a lot of reworking. I have worked with a lot of editors, and nobody reworked the things I had written like Roy did. In fact, we had kind of a running dispute.

As a preacher, I've been schooled by the writings of Fred Craddock and Eugene Lowry, who say you never let people know where you are going right at the beginning. You create suspense and you lead people along, and you finally get them to a conclusion that is so obvious that they make it for themselves. Well, I tried to write that way, but Roy was sure that the conclusion had to be in the first paragraph. Almost every article I ever wrote for Roy, I found that there would be a new first paragraph with all this stuff from my last paragraph. But what a difference his editorial work made.

Roy also was a theologian. Donna tells me that sometimes Roy wondered if that legacy

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and drink,
but of justice
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and joy in the
Holy Spirit.**

would even be remembered, but what an impoverished church we will be if we do not remember Roy's theology. Roy was not the kind of theologian who analyzed theoretical words. He was a theologian with a vision of what we ought to do and where we ought to be, and he knew that theologians were important for the church. Here's what he said about theologians:

The future of the Adventist church depends on its theologians not responding to what seems to be an increasingly hostile environment, becoming more politically astute, muted, and gray. [Roy could never be accused of being muted and grey, I can assure you.] For succeeding generations to care about Adventism, its theologians must feel passionately enough to make us long for vistas we can barely glimpse. For a faith rising out of visionary experience to flourish, Adventism depends on its theologians to continue to be passionate and daring enough to inspire the church with sightings of new horizons.³

A number of you have been in Roy's new home, just a couple of miles from here. He loved that new home, and when he would talk about it, the thing he talked about most was the view. Almost three hundred and sixty degrees of view where he could look out over the horizon and could see the lights of the city and the mountains. Roy loved looking out and seeing beyond. He knew that is what theologians need to do, and that's what he did as a theologian.

Roy was an Adventist theologian. He was an Adventist through and through. I don't think that even in his wildest imagination Roy could see himself not being an Adventist. Roy loved the Adventist church so much that it brought him pain when its leaders did things that didn't make sense to him. Unfortunately, that was often the case. Roy was well aware of the church's foibles. He could say that recently the church in North America had become more an earthen vessel than a treasure.⁴ He could point out those foibles and he could make suggestions, but it was always in a spirit of constructive criticism, wanting the church to do better, be better than it is. Roy could take every aspect of Adventism and draw it into that vision of the future that makes a difference in the present. He could even take something like Adventist dietary practices, vegetarianism, (although he wasn't a vegetarian), and say, "The vegetarian diet does not have to be one more means of purifying our lives, or another law. The vegetarian diet can be a cornucopia of the pleasures and benefits given to us by God. The

healthier and longer lives vegetarians enjoy is a foretaste of the New Earth."⁵

Probably for Roy though, the part of Adventism that was the greatest sign of the coming kingdom was the joy of Sabbath. It gave him such a sense of joy in life. He could say, "In the full throated laughter of Sabbath joy, we hear all our laughter resonate already to the sounds of the Holy City and a God of joy."⁶

That's where Roy's joy was. He had a vision for Adventism, but Roy's Adventism was not sectarianism Adventism; it was not a separatist Adventism. Roy believed that Adventism had something to offer to the world; it had something to offer to the culture; it had something to offer to the broader Christian community. He had a vision of us going out with no shame, but with great appreciation of our heritage, sharing this vision of the kingdom. Listen to his vision of what Adventism should be:

Contemporary Adventism should regard a rekindling of the apocalyptic vision as its special gift to contemporary culture. The Adventist church in our time is to embody the apocalyptic vision of a community whose disappointments are overwhelmed by its experience of the divine. A church empowered by God's presence. The Adventist church is to be a visionary vanguard, revolutionaries of the imagination, propelled into action, shattering the routines of oppression, with the shock of the holy.⁷

That's a vision to get excited about, isn't it? That vision caused Roy to care deeply and to live joyfully, and it's hard to think of him not being with us. What would Roy want us to do today?

I'll tell you one thing he wouldn't want us to do, he would not want us to minimize the pain of loss. He would not want us to try and put a pretty face on death. Roy knew better. I'll never forget, many years ago, at an American Academy of Religion meeting, in Chicago: a big ballroom, over a thousand people present. A plenary session was given by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a woman who helped us in our ability to treat people who are dying with dignity. In this particular lecture, however, she was trying to convince us that we should accept death as a natural part of life. That we should welcome death as a friend. That we should recognize that there is beauty in death.

I remember her using the analogy of shooting stars. She said, we look to the sky and we enjoy the beauty of shoot-

ing stars going across the sky, and she said they are the death of meteors. It is just death, but there is this beauty in it. And we need to learn to see that kind of beauty in human death as well. I was sitting in the same row with several of you and with Roy. As he listened to this lecture, he got more and more livid. He was talking under his breath, "that is not true, no." And when she ended, he virtually bounded out of his seat to get to the microphone to take her on. She was a bit dismissive of him, but Roy was tenacious. And when the question and answer session was over, he went and engaged her personally in a rather long and animated conversation that I enjoyed watching. I remember Roy saying things like, "Paul says the last enemy to be destroyed is death." And he quoted from Dylan Thomas, "do not go gently into that good night."

Roy would not want us to try and put a pretty face on horrible loss. And Roy was right. When I walked into the viewing room at Montecito, and I saw Roy's lifeless body in a casket, I can assure you it was nothing like watching shooting stars. It was terrible. Roy knew that about death. The theologian Oscar

Cullmann pointed out years ago that the artists who paint the most glorious portraits of the resurrection are those who paint the most realistic picture of the crucifixion. Only when we realize that death is the enemy, can we see how glorious hope is. And Roy had that hope. That was part of his vision, a kingdom that was coming.

He edited a book called *The Pilgrimage of Hope* and some of us here had the privilege of writing articles in that book. He himself wrote two. I want to close by looking at some excerpts of what Roy said about hope in those two essays.

Contemporary Seventh-day Adventists live between the times, between the decisive battle and the future celebrations, but no matter when the final victory comes, our lives now need not be racked with doubt and anxiety. The decisiveness of Christ's triumph in the past guarantees the certainty of his return in the future. Nothing can alter the significance of what has already been accomplished. No delay can shatter confidence in the triumph already achieved. My grandfather and my parents expected Christ to come before they died. Years after

**What an
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verished
church we
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remember
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theology.**



Ron Numbers, Dave Larson, Charles Scriven, Bonnie Dwyer, Donna Carlson, Gillian Geraty, Alvin Kwiram, John Brunt, and Larry Geraty at the Branson Memorial Service that was planned by Donna Carlson.

their death, I still mourn separation from my mother and father. I believe that one day my loneliness will be overcome. Christ's work in the past makes certain his return in the future. God, when he decides, can come. God, when he decides, will come.⁸

That was Roy's hope. I pray that Roy's joy and hope brings you comfort in this time of loss, and holds you, and keeps you, and supports you until that day when the last enemy is destroyed and death is swallowed up in victory. ■

John Brunt, senior pastor, Azure Hills SDA Church

Footnotes

1. Roy Branson, "The Drama of Adventist Worship," *Spectrum* 29:4 (2001): 43–45, see page 43–44.
2. Roy Branson, "Bringing the Dead to Life," *Spectrum* 26:1 (January 1997): 2.
3. Roy Branson, "The Daring Vision that is Adventism," *Spectrum* 26:1 (May 1997): 2.
4. Roy Branson, "Trumpet Blasts and Hosanas: Once and Future Adventism," *Spectrum* 18:3 (1988): 29–35, see 32.
5. Roy Branson, "Those Hardy Vegetarians and Their Succulent Cuisine," *Spectrum* 26:3 (Sept. 1997): 2.
6. Roy Branson, "The Sacredness of Laughter," *Spectrum* 26:4 (January 1998): 44–49, see page 49.
7. Roy Branson, "Trumpet Blasts and Hosanas," 33.
8. Roy Branson, Ed., *Pilgrimage of Hope* (Association of Adventist Forums, 1986), excerpts from his two articles, "Adventists Between the Times: A Shift in the Church's Eschatology," 60–61; and "Responding to the Delay," 16.



Roy and Donna Carlson in San Diego.

Dublin Tribute

BY ALITA BYRD

I cannot think of a single person I know who influenced so many people to such a great extent as Roy Branson. Generations of young people at Andrews University, Washington Adventist University and Loma Linda University experienced his mind-expanding classes. His legendary Sabbath School classes forced people to think about and discuss difficult social and theological issues. The media organization he founded illuminated the Adventist church in important ways.

There is no one who shaped my thinking more.

Roy Branson introduced me to *The New Yorker*. He showed me the importance of social justice. He made me realize that it's possible to actually influence policy—in both the church and the secular world—instead of just watching it happen. He encouraged me to research and write difficult stories, and trusted me with assignments that other editors wouldn't have. He opened my eyes to the broader world of academia outside Adventism. He helped me to see beyond the insular walls of the local Adventist church, and place my faith in a global context. He showed me a side of Adventism that was not constrained by rules and dogma, but was focused on advocacy, peace, justice and equality for everyone. He embodied ethics. He lived kindness and generosity in his everyday life. He was always cheerful. His self-discipline was admirable, as he walked three miles every day without fail (following the scare he had after his first heart attack).

I first met Roy Branson in 1995, when I came to Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) as a sophomore. As a journalism major, someone suggested that I apply to work in the office of *Spectrum*, right on campus. Roy gave me a job as administrative assistant, and I helped to process subscriptions, write Christmas cards to donors, and keep the paperwork up-to-date. But gradually, he gave me more and more writing assignments. I wrote about Adventist members of congress. I wrote about Adventist congregationalism. I investigated large salaries paid to administrators of Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. And I tracked down an Adventist pastor accused of genocide in Rwanda. Roy talked me through everything. I can't imagine he ever could have edited a daily, because no mat-

ter how busy he was, he always had time for discussions. And he always had time to listen. He was a keen questioner and he truly listened to people, especially students—never talking down to them. I never felt he tried to convince me of anything, either. He just kept asking questions and kept listening, letting me talk my own way through sticky issues.

Roy was never great at the details. He was the ideas man, the thinker, the entrepreneur. He needed other people to help carry his projects to fruition. He knew that, and there was never any lack of those people. After all, we were the ones who benefited most.

Working for a while at Roy's Interreligious Coalition on Smoking or Health on Capitol Hill was a wonderful eye-opener on the workings of government, and the way that even small organizations can have a big impact. Roy's confidence in speaking to politicians, religious figures and the media helped me to grow my own confidence. His ability to nurture relationships was inspiring.

It was Roy who told me I should try to work for *Preservation*, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (because it was such a beautiful publication!), which I had never heard of. But sure enough, I got an internship there, which led to my first real job, at *National Geographic* magazine.

It was Roy who I always turned to first for a recommendation, and his recommendation probably helped me get to London School of Economics for a master's program.

And it was in London that I met my Irish husband. When we got married in 2003, I couldn't think of anyone I wanted to speak at our wedding more than Roy Branson. He agreed, and he later told me that he spent weeks researching and preparing. He spoke movingly and memorably about Ruth, and about how her marriage to Boaz was the uniting of two different peoples.

There are simply hundreds, and probably thousands, of people who have similar stories about the impact Roy Branson had on their politics, their faith, their career. If we all wrote short



Roy in St. Petersburg

tributes, they would fill books. There are not many people in the world who can claim to have inspired the number of people Roy did. He was a giant in the world of Adventism and beyond.

With a PhD from Harvard University and a network of contacts, Roy could have done anything. But he chose to concentrate his efforts within the Adventist church and its institutions. He remained passionate about the church all his life, and the church is richer because of him. His thoughtful editing of *Spectrum* made it the influential publication it is. His Sabbath School inspired people far beyond Sligo Church. His championing of the ordination of women made waves, and possibly changed the course of Adventist church history. His friendship with generations of Adventist theologians, teachers and administrators undoubtedly made them think about things just a little bit differently. It would be difficult to overstate his influence.

I will miss you, Roy. We will all miss you. ■

Alita Byrd, member of the *Spectrum* web team and freelance writer from Dublin, Ireland, sent this tribute when she learned of Roy's death.

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