

Ria's Corner

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July 20, 2017

Dear loved ones and friends,

Edwin is still in birth pangs on the third-last chapter of his long Esperanto epic, *La Konflikto de la Epokoj* (The Conflict of the Ages), which deals with the Great Controversy theme, the conflict between Christ and Satan, Good and evil. He is therefore unfortunately not yet quite ready for another Prophetic Bulletin, though we already have some material for it. But time has been galloping past too fast, and I have so wished to reconnect with you, precious friend. Therefore, here is an installment from my perspective. It is not heavy theology, just chatting.

In dealing with the events just before the Second Coming of Christ, Edwin also does his best not to be didactic. It is not an overt Bible study and not a translation of Ellen G. White's *Great Controversy* into Esperanto, but a wholly original epic poem in that language. This project started 59 years ago, and some of it was published in his 2015 collected Esperanto poetry, *Testamente*. You may have seen this hardcover book of more than 700 pages on Face Book. He also held it aloft during personal ministries time at the Mission Hope Adventist Church, shortly after his 85th birthday, as can be seen on a DVD recording about his books.

We pray this epic will help someone among our Esperanto friends to believe in the perfect sacrifice that Jesus made for them to be eternally saved in His kingdom. Nowadays, Edwin is the only major Christian poet in Esperanto, and we have wonderful friends who are waiting for it to be finished so it can be published in full (about 350 pages). Hopefully it will be read by many Esperantists, at least those who love literature! Some of our usual friends unfortunately consider writing poems a waste of time, but is it not another gift from God to praise Him? If you would like to get this 85th birthday DVD, or any of his other wonderful material, please let us know. Also check our website propheticum.com, which has now been viewed by more than 41,000 people. We thank God for our faithful webmaster, Michael Scheifler.

So much has happened to us since we last communicated, that I love doing so now, before the Doppler effect becomes too faint and disappears into the distance of tangled memories.

Now let me tell you about our California trip. We flew from McAllen, Texas, early Wednesday, May 24, after being taken to the airport by our son Carl. Unfortunately neither he nor his wife Shelley could accept the invitation to the graduation and wedding of our grandson, Edwin, Junior. Both of them had to remain for surgery.

At Ontario, California, we were welcomed by our special book friend and host, Doug von Kriegelstein, who lives in Cherry Valley at an altitude of about 3,000 feet, where we stayed over at his place. With him to fetch us from the Oregon airport was another brother, Mac Forrester, our gracious chauffeur then and also the next day. He and Doug took us high up, more than 8,000 feet, into the gorgeous San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California. We even saw snow! There, toward the end of the trip, I found myself frighteningly short of breath, with my feet dragging as I tried to walk. It was a very humbling experience indeed, especially when I sometimes pretend to be a big and strong he-woman, which I, alas, have never been.

But let me briefly tell you something about our Br. Doug, a very enterprising missionary with an amazingly varied and assorted mixture of interests. Among other things, he cross-pollinates bearded irises and collects cacti as well as alphabet rocks and sticks! These have on them letters put there by nature. We have a photograph of stones arranged to spell out the word LOVE.

At that time he was busy with the cherry harvest, which he either canned or juiced. But how I enjoyed the delicious fruit, which I loved picking right off the trees! Unfortunately the apricots were still too green. Doug also liked cooking for us and reintroduced us to what we in South Africa called mealie rice porridge, but here in the US it is known as grits. The Italians call it polenta. Edwin liked it so much that he afterwards ordered some by mail. Doug's wife, Barbara, was away at a Kansas Camp Meeting to teach the children's classes, something which she is very good at.

While in Doug's home, we had the rare pleasure of handling two humongous volumes of Catholic Canon law in Latin. One of them was Gratian's *Decretum*. Its writer was a canon lawyer in Bologna, Italy. The first edition of his work was produced in about 1150, before the invention of the printing press. The other big book was the *Decretales Gregorii Papae IX* (Decretals of Pope Gregory IX), volume 2. According to the title page, this was its 1697 edition, printed at Paris in France. Like the *Decretum*, the *Decretales* cost Doug a pretty penny in American dollars. Gregory IX (c. 1145-1241), a cruel pontiff who also fathered the horrible Inquisition, came just a little later than Gratian. For centuries, the writings of these two men constituted important parts of the *Corpus iuris canonici* (Body of Canon Law).

Included was the Donation of Constantine, a forgery that the papacy used for centuries to bolster both its spiritual and temporal power. Doug showed it to Edwin and put his finger on the expression *Vicarius Filii Dei* (Vicar of the Son of God). These Latin words have a numeric value of 666. According to Rev. 13:17-18, this refers to the name of the papal beast.

In our home, we have the 1985 version of the 20th century *Code of Canon Law*, a Text and Commentary. This is an English translation of the *Codex iuris canonici* (1983), which first appeared in 1917. Sanitized, it no longer contains the Donation or the words *Vicarius Filii Dei*. But, as footnotes show, much of the *Codex* is really based on the older *Corpus*. It is really no use pretending that the title *Vicarius Filii Dei* never existed.

By the way, the writing of the *Codex* was superintended by Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the same man who successfully negotiated diplomatic agreements with several European governments. His greatest achievement was the Lateran Treaty between the Vatican and the Kingdom of Italy, in the time of Benito Mussolini, which was ratified on 7 June 1929. The papacy owes very much to Gasparri, a wily negotiator. Apart from other benefits, it was paid a huge amount of money, about \$90,000,000 in cash. Following the Wall Street Crash a few months later, this was invested and within ten years grew to a billion dollars.

As Edwin shows in *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy*, his masterpiece of prophetic interpretation, many Catholic writers, even some popes, as well as Protestant expositors up to the nineteenth century have referred to *Vicarius Filii Dei*. The last mentioned, beginning with Andreas Helwig in 1600, have shown that it has a numeric value of 666. It is from these antecedents that our own Uriah Smith derived his interpretation. Other Protestants, however, later joined their Romanist brethren in denying that the number 666 has anything to do with *Vicarius Filii Dei* or the papacy. It is a shame that some Seventh-day Adventist scholars are now also in their ranks, with a badly twisted idea that 666 consists of three sixes and just denotes human imperfection! As a matter of fact there are not 3 but 111 sixes in 666.

Are we perhaps afraid to be considered old fashioned by remaining true to what our denomination has taught for at least 150 years? Edwin in his book deals with the history of our fearfulness and putting a potato into our trumpet. Do we, like those who believe in the Secret Rapture, also fear persecution? Our lukewarmness, according to Revelation 3, makes the Lord want to vomit. He has a remedy, however: a thorough and deep conversion daily! Edwin's lecture on the topic of 666 at Southern Adventist University in 2012 is available on a DVD. Would you like a copy of this DVD for only \$10.00, plus shipping and handling? If so, please contact us by e-mail.

While we were at Doug's place, we also discovered Andrew Murray, that great South African minister, who in the Dutch Reformed Church taught righteousness by faith, wrote much about practical godliness, and longed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He led a great revival in the 1860's. It is fascinating that God brought about a reawakening in South Africa more than 20 years before the preaching of Waggoner and Jones at the Minneapolis Conference of 1888! Unfortunately Murray's revival seems to have been short lived because of the liberal elements among younger pastors who followed him. By the time we were born, formalism had largely taken over in the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. Fortunately Seventh-day Adventists still, by the grace of God, have time to let Jesus by His Holy Spirit come into the heart temple. He desperately wants to cleanse, shape, and use us for his work.

What we found most impressive about Doug is his missionary outreach to Africa. He also visits that continent as often as he can. For instance, last summer he was in Zambia. From time to time, he sends good Adventist literature in banana boxes to be read by prisoners in all of Ghana's 50 prisons. He has on more than one occasion bought copies of Edwin's work, *The Truth about 666*, for this purpose. To get them to Africa, he travels to Arizona, a round trip of some 800 miles. From there, the books go by ship container. To finance this ministry he sells, at camp meetings, used Adventist books and old Chapel vinyl records of sermons by H.M.S. Richards. During the past two years, he raised \$15,000 and about \$250,000 in 25 years. If you have such material and think you could help Doug von Kriegelstein, please text or e-mail him at dougyon@hotmail.com. Also do not hesitate to call him at (909) 224-4551.

This is the same dear brother whom God woke up one night and told to send \$300 to Edwin. He did so pronto!

Friday morning after breakfast Dr. Omar Gomez came to take us to the more low-lying Loma Linda, just round the corner of the mountain, it seemed. There I was surprised to see almost as many jacaranda trees in bloom as in Pretoria, South Africa, and was very excited to spot the famous university. His wife, Dr. Julia Gomez, took me sightseeing. I saw the old Loma Linda Hospital, the one Sr. White advised the church to buy, sitting nicely on top of the hill overlooking the Valley. This has been replaced by the huge one we normally see pictured in *Review* articles about this university with its famous medical school. We took a few pictures, but unfortunately not of the Good Samaritan sculptures, because it was dark when I got close enough!

Let me try to tell you as briefly as possible about the electrifying experience of attending our very first (and probably last) graduation at our Loma Linda Medical School, for which we had gone there. Our elder grandson, Edwin André de Kock, received his hoodie on Friday evening, May 26. The Loma Linda Church was packed, and the giant organ roared magnificently, while faculty sedately filed up in pairs and packed the stage. The graduates, being so many, kind of fox-trotted up in pairs, the last of them with young children and babies perched on shoulders or in their arms. These they had managed to acquire in spite of all the time spent with books and patients. These young children were congratulated by name

and awarded small cups by Dr. and Mrs. H. Roger Hadley, Dean of the School of Medicine. The highlight of the evening for each graduate, I guess, was no doubt when he or she knelt on a small stool and was draped in the beautiful hoodie by his nearest of kin. In the case of our grandson Edwin these were his parents, our son André and his wife Mirtha, who is herself a physician. The group then smiled for a professional photographer and exited to the bosom of the proud family. The formalities with each took only a few minutes, but halfway through the proceedings I realized the pain in my leg/hip was getting out of hand, (no pun intended!). Scanning the long list ahead, I decided it would be unwise to be heroic and exit on a stretcher. So, after the boyfriend of our granddaughter Rose had got his hoodie, grandma got grandson Edwin to help her to the entrance, where our friend Omar Gomez kindly gathered me into his car and took me home. Edwin Senior had wisely stayed home, since he was still recovering after the first two days of our wonderful visit to Doug von Kriegelstein and that trip up the San Bernardino Mountains.

On Sabbath, Omar took us to Advent Hope, a special Loma Linda congregation for young adults, which was started about sixteen years ago but is now attended by all age groups. It reminded me of our best churches in South Africa. The women dressed modestly and there were no praise teams. Omar specifically wanted us to make contact with some of the leaders of this group. The service during this graduation weekend was conducted by three graduates, which we found most interesting. Julia was with the Spanish congregation nearby, where she is the mover and shaker of their pathfinders, who came in second on the Bible Bowl that Sabbath. After Sabbath, her team celebrated by visiting the bomb shelter in the Gomez back yard. It had been built in the time of the Cold War. Then they consumed all the cherries and food that Julia put out for them. They were so well-behaved I did not even wake up! By the way, I recently read that upscale bomb shelters are now in high demand among the rich on the west coast. One wonders why. Does North Korea have anything to do with it? But it is really time to pray seriously for the angels to hold back the threatening winds of strife.

Sunday morning early we were on the Loma Linda premises, where a carpet of purple potted petunias and yellow marigolds were banked between the stage and seats which had been arranged under huge canvasses. This time an orchestra played Verdi's *Triumphal March* from *Aida* and also *Pomp and Circumstance* by Elgar. Among all the speeches and awards I found the Global Service Award given to Dr. James Appel the most interesting, having read about his missionary experiences in Africa during the past few years in bulletins from FAMA (Former Adventist Missionaries to Africa). Apparently he and his wife are now in Chad as self-supporting volunteers at two hospitals, while they live on a farm in the vicinity, where they presumably try to make a living. He is also a fascinating writer. I do hope this publicity helps him sell more of his books that were mentioned in the graduation program catalog.

It struck us how many of the graduates have Asian and other foreign names, with fewer Anglos. Apparently statistics show that Adventists are ethnically the most diverse church group in the world. Later this was confirmed for us when we went for a tour of the large number of foreign Adventist churches in Loma Linda! It is really a pity they are so full already, because many of their members could have gone out to do mission work among the many non-Christians belonging to their nation right here in the United States. "Great benefits would come to the cause of God in the regions beyond if faithful efforts were put forth in behalf of the foreigners in the cities of our homeland. Among these men and women are some who, upon accepting the truth, could soon be fitted to labor for their own people in this country and in other countries." (Review and Herald, October 29, 1914.)

Mission stories have always been among my favorites, so I sometimes wish I were young and that there were six of me. But, alas, we each get youth only once! And then, as George Bernard Shaw said, youth is wasted on the young. So may the Lord help me to be a nicer senior instead. To the strains of *Semper Fidelis* by John Philip Sousa everybody marched out, and then we stood around as family groups in the hot sun and took pictures. We met Edwin's charming parents-in-law-to-be, Arturo and Lupita Ruiz, as well as Rose's boyfriend, Damian, who also graduated and is by now in Florida, busy with his surgical residency. After a meal at Olive Garden, we were offloaded at the Gomez residence, very, very tired.

The following afternoon, Monday 30, was the next red-letter day for young Edwin and his fiancée Dalila: their wedding on Memorial Day. Omar took us to the venue, the covered back garden of a house belonging to Dalila's cousin, who very kindly and generously prepared and made this venue available to them. A cross was affixed to a huge tree, under which the small orchestra played. As grandparents, Edwin and I were seated in the first row, near Dalila's grandmother. A large photo of her late husband's was displayed across the aisle from us. He had died recently.

In the front, white gauze curtains draped to form a soft, well-defined backdrop for the ceremony. Lots of greenery with sprays of creamy roses decorated the aisles. First came the five bridesmaids in long pink halter-neck dresses, among them our beautiful granddaughter Rose; then five best men, among whom was our other precious grandson, Joseph. He works as a meteorologist for the United States Air Force and is stationed in England, from where he flew over for two weeks to attend the wedding and visit his parents. Last came a few cute little girls and boys.

Dalila was beautiful in a long white lace dress. She was flanked by both her parents. I thought this so touching, especially since she is their only child. A short ceremony was conducted by a young pastor in two-tone shoes which I had not seen since childhood. David, young Edwin's cousin, very beautifully played a violin solo of the Lord's Prayer, very fitting and especially for us. All the music was unobtrusive and in good taste. Apparently Dalila, her parents, and friends worked together and organized everything, thereby making possible a much larger and inclusive wedding festivity. Among the guests were many friends, including non-Adventists. The catering for the reception at the same venue was done buffet style, a marriage of Mexican and Peruvian dishes. There was also plenty of space for circulating, as is my own custom down here in Texas.

We were so happy to see old friends, such as Dr. Will and Sylvia Clarke of Loma Linda, as well as Mirtha's sisters and some of their children, who had come from Florida. Apart from the wedding ceremony itself, most of the proceedings were in Spanish, which I unfortunately do not know. I also do not hear too well. So I missed the words but was very moved when Dalila's dad tried to read in Spanish the words of the song "I loved her first" by Heartland, which you may know:

When she first smiled at me,
I knew the love of a father runs deep
And I prayed that she'd find you some day,
But it's still hard to give her away.
I loved her first.

He started crying so hard that his niece had to take the mike and read the rest of the lyrics from his smart phone. I just love a man who can cry! Then he and Dalila did a very sad, slow

dance together to this tune, almost like saying goodbye to his special girl, an only child. What I did not know at the time is that Dalila and her parents, but especially her father, were very close and that this song had been their special song. I am so glad to know now that she comes from such a wonderfully loving home and that Edwin has been such a lucky guy to gain a very wise, loving, and devoted wife. We pray for Edwin and Dalila daily, and would like to ask you, dear friend, to pray for them, too. As many of you know, residents work very long hours under tremendous pressure daily. We thank Dalila's dear parents for bringing up such a jewel and pray that they will be comforted in gaining a loving son.

A friend of Dalila's from Maryland took numerous wedding pictures, but unfortunately halfway through it all Edwin Senior and I both felt too tired to stay longer. The fun part happened afterwards, I believe. The tossed wedding bouquet landed on the roof! So Dalila tossed another one, but unbeknown to her the flower girls snuck in with the single ladies, so one of them caught it. Fortunately we are not superstitious! Later in the afternoon our children brought us some of the delicious wedding cake. André, with typical De Kock humor, predicted the other young ladies would have to wait until in their 40's before they could get married! But the mishaps make a ceremony such as this totally unique.

The next day Julia took us to visit and have lunch with Mary McDowell, the spry ninety-year-old widow of Lyndon McDowell, who graduated in South Africa at Helderberg College a little before Edwin did. Subsequently he headed the Theology Department there but later emigrated, first to Canada and then the United States. Apart from being a minister, he was an excellent writer of many articles and book reviews. Mary, an American, lives in a retirement home at Loma Linda. Some of the other residents wondered aloud if we were coming to live there too, but at \$2,600 per head that is highly unlikely!

On that same day, at the home of Omar and Julia, we had a pleasant visit from three of the Advent Hope leaders, who received a set of Edwin's books. We were also very happy to meet a hardworking family which had fairly recently left South Africa, where their lives had been threatened. One of them, Michael, now heads Advent Hope. Please pray for these dear folk to obtain permanent residence in America.

Early Wednesday morning we flew back to McAllen, Texas, where we got picked up by our son Carl after midnight, arriving home way past bedtime. There we were unexpectedly met in the pitch darkness (after he had left) by our neighbor's horses—ma and baby! I, who had been bitten twice by the same mommy, got such a fright that our cat and I rushed up the back steps, thinking horses would not climb up there. Meanwhile Edwin, with a cooler head, called neighbor Ruben on his cell phone to come and collect his animals—all the while wondering in the dark, while unlocking the gate, if she would not nip him in the back! So much excitement for one day, but now the whole garden is full of fairly deep hoof prints. But, after all, it had been my idea to tell Ruben that while we were away his horses could come and eat the grass to save us mowing it.

We are planning to drive up to Houston for the International Convention of Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), which is scheduled for August 2-5. It will take place at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

If you happen to be there, you may see us at Rodney and Patti Heinrich's **New Life Mission** booth, number 929. Among their other exhibits will be Edwin's publications.

Two of our other friends, Henry and Arlene Stubbs, are also scheduled to be there, representing the **World Youth Group**, at booth number 608. For further details about this fascinating and heart-warming ministry, please visit their web site at worldyouthgroup.com.

They and their supporters do medical missionary work in Cuba, which they have been visiting for many years.

In 2014, they took us with them, where Edwin gave four lectures on prophecy in the La Vibora Seventh-day Adventist church from 17 to 19 October. Later he used this material as the basis for writing his most recent book, *A More Sure Word of Prophecy*, published and printed here in America during 2014. It sells for \$10.00, plus shipping and handling. Its Spanish version, *La Palabra Profética Más Segura* (2015), was both translated and printed in Havana, Cuba. Because of the embargo, copies for us had to be “smuggled” out by friends. It sells for only \$8.00, plus shipping and handling.

On our computer we recently checked out the starry heavens and galaxies in outer space. I cannot imagine, in my wildest dreams, how anybody in his or her sound mind would not look forward to traveling through that magnificence. God placed the love of beauty and eternity in our hearts! Let’s plan to spend it with Him and remember that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Thank you for your patience, love, and faithfulness in praying for the needs of our own ministry, as well as others who do God’s work. Please show Edwin’s material to your friends or tell them about it. You may also wish to buy sets for a few of your dearest friends, as a pastor in Canada has just done. And do drop us a line of encouragement. We deeply treasure your love and friendship.

Your forever friends,

Ria (and Edwin) ☺