

# *Ria's Corner*

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Dearest all, friends and loved ones from Australia, New Zealand, Cuba, South Africa, the United States as well as those in Canada, and the rest of our deeply suffering planet,

I have considered for some time now that you may be worried about our latest news, especially since we during the last few days had to hear with shock and sorrow of the death of precious loved ones in South Africa: first Alex Strydom, Edwin's sister Susan's son, and then the close friend of Ria's niece. It made me a bit nervous that I might never finish this!

A few weeks ago, Edwin became ill and intermittently kept on vomiting through the whole night. Early the next morning, we called his primary care physician, who advised that he be taken to the emergency care extension of the Rio Grande Hospital nearby in Edinburg. Ruben Rangel, one of our kind neighbors, rushed him there. There a CT-scan indicated that in his pelvic area Edwin had a mass, which could be malignant. Such symptoms sometimes accompany cancer in its final stages. The attendant specialist urged that the ambulance take him to hospital for further tests.

However, Edwin preferred that Ruben drive him home to set our house in order. Among other things, I also had medical problems. Edwin also got in touch with his normal urologist, who doubted the diagnosis. He had the CT-scan reevaluated by another radiologist. After about three weeks in limbo, it turned out, that the first diagnosis had been faulty. Or was it a miracle? A second physician who looked at the data reported: "There is no cancer. You have nothing to worry about!"

So life became somewhat easier, while other aches and pains resumed their previous gravity. In my case, it has also been nausea and bouts of vomiting. After an entire series of tests, my gastroenterologist has not been able to find the cause, except gastritis, which he said was mild. Diagnostically he tried everything: I swallowed a probe into the stomach. Later there were an ultrasound, a CT-scan, and an MRI. Nothing! Now I have undergone another gastro-endoscopy. Among other problems, it shows a small hernia. Maybe this

is it and could require more surgery. That makes us worry about a copayment, potentially large.

Life is at times much like a concrete mixer, and the secret is to keep one's nose above the latest batch of concrete, by enjoying the goodness of God in between, like when our first-born, André (now himself a middle-aged man), his wife, Mirtha, and their daughter Rose came to visit us for a while in June.

While they were here, our children virtually decided for us that we needed to move into a smaller house and yard. This idea I bitterly resented, because I suffer from insomnia when surrounded by noise and lights. Our earnest prayers ascended to our Heavenly Father, who sent us two precious Adventist ladies from Mexico: Keeoni a nursing student, and her lovely mommy Martha, to live with and help us. Both are involved in medical affairs and training as nurses, as well as fervent believers in good health.

The Lord had heard our cry and at the same time supplied them with a free home in which to pursue their dreams. They are most helpful and competent, hard-working women. Concretely, they help in the garden, cook and clean, and drive our car to town and church. Occasionally, Edwin also still does so, but an old man of 92 mostly should not be behind a steering wheel.

So far, this arrangement with the two ladies is proceeding happily. Please pray they will be with us until we lay our final burdens down. We are, then, staying put in our own home, until the day we are moved out of it to the crematorium.

In the meantime, we enjoy the simple pleasures of life, such as having worship together morning and evening. We love discussing implications of what we read from the Word of God, then pray together. Afterwards we feed our wild birds. We also tremendously enjoy the antics of our two cats as well as a stray that comes to eat at our door, also for a cuddle. She has two cute babies. We also delight in the new views of outer space from the Webb telescope and long to travel through God's jewels to the grandest one of all, the city of God, with splendors we cannot even imagine. All the finest firework displays of earth throughout the ages, rolled into one cannot even faintly give us an idea of the feast our eyes will behold! At full moon time, I delight in the golden splendor and am reminded of the warning against worshiping the sun, moon, or stars! God knew those who delight in beauty may be tempted, yet He made them so surpassingly beautiful anyway!! The best part is that my sight and hearing will be perfect then, not half muted, so I can delight myself in His amazing creation

of sight, sound, taste, joyful feeling perfection in His surpassingly perfect creation through all eternity.

But horrible experiences keep on intruding. Arno Kucharzik, Edwin's closest friend for 75 years, since 1947, when both of them were teenagers, has had a serious stroke. He is in hospital at Durbanville, South Africa, paralyzed on his right side, from top to toe. Therapy is being applied, but he is hanging between life and death, with pneumonia endangering his recovery. Sadly, some of his loved ones think it might be better for him to go! The doctor has put him on morphine and gives him seven days to live.

Steve Emse, our wonderful researcher for Edwin's 666 book, developed deep vein thrombosis. We pray for healing and that his medical needs will soon be taken adequate care of.

Shockingly another good friend, Norman R. Gulley, has passed away, at the age of 88. He was the first Seventh-day Adventist systematic theologian in the true sense of the word. He also authored some other works. But his four volumes of *Systematic Theology*, based on research over many decades, is unique. It builds its conclusions entirely and with rigor on what the Bible says. Though Gulley also firmly believed in the writings of E. G. White, he never derives his conclusions from them. We feel honored that in his fourth volume, *Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things* (Andrews University Press, 2016), Gulley positively referred to and quoted from three of Edwin's books: *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*; *Seven Heads and Ten Horns in Daniel and the Revelation*; and *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy*.

While putting the final touches to this volume, Norman informed Edwin that some persons at Andrews opposed his inclusion of the *Vicarius Filii Dei* explanation, as well as any reference to Edwin's book about it, and wanted him to eliminate it. But Norman stood firm, for he agreed with my husband as well as Uriah Smith. We dearly loved that man, and our prayers go out for his wife Leona and their posterity.

In South Africa, our precious Martie Evert recently fell and broke her pelvis at Anerley Haven on the south coast of Kwazulu-Natal, while visiting there. This has necessitated many weeks of lying flat on her back there before entering rehab., where she has to learn to walk again. I know how painful and slow that

can be, but am so happy our wonderful Lord says: "In all their affliction I am afflicted."

Martie, who sings like a nightingale, is like a daughter to us. Fifty-five years ago, we lived at Helderberg College, where Edwin headed the Afrikaans and Dutch Department and also taught some Speech and Homiletics. Martie van der Westhuizen was a young student. Unfortunately, her father, no longer able to pay for her tuition, was told she had to leave. Edwin said it was a pity for such a talented person to drop out. Therefore, she lived with us for her final two years as a student. Edwin also taught her linguistics. That was more than half a century ago. After further studies, she later had a career as a skillful translator. Today she is a retired, grey-haired grandmother who still translates for the church. She and her husband Alvin Evert also became lifelong denominational workers.

And so I wonder about many of you while praying for you: for instance, our precious friend Jack Blanco living near Southern University, from whom I cannot get a reply. Does anybody have any information about him? And Pastor Jim Reinking and Donna or Will Clarke and Sylvia here in the United States, or Muriel Crosbie in Canada?

George, whom I first knew as my baby brother, lives in New Zealand. Recently, he lost his wife Ruth to brain cancer. We are praying for him to be comforted. About six months ago, my sister Chrissie Vermaak lost her husband Nic to Myasthenia Gravis, and the Covid in Bloemfontein, South Africa. She is still trying to get his estate sorted out and is afflicted by other difficulties. Fortunately she was able to get help from a capable Adventist attorney, so the Master of the Supreme Court will be able to finalize the estate, hopefully soon.

Right up front and foremost in our minds daily is the suffering of our precious people in the Ukraine. ADRA and local Adventist churches do their best to take care of the displaced and suffering. Our hearts cry out for mighty angels to grab hold of the winds of strife, somehow, so that the servants of our God can be sealed in their foreheads and our Saviour, the Prince of Peace, can come to restore to us what Satan has stolen and destroyed. "Oh, may Thy kingdom come soon, my Precious Lord!" is the prayer I am sure you reiterate with me wholeheartedly.

Recently we had the heart-wrenching experience of seeing and hearing our precious Michael Scheifler with his caregiver. He used to be our web master

before he became the prey of Parkinson's disease. It was pitiful to see him suffer, but he fervently agreed with us about the new bodies Christ will give His children soon. Please pray for him and other friends who suffer from that terrible affliction. What horrible diseases Satan is afflicting the human race with! But one day he will pay for tormenting us so mercilessly.

While we ask you to pray for us and all the suffering, also please thank the Lord for the two Angolan students, Dario and Edigar, who last month graduated from theology at our Cuban seminary. They are also hoping to do their Master of Divinity as the Lord shall lead. You may remember how the Good Lord enabled us with your help to pay for their studies at the seminary. God has been so good to them! Please keep them in your prayers too. Also Henry and Arleen Stubbs, who have recently as self-supporting missionaries returned from another successful trip to Cuba.

Please, please drop us a line to tell us how things are with you: Una Turner and Pastor Hanbury from Australia, dear John from Portugal, and Pastor Edgar Nunes from Canada. We have not heard from Teatsy Farris for the longest time and wonder if you are still alive.

The name of Gus Foster reminds us of that most splendidly fantastic Foreword to Zion camp meeting that we enjoyed with a special group in Idaho a few years ago. There we also met the lovely large family of Andy and Naomi Weaver, Amish converted to Adventism. They soon supplied enough students to start an Adventist school! This congregation has become a haven of refuge for those who suffer amid shunning and other unkind ways of discriminating against people who dare to differ from the accepted norm of their community.

From some of you we have not heard for the longest time and wonder if you are still alive? Please strengthen our hearts by letting us know that you are and are praying for us as we face the infirmities of late old age, and try to dispose of the unsold books still in our home that Edwin spent fifteen years preparing. We must get our house in order, as King Hezekiah was instructed to do.

For instance, we have a very large stock of *Cristo y Anticristo en la Profecía y la Historia*. Potential readers in the United States have shown little interest in it. Therefore, we think of donating them to people in Cuba but lack the funds to send them to somebody who will take them there, where they are greatly appreciated. Your suggestions and enabling contribution will be greatly appreciated.

**Our greatest need:** your prayers to enable us to let our light shine daily amid the frailty and loss of our final years. We need this now more than ever.

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