

# Passport

Second Quarter 2008

A newsletter for the  
Regional Conference Retirees  
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

## The Blessing of Influence

**Influence defined** - The capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others: *He used family influence to get the contract.*

Although you are retired you have influence on your children their children and in some cases great grand children. The same is true of the children of your friends and their children and yes, even their great grand children. How do you use this influence?

- In conversations around the Sabbath Dinner table
- At church business meetings
- In the soul winning efforts of your local congregation
- In casual chance meetings at church or in public places in the city

where you live

The fact of retirement does not mean the end of influence. Many retirees believe that they have had their day in the sun and that it is time for them to take a back seat and enjoy the ride. Here is a reminder. The back seat is still on the bus. You may not be the driver but you can influence the direction. It must not be obtrusive (undesirably noticeable) but it can be present and valuable.

I recall an encounter I had as a student with an elderly Black woman sitting on her porch during the turbulent 1960's in Birmingham, Alabama. Rioting and demonstrations were filling the headlines of the nation's print media and the screens

of the TV news outlets. I was working with a summer student organization selling subscriptions for the popular magazines of that day. Before I could get the little sales spiel out, she said to me in a clear and determined voice. "You young people are running around cutting up and tearing this country up, thinking that you have all the answers to the problems. You better stop and talk to some old people like me because you cannot go anywhere without us. You need our wisdom and experience or you will only succeed in tearing down everything and building up nothing."

I do not recall asking any old people anything because the only thing I was interested in at the time was tearing up those "huge" bills I had at Oakwood. However, I do remember listening to those elderly persons who **volunteered** to share their wisdom with me. Today wisdom is necessary to successfully address the issues that we face internal and external to the Church.

Do you remember the song we used to sing in MV meetings that said in part "A volunteer for Jesus a soldier true, others have enlisted why not you . . ." The young people of today need your input. For Heaven's sake, please let us not fail them now.

*Joseph W. McCoy*  
Executive Director

## The Recession and the Retirement Plan

It goes without saying that everyone is watching the economic issues of our fair land. There seems to be a confluence of mini catastrophes converging on us. The Retirement Plan investment portfolio has taken its lumps just as has everything and everyone else on the economic front. The good news is that when planning the health of the Plan the professionals instructed us that we must take the long view of things. The ups and downs of the market are expected and included in the balancing of the investments. If there is correct balance then we will be fine in the long term. However, as in all things Christian and in the words of a song we used to sing in the days of my youth, "Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right."

## Health Insurance Issues

Recently Adventist Risk Management our agent for Retiree Health Insurance changed the vendor that handles medical claims. In the transfer of records the Medicare Extension (MCx) feature did not transfer and many of you were presented with the challenge and the bills leading to your belief that you

had a \$2,100 deductible for prescription drugs, and other medical coverage before the insurance would begin to pay.

We are pleased to tell you that this mistake has been resolved and that if you have paid for those charges since January 1, 2008, you are entitled to be reimbursed. Please call our office and speak to Mrs. Elaine Allston, the Coordinator for Benefits Processing about the details. One thing you will need to do to be reimbursed is to send the following:

- 1 – Medicare EOB (Explanation of Benefits)
- 2 – Bill/Invoice from your Doctor's office
- 3 – Receipt of your payment to the Doctor

**\*PLEASE keep a copy of ALL items that you send to ARM**

**Send the required items listed above to:**

**Adventist Risk Management Claims**

**P.O. Box 1928**

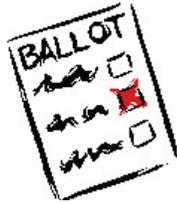
**Grapevine, Texas 76099-1928**



Your NEW cards from ARM will be mailed directly to you.

## Recent Regional Conference Elections

The Southeastern Conference held a Constituency Meeting on April 27, 2008. In that meeting the people elected Elder Hubert J. Morel Jr. as the new president. Elder Morel brings a wealth of pastoral and leadership talent to the assignment serving most recently as Secretary for the Conference over the last five years. We are sure that the blessings of the Lord will continue to flow under his capable hand. He follows Elder W. Lester Taylor as the fifth president of that conference that was organized in 1981. The other officers elected are:



Secretary – Elder Patrick Vincent

Treasurer – Mrs. Gwendolyn Parker

The following persons were elected to the departments listed below:

ABC – Referred to the Conference Executive Committee

Church Ministries – Clarence Wright

Communication – Robert Henley

Education – Elisa Young

Family Ministries – Lewis Edwards

Haitian Coordinator – Allah Monestime

Ministerial Director – Referred to the Conference Executive Committee

Publishing – Theus Young

Stewardship, Trust Services – David Long

Spanish Coordinator – Referred to the Conference Executive Committee

Youth Ministries, NSO – Cesar Robinson

Women Ministries, Prayer Ministries - Nicole Brise

Elder Taylor's presidency is marked by significant growth in baptisms, conference membership increases and in tithe gains. His tenure also saw the purchase of a new conference headquarters building and a beautiful 400 acre estate which will be developed into the new campground. We salute him for his vision and daring and for his good and faithful service to the conference. Your prayers for him and his wife Victoria will surely carry them enthusiastically to the next assignment the Lord has for them in His Church.

## Wellness and the Regional Conference Retirement Plan

All too often when discussing insurance we are not conscious of the negative impact poor health habits have on the cost of providing that insurance. In the next issue we will begin a feature on Wellness. The good news is that you do not have to wait for that feature to begin a good health regimen. A good start is contained in two activities. The first is to drink an adequate amount of water each day. It is available and it is cheap, especially coming out of your faucet at home. The second is moderate exercise, preferably walking a few blocks each day. A third but probably the first thing to do is have a talk with your doctor.



Does this sound familiar? Do you remember when where and how long you have been listening to this advice? Did you do anything about it since you last read or heard it? Now is the time appointed to



## Southeastern California Lay Leadership Conference

Recently some of us from the Regional Office were invited to California to participate in a Lay Leadership Conference. On its face it could have appeared to be yet another thinly veiled effort to start a Regional Conference. We came away from the meeting with the clear understanding that they were reacting to a substantial increase in the amount of tithe that each congregation would need in order to have a fulltime pastor and additional staff with which to do ministry.

The major issue seemed to be the negative impact the increase would have on congregations that were predominantly Black and what if anything those congregations would or could do about the problem. It seems the fact that both the President of the Union and the President of the local Conference are Black made little difference. The flow of the tithe dollar was of great concern and inspired some interesting, intelligent and sometimes frightening comments. One issue that got more than casual attention in private conversation if not in open forum was the recent General Conference action regarding formation of **The Union of Churches** in some sections of the World Field and how that may apply to their situation. Let us remember our brothers and sisters on the West Coast in our prayers. We must also remember in our prayers the Black Administrative Caucus/Officers and our Leaders at every level of our church on both sides of the aisle.

## Regional Conference Campmeeting Dates:



**Allegheny East Conference**

June 26 – July 6

**Allegheny West Conference**

June 25-28 (One Weekend)

**Central States Conference**

June 20-22 (One Weekend)

**Lake Region Conference**

June 20 – 28

**Northeastern Conference**

June 27,28 & July 4, 5

**South Atlantic Conference**

June 5 – 14

**South Central Conference**

June 6 – 15

**Southeastern Conference**

June 24-28

**Southwest Region Conference**

June 13 – 22

**Bermuda Conference**

June 27 - July 5

## Regional Conference Retirees

**We are pleased to introduce the NEWEST retirees added in the 2nd quarter of 2008:**

1 - Gabriel Saintus	Lake Region	28 years
2 - Jeanty Arisme	Southeastern	16 years
3 - Paulette Bermingham	Northeastern	30 years
4 - Theresia Taylor	Lake Region	20.2 years
5 - Millard Taylor	Lake Region	16.2 years
6 - Michael Bernard	Allegheny East	33.1 years
7 - Sylvia Bailey	Allegheny East	30.10 years
8 - Edward Woods	Lake Region	7.4 years
9 - Willie Bussey	South Central	29.4 years
10 - Joseph Harris	Allegheny West	41.9 years
11 - Joseph P. Lewis	Allegheny West	31.8 years



### **Retiree(s) Recently Departed:**

Stennett H. Brooks - Bronx, NY

## Oakwood and University Milestone



On January 1, 2008, Oakwood College officially became Oakwood University. Significantly exactly 50 years ago Oakwood received its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. That milestone was reached during the tenure of President Garland J. Millet. Dr. Millet, who is retired in the Huntsville area, was one of many witnesses to this great achievement. Congratulations! Oakwood University and Dr. Delbert Baker, faculty and staff!

## Oakwood Students Win National Championships

### **OU Ambassadors Win 2008 USCAA Championship**

Chalk up another first for Oakwood University – as the Ambassadors beat Florida College at the Men’s Division I Basketball National Championship playoffs of the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA) in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma in March. This was Oakwood’s first year participating in the USCAA, so the win is especially meaningful. Coach Tony Oliver said the team prayed before they stepped onto the court for the Saturday night game as a part of their regular “M-O” before every game. Despite countless queries as to why the team refused to participate in games played between sunset Friday and sunset Saturday, the Seventh-day Adventist team members and coach stood by their religious convictions and observed the Sabbath. The rest seemed to work to their benefit. The team returned to Huntsville to a crowd of well-wishers at the airport and was later recognized by the Huntsville City Council on April 10. Congratulations Ambassadors!!



### **OU Wins Honda Campus All-Star Challenge**

Oakwood University defeated Alcorn State to come in first in the 19th annual Honda Campus All- Star Challenge, billed as “the largest annual academic competition between the nation’s leading Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” The event was held March 27 through April 1 in Orlando, Fla. Oakwood had participated since the Challenge’s inception in 1989, but had never made it past the Final Four. After playing all of their first seven matches on Friday, due to the Sabbath observance, they won Saturday night to advance to the semi-finals and on to the finals on Sunday. Each of the 64 teams was comprised of five students with diverse academic backgrounds. The grand prize was a grant of \$50,000 from Honda. We agree with one friend of Oakwood, who said that the most important part is not the intellectual prowess, the trophy, the national media attention, or the money, but our team’s witness about the Sabbath!



## The 2010 General Conference Session will be in Atlanta, Georgia



The World Church will be coming to the East Coast of the United States. Most of our membership is on the East Coast. Hence there will be a huge number of visitors from around the world visiting our churches, especially if the weak American Dollar continues to favor tourists from other parts of the world. This will be an excellent opportunity to display the blessings of the Lord to us. One of the best ways is to support the major soul winning emphasis by the North American Church to make 2009 a banner year for baptisms. We pray that our retired workers will be more than spectators in this great mission outreach.

## Hard Questions That Demand an Answer

### Recent Adventist Review Article – Disassemble Conferences

A recent article in the Adventist Review by one of our prominent pastors seemed to call to attention the question of Regional Conferences and their validity. I made haste to answer what I thought to be the underlying theme and expressed my views in a note to the editors. They responded by telling me that “as you can imagine there has been a huge response to the article.”

Working in the Regional Conference Ministry Headquarters in Huntsville positions us to field responses and opinions on almost every subject – especially those that carry the message under Black banner. One person with whom we spoke said that they had spoken to the pastor and understood him to mean a review of all conferences should be undertaken by the Church. Who can disagree with that? However, in most instances in the past that kind of review would begin with our Regional Conferences and end with someone other than one of us holding and owning the trumpet and sounding the battle cry from beneath this perceived Utopian banner of the cross.

The cry for unity, if it means that our people lose the seat of ascendancy or have to support a hand from another community on the rudder in our section of the vineyard, sounds more like a scream than a rallying battle cry. Here are some facts that must be considered:

- Our conferences do not need to disappear in order for there to be unity in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- This whole notion of proclaimed unity appears to many, a diversionary tactic perpetrated on the People of God by the Evil One. In fact that kind of unity sounds **more like politics than mission**.
- There is not one single group including our own that has the corner on things spiritual and God does not **need us** to finish His work even in our own communities. Remember, the stones can have voice at His command.
- It is our privilege to be used by Him and he can better use us motivated by the love of Christ for all people, than by persons motivated by that same love from other communities. History has taught us that the work goes further faster when carried by those who are native to the target people group—black or white, rich or poor, educated or not, brown or yellow, foreign or domestic.

Here is the Hard Question:

Should our Division and General Conference leaders consider changing the emphasis from **“unity”** to **cooperation**? In that scenario no one disappears. We all just get up from doing virtually nothing in most communities of our Church and go across the street or across town with a single purpose. That purpose should be the pooling of our collective energy and resources to ensure that the End Time Message is carried to every man’s door en masse by our members instead of mostly by Church Professionals.

Let us pray to that end.

## Laugh Out Loud (LOL)

*Apparently this is an actual letter that was sent to a bank by an 86-year-old woman. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the New York Times.*



Dear Sir:

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my check with which I endeavored to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between presenting the check and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honor it.

I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my entire pension, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years.

You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account \$30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally answer your telephone calls and letters, — when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become.

From now on I choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person. My mortgage and loan repayments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank, by check, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.

Be aware that it is an offense under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Authorized Contact Application which I require your chosen employee to complete.

I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative.

Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Notary Public, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, at MY convenience, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modeled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further.

When you call me, press buttons as follows:

IMMEDIATELY AFTER DIALING, PRESS THE STAR (\*) BUTTON FOR ENGLISH!

1. To make an appointment to see me
2. To query a missing payment.
3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
4. To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.
6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home .
7. To leave a message on my computer, a password to access my computer is required. Password will be communicated to you at a later date to that Authorized Contact mentioned earlier.
8. To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through 7.
9. To make a general complaint or inquiry. The contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service.
10. This is a second reminder to press\* for English.

While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, music noise will play for the duration of the call.

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

Your Humble Client

### **For More Information Contact:**

Regional Conference Retirement Plan

7000 Adventist Blvd—Huntsville, Alabama 35896—[www.regionalministry.org](http://www.regionalministry.org)

Phone (256) 830-5002—FAX (256) 830-5078