

April 29, 1923. The Adventist community at Emmanuel Missionary College, Berrien Springs, Michigan, woke up that spring morning in anticipation of something new. Just three years after the first radio broadcast in the United States, Adventists had installed their first radio station KFGZ, authorized to broadcast on 360 meters, 833 kilohertz. From a room on the college campus, the Seventh-day Adventist message was broadcast over the air for the first time.

From that early beginning, Adventists have captured the radio waves to accomplish a global mission. Seventy years later, Adventist World Radio today broadcasts around the world nearly 1,000 hours each week in 32 languages. God's Word is in the air non-stop every day and every night throughout the year.

Twelve years after the Berrien Springs start, W. H. Branson, vice-president of the General Conference, met with the General Conference Committee to alert the world church to the "immensity of the task of reaching the millions of people in our large cities" through radio—"one of the greatest single means of presenting the Bible truth." He pleaded for the "larger use of radio" and for establishing "a nationwide network."

Up until that time the use of radio by our church was sporadic. Allentown, Pennsylvania, set up a 15-watt transmitter in 1924 for H. A. Vandeman's airwave evangelism. The New York Temple broadcast in 1925 over WSDA. Pacific Union College established its station in 1927. In 1929, the church in Canada began the Voice of Adventist Radio in Newfoundland, now the oldest continuously broadcasting Adventist station in the world. Down under in 1928 Adventists were on the air in Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney. By 1935, 40 North American conferences had embraced radio evangelism and were baptizing hundreds.

But the initiative of the General Conference set a new tone. In France, Charles Winandy presented the message over Radio Normandie in 1938. In Australia, evangelist L. C. Naden started the Advent Radio Church in the Sydney area. Meanwhile World War II came, and radio became the global tool of communication. Sensing the importance of this medium, the Church's Radio Commission, set up in 1936, recom-

mended in October 1941 "that immediate arrangements be made for a national [U.S.A.] hookup of 80 stations for a weekly 30-minute broadcast during the year 1942." The church leadership commissioned H. M. S. Richards, the young and dynamic evangelist who founded the Voice of Prophecy radio program in 1930, to be the speaker for the national broadcast. The Mutual

Let the Earth Hear His Voice:

Seventy Years of Adventist Radio

Broadcasting system carried the program over 89 stations each week.

The 1940s were a banner decade for the radio ministry. In May 1942 the church leadership authorized a Latin American Radio Commission, and in October the use of the Bible correspondence course in conjunction with radio broadcasts was approved.

While the Latin American Commission, under the direction of H. G. Stoehr, immediately set out to produce programs in Portuguese and Spanish, L. C. Naden by 1943 was preaching in Australia over 24 stations. The year 1948 saw Adventist radio waves broadcast across the South Pacific islands from Suva, Fiji. Back in Europe, in May 1947, Victor Cooper

by
Andrea
Steele

arranged programs over Radio Luxembourg and in April 1948 over Radio Monte-Carlo. In the same year, *La Voix de l'Espérance*, the Voice of Hope, was first launched in France, and the name stuck to all broadcasts in French-speaking countries. In 1953 French and Tahitian programs were broadcast from French Polynesia and New Caledonia.

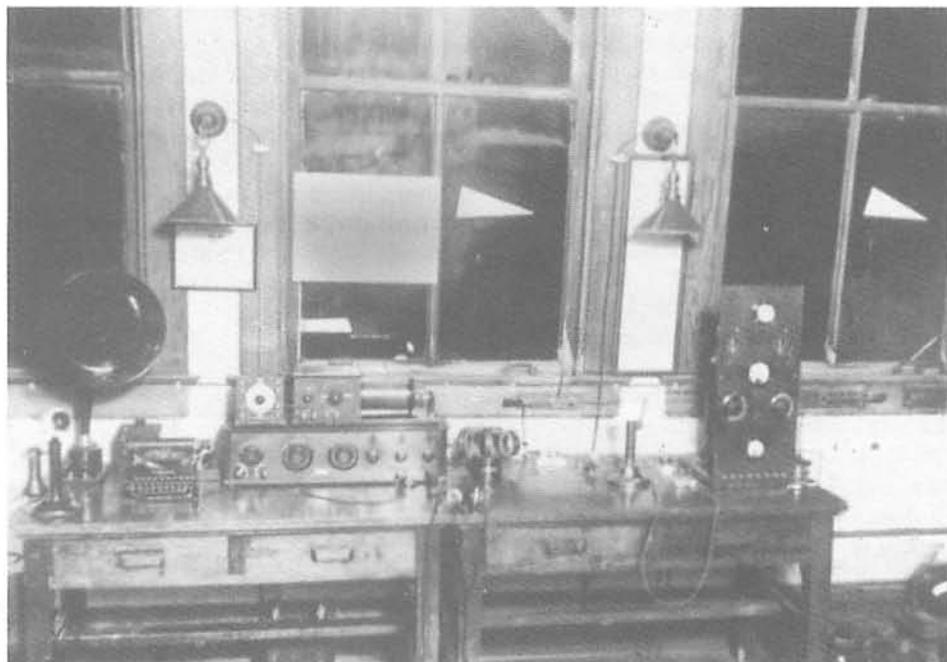
The year 1948 was a key date in the history of Adventist broadcasting. Twenty-five years after the first small step taken in Berrien Springs, the General Conference gave a new status to radio ministry by organizing the Radio Department, with Paul Wickman as its first secretary.

Enter Short Wave

Meanwhile, the church was entering short-wave broadcasting around the world. The war years had made short wave popular, and the Voice of Prophecy was ready to use it. The U.S. Armed Forces Radio and Television Service carried this program on its shortwave during World War II. Radio Australia's short wave carried the voice of L. C. Naden to the Middle East.

Adventist short-wave programs were also broadcast for various lengths of time during the next 30 years from stations in Goa, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Jakarta, the Maldives Islands, Pitcairn Island, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and even Radio Afghanistan. About 1980, Bhutan Radio, the smallest station in the world, broadcast Nepali programs supplied by the Southern Asia Division. From 1975 AWR-Asia became the primary broadcasting agency for the Adventist Church in Southern Asia, with programs produced by its own studios in Poona and broadcast over the commercial station of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation.

The 1950s and the 1960s also saw a network of college radio stations. Today, the Adventist Radio Network in the United States has 15 stations.



From this studio at Emmanuel Missionary College, Michigan, the first Adventist radio broadcast was heard in 1923.

Adventist Radio Comes of Age

The 1970s were the decade of expansion and consolidation in Adventist global broadcasting. The consolidation began in 1971 with the General Conference approval of the construction of the Adventist Media Center in Thousand Oaks, California. The expansion was seen around the world. In 1971 the South Pacific Adventist radio network reported 27 local mission broadcasters producing 31 programs over 19 stations on a weekly or semiweekly basis. The same year, the General Conference Communication Department started the "Pastor's Script Service" making available to Adventist ministers five-minute daily and 15-minute weekly script formulas to be adapted for local broadcasts.

In 1972 the Southern Asia Division expanded its studios in Poona, India, to produce programs in six languages for broadcast over Radio Sri Lanka. In 1974, Lesotho and Swaziland in Southern Africa began broadcasting "The Quiet Hour."

By 1973 our church was broadcasting on 2,779 stations each week in 42 languages in 72 countries. Adventists were also operating 194 Bible correspon-

dence schools with courses in 80 languages. That year alone, 593,948 people enrolled in Bible courses, and, as a result, 19,735 people were baptized.

The Leap of Faith

The denomination in 1971 took a leap of faith in stepping forward to establish the largest single endeavor the church has ever made in international broadcasting. Adventists leased time on a privately owned short-wave station in Portugal to broadcast to countries of Western and Eastern Europe. Called Adventist World Radio-Europe, the first program was heard in Italian at 11:30 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time on Friday, October 1, 1971.

This, too, was a small beginning. In 1971 the church leased 20 hours of time for 12 languages. Today, AWR broadcasts in 32 languages for nearly 1,000 hours a week from 16 transmitters in strategic locations around the world: Gabon, Africa; Costa Rica and Guatemala, Latin America; Guam in the Western Pacific; Italy across Western Europe; and since March 1992 from transmitters in Russia. We have recently received a license to broadcast from two transmitters located in Slovakia. Together these stations carry the gospel to Europe, the Middle East, Latin America,



This studio in Poland is typical of the radio studios creating programs for local stations and AWR around the world.

Southern Asia, China, and Africa.

In 1978 plans were made for broadcasting to Africa, using facilities located at Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon. However, war got in the way. Tentative searches continued for a few years for a site on the continent itself, without success. When leased time was made available on a 500-kilowatt transmitter of Africa Number One station in Gabon, the General Conference Communication Department asked WAUS of Andrews University to prepare programs for the one-hour-a-day broadcasts.

Utilizing the talents of students from French-speaking Africa, Andrews University radio station created 156 one-hour programs. The broadcasts began on October 31, 1983, and continue till today to reach the countries of northwest Africa, resulting in baptisms and new congregations in many places.

AWR-Latin America, with headquarters in Alajuela, Costa Rica, first began in Guatemala City in 1980, with broadcasts from a 10-kilowatt transmitter. Programs continue from this site, as well as six other transmitters located in Costa Rica. These broadcasts in Spanish

and English cover the island nations of the Caribbean, reaching as far north as Canada, and as far south as Rio de Janeiro.

Voice of the Global Mission

With the launching of Global Mission in 1990, AWR's role and importance in international outreach was further accentuated. In January 1993 AWR began to broadcast in Arabic to reach the vast populations of the Middle East. A studio in Cyprus, built in honor of Neal C. Wilson who as president of the General Conference played a crucial role in the establishment of AWR, took charge of Arabic broadcasts.

Meanwhile in Europe, with governmental deregulation of radio, new broadcasting opportunities were available for the church. Today, more than 50 local stations in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, France, Croatia, and Rumania broadcast the Adventist message. These small, mostly volunteer-operated stations not only broadcast but also get involved in many community needs. Recently, in Goteborg, Sweden, the Adventist Church was overwhelmed when 2,000 people showed up for an biblical archaeology seminar. Many of those attending said they had been long-time listeners of Radio Adventkyrkan.

In Stockholm as many as 28 new church members say they were introduced to the church through the station's Swedish and Spanish broadcasts. In France, one woman's anxious letter about her search for truth ended with a request for the Bible correspondence course.

Paolo Benini, president of the Italian Union, reports that the local church-owned two-kilowatt station in Rome, two kilometers from the Vatican, has a range of 40 square kilometers, with 4,500,000 potential listeners. Of the four or five people who call in each week, at least one signs up for the Bible course.

The Ultimate Dream

But the ultimate dream of Adventist pioneers was realized in 1985, when broadcasts to the vast hinterland of China were made possible by the construction of AWR-Asia on the island of Guam. Of its 235 hours of broadcasts each week, 128 hours are in Mandarin,

Cantonese, Fujian, and Hakka. Another major world short-wave broadcaster broadcasts only 35 hours a week to China!

The China broadcasts have done more than just plant seeds. Thousands of baptisms can be ascribed to a first contact through AWR, and in dozens of locations around China, groups of 20 to 200 people gather together each Sabbath for "church." The entire service is what they hear on radio: the songs, the Sabbath school lesson, and the worship service.

Some of the most inspiring stories come from those who left their faith during political upheavals. Now they rejoice in their renewed relationship with Jesus, and attribute this to the programs heard on AWR.

Projections

What of the future? One has only to look at the Voice of Prophecy for an answer. For 60 years this organization has been broadcasting regularly over 1,100 stations. The 133 Voice of Prophecy Bible correspondence schools in 66 languages, so closely associated with broadcasting, also speak volumes about the future of radio in religious proclamation. Radio is still the cheapest, most private, and portable tool of communication we have, and its role cannot be minimized.

Even in television-saturated North America, radio still plays a vital role in conveying a caring ministry. Jennifer Schooley, of KCDS at Pacific Union College, shares the challenge: "We get calls from listeners who are going through incredible traumas. We have a directory of crisis phone numbers, but when you have someone on the line who has a hand full of pills, and this by every intent is their last phone call, you have to listen and be compassionate, think clearly and quietly, call 911 [the emergency number] on another line and carry on two conversations at once."

Broadcasters in other areas also display a single-minded commitment to radio for evangelism. One layman in

For More Information About...

- **Adventist radio stations in your area:** Contact the communication director of your conference or mission.
- **Bible correspondence courses for you or a friend:** Contact the communication director of your conference or mission.
- **Serving as a student volunteer at an Adventist World Radio station:** Contact the chaplain's office of an Adventist college/university or the GC Student Volunteer Office at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Applicants must have English fluency, must have completed at least two years of college, and must have some experience in a production studio or radio station.
- **Adventist World Radio (AWR) programs or a brief history of AWR:** Write to Program Director, AWR, Heidelberger Landstrasse 24, Darmstadt 64297, Germany.
- **Directory of Adventist Radio Network stations in the U.S.A.:** ARN Director, c/o KCDS FM; Angwin, CA 94508; U.S.A. The cost is U.S.\$15.00.

South America is on 610 radio stations every week with his own program. His wife is a teacher, and he receives only a monthly stipend; from this he purchased the equipment to do the recording.

Another layman in South America left his conference Bible worker position to go into an area where there were no Seventh-day Adventists. He began his



The new Adventist Media Center in Tula, Russia, is the only privately-owned media center in the country.

missionary work with a weekly radio program and now pastors a church of more than 100 members.

But there are challenges along with joys. Technological changes as far reaching as the invention of the transistor don't happen every year, but the advent of Direct Satellite Broadcasting (DSB) will probably change the face of broadcasting during the first decade of the new century. It will mean changes in receivers (radios) as well as transmission equipment.

A second challenge is programming. Some industry estimates say it can take, on an average, up to 40 hours to prepare one hour of certain types of radio programs. The actual time depends on several variables, but it does require considerably more than an hour to make an hour-long program.

The problem is multiplied by different languages and cultures, and the need to transcend these to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the hearers. Availability of resources varies from country to country, and for those countries where there are few or no Adventists, appropriate programming is difficult to obtain or produce.

The third challenge, as ever, is cost. But cost of broadcasting should be seen

in relationship to potential and actual audiences. For example, AWR-Asia's annual budget is U.S.\$1.2 million a year. For that amount, the station broadcasts 235 hours a week in 19 languages, and its potential audience is half the world's population! But that's potential; what about reality?

AWR-Asia received 20,365 letters in 1992. A formula used by major short-wave broadcasters calculates 600 listeners for each letter received; in some very closed countries the figure is as high as 1,000 listeners per letter. Taking the smaller figure, AWR's audience in Asia is about 12 million people. The yearly cost per person is just under 10 cents, and certainly justifies General Conference President Robert Folkenberg's statement that "AWR is one of the most direct ways to turn cash into mission."

And that's the whole purpose of Adventists using radio everywhere in the world: mission. Adventist broadcasters are united in their determination that this message of the Gospel will be "preached unto all the world." Maranatha! □

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and development for Adventist World Radio. She and her husband, Allen, reside in Germany.