

# The Journal

## News of the Churches of God

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1 John 4:18

September-October 2007

## This superman of health promotes seniors' fitness

*This article, about longtime Church of God member Harry Sneider, is excerpted by permission from the Pasadena (Calif.) Star-News of Oct. 7, 2007.*

By Robert S. Hong

ARCADIA, Calif.—Family fitness is the wave of the future. At least that's what personal trainer Harry Sneider believes, and he's been spreading that philosophy for nearly 50 years.

"What's needed in the San Gabriel Valley is not bigger clubs but more home-type training with emphasis on unifying families through fitness," he said.

This last summer Dr. Sneider, 66, took home the "Super Senior" award from the Pasadena Senior Center for the work he has done in promoting fitness among senior citizens.



Harry Sneider

### A house full of gym

Along with his wife, Sarah, Harry Sneider operates a full gym out of his house in Arcadia. But, unlike some commercial gyms, Dr. Sneider's adds a little extra inspiration to clients' perspiration, they say.

"We're interested in bringing faith, encouragement and support as part of a fitness regimen," Dr. Sneider said.

It's this aspect that he feels would benefit families who exercise and grow together.

A devout Christian, Dr. Sneider prays for all of his clients and refers to

himself as a "minister" of fitness.

Dr. Sneider's faith comes from his miraculous recovery from a near-death encounter with the bone disease osteomyelitis early in his life that left him disabled in his right leg.

But that did not stop him from being active and only furthered his mission to deliver fitness to those who requested his services.

"I thought this must be the mission of my life," he said of his passion for training. "I became a minister of barbells and dumbbells."

And on his list of clients are Olympians and fitness icons.

"He is incredibly creative in knowing what an athlete needs on any given day," said Olympian Dwight Stones, who took home two medals in the high jump in the 1970s. "He knows just by talking to someone how much their body can take that day."

Sarah Sneider, who has been training since 1968, is right by her husband's side in working with clients.

### Hospitals are expensive

An exercise routine the couple specializes in is rebounding, which involves workouts on a small trampoline. The Sneiders have published books and DVDs with workouts using the "rebounder" and are experienced with all types of gym equipment.

"What Harry does best is be a great motivator," said four-time gold-medalist John Naber. "When he gives you his attention you feel there's nothing you cannot do."

The Sneiders invite their friends to write or phone them at harrysneider@earthlink.net or (626) 355-8964.



**THE FEAST IN TEXAS**—Emily Rose Thompson, 17 months old, attends the Feast of Tabernacles Oct. 2 in Big Sandy at a site sponsored by the Church of God Big Sandy. Emily is the daughter of Jerry and Melissa Thompson of Hawkins, Texas, and granddaughter of Roland and Vonda Ouellette, also of Hawkins. For a photo of Emily and her grandfather, see page 4 of this issue of *THE JOURNAL*. See reports from several Feast sites beginning on this page. [Photo by Dixon Cartwright]

## Resident of a Jerusalem suburb, Beit Hanina Hadashah, takes you on a tour of Holy City

*Mr. Martin is son of the late Dr. Ernest L. Martin, head of the theology department at Ambassador College and elder in the Worldwide Church of God.*

By Samuel Martin

JERUSALEM, Israel—In response to several E-mailed comments and letters from relatives and friends, I wish to tell you a little bit about where I live.

Probably the best place to start talking about Jerusalem is with the book of Samuel. Imagine that.

Notice 1 Samuel 1:1: "Now there was a certain man of Ramatayim-zofim, in Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elqana, the son of Yeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuf, an Ephraimite: and

he had two wives; the name of the one was Hanna, and the name of the other was Penina."

I live in a suburb of Jerusalem known as Beit Hanina Hadashah. Where I live now is exactly where I lived when my family resided in Israel from 1968 to 1973.

In fact, my current next-door neighbor had the Worldwide Church of God's office, including the Telex machine, in an apartment under his home.



Samuel Martin

I live in the northern part of the ancient land of Benjamin. The northern border of the ancient land of Benjamin and Ephraim is about 15 miles directly north and east of our home.

### Samuel's village

Beit Hanina means the "house of Hanania." The name may refer to Ananiah, a village in the region of Benjamin mentioned in Nehemiah. The region is associated with Samuel the prophet in a profound way.

Samuel was born in a village known as Ramatayim-zofim. In fact, scholars point out that there is much disagreement in locating some of the sites (including this one) that we find prominently mentioned in the region

See **BEHIND OUR HOUSE**, page 23

## Church member, CIA employee, tells what he believes is important

By Dixon Cartwright

BIG SANDY, Texas—What it's like to be a Church of God member and at the same time work for the CIA was a topic of a seminar here the Sabbath of Sept. 15, 2007.

Michael James of Germantown, Md., a 44-year-old elder in the Church of God International, delivered a sermon to attendees of the Church of God Big Sandy on the importance of Church of God members reaching out to everyone, not just other church members.



Michael James

Later that day Mr. James, who pastors a CGI congregation in Gaithersburg, Md., near Washington, D.C., presented a seminar about his career in the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in an effort, he said, to "dispel some myths, some misconceptions, that people have about the agency."

Mr. James took pains to explain

that he is not a spy, that the CIA is a good place to work, even for Christians who observe the Sabbath and feast days, and that he believes the agency carries out important efforts in an era that has proven dangerous for many citizens of the United States.

He emphasized that anything he said was strictly his opinion. He was not, in his remarks, representing his employer or the federal government.

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pa., Mr. James earned a degree in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and, thanks to a suggestion from his father, applied in 1986 for a job with the CIA.

He began work in the agency's security office, and his second job there was in the "counterterrorism office."

"We would get information on terrorist incidents throughout the world," he said, "and we would write short summaries of those incidents and put them into a database, then run searches on that database" for other CIA departments and government agencies.

Since then he has served in other capacities including as a trainer of

See **COG MEMBER**, page 6

## Journal readers report on 2007 Feast observances

Following are Feast of Tabernacles reports readers have sent to *THE JOURNAL*. This is the first installment of brief articles covering the 2007 festival, printed here in alphabetical order by city of observance. See more reports in at least three future issues of *THE JOURNAL*.

### Harrisburg and Amarillo

AMARILLO, Texas—I just returned from Harrisburg, Pa., where I was asked to be a speaker at the Pleasant Valley Christian Church's Sabbath services during the Festival of Tabernacles celebration.

I returned to Amarillo for the Last Day of the festival.

It was a delightful weekend with a warm and friendly group of brethren exuding a wonderful spirit.

It was good to see old friends like Bob and Beverly Wertz, Gene and Ruth Wertz and Calvin and Barbara



Jeff Booth

See **READ FEAST REPORTS**, page 4

- 3 Harry Curley advises readers to beware the leaven of their leaders
- 3 Secessionist principles saved the Church of God, says Mac Overton
- 4 Don't miss Leon Sexton's startling Feast report from Thailand
- 5 Ken Westby asks what we can learn from the man who circumcised Jesus

## The Journal invites readers' Feast reports

**T**HE JOURNAL invites readers to send in reports of their 2007 Feast of Tabernacles observances.

Members of the Churches of God and other Sabbatarian fellowships met at several hundred Feast sites in 2007, with most observances beginning the evening of Sept. 26.

You still have time to get your report into the next issue of *THE JOURNAL*. Mail your information to Festival Reports, *THE JOURNAL*, P.O. Box 1020, Big Sandy, Texas 75755, U.S.A. Or E-mail it to info@thejournal.org. Or you can fax it to (903) 636-9097.

Photographs as prints or E-mail attachments are also welcomed. Please mention the dates of your observance and the name of the church fellowship or affiliation, if any, or other sponsors of the site.

Feast reporting begins in this issue and will run for four issues.

## Reunioners say it was just like being in college again

By John Warren

DALLAS, Texas—"We were young again!" exclaimed a member of the AC class of 1977 in describing the reunion of his classmates in August.

The Ambassador College, Big Sandy, graduating class of 1977 got together for its 30th-year reunion here Aug. 3-5, 2007.

Most reunion activities took place at the Omni Park West hotel in Dallas.

A planning committee composed of Charles and Jacque (Harvey) Melear of Fort Collins, Colo., Jeff Wahlen of Orlando, Fla., Debbie Wood of Tyler, Texas, Laura (Tomich) Worthen of Big Sandy, Michelle (Bumpers) Quant of Burlinson, Texas, Carol (Galloway) Wallach of Corona, Calif., Terry Willhoite of Monrovia, Calif., and Steve Schantz of Melbourne, Fla., organized a full weekend of events that provided many opportunities for classmates and friends to get reacquainted.

See **FORMER AC STUDENTS**, page 6



# Greg Doudna is a nice guy, but so what?

The writer is a longtime member of the Church of God and is now with the Church of God an International Community. He attended Ambassador College, Big Sandy. Mr. Adams is working on his Ph.D in history at Oklahoma State University.

By Tom Adams

**S**TILLWATER, Okla.—I am not a great letter writer, so after four years at Ambassador, Big Sandy, I lost track of many friends.

It was always exciting to travel to Feast sites to see which of my old classmates and friends would show up.



Tom Adams

has written a book on his experiences at Big Sandy.

Mr. Doudna is the author of the recently revised *Showdown at Big Sandy: Youthful Creativity Confronts Bureaucratic Inertia at an Unconventional Bible College in East Texas*, available for \$29.95 plus shipping from The Scrollery (scrollery.com), P.O. Box 4395, Bellingham, Wash. 98227, U.S.A.

## A lot of research

Mr. Doudna arrived in my sophomore year, and we spent quite a bit of time together. We spent so much time together that, had you asked, I would have said we were in the same dorm that year.

However, after reading his book I

*Showdown is a good Feast present if you also think a copy of Martin Luther's 95 theses would be an appropriate confirmation gift for a Catholic.*

now remember that we shared a study room only in the sense that we had a lot of discussions in it.

I remember much of his research, and, somewhere in my archives, I have copies of several of the papers he discusses in his book.

## Deserves some latitude

One of the enjoyable aspects of reading *Showdown* is that it brings back a lot of memories and reminds one of a simpler time and things one otherwise may have forgotten.

It is also extremely entertaining and humorous at times. The story on page 474 is worth the price of admission all by itself.

I noticed a few things he has for-

gotten. For example, the dorms held only 24 students, not 32, but he does call me "pure-hearted" and one "of the church's best," so I can allow him a lot of latitude in these matters.

The previous review, by Mac Overton, in *THE JOURNAL* dated Sept. 30, 2006, presented Greg Doudna's book in a very favorable light, so this review is written as a counterbalance.

*Showdown at Big Sandy* has serious problems. I knew Mr. Doudna well and experienced some of the same events.

Therefore my observations here are not meant to be hurtful or mean-spirited, merely a second opinion.

Besides, Mr. Greg Doudna will see this before it sees print, so the most egregious observations have probably been purged.

## Observations and reservations

Although I recommend this book for anyone wanting to know what the mid-'70s were like in Big Sandy, I have several observations and reservations about the book.

First is that the bulk of the work is an explanation about close to a dozen research papers Mr. Doudna wrote while at AC.

As such, the book does not need to be read in the order it was written. One good approach would be to first read chapter 24, which contains other people's response to early editions of the book.

The reader will find two comments that will help in understanding the book. Ron Dart's explanation of the situation at the time in Pasadena helps counter Mr. Doudna's growing frustration, expressed in the book, of getting practically no recognition for his work from headquarters.

## Doctrines didn't take

Then there is the late Richard Nickels' comment that, apparently, the doctrines of the church never really sank in to Mr. Doudna.

This is evident in many of his papers. One example is his work on the two trees in which he states that the "tree of knowledge . . . was good [and] holy." He does not call it "the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil."

To understand that difference vitates most of his observations on the subject. (It also brings up the question of to what extent our children truly understand the truths we worked so hard to dig out and fought so hard to keep. Do they understand the real issues of 1995 and beyond?)

Another observation is that the book lacks context. During this time the "intellectual movement" started at Big Sandy. It did not draw official ire until it migrated to Pasadena, but that was one of the joys of Big Sandy: You were free to do a lot of things without being noticed.

Mr. Doudna does not mention that many of those who were seriously into the movement were insufferably arrogant and insulting to others. Mr. Doudna's enthusiasm and optimism kept him from being that way, but when he says someone was universally admired and liked that was not necessarily true.

## Appropriate as a Feast gift?

Last, the previous reviewer recommended *Showdown at Big Sandy* as a good Feast present for friends.

This is true if you also think a copy of Martin Luther's 95 theses would be an appropriate confirmation gift for a Catholic.

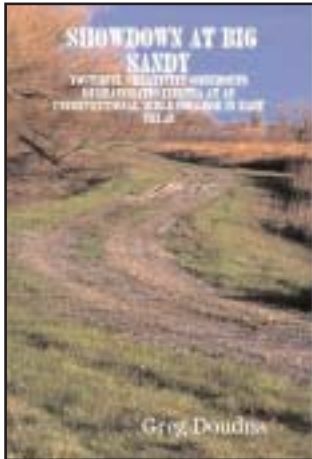
Almost all of Mr. Doudna's papers seek to change and/or challenge basic doctrines of the church. The premises of all his papers are weak, and most of his arguments are specious.

Although they can all be demolished easily, too many members—even ministers, according to the book—take them as new truths and revelations.

If you give it as a Feast gift, it may be the last Feast the recipient attends. Get a copy and read it before you give it to others.

For all that I've written above, certain ideas are interesting. For instance, his comments on John 20:17 need to be studied and confirmed and perhaps integrated into our body of beliefs.

But, like any outside reference, and despite Mr. Doudna's attendance at AC, it is an outside reference and therefore needs to be approached with care.



Greg Doudna



Greg Doudna

## Notes and quotes

### Mrs. Billingsley dies

VALLEY SPRINGS, Calif.—Madeline Billingsley, wife of Church of God Faithful Flock pastor Alton "Don" Billingsley, died Oct. 29.



Madeline Billingsley

Besides her husband, Mrs. Billingsley is survived by a daughter, Jeanne Louie of Phoenix, Ariz., and four grandchildren.

Mr. Billingsley receives mail at P.O. Box 8819, Modesto, Calif. 95357, U.S.A.

See Mr. Billingsley's tribute to his wife on page 22 of this issue of *THE JOURNAL*.

### Winter Family Weekend

MILFORD, Ohio—The United Church of God announced that its 2007 Winter Family Weekend is set for Dec. 21-25 in Louisville, Ky.

Activities will include Sabbath services, sports tournaments, dances, games and seminars.

For more information see [www.ucg.org/familyweekend](http://www.ucg.org/familyweekend), or write the UCG at P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254.

### Winter Family Tournament

LIBERTY TOWNSHIP, Ohio—The COG Cincinnati and COG Lexington announce their 11th annual Winter Family Tournament, set for Dec. 21-24, 2007, in Lexington, Ky.

Activities will include sports events, children's games, family dances and other activities.

For more information contact Jim O'Brien at (513) 755-0040, or write P.O. Box 1811, West Chester, Ohio 45071. See also [www.cogcincinnati.org](http://www.cogcincinnati.org).

### Family Fellowship Weekend

BIG SANDY, Texas—The Church of God Big Sandy has scheduled its 2007 Family Fellowship Weekend for Dec. 29-30 in the church-owned building in Big Sandy.

"Some of you might want to begin making plans to participate in the Family Variety Show," stated a recent church bulletin.

For more information as it becomes available, see the bulletin posted each week at [bigsandychurch.org](http://bigsandychurch.org). Or call (800) 946-5545.

### Lost tribe arrives in Israel

TEL AVIV, Israel—A group of people, 174 strong, from a throng of thousands of people in India who believe they are one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel landed in Tel Aviv in August, reported the WorldNetDaily.com Web site.

Many of the Indians were fulfilling a lifelong dream of returning to the nation they consider their homeland.

"I truly believe this is a miracle of immense historical and even

biblical significance," said Michael Freund, an American who directs a Jerusalem-based organization, Shavei Israel, that works with the Indians.

Mr. Freund hopes to bring to the Jewish state the remaining 7,000 Indian citizens who believe they are descendants of Manasseh, one of the patriarch Joseph's two sons.

The Indians met with six rabbis to begin an official conversion process to test their knowledge of Judaism and assess their conviction.

A total of 216 people have converted so far.

### Just what do you mean ghosts?

SAN DIEGO, Calif.—According to a new book, *Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush*, by Robert Draper, Mr. Bush says he has seen ghosts emerge from the Lincoln bedroom in the White House.

President Reagan reportedly told the story that his dog was scared and refused to enter the Lincoln bedroom, suggesting that President Lincoln's ghost was residing there.

Vladimir Putin is said to have claimed that Russian cosmonauts have seen ghosts in outer space.

What should Christians believe about ghosts?

Norbert Link of the Church of the Eternal God answers this question on a segment of the CEG's *Standing Watch* broadcast viewable at [tinyurl.com/22e4hz](http://tinyurl.com/22e4hz).

Write the CEG at P.O. Box 270519, San Diego, Calif. 92198, U.S.A., or visit [www.eternalgod.org](http://www.eternalgod.org).

### Happy 12th

CLINTON, N.C.—The Church of God Sabbath Day, which meets in Clinton, celebrated its 12th anniversary Aug. 25, 2007.

"It was truly a delight to see our friends and brethren who came out to be a part of this milestone and to share in the history of our small but devoted fellowship group," said John C. Strouth Sr.

Mr. Strouth invites one and all to Sabbath services and other functions of the congregation.

"Come when you can," he said. "The lights are always on."

Write Mr. Strouth and the Church of God Sabbath Day at P.O. Box 1308, Clinton, N.C. 28329, U.S.A., or [jcstrouth@intrstar.net](mailto:jcstrouth@intrstar.net).

### New video

MECHANICSVILLE, Va.—Todd Kallenbach announces a new video.

"I spent many years in the WCG and its split-offs and now host a small Bible-study group here called True Bread," Mr. Kallenbach said.

The video is "very relevant to any still in or who have come out of the WCG since HWA's death," he said.

Watch Mr. Kallenbach's presentation at [tinyurl.com/yp88rb](http://tinyurl.com/yp88rb).

# The Journal:

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