

# "Sorry, No Business Today"

By THOMAS A. DAVIS

Y1 1858

A SHINY new car came to a stop in front of the service station, and John Hnatyshyn, young people's secretary of the Southern African Division, home in North America on furlough, said, "Fill'er up, will you please?"

It was shortly after the war, in 1947, and new cars were next to impossible to get. But Elder Hnatyshyn was on his way back to the mission field, and needing a car to take back with him, he was able to get priority.

Before the gas had gurgled to a stop, a second car, giving obvious evidence of old age, pulled up on the other side of the tank. The two men occupying the front seat looked appraisingly at the fresh-from-the-showroom sedan. Then the driver climbed from his seat and came around to Elder Hnatyshyn.

"Man, where did you find the pull to get that car?" he asked smilingly.

"Well, you see, I am a missionary on my way back to Africa, and so I was able to get this car to take along."

"Oh, so you're a missionary. What church do you represent?"

"I'm a Seventh-day Adventist."

The stranger reached over and took Elder Hnatyshyn's hand. "God bless Seventh-day Adventists."

Elder Hnatyshyn, surprised, looked at

the man questioningly, so he explained.

"My friend over there and I are Baptist ministers. We are now on our way back to the seminary to take some post-graduate work. But during the war, before I graduated, I was in the Army and I met several Adventist boys at that time."

The Baptist minister then went on to tell the reason for his high praise. "You know, a lot of fellows, when they get in the Army, become weaned from the influences of home and church. They cast off all but military restraints, and just live for a wild time."

The attendant had finished with Elder Hnatyshyn's car, so after saying to him, "You can fill mine too," the minister continued his story.

"I found that Seventh-day Adventist boys were just not that type. They stuck by their religion. They were conscientious. They were helpful and cheerful. They were a stabilizing influence in our outfit. Because of their influence more than one boy became ashamed of himself and straightened up. And some found God."

He paused a moment.

"I was in the South Pacific for a while. There I ran into some Adventist natives. There was one experience we had at Guadalcanal that greatly impressed us."

His outfit, he related, had arrived at one particular place on a Thursday, expecting to pull out the next day. Some of his unit found natives to do their laundry for them, giving them to understand that they would be calling for it the next day, Friday. Later in the day they learned that their orders had been changed and they would be there for three or four days. They didn't bother to pick up their washing on Friday.

Saturday morning they called for their laundry and found the natives all dressed up, about to leave their homes. Under their arms they carried Bibles.

"Where are you fellows going, all dressed up?" the GI's demanded.

"We are going to church."

"Going to church? Who ever heard of people going to church on Saturday? Sunday is the day for churchgoing."

"No, no! Today is the Sabbath. We are going to church today."

"Well, we want our laundry."

"We are sorry. No business today. If you must have your laundry, you can take it and pay us tomorrow."

No amount of cajolery could change their minds. The GI's went without their clean shirts that day.

"Discussing the incident afterward," the preacher went on, "the boys said, 'We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We came over here, supposedly to show civilization and Christianity to these natives, but instead they were the ones to teach us how to be Christians.'"

By then his car was ready, and the minister turned to go. "You can tell your people that I have told you I think Seventh-day Adventists are wonderful."

Elder Hnatyshyn sat behind his steering wheel and watched the two men drive off. "How wonderful it would be," he mused, "if we could always deserve those words of praise."