To order additional copies of *We Are the Pathfinders Strong*,
call 1-800-765-6955. For information on other Review and Herald products,
visit us at www.adventistbookcenter.com.
WE ARE THE PATHFINDERS
THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS
STRONG

Willie Oliver with Patricia L. Humphrey
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank all those who contributed to this book, especially

Daniel L. Davis
Terry Dodge
Mark Ford
Robert Holbrook
Jeannette Johnson
Donald Laing
Norm Middag
Dixie Plata
Elsie Russell
Gerald Wheeler

All these people were also especially helpful in verifying the facts and events presented in this book.
This page intentionally left blank.
6
CONTENTS

Preface .................................................. 9
Foreword ................................................ 11

CHAPTER ONE

We Are the Pathfinders Strong! .......................... 13
Discover the Power Camporee

CHAPTER TWO

The Servants of God Are We 1950s ...................... 29
Faithful as We March Along 1960s ..................... 63

CHAPTER THREE

In Kindness, Truth, and Purity 1970s ................... 73

CHAPTER FOUR

A Message to Tell to the World 1980s .................. 79
A Truth That Will Set Us Free 1990s ................... 91

CHAPTER FIVE

King Jesus the Saviour’s Coming Back! ............... 115
Discover the Power Camporee

CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER SEVEN

Epilogue .................................................. 141
This page intentionally left blank.
An old saying states that the youth of today are the church of tomorrow. But not so with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I’d like to coin a new phrase: The church of yesterday, today, and tomorrow has been, is, and always will be a youthful church. Looking back on our history, even to the very beginnings of the movement, young people have played an important role in the growth and development of our denomination.

Ellen G. White was 17 when she had her first vision. John Loughborough was also 17 when he began to preach the message of Jesus’ return. Annie Smith and her brother Uriah were both youth when they joined the Advent movement, and John Andrews at the age of 20 was spreading the message of the Second Coming through the written and spoken word. And the list goes on.

These young people and many others of future generations to whom they would someday pass the torch had (and still have) a vision to share the gospel message with the world. It is a vision that leaves no doubt as to what role the youth of the Adventist Church are to play. Ellen White expressed that vision in these words: “We have an army of youth today who can do much if they are properly directed and encouraged. We want our children to believe the truth. We want them to be blessed of God. We want them to act a part in well-organized plans for helping other youth.” And she continued, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, a risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!”

She made her statements just before the end of the nineteenth century. Not a single Pathfinder Club existed anywhere. Today, as I look at the vast army of Pathfinders around the
world, I wonder if Ellen White could have ever imagined the marvelous way in which her prophetic words would become reality. It is an army of youth filled with a passion for doing, loving, serving, and, most of all, sharing the good news of a Saviour on the verge of His return.

But no army has ever been successful without a staff of well-qualified generals, and this one is no exception. This book honors all the dedicated Pathfinder leaders and pioneers who have unselfishly given their time, talents, and effort without pay—and often without recognition or thanks—to enrich the lives of young people. Why do they do it? Because they, too, have caught the vision so aptly penned in the words of Ellen White. I heartily salute those great men and women of the past, as well as each of you who continue to add to the rich history of Pathfinder ministries today. And may we all give our praise and thanks to the Commander-in-Chief who so nobly leads His army to the finish. It is my hope and prayer that the memories of God’s blessings of yesterday will inspire us to even greater heights in Pathfinder ministry tomorrow. Maranatha!

— Willie Oliver
Director of Pathfinder Ministries
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
It has been 90 years since the establishment of Junior Missionary Volunteer Societies; more than 80 years since the introduction of the Junior Bible Year; more than 75 years since the first summer camps, the introduction of the first Progressive Classes, and the development of the first Vocational Merits; and now it’s been 50 years since the Pathfinder Club evolved out of all that and received official recognition by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In human terms, that’s all quite a while ago. During this same time span cars have gone from Model T’s to Vipers. Airplanes have evolved from Kitty Hawk to the Concorde. And communication has expanded from telephone to e-mail. The world has seen more and greater changes since World War I than in its entire previous history. Some would claim that we could say it has also been the case since World War II. Yet even World War II now seems to be a terribly long time ago. Most of us alive today were born after “the war,” so our memories go back an even shorter time. The novelty of transistor radios, pocket calculators, and 8-track tapes is about as far back as most of us have good, clear recall.

With so many transformations and so much still continually changing, it is easy to completely erase from our minds all that “unnecessary and useless information from the past” and just worry about living in the now. It’s all we can do just to keep up with all the novelty and excitement of the moment.

Who cares about all that stuff behind us when even just yesterday is already getting dim? So why print a book about Pathfindering during the past 50 years? Does anybody really care anything about old names and dates— who did what, when, or why?
A famous quote first written by Mrs. Ellen White on December 19, 1892, haunts us with its veracity. She wrote: “As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (Life Sketches, p. 196). Yes, this book is full of names, dates, events, and all other kinds of apparent “trivia” (including a few corrections from past similar materials, thanks to ever-sharpening historical research skills), but through it all, it should help us understand what God has done, how He has led, and then give us confidence in Christ as our personal leader and Master Guide. Enjoy, even reminisce, and give thanks to God.

— Robert Holbrook
World Pathfinder Director
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
When groups of settlers wanted to move into an uncharted region of the American continent 200 years ago, they hired a guide to take them. Someone who could show them the way through dangerous mountain passes and over raging rivers, and defend them against wild animals. Called Pathfinders, they were the ones out front, ahead of the party, leading the way. And it’s no different today.

The Discover the Power Camporee (DTP) was an action event, and it put Pathfinders out in front in a big way. More than a year before the August 10-14, 1999, engagement in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, thousands of Pathfinders from all over the world started getting ready to make the trip. It was the biggest Pathfinder event of the century, and die-hard Pathfinders were determined to be a part of it.
During the six-day event, a group of teenagers and support staff produced a newspaper that chronicled many of the activities that happened there. The following excerpts from that paper represent a cross section of the life and times at the Discover the Power Camporee.

**Oshkosh?**

The name Oshkosh is well-known by those Pathfinders who once toddled around in the sturdy overalls made there. But when the church announced the location for the 1999 DTP Camporee, most people said, “Where?” Oshkosh may not be a regular crossroads for most people, but it is a long way from being the middle of nowhere.

Oshkosh is the home of the Experimental Aircraft Association, or the EAA. A group of friends who shared the unusual hobby of building airplanes in their garages—homebuilts, they called them—founded the EAA in 1953. Their mission was to make aviation accessible to all who wished to fly. Interest in the EAA soared in 1955 when the founder published an article in Mechanic’s Illustrated entitled “How to Build an Airplane for Less Than $800, With Engine.”

As membership grew, so did the need for more space to hold their events. Their biggest one they called a “fly-in”—an open-air convention where pilots flew their home built planes to a central location where they could show their work, share their problems, and look for solutions. In time, thousands of planes crammed the airfields at the fly-ins until, for safety and convenience, something had to be done. In 1970 the EAA found the ideal setting in the wide open spaces around Oshkosh, Wisconsin. And then things really took off.

Today the EAA has 170,000 members worldwide, and Oshkosh regularly hosts fly-ins attracting more than 12,000 pilots and their planes, and the 800,000 visitors who want to look at them. In 1998 the EAA exhibited 682 home builds, 125 antique planes, 547 warbirds, 38 acrobatic planes, 178 amphibious, float-
planes and seaplanes, and to top it off, the British Airways’ Concorde supersonic airliner. To accommodate them all, the EAA built one of the finest large-scale camping and exhibition facilities in the world. It was the perfect setting for 22,000 Pathfinders to set up temporary housekeeping.¹

Years of planning and months of hard work made the camporee a reality. It was, for all practical purposes, a city. It had its own radio station, newspaper, post office, police.
force, hospital, grocery store, and medical clinic. Managing all this was the “mayor,” Ron Whitehead from the Center for Youth Evangelism in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and camporee director.

“It’s the end of the millenium,” he said in one of his many press conferences. “Isn’t it appropriate that we are discovering the power of God?”

Debbie Solid, 17, an event staffer from Camp Au Sable in Michigan, is one of many who helped construct the miniature city. “I got lost at least ten times,” she said. “But it was an awesome opportunity to witness for God.”

Traveling Mercies

From across the continent and around the world, Pathfinders and their clubs came to have fun, meet friends new and old, and in the process tell others about the God they love. Thousands of prayers, asking for travel protection, headed heavenward as Pathfinders traveled to DTP across land and sea. And there were some dramatic answers.

When Pathfinders from the Walla Walla, Washington, Eastgate church left home they had no idea about the miracles and challenges that lay ahead. Just outside of Billings, Montana, their bus broke down. They limped into town only to learn it would cost several thousand dollars to fix it—money they didn’t have.

Karen Fishell’s 1993 Subaru Loyale was totaled on the way to the camporee. Miraculously, she and her passenger escaped with only minor injuries. Photo courtesy of Karen Fishell.

The local church offered them the use of the school gym for as long as they needed. After talking with their pastor back home, and receiving his support, they decided to somehow continue their trip to DTP.

That Sabbath the Billings church pastor explained the Pathfinders’ situation to his congregation. An 84-year-old member felt impressed to help. “I’m getting old and don’t need it,” he said as he gave them $3,000. It was enough to pay for bus repairs as well as rental cars so they could continue on their way to DTP. “It was a gift from the Lord!” exclaimed the Eastgate leader.

An hour from home, a soft-top carrier containing supplies fell off the top of the van that Grand Junction, Colorado, Pathfinders
were riding in. Staff member Karen Fishell, driving a 1993 Subaru Wagon with her son, Bautch, swerved to miss the carrier. She lost control of the car and skidded into the median where the car rolled over twice. Ambulances took the injured to the hospital, where Bautch received about 12 stitches. Fishell was not seriously injured.

The 17-member group returned to Grand Junction overnight, where church members loaned them a pickup. They arrived in Oshkosh on Tuesday.

“God protected us,” says Karen Fishell. “It could have been so much worse. We’re very grateful for God’s protection. God wanted the kids to come so they could hear all the great stuff and grow in their relationship with God.”

In Charlotte, North Carolina, club leader Brian Dudar organized a group of eight Pathfinders and six adults to travel the 1,184 miles to Oshkosh on bicycles. They called their plan “Bike for Life: Teens Against
Tobacco” and turned their trip into a rolling health evangelism program. Dressed in bright orange and black shirts, the teens stressed the message that it’s not cool to smoke or use tobacco products to news organizations and church groups along their route.

They left Charlotte on July 18, and pulled into Oshkosh 23 days later amid cheering crowds of well-wishers, local news organizations, and, of course, a Pathfinder color guard. The Northeastern Conference Drum Corps escorted them to their campsite.

“I wanted to be a good witness to other kids that you can keep going,” said Josh, one of the youngest bikers whose scraped arms and legs attested to his 14 falls. “I have no regrets about going on this trip. I would definitely do it again.”

**Powerful Theme**

Among the main attractions for the week were the evening programs held each evening in the main assembly area. As camporee organizers pulled together plans for the evening programs, they wanted a special theme song for the week. After listening to dozens of potential songs prepared by professional recording artists, program coordinator Bernie Anderson decided that the best Pathfinder song could be written only by a Pathfinder.

“DTP was all about empowering kids to go out and do something good for God,” he said. “We really felt this was a way to let them share their faith with each other and the world. All they needed was a chance.”

The church announced a contest for any Pathfinder to submit a theme song that would be sung by 22,000 Pathfinders at the program each evening. The prize was $300.

Valerie Jean Gonzales, 15, and Kristen La Madrid, 14, both from Glendale, California, decided to give it a try. With the encouragement of Valerie’s mother, Abigail, who was also the Glendale Filipino Pathfinder leader, they sat at the piano after church one Sabbath and began trying out chords and phrases. They used as their guide the program themes planned for
each evening at the camporee. Valerie’s uncle, Ruel Banquiero, helped with the recording. With one week to spare before the contest deadline, they mailed their entry. It won.

“Their song really lit up the room the first time we played it,” Bernie recalled. “It was unanimous that they had captured the spirit we wanted to share at DTP. It was great.”

Valerie and Kristen performed their song, “Discover the Power of the Lord,” to an enthusiastic audience on the opening night of the camporee. And people were humming it all week long. It was the kind of song you just couldn’t get out of your head.

“The most powerful discovery we can find is the power of the Lord and His love for us,” says Valerie. “We wanted the Pathfinders to be able to leave the camporee with a love for Him, something that would never die.”

The evening programs were a choreography of light, sound, and . . . electrical cords. Bernie Anderson, backed by a staff of 80 crew members, staged 5 major programs that included music, drama, big-screen video, and live satellite broadcasts, all capped on the final night by a 20-minute fireworks display—firing off more rockets than ever before in the history of Wisconsin.

A crew of 40 people worked two days to build the main stage, the biggest available in the state. Twenty more controlled the stage lights and sound, and another 10 helped the actors and performers with makeup and costumes; no small undertaking considering that for the Friday evening performance alone they had 200 props and costumes for actors playing everything from Roman guards to angels. They were picky, too. Sound editors spent 15 hours mixing sound for a two and one-half minute music video.

“We saw it as more of a ministry than a
show," says Bernie. "We carefully planned everything to maximize our technology, and we prayed that the Holy Spirit would move in each night’s program. Of course, each program highlighted the Pathfinders’ own talents."

The DTP praise team, led by Southern Adventist University chaplain Ken Rogers, started practicing two months before the first program started. "For me, there's nothing more exciting than sharing Jesus through music," says Veruschka Valenzuela, a vocalist from Andrews University. "It's so thrilling to have 20,000 kids join you in singing, 'I believe in God.' We combined a lot of flavors together to make music that everyone could enjoy."

The masters of ceremonies each evening were Tim Nelson and Kevin Bowen. Both 21, they had been friends since fourth grade, "causing shenanigans" they say. But their familiarity paid off.

"We were excited about being there with all those kids," says Tim. "Interacting with them and meeting new people. Praising God with so many people puts us in awe."

**Distinctive Settings**

Pathfinders set up their tents in an organized chaos all across the 50-acre EAA campground. Club directors and conference leaders went to great effort to make distinctive gateways leading into their respective sites—and some might think a little competition was in play as well. The colorful and creative decorative constructions ranged from a mock-up of the space shuttle to a scene from the wild wild West.

Del Braman, a retired worker from Atlantic Union College in Lancaster, Massachusetts, made one of the more unusual displays. Building on the theme of Adventist history, Del constructed a model of the meeting house that was home to the first Sabbathkeeping Adventist congregation in the world: the Washington, New Hampshire, Seventh-day Adventist Church, a place where pioneers such...
as James and Ellen White, John Nevins Andrews, and Uriah Smith all once worshiped.

The five-foot-high model was an exact representation right down to the windowpanes. “It took a month for me to build,” Del recalls. “About 140 hours of work by myself. My wife did hold a board or two once in a while,” he added, laughing. Del built the church model in his garage at the request of Bill Wood, the youth director for the Atlantic Union. It was constructed in modules that he could disassemble and pack for easy transportation.

“The idea was to touch a new generation of Pathfinders with something of the history of our church,” Del explains. “Some of these young people, coming from other parts of the world, are seeing it for the first time. I hope it helps take them back to those early days.”

Service

One of the most important goals of the Discover the Power Camporee was to introduce Pathfinders to the many opportunities they have to share the love of God with the world. During the months leading up to the camporee several ministries created custom projects that put the Pathfinders on the cutting edge of service.

Project Air Power

Adventist World Aviation initiated a program for Pathfinders to restore and refurbish a Cessna 182 aircraft now being used in ministry to people living in 50 isolated villages in southern Guyana.

Before the camporee began, Pathfinders from the Morning Star, the Coloma Silver Foxes, and the Niles Four Flags clubs, all from Michigan, put on their oldest clothes, rubber gloves, and protective eye gear to strip paint and clean metal as the first step in a complete overhaul. AWA volunteers removed and repaired the wings, inspected the tail section, re-
 Volunteers working on Project Airpower restored and modified this Cessna 182 for mission service in Guyana. Pathfinders from the Morning Star, Coloma Silver Foxes, and the Niles Four Flags clubs, all from Michigan, assisted in the restoration. Photo by Tompaul Wheeler.

placed control cables, installed new fuel tanks, and made special modifications to the control surfaces that allow the plane to land in small clearings. Other Pathfinders worked to sponsor “shares”—$100 contributions that helped buy the necessary parts and equipment needed to restore the plane.8

Project Word
Youth leaders encouraged Pathfinders to collect Bibles from members in their congregations and bring them to Oshkosh. By the end of the week they had delivered more than 150,000 Bibles to the Bible receiving center, four semitrailers side by side that served as the collection depot. But they didn’t stay there long. Pathfinders also assisted in packing them for shipment to people who consider a Bible, any Bible, as precious.

“Lots of Bibles sit on shelves not being
used,” says Larry Dalson, president of Project Word, who helped coordinate the project. “Many people in developing countries who speak English would love a Bible. We’re just shifting the inventory.”

Project Word is a nonprofit organization that distributes Bibles and other Adventist literature to developing countries as well as assists in the care of orphans in Haiti.

ADRA Pack-a-Box

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) set up a packing and shipping center in one of the large hangars at the EAA airfield. As part of ADRA’s relief work for the refugees of Kosovo, a Pathfinder could pack a box with school supplies, toiletries, toys, snacks, wash cloths, and pop-up books. ADRA encouraged the Pathfinders to write messages to the Kosovar child who would receive each box. Many clubs made beautiful quilts that they also included, along with clothing collected by Pathfinder clubs prior to the camporee.

Spiritual Celebrities

Pathfinders could meet famous personalities at the Camporee. People like Henry T. Bergh, who helped start some of the first Pathfinder clubs and composed the Pathfinder song; Desmond T. Doss, the Adventist medic who won the Congressional Medal of Honor; and Terry Johnson, the former dyslexic who wound up on the White House Honor Guard. Former world Pathfinder leader Leo Ranzolin as well as current world Pathfinder leader Robert Holbrook participated. World youth leader Baraka G. Muganda and associate youth leader Alfredo Garcia-Marenko also represented the General Conference.

Brandi Chapple was another big hit. As
Brandi Chapple, cohost of BET’s Teen Summit, tackled tough issues like drugs, family pressures, violence, and fashion.
God’s way, He’ll definitely bless us.”

Cheri Peters also knows the value of inner strength. The second child of teenage parents, she endured sexual abuse from infancy on. She first attempted suicide when she was 8 years old by climbing on the roof of her house and jumping off. Homeless at age 12, she became a drug addict in her teens, living off the streets.

At 22 she had had enough, and wanted to die. But as she prepared to attempt suicide again she felt the love of God come over her for the first time. Her transformation began that day. Today, she hosts two television programs and a radio show and helps young people find the love she never felt during her childhood. She lives on a 30-acre ranch in Idaho where troubled teenagers can stay as they overcome their problems.

“The only way to find God is through service,” she says. “Any other way is like trying to take swimming lessons through a correspondence course.” It was a sentiment right on target at Discover the Power Camporee.

The Sanctuary

When the Israelites back in Bible days went camping, they took their church with them. And something like it was open to all at Oshkosh. The King’s Castle exhibit was a reconstruction of what some believe the Tabernacle made by Moses in the wilderness could have looked like. It was an impressive, life-size model complete with Israelite priests, altars, furniture, sheep, and a goat. The structure followed the specifications given in the Bible.

The sanctuary exhibit, built in California by members of the San Diego Clairemont Adventist Church and sponsored by the Omega Broadcasting Corporation, presents a blend of historical fact and theological interpretation. Pastor Ted Tessner, who has spent many years researching the different sanctuary buildings in the Bible, was its director.

“Unless our people understand the sanctuary,” he says, “they won’t understand the significance of last-day events.”

More than 4,000 Pathfinders had the
chance to tour the exhibit during the camporee. "I was really impressed with the way they could actually set it up to look like the real thing," said Angela Kast, a member of the White House Patriots from Tennessee. Visitors received response cards at the end of the tour, and more than 100 Pathfinders accepted Christ for the first time after going through the exhibit.

"I got one card that had the greatest quote on it," says Pastor Tessner. "It just said, 'The dude explained it.' I love that."13

"Pathfindering doesn’t just exist for outdoor skills, or leadership skills," says Ron Whitehead. "Other organizations do that too. Pathfindering exists to point kids to Jesus. We’re here to discover the power of Jesus Christ and go to the feet of the true Master Guide."

A full-size replica of the wilderness tabernacle gave Pathfinders an inside look at the foundations of their beliefs. Photo by Suzanne Perdew.

The highlight of the week was the baptism service where Pathfinders dedicated their lives to Jesus.

Willie Oliver, NAD Pathfinder director, with three of the baptismal candidates he worked with during the camporee.
Candidates in the Discover the Power baptism class show their enthusiasm for Jesus.

1 Reported by Suzanne Perdew.
2 Reported by Tompaul Wheeler.
3 Reported by Tompaul Wheeler and Suzanne Perdew.
4 Reported by Celeste Perrino Walker.
5 Reported by Krissy Denslow.
6 Reported by Tompaul Wheeler.
7 Reported by Kelli Gauthier and Felicia Ford.
8 Reported by Suzanne Perdew.
9 Reported by Celeste Perrino Walker.
10 Reported by Krissy Denslow.
11 Reported by Tompaul Wheeler.
12 Reported by Krissy Denslow.
13 Reported by Celeste Perrino Walker.