

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

A CAREER in astronomy started a fascination in the church for Pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Mart de Groot.

Born in Leiden, Holland, Mart wasn't brought up in a religious family, and Christianity was not on the agenda.

Mart commented: "My grandmother was a committed Christian however, but for rest of us it never really entered our lives."

The family moved from Lieden to Utrecht where Mart did most of his growing up and studying.

He left school, where he was the smartest in his class, to do maths and science at university.

Mart commented: "It was obvious I had to go to university and because I had a really good maths teacher I decided to take the subject."

"I also had to choose a major and a minor subject so I chose physics as my major."

He added: "I had the choice of astronomy or chemistry for my minor subject and I felt I knew enough about chemistry, seeing as I had hurt myself trying to make my own fireworks, so I chose astronomy as my minor."

"My astronomy professor completely converted me to astronomy and I have never looked back."

Out of duty to his grandmother Mart went to a church meeting with her and so began his interest in the church.

Mart commented: "As it was my grandmother who had asked

me I couldn't say no, even though I really couldn't be bothered."

"I did become fascinated, from a scientific perspective, in how things had evolved and this continued throughout my time at university."

"I found Christianity and appreciated the logic of the Bible and started to read up on it."

"I became very enthusiastic and got involved in different activities and went on to develop a relationship, not just with God but with the Church."

He continued going to church and as luck would have it his future wife, Willemien, joined the church he was going to.

It wasn't long before they became acquainted, started dating and subsequently got married.

They had three children: Nellie, Roel and Jose, before the family moved to Chile where Mark started work at the European Southern Observatory.

Whilst in Chile the family grew even more when Mark and Willemien adopted two Chilean children, Abbey and Joey.

The family lived in a modest home some 8,000 feet up a mountain in which Mart describes as a "technological oasis."

He commented: "I was only supposed to stay in Chile for two years but ended up staying for six and a half."

His contract eventually ran out at the Southern Observatory and in 1976 he took up a post



this week:

MART de GROOT, Pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Larne

at the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium.

The family set up home in Richhill, Armagh and went on to adopt another child, Miriam.

It is clear that the de Groot's are a close family, despite two now living in England and one living in Spain.

"My eldest child came back to live with us with her husband and two boys, so my wife and I have moved into a granny flat adjoining the main house," Mart said.

He added: "It is a good thing for my wife to have company when I am away and at least I know she is not left alone."

"Of course with living together we do get the odd wife-sitting job, especially as we have six grandchildren in total, with another on the way."

His wife Willemien works in a garden centre in the summer months but is also very much involved in the church.

Mart said: "The whole family goes to the services together and Willemien is the first musician in Larne."

"My wife is very supportive of me and is a good counsellor some-

thing which I as a scientist don't have the ability of. We complement each other."

He keeps in contact with his brother, two sisters and step-father who still live in Holland.

"When I am in Europe I try to meet up with them and I've finally got to know my brother properly because he went to sea at 17 and I only saw him briefly for the next forty years."

Mart remained at the Armagh Observatory as a director for 18 years until his retirement in 1994.

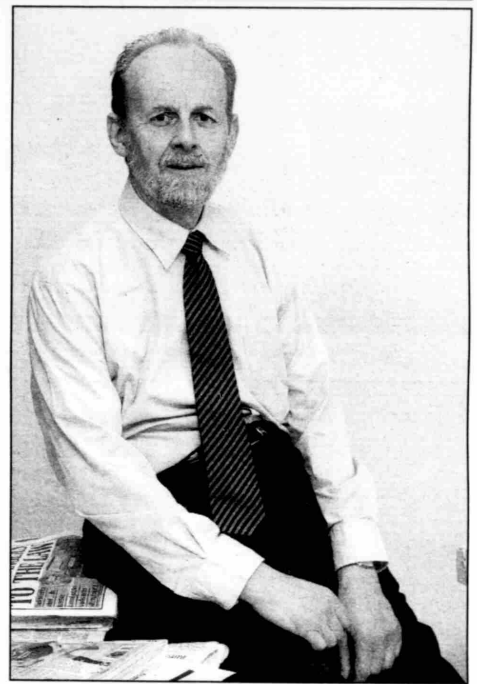
He said: "I had a good time at the observatory and it was wonderful to watch it grow over the years."

"The option for early retirement came up and it was fairly favourable conditions so I would have been foolish to say no."

Mart's retirement has meant he can devote more time to the Church, something which he has become more and more involved in over the years.

He was both a lay preacher and a lay elder for many years and in 1997 he was asked if he would like to become a pastor. "It was a big decision to

CALLING ON THE CLERGY



Mart de Groot. LT25-321-PR.

Mart is kept busy with his church work but when he gets the chance he likes to work in the garden and continue with his love of astronomy.

"Astronomy is still very important in my life but instead of it being my job it is now my hobby."

"I still have an office at the planetarium where I can go to whenever I want."

Mart commented: "I no longer do any research work and for once I get to study the areas that interest me."

As for the future, Mart officially reaches retirement age later this year.

He said: "In spite of this I will be able to continue as the pastor in Larne and Belfast for the foreseeable future, or until I'm told otherwise by the powers that be, and when I eventually do retire then I'll have my love of astronomy to keep me busy."

Visitor from across the Atlantic to speak at Larne Elim

MEMBERS of Larne Elim Church's congregation are looking forward to a special American visitor this coming Sunday morning.

Mrs Semmie Holyfield from Virginia, is the founder of a Christian Ministry known as "The Barnabas Walk" and the whole emphasis of her work is to be an encouragement to Believers wherever she speaks.

She sees the power of God at work as she offers prayer through the laying on of hands. You are invited to this special service which begins at 11am.

For more details contact Pastor Gordon on 28278785.



George Madden goes for an African theme with this work at his floral art display in the Ballycarry Old Presbyterian Church. LT24-307-PR

Start with a prayer

My peace I give unto you. John 14:27

With readiness meet the morning,
No matter what lies ahead
And instead of presuming the worst
Start off with a prayer.

All is wisely measured to our strength
And should your sky be grey,
Look at all the little hurdles
As but guideposts on the way.

If you think you can, you will make it

Despite what is set before you;
Why throw a spanner in the works
And discourage others too.

It's amazing the time we spend
wrestling
With things entirely forgotten tomorrow;
Sum it all up and you will find.
Adding joy helps subtract the sorrow.

Doreen Craig.

Cheque boost from children

RIGHT: Children from Larne and Inver Primary School presenting a cheque to Valerie Cromie of the Sargent Cancer Care for Children raised at a sponsored Readathon. LT23-001-PSB

Time of real Summer Madness for youth!

ANNUAL Christian youth festival, Summer Madness will be back at the King's Hall, Belfast from July 4 to 8.

The unique event combines worship and practical teaching from leading youth speakers with performances from a wide range of international and local Christian artists, and a packed fringe programme of outdoor activities, sport and entertainment.

The festival usually attracts more than 4,000 young people from across Ireland and beyond, many of whom camp out in the grounds of the King's Hall for the duration of the festival.

This year numbers are set to smash all records with even more interest in the lead up to the festival than ever before.

The 2003 Summer Madness event will have a special addition to the

programme in the shape of the Christian Missionary Society Ireland's (CMS Ireland) version of 'Fame Academy', namely the 'Avalon Acoustic Afternoons' where singers/songwriters can 'strum their stuff'.

WORSHIP

Colin Corbridge, one of the Summer Madness event organisers said: "The Avalon Acoustic Afternoons will be great fun and form a vital part of our dedication to worship through the arts."

Festival goers will have the chance to vote for singers and songwriters based on performance, songwriting and vocal ability on the day, with the lucky winners receiving time in a recording studio and a world-renowned Avalon guitar from the Lowdown factory."

Anyone interested in taking part should visit the www.summer-madness.co.uk website for details as soon as possible as the deadline for entries in this section is June 22.

Other highlights of the event include the debates, with some promising to be extremely lively to say the least. Topics include 'True Love Waits', which looks at sexual abstinence in 21st century culture, and 'How to Raise Your Parents Properly', which explores the best way to survive the teenage years, with Summer Madness' own confrontational host, Mr Jules 'Jerry Springer' Hamilton.

Tickets are still available for the Summer Madness festival and anyone interested should visit the website or contact the organiser's office on 90 673379 or e-mail office@summermadness.co.uk



Gospel concert in Glynn Village

A GOSPEL concert has been arranged for next Saturday June 28.

The concert will be held in Glynn Village Hall and will feature special singing guests the Calvary Quartet. Guest speaker will be Pastor Terry Fitts and supper will be provided.

The concert will start at 7.45pm, admission is free and all are welcome.