



Monument Valley Hospital  
Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

# Monument Valley Mission

---

## FRANK W. HARDY

Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D. (University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1979) is now retired. He worked at La Vida Mission (Tsaya, New Mexico) 1969-1972, at Southwestern Adventist College 1978-1980, and at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, Maryland) 1996-2012. He has published two bilingual missionary booklets (Navajo, English): *Christ Bihigíí* [Things That Are Christ's] (Pacific Press, 1978); *Jesus Hol Yi'ashgo* [Walking With Jesus] (Ellen G. White Estate, 2008). The second is an adaptation of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White.

---

Monument Valley Mission, operated by the Nevada-Utah Conference under the auspices of the Pacific Union Conference, served the Navajo Nation along the Utah-Arizona border with medical care, education, and gospel ministry for most of the second half of the twentieth century.

## Origins

Prior to World War II, Navajos living in Monument Valley who needed medical help had to travel 22 miles to a government clinic in Kayenta, Arizona. In 1942, though, even that option was removed when the clinic closed because of wartime demands on resources. Then the nearest hospital was 100 miles away in Tuba City, Arizona. The Navajos' lack of access to health care was the pressing need that brought Marvin Walter and his wife, Gwen, a nurse, to Monument Valley in September 1950 to establish a medical mission.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as he arrived at Rock Door Canyon in Monument Valley, Marvin signed up to be a per diem fire spotter for the Bureau of Land Management, which gave him access to shortwave radio. With the shortwave he and his wife

could make long-distance contact with medical professionals for guidance and aid to meet emergencies and special needs. The first few months Gwen went where her services were most needed, but by the next year (October 1, 1951) she had opened a permanent two-room clinic facility in Monument Valley. It was constructed on land provided by Harry Goulding (who owned a trading post nearby) from materials left over from an old movie set<sup>2</sup>

In fact, it was at the suggestion of Goulding, whose 640-acre ranch was surrounded by the Navajo reservation, that the Adventist Church had established the mission in Monument Valley.<sup>3</sup> Regarding its early progress, Goulding stated, "I have been living in Monument Valley for 27 years, and the coming of Marvin and Gwen Walter is the finest thing that has ever happened for the Navajos."<sup>4</sup> In 1953 a 20-student elementary school was constructed, opening for classes the following year. By the start of classes in fall 1957, 19 students were enrolled<sup>5</sup> The clinic was fully operational by 1954, and an additional 1,800 square feet were added in 1956,<sup>6</sup> but transforming this into a real hospital would cost more than the mission had.

## From Clinic to Hospital

In 1957 a physician, C. Paul Bringle, arrived. He died shortly afterward, but not until he had opened a satellite clinic in Mexican Hat, Utah, 20 miles northeast of Monument Valley.

Dr. Lloyd Mason, who had a thriving medical practice in Bishop, California, was asked in 1958 to spend a year at the mission, along with his wife, Alice, a registered nurse, studying the problems to determine exactly what would be needed in building a modern hospital at Monument Valley. At the end of the year they agreed to remain on condition that the long-awaited hospital be built. Two years later a 21-bed hospital was in place, opened May 4, 1961, the \$150,000 cost raised by donations from the Pacific Union Conference membership, the Navajo Nation, and other supporters. The Utah Indian Affairs Commission provided \$75,000 for the water system.<sup>7</sup>

The new facility provided "the most modern equipment, in one of the most inaccessible areas of the Navajo Reservation," including "operating room, delivery room, nursery, isolation areas, kitchen, and eating areas, plus all the other space and equipment that is needed by a complete hospital," according to a *Navajo Times* editorial.<sup>8</sup> In 1970 the hospital was expanded to 29 beds, staffed by two physicians, a physician's assistant, and a pharmacist, plus seven licensed practical nurses.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Mason reported in 1966 that the hospital and two satellite clinics were treating 27,000 patients annually.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the clinic at Mexican Hat, Utah, the state of Utah built a clinic at Navajo Mountain, Utah, 100 miles west by car, 20 miles by air, that was staffed by Monument Valley. The Masons ending up staying in the valley 17 years until leaving for Africa in 1975, where Dr. Mason was called to serve as relief physician for Seventh-day Adventist Medical Services in Nairobi, Kenya.<sup>11</sup>

Loma Linda University School of Dentistry began operating the Monument Valley Dental Clinic in 1966. Students came in for periods of four to six weeks. Just as there were satellite medical clinics, there were satellite dental clinics—one at Navajo Mountain, open one day a week, the other at Montezuma Creek, 60 miles east by road, open two days a week.<sup>12</sup> What made this possible, of course, was that the dentists involved did not travel by road. They had two Cessna airplanes, a four-seat model 172, and a six-seat model 206.

## Monument Valley Church

A small church, built as a gift to the mission from an anonymous donor in California, housed worship services as early as 1959, was later enlarged to a capacity of 200. In 1960 attendance by Navajos at Sabbath services was estimated at 50 to 75. A decade later the Monument Valley church had 115 Navajo members out of a total membership of 160.<sup>13</sup> Tom Holliday was hired as a Navajo translator at the beginning of 1961 and that same year was instrumental in baptizing a younger fellow Navajo, Bud Joe Haycock. Both would eventually serve at Monument Valley as ministers.<sup>14</sup> For a several years Tom Holliday recorded programs for the Navajo Voice of Prophecy radio broadcast.

## Financial Considerations Bring Change

When financial stress raised the possibility of closing Monument Valley Hospital in the mid-1990s, the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* sent a reporter who investigated community attitudes toward the care received at the hospital as compared with the newer and less-expensive Indian Health Service (IHS) facility in Kayenta. "That one down there [at Kayenta] . . . is no good. . . . I go here," said an elderly Navajo quoted in the article. An employee pointed out that more would close than just the hospital, because "the church also runs the post office, the fire department, and the ambulance service, the loss of which would leave San Juan County in a bind."<sup>15</sup> The nearest ambulance would be 55 miles away in Bluff, Utah.

The financial pressures finally proved decisive. The hospital could not charge enough for services, collect enough from patients, or get enough referrals from nearby IHS sister institutions. Monument Valley Hospital closed in June 1996.<sup>16</sup> What is still called the Monument Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church now meets at Kayenta.<sup>17</sup> The Monument Valley SDA Mission School continued operating for more than two decades, with an enrollment of 14 reported for the 2017-2018 school year. However, according to information updated January 7, 2019, in the Adventist Organizational Directory, the school was inactive.<sup>18</sup>

## Contribution

There was no hospital in Kayenta from 1942 to 1959, when a new facility was opened there. That building was expanded in 2001 and replaced by a new \$150 million campus in 2016 (Kayenta Health Center and Alternative Rural Hospital).<sup>19</sup> Besides the new hospital, Kayenta now also has an 18-station dialysis center (Four Corners Dialysis Clinic Kayenta). The Adventist hospital at Monument Valley was eventually replaced by Monument Valley Community Health Center, a private nonprofit facility built in 2000.<sup>20</sup>

During a specific window of time after World War II when none of this existed, private health care at Monument Valley mission filled a need that no one else was filling or thought much about. The work initiated by Marvin and Gwen Walter in 1950 continued for nearly a half century and accomplished far more than anyone could have imagined at the beginning.

## SOURCES

"Adventist Clinic Now Has BLM Short Wave Contact." Grand Junction *Daily Sentinel*, January 22, 1952.

Bauer, C. L. "A New Mission Project in the Pacific Union Conference." *Pacific Union Recorder*, January 22, 1951.

Blacker, W. J. "April 30 Offering for Our Indian Work." *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 25, 1960.

"Briefly Stated." *Columbia Union Visitor*, November 28, 1968.

Burton, Shirley. "What Are You Going to Do for Monument Valley?" *Pacific Union Recorder*, October 29, 1970.

Donaldson, Amy. "Navajos at Monument Valley Like Local Hospital—But It's in Jeopardy." *Deseret News*, July 21, 1994. Accessed January 12, 2020. <https://www.deseret.com/1994/7/21/19121029/navajos-at-monument-valley-like-local-hospital-but-it-s-in-jeopardy>.

Ford, Herbert. *Wind High, Sand Deep*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1965.

Mason, J. Loyd. "Monument Valley Hospital in Operation Since 1961." *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 9, 1966.

"Monument Valley Community Health Center." Utah Native Health Services, Inc. Accessed January 13, 2020. <https://www.unhsinc.org/locations/4>.

"Monument Valley Hospital—Monument Valley, UT." Hospital-Data.com. Accessed January 13, 2020. <http://www.hospital-data.com/hospitals/MONUMENT-VALLEY-HOSPITAL-MONUMENT-VA315.html>

"Monument Valley Mission." Grand Junction *Daily Sentinel*, December 28, 1952.

"Monument Valley SDA Church." eAdventist. Accessed January 13, 2020. <http://eadventist.org/en/search?org=ANPFDB>.

"Monument Valley Mission School," accessed January 13, 2020. [www.adventistdirectory.org/viewEntity.aspx?EntityID=18532](http://www.adventistdirectory.org/viewEntity.aspx?EntityID=18532)

Moore, Frank and Bill. "With a Grain of Salt." Redlands *Daily Facts*, February 7, 1952.

National Center for Educational Statistics. Accessed January 13, 2020. [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school\\_detail.asp?Search=1&State=49&County=San%20Juan&NumOfStudents=1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=A9703415](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&State=49&County=San%20Juan&NumOfStudents=1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=A9703415).

"Navajo Times." *Navajo Times*, May 10, 1961.

Osmunson, E. R. "Gospel Work Among the Navajos." *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 4, 1960.

———. "'High Day.':" *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 4, 1960.

———. "The Gospel to the Navajos." *Pacific Union Recorder*, September 11, 1961.

———. "You Are Invited to Have a Part." *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 26, 1963.

Parrish, John. "School of Dentistry Summer Team Is at Monument Valley." *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 21, 1967.

Peterson, Lavern, and Grace Duffield. "Monument Valley Mission." *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 23, 1957.

Schnepper, F. W. "Dr. Lloyd Mason Assumes Post at Monument Valley Mission Clinic." *Pacific Union Recorder*, July



7, 1958.

Sterling, Betty. *Mission to the Navajo*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2012. Originally published 1961.

"To New Posts," *ARH*, February 5, 1976.

Walker, Preston. "Section of Navaho Indians at Last Being Given Some Medical Aid and Education." *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, January 17, 1952.

Walter, Marvin. "Monument Valley Ministry." *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 11, 1955.

## NOTES

1. C. L. Bauer, "A New Mission Project in the Pacific Union Conference," *Pacific Union Recorder*, January 22, 1951, 1.?
2. Preston Walker, "Section of Navaho Indians at Last Being Given Some Medical Aid and Education," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, January 17, 1952, 5; "Adventist Clinic Now Has BLM Short Wave Contact," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, January 22, 1952, 10; "Monument Valley Mission," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, December 28, 1952, 11.?
3. Bauer.?
4. Frank and Bill Moore, "With a Grain of Salt," *Redlands Daily Facts*, February 7, 1952, 12.?
5. Lavern Peterson and Grace Duffield, "Monument Valley Mission," *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 23, 1957, 10.?
6. Marvin Walter, "Monument Valley Ministry," *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 11, 1955, 1; F. W. Schnepfer, "Dr. Lloyd Mason Assumes Post at Monument Valley Mission Clinic," *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 7, 1958, 1.?
7. E. R. Osmunson, "The Gospel to the Navajos," *Pacific Union Recorder*, September 11, 1961, 1; E. R. Osmunson, "You Are Invited to Have a Part," *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 26, 1963, 1; Herbert Ford, *Wind High, Sand Deep* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1965), 9; Shirley Burton, "What Are You Going to Do for Monument Valley?" *Pacific Union Recorder*, October 29, 1970, 1.?
8. "Navajo Times," *Navajo Times*, May 10, 1961, 2.?
9. The second physician was Dail F. Lodge, who came in January 1961. Over time the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* would list the name of the institution variously as Monument Valley Mission Hospital, Mission and Hospital (1962–1971), Monument Valley Seventh-day Adventist Hospital (1972–1981), Monument Valley Hospital (1982–1990), and Monument Valley Hospital (1991–1996). Starting in 1982, the number of beds listed in the *Yearbook* also fluctuates (1982–1984 [27], 1985–1988 [23], 1989–1992 [24], 1993–1996 [20]). The last year of operation was 1996.?
10. J. Lloyd Mason, "Monument Valley Hospital in Operation Since 1961," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 9, 1966, 1.?
11. "To New Posts," *ARH*, February 5, 1976, 31.?
12. John Parrish, "School of Dentistry Summer Team Is at Monument Valley," *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 21, 1967, 1; "Briefly Stated," *Columbia Union Visitor*, November 28, 1968, 2; Burton.?
13. W. J. Blacker, "April 30 Offering for Our Indian Work," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 25, 1960, 1; E. R. Osmunson, "Gospel Work Among the Navajos," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 4, 1960, 1; E. R. Osmunson, "'High Day,'" *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 17, 1961, 9, 10.?
14. Osmunson, "'High Day,'" 9; Burton. It was sometimes reported that Tom Holliday was a medicine man before coming to the mission. His father and an older brother occupied this role, but he did not. After serving in the United States Navy, Holliday translated for a Presbyterian pastor in Kayenta and started his own Pentecostal congregation. It was with this experience in hand that he came to Monument Valley Mission and Hospital as translator.?
15. Amy Donaldson, "Navajos at Monument Valley Like Local Hospital—But It's in Jeopardy," *Deseret News*, July 21, 1994, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://www.deseret.com/1994/7/21/19121029/navajos-at-monument-valley-like-local-hospital-but-it-s-in-jeopardy/>?
16. "Monument Valley Hospital—Monument Valley, UT," Hospital-Data.com, accessed January 13, 2020, <http://www.hospital-data.com/hospitals/MONUMENT-VALLEY-HOSPITAL-MONUMENT-VA315.html>.?
17. "Monument Valley SDA Church," eAdventist, accessed January 13, 2020, <http://eadventist.org/en/search?org=ANPFDB>.?
18. National Center for Educational Statistics, accessed January 13, 2020, [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school\\_detail.asp?Search=1&State=49&County=San%20Juan&NumOfStudentsRange=more&IncGrade=1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=A9703415](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&State=49&County=San%20Juan&NumOfStudentsRange=more&IncGrade=1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=A9703415); "Monument Valley Mission School," accessed January 13, 2020, [www.adventistdirectory.org/viewEntity.aspx?EntityID=18532](http://www.adventistdirectory.org/viewEntity.aspx?EntityID=18532). The school is not listed among Nevada-Utah Conference schools as of January 13, 2020, <https://nuceducation.org/our-schools/>?
19. When Monument Valley Hospital opened, it was reported to have cost \$150,000, or one tenth the above amount. (*Navajo Times*, May 10, 1961).?
- 20.

"Monument Valley Community Health Center," Utah Native Health Services, Inc., accessed January 13, 2020, <https://www.unhsinc.org/locations/4>.  
?

---

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000