

# Global Relief Comes From Watsonville

By JOHN McNICHOLAS  
Sentinel Staff Writer

An international relief organization, geared to deal with disaster on a massive scale, opened its warehouse doors and made some of its resources available locally during the first days of the disaster here last month.

The Western U.S. headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist World Service organization are in Watsonville. Although the organization's purpose is strictly world relief, when floods and slides turned whole neighborhoods here to shambles, SAWS directors felt compelled to offer relief to local victims.

After a check with the Washington, D.C., headquarters, SAWS sent out cots, blankets and pillows to the Red Cross shelters around the county. The warehouse doors were opened, and as much clothing as was needed was offered (local contributions provided more than enough clothing, however).

Finding clothing to offer was no problem for SAWS. In its warehouse on

Harvest Drive, it keeps on hand enough 120-pound bales of clothes for 20,000 people.

SAWS, along with organizations such as CARE, the Catholic World Service, Lutheran World Service, World Vision and Church World Service, ministers to the hungry and homeless all over the world.

It is providing emergency relief now in Burma, for instance, where the cities of Mandalay and Taundwingyi have been on fire for months, Grady said. Though he doesn't know what caused the fires, he does know some 60,000 people are homeless. SAWS is responding.

SAWS depends on contributions from church members, donations from corporations and government grants and supplies. An average of 25 administrators oversee the programs, Grady said.

The organization recently purchased all the equipment in the decommissioned Army hospital at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro for six cents on the dollar. Last week, the last 40-foot container of equipment was shipped out to be distributed

among 10 hospitals in the Philippines.

In Haiti, which Grady said is "one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere," SAWS feeds 85,000 people daily.

Agricultural experts, including Dr. Jacob Mittleider, are teaching Zimbabwe workers more efficient methods of production.

And so it goes in 25 nations of the third world. The first priority is disaster relief; after that, rehabilitation. Each day, SAWS feeds 200,000 people.

"We're not in the business of politics," Grady said. "We're neutral when it comes to race, religion and politics. We don't get involved in asking who's who."

Nor are the SAWS workers handing out a blanket with one hand, and a religious tract with other, Grady said. "One of the best ways to present the Gospel is to help a person in need." All the volunteer agencies are doing the same thing, and we help each other if need be."

SAWS, along with the other agencies, administers the government's Food for Peace program, in operation for more than 20 years.

Government-purchased food is shipped to countries in need, and SAWS personnel "follow it from port to the warehouse to the very people who are eating it," Grady said, to preclude any unauthorized use of it or corruption.

In its early years, the Food For Peace program experienced some problems, but Grady said they since have been solved.

The clothing SAWS distributes is gathered, sorted and mended by volunteers within the Seventh-day Adventist

church all over the Western United States.

They are laundered and separated into winter, summer, men's, women's and children's clothes and then mended, baled and waterproofed for storage at the warehouse.

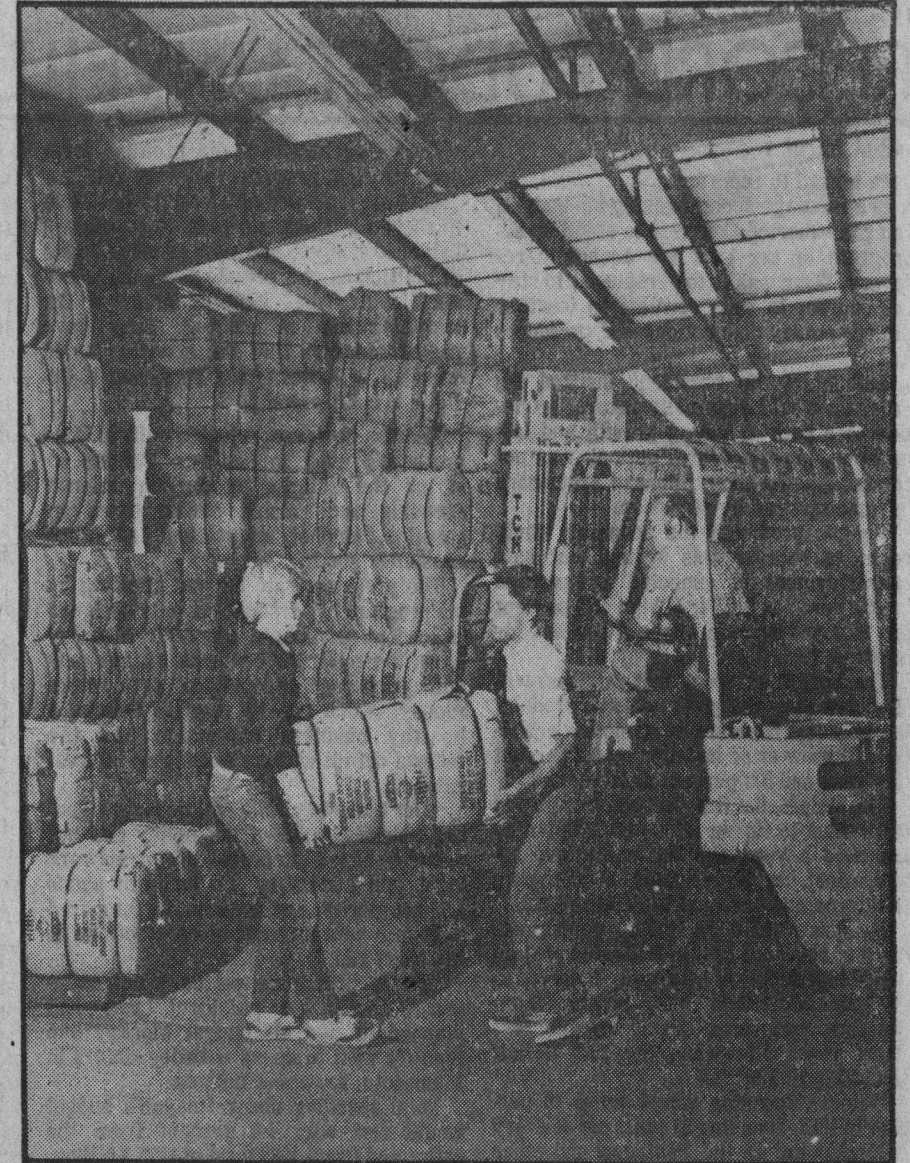
One reason for locating the western center in Watsonville — the other is in Baltimore, Md. — was the proximity to Monterey Bay Academy. The Adventist boarding school is a ready source of labor. One of the school's goals is to teach students the value of work, and students may earn up to \$4 an hour from SAWS.

Most of the workers overseas are volunteers, Grady said. SAWS is allowed by the government to spend up to 40 percent of grant funds on public relations. SAWS spends only 4 percent, putting 96 percent into direct relief.

A current project, Grady said, is assembling an emergency medical team ready to go to any corner of the world on four hours' notice. It will be ready and equipped by mid-year, according to Grady, with supplies, 40 medical personnel, an administrator and a portable field hospital.

The hospital unit recently was donated by the city of Watsonville.

Besides food, clothing and medical relief, SAWS trains people to do for themselves and supports them while they build sewer systems, wells and irrigation systems. When SAWS leaves an area, the people are better able to support themselves, he said. "It's not just a giveaway program. It's a food for work program" after an emergency is over, or on rehabilitation projects.



Students work in SAWS warehouse