

## **COLPORTEUR REPORT—1965 SILVER CREEK, NEBRASKA**

Colporteuring took on a new and different tenor in the rural areas of Nebraska. We were confronted with many new dilemmas in placing the Volumes in the hands of farm Truth seekers. From one standpoint we saw what was involved in laying down one's life for the Brethren.

We were privileged to serve with the Henry Stricklands during our stay in Silver Creek. We especially appreciated their example and their witness in their own vicinity. Sr. Strickland has been reared in the area and is well known and well-liked for her Christian way of life. Whenever friends learned that she and Br. Strickland were connected with the Volume, they were eager to purchase it. From the Strickland's examples we saw in action the principle: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ...."

Our canvassing was handled a little differently this time. Instead of going from door to door, we went from farm to farm. After securing permission to work in the area and a country map from the local officials, we set out to travel—sometimes a mile or more distance between farms—to place the truth in the hands of those with a hearing ear.

Farm folks sometimes aren't as easy to get to as city people. We found ourselves climbing over, under and through barbed wire fences, dodging herds of sheep and cows, pacifying loyal watchdogs, tramping through mud and manure, and shouting over the roar of tractors and combines. One colporteur call was interrupted and ended by a herd of sheep galloping across the path.

The greatest obstacle confronted this trip were the dogs, with which we had a number of narrow encounters. At one farm two snarling animals were chewing on the fender of the car. At another, the man had to escort us to and from the car to protect us from seven German shepherds who were barking furiously. One colporteur, while dodging a vicious dog who was snapping at her leg, managed to place a Volume with the farmer. He assured her that the dog had never bitten anyone, but afterwards he recalled: "Well, I guess I can't say never—he's bitten three men, but never any women!" We finally conceived the idea of diverting the dogs' attention by carrying a supply of "Dog Yummies" in our colporteur purses.

Unlike other places we had few unusual experiences. Our colporteur stay in Silver Creek was relatively routine and we found that farmers and small town people are very similar to those in large cities. The majority of the people were quite satisfied with their lives and their religion, the standard answer being that "they received everything necessary from their local churches." When we were asked if we had references from the local ministers, we were reminded of the dependency of the people on their ministers.

We had an encounter with a Seventh Day Adventist who told us that their founder was E. G. White (author of *THE GREAT CONTROVERSY*) who had had visions and revelations directing her writings. The woman was very reverential and studious as we discussed the 2300, 1260, 1290 and 1335 days, plus other parts of Daniel and Revelation. She asked questions which led to a discussion on our Lord's return in 1874—tying in the parallels and the Miller movement. Her understanding of the Judgment Day and the Reign of Christ made us more conscious of the unreasonable delusions encouraged by error mixed with Truth. Our discussion also included the Law, Ten Commandments and the Sabbath.

We had very few experiences with Jehovah's Witnesses among the farmers, but we did call on one—an elderly woman who discussed various points with us for 45 minutes. We first tried the positive approach by discussing our similarities and her only reply was: "We're so alike, why don't you meet with us?" At this point we proceeded to discuss our differences—particularly the various judgment periods and the high calling still being open. Even after the differences were discussed, she felt that we should still meet together. She refused to take the Volume and left a bit discouraged, nevertheless appreciating the opportunity to present the Truth.

One of our most encouraging experiences occurred on the last day of colporteur-ing. After showing the volume to the man who answered the door, he refused because he thought he already had a copy. We asked if he'd sent for it, but he said he thought that he had purchased from a "salesman" in Chicago. Several doors down, his daughter caught up with us, saying her father had changed his mind and wanted one.

Rest stops and lunch hours presented another hurdle for the city sisters. Our favorite lunch spots were cemeteries and country school yards because they had outhouses and water pumps—everything to suit our needs. These experiences certainly enhanced our understanding of other ways of living and showed us that you really need very little in the way of physical comforts to subsist.

We also made a few isolated follow-up calls that were scattered at various distances from the Strickland farm. We called on one woman who had recently been taking an Armstrong course and was very much interested in Bible study. She purchased a Volume and we had an opportunity to encourage her in the study of God's plan.

Another call was quite a distance away to a man who had written in response to an ad. When we called a very abrupt woman came to the door. She was quite hostile and insisted that they didn't want a Volume because she was Catholic and her husband had to go to church with her. However, we knew that her husband worked the town gas station so we asked if we might call on him. She consented, and we found him quite friendly and receptive. He was glad to take the Volume and said that he would surely read it.

One woman who had received a "Hope" booklet from an obituary letter was contacted because she had sent in for other booklets. On the phone she said that she would leave it up to us whether or not we wanted to come out. We did, and she very cordially greeted us. Her son had been a student pastor at a local church, but on the death of her husband, he had had to quit and help with the farm. She was quite interested and open-minded. Because of financial difficulties, we gave her the Volume.

Brethren were few and far between in this area and many isolated. We appreciated the opportunity of calling on one new, young sister isolated because of a family situation; and of trying to build her up in the most holy faith. She taught us a very valuable lesson in that she insisted that we not exchange reports of mutual friends, but, rather discuss the Truth since she had so little time to fellowship: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."