

Love children in Nassau



By ALICE RUSSELL

"I was a drunk, a wino, a hophead!" cried the young man with the mobile expressive face, the carelessly falling dark hair. His voice shook with emotion. "I slept on park benches, my mind was gone. Do you know what it's like to walk around the city streets and not know where you are, what you're doing?"

"I was finished," said the lovely eighteen-year-old girl with the shining eyes, the straight glossy black hair that fell halfway down her back, the shy but radiant smile. "I'd had 100 LSD trips. I got so I wouldn't even get up in the morning, I'd just lie there and reach over to the—you know?—the night-table for a joint of marijuana. I was going to commit suicide."

"God reached down to me!" The young man raised both arms, his voice quivering with passion, with exaltation. "He reached down and took me from a park bench—a bum, a hophead, a stinking NOTHING!—and told me to preach His word! ME! I'd never even opened a Bible! I didn't believe it, I thought it was all those drugs I'd taken. I was out of my mind. I thought, 'Oh, my God, I'm losing my head!'"



SALLY SHEPHERD, 18, and Bob Valente, in his early 20's, were once full-fledged hippies, until they decided they could do more good by helping people re-discover the true meaning of love through religion. They are now living and preaching in Nassau.

"I read it for three days — without sleeping, without eating. I took a break, then I came back and started again. I read it fifteen hours a day." His handsome face was alight. "I said, 'Okay Lord, what do You want me to do?' 'Go out and preach,' he said. 'There's not much time!'"

"Do you know what it's like to stand all alone preaching the Gospel in a hostile neighbourhood? People call you names, they throw things at you, you get beaten. The police arrest you, they haul you off to jail. Over and over they arrested me. I kept on preaching." The boy's name — he's

Like the early Christians, they live on absolute faith in God's provision. He has not let them down. People come forward and ask them to their homes — to eat, to sleep. They go out to speak on the street-corners of Nassau, confident that God will uphold them. They spoke Sunday night

"You know what hippies are?" asked the young girl earnestly, of the rows of puzzled faces before her in Evangelistic Temple. "They're — well, like — they're young people who are searching for something, something better than the world they see around them. They don't think it's good enough, they want something better, they want to be different, to live a life of love."

"And so the boys wear beads, and they all dress kooky — you know? — and they live close to one another, like they share things with one another, because what they're trying to express is love. Hippies are beautiful people, really. All they're trying to say is Love. You know?"

"I was an off-Broadway actor," said the boy, with a little smile, remembering. "I went to a psychiatrist for three years. I had my own agent, my own manager."

You gathered that this was before marijuana took possession of him, body and soul. Before he started sleeping on park benches.

"When the Lord spoke to me, after I called on Him in my agony for help — I was shaking, I was frightened, it was too much, I went home and read the Bible, sitting in an old green leather chair by the window.

THE SEEKERS

"We wanted love," said the girl in her soft voice. "All the hippies wanted love. We were like lost, trying to find it. So I thought I'd take up modelling. I thought 'People will see my picture on the covers of the magazine, in all the ads, and then they'll love me.' But nothing seemed to turn out the way I'd planned. It was all just a nothing. If you're a model — you know? — you get to go out with the wealthiest boys in town, but it doesn't mean anything."

"So I stayed with the hippies, down in the Village — well, like Greenwich Village in New York City, where all the hippies congregate — and I took more trips. And more. You know that's one thing hippies all have in common, something they can always talk about to each other. Drugs."

"Next day I went and preached in Times Square," said the young man. His shoulders hunched a little at the memory. "Oh, people, for you know what Times Square is like? It's a jungle!"

"I went down into the slums, and stood on street corners, and preached. I preached to hippies. I preached in the Village, I went from one corner to another, and preached.

in his early twenties — is Bob Valente, the girl is Sally Shepherd. They go where it seems that God sends them. Sally ran away from Denver to seek fame and fortune in New York. What she found was drugs, degradation and — almost — death. She has been a convert for only three months, and she is still shining with the glory of it.

MIRACLE

"Do you know what Sally was like when I found her?" There is awe and tenderness in Bob's voice as he turns his head for a quick glance at the girl sitting so quietly on the platform behind him. He sounded awed, still incredulous.

"She was an acid-head — dirty, forlorn, distorted, messed up ready to die. And look at her now! You see how she sparkles? God did that — God saved us both, bums that we were! God made us Christians. He told us to go out and preach!"

They do. Wherever they find themselves, they preach, and their theme is Love — fervent, compassionate Love. Love that all the lost children of their generation are looking for, and groping, fail to find. Love that the lost children of an older generation look for too.

It seemed to them that God was leading them to Nassau. They came here with \$9.

at the Evangelistic Temple, thanks to the courage and open-mindedness and deep Christian feeling of its pastor, the Rev. Peter Koeschall.

All things considered, it was a daring step, a heartening step, a great leap forward in present-day ministry, for which all honour is due to Pastor Koeschall.

If you see these two

beautiful young people on a corner, if you hear them trying to raise their voices against the uproar of traffic — stop for a little. Stop and listen. Listen as you might to two of the fervent and humble and unknown early Christians, if they were somehow to walk among us.

Love is their message.

(Sally & Bob were part of our first Love Family whom we took from N.Y.C. to Miami by camper, then to Nassau, Bahamas Islands, by boat to preach the Gospel with us! —PTL!)

... as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. —John 1:12

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. —Galatians 3:26