

ANGEL ON WALNUT STREET

by Peggy Dudley

What a change in environment—from a 120-acre farm in Wisconsin to Emmanuel Missionary College! It was 1941 and World War II was in progress.

Ruth Kaiser had come to Berrien Springs with the academic goal of becoming a Bible worker. There were no grants or loans in those days so she worked many hours to finance her education. Nevertheless, she managed 10 hours of academic work each semester. During the summer she worked as a colporteur (literature evangelist) in Wisconsin. She walked from farm to farm—one day it was 20 miles—to sell books. Ruth was dependent on the kindness of the farm families for a place to sleep and for food to eat, as was the custom for student colporteurs. As a shy student, she found this very difficult—yet she persevered because she knew that God would provide what she needed to continue her education.

Then a very unexpected event appeared on her horizon. A small country school needed a teacher, and the superintendent of education

impressed her that here was a real need. Would she please come for just this year? After praying about it she decided to fill the need. She took a Methods Class from Mabel Cassell that summer in preparation for this urgent need—to teach 15 students in all eight grades! It was her faith in God that enabled her to tackle this challenge with only one class in education. Ruth remembers learning a very important lesson from the class taught by Cassell that helped her steer through church politics (namely churches with serious internal strife)—to never take sides. How thankful she was to have learned this before beginning her teaching career.

Listen up, teachers. Can you imagine getting up at 5:30 in the morning and walking a mile and a half to school to build a fire in the wood stove so the schoolroom would be warm when the students arrived? Furthermore, Ruth was expected to board around (this meant to take turns sleeping and eating in the homes of the different students during the school year). Another challenge—there were no answer books, so she needed to keep up with the

students on every assignment every day.

After four years the superintendent of education again approached her with a need in Milwaukee for a teacher to teach grades 1–4 with 34 students. This offer was appealing because she realized she preferred working with younger students and, on the plus side, no more building fires at 5:30 a.m! On her first day she was surprised to find a whole row of mothers sitting in the back row of the schoolroom. They were there to check out the new teacher. She must have passed their test because she stayed for 3½ years until the death of her father. Then she was suddenly needed by her mother on the farm to milk the cows and plant the fields. While she and her mother struggled to keep up the farm, Ruth taught in the local public school until state requirements for teachers necessitated more classwork.

All her life Ruth had been taught by her mother to look to God for guidance and wisdom. They now felt impressed to rent out the farm and move to Berrien Springs so Ruth could finish college and major in education



Selina Mwakipunda and Ruth Kaiser (*right*) on the front porch of Ruth's home. Selina is an international student from Tanzania who is studying in the Seminary and has lived in Ruth's home for two years.

HER BIGGEST PASSION IN LIFE CONTINUES TO BE STUDENTS WHO NEED A HELPING HAND

what to do with it.' I said, 'I know what to do with it. There are plenty of Andrews students who would be delighted to have some good Brownberry bread.' Mardell and Otto proceeded to load up the trunk and the back seat with as many loaves as the car could hold. I had no trouble giving them away and that was the beginning of my porch ministry."

What has really been heartwarming is to see how many students from bygone years still remember her with phone calls, visits, cards and occasional flowers. These students who came to Andrews to **Seek** and **Affirm**, are now **Changing** the world in many capacities. And they share the same love for God that spilled from Ruth's heart into theirs. ■

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because the doors kept opening with teaching positions instead of Bible workers. Ruth and her mother made prior arrangements for housing in a Quonset Hut (student housing in those days), and Ruth had been promised a job in the bindery. Alas, when they arrived, neither the Quonset Hut nor the job was available. But as had been evident throughout Ruth's life, God again provided for both Ruth and her mother when they found themselves in this predicament.

Ruth graduated in 1955 and began teaching at the Village School. While teaching she also took classes and received her master's degree. Then Ruth was given the opportunity to teach at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School, from which she retired 23 years later.

But did this mean that Ruth retired from ministry? Not in the least. God continues to lead in every phase of her life. The same love of God that filled her life continued to spill over into the lives of those around her—caring for her precious mother until she passed away and then ministering to those around her.

Her biggest passion in life now continues to

be students who need a helping hand. Since 1988 she has conducted a porch ministry. Unsponsored international student families who are struggling to get their education have been finding help on Ruth's porch. Ruth is a gifted shopper who knows how to get the most from every dollar. From time-to-time she has received monetary donations from people who are interested in this ministry. She buys items (food and laundry supplies) when they are on sale at various stores; she shops yard sales for clothing and bedding; and she distributes produce from gardeners who want to share the excess. A few students with no place to live have found a temporary haven in her spare bedroom.

All this happens from the porch of her little house on Walnut Street (where she and her mother moved in 1954) in the shadow of the Howard Performing Arts Center. Here in her own words is how it began: "One summer day I went to Eau Claire to visit my former classmates and friends, Otto and Mardell Stebner. During our conversation Mardell said, 'I have so much bread I don't know