

[Footnote]

Paragraph 3

*** yb05 pp. 205-211 Iceland ***

one. This seems to have been accepted without much opposition. However, his directive allowed the people to worship heathen gods in secrecy and to continue practicing heathen customs. While the ruling was more a political settlement than a religious one, it may have played its part in making Icelanders independent thinkers, liberal toward religious issues.

Today, about 90 percent of the population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the national church. Though the Bible is found in almost every home, few believe it to be God's Word.

The Good News Reaches Iceland

By the dawn of the 20th century, many Icelanders had emigrated to Canada, partly to escape the hardship resulting from volcanic eruptions and severe cold. It was there that some first heard the good news of God's Kingdom. One of these people was Georg Fjölfnir Lindal. Shortly after dedicating his life to Jehovah God, he became a pioneer. Brother Lindal spoke the Icelandic language, so in 1929, when he was 40 years old, he decided to move to Iceland. Arriving in Reykjavík on June 1 of that year, he was the first one to preach the good news in Iceland.

Brother Lindal waited three months before his first shipment of literature arrived, but as soon as it did, he set out to witness to everyone in the country. By the end of October 1929, he had distributed 800 copies of *The Harp of God* in Icelandic. At that time, he wrote: "Since my arrival here, I have canvassed a number of towns with a population of about 11,000 people. The total population of Iceland is about 100,000 or a little more, so there are some 90,000 more to be reached. It will take considerable time for one person to canvass all the territory here, as traveling is very difficult. Iceland is a mountainous country with a broken coastline, no railways, and few automobile roads, so I have been traveling by boat most of the time."

There is no hint of complaint in the few handwritten letters on file in an old manila folder that bears the stenciled label "Iceland." In that same 1929 letter, Lindal wrote: "It gives me great joy to relate an encouraging experience that I had lately. I had occasion to call back at a certain place where I had previously canvassed. I met several people who had bought books the first time I was there. One man said: 'I have read the Harp twice and am reading it the third time. It is a good book. Thank you for calling.' Another remarked: 'So you are back. That book is very good. Why don't you get all of Judge Rutherford's books in Icelandic?' I told him that many of them could be had in Danish. He said: 'Send me everything you have, yes, Pastor Russell's volumes too, and I will have enough to study this winter.' Others expressed their appreciation of the books. I am thankful to God for permitting me to bring the message of truth to those who have a hearing ear."

It was a tremendous task for one person to reach everyone on this island, which is more than half the size of England. Iceland extends about 200 miles [300 km] from north to south and some 300 miles [500 km] from east to west. The coastline, including fjords and inlets, is nearly 4,000 miles [6,400 km] long. Yet, within ten years Brother Lindal covered the whole island, preaching the good news and distributing literature. He traveled along the coast by boat, and when he visited the farms inland, he used two ponies, one to carry him and the other to carry his literature and belongings. According to the brothers who were privileged to work with him some years before he left Iceland, Brother Lindal was a devoted and serious-minded brother, shy and reserved, a man of few words. He was a man of imposing stature—tall—almost too big for the small Icelandic ponies that he used for his travels. At times when there was no pony, he was strong enough to carry his books and possessions by himself.

Little did Brother Lindal realize, when he started his mission in Iceland in 1929, how difficult it would be and how much patience and perseverance it would take to break the ice, so to speak. For almost 18 years, Brother Lindal was the only Witness in Iceland. Despite his hard work, he did not see anyone take a stand for the Kingdom. In 1936 he

wrote: "During the time that I have been here, I have placed in the hands of the people between 26,000 and 27,000 books. Many people have read them. Some seem to have taken their stand against the truth, but the majority remain entirely indifferent."

Some, though, appreciated the message he brought them. For example, an elderly man accepted a copy of The Harp of God. When Brother Lindal called back several months later, he met the old man's daughter, who told him that her father had liked the book and had studied it thoroughly before he died. In keeping with a pagan custom, he had even requested that at his death, the book be put in his coffin with him, which had been done.

Brother Lindal's long, lonely stay in Iceland ended on March 25, 1947, when graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead arrived. He continued his service there until he returned to Canada in 1953. Sixteen years later, Páll Heine Pedersen, who was then serving as a special pioneer in Iceland, decided to travel to Winnipeg, Canada, to meet Brother Lindal and to get some firsthand information about his work in Iceland because, by then, the missionaries who had worked with Brother Lindal in Iceland had left the country. While on vacation in the United States, Brother Pedersen traveled by bus to Winnipeg. On arriving, he learned that Brother Lindal had finished his earthly course that morning. He had served Jehovah faithfully until his death.

Paragraph 14

*** w02 9/1 pp. 25-29 "I Would Not Change a Thing!" ***

Life Story

"I Would Not Change a Thing!"

AS TOLD BY GLADYS ALLEN

I am sometimes asked, "If you had your life to live over again, what would you change?" I can truthfully answer, "I would not change a thing!" Let me explain why I feel this way.

IN THE summer of 1929, when I was two years old, something wonderful happened to my father,

Matthew Allen. He obtained the booklet Millions Now Living Will Never Die!, published by the International Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. After devouring just a few pages, Dad exclaimed, "This is the greatest thing I have ever read!"

Shortly thereafter, Dad obtained other publications of the Bible Students. He wasted no time in sharing what he was learning with all the neighbors. However, there was no congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in our rural community. Recognizing the need for regular Christian association, Dad moved the family to Orangeville, Ontario, Canada, in 1935 because there was a congregation there.

In those days, children were not always encouraged to attend congregation meetings; they usually stayed outside the meeting place and played until the adults were through. This did not suit Dad. He reasoned, "If the meetings are good for me, they are good for my children." So although newly associated, Dad instructed my brother Bob, my sisters Ella and Ruby, and me to join the adults at the meetings, and we did. Soon the children of other Witnesses were sitting in too. Meeting attendance and commenting became a very important part of our lives.

Dad loved the Bible, and he had a delightful way of dramatizing Bible stories. Through these, he impressed upon our young hearts vital lessons that I still remember with great fondness. One that comes to mind is that Jehovah blesses those who are obedient to him.

Dad also taught us to use the Bible to defend our faith. We used to make a game of it. Dad might say, "I believe that when I die I'm going to heaven. Now you prove to me that I'm not." Ruby and I would scour the concordance to find scriptures we could use to refute that teaching. After we read the scriptures we had found, Dad would say, "That's interesting, but I'm still not convinced." So back to the concordance we would go. This often went on for hours until Dad was satisfied with the answers we gave him. As a result, Ruby and I became well-equipped to explain our beliefs and defend our faith.

Overcoming the Fear of Man

Despite the fine training I received at home and at congregation meetings, I must admit that there were aspects of being a Christian that I found challenging. Like many young people, I didn't enjoy being different from others, especially my classmates. An early test of my faith involved what we called information marches.

The idea was for a group of brothers and sisters to walk slowly down the main streets of town carrying signs with slogans on them. Everyone knew everyone else in our town of 3,000 or so. During one information march, I was walking at the end of the line carrying a sign that read "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket." Some of my schoolmates caught sight of me, and they wasted no time getting in line behind me, singing "God Save the King." How did I cope? I fervently prayed for the strength to keep going. When at last the march was finished, I hurried to the Kingdom Hall to turn in my sign and go home. However, the one in charge told me that another march was about to start and that they needed one more person to carry a sign. So out I went again, praying harder than ever. By this time, however, my classmates had got tired and had gone home. My prayers for strength became prayers of thanksgiving!—Proverbs 3:5.

Full-time servants were always welcome in our home. They were a happy group and a joy to entertain. As far back as I can remember, our parents always held out the full-time ministry to us children as the best career possible.

Responding to their encouragement, in 1945, I began my career in the full-time ministry. I later joined my sister Ella, who was pioneering in London, Ontario. There, I was introduced to a feature of service I thought I would never be able to do. The brothers used to go from table to table in the local bars offering patrons copies of The Watchtower and Consolation (now Awake!). Fortunately, the work was done on Saturday afternoons, so I had all week to pray for the courage to go! No, the work wasn't easy for me, but it was rewarding.

On the other hand, I also learned how to deliver special issues of Consolation dealing with the

persecution of our brothers in Nazi concentration camps, especially contacting important Canadian businessmen, including presidents of large corporations. Over the years, I have found that Jehovah always supports us as long as we rely on him for strength. As Dad used to say, Jehovah blesses those who are obedient to Him.

Answering the Call to Serve in Quebec

On July 4, 1940, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned in Canada. Later, the ban was lifted, but we were still being persecuted in the Roman Catholic province of Quebec. A special campaign using the strongly worded tract Quebec's Burning Hate for God and Christ and Freedom Is the Shame of All Canada was undertaken to draw attention to the mistreatment of our brothers there. Nathan H. Knorr, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, met with hundreds of pioneers in the city of Montreal to explain the implications of what we were about to do. Brother Knorr told us that if we agreed to engage in the campaign, we could expect to be arrested and put in jail. How true that proved to be! Over time, I was arrested 15 times. When we went out in field service, we made sure to carry our toothbrush and comb with us in case we had to spend the night in jail.

At first we carried out most of the work at night so as to draw as little attention to ourselves as possible. I used to carry an extra supply of tracts in a bag that I hung around my neck under my coat. The bag full of tracts was quite bulky, making me look pregnant. That worked to my advantage when I got on a crowded streetcar to travel to the territory. More than one gallant gentleman stood up and offered the "pregnant" lady his seat.

As time went on, we began engaging in the distribution work in the daytime. We left tracts at three or four doors, and then we went on to another territory. Usually, that worked well. However, if a parish priest learned that we were in the area, we could expect trouble. On one occasion, a priest incited a mob of 50 or 60 adults and children to throw tomatoes and eggs at us. We took refuge in the home of a Christian sister, where we had to spend the night sleeping on the floor.

There was a great need for pioneers to preach to the French-speaking people in Quebec, so in December 1958, my sister Ruby and I began studying the French language. Thereafter we were assigned to a number of French-speaking areas in the province. Each assignment brought with it a unique experience. In one place, we went from door to door eight hours a day for two years without getting anyone to answer! The people simply came to the door and pulled the blinds down. But we didn't give up. Today, there are two thriving congregations in that town.

Sustained by Jehovah in Every Way

Special pioneer work opened up to us in 1965. In one special pioneer assignment, we came to understand the full import of Paul's words recorded at 1 Timothy 6:8: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." We had to follow a strict budget in order to care for our expenses. So we set aside money for heat, rent, electricity, and food. With that taken care of, we had 25 cents for the rest of the month to spend as we wanted.

With limited funds, we could afford to have the heat on in our home for only a few hours at night. So our bedroom never got above 60 degrees Fahrenheit [15°C] and was often much colder. Well, one day a son of one of Ruby's Bible students visited us. He must have gone home and told his mother that we were freezing to death, for thereafter she sent us ten dollars every month to buy oil so that we could leave the heater on all the time. We didn't feel deprived in any way. We were not rich, but we always had the necessities. We felt that anything left over was a blessing. How true the words at Psalm 37:25: "I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his offspring looking for bread"!

Despite the opposition we faced, I had the pleasure of seeing a number of people with whom I conducted Bible studies come to a knowledge of the truth. Some took up the full-time ministry as a career, which brought me special joy.

Successfully Facing New Challenges

Cornwall, Ontario, became our new assignment in 1970. About a year after we arrived in Cornwall,

Mom became ill. Dad had passed away in 1957, and my two sisters and I took turns taking care of Mom until she died in 1972. Our special pioneer partners, Ella Lisitza and Ann Kowalenko were a stabilizing influence and loving support during this time. They took care of our Bible studies and other responsibilities during our absences. How true are the words of Proverbs 18:24: "There exists a friend sticking closer than a brother"!

Life certainly is full of challenges. With Jehovah's loving arm of support, I have been able to face them. I am still joyfully pursuing a life of full-time service. Bob, who died in 1993, spent over 20 years in the pioneer work, which included 10 precious years pioneering along with his wife, Doll. My older sister Ella, who passed away in death in October 1998, pioneered for over 30 years and always maintained the pioneer spirit. In 1991 my other sister, Ruby, was diagnosed with cancer. Yet, she used her limited strength to preach the good news. She also had her sense of humor right up until the morning she died, September 26, 1999. While I no longer have my sisters, I do have a spiritual family of brothers and sisters to help me keep my sense of humor.

When I look back over my life, what would I change? I have never married, but I have been blessed with loving parents, a brother, and sisters who put the truth first in their lives. I'm looking forward to seeing them all soon in the resurrection. I can feel my dad squeezing me now and see my mom's tears as we give each other a big hug. Ella, Ruby, and Bob will be jumping with joy.

In the meantime, I have every intention of continuing to use what health and energy I have left to praise and honor Jehovah. The full-time pioneer service is a wonderful, rewarding life. It is even as the psalmist said of those who walk in Jehovah's ways: "Happy you will be and it will be well with you."—Psalm 128:1, 2.