

# An Angel at the Door?

By Ruth E. Bryan



The year 1959 found my husband, me, and our four small children in the States on a one-year missionary furlough. Don was pursuing another degree at Greenville College in Illinois, necessary to develop the Open Bible High School in Trinidad.

The small, upstairs, three-room apartment we rented was a tight fit for a family of six.

Don learned his degree work would take longer than the regular 12-month furlough, but a furlough extension with support was not approved. Financially, we were on our own.

The Lord answered Don's prayer for guidance with these words, "When you use all you have, I will provide more." This was the beginning of a journey that stretched and tested our faith to the limit. We sold every personal item

we could live without. Again

and again the Lord surprised us with provisions when we were down to the last dollar.

The college, located in a small town, had a large student body, making part-time jobs scarce. Don worked at the college for minimum wage as night watchman and furnace attendant, shoveling coal into a heating system for several buildings. Later a position as assistant dean of men opened; however, college management wasn't inclined to employ someone for the position who was not of their theological persuasion. Three times Don's application was denied, but eventually he found favor and was hired to assist in oversight of the freshman and sophomore men's dorm.

Winter arrived. We had come from the tropics and winter clothing was not in our budget. We attended our landlords' church one Sunday morning, upon their invitation. After service, the pastor surprised us with a visit. He connected us with a clothing supplier who provided the whole family with quality winter clothing, including boots and mittens.

Soon the Christmas season was upon us. With

rent and tuition due, we did not have money for a nice meal or presents. The children were obviously disappointed, but understood. Our oldest daughter longed for a doll she had seen in a store window. Our second son wanted a toy John Deere tractor like his grandpa's. Yet the sights and sounds of the season made for a fun, exciting time. None of the kids had experienced snow. Don and I joined them in snowball fights and making snowmen, complete with carrot noses – happy experiences even with no expectations of gifts and the possibility of macaroni and cheese for Christmas dinner.

Christmas Eve was beautiful, with soft snowflakes covering the streets and trees. My thoughts of a warm house and the joy of being with family were interrupted by an unexpected knock at the door.

When I opened it, I was shocked. There stood a state patrolman in full uniform.

"Does Don Bryan live here?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, wondering what could be wrong.

The officer said he was on duty and asked us to wait as he had something in his patrol car for us. He returned with two large boxes.

With a friendly smile he left the packages and hurriedly returned to his vehicle. The children gathered in wonderment as Don told us about meeting the patrolman in the town square two months before.

The wonderful aroma of a yummy Christmas dinner with all the trimmings greeted us from the first box. The other was filled with toys and gifts for each of us. And among the toys, a doll like our daughter desired and the John Deere tractor our son wanted. How did this policeman know? We had told no one of our circumstances. To us he was an angel! The children were ecstatic. Our hearts leapt with joy. Praises to the Lord flowed from our hearts.

Though many years have passed we always remember the Christmas when a patrolman was sent by the Lord to confirm His earlier message, "When you use all you have, I will provide more."

Yes, He is a God of more. Much more!



Ruth Bryan, an Open Bible College graduate, served alongside her husband, Don, in Trinidad for 13 years. Her ministry has been that of an intercessor, a Bible teacher, and mother or six children. She counts it a privilege to have been part of Don's ministries as pastor, administrator, college president, regional superintendent, church planter, and director of Ethnic Ministries.

Photo inset: Don and Ruth Bryan are pictured with their young children: (left to right) Donnie (age 5), Becky (2), Daniel (3), and Brenda (4)

