Love children in Nassau

By ALICE RUSSELL

"I was a drunk, a winner, a hopeless" cried the young man with the mobile expressive face, the courteous 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 along the street corners 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. "After walking all day, I fell halfway down her back, the sky 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 up to the sky—do you know? — the needle's 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 excitement. "He reached down and took me from a park bench. I was on a hospital, a slinking nothing—and told me to preach. He said, 'I'll never even opened a Bible. I didn't believe it, I thought it was all those drugs I'd taken. I was one of God's children. I thought, 'Oh, my God, I'm losing my mind.'"

SALLY SHEPHERD, 18, and Bob Valentino, 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.

"Do you know what it's like to stand all alone preaching the Gospel in a remote neighborhood? 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 and they arrested me, I keep 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, confessing that God will uphold them. They spoke Sunday night.

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

"And so the boys wear beads, and they all dress —knock — you know — and they live down another, like they share things with one another, because they're trying to express 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. "And I went to a psychologist for three years. I had my own agent, my own manager. You gathered that this was before marijuana took possession."

"And I became a hippie. And then I was thinking, 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 kids, trying to find it. So I thought I'd take up modelling. I thought people would see my picture in the covers of the magazines, in all the jobs, and then they'd love me. But nothing seemed to turn out the way I'd planned. It was all just nothing. If you're a mod — 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, 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 Valentino, 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 converter 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 wonder 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, furred, disoriented, ready up ready to die. And look at her now! You see how the sparkles? God did that — God saved her and budded her up. She is a Christian. He told us to go out and preach!"

They do. Wherever they find themselves, they preach, and their theme is Love, fervent, compassionate Love. Like that all the lost children of their generation are looking for, and loving, 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 heart-stopping 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 upsurge 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 outreach. (Sally & Bob were part of our First Love Family, whom we met in Chicago, then to Miami, then to Nassau, then to Paris, and back in without $25,000 in the pocket as they preached the Gospel with me.)

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