

Candles in the Night

Stories of caring for neglected children
and needy souls on the mission field



CHRISTIAN LIGHT
PUBLICATIONS

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Introduction

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the Sansón Children's Home served children and families in Guaimaca, Honduras. Many children came and went and were influenced by the lives of their Christian care-takers. A number were adopted by Anabaptist families in the United States. Some children's stories didn't have good endings, but a good number went on to live inspiring, godly lives. The photos in the book are of children who were at the home but not necessarily the children in the stories.

The stories in Section 1 are from the children's home. Section 2 consists of inspirational mission stories from other Latin American countries.

The accounts in this book are true, though some details have been added or changed to help the stories flow smoothly. Most names have been changed to protect privacy.

The life of a repentant believer who has found forgiveness and freedom in Christ contrasts sharply with the spiritual darkness of a sinful life. Christians glow like candles in the dark. And the flickering flame of one candle can light more candles.

May God bless everyone shining for Jesus regardless of where they are in this dark world.

Kathryn Troyer
Miriam Schrock

Chapter 1

Administrator Needed

Miriam Schrock

1973 - 1979

Danny brought the mail into the farmhouse kitchen, plopped it on the table, and went to wash up for lunch. Sadie looked up from the hamburger gravy she was stirring and gave him a welcoming smile. “Looks like *The Budget* came,” she commented.

Her husband grunted an acknowledgment from the depths of scrubbing himself. Sadie set the small bowls of food on the table set for two, poured water into the glasses, and was ready for prayer when Danny took his place at the head of the table.

“Did you get all the hay mowed?” she asked as they filled their plates.

“Yep. This little farm is about the right size for one man,” Danny answered. “Dad gave us a good start here five years ago, and I appreciate it. But here we are, almost thirty years old . . .”

“. . . and we still don't have any children. You're wondering if the Lord might have something for us other than farming,” Sadie finished for him, her eyes alight with understanding. She also yearned for little ones of their own to nurture.

He nodded and toyed with the food on his plate. They had similar versions of this conversation often enough that it was almost memorized. They both sensed a growing restlessness. Slowly he finished his potatoes and gravy and reached for a piece of shoofly pie.

Sadie picked up *The Budget*. "Well!" she exclaimed. "Right here on the front page is a piece from Colonia Sansón, Guaimaca, Honduras. Shall I read it out loud?"

"Sure!" Danny enjoyed his pie while he listened.

"What was that about a children's home?" he asked when she finished.

Sadie read it again. "Sounds like they are looking for an administrator for the children's home they are starting."

Danny's brown eyes held a spark of interest. "I see," he said thoughtfully.

That evening while they were choring, Danny said, "You know, I keep thinking about that children's home in Honduras."

Sadie emerged from beside the cow she was milking and gave him her full attention. "It's been on my mind too," she said.

"Shall we go see the place?"

"That would be interesting!" Sadie's gray eyes sparkled.

Danny grinned. "I don't know what an administrator's duties would be, or whether we would qualify."

"We can pray about it," Sadie said.

Several weeks later, the young couple airmailed a letter to Joe Stoll in Guaimaca. "We would like to come for a visit," Danny wrote. "We will be landing in Tegucigalpa at 1:30 in the afternoon. Would someone be able to meet us at the airport?" He included the date of their arrival.



The plane banked sharply as it descended to the mountain-rimmed capital city of Tegucigalpa. It bounced roughly as the wheels hit the pavement. Sadie grabbed her armrest and braced herself as her body strained against the seat belt. Engines roaring, the plane trembled, shook, and slowed to a sedate pace. Passengers cheered and clapped. Danny and Sadie looked at each other and grinned shakily. This was their first time flying.

“That was pretty rough!” Danny exclaimed. Although they didn’t understand the Spanish exclamations and conversations around them, they understood the relieved smiles. They were relieved to be on the ground too. Little did they guess the adventures awaiting them.

Following the other passengers, they made their way through customs and into the main lobby. They scanned the waiting crowd for someone of their own faith, someone who spoke their language. They saw none.

“Maybe they were delayed,” Danny said. Outside at the curb they waited. An hour passed—but still no one showed up.

“What shall we do?” Sadie asked anxiously. “We can’t talk Spanish, and no one talks English. We can’t just stay here!”

Danny flagged a taxi driver. “Guaimaca,” he said. “Bus to Guaimaca.”

The man nodded and smiled. “*Sí, sí*. Bus to Guaimaca.” He pointed to their suitcases and opened the trunk.

Within minutes, the suitcases were loaded. Danny and Sadie climbed into the back seat, and off they went. Horns blaring, traffic zooming, pedestrians milling, small stores with merchandise stacked from floor to ceiling and spilling onto the sidewalk . . . so many new sights and sounds.

“It’s like we’re in a different world!” Sadie exclaimed.

The taxi stopped on a busy street lined with dinky buses awaiting passengers. The driver collected his pay, unloaded their suitcases,



Market wares spilling into the street

and departed. A busboy trotted up to Danny. “Guaimaca,” Danny said. Several more busboys came, all wanting to claim them as passengers. “Guaimaca! Guaimaca!” Danny kept repeating.

Finally, one boy shoved through the group and grabbed two of their suitcases. The latches flew open on the one, dumping their clothing onto the dirty cobblestones. Hastily the boy shoved their things back into the suitcase and slammed it shut. Down the street he trotted, with Danny and Sadie running after him.

We need our luggage, boy! Sadie cried silently. *Where are you going with our suitcases?*

The boy stopped at an ancient rattletrap of a bus and ushered them on board. After sliding the suitcases onto the overhead rack, he hurried off to find more passengers.

The bus was jam-packed with passengers and cargo of everything imaginable. *What could be wriggling in that feed bag?* Sadie wondered. *Will the chicken held under that lady’s arm be her lunch*

tomorrow? Seats meant for two people held three, with the third person perched on the edge, his feet braced in the aisle.

The old bus coughed to life. Down crowded city streets, past the smelly city dump, out into the mountains the bus rattled and shook. Danny gazed out the window, fascinated. The dirt road snaked up and down across the mountains. Dust billowed in the open windows, liberally coating the passengers and their belongings. Deep ravines dropped away from the roadside. Sadie caught her breath and wondered how they would ever arrive alive. Numerous crosses along the road told stories of unfortunate accident victims.

“Danny,” she said, pulling on his sleeve. “Do you think we are for sure going the right way?”

Danny smiled. “We can only hope! They did seem to understand that we want to go to Guaimaca.”

Hour after hour they rattled on. By the time the bus pulled to a stop, it was nearly dusk. The busboy motioned for Danny and Sadie to come. He unloaded their suitcases and pointed in the general direction for them to walk, and the bus headed off in a cloud of dust. Sadie threw up her hand to cover her nose, and it came away grimy. The couple looked around. A little shack stood beside the road, and that was all. What forsaken spot was this?

A young boy emerged from the shack, carrying a machete almost as long as he was tall. He beckoned to them, and they picked up their suitcases and followed him down a narrow path through the trees.

Soon, through the trees, a house appeared with faint lamplight glowing around the shutters. Their young guide left them at the door, and Danny knocked. A bearded man welcomed them in. “Why, hello! I am Joe Stoll,” he said.

“We are Danny and Sadie Stoltzfus,” Danny said, “from Pennsylvania. Did you get my letter?”

“Letter?” Joe looked bewildered. “No, we didn’t get a letter from you that I know of.”

“That explains it!” Danny chuckled. “I had written to let you know we were coming. We hoped someone could meet us at the airport.”

Joe grimaced. “Oh, my, that’s too bad! No letter came, so we didn’t know!”

“That’s fine,” Danny assured him. “We managed to find you.”

“We are just ready to walk over to Stephen Stolls for the evening,” Joe explained. “Why don’t you go with us?” He showed them to a room where they could freshen up.

Sadie longed to climb into a tub of hot sudsy water and scrub away all the grime from their long bus ride. But there was no bathtub, only a small basin of water and an outdoor toilet. Her hair was so full of dust she could hardly run a comb through it. Wearily she changed her dress. “Couldn’t we just stay here and go to bed?” she whispered to Danny.

“I think we should go along,” he responded. “Think you can make it?”

Sadie swallowed her disappointment, and they went.

Later as they prepared for bed, Sadie said, “Please, Danny, don’t tell anyone that we may be interested in moving here. This place doesn’t feel like home at all. It would be too big a sacrifice to live here!”

The next day was Sunday. They walked to church with the Joe Stoll family and many other churchgoers. The wooden church house perched on a hilltop near the Sansón Children’s Home.

That week Danny and Sadie visited most of the fifteen church families. “You know,” Danny said as they walked from one home to another, “I am impressed with the close-knit brotherhood this church has, in spite of their different backgrounds.”

“I know,” Sadie agreed. “Maybe we could get used to living in Honduras after all.”

The children's home drew them again and again. They played with the children and visited with the caregivers. Danny repaired a broken bench. They ate rice and beans and tortillas with the children. They observed and asked lots of questions about what the work of an administrator would involve. The thought of administrating the home seemed challenging.



Home children

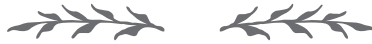
As they started for home a week later, a spark of interest flickered, in spite of their first misgivings. Did God want them to serve at the children's home? How could they leave their little farm and their families to move to a faraway land? Daily, Danny and Sadie prayed, searching for God's direction. During the next few months, they set aside time for fasting and prayer.

One evening Sadie opened her Bible to Exodus 33. When she came to verse 14, she paused. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." She read it again. And again. She heaved a sigh and relaxed. "If God wants us to go, He will go with us!" she exclaimed.

“Huh?” said Danny, looking up from the book he was reading.

“Listen to this, Danny.” She read the verse aloud reverently, fervently. “Just think. If God wants us to go to Honduras, He will go with us!”

Danny nodded, his eyes alight. “Doesn’t the next verse say, ‘If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence’? We certainly don’t want to attempt such a big undertaking without His presence and blessing!”



“Do you think we should have a good talk with my parents about Honduras soon?” Sadie asked Danny one Saturday evening.

“We need to,” Danny agreed. “Shall we plan to go over tomorrow afternoon?”

Dad and Mom listened gravely as Danny shared their burden for the Sansón Children’s Home and its need for an administrator.

“It’s so very far away!” Mom exclaimed, wiping her eyes.

Dad shook his head solemnly. “You are so young. You really don’t know what you are getting yourselves into.”

Sadie shot a troubled glance at Danny as he shifted his position on the couch. The clock on the shelf ticked loudly as they sat in silence. Would her parents not give their blessing?

Dad shuffled his feet. “Let’s sleep over it and ask God to guide you,” he said at last. “It’s such a new idea for someone from our Amish churches to go to a faraway land.”

With that, Mom went to the kitchen to make popcorn, and Sadie brought a jar of grape juice from the basement. The rest of the visit passed pleasantly.

One Sunday afternoon several weeks later, Dad and Mom drove in at Danny’s farm. They toured the garden and flower beds and sat on the porch for a relaxing visit. Before they left, Dad cleared his throat.