



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Rachel Edith Lohonen

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A seventeen year old Wisconsin farm girl found herself in the metropolis of Minneapolis. Her name was Rachel Amerson. She was there to pursue her heart's greatest dream. God had used the testimony of a TEAM missions couple to inspire Rachel to become a missionary. Her goal? She planned to study at Northwestern College and then serve the Lord in remote Mongolia! Who would have imagined that

this young woman could have such a far reaching goal.

Rachel was determined to accomplish what God had impressed on her heart. There was just one obstacle. Rachel was legally blind. After just a few months of studies, it became clear that she was not going to be able to continue at Northwestern.

The most logical thing would have been for Rachel to return to the farm. But Rachel had already shown that she wasn't necessarily going to follow the path of logic! The drive to touch the lives of men and women lost in spiritual darkness still burned within her. If she could not continue her studies, if she could not go to Mongolia – then she would find a mission field in Minneapolis! Instead of returning to the farm, Rachel began helping in a mission on Minneapolis' Skid Row.

Not long afterward, she met Gustave Lohonen. Now, Gus was himself an intricate piece of God's handiwork. Born in Finland, he came to the US with his family when he was a little boy. The family's hope of finding financial freedom in the US were short-lived when Gus' father died a few years after settling in their adopted country.

It became painfully evident that Gus' mother would not be able to provide sustenance for her four children – so Gus and his brother Hugo were sent to an orphanage. They were subsequently sent to two different foster homes – separated from each other and from all that meant love and security.

When Gus and Hugo were old enough they left their foster homes and began traveling together finding odd jobs that lasted for a few weeks and then moving on, when Hugo died young, Gus lost the only thing that gave him a reason to keep on. He began "riding the rails" crossing the US in boxcars, looking for work – enough to put a roof over his head and a plate of hot food in his belly.

As so often happens to those who find themselves in this situation, Gus began to drink heavily. He soon became a hopeless alcoholic. Now he lived from one bottle of cheap booze to the next. His life was spiraling out of control. Despondency was a constant companion. Gus became one of the thousands who lived on the streets – alone, lost, without hope. The years passed in a dark blur. Gus was already forty-five years old.



Rachel Lohonen web obit page 2

But God had not forgotten Gus, and Gus had heard the Gospel many times as he wandered in and out of the Skid Row missions. God says that His word will not return void but will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent forth.

One bleak day, Gus was in the Minneapolis train station. A distinguished gentleman saw Gus pick a Gospel tract out of the dirt. This gentleman had a deep love for God as well as an intense love for the down and out. He approached Gus and explained the way of Salvation to him. The light finally broke through! Gus accepted Christ into his life.

Gus' life was radically changed from one instant to the next. His thirst for alcohol was gone. He was a transformed man! Some four months later, Gus was handing out Gospel tracts on the sidewalk at the mission where he now served. A young woman approached him and he offered her a pamphlet!

Little did Gus know that this young lady was already a Christian and had crossed over to his side of the street because the mission she served had not yet opened it's doors. And little did he know that this young woman would become his bride within eight months. That young woman was Rachel Amerson, the woman whose life we are remembering today.

Logic would have said that a man of forty-five should not take as his bride a girl of eighteen. But Gus and Rachel did not look to logic to guide them. They knew that God had shown them it was His will for them to be together.

Over the years that followed, Gus and Rachel would have eight children together. Gus was taken to be with the Lord when Rachel was only thirty-nine years old – leaving her with the daunting challenge of raising her eight children.

For years, Rachel had been memorizing Scripture. She would often rest her Bible on the end of the ironing board and as she ironed, she memorized. In spite of being legally blind, she managed to memorize large portions of the Bible, sometimes committing an entire book to memory.



Rachel had to face many valleys as she struggled to raise her children. Years of "hiding God's word in her heart" would be the one thing that sustained her. Her complete trust in God and His promises was evident to all who knew her. God proved Himself worthy of that trust many times over.

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Mom, there are not words in the universe that could adequately express the impact you have had in our lives. You were truly a shining example of a godly woman. We know you are with the Savior you so longed to see. To say we will miss you falls woefully short in expressing the deep sense of loss we are experiencing. We are so much richer for having had you as our mother.

To God be the glory!

