

Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Tante Corrie



Genuine Christian heroes are hard to find. Most are the self-made variety. They wear sequined clothes, flashing rings, huge crosses around their necks, or parade the platforms trying to imitate Kathryn Kuhlman. They bow before the goddesses who appear with cameras from the newspaper or TV station, publish magazines with their picture on every page and hire publicity agents who get them on all the talk shows and on the program for the national conferences. But like Disney World and Dairy Queen ice cream, they are artificial. They are like the little roadside stand near the gate of the national park which boasted: "Genuine Antiques Made Here." They have never suffered for their faith, only for their foolishness. They are plastic, stamped on the bottom side: "Made in America."

But all Christian heroes are not of this cheap American grade. Last week in California I visited one of the rare, genuine heroes in the

Kingdom. She does not look like a hero (or should I say heroine)? She is old and wrinkled. She wears her hair on top of her head in a bun. Her shoes are old-fashioned, the kind that lace up. She wears no lipstick. She's not even American. But speak her name in any church in the world and heads will begin to nod slowly while a gentle sigh sweeps through the crowd. We know her and love her — the spinster woman from Holland who, like so many other brave Dutch people, suffered the hell of a Nazi concentration camp rather than betray their Jewish friends to the Gestapo. Her name is legend: Corrie ten Boom.

I fell in love with her when we first met in Holland eight years ago. At that time she was not famous, just a squat little woman roaming around the world talking about Jesus Christ. Then John and Elizabeth Sherrill thrust her into the public eye with their magnificent book, "The Hiding Place." Billy Graham

began to champion her cause. A movie appeared on her life and, almost overnight, she belonged to us all.

I joined my life with hers in writing "Tramp for the Lord," the actual writing of which was done here in Vero Beach. I worried about her health. People were clamoring for her books, her autograph, her sage advice. How she kept going, living out of that suitcase past 80 years of age, no one knew. But she did.

Now she has stopped her tramping. She has bought a quiet little house near Los Angeles, is learning to play the organ, is accepting no more speaking engagements and wants to spend her last years writing. I'm glad she has finally slowed down, for it gave me a chance to catch up with her, share a wonderful visit with my children, and report back to those of you who love her that Tante Corrie looks better than I have ever seen her. Still a genuine hero.