

Wayne/Millie Horlacher – 2 author

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Let's go to Wyoming. A pastor is using a devotional book with the members of his congregation. This particular book was written by an author from rural Kansas. The book is titled Seasons of Salt. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Last week we learned about Wayne and Millie Horlacher in Colby. Wayne is the retired owner of Horlacher Jewelers. Millie is an author.

Millie grew up on a farm in northeast Kansas, south of the rural community of Horton, population 1,776 people. Now, that's rural. Millie was one of eight children raised on that farm. Her parents stressed education. All eight of those children went on to higher education after high school. Four of them got master's degrees.

Millie went to K-State and met Wayne when they were both playing in the K-State band. She and Wayne were married and, after his service in the military, came to Colby where Wayne joined his father's jewelry store business. Millie and Wayne had four children.

Their faith is very important to Millie and Wayne. They continued their involvement in United Methodist churches and the community. Millie became a certified lay speaker for the United Methodist Church. She served as spiritual growth coordinator for the United Methodist Women at the local, district, and conference levels.

One of her frequent tasks was to provide devotions at various meetings. She carefully prepared her meditational messages. "When I presented devotions, people would often come up to me and say, 'Could I have a copy of that?'" Millie said. Eventually she realized she should put those into a book so they would all be available.

"I like to write," Millie said. "Since I had to do devotionals all the time, I had lots of ideas to share."

Wayne and Millie's four children also went on to higher education. Daughter Joan loved animals. She graduated from the veterinary assistant program at Colby Community College. Joan and her husband were living at Garden City and they decided to relocate back to her hometown. They moved their mobile home from Garden City to acreage that Wayne and Millie owned at Colby.

Then came September 23, 1983. The family was setting up the mobile home which was up on jacks when disaster struck. A fluke downdraft of wind hit the mobile home and moved it six feet off the jacks, killing Joan instantly and crushing Millie's legs and breaking her arm. "I prayed that I might die instead of Joan... That did not happen," Millie wrote. Millie was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Denver where she had surgery and eventually recovered.

The loss of their daughter was devastating. Millie would later write: "The grief process is never really over. Grief does not go away; it only holds the heart in softer gloves."

Her gift for writing led her to produce a book of meditations. These are brief vignettes paired with a scripture verse and a prayer. As noted, she named the book Seasons of Salt.

"Life is salty," Millie said. "Sometimes it's sweet and sometimes it's vinegar. Everyone's life is a mixture of sweetness and sorrow." Her book notes that salt is used as

a seasoning, a preservative, and a purifier. Her intent is that these meditations might serve the same purposes through the journey of life.

Seasons of Salt is a 232-page, large print book which includes more than sixty devotions suitable for individual or group use. The book was published in 2009.

Seasons of Salt has been sold across the nation and beyond. Copies have been sent as far away as Germany, England, and Australia. A pastor in Wyoming is said to have used it as a church devotional series. "It has been used by both Catholics and Protestants, all across the spectrum," Millie said.

Seasons of Salt is available from the author and on amazon.com.

It's time to leave Wyoming, where a pastor is using a book by a rural Kansas author as a devotional. We salute Millie Horlacher for making a difference by sharing her devotional thoughts with others. To me, she represents the salt of the earth.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.