

The Private Life

The Graham children learn to take care of each other. There are few other youngsters in neighborhood.



The nation's leading evangelist doesn't get to spend much time with his family; but when he does, they command his full attention.

THE ONLY MEMBER of the Billy Graham family in Montreat, N. C., who doesn't study the Bible regularly is an awe-inspiring animal named Belshazzar, who frequently strains the spiritual atmosphere of the Graham household with his inability to distinguish friend from foe.

Shortly before the Grahams moved into their new home in the heart of the Carolina hill country, Ruth Graham received a terse note from a neighbor:

"I would like you to know that last night I barely made my front door before your beast tried to take the seat out of my trousers."

Not the least of the reasons why the Grahams were glad to get into their new home was the restricted field it offers Belshazzar—a 140 pound, pure white dog of the rare Great Pyrenean breed—for making unsocial contacts. There were other reasons, too. The Grahams, who now have five children, had long since outgrown their old quarters adjacent to the Presbyterian conference grounds in Montreat. And the old Graham home, exposed to public view as it was, had turned into a mecca for curious motorists, celebrity-conscious hitchhikers and bus loads of sight-seers.

Evangelist Billy Graham doesn't get to spend much time at home because of the demands of his work. When he's there, he likes to enjoy his family and pursue his theological studies in peace and quiet. This was increasingly difficult when, every time Billy raised a window shade or opened the front door, he found himself face-to-face with a passel of tourists or an indignant trespasser who had just tangled with Belshazzar.

So two years ago, the Grahams moved into a new home, paid for by hundreds of well-wishers sensi-

tive to the needs of Billy and his family. Reached only by a tortuous mile-and-a-half of unimproved road, it provides a cloistered contrast to the carnival surroundings of the Graham crusades.

A visitor to Montreat has difficulty getting directions to the home of its most eminent citizen. "The townspeople," says Jim Moore, Graham's secretary, chauffeur, and general aide-de-camp, "really protect Billy. They feel he deserves some privacy for the few months he's at home, and they give it to him."

There's nothing cloistered about the Graham family, though. Seen outside his evangelistic trappings, Billy Graham might be taken as the highly successful vice-president for sales of a large corporation. He is imposing, standing six-foot-two; he is handsome in a curly-haired, boyish sort of way; he has tremendous charm and amiability; and he has the happy facility of being completely self-possessed and at ease in any surroundings, encouraging these same qualities in anyone he meets. Only his eyes belie this picture of easy amiability: they are deeply blue, intense, almost fanatical, and they burn with a zeal which isn't always reflected in the light-hearted conversation he makes so well.

The rest of the Graham family also operate on the theory that God never intended His children to be dour or straight-lipped about their daily living. The Graham home is run strictly on the Biblical principles which Billy Graham preaches so earnestly; but the Grahams have fun at it.

RUTH DOESN'T conform to the popular prototype of the ascetic wife of an evangelist. She's decidedly attractive, wears clothes well and smartly (although she makes most of them herself),



The old Graham home (background) attracted too many sight-seers. Billy points out site of their new home to (l to r) Anne, Mrs. Graham, Ruth, Virginia, and Franklin.