

Marshall Town, Iowa; and how the town's church people graciously offered us their help.

I realize I didn't mention the story of how I got my yellow Dodge, so as long as we're just chatting, let me tell you about her. When I first arrived in Carbondale I didn't need a car because I lived in the dormitory and everything I needed was close by. I shared the room with one American student, but the bathrooms were all shared. It was a bit of a challenge explaining to the other students the concept of *wudu*, the practice of washing before each of our five daily prayers. Eventually, everyone just accepted our commitment to performing Islamic rituals. But when I moved to Iowa, the situation changed. Marshall Town was a small town nestled among the plains and corn fields, so without a car you had no chance of going anywhere. I decided that getting a car was an essential matter, but the problem was that my pockets were drained. I had no more than \$500 dollars at the time and our monthly stipend from the embassy was \$450, which was just enough to cover the basic necessities of food, rent, and books. The only used-cars I could find in acceptable condition were no less than \$2,000. I asked my mother to send me the rest of the money, but she refused. It wasn't a matter of money, but a matter of maternal fear. She dreaded the idea that I would be driving, so she took the firm position that if I needed to go anywhere, I should just hail a taxi. I found it impossible to explain to her that there are no taxis in rural Iowa. Nevertheless, I was determined to get myself a car and I applied the Kuwaiti principle that you should "stretch your legs no further than the end of your quilt." I kept searching until I finally found a 1964 Dodge being sold for \$300. I made it work until I could go back to Kuwait in the summer.