



Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XVIII Number 2

June 2015

AN OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE YOUTH ORIENTATION UNIT HISTORY IN ALBERTA

by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

What was it like to work with young offenders in a farm setting? "One had to be careful crossing the property in the evenings," long-time board member and Youth Orientation



Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

Unit (Y.O.U.) director, Jake Baergen recalled. It sounded ominous until

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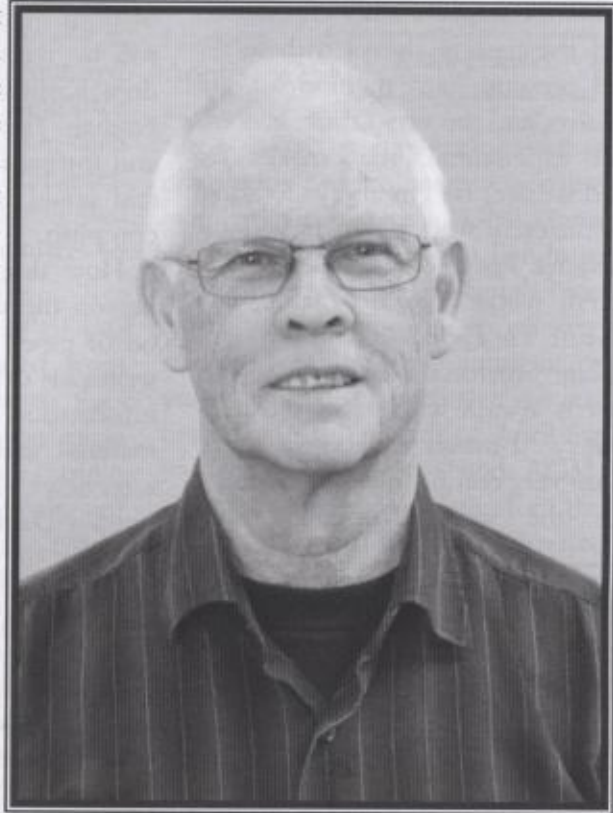
DAVID HUBER LEFEVER: MY HUGUENOT- MENNONITE HERITAGE

as told to Dave Toews

I am a direct descendant of Isaac LeFevre, born March 26, 1669, whose parents and siblings were martyred for their French Huguenot Protestant faith in 1685 near Chateau-Chinon in the Yonne River Valley, France.

About the Name, Lefever

Lefever: This is an Olde French occupational name "fevere" or "fevre" meaning a "smith, iron-worker or blacksmith." Spelling variations of the name include: LeFever, LeFevre, LeFevres, LeFebure, LeFebvre, LeFebvres, LeFeaver, LeFevere, Favre, Favres, Fevre, Febvre, Febvres, Lefabre, Lefabvres, Fabvres, Lefever and more.



David H. Lefever

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Origin of the Name, Huguenot

The current edition *Encyclopedia Britannica* offers several explanations of the name, including the following one: "The origin of the name is uncertain, but it appears to have come from the word *aignos*, derived from the German *Eldgenosen* (confederates bound together by oath), which [was] used to describe, between 1520 and 1524, the patriots of Geneva hostile to the duke of Savoy. The spelling *Huguenot* may have been influenced by the personal name, *Hugues* or "Hugh." A leader of the Geneva movement was Besancon Hugues."

(Continued on page 5)

Editorial Reflections:

by Dave Toews

"I'm drawn to stories that explore the relationship between the present and the past. (I don't see them as discrete temporal



Dave Toews

locations; rather it's my experience that the past is always with us in the present: our memories, our dreams, and the very fabric, genetic and experiential, that makes us who we are) so I'm always looking for different ways to marry various narrative lines together into a coherent whole." Kate Morton, author of, *The Forgotten Garden*.

Kate Morton's words, "... the past is always with us in the present ... it makes us who we are" are very real for me. Therefore, I like the way Chairman, Dave

Neufeldt, continues to encourage people to write their family stories and attend MHSA conferences.

How do we create interest and gain members in the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta? This week, perseverance paid off for me. Our younger son, Everett, asked me to write our family story and I jumped at the chance. I consider it an honour and a privilege to have been asked. For me, this will be a labour of love. The story, of both Marion's family and mine, will be written for our grandchildren Kishina, Anaya, Zachary and Nathan Toews. The length, depth and format is yet to be determined and could take some time to accomplish.

How does one get to know a person thoroughly in a short period of time? It can be simple. One writes his or her family history with information gleaned from written material and through a series of interviews. For example, I have known David Lefever for quite a number of years. We golf in the same group every week during the summer. Since I have written his family story that appears elsewhere

in this issue, I know a lot more about David: where he comes from; who he really is; and, many of his life-changing events. This has been a remarkably fulfilling experience for me and I think, for David, also.

Letters to the editor can be very invigorating and create positive energy for the newsletter staff. Hilda Voth, my former school mate and fellow church member from Mayfair, Saskatchewan, enjoyed the last issue, as did Helene Unger from Sherwood Park. Terry Smith commented on Anne Harder's study of the complex relationships of German Mennonites with wider society and their own faith communities.

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue. Of special note are Donita Wiebe-Neufeldt's excellent reports on the last two MHSA conferences that were shared with *The Canadian Mennonite*. We also appreciate first time contributor, Ruth Friesen, for her family story, *Roots and Branches*.

The MHSA welcomes your feedback, e-mails, letters to the editor and articles. Contact dmtoews@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is Sept 1, 2015. ♦

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Send submissions and other correspondence to:
Dave Toews, Editor
(dmtoews@gmail.com)

Subscription is through membership (\$30.00). To join, send payment to:

MHSA
2946 32 Street NE
Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7

Editor: Dave Toews

Assistant Editor: Lorne Buhr

Copy Editor: David Jeffares

Editorial Committee: Dave Toews,
Lorne Buhr, David Jeffares &
Colin Neufeldt

Layout: Colin Neufeldt

Distribution: Bill Janzen

Membership List: Ellie Janz

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www.mennonitehistory.org

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Vice Chair: Dan Jack, Calgary
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GAMEO Representative:

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WHAT IS MAID?

It is the Mennonite Archival Image Database and a wonderful way to discover photographs of Mennonite life in Canada and around the world. Check out the MAID website at: archives.mhsc.ca

Publications for Sale:

- Coaldale Hospital Memoirs (\$25)
- Among the Ashes (\$25)
- Seeking Place of Peace (\$15)
- Nuggets of Gold (\$15)

Chairman's Corner

by Dave Neufeldt

In April, the MHSA held its Annual General Meeting and Spring Conference at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton.

The topic of the conference was the Youth Orientation Unit (Y.O.U.) that operated in Warburg, Alberta, between 1969 and 1991. We were fortunate in that several individuals involved in the founding and operating of Y.O.U. were able to participate in the conference and provide first-hand stories. A fuller report on the conference and AGM can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

I do, however, want to highlight some changes to the board that occurred at the AGM. We elected two new members—Alice Unrau and Dave Toews. Neither of them are strangers to MHSA. Alice has been a regular volunteer at the archives and Dave has been our long-time newsletter editor. I am very pleased that they have joined our board and I look forward to working with them. At the same time, I regret that Lil Bartel has chosen not to continue on our board at this time. I have enjoyed working with her and thank her for her contributions. While she will not be continuing as a board member, Lil will be continuing her regular volunteer work at the archives.

The Sunday before the AGM, I asked a group of people after church if anyone wanted a ride to Edmonton for the meeting. One of my friends responded (incorporating graphic hand mo-



Dave Neufeldt

tions) that she would rather stick a knitting needle into her eye. Apparently, not everyone shares my interest in history. It is a subject that is frequently described as boring. I think one reason people find it boring occurs when historical events do not seem to connect to present life.

I feel that our congregation (Lethbridge Mennonite Church) is making a significant connection now. We just decided to join with other local churches to sponsor at least two refugee families from Syria. Mennonite Central Committee is currently highlighting the need for sponsors for Syrian refugees. Over three million people have fled Syria to neighbouring countries to escape the civil war in Syria.

Many of the members of our congregation are descended from families that came to Canada fleeing war, persecution and starvation in other countries. It was often through the great generosity of others that they were able to establish themselves in Canada. When we remember our own family histories, the benefits we received from others demonstrate how important it is for others to receive that same generosity from us.

One of the important roles we have at MHSA is to preserve and share our stories. The challenge is to share those stories in a way that is **not** boring, but rather, that connects with people's present lives. It is through such connections that the learnings of the past can shape the future. ❖

WHAT IS GAMEO? It is the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online and an important resource in conducting historical research. Check the website at: www.gameo.org

Report on the AGM

by Katie Harder

As seems to be the norm lately, those travelling to the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta AGM on the morning of April 25th again encoun-



Katie Harder

tered snow and wintry weather conditions which have become standard fare for the AGM! Upon arrival in Edmonton, the Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church was warm and welcoming so all was good. Over the past number of years, the Board has chosen the last Saturday in the month of April for its Spring Conference and AGM. Perhaps the usual date for the AGM and Spring Conference should be reconsidered for weather reasons!

This year, the Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton agreed to host the event. Upon entering the spacious foyer, one first encountered the registration and book table where Katie Harder, Alice Unrau and Ingrid Warkentin were there to assist the guests and members alike with registration, to renew their memberships and to purchase books. The cost of registering for the event was \$20.00. The money enables MHSA to pay the host church for the food costs incurred for lunch and Faspas. The fee also covers guest speaker honoraria for the featured afternoon session. The MHSA generally just breaks even; the events have rarely resulted in profit!

Shortly after 11:00 A.M., 27 members and guests assembled for the 2015 AGM. The Board chair, David Neufeldt from Coaldale, warmly welcomed the assembly and opened the AGM with prayer. The various committees reported, beginning with the chair's report. David reviewed the three activities in which the MHSA is involved: the operation of the archives and library; the spring and fall conferences; and, thirdly, the publication of a newsletter three times a year. A new initiative for this year is the *Lending Library*. Kathy Ma from First Mennonite Church Edmonton has agreed to serve as the volunteer librarian for the loaner operation in Edmonton. The *Lending Library* consists of about twenty books, of which the MHSA has numerous duplicate copies. The *Lending Library* will likely stay in one location for about four months and then move to another church.

On our behalf, David attended the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada annual meeting in Waterloo, ON. He reported that the web-based Mennonite Archival Image Database, which has been in development stages for a number of years, is now in operation. The MHSA will also be adding its photos to the database.

David informed the group that the MHSA hopes to showcase The Ray Dirks Art Exhibit entitled "Along the Road to Freedom: Mennonite Women of Courage and Faith" sometime in 2016. This exhibit honours the lives of Mennonite women who lived under Stalin's 'reign of terror,' and their journey to find a new home. A possible venue for this exhibit would be the museum in Coaldale.

David also commented on the success of the genealogy project that Lil Bartel has supervised in conjunction with the staff at Menno Simons School in Calgary. Several of the projects were on display in the foyer of the church.

David expressed thanks to all the volunteers who make the MHSA a possibility.

The editor of the newsletter, Dave Toews, mentioned how delighted he was about some of the comments that were received about the March issue of the newsletter which obviously was a job well done! Dave briefly paid tribute to Dave Hildebrand, a volunteer who served as the publisher and distributor of the newsletter for many years. Dave passed away in January, 2015. Dave mentioned that he is always on the lookout for historical human interest stories so for all those who like to write, or those who need help in writing a story, Dave would be more than willing to facilitate writers' enquiries.

Ted Regehr briefly shared how the subject matter for the afternoon's session (Y.O.U.) came about. He, together with Peter Dyck, was working at processing a large collection of materials that had been contributed to the archives. As often happens in the process of acquisition, one can't help but read through some of the material and, thereby, interest is piqued. Ted and Peter came to the conclusion that this project, the Youth Orientation Unit, had much merit and that the story should be told while persons involved are still able to tell parts of the story. The Board had readily given its approval.

MHSA functions with a Board of elected volunteers. This year Dan Jack, incumbent, David Jeffares, incumbent, Peter Dyck, incumbent, Alice Unrau and David Toews were elected by acclamation. There is now a Board of

eleven members. As often happens, the Board members are recruited as volunteers; this is also true with MHSA. Lil Bartel, a valued past Board member chose not to be re-elected due to family reasons, but has promised to continue volunteering her time at the Archives/Library.

All organizations, including the MHSA, need an operational budget. If the MHSA could expand its donor base, the scope of the organization would expand significantly. The Board was encouraged to apply for a government grant which, on other occasions in the past has been successful. The requirements for a grant are very stringent; at this time, the MHSA does not have a project that qualifies. The Board will, however, continue to explore this avenue for extra funding. The proposed budget for 2015 in the amount of \$23,600.00 was accepted. Expenditures for 2014 came in at \$20,996.82, of which \$7,200.00 was rent.

Thanks were offered to all MHSA donors; they are valued and appreciated.

After an informative and productive morning, the AGM concluded at 12:15 P.M. whereupon a wonderful noon meal was swerved by the ladies of the Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church. They were thanked for their warm hospitality and help in making the day a memorable one. ♦

Are you concerned that the historical legacy of an important Alberta Mennonite leader will not be recorded in the annals of history? If so, then contact Wes Berg (w.berg@ualberta.ca) about documenting it in GAMEO.

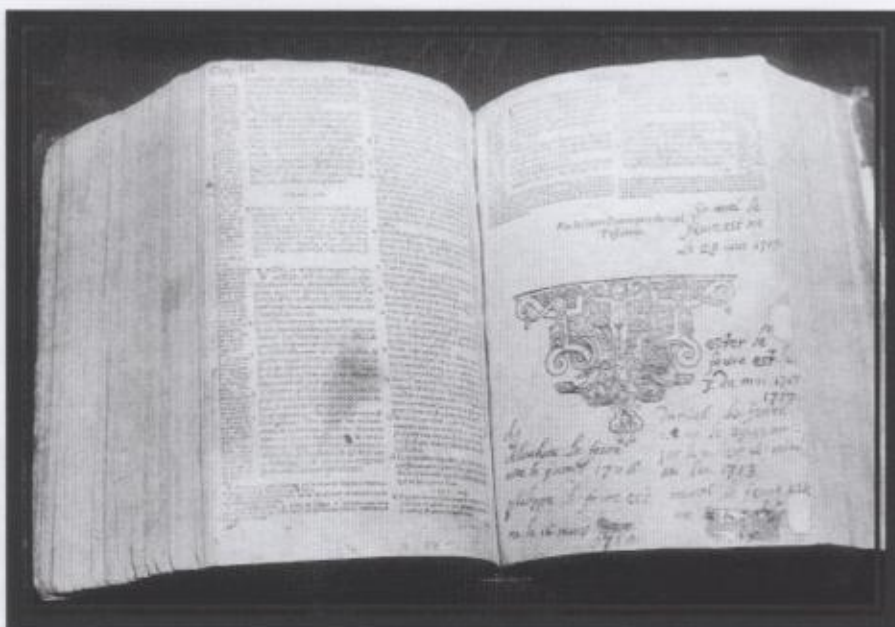
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Brief History of the Huguenots

The Huguenots were French Protestants most of whom eventually came to follow the teachings of John Calvin and who, due to religious persecution, were forced to flee France to other countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some remained, practicing their Faith in secret.

The Protestant Reformation began by Martin Luther in Germany about 1517, spread rapidly in France, especially among those having grievances against the established order of government. As Protestantism grew and developed in France, it generally abandoned the Lutheran form and took the shape of Calvinism.

The new "Reformed religion" practised by many members of the French nobility and social middle-class, based on a belief in salvation through individual faith without the need for the intercession of a church hierarchy and on the belief in individuals' rights to interpret



Isaac LeFevre's 1608 Geneva Bible; Isaac took the bible with him inside a loaf of bread from the massacre site

scriptures for themselves. This placed these French Protestants in direct theological conflict with both the Catholic Church and the King of France in the theocratic system which prevailed at that time.

Followers of this new Protestantism were soon accused of heresy against the Catholic government and the established religion of France and a General Edict urging extermination of these heretics (Huguenots) was issued in 1536. Nevertheless, Protestantism continued to spread and grow and about 1555 the first Huguenot church was founded in a home in Paris based upon the teachings of John Calvin. The number and influence of the French Reformers (Huguenots) continued to increase after this event, leading to an escalation in hostility and conflict between the Catholic Church/State and the Huguenots. Finally, in 1562, some 1200 Huguenots were slain at Vassy, France, thus igniting the French Wars of Religion which would devastate France for the next thirty-five years.

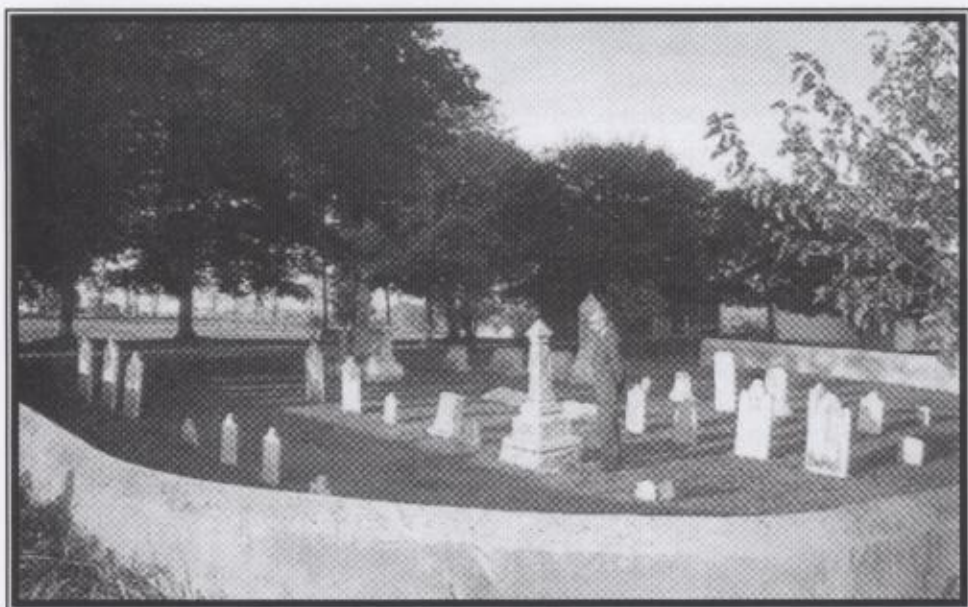
On Sunday, August 24, 1572, when a large number of Huguenots had gathered in Paris for the wedding of one of their chiefs, the Roman Catholics attacked and killed several thousand. This was known as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Massacres were ordered in other parts of France and all together seventy thousand perished. The Pope sent congratulations to Catherine de Medici, the queen regent and both felt that they were finished with the Huguenots. But the Huguenots rallied and persevered.

The *Edict of Nantes*, signed by Henry IV in April, 1598, ended the Wars of Religion and allowed the Huguenots some religious freedoms, including free exercise of their religion in twenty specified towns of France.

The *Edict of Nantes* was revoked by the *Edict of Fontainebleau* by Louis XIV in October 1685 and began renewed persecution of the Huguenots causing hundreds of thousands of Huguenots to flee France for other countries. The promulgation of the *Edict of Toleration* in November, 1787 partially restored the civil and religious rights of Huguenots in France.



The LeFevre Coat of Arms, a stag head of silver, three gold crosses re-crossed on a field of blue granted in 1543 by the Royal Duke of Lorraine



The LeFevre Cemetery in Strasburg, Pennsylvania

Since the Huguenots of France were, in large part, artisans, craftsmen and professional people, they were usually well-received in the countries to which they fled. Most of them went initially to Germany, the Netherlands and England. Considerable numbers of Huguenots migrated to British North America, especially to the Carolinas, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York. Their character and talents in the arts, sciences, and industry were such that they are generally felt to have been a substantial loss to the French society.

In the 1920s and 1930s, members of the extreme-right Action Française movement expressed strong animus against Huguenots and other Protestants in general, as well as against Jews and Freemasons. They were regarded as groups supporting the French Republic, which Action Française sought to overthrow.

In World War II, many Huguenots led by André Trocmé in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in Cévennes helped save many Jews. They hid them in secret places or helped them get out of Vichy France.

Approximately one million Protestants in modern France represent some 2% of its population. Most are concentrated in Alsace in northeast France and the Cévennes mountain region in the south, where they still regard themselves as Huguenots to this day.

My LeFevre Genealogy from My Eighth Great-grandfather

Mengen LeFevre (1-001) b 1510, Loraine, France (FR), ennobled by the Royal Duke Antoine and granted a coat of arms in 1543. (Spouses are not always mentioned and many records were destroyed along with the Huguenot people and their churches)

Abraham LeFevre (5-001) b 1632, Strasburg, FR, martyred 1685 with his entire family (wife, three sons and three daughters), except for his third son Isaac after the declaration of the Edict of Fontainebleau.

Isaac LeFevre (6-004) "founder of The Pennsylvania LeFevres" b Mar 26, 1669, Chateau-Chinon, FR, d Oct 1, 1751, Lancaster County, Pennsyl-

vania (PA) m in Bavaria abt 1704, Catherine Fuehre (or Ferree) b abt 1679, Landau, FR d 1749. Isaac, a boy of sixteen, the sole survivor, fled the scene of his family's murder taking with him only his father's Bible. His mother had concealed the Bible by baking it in a loaf of bread. This Bible Isaac clung to and cherished through all his journeys and hardships for sixty-six years of his life. Isaac and Catherine are believed to be buried in the LeFevre Cemetery, Strasburg, PA along with a total of seven generations of LeFevres. (Early records are sketchy.)

Philip LeFevre (7-002) b Mar 16, 1710, Kingston, NY d Sept 1761, m abt 1730, Mary Herr, no dates. Mary was the grand-daughter of Hans Herr, Swiss Mennonite Bishop born in Zurich, Switzerland. It is believed that at this time our family became Mennonite. In spite of this, Mary's father, Christian, disowned her for marrying outside the Mennonite faith. Philip was a blacksmith and gunsmith who made farm implements and smoothbore guns. Some of these guns were used in the American Revolutionary War.

Adam LeFevre (8-007) b Feb 27, 1745, d Feb 15, 1814, m Elizabeth Paules b July 4, 1743, d Aug 30, 1816. Adam and Elizabeth had a number their children baptized as infants. Adam was an innkeeper by profession.

Henry B LeFevre (9-029) b Apr 11, 1772, d Sept 26, 1844, m Aug 4, 1822, Elizabeth Hess b Aug 29, 1792, d Sept 4, 1826.

Adam LeFevre (10-098) b May 11, 1825, d Feb. 2, 1889. m Nov., 1850, Catherine Kendig, b Oct. 8, 1830, d Sept. 8, 1902. Adam served on the board of directors of the Lancaster County National Bank.

Martin K LeFevre (11-323) b Jan 16, 1854, d Apr 7, 1938, m Nov, 1880, Amanda Mylin b June 14, 1854, d Apr 15, 1936.

Martin (LeFevre) Lefever (12-439) my grandfather, b Jan 26, 1894, Millersville, PA d Dec 8, 1984, m Jan 6, 1920, Elizabeth Gerlach b Mar 19, 1897, d June 28, 1983, (there were no death dates in the family history and genealogy book, *The Pennsylvania LeFevres* [copyright 1952] as Martin and Elizabeth were still living). Martin changed the spelling of the family to Lefever but in the family genealogy the spelling remains as LeFevre throughout. The earliest recollections I have of my grandparents is of Christmas dinners with the extended family, the women all received lovely colourful crocheted throw covers from grandmother and the men got shirts. They lived in a big old house with a bare open concrete basement, where all the festivities took place. Grandmother was an excellent cook and loved to bake. She had her own stall at the Lancaster County Market where she sold baking and garden produce. Martin was a short jovial man well known for his one-liners, if someone received a cut to their hand he would quip, "It's far from the heart, bandage it up and let's get back to work." In addition to farming, grandfather was the gardener at Millersville State College.

Leon Gerlach Lefever (13-377) my father, b Mar 26, 1922, d Nov 17, 2002, m Feb 18, 1942, Anna Mary Huber b Oct 4, 1920, d Mar 1, 1997. My father was a very strict authoritarian man. He was also a very powerful physically. At a bridge construction site the foreman challenged his men whoever could lift this counter balance weight could have it. Father tossed it in the back of his truck and took



Lefever family; rear Leon, Anna Mary, David, front Daniel, Mary Elizabeth, with truck and trailer leaving for Alberta in April, 1955

it home. My mother Anna Mary was a very enterprising warm hearted woman. She loved to bake, cook and was famous for her Sunday chicken dinners. She was five feet tall, very strong and could spear tobacco plants with the best of them during harvest.

David Huber Lefever (14-317) b July 5, 1943, m Aug 16, 1969, Jean Miyoko Taniguchi b Sept 2, 1942.

My Story

I was born on July 5, 1943 in the hospital in Lancaster, PA; I proved to be a difficult birth. Forceps had to be applied and it took some time for my head to regain its normal shape. My brother, Daniel, b July 19, 1944, was a happy-go-lucky child but he could have a temper if one got him upset. Sister, Mary Elizabeth (always known as Dolly), b Apr 19, 1946, was a very energetic child always trying to keep up with her brothers. Youngest brother, Park H, who was b Mar 19, 1948, died at birth.

My earliest memories of our home life are mother reading Uncle Tom's Cabin to us before bedtime. Our family lived on a mixed farm of 80 acres at Bausman in Lancaster County a few miles outside of Lancaster City. We had milk cows, pigs, chickens and fattened steers for market purchased as yearlings. But our principle cash crop was tobacco. Tobacco was very labour intensive and the whole family had to help during harvest. In 1951, revival preacher, George R Brunk, preached against raising tobacco. This caused a number of Mennonites to plough down their freshly planted fields! Our farm had a lovely bubbling spring, a tributary of Little Conestoga Creek. The spring supplied the farm, house and garden with sparkling, clear, cool water. We enjoyed helping our parents with farm chores and work in the garden. Daniel and I would carry a bushel basket of chop (ground corn), one of us on each handle, to the steers' feed trough.

We attended the Vine Street Mission, now the James Street Mennonite Church that began as a Sunday School in downtown Lancaster in 1897. I



**Lefever family in front of the bunkhouse
in Eaglesham, Alberta 1957**



Millersville Mennonite cemetery where Daniel is buried

get ever tighter on my leg if I misbehaved. Sunday evening there was Children's Church, with a flannel board and memory work to recite in front of the congregation. Mother taught Summer Bible School and father worked on various committees.

In the spring of 1955, everything changed! My father was feeling a lot of family pressure and was on ulcer medication. He was looking for a change, a new start. So at the urging of tent evangelist, Howard Hammer, and the invitation of pastor, Linford Hackman, our parents made the decision to move to Eaglesham, Alberta. Shortly after Easter we set out by car, truck and trailer with all our worldly goods to work in the Northern Alberta Mission at Eaglesham for The Saskatchewan-Alberta Mennonite Conference. This became The Northwest Mennonite Conference in 1972. During this time, the families of Ike and Millie Glick and Paul and Helen White also moved from Pennsylvania to Northern Alberta.

On the way from Edmonton to Eaglesham, the RCMP stopped us at Athabasca due to a spring road ban. We left the truck and trailer there and stayed with pastor Willis Yoder at Smith, Alberta for one week. Back on the road, we were further delayed when we came upon a tanker truck stuck in a low soft spot on the gravel highway.

That first summer, we stayed with the Rollin Yoder family at Eaglesham and helped with the farm and garden work. We bought a hand cultivator with a big front wheel. Daniel pulled by rope in front and I pushed on the handles. In fall, father found work, parging the piers

remember Sunday School teacher, Isaac, who made the Bible stories come alive for me. Our class was held in the Amen Corner, front right hand side of the stage, no dividers, visible to all. During the service I had to sit next to father and his iron grip would

of the Watino bridge over the Smokey River. This bridge was disassembled and moved in 2010 after a new bridge was built in 2009. Father purchased two bunkhouses from the construction company and moved them to the Yoder farm, one for a house for us and the other for a car garage.

Later, in 1955, we purchased our own quarter section farm from Harold Moulton four miles south of Eaglesham. We moved the house and garage there and spent the first years working hard to



**Four generations of Lefevers 1975; Leon, Brian,
Marcella, David, sitting grandparents Elizabeth
and Martin**

make ends meet. Because father was an excellent innovative farmer, we had one of the first trench silos in the area. The farm thrived and we grew it to 640 acres.

Our parents also worked diligently at the Eaglesham Mennonite Church that began meeting in the Four Mile Creek one room school. Again mother taught Sunday School and father worked on various committees throughout the years. The dedication of the Blue Sky Mennonite Church was a highlight for all of us.

Dolly, Daniel and I were all good students. We attended the Eaglesham (Catholic) School. At school our main entertainment was three against three table-top hockey. I also played some basketball, ice hockey and participated in track and field. In 1959 for grade 11 my parents decided I should go to Lancaster Mennonite High School. That was scary for me but I looked forward to be with my aunts, uncles and cousins.

On November 11, 1959, a terrible tragedy struck our family and life was never quite the same again. Daniel, my brother and best friend, was killed by a drunk driver. Our truck had stalled due to a dead battery and our neighbour, Oscar, had come to tow the truck to get it started. Daniel was walking beside our truck to talk to father when the driver of a pickup truck swerved and slammed Daniel into the wide protruding box of our three ton grain truck. Daniel suffered serious internal injuries and, in spite of all efforts, died on the way to the Spirit River Hospital. The drunk driver, who shall remain nameless, was never charged as far as we know. His wife came to the funeral in Eaglesham and remarked upon how calm and peaceful our family was during this very difficult time.

Our grieving parents had Daniel's body embalmed and taken by train to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for a second funeral. He lies buried under the rich Pennsylvania soil in the Millersville Mennonite Cemetery. It was a very sad funeral. Hundreds attended to mourn Daniel's passing. Instead of staying at school in Lancaster, I returned home to complete my high school in Eaglesham. I needed to be home with my family plus I was having considerable difficulty in German class.

I come from a long line of agrarian folk. My parents and grandparents were farmers and I had always dreamed of being a farmer. But, a strange incident during my grade twelve final exams, changed my life forever. While writing my chemistry test, I was hit by a fierce migraine headache and could not continue. I was partially blinded in both eyes for 20 minutes, followed by a throbbing headache and light-sensitive eyes. I received 17% for that aborted attempt but, on the rewrite, I managed a much better 75%. After this event, Catholic Sister Edwards encouraged me to go into education at university as I was one of her top students. And, that is what I did.

I made mostly good grades at university but had some difficulty with English 230. During this time I lived with Ike and Millie Glick. We always went to church. I had a lot of friends and during the first years, I played hockey with the Alberta Mennonite University Students (AMUS) on outdoor rinks. For the first two summers I returned to help my parents on the farm but after my third and fourth years, I worked on construction and at Martin's Farm Equipment. I graduated in 1969.

I taught the first two years at Eaglesham to fulfill my bursary requirements. Then I got my first teaching position in Edmonton at Lauderdale Elementary School and taught at various other city schools for the next 30 years.

Life has been good to me. I met Jean while teaching at Lauderdale. We had some fun courting! When I was walking by Jean's classroom, she said, "Your lights are on," and, of course, they weren't. Later, Jean's friend, Grace, was chatting me up in my classroom while Jean was sewing the sleeves shut on my jacket in the staff room. Jean and I were married August 16, 1969. We have three children, one son and two daughters. I retired June 30, 1998, to our house on 37th Street in Edmonton. I enjoy golfing, word puzzles and do some maintenance work at our home church, Holyrood Mennonite.



David and Jean Lefever

My parents stayed on the farm until father had a massive stroke in 1984. They sold the farm in 1986 and retired to Edmonton. They are both deceased now, mother in 1997 and father in 2002. My sister, Dolly, was the adventurous one in the family and scaled many heights, including Mount Everest. She lives in Anchorage, Alaska, where she trains search and rescue dogs.

Sources: *The Pennsylvania LeFevres* (copyright 1952), The Pennsylvania LeFevre websites, Wikipedia, GAMEO, *The Encyclopedia Britannica* and in conversation with David H Lefever. ❖

(continued from page 1)

he continued, "There were few yard lights and a "Kick the Can" game could be happening anywhere. One had to be alert."

On April 25, 2015, members and guests of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta gathered at the Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton to hear the story of the Y.O.U., a residential farm work program which operated near Warburg, Alberta, between 1970 and 1990. Through farm work and a family atmosphere of care, young men on probation came to the Y.O.U. to learn life skills and eventually reintegrate into society.

The Y.O.U. came into being through the dream of Lendrum's first pas-

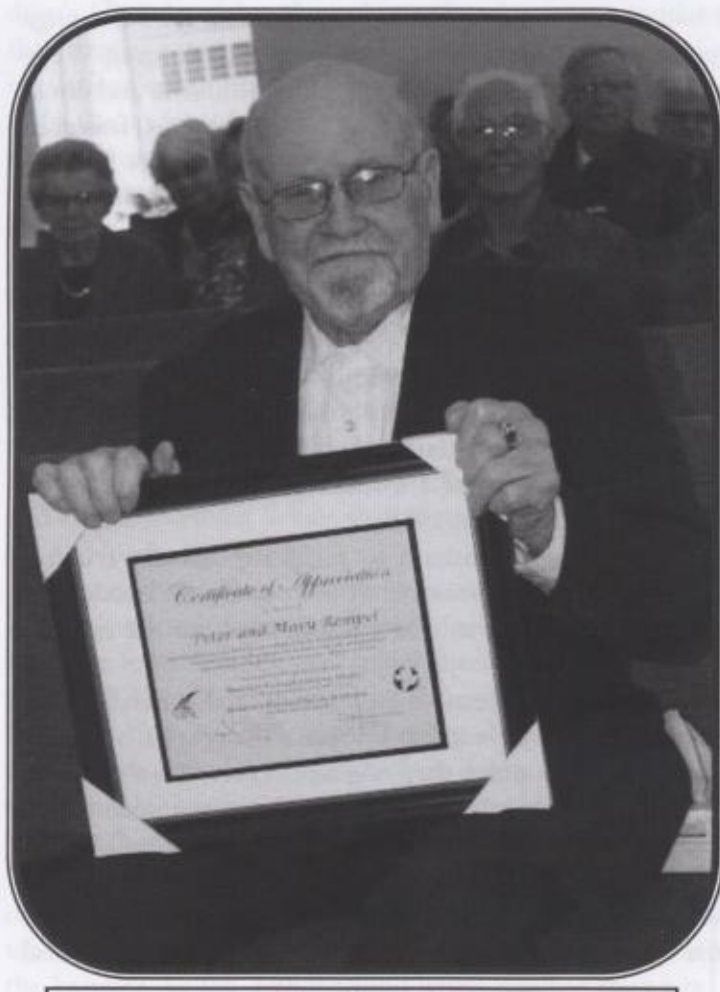
tor, Peter Rempel. He and his friend, Dr. George Loewen, used to discuss his ideas. "Peter and I would often spend time walking and talking about using work as therapy for troubled young people," Loewen said. Eventually, it became clear to Loewen that the issue holding Rempel back was financial. So, he offered to help. "How much are you willing to lose?" Rempel asked. "Everything I put in," replied Loewen, and the

dream began to shape itself into reality.

In 1967, Rempel and his wife, Mary, purchased 160 acres of land with a few buildings near Warburg, Alberta. In 1969, Rempel and Loewen formed a partnership to own and operate the farm and, by 1970, the first "client" was onsite. While the original idea was for the farm to be self-sustaining, it quickly became clear this would not be the case. The troubled young men lacked the life and work skills necessary to keep the farm viable. They were hard on equipment, ruined several vehicles and were in need of significant supervision and instruction at all times.

The difficulties and resulting criticism did not stop the Rempels or the Loewens. To pursue the dream, Rempel resigned his pastorate, got a degree in psychology and took on janitorial duties at the church to help support his family. When an accountant told Loewen he had to stop or go bankrupt, Loewen went to court to argue that the program should not be taxed as a "hobby farm" but instead should be given government aid to help young offenders become good citizens. "The lawyer representing the crown was the first to shake my hand. In retrospect, we could see it was a great venture; multiple times, the project seemed to be doomed to failure, except that God was in it," Loewen recalled.

In 1972, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Alberta began to support Y.O.U. by providing \$90.00 per month. Within a year, that support increased to \$2,400.00 per month and voluntary service workers began to arrive at the farm to help. Social Services chipped in, providing some funding for each young offender in the program. Even with this help,



Peter Rempel

however, in 1974, Rempel and Loewen informed MCC that the program would close without greater support. In 1975, MCC took on the program as its own, with Rempel remaining as director.

In 1976, MCC purchased the farm from Rempel and Loewen and government funding began to cover greater percentages of the costs.

Through 20 years of operation, the Y.O.U. proved to be remarkably successful. "66-68% of the clients did not incur further charges for a period of 2 years after leaving Y.O.U.," Baergen said in his report. A significant number of women who volunteered over the years were noted in reports as being particularly important to the program by serving as surrogate mothers to the young men. Mary Rempel and Irene Baergen (the wives of Peter and Jake) were given special mention for their cooking, caring and "mom" skills. "I soon fell in love with most of the guys and was never uncomfortable around them. I was always confident that they would protect me and take care of me in any situation," Irene said.

The *Young Offenders Act* (1984) proved to be problematic for Y.O.U. Whereas 16-20 year-olds had been involved in the program for at least 6-9 months each, after the Act was proclaimed, program involvement was limited to 16-17 year olds for short terms ranging from 2 weeks to 4 months. The shorter periods of time in the program were detrimental because the young men did not experience adequate opportunity to change their life styles. "The number of fellows that were able to make the changes necessary dropped dramatically," Baergen said. A further complication arose out of the *Young Offenders*



Above: Jake and Irene Baergen receive MHSA certificate of appreciation from David Jeffares

Below: Certificate of Appreciation



Act restricted access to records. Y.O.U. staff were unable to follow the progress of clients after they left the farm.

The final blow came in 1990, when the Solicitor General's Department ceased to fund Y.O.U. Herman Neufeld joined the Y.O.U. board in 1990 to assist with the closure of the program and to consider the subsequent use or sale of the property. After several programs were considered and deemed unsuitable, MCC Alberta approved the sale of the site. Equipment was sold and, in 1994, the property was sold to the Lucy Baker School for Girls. In his report to the MHSA gathering, Neufeld concluded, "At this time, I

would like to suggest that we view the demise of the Y.O.U. program, NOT as a failure, but as an opportunity to celebrate." The program experienced 20 years of success. That is a long time especially in terms of the life of any program today."

The highlight of the presentations to the MHSA crowd came when Peter Rempel, himself, took the stage to answer a few questions and tell stories. Asked if he had ever been afraid for his life, Rempel answered, "Yes. I have experienced many threats." He told the story of four young men who had threatened him, "I wanted to make friends, not trouble," he said. "They became my friends. My concern was to be a faithful servant of my Lord, Jesus Christ. It was important to have the opportunity to tell many, many people about Jesus Christ, and they loved me for it," he said.

In recognition of their years of dedicated service to Y.O.U., George and Helga Loewen, Jake and Irene Baergen and Peter Rempel were presented with certificates of appreciation from the MHSA.

Records of MCC Alberta's involvement in the Y.O.U. program are now available at the archives housed in the MHSA office in Calgary.

This article first appeared in the May 25, 2015 issue of the Canadian Mennonite. Correspondent Donita Wiebe-Neufeld is a pastor at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, AB. ❖

Letters to the Editor

Hello David,

Saskatoon, SK. Apr. 3 2015

Your latest Newsletter arrived at the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Archives this week. As I leafed through it a number of articles caught my attention, so I decided to read the whole paper. This is something I rarely do with any of the newsletters and books that we receive at the archives because I think I'm too busy organizing materials and volunteering at various places.

I want to commend you on putting together such an interesting, readable newsletter. All of the articles dealt with issues relevant to Mennonites, such as COs, MMI, and the history and art of Mennonite cooking and baking which evoked many memories of life in a Mennonite community. Another feature I liked was all the photos of your contributors/writers.

I really enjoyed your story "Ravenhead Remembered" and will now find that October issue with the first installment. I didn't realize that Mike Shklanka taught at your country school. He was my grade six teacher (Mayfair Rural School) which must have been the year prior to when he taught at Ravenhead. We enjoyed music classes with Mr. Shklanka because he often played his accordion to accompany our singing. Your walk to school sounds similar to our experience – no rides except in unusual circumstances like when I dislocated my ankle and the time it stormed so much that Agnes and I couldn't get up the snow bank at the top of the coulee and had to return to the school and wait for Dad to come get us. Even though we had no telephone we didn't worry; we knew someone would come to our rescue eventually.

In the future I will have to take time to read more of the newsletters that come to our archives, at least the articles that have relevance for me.

Thank you for sharing your excellent newsletter with our archives and keep up the good work you do as editor.

Best Regards,
Hilda Voth

Dave Toews, Mitchell, MB.
Apr. 6 2015
Greetings in Christ.

Anne Harder's study of Canadian Mennonites in World War Two surveyed in a valuable way the complex relationships of German Mennonites with the wider society and within their own faith communities. As a person linked by culture mostly to the British Isles and yet an EMC minister, what would have been my response during the Second World War to the Mennonite church with its German culture and focus on isolation? I don't know. I do know that if it had not changed, I would not have been welcome to join it, nor would I have wanted to. The article might have highlighted a bit more the disagreement among Mennonite leaders on what forms of participation were appropriate: war bonds, non-combatant service. Given the percentages of members who objected to military service and who served in combat in World War Two, what would happen today if Canada faced invasion or Mennonites faced conscription? War is a great evil. The response to it is complex. My thanks to Anne Harder.

Blessings,
Terry M. Smith (Rev.)

Sherwood Park, AB.

Apr. 6, 2015

Good Morning Dave,

Just finished reading the March Newsletter. What an excellent newsletter... packed with awesome info!

I was going to comment on my favorite two pieces and then that morphed into three...and four...and, well, I guess you can say that I enjoyed the entire paper - extremely well done. I will send little individual notes of appreciation.

Regarding Colin's Picks - I found this to be very helpful and I hope that he will continue to do this for us. I especially appreciated the links to the articles, so that I can delve deeper into these and other resources.

Thanks for all your hard work in getting the Newsletter together for us three times a year. It's quite a commitment, one that is valued by your readership.

All the Best,
Helene Unger

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Do you want to make a contribution to Alberta Mennonite history, but do not have the patience to write history or volunteer in the archives? Do you want to support Mennonite historical research projects or help in the long-term preservation of records that document the Mennonite experience in Alberta? Then please consider making a donation to the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, 2946 - 32 Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7. Not only will you receive a charitable receipt, but also the satisfaction of contributing to the long-term survival of Alberta's Mennonite heritage.

Look to the Rock

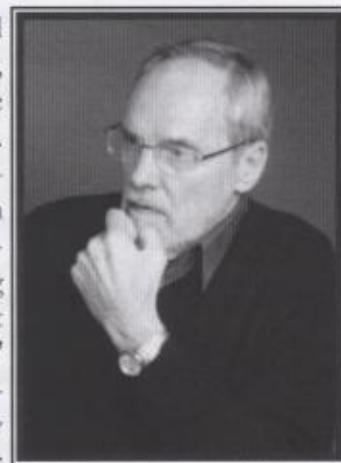
Foreword by Dave Toews

"Look to the Rock," a homily by Rudy Wiebe, was presented at the 200th Anniversary Commemoration of the founding of the Molotschna Colony in Tokmak, Ukraine, on Oct. 10, 2004.

The day-long festivities were planned and sponsored by Ukrainian Mennonite churches, the Dnieper Mennonite Heritage Cruise and the International Mennonite Memorial Committee. Activities included the Bicentennial Thanksgiving Service at the 700-seat Tokmak theatre with lunch in a Tokmak restaurant and in the Petershagen Mennonite church. Later the unveiling and dedication of Johann Cornies memorial at the village of Kirovo/Juschallee site of Cornies' famous estate at the southern end of the one-time Molotschna settlement. Composer Larry Nickel was commissioned to write special music for the occasion.

Participants included 180 cruise passengers, Ukrainian Mennonite congregation members from Zaporozhye, Petershagen and Kherson, representing the newly formed Conference of Mennonites in Ukraine along with a tour group of *Aussiedler* (immigrants from the former Soviet Republics) from Germany.

Sources: The Mennonite Heritage Cruise website and the *Mennonite Historical March*, 2004.



Rudy Wiebe

My fellow pilgrims:

We gather here today, from around the circle of the earth, to remember, and to give thanks. I greet you with the words of the poet and prophet Isaiah, chapter 51 [1, 16]:

Listen to me, all you who follow what is right and seek the Lord;
Look to the rock from which you were cut,
To the quarry from which you were dug...
For I am the Lord your God ...
And I have put my words in your mouth,
And hid you in the shadow of my hand ...
And I say to Zion, "You are my people."

The quarry from which we are dug is the bedrock of Jesus Christ himself, the rock from which we are cut is the faith of our ancestors. Here, today, we want to look to that rock dug from that quarry, and remember.

Four hundred and eighty years ago, our spiritual forbears in Switzerland studied the Scriptures and, with great joy, they discovered a new understanding of how to be a disciple of Jesus. It meant committing themselves to following him both in his teachings and in his life. When in January, 1525 Georg Blaurock knelt before Conrad Grebel and said, "I beg you, for God's sake, give me the true Christian baptism!" he was not an helpless baby hav-

ing a rite administered upon him; he was a responsible adult confessing his faith in Jesus Christ; he was a deliberate adult declaring his decision to follow Jesus.

From this rock of decision, of joy, of free-will commitment, are we cut.

And we remember the consequences. Even as the fire of this new Gospel spread north with adult baptisms through Europe, just as quickly did persecution by state church and state government follow.

- January, 1527, Feliz Manz in Switzerland, drowned;
- May, 1527, Michael Sattler in Germany, burned at the stake; two days later his wife Margaretha Sattler, drowned;
- November, 1527, Weynken Claes, a widow in Holland, burned at the stake.

Four of many; and always there were more, and more. The 16th century became a hell of blood and burning, you can read the stories in the thick martyr books published in every language of Europe. As the writer of the Book of Hebrews declares,

What more shall I say? Words would fail me to tell of [all those who suffered]They were too good for a world like this one.

What can you do when you are hounded to death for your faith by those who have power over you? You can:

- renounce your faith -- and some did;
- you can try to fight the powers with their own violence of fire and water and rope and sword -- and some did;
- you can try to be a secret believer -- but how can a faithful Christian life be kept a secret, hidden in a corrupt world?
- you can suffer and die -- and thousands did;
- or you can flee. Not the flight of cowards, nor the escape of those who seek a promised land which will be forever theirs, no, rather the journeying



Lendrum MBC participants in the 2004 Molotschna Anniversary Cruise, on board the *Dneiper Princess* in the harbour at Odessa, Ukraine. L to R: Lois Huk, Frieda Friesen, Kae Neufeld, Diana Wiens, Tena Wiebe, Rudy Wiebe, Eugene Huk, Harold Wiens, Abe Friesen, & Helena Voth

of those who renounce human violence and who flee to find a refuge, somewhere, anywhere on earth where they can live their faith in peace.

Many, perhaps most of us, in this room today are the descendants of those who in the past five centuries have fled. Our Swiss and German ancestors found refuge in North America with the English Quaker settlements of Pennsylvania; our Dutch ancestors fled east to where the good Roman Catholic citizens of Danzig and the King of Poland offered them refuge in return for their hard work in reclaiming the Vistula Delta. For over two hundred years they lived there, following their motto of "Work and Hope." God blessed them as a community of believers, as artisans in the city, as farmers building beautiful villages and farmsteads protected by the dikes and windmills they built on the Vistula marshlands. But the continual wars of Europe over-ran them, and when Frederick the Great of Prussia came to control their destiny, it was time for many Mennonites to flee again. Beginning in 1789, our forbears left the lowlands of Prussia for refuge here, on the strange, high steppes of Ukraine, its long hills and winding rivers. And here too, with hard labour, they found civil peace and God blessed them with freedom and many children and a burgeoning prosperity. And so much independence that the community often quarreled within itself --

Flemish and Frisians, landless and land owners, conservatives and progressives, Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren

but the Czar's land was vast enough to contain them all, and especially here in Ukraine, their

communities blossomed into what we now call "The Mennonite Commonwealth." Churches, schools, hospitals, factories, estates, art and music, and railroads grew and flourished, and above all so did personal freedoms; the "quality of life" of individuals improved like an endless blessing from God.

Yes, the Mennonite world here flourished in faith and prosperity -- until World War One and the Bolshevik Revolution destroyed all Russian worlds together; within a few years no person alive in what had once been the Czar's immense Empire was spared possible destruction.

Those of us who have come from North and South America are here today because our parents and grandparents fled from this land of Ukraine in the 1870s, in the 1920s, and in the 1940s. On those far continents we have found -- so far -- peace, much prosperity, and above all, freedom to practise our faith. Today the world-wide Mennonite family has grown to over a million baptized believers. But many of our personal families who remained in the Soviet Union until its collapse experienced violence, cruelty, fear and destruction that may well exceed the suffering of our ancestors in the 16th century. You, sisters and brothers from Germany, and you, the enduring believers of Ukraine, understand this more clearly than anything I could attempt to describe.

But today we can meet. We can come together and tell each other our stories, however sad or happy or amazingly miraculous they may be. That is the most beautiful thing we human beings can do together: not yell at each other, or quarrel about land, or kill one another because of an idea, or -- worse -- kill

because of God. No! We are human beings, created from the mud of the earth and the breath of our Creator, and we talk! We tell each other stories, as, by his gentle example, Jesus himself taught us. Our past gives us the stories by which we can live our present story.

Let me, for a few moments, tell you a story of mine.

There once was a Mennonite colony -- it exists no longer -- of twenty-five villages north of the city Orenburg near the Ural Mountains in eastern Russia. Both my father's and my mother's parents were pioneer settlers on the steppes there; in 1929 my parents with their five children were the only members of either large family to get out of Russia in the dramatic escape now known to Mennonites as "Flight Over Moscow." Almost seventy years later my wife Tena and I were in Orenburg for the first time. My cousin Johann showed us "The Grey House" at #24 Kirov Street where, deep in the basement, where their cries could not be heard, the KGB questioned those they arrested and often questioned them to death. High over the houses, Johann pointed out the walls and roofs of enormous Orenburg Prison on the banks above the Ural River and then we crossed the bridge into the valley where the river turns against the rock cliffs below the city. For decades this valley was a park, a playground for families, walks for lovers to wander hand in hand, until one spring the river washed away the bank and exposed bones -- thousands upon thousands of human bones. The river revealed that the lovely park below Orenburg was, in reality, a massive grave, covered trenches filled with the bodies of men murdered during the Stalin terror of 1937-38.

The valley is a park no longer; it is a memorial. We stand in silence, look down the rows upon rows of memorial birch trees now planted there, each one bearing a plaque with a name and a date of birth -- though it is of course impossible to plant enough trees to name all those who were destroyed. We remember in particular two of my father's brothers, the elder Peter Jacob Wiebe and the youngest Heinrich Jacob Wiebe, whose bones are here, somewhere, slowly moldering back to their elements, and as we kneel there to weep, to pray, to touch the long-suffering earth which nourishes this green May grass and these shining birches, we remember the son of that Uncle Peter Wiebe, also a Peter -- the name means "rock" -- my cousin Peter Petrovitch Wiebe who was twice torn from his home during the night, also tortured in The Grey House, also starved in Orenburg Prison, but somehow, by the strange mercy of God, survived all that to work for years in a Kazakhstan copper mine labour camp and who in his old age was free in Germany, who lived surrounded by children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren to whom he could tell, again and again, the inexplicable mysteries of his life: how God had been good to him and had kept them all, through all pain and suffering and death, kept them faithfully in His loving care.

My cousin Peter's rock of faith overcame the Gulag. And now he rests in the bosom of Abraham. And when I remember us telling each other stories in the language our mothers taught us, it is as if I were seeing the long, long pilgrimage of our Mennonite people reaching back through the centuries, our ancestors struggling in hope and with great courage, leaving their homes again and again in order to remain true followers, faithful disciples of Jesus. For in the stories that Peter told me, I could hear even more clearly the

voice of God speaking through Isaiah:

Listen to me,
All you who follow what is right and search for God;
Look to the rock from which you were cut,
To the quarry from which you were dug....

[Listen to me,]
For I am the Lord your God ...
And I have put my words in your mouth,
And [I have] hid you in the shadow of my hand ...
And I say to you, "You are my people."

Thanks be to God. [*Dank Sei Dir, Herr*]

Rudy Wiebe is the author of many widely published novels, short stories and articles; his latest novel *Come Back* won the Robert Kroetsch City of Edmonton Book Prize for 2015. He is professor emeritus of English at the University of Alberta, and he and his wife, Tena, have been members of the Lendrum MB Church, Edmonton, for 50 years. ❖

Review of Rod Janzen and Max Stanton's, *The Hutterites in North America*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2012.

by Henry M. Dick



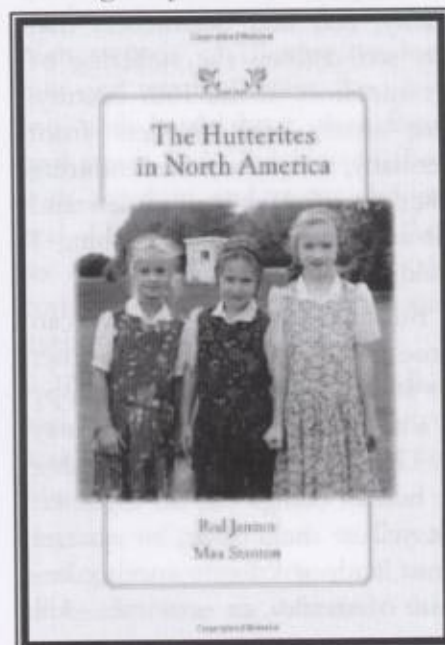
Henry M. Dick

This book, divided into 13 topical chapters with graphs and tables, extensive end-notes, bibliography and index, represents a comprehensive study of all things Hutterite in North America. The book traces their history from the 16th century reformation, when persecution lead 200 German speaking Anabaptists to flee to eastern Europe and establish the first commune under the leadership of Jacob Hutter. Today, the world population of Hutterites numbers more than 40,000; about 36,000 residing in North America. A 2011 survey shows 15,600 members living in 165 colonies in Alberta. Since the late 19th century, birthrates have declined from an average of 10.4 births per mother to about 3.5 today. Approximately 15 % attrition is attributed to members leaving the colony. Using these numbers it is estimated that the colony membership doubles in 20-25 years. The practice of the colonies is to limit their membership to 150-160 per colony. This prompts a constant search for land for the purpose of establishing future daughter colonies.

Hutterites are direct descendants of about 90 individuals and form a unique ethnic group. Fourteen family surnames predominate, two of them of Mennonite origin (Decker and Entz), added in the Ukraine when Hutterites resided in proximity to the Mennonites and were joined by two Mennonite families. In Canada there are 3 distinct branches of Hutterites, each with their distinctive dominant family names and following their unique un-

derstanding of how to live out the scriptural mandate in Acts 2:44-45. They are recognizable by their distinctive dress, style of colony governance and attitudes towards education and technology.

The Hutterites demonstrate a strong work ethic and view hard work as one aspect of 'discipleship.' A core component of their faith is the notion of "Gelassenheit," understood as a daily struggle against egoism, selfishness and jealousy. Worship services incorporate prayer, singing and reading from the "Lehren," exegetical writings handed down from the 16th and 17th centuries and focusing on 'rules for living' as outlined in the gospels. Baptism by sprinkling and church membership precedes marriage at age 20 - 25, after which members are subject to the strict disciplines outlined in the *Lehren*. In order to manage the risk of inbreeding marriage partners are sought in other colonies; including colonies of other Hutterite branches and in colonies outside of Canada. The female marriage partner traditionally



leaves her home colony and becomes a member of her husband's colony.

Hutterite education in Canada is generally under the strict supervision of the Colony and focuses on acquiring basic reading, writing and math skills. The colonies provide their own schools and hire outside credentialed teachers in order to comply with minimal provincially regulated standards. The untoward risks of subjecting their children to the influence of outside teachers has lead the colony to becoming less restrictive in allowing their own members to pursue teacher training and provincial credentialing. The curriculum includes daily lessons, in German (spoken with a Austrian dialect), on Hutterite faith and culture, Bible reading and memorization. Most kids leave school as early as allowed by provincial regulation and learn necessary life skills by working with their elders. Colony women, especially, are avid readers and most colonies have a substantial library (German and English holdings) and subscribe to local newspaper and news magazines. There is decreasing resistance to post secondary education at the university level and more so at the trade schools level, with the realization that it is in the colony's best future interests.

Governance in the colony follows a top-down model. The elected elder with his respected ministers form the management group and appoint the 'bosses' that oversee each of the various areas of colony operation. Given the small membership (150 maximum), every member participates in the affairs of the colony and is relatively close to its 'centre of power.' Women do not vote but are encouraged to express their

views and effectively influence decisions by ensuring that the male decision makers are aware of their views.

Hutterites readily embrace new technologies which advance their agrarian interests and are adept at identifying within their group individuals who, despite their lack of formal education, are adept at learning and applying new technologies. Allowing access to the cyber world is controlled to the degree that it can be. Nevertheless, increasingly, the young people are able to obtain multimedia devices and keep them hidden (?) from their elders. The colony is especially wary of electronic social media and seeks to protect the young people from their negative influence. Alcohol is used in moderation by members; tobacco is not.

This book adds to the already vast published literature on Hutterites. It is written in a 'reader friendly' style, but could be condensed somewhat by avoiding repetition and pedantry. Nevertheless, for those wishing to inform themselves of all things Hutterite, this is a recommended read. ♦

ROOTS AND BRANCHES

by Ruth Friesen

I was first introduced to the Mennonite Church through my husband, Vincent Friesen. While we were dating, we attended the youth/young adult group and eventually were married in 1972 at First Mennonite Church (FMC) in a service which involved Gary Harder, then pastor at FMC, as well as Harry Crawford, the minister of Dayspring Presbyterian Church. It took some time, but in 1976, I transferred my membership to FMC and our family has been a part of that congregation ever since.

I was raised in the Rupert Street Presbyterian Church in Edmonton, a church my parents, Alan and Edna Davis, chose because it was near where they lived and they appreciated the strong sermons of the young minister. They began attending when I was about four years old and never wavered from that connection over the remainder of their years.

I can remember my baptism very clearly. Because there were so many baptisms that morning, there were two services. I was five years old, my sister Elizabeth and brother William were about a year old and we were all baptized in the first service. I clearly remember feeling that something very special was happening that morning. That feeling was enhanced when I peaked through the sanctuary doors during the second service and I saw my father being baptized. I didn't question this, but accepted it as a very special part of the important day.

Only years later did I understand why my father was baptized as an adult. He was raised Baptist! My grandmother, Christina May Thursfield was the third child of Robert Carey Thursfield and Christiana May Walley Thursfield. The Thursfields and Walleys were part of the Tarpoley and



Ruth Friesen



Davis Family Photo — Rear: Alan & Edna Davis. Middle: Grandmother Christina Davis, Great Grandma Faulkner, Grandmother Mable McPhee. Front: Elizabeth, Ruth and William Davis.

Brassy Green Baptist Chapels in or near Audlem, England. In a document found among my parents' files, I found a memorial to a succession of Thursfields who had served in the Tarporley Church since the 1800s. James Thursfield was honoured for being the Minister of the Church; his son Robert Thursfield (my great grandfather) was a deacon in the church for 33 years and was also credited with establishing the first Sunday School. The Walley family is outlined in a history book of Brassy Green and Tarporley which dates back to the 1600s. So, it seems that my father's commitment to his church through 20 years as Sunday School Superintendent and his appointment as an elder for life served as a continuation of a long line of committed Christians.

In 1914, my grandmother, Christina Thursfield, along with her younger sister, Marjorie, travelled by ship and train from England to Medicine Hat, Alberta where they were to join their brother, Robert Sidney Walley Thursfield, who had preceded them and was homesteading a small farm at Comrey, near Manyberries. One older sister, Constance, remained in England while their oldest sister, Ethel, was then living with her husband, Herbert Sutton-Smith, in China where they were medical missionaries.

Christina and Marjorie had an arduous journey which included the long wagon ride from Medicine Hat to Comrey. Upon arrival at their brother's homestead, they met his neighbor, George William Davis, who claimed he decided on first sight that Christina was "the one" for him. After a year of courtship, they were married. In this far-flung land, the service of a minister was a matter of asking whoever the travelling clergy was at the time. They were married in Sidney's home; the groom was listed as Church of England, the bride as Baptist and the minister was a Norwegian Lutheran. During the family's sojourn in Comrey, my father, Alan, was born in 1917 and his brother, Robert, came along in 1920. The early years were somewhat prosperous, but soon the drought came and life on this small home-

stead became too difficult. My grandparents sold off what they could and moved to Wabamun, Alberta, where some extended family already lived and where there was work to be had in the coal mine. An advantage to this move was that both boys were finally able to attend a school. Until then, my grandmother had provided "home schooling." Both boys managed to attain a Grade 10 education, though the final grade was only available through correspondence.

My parents, Alan Davis, and Edna McPhee, met in Edmonton in 1946, and were married in the Highlands United Church on October 11, 1947. Their church attendance was, during their first years of marriage, sporadic at best but, after the birth of their three children, they went seeking a church and found it at Rupert Street Presbyterian, which later became Dayspring Presbyterian.

In 1967, my father received a letter from his cousin, Eric Sutton-Smith, son of Ethel and Herbert, who had spent time in China. Eric



Pastor Eric Sutton-Smith in the Prayer Chapel of Cinnamon Gardens Baptist Church, Colombo, Sri Lanka

had followed in his parents' footsteps and was also a missionary in China, serving as a pastor in a Baptist Church in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Eric wrote to ask my parents to assist in welcoming a young couple from his congregation who were moving to Edmonton to study at the U of A. My parents happily agreed to carry out Eric's request. Ultimately, the Davis kindness led to a friendship that has lasted for many years. Ranjani and Kinglsey de Alwis lived with us for an extended period of time and continued to visit and share family time with us many more times over the years.

In September, 2013, Vince and I, along with my sister, Betty, travelled to Sri Lanka to spend time with these dear friends and to visit the church where my father's bachelor cousin, Eric, served as pastor for 17 years. Our visit to Cinnamon Gardens Baptist Church was very special because we met people who still remembered their beloved pastor for whom they had built a small prayer chapel as a memorial. Betty and I were the only members of Eric's family the Cinnamon Gardens congregation had ever met.

Although this is only a snippet of my family history, I think it tells the story of God at work in our family and its predecessors, rooted in faith and branching out into the world. A long history of faithfulness, flavoured with adventure and twists of circumstance, led to unexpected relationships which blossomed into family bonds. Church of England, Baptist, United, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Mennonite — all a part of my life — added a richness and a strong sense of the threads of faithful followers of God trying to be the people God called us to be. Thanks be to God!

Ruth Friesen treasures her involvement in all levels of church life including her own congregation (FMC), Mennonite Church Alberta, Mennonite Church Canada and the Canadian Mennonite University. Being a part of the broader Mennonite Church has always been a rich experience for Ruth who lives with her husband, Vince, in Edmonton, Alberta, where they enjoy life with their three married children and five grandchildren. ❖

Menno Simons 2014-15 Genealogy Class Report

by Lil Bartel

The winners of the genealogy project at Menno Simons School in Calgary this year were **Hanna Braun, Elias Grasmeyer** and **Ben Montgomery**. Each received a small cheque from the MHSA for a job well done.

The family trees were very well done, showing numerous generations, where they lived, marriages, birth dates and some of the students had included pictures and stories.

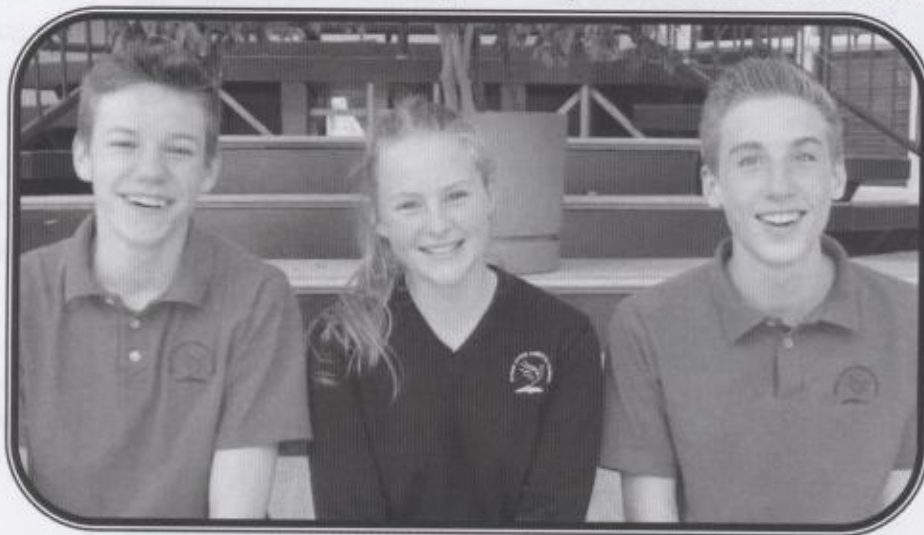
There was a written component to the assignment. This project is done in conjunction with the Christian studies class and, in it, we try to have the students show where there are moments of God's leading in their ancestors' lives.

I hope, through this class, to spark some interest in the family history in each of these students and in their parents as well. From the submitted projects, it is evident that there has been parental involvement and this is quite acceptable because they can impart the gems of their family in this way.

This is the third year I have had the privilege of working with the students and I look forward to doing so each year. We learn from them as



Lil Bartel



Elias Grasmeyer (left), Hanna Braun and Ben Montgomery — the winners of genealogy project awards

well. This year, Mr. Thiessen, the Menno Simons' principal, asked the students to name the countries from which their families came. The homelands nearly covered the world so the students learned how diverse the backgrounds of the participating families actually are! ❖

Mennonite Heritage Picnic

It is good to look back at one's national, cultural and heritage from time to time. With the *Mennonite Heritage Picnic* (see the advertisement below), we wish to commemorate and explore the Mennonite tradition.

While we recognize the various branches of the Anabaptist tree we seek to celebrate and ponder the commonality that exists among us.

Whether you are a first generation Mennonite, trace your roots to the Reformation 500 years ago, or simply interested in the Mennonite culture, you are welcome! ❖



Menno Simons genealogy class projects on display at the MHSA Conference

8th Annual
MENNONITE
Heritage Picnic
August 1, 2015
11 am - 5 pm
23110 TWP RD 520
Sherwood Park, AB

Hindsight, Foresight and Insight

"Hindsight is the ability to see what has come before. And that can only happen if a firm foundation of one's past is communicated with clarity and conviction over and over again.

Foresight is the ability to see what is coming, to be 'ahead of the curve.' Foresight pushes us and makes sure we don't get too complacent, too insulated, too comfortable!

Insight is discernment. It is the power of apprehending the inner nature of things."

Source: "A Vision of Mennonite Education for Our Times," by Susan Schultz Huxman, *Canadian Mennonite*, August 27, 2013.

