



Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XV Number 2

June 2012



Katie Harder

Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church

April 12, 2012

by Katie Harder

The onset of the day of the annual MHSA meeting began as a cool blustery wintry morning, not the hoped for spring weather. But this is Alberta; the weather is always unpredictable, and people plan to travel in spite of the weather.

Upon arriving at the church in NE Calgary we were warmly greeted and asked to make our way downstairs. Here, in the main dining hall, Ellie Janz and Katie Harder set up the registration table. We registered 45 persons for the morning sessions,

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MHSA Annual General Meeting Report

MHSA Newsletter Article Results in Meeting of Fuhr Cousins

By Byran Fuhr

In an article I wrote for the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta (MHSA) Newsletter (March, 2010), I described my German Lutheran heritage on my paternal grandmother's, the Fieseler side. I then went on to describe how we became Mennonites by choice. Since then I have been researching my Fuhr roots and have made significant progress. I will describe some of this research and how it resulted in meeting one of my second cousins.

My four-times great-grandfather, Johann Peter Fuhr (1) (refer to Genealogy Chart below), was born in 1747 near present-day Frankfurt. He married Maria Louise Elisabetha Kesselring, and they had five children while in Germany. By the late 1780s they decided to join a wave of German colonists moving east to Galicia, a newly acquired province in the northeastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Austrian government encouraged this migration, and most of the colonists lived in small farming communities in a belt running from present-day L'viv, Ukraine southward to the Carpathian Mountains. My ancestors settled in various communities around

(Continued on page 3)



Byran Fuhr

You are invited to attend the MHSA Fall Conference entitled: **The Joys and Challenges of Writing Mennonite History and Biography**

This conference will focus on the work of three Mennonite writers who will share their experiences in writing Mennonite history and biography.

Our presenters will be:

Peter Rahn (author of *Among the Ashes: In the Stalinkova Kolkhoz [Kontinuisfeld] 1930-1935*);

Walter Braul (author of the forthcoming *Russian Mennonites, a Broken Path to Civility*); and

Wes Penner (author of *Growing Up, a Report on My Life, Faith and Spirituality*).

The conference will take place at 1 pm on Saturday, October 27 at First Mennonite Church (3650-91 Street) in Edmonton, AB.

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Editorial Reflections:

by Lorne Buhr



Lorne Buhr

One need not look very far to encounter tales and sagas of Mennonites dividing one group from another. The topic comes along in various ways in issues of this newsletter. John B Toews writes about one of the less rancorous tussles in his article "Namaka: a Letter and a Story"

It seems to be the nature of religious belief that variations in theology are hard to accept or even to patch up. Sometimes this has caused hurt and division within congregations, conferences, and even in families. Not all divisions need be nasty. Mennonites have found many ways to work together. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) are two organizations which come to mind when thinking of cooperative collabora-

tion. Both organizations try to help people in need.

At those times when we feel down-hearted about the divisions which have come and gone, or, have come and stayed, we do well to review the words penned by our erstwhile leader, Menno Simons. Menno tells us what the signs of true evangelical faith are.

"True evangelical faith cannot lie sleeping,

It clothes the naked;

It feeds the hungry;

It comforts the sorrowful;

It shelters the destitute;

It serves those that harm it;

It binds up that which is wounded;

It has become all things to all."

In Menno's original list there were seventeen signs of true evangelical faith. The list which is usually quoted now has seven. By doing



Menno Simons

deeds such as Menno suggests, we are also to be ready to give a reason for the faith which is in us, which comes from God.

For over eight decades "True evangelical faith" has been practiced by Mennonite Central Committee, first founded to help destitute Mennonites in South Russia. From those beginnings MCC has maintained that need trumps correctness. Mennonites come under a big umbrella where we have learned to help one another and to help others in need by offering a hand up.

In some of our homes we see the words of Menno as a Spruch (Low German for verse on the wall). It is a wonderful reminder. Larry Nickel, Mennonite composer and musician living in British Columbia, has set the words of "True Evangelical Faith" to choral music. It is a very fine rendering which can inspire and guide us. And help us get beyond our differences.

Chairman's Corner

By Bill Janzen



Bill Janzen

It has been a quiet summer! The abundant rain and the beautiful gardens, parks and fields have enriched our summer activities. Now that the sun rises later and sets earlier, the leaves changing color and the tem-

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Editorial Reflections:

by Dave Toews



Dave Toews

As I contemplate on what to write in this short piece I am thinking about our friend and colleague, layout editor Dave Hildebrand. Dave is just recovering from surgery to repair the sheath around his Achilles tendon. I am happy to report Dave is well enough to produce this issue of the newsletter. Dave I wish you continued and complete recovery.

In this edition Katie Harder and Ellie Janz have very ably reported on the April 14th Annual General Meeting and Spring Event. I want to join in the chorus of thank-you's to Pastor Chau Dang and all the participants from the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Calgary for hosting the MHSA.

And for allowing us a glimpse into their everyday and worship lives both before and after they came to Canada.

Wesley Berg has written Guidelines for GAMEO. Here he has outlined the framework of how you can initiate the process to submit articles regarding individuals, geographical locations and institutions for the online encyclopedia.

Unexpected success is always enjoyable! I requested articles from several people and to my pleasant surprise I was barely home and there were two well written pieces on my screen. Thank you Suzanne and Jim and all the other contributors to this newsletter.

As always we welcome your comments and contributions. The deadline for the next issue is September 1, 2012. Have a great summer. ♦

lieve we experienced another enriching time of sharing stories and reviewing the work of MHSA. I am thankful for the services of the Board in the past year and now am looking forward to meeting with the new Board Members who will bring new ideas to the table. I appreciate the support that the Volunteers and Board Members received at the Annual General Meeting. It provided us with encouragement to move forward and set new goals for the coming year.

I want to express again my gratitude to Pastor Chau Dang, and the members of the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church, for the use of their facilities and the great lunch they served us. It was hard to get our AGM participants away from the tables and back to the afternoon session.

The people in attendance heard a life story to be remembered. One of the seniors from the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church wrote his story which was read. Pastor Chau told his personal journey and the history of the church. He answered many questions and people were appreciative of his openness to sharing his story. He has made an excellent beginning in writing down their life experiences before it is too late. May it encourage others to write their story so the next generation may learn about the life experiences their ancestors..

It is my hope that we will be able to provide additional times when the Archives and Library will

Chairman's Corner

By Bill Janzen



Bill Janzen

We have held another Annual General Meeting. I be-

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be open on Saturday as well as some information sessions on writing an autobiography, writing family history and genealogy. Certainly all are welcome to come see our facilities and what is in it. I hope it will cause some of you to get involved in one way or another.

Thanks to the membership for all your support. ♦

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Bolechow, just south of L'viv.

What a coincidence that my wife, Arlene, and I (7a) visited L'viv in 2004, and actually hiked in the Carpathians! Arlene was on a six-week teacher exchange at Kiev University, and during that time we took a short tour of western Ukraine. Little did we know that we were treading on the same earth as my ancestors did over 230 years ago!

I must acknowledge my second cousin, Leona Hegel from Regina, for putting me onto the fact that my Fuhr ancestors were from Bolechow. Leona's own research into her Fieseler roots (also mine), led her to discover the location of Bolechow. With this information and my own Google research, I discovered the *Galician German Descendants Website*, which allowed me to obtain a database of all Germans from Bolechow from about 1750 to the early 1900s. I found this information extremely useful in researching my roots.

Andreas (2), the eldest of Johann Peter's (1) seven children, was married in 1800 after the mass migration from Germany to Galicia. Andreas (2) only managed to produce two offspring before he died of a violent fever at age 31. The oldest, Johann Jakob (3) was born in Bolechow in 1801 and married Katharina Mohr; they had 13 children. One of them, Johann Christian (4) was my great-grandfather. He married Katharina Schultz in 1870 in Bolechow; their sixth child was Konrad (5a), my grandfather, born in 1881.

The *Ellis Island Website* indicates that my grandfather, Konrad (5a), arrived in New York in 1902 on the *Vaderland* which sailed from Antwerp, Belgium. His last residence was listed as Bolechow and



Konrad Fuhr

Fuhr Family Genealogy Chart

- (1) Johann Peter Fuhr & Maria Louise Elisabetha Kesselring
- | (2) Andreas Fuhr & Maria Margaretha Katharina Harth
- | | (3) Johann Jakob Fuhr & Katharina Mohr
- | | | (4) Johann Christian Fuhr & Katharina Schultz
- | | | | (5a) Conrad Fuhr & Johanne Karoline Conradine Fieseler
- | | | | (5b) Johann Jakob Fuhr & Juliana Bieber
- | | | | (6a) Conrad John Fuhr & Gladys Mary Thomas
- | | | | (6b) Theodore Fuhr & Dora Hryhorchuk
- | | | | (7a) Bryan John Fuhr
- | | | | (7b) Garry Wayne Fuhr

his destination was Milwaukee to see his cousin Daniel, who had previously emigrated from Bolechow. This information was passed on to me by Dale Hecksel from Rockford, Michigan, a third cousin of mine (he and I have the same great-great-grandfather, Johann Jakob [3]) to whom I was referred by the *Galician German Descendants Website*. Dale is a Fuhr Genealogy nut and has helped me a great deal in putting together my story.

My grandfather joined Daniel and his family later in 1902 in journeying from Milwaukee to the Northwest Territories (which in 1905 would become the province of Saskatchewan [SK]). Daniel claimed a homestead there, and Conrad (5a) (the K probably changed to C upon arrival in the United States or Canada) was hired by Ludwig Werle to work on a farm north of Langenburg, SK. As described in my previous article, Ludwig's stepdaughter, Conradine Fieseler and Conrad (5a) were attracted to each other, and it was not long before they were married. Conrad (5a) obtained entry in 1903 for his homestead, just two sections away from his cousin Daniel near MacNutt, SK. I recently discovered the actual homestead entry application signed by my grandfather. He and my grandmother built their house there in 1904, and gradually cleared and worked the land until it was finally theirs in 1909. My wife and I were shown the actual site of the homestead by a former neighbor of my grandparents, whom we met in 2008 at the 100th anniversary of Zorra, SK Lutheran Church.

The *Bolechow German Descendants Database* lists a brother to my grandfather, another Johann Jakob (5b), born in 1886. I had been trying unsuccessfully to track down

(Continued from page 3)

this great uncle of mine until I received a phone call from Garry Fuhr (7b) in Creston, British Columbia (BC) one evening in July 2011. When Garry (7b) asked if my grandfather was Conrad (5a), I realized the mystery was solved; Garry (7b) and I (7a) were second cousins!

For his part, Garry had also been trying to track down his great uncle (my grandfather Conrad [5a]). Garry's Aunt Mary recalled his two uncles, Henry Fuhr and Tony Reimer, visiting my grandfather in Vancouver. I know that my grandfather moved to Vancouver, BC about 1934. Garry had also obtained the death certificate for Conrad who died in Vancouver in 1946. My Aunt Hilda, my father's sister, signed it, it showed Conradine Fieseler as Conrad's wife. Further searching by Garry on the Saskatchewan Vital Statistics site and some Google research using Conrad Fuhr and Conradine Fieseler, allowed him to come up with the issue of the MHSA Newsletter which contained my original article mentioning my grandparents. His dates matched up with the dates in my article, and that is when he phoned me.



Second Cousins Gary and Byran Fuhr

According to Garry's records, his grandfather emigrated from Bo-lechow somewhat later than my grandfather, and settled in Eatonia, SK. Garry has the homestead entry application of his grandfather, Johann Jakob (5b), dated 1913 at Kindersley (near Eatonia, SK). He married Juliana Bieber in 1917 in Melville, SK. Garry's father, Theodore, was born in Eatonia, SK in 1926, but the family moved to Kelowna, BC soon after. Theodore married Dora Hryhorchuk and Garry was born in Armstrong, BC in 1949.

Garry was on vacation in Alberta in September 2011, and he gladly accepted my invitation to stay the night with us in Edmonton. We spent a whole day comparing notes on our family trees, and agreed to keep in touch. ❖

Continued from Page 1

at \$10.00 @ person. This included the cost of the coffee breaks and the noon luncheon provided by the ladies of the church. A lot of guests also updated their membership fees at the time of registration.

The *morning session* was called to order in the multipurpose room of the church at 10:00 a.m. by the chair, Bill Janzen. Bill warmly welcomed all the guests and stated that the visiting that happens at these meetings is one of



J.J. Fuhr and J. Bieber

the successes of the day. People enjoy the casual camaraderie, and often meet old friends or perhaps connect with someone new. He commented that the afternoon session would be very informative as we would hear first hand the story of Chau Dang, one of the Boat People that came to Canada following the Vietnam War, as we will see and hear a power point presentation regarding the life of Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church.

Bill encouraged all of us to delve into our own family histories and to learn from them. He remarked that this week would mark the 100th anniversary of the disastrous mishap of the Titanic, in which due to confusion and lack of preparation only 28 out of the 64 lifeboats were ever deployed. This tragic error resulted in the needless loss of human life.

Bill then went on to introduce the current Board members, as well to introduce Jim Bowman, a recent employee with MHSA, who now serves in the capacity as the archivist/consultant.

Chau Dang, the pastor at the church led us in the *morning devotion* and focused on the stories of Esther and Mordecai, as well as on the book of Ezra which tells the story of the return of the Jewish exiles from captivity to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Both of these stories attest to the value of recording history for future generations.

The business of the day included the *chairman's report*. Bill expressed appreciation to various individuals who had helped with the week to week operation of the Archives and Library Centre. He particularly drew attention to the invaluable assistance of Cary Sweet

who currently maintains the website. It was particularly challenging to get access to the various websites, after Judith Rempel's passing, as Judith had often been the only contributor; as a result some of the info has been lost. Cary has diligently persisted in his efforts and Bill feels we are now back on track.

Bill briefly shared on the significance of the Fall Conference which was hosted by the Berghthal Mennonite Church in the rural Didsbury area. A long-time local historian by the name of Jim Lore shared his perspectives on "Viewing the Mennonites in the surrounding area through the community mirror." The conference was well attended and the feedback on the day was very positive.

Bill reminded the assembled group that we will be reviewing and voting on the revised MHSA bylaws in principle. Colin Neufeldt, a solicitor from Edmonton, as well as the former chairperson graciously volunteered to revise the bylaws to meet with CRA approval and has offered to guide us through the process.

Treasurer's Report: Ellie Janz provided us with the treasurer's report, noting that we did not realize our 2011 proposed budget figure of \$28,600. The revenue for 2011 only came in at \$12,900.27 which left us with a deficit of \$7,437.97 and an opening balance of \$6,222 for the year 2012. One of the shortfalls noted was the lack of incoming financial donations. The proposed budget for 2012 is \$21,000. To date we have already received a generous donation that has paid our yearly rent to MCC in the amount of \$6000 as well as paid the insurance fee of close to \$1000. We are very grateful for

these donations.

Archivist/Consultant Report: Jim Bowman the newly contracted employee of MHSA gave us an acquisitions report noting that we now have 66 distinct archival fonds or collections at the centre. We have acquired the Menno Bible Institute collection, as well as the Henry Goerzen collection containing transcripts and interviews from World War II regarding conscientious objectors. John J. Bergen, Edmonton professor has donated his personal papers documenting his life. Cary Sweet has donated his collection on the Sommerfelder and Swift Current Colony Mennonites. A collection of Judith Rempels' correspondence has also been donated by her estate.

Jim also reported that MHSA has applied for a grant of \$5000 from the Archives Society of Alberta which to date has not been received but we have been assured of its acceptance. Next year we are hoping to apply for a grant from the Library and Archives Canada Society in the neighbourhood of \$10,000. Grant monies are only made available for specific projects. Jim expressed his gratitude to the various volunteers.

Newsletter Co-Editors: Dave Toews, Lorne Buhr, and Dave Hildebrand share the role of co-editors. Dave and Lorne shared a verbal report and are looking for volunteers to contribute to the Newsletter. If you have a story that you would be willing to share but lack the needed writing skills they are willing to do an interview and write the story for you. They are also looking for someone to initiate a column pertaining to Mennonite cooking/baking/sewing etc. which could perhaps develop into a regular column. They asked for a show of hands as to how many persons would be able to receive the newsletter on line. Having the Newsletter on line would alleviate some of the cost of postage and paper. Numerous hands were raised, so that is perhaps something that should be explored.

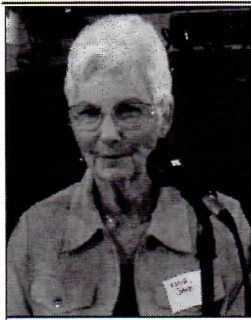
Elections for Vice Chair and Board Members at Large: David Neufeldt from Coaldale was elected as vice-chair by acclamation. The following were elected as board members at large: Dan Jack, Calgary; David Jeffares, Edmonton; Lill Bartel, Calgary; Peter Dyck, Calgary.

The Proposed Bylaws: A year ago we discovered that our Society is not officially registered with the Alberta Government. Colin Neufeldt graciously volunteered to work through the By-laws. The newly revised By-laws were presented to the membership for their approval in principle. The membership passed a motion to accept the By-laws in principle and to forward them to the Charities Directorate at Canada Revenue (CRA) to be reviewed, after which they will be sent to the Alberta Government for approval.

Presentations: Two formal presentations were made by the chairperson. Irene Klassen a resident of Calgary, and a long-time volunteer with MHSA was the recipient of the "Award of Excellence" from the Canadian Mennonite arm of the Mennonite Historical Society for her many years of outstanding service. Ralph Dahl was recognized for his six years of service as vice-chair of MHSA. Both have worked tirelessly for the society and their efforts have been much appreciated.

Following the announcements we were all invited to participate in a delicious ethnic Vietnamese noon meal which was served in the dining hall. The church ladies did an excellent job of preparing a meal of noodles, sauce, fried vegetables and chicken together with egg rolls. The delicious

noon meal together with the ambience around the table brought an informative and enjoyable morning to a close. ❖



Ellie Janz

THE STORY OF PASTOR CHAU HONG DANG OF THE VIETNAMESE MENNONITE CHURCH Calgary, Alberta

By Ellie Janz

Pastor Chau began his presentation with the verse from Jeremiah 29:11 as paraphrased by Eugene H. Peterson.

"This is God's word on the subject ... I'll show up and

take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I am doing. I have it all planned out – plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hoped for." Chau thanked Hugo Neufeld for helping him write his story, and had several power point pictures to go with each of the nine sections his presentation was divided into.

Early Troublesome Years, 1959-1968. Chau was born September 1, 1959, the oldest of twelve children, in the village of Trang Bang, close to the Cambodian border. His family was quite well off financially, a respected family in the community, his father had a business selling tractors and other agricultural machinery. However, Chau was born during the time of the Vietnam War (1955 – 1975), and their village became one of the focal points of the frightening battle. It was in this community that a photographer took a picture of children and their families fleeing the village, clothes melted from their bodies, seared by napalm gas. (we probably all remember that picture of the screaming, naked young girl fleeing the devastation, which became the anti-war rallying point for people all over the world.)

Chau knew that when he reached age 12, he would be drafted into the army, unless he had extremely good marks, in which case, he might have a chance to go on to further study and university, so he buried himself in books, studying as hard as he could. His parents and grandparents believed in the Vietnamese religion of Caodaism, a religion that combined elements from many of the world's main religions, including Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Christianity Judaism, Taoism, as well as Geniism, an indigenous religion of Vietnam. Growing up he had no faith and no God, was a total atheist.

Life Gets Better, Saigon, 1968-1976. Chau's family was very fortunate to be able to move to the capital City of Saigon, which at that point was somewhat sheltered from the brunt of the war. His father was able to relocate his business and amazingly, life flourished again, and they became one of the more prominent families in this new community.

Teachers College in Dalat and Planning Escape, 1976-1979. After graduating with above average marks, Chau was able to attend

Teacher's college in Dalat, 300 kilometers north east of Saigon, a beautiful city with a moderate climate



Afternoon crowd

that allowed the growing of abundant fruits and vegetables. However, with the ongoing war, food was becoming scarce all over the country, and food was tightly rationed. As students, their only source of protein was a small portion of rotten fish once a week. Most of the youth his age were drafted into the army and served in labour camps. Chau was fortunate to avoid the army because of his good marks and acceptance into college. However, they were all trained to use guns and took their turns as security officers to protect the student body. Providentially, there were no incidents at the school that Chau needed the use of a gun. Life was becoming very tough for his family back home, and eventually his father's business was confiscated. Work was impossible to get, food became scarce, and his family moved into the countryside, where his father worked in the rice fields, a huge demotion for him. Being the oldest son, when Chau was home for a few days, his father told him, "You have to leave Vietnam for the sake of your future and future of our family. There's nothing for your future here in Vietnam." At first shocked by the thought, he gradually began to think that maybe he could help his family. God was still not a part of his life at this time. He knew of people who had been shot or put into prison trying to escape. His sister, MyLoan, five years younger, was to go with him. The plan was that once they were safely out of Vietnam and settled in a new country (he had no idea where) he would try to bring the



Interviewer and author of the Vietnamese Story, Rev. Hugo Neufeld and Pastor Chau Dang



Pastor Chau Dang makes his opening remarks of the afternoon

rest of the family to safety. Looking back, Chau can now see how God, as with Jeremiah, had plans for him and his future. Eleven times he tried to escape, everything done in utmost secrecy. The pattern would repeat itself. His father would find a connection and would pay someone to get him out of the country. They would tell him, "Have your son and daughter go to this particular place at this particular time and wait. Someone will come and bring them to safety." Eleven times they said their "underground" farewells; eleven times they patiently waited at the



Copy of photo of 12 meter boat from
MHSA Newsletter Vol. XIV No. 1,
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secret spot; eleven times they discovered no one waiting for them. Each time Chau had to quietly leave everything and skip school. It was a desperate, dangerous operation, and he was often terrified of getting caught, arrested, put in pris-

on, or even killed.

The Journey at Sea to Thailand, March 15, 1979 – June 30, 1979. At last Chau's father located a broker who turned out to be credible. With plenty of bribes to police and to the broker, Chau and his sister finally managed one day to board a 15-metre three decker boat, packed with a total of 556 people that would take them to the international waters.

They were ushered to the lower deck that had tiny portholes on the sides, and a few small circular air ducts going straight up to the open third deck for air circulation, but no windows. With so many people, everyone on each deck had to sit tightly jammed together, and even with the vents on their deck, there was not enough oxygen to breathe. They were at sea for three days and three nights; not even feeling like eating the little food they had. They encountered two pirate boats, but for some reason, probably because of the number of people on board who they thought might have weapons, the pirate boats did not rob them. They knew other groups that had been robbed and killed by pirates. It was during these three heart-wrenching days that Chau cried out to a God somewhere out there. In desperation he prayed that if there was a 'heavenly being', he should help him get out of Vietnam. Then Chau would serve him. As Chau later learned the story of Jonah's three days in the belly of the great fish, he realized his spiritual wrestling somewhat paralleled Jonah's frantic struggle of trying to escape the Almighty God. Finally, a large Thai commercial ship noticed their plight and came to rescue them. They had to leave their belongings behind, but could bring their small backpacks. Now they had room to walk on deck and there was enough food to eat. At that moment, Chau somehow knew that everything was going to get better. Was it the Spirit of God, whom he as yet did not know, that was giving him hope? This ship made it to the Thai harbour safely after two more days at sea, however, they were not allowed to leave the ship for 45 days. The people in the fishing village offered them wonderful hospitality. Chau is still very thankful for all the food they brought; rice, steamed fish, and water, to feed all 556 of them every day, 3 times a day. During this time, he began to feel that maybe there was a God.

Finally on the Way to Canada. After the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees promised the Thai government that they would take care of them by sending them to a western country for settlement, they were taken off the ship and sent to Bangkok, where they stayed in a Transit Centre for 3 months. After meetings and individual interviews with Canadian immigration officers, Chau and his sister were accepted and boarded a plane for Calgary, Alberta on June 26, 1979. Arriving in Calgary at 3:00 a.m., they had no idea who they were supposed to meet, or what the future would hold. They had not had any news from their family back in Vietnam either. Suddenly, (Chau felt it was God's leading) they were met by Mr. Bill Thiessen, director of MCC, who was at the airport waiting to pick up another family that the Mennonite Church had sponsored. Apparently there had been a mix-up and Chau and his sister were expected to arrive the following day. Mr. Thiessen called up their sponsors, George and Hilda Klassen, who came in the middle of the night to pick them up. How thankful they were. They stayed with the Klassen's in their home for approximately one year. They provided excellent support and helped them to settle into a new life in Calgary. During this time, Chau took an ESL (English as a second language) class at night and worked as an apprentice electrician for the Klassen's dur-

ing the day. His sister attended grade ten. In Calgary, Chau was introduced to the church and the Christian faith. The Klassen's gave him his first Bible and they began to go to church on a regular basis. When the Vietnamese group started meeting at Foothills Mennonite Church, it was their leader, Ezekiel Wong, who helped Chau make a commitment to Christ and who baptized him. Chau now saw clearly that God had a plan for him from the beginning, and in his time he carried it out. Once he came to know God and His love, he made a deliberate choice to believe in Him, to follow Him and to obey Him.



Pastor Chau Dang

Reunited with the Rest of the Family. With the help of his sponsors, Chau and his sister brought the other 12 members of their family to Calgary, so that all 14 were now in Canada. In 1981, one sister and three brothers came from a refugee camp in Indonesia. Three years later in 1984 it was a joy to receive his parents and four sisters. In 1995 they could bring their handicapped sister, and finally, the last sister who had been delayed due to her health condition, was also reunited with them in Calgary.

The Call to Become a Pastor. Chau met his wife, Donna, a devoted Christian girl in Edmonton, and they were married in 1987. At this time he had his Master Electrician Certificate and ran his own business as an electrical contractor. Things went well in terms of family and work, being economically secure. However, in the fall of 1993, Chau and his wife responded to a call from God. Leaving his career behind, he pursued a new goal in life; to be God's servant in full-time Christian ministry. They moved to Regina to attend Canadian Bible College. After graduating in 1995, they accepted an invitation from the Mission Committee of Mennonite Church Alberta to be a church planter in Edmonton. As a result, the Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church emerged, and they enjoyed seven years of ministering in that congregation, affirming they were called by God. In the summer of 2002, they accepted a new invitation to be the pastor of the Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church. It was not an easy decision since the people in Edmonton loved them and the church was growing. After careful discernment they resigned from the Edmonton church and took on the challenge to move to the Stampede City. Here they continue to serve a growing congregation that has services in Vietnamese and in English, yearly baptisms, and is planting a new church in Saskatoon. They have gone through a major building project, and continue an ongoing search to acquire more space. While there are many challenges in their congregation, they know that God is richly blessing them!

Returning to Vietnam. As life became more stable in Vietnam, Chau had an increasing desire to return to his home country for a visit. Finally, in 1999, after 20 years in Canada, Chau and his wife Donna had the opportunity to take a trip to Vietnam. Along with the excitement, he felt nervous. Old memories of his childhood and youth came back. Would it really be safe to step onto the soil where he had been born? With hearts pounding, they headed to the immigration office. Would the communist officers let them in, or would they arrest them for reasons they didn't know of? After asking each one of them a few questions, the immigration officer returned their passports and they went through, very relieved. Praise the Lord! During this visit, they visited many churches and pastors, fellowship-

ping in the Lord and exchanging information with one another. They also initiated what was called "a loving cow library project," which loaned a cow to a poor family or individual for 1 to 2 years. After that period of time, the recipient would have a choice of either returning the cow or paying for it in a lump sum or by making regular payments. Their intention was to help the poor to help themselves. However, they never had any cows or payments returned to them. Pastor Chau was part of organizing and supporting the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship, which brought together many churches from across Canada and the US. In 2003, he returned to Vietnam as their representative to participate in the first Mennonite Church conference in Vietnam, where they officially formed the Mennonite Church organization in Vietnam, even without the necessary permit from the communist government. During the next five years they worked through much red tape and finally in 2008 the Mennonite Church of Vietnam was given official recognition by the government authorities. In 2006, Chau and his wife led a short term mission trip to Malaysia, where many Vietnamese workers had moved. Eighteen persons from their congregation accompanied them on this memorable trip. Here they had the opportunity to minister to many of their Vietnamese workers in material, emotional and spiritual ways. As many as 100 Vietnamese workers responded to the invitation to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, amidst the hardships they faced in that country. It is so gratifying to know that these new Vietnamese Christians have returned to their villages and become the first fruits



Leanne and Chau answer questions from the afternoon crowd

of the Gospel to their own relatives and villagers. The Gospel is spreading in Vietnam, regardless of persecution from the atheist authorities.

A Different Boat Ride.

In 2009, 30 years after their arrival in Canada, the majority of Chau's family gathered together to take a one-week cruise in the west Caribbean Islands. And what a different boat ride this was! They could be up on deck, sit in comfortable chairs, have plenty to eat, and enjoy the blue waters all around them. They were "boat people" but travelling in comfort and safety this time. This was such a contrast to the picture that hangs in his office of that crowded little 3-decker boat that many years ago carried them out of a war-torn country on a long arduous journey to a land of plenty. He is so thankful that God is faithful. God not only provided him and his family with safety and a land where so many material blessings became available, but God also gave him a spiritual Christian experience and a church. Along with Jeremiah, he can say that God did not abandon him, but in His time carried him into a different kind of Golden Era.

When Chau was asked after his presentation if other people were writing or had written their stories, he replied that it is not a Vietnamese custom to keep journals or diaries. Writers or people in the audience were encouraged to interview others and help them write their own stories. ❖

ALFALFA TO IVY - Memoir of a Harvard Medical School Dean

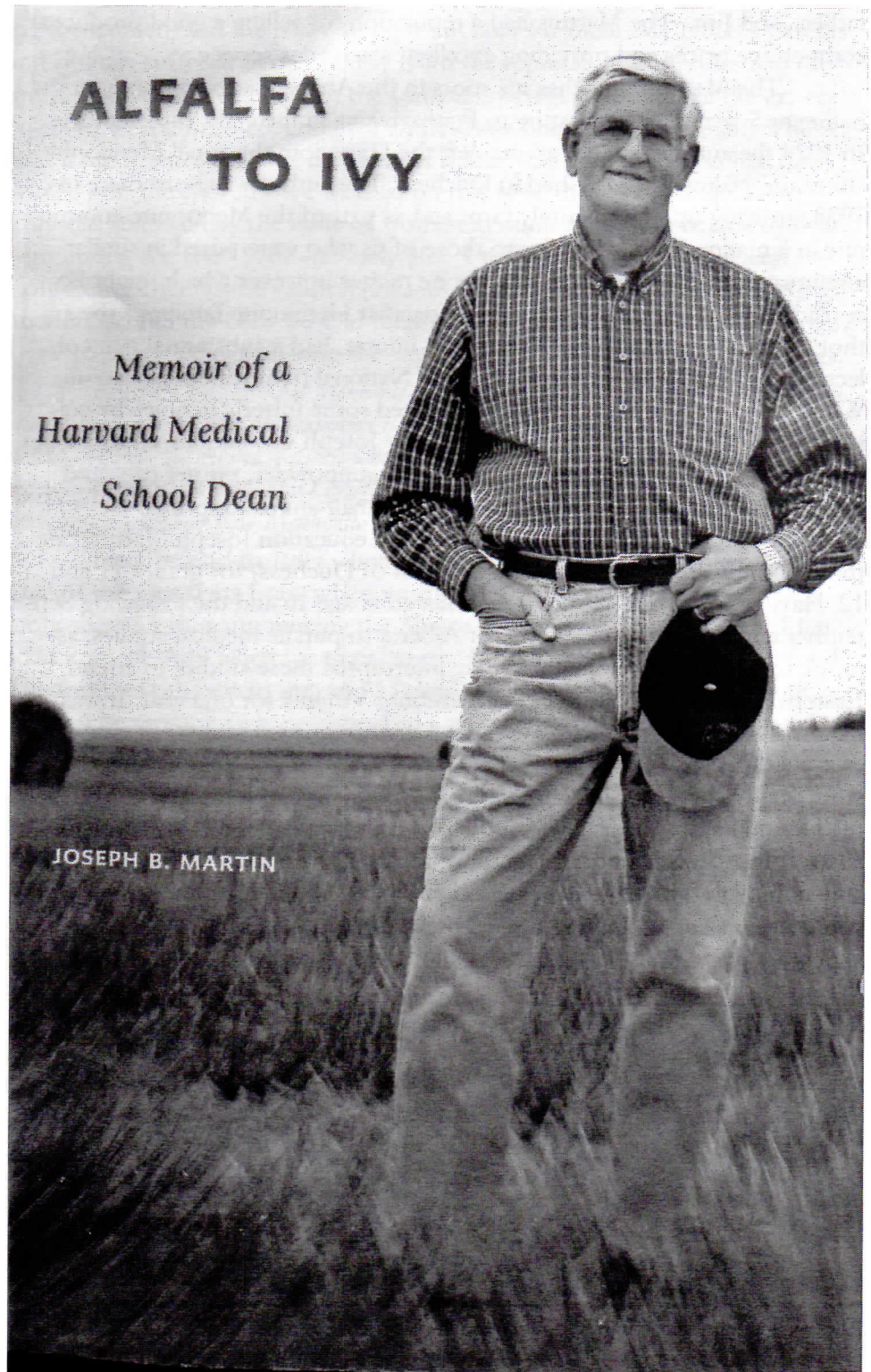
Joseph B. Martin MD, PhD

The University of Alberta Press 2011, 457 pages

ISBN 978-1-55195-700-5 (pbk)

Reviewed by Henry M. Dick, Edmonton

The hamlet of Duchess lies in the Eastern Irrigation District (EID),



a mixed farming area about 100 miles east of Calgary on the “Alaska highway” (rte.873), so called because during the war U.S. troops used this route on their way to and from Alaska. In the EID locally grown alfalfa was a major source of feed for the farm cattle and horses and, because of its nitrogen-fixing roots, was used extensively in crop rotation before commercial fertilizers came into use. In the neighboring communities in the 1940’s and 50’s farmers who had a John Deere tractor or drove a Chrysler, Plymouth or Fargo truck were in all likelihood familiar with the Duchess Garage, owned and operated by the Martin brothers; Sam, Fred, Joe (the author’s father), and Jim. The Martins had a reputation for selling a good product at competitive prices and providing excellent after-sales service.

The Martin family has its roots in the Anabaptist community originating in Switzerland, migrating to Pennsylvania in the early 18th century. In 1924 the author’s grandparents left the US to join the small Mennonite community already established in Duchess. The author was born there in 1938, growing up on the family farm and as part of the Mennonite community in a manner that is familiar to those of us who were raised in similar circumstances. There is reference to one matter however which might be considered out of the ordinary among pacifist Mennonite families - the author’s father was an avid marksman and hunter, had a substantial gun collection and was a charter member of the National (US) Rifle Association. While many boys in those early years earned some miserly pennies by collecting gopher tails and magpie eggs, young Joseph was earning extra pocket-money by filling brass cartridge shells with gunpowder, primer caps and bullets for his father, as well as managing a small-animal trap-line.

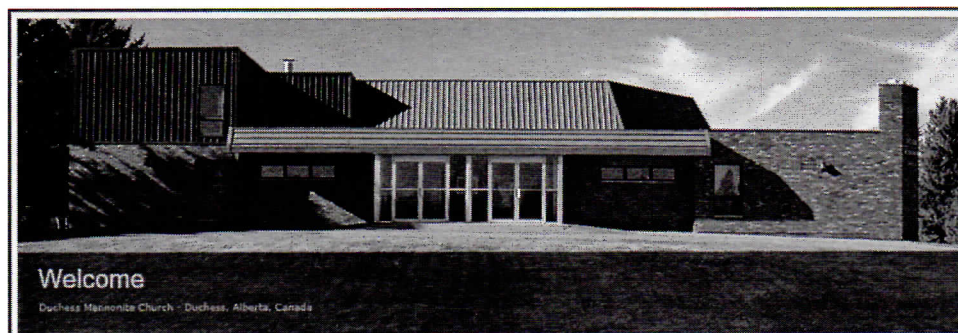
In order to complete his high school education Joseph Martin rode the school bus to Rosemary (10 miles west of Duchess) for grades 11 and 12. Having “skipped” grade 8 he graduated at age 16 and the following September enrolled at the University of Alberta to pursue medical studies, aspiring to be a medical missionary. He interrupted these studies to attend Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg Virginia for one year. It was here that he met his future wife, Rachel Wenger.

The story of Joseph Martin’s growing up years (Chapters 1 & 2) is a story that his generation of Mennonite immigrant children identify with so readily and is thus most ‘readable’. The thrust of the memoir however focuses comprehensively on the author’s career in medical education, research and administration (Chapters 3 through 11, pp. 65 - 370). His research in neurobiology and endocrinology was characterized by extensive international peer collaboration, pushing and exploiting evolving research methodolo-

gies. The outcomes significantly advanced the understanding of disease processes at the genetic/molecular level, thus improving the clinical management of diseases such as Louis Gehrig’s disease (ALS), Alzheimer’s Disease, Huntington’s Disease, and others. Dr. Martin has authored more than 300 scientific articles and reviews in prestigious medical science journals as well as serving on the editorial boards of several. In Joseph Martin’s more than four decades of work in North America’s ‘Ivy-League’ academic institutions his most noteworthy administrative positions included Neurologist-in-Chief, Montreal Neurological Institute; General Director, Massachusetts General Hospital; Dean of Medicine and Chancellor, University of California in San Francisco; Dean, Harvard Medical School. In each of these roles he excelled, earning numerous honors and awards along the way.

Noteworthy for Albertan’s, In 1979, while at the Harvard Medical School, Joseph Martin was asked to host a visit from Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed who was seeking advice on how to set up an endowment fund for biomedical research in Alberta. Joseph was subsequently invited to serve on the Alberta Heritage Fund for Medical Research advisory Board established by the Lougheed government.

In the final chapter of the memoir Dr. Martin steps away from the ‘Ivy Tower’ and reflects on 16 important leadership lessons learned along the way. Several struck me as especially insightful: “Never attribute to malice what can be explained by incompetence”; “If a thing is not worth doing, it is not worth doing well”, “Rejoice with those who rejoice



Duchess Mennonite Church. Founded in 1917 by settlers from Pennsylvania with Swiss Mennonite roots.

and weep with those who weep”; “How you react to success is more important than success itself.”

In a brief epilogue the author returns to his Duchess roots to celebrate his mother’s 94th birthday. He reflects on the changes in the community of his growing up years and of his aging extended family. He ponders the question of the influence of our growing up years, including the stories of our ancestors, on how we each eventually define our lives.

Several years ago a fellow knocked on my door at our winter home in Arizona and asked if I was one of the Rosemary Dick boys. I said that I was. He introduced himself as Bill Martin from Duchess. Later, after reading Joseph Martin’s Memoir, I asked him about his cousin Joseph. The answer: “when he’s in Duchess with family he’s the same Joe we’ve always known”

In the postscript a colleague of the author offers that academic institutions are endowed with many highly capable and dedicated individuals. “...less commonly encountered, however, are highly successful academic physicians who are also low-key, disarmingly charming and able to take themselves less seriously than they take their work and their responsibilities. Joe Martin falls squarely in that category.....” ❖

Guidelines to GAMEO

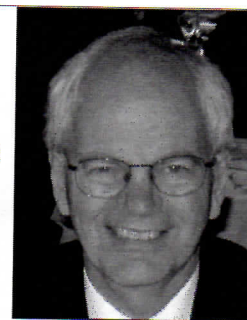
by Wesley Berg

In the March 2012 Newsletter I suggested that I planned to develop an outline for people wanting to provide information for possible biographies for GAMEO. I have now completed a half dozen biographical articles and am at work on two more with the help of family members who are gathering in-

formation on their fathers.

Looking to the future, I do not have the knowledge of the province and its Mennonite community nor am I in a position to do much original research to identify and write about all of the subjects who deserve to be included. As with the two articles now in progress, I am prepared to take information provided to me and write an article, or I am happy to work with authors who want to write the articles themselves, keeping in mind that final editorial decisions about appropriateness, content and style are made by the GAMEO editorial committee. At the end of this article I have included an outline that I have developed to assist family members and researchers to provide the appropriate information for biographical articles. I would be happy to hear from anyone interested in making sure that deserving persons are included in GAMEO. My email address is wberg@ualberta.ca

Anyone interested in such matters should also check out the Resources section of the GAMEO web site (www.Gameo.Org and click on resources tab and scroll down to Guidelines [templates] for articles.) It includes editorial guidelines and templates not only for bibliographies but also for geographical locations, books, institutions, etc. Note, for example, that the entries for places like Tofield and Didsbury are taken from the Mennonite Encyclopedia, published in the 1950s. There is ample opportunity for local historians to bring such articles up to date.



Wesley Berg

GAMEO Biographical Outline

NAME:

BIRTH/DEATH PLACES AND DATES, PLACE IN FAMILY, NUMBER OF SIBLINGS.

BAPTISM: CHURCH AND DATE

NAMES, PLACES AND DATES OF PARENTS, INCLUDING MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHERS

MARRIAGE DATES, NAME, PLACE AND BIRTH/DEATH DATES OF SPOUSE

EDUCATION: INSTITUTIONS, DATES ATTENDED, SPECIALIZATIONS, THESES

DATES AND PLACES OF RESIDENCE

OCCUPATION: PLACES AND DATES, CONTRIBUTIONS, ACHIEVEMENTS

CHURCH AFFILIATIONS: PLACES AND DATES, ROLES, CONTRIBUTIONS

WRITINGS BY SUBJECT, PUBLICATIONS BY OR ABOUT SUBJECT, STORY OR ANECDOTE CAPTURING PERSONALITY OR CHARACTER OF SUBJECT

DIGITAL IMAGE OF SUBJECT (MIN. 400K) ❖



Suzanne Gross

I'm from a Different Tribe, *My Journey with Russian Mennonites in Alberta*

by Suzanne Gross

It has been thirteen years since my family chose to move to Edmonton in pursuit of academic opportunities for my husband Robert. The year was 1999. We brought with us a car, two children, and a truck full of things we had collected from our past. Part of what we brought was our cultural and religious past, merging that with our present. Robert is not of Mennonite background, and has found a spiritual home with the Quakers. So the following story is more about me and my girls' story of church traditions.

Within several weeks of arriving in Edmonton, we started exploring the local church scene. We were looking for a church with some degree of formality, good singing, a history and passion for doing Mennonite-style social justice, a good program for children, and the possibility of developing friendships that would play the role of family in a country where we had no biological relatives.

One of my first cultural memories was reading about a Faspa for a church closing in Vauxhall, Alberta. It sounded so sad to me – I concluded Faspa was a type of funeral meal for sad occasions. I have since learned the ins and outs of Faspa – the traditional Faspa, and the urban, modern Faspa. And the pickles!

All of this to say that I am from a different tribe. I am fully Mennonite – in fact, as my story will tell, I have some pure-bred Swiss Mennonite in me thanks to my Swiss mother. My father is also a Swiss Mennonite, but through the Pennsylvania migration where his earliest Godshalk ancestor arrived in 1699, and his Gross ancestor in 1763.

The Mennonite identity I brought with me grew out of my first five years in Goshen, Indiana, where I was born, followed by four years in Switzerland where I started school and became a francophone child, only to return to Goshen where I sorted out my identity for years to come.

My early memories of Goshen include welcoming my father home from having taught all day at Bethany Christian High School – a Mennonite school that opened its doors in 1954. I remember gym parties and retreats at Brunks' Cabin which was a rustic little cabin in the woods of Michigan owned by Goshen College. I remember going to the College Mennonite Church and going to Sunday School.

And then, at age five, our family packed four large suitcases and moved to Switzerland. Here I

would live upstairs in my maternal grandparents house for four long childhood years. My mother's father was a Swiss-German Mennonite who had grown up on a farm in a mountain village. His village was among the many little communities that sprang up as a result of the Bishopric of Basel's declaration that Anabaptist-Mennonites would no longer be killed as a result of their heresy, but that they were to live isolated lives up in the mountains that had inferior farmland, and that they were never to interact with non-Mennonites in the valleys. They could, however, leave their milk pails at the bottom of the mountain in exchange for other goods they might need.

At some point the restrictions were lifted, and Mennonites began to move into the valleys near their farming communities. My grandfather, Walter Geiser, was one of those. He chose not to farm, but became instead a machinist in the town of Tavannes in Canton Bern. But his real passion was church work as a minister. He was a very kind and generous man with a sense of adventure. In 1961 he came to North America to the Mennonite World Conference in Kitchener-Waterloo – a conference I vaguely remember. Afterward, he visited us in Goshen. He was well-known as a church leader beyond Switzerland.

I remember attending the 1967 Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam. My Grandfather's health was not good, and so he was not able to attend. He died the day the conference began, and his passing was shared with the whole World Conference gathering.

The Mennonites who went into the Bernese mountains were Swiss-Germans. They spoke Swiss German and reminded me often



Interior of the Kliental Mennonite Church in Moron, Canton Bern, Switzerland. Wall verse: We Preach the Crucified Christ.

that God spoke Swiss-German to Adam. But the territories in the valleys were part of francophone Switzerland. My grandfather, however never learned French very well. But he married a Swiss Mennonite who was a Francophone who also spoke Swiss-German. She was from a community that had moved out of the mountains a generation or two earlier, and so had adopted French as its primary language. But even there, her home church of Les Bulles, outside of La Chaux-de-Fonds, held services in German until the 1950s.

I soon learned French, but adopted the prevalent attitude toward Swiss-German which was: it is for peasants; and is not a learned language. So I never learned Swiss-German, which I now regret. But the church we attended every Sunday for the first while was in one of these mountain communities that had not become Francophone. It was the village of Moron – a completely Mennonite village except for the cheese maker who was Catholic. Moron had a little chapel in the middle – very similar to the old Tofield Alberta church before it was torn down. And much like the Tofield church, there were German Bible verses on the walls! There was a harmonium for hymns. There was a choir that sang with lots of happy Swiss-German energy. And we had lukewarm tea with sugar after special services. When we walked out of the church, we were careful not to fall in the manure pile! Swiss farms have their manure pile right by their front door between the house and attached barn. And in Moron, there was a farm right across the little path in front of the chapel, with a very healthy manure pile beautifully sculpted and braided!

After a few years, there



Miriam, Joani (cousin), Suzanne, Robert and Naomi on the steps of the Kleintal Church, built in 1892

were enough Mennonites in the town of Tavannes that we decided to form a daughter community, and my mother started the long process of organizing a Sunday school class for children. The big issue was language: should it be taught in Swiss-German (God's language, after all!) or French. There were only two boys attending who didn't speak French – the others didn't speak German. So three out of four weeks, we had Sunday School in French, and the fourth was in Swiss-German.

So when I was nine, Mennonites for me were mostly farmers who had impeccable farms and gardens. Mennonites didn't smoke and were known to be responsible drinkers. I lived across from a Catholic church, and I knew we were very different from the Catholics. I seemed to know that close fellowship was something that other denominations didn't share so much with us. My Catholic friends talked about mass very differently from my church experience. And even though I complained about all this Swiss-German I had to put up with, there was something comforting and genuine about the people who gathered every week to sing together pray together, and listen to a sermon together. Church was simple and familiar.

In 1968, we packed our bags again and returned to Goshen Indiana. I was now a nine-year-old Swiss-Mennonite girl who thought she was American – but really wasn't anymore. I had kept up my English thanks to my father who had never learned French since he spent most of his time in



The Geiser family home where
Suzanne grew up.

Basel, studying and working on his dissertation on the sixteenth-century Hutterites. He came home on weekends, and between that and a chapter every night from the Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books, I kept up my English to some degree-- although I still count in French!

I settled back into life in Goshen – a flat land full of Mennonites, with over 22 Mennonite churches listed in the Goshen News on Saturdays. These churches included conservative Mennonites who wore coverings of all sorts –

with strings, without strings, with strings tied, and Old Order Amish with their bonnets and buggies. I would run into them when we went grocery shopping. I somehow felt very comforted among these plain people, perhaps because they reminded me somewhat of my Swiss Mennonites in the mountain villages. I remember that every fall, there was a big Mennonite Central Committee Michiana Relief Sale where all of these Mennonite groups, and the Amish, would come together and put on the best party ever – with apple butter, homemade furniture, and quilts that sold for exorbitant amounts to buyers as far away as Chicago.

I attended College Mennonite Church – a congregation of 800 members in a church built with lots of Mennonite symbolism. The church was built in the round to reflect the gathered community. It had 12 beams representing the twelve disciples of Christ – whom we followed. I also remember the pastor John Mosemann, who made a point of walking around the circular foyer after every service and greeting and shaking hands with all the children whom he knew by name.

I also remember learning about the GCs (General Conference Mennonites). GCs, I was told were Mennonites, but they were much more worldly. The women wore jewelry and white gloves. They had never worn the head covering. They used instruments in church. They were more congregational – less power resting in the hands of the bishop! Eighth Street Mennonite church was a GC church about ten blocks down the street, but I never set foot in it until I was an adult.

The College Mennonite Church was a formal church, whose services were broadcast on the Goshen College radio station and continues to be accessible by radio and internet for the benefit of the very large Seniors living complex called Greencroft. I liked going to Sunday school, and I enjoyed the church service – although the ten-minute morning pastoral prayer felt long to me as a child. Later, when I became interested, I listened to John Mosemann's prayers and realized how rich and worshipful they were. It was in these prayers that he challenged us to live up to our calling as disciples and servants in the world.

The church might have felt formal, but the service was simple. We sang all our hymns a cappella. In fact, it was explained to me that musical

instruments would destroy our four-part singing. In 1970 or so, when the College approached the church to install a pipe organ, the big worry was that this organ would destroy our singing. So the organ was used strictly for preludes, and now and then for a hymn such as "God is Working His Purpose Out." But we loved and cherished our four-part a cappella singing, and even introduced pre-service singing so that we could do even more of it.

As with many youth who grow up in a church, you have to leave to find your leadership wings. I was always a child in the College Mennonite Church, even though I was baptized at age 17. After graduating from Goshen College, I moved to Hyattsville Maryland, where I started graduate school in music, first in piano, and then shifting to musicology. The Hyattsville Mennonite Church was a small dual-conference church and welcomed me in. I was soon invited to play piano, and lead their a cappella singing. I developed a love for song-leading during this time, something I miss doing on a regular basis.

It was during my dissertation time that I became much more familiar with my father's Mennonite tradition. He grew up in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, which was part of the Franconia Conference. Both the Franconia and Lancaster conferences had a tradition called *Fraktur*, which is an illuminated writing style for marriage certificates and book plates. Franconia Conference had a stronger education tradition, however, publicized by Christopher Dock, who wrote the first printed pedagogical treatise in the New World, published in 1769. He, among other schoolmasters, gave children Frak-

tur certificates for good studies. Beginning in 1780, schoolmasters began giving children little booklets called *Notenbüchlein* (music note booklets) for their music studies. I tracked down about thirty five of these books dating from 1780 to 1835, which I found not only in libraries in the Franconia area, but also in Goshen, and in Jordan-On-The-Twenty, Ontario. The Fraktur cover pages were known, but the contents had not been studied. I discovered two general areas of interest for Mennonite music history: 1) a documentation of the Old Way of singing, which turned into an article co-authored by me and Wesley Berg, who added his expertise in this area of musicology from the Old Colony Russian Mennonite style of singing, and 2) the emerging of harmony, first in an old-fashioned two-part harmony but soon moving to three-part hymns in the style of the singing-schools prevalent in the United States at that time. This tradition seems to have entered the Franconia community around 1815.

From my research I learned



Typical Swiss Mennonite farm house

much about rural Pennsylvania during the time of William Penn's "Holy Experiment," and the Mennonite contribution to this. For instance, in 1688, some Mennonite-Quakers of Germantown Pennsylvania, in opposition to slavery, wrote the first abolition document in the New World. The Quakers Yearly Meeting passed a similar resolution thirty years later.

This is the community my father grew up in many generations later. The Mennonites lost their German around 1900. With the switch to English also came a literary gap that was filled largely by Daniel Kauffman who instituted many rules and regulations including the compulsory head covering for women, and the plain, straight-cut coat for men. My father's parents and siblings suffered tremendously from the repression these rules had on individuality and creativity. In the Indiana-Michigan conference the expectation to wear a head covering for church was finally lifted in 1968. The next issue I remember was the issue of remarrying someone who had divorced – in the church. We worked on this issue during the mid-1970s. This was followed by the issue of women in ministry – an issue quietly dealt with during the late 1970s and early 80s. I realized at the joint General Conference-Mennonite Church (GC-MC) convention, Bethlehem 1983, how far behind the GCs we Old Mennonites (OMs) were at that time, when I saw so many women sharing the stage with men on the GC side of things.

Editor's Note: "Old Mennonites" was the popular way to refer to members of Mennonite Church. This denomination is not to be confused with Old Order Mennonites or Old Colony Mennonites. Readers who are interested in getting more details can check the various groups on GAMEO (www.gameo.org) Through amalgamation of the GCs and the MCs we now have Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA

Fast forward to 1999 when my family moved to Edmonton Alberta. One of the first signs I saw when we pulled into the visitors centre in Edmonton was a sign announcing the Mennonite Relief Sale in Tofield! I felt so at home!!! And when we went, so much felt familiar except for the food! The food was all new to me, and I found the excitement and pride about Mennonite sausage very endearing!

First Mennonite Church became our home church, in part because it had a formality that felt familiar to me. But I was puzzled with the singing. The singing was so strong and good, I kept trying to figure out why they wouldn't sing a cappella. To my ears so many hymns just sound so much better a cappella. And for me, the a cappella experience seems so much more congregational. But I soon learned that the piano is the soul of Russian Mennonite singing, and I was challenged to learn to "lead" from the piano.

It has taken me a long time, but I am beginning to understand how the many food traditions of the Russian Mennonites are really symbolic of an identity that ties together a people who came through some very rough times together. I still marvel at stories that people remember – either through their grandparents, or through their parents, or even themselves, depending on when they came. This is really a very different experience time-wise from that of the Swiss-Mennonites who came largely between 1683 and 1750. Also, the Swiss-Mennonites came more for opportunity, and freedom of religion than because of severe and traumatizing persecution. That part of Swiss-Mennonite history had happened a century earlier.

Another aspect of belonging to a different tribe that can be chal-



The Moyer family homestead in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, USA.

linging, is not having a network of relatives. When I travel to conferences, for instance, I don't have cousins I can stay with. Every now and then, though, someone comes through town who knows my parents, and, as silly as it seems, that sort of connection makes me feel like I belong to an affiliated tribe rather than to a distant tribe!

As Mennonites, we all do fellowship, we all are proud of our singing, and we all pray for the world and try to do our part in following Jesus and being servants to each other and to the world. This is the strong affiliation I celebrate. The other stuff is more of an issue of comfort. It can exclude, but Russian Mennonites are patient teachers. I will never be related to anyone – although we borrow relatives shamelessly --but maybe someday I can learn to make plumamous!

Suzanne E. Gross was born in 1958 in Goshen, Indiana, the daughter of Leonard Gross from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and Irene Geiser Gross from Tavannes, Switzerland. Suzanne completed her BA at Goshen College with a double major in music and French, and a minor in English as a second language. She also has a Master of Music in piano and a PhD in Musicology from the University of Maryland, College Park. Suzanne is married to Robert Kirchner and they have two daughters Miriam and Naomi. Suzanne works at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and is the director of the Global Voices Choir. Suzanne is a member of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton. ❖

An Appreciative Non-Mennonite

By Jim Bowman

Dave Toews asked me to write my biography for the Newsletter. What a daunting task! It's something I've never been asked to do before.

As is customary, I'll start with the genealogical infor-

mation. I, James Edward Bowman, was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1949, the first child of Alexander McGregor Bowman, 1910-2009, and the former Elizabeth Rosemary Riddle, b. 1916.

I've traced my Bowman ancestors back to about the 1790s. They were weavers in the Scottish textile-manufacturing city of Paisley, and before that, they were probably crofters (tenant farmers) who were evicted from their lands during the Clearances, when the farmland was converted to pasture. They migrated to Dufferin County, Ontario in the 1860s. My grandfather James Hendry Bowman, 1877-1953, and my great grandfather James Bowman, 1852-1930, led a group of their Scottish-Canadian relatives and neighbors to settle at Minburn, Alberta around 1907. My father farmed at Minburn, Vegreville, and Jarvie, Alberta, until he qualified in the trade of auto mechanics while serving in the Air Force during the Second World War.

My mother's family are more interesting. The Riddles were farmers in Redesdale, the remote valley of the Rede River in Northumberland, close to the Scottish border. One of them, my great-great-great grandfather Edward Riddle, 1788-1854, had an aptitude for mathematics and succeeded in rising above his humble origins. He had several scholarly publications and became headmaster of the Greenwich Hospital Schools near London, where sons of naval and merchant ships' captains were sent to learn navigation. There are still numerous Riddles living around Greenwich, most of them working in science-related professions such as engineering. My grandfather Edward Vivian Riddle, 1881-1973, served as an infantryman in the South African War, settled on a

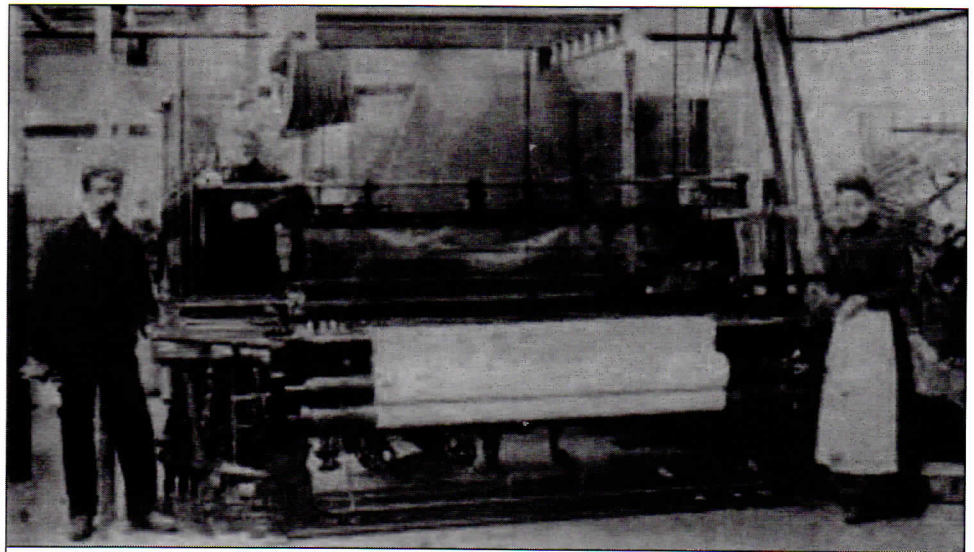


Jim Bowman

desolate homestead about twenty miles south of Cereal, Alberta around 1910, then moved to a more pleasant farm near Rocky Mountain House in 1924.

My mother's family had more than its share of brilliant creators as well as scoundrels. My great-great grandfather Ralph Willett Lucas was an affable and talented artist who avoided social disgrace by hiding the fact of his illegitimate birth. His father Ralph Willett Adye was an army officer who wrote the definitive handbook for artillery officers. His relatives the Willetts were slave-owning Caribbean planters. One of them, Ralph Willett, used part of his wealth to achieve renown as a collector of rare books. Another, Willett, John Willett, became a Member of Parliament by purchasing the votes of all twenty electors of a depopulated "rotten borough". The earliest Willetts I know about were Church of England clergymen during the Reformation who held the title of Prebendary (business manager) of Ely Cathedral and were in a position to attain wealth by accepting "gifts" from interested parties.

In corresponding with my distant cousins, I remarked that my ancestors would be aghast if they knew of my pacifist beliefs. I came of age in Vancouver during the Vietnam War, and it was a time of much turbulence. As a university student, I was immersed in stew of intriguing ideas: Marxism, Zen Buddhism, anarchism, Taoism, Christian socialism, sociology of religion, utopian communalism. A sociology field trip to visit with the Doukhobor communities in the B.C. Interior had a profound influence on my spiritual orientation. It might have been the Russian harmonic singing that did it. Or maybe it was the creamy vegetarian



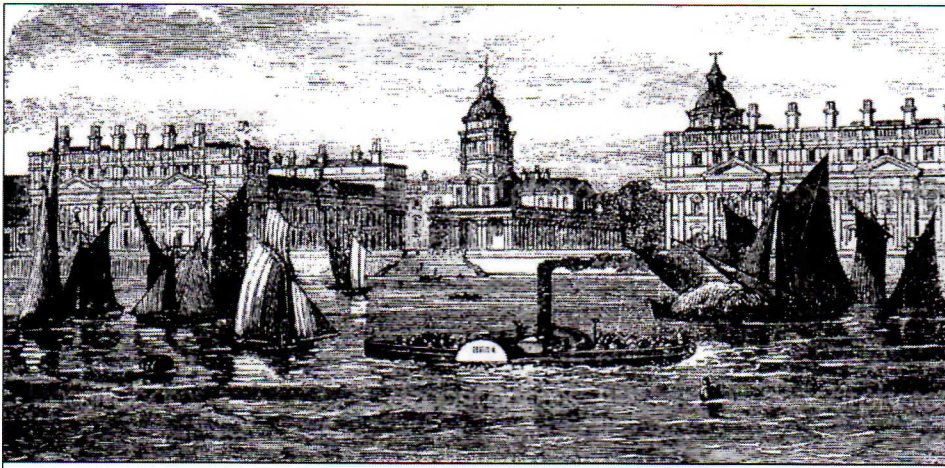
Scottish Textile Industry

borscht. Later I was told that it is very difficult for a non-Russian-speaker to understand what it means to "wrestle with the Spirit". Eventually I found my way to the Unitarian church, which encourages its members to explore their own religious values. It was a good fit for my restless, inquiring mind, and I still am an active Unitarian.

Sitting around all day discussing philosophy and religion would be nice, but it isn't a very practical way to put food on the table. I needed to master a profession, and went back to school to earn a degree in librarianship in 1982. I only actually worked as a librarian for a few months. But I apprenticed by volunteering for one of the archivists at UBC, and I got hooked. Archival work uses librarians' skills but I found it to be more creative. Arranging and describing a disorganized box of archival records creates order out of chaos, and, I like to think, makes the world a little bit better.

As a community archivist in the Lower Fraser Valley in the early 1990s, my work required me to interview members of the older families in the community. I got to know many of the Mennonites whose families had settled in districts such as East Chilliwack, Yarrow, Greendale, and Arnold. I was particularly impressed by some of the older Mennonite men I met, who had been conscientious objectors during the Second World War. I admired the way they lived their lives with quiet gentleness yet determination. I wondered if my own belief in pacifism would have given me enough courage to serve out the war years in a crude, harsh forestry camp, despised by the majority of the population. Out of respect, I did a bit of volunteer consulting work at the Mennonite Archives Centre in Clearbrook (now part of Abbotsford).

By the early 2000s I was working at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. Many visitors to the Archives were interested in using its resources to research their own genealogy, yet my colleagues seemed to be unable to help with some of the more complex aspects. Though initially not an enthusiast, I completed a distance-learning certificate program in genealogical studies. Judith Rempel, already well-known in the Calgary genealogical community, had become the coordinator for the MHSA. She completed the Archives Institute – an intensive one-week course in archival studies – and was in search of a "mentor" who could advise her on the practical aspects of man-



Greenwich Hospital School as seen from the Thames River

aging an archival program. With some experience and interest in Mennonite archives, I volunteered to come in occasionally on Saturday mornings to advise on archival practices and principles. I never did convince her that it's unnecessary to remove all the staples from archival documents, though.

With Judith's passing in May 2011, the MHSA Archives and Library has had to adapt to rapid changes. We are fortunate to have volunteers – Bill Janzen, Irene Klassen, Ralph Dahl, Ellie Janz, and Cary Sweet – who are all personally committed to using their complementary skills to develop an institution of excellence. My own priorities are to clear up the backlog of undescribed accessions; put succinct and accurate descriptions of our holdings in the Archives Network of Alberta database <www.archivesalberta.org> and the Archives Canada database <<http://www.archivescanada.ca/english/index.html>>; and keep the reading room tidy-looking and inviting to researchers. Our application for an Access to Holdings grant from the Archives Society of Alberta was successful, and I'll be spending 20 Thursdays completing the arrangement and description of the very large Mennonite Central

Committee Alberta fonds.

Anyone interested in Mennonite history or genealogy is welcome to drop by at the Archives and Library office at 2946 – 32 Street NE in Calgary for a cup of coffee, a chat, or a tour of the office. ♦

Our Mission is Not Yet Over,

Why I Have Remained in Russia

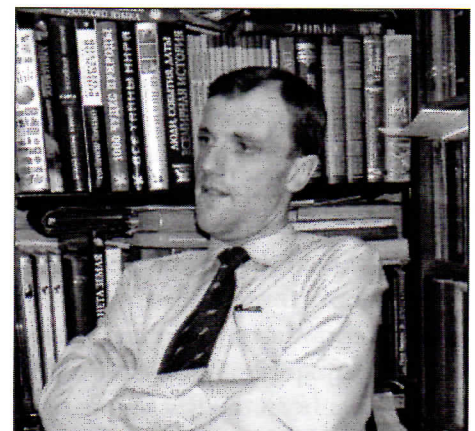
By Andrei Peters, submitted by Lawrence Klippenstein

The question seems easy at first glance. One can quickly produce a deluge of pleasant or noisy wordage. But if one rejects pathos and searches longer within oneself for the real reasons, then the matter becomes more complicated. One also discovers issues about which one would rather not speak. It would be the untruth to claim that I have never had the desire to leave for Germany. When I was still a child and the totalitarian order ruled the land, I more than once heard stories about a distant, fairy-tale land where people lived infinitely better than we did. There

it was possible to attend church peacefully and unhindered and even go to Sunday school without any fear of persecution. And in our hearts we envied all those who had managed to end up there.

And then suddenly came the time for which we had all longed: the borders were opened and a seemingly endless line of émigrés headed westward. It appeared as if God himself had given me the chance to fulfil my long-held dream of moving to Germany. I began to make plans for the future. I tried to fathom the grandeur of life in that foreign setting which had appeared on my horizon.

But my parents and I visited the small groups of orphaned, elderly women and I saw the tears of joy with which they greeted us, how they vacuumed up a sermon's every word and plead tearfully that we not forget them. All that made an indelible impression on me and altered my stance on emigration. I began to look for the real, objective reasons behind emigration. The more I looked into the matter, the more it became clear to me that a single, major motivation could not be ignored: material gain or at least a major improvement in living conditions. That is where the internal struggle began. I understood well on the one hand that if such



Pastor Andrei Peters of the Novosibirsk Mennonite Church



Novosibirsk Mennonite Church

desires become a priority, they clash entirely with a basic principle once proclaimed by the Apostle Paul: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me." (Gal. 2:20) That sounds first of all like total self-denial.

Leaving was for me secondly a matter of complete obedience. It was hard for me to imagine that God would dispatch his workers to some useless place. God usually sent his most proven disciples there where it was especially difficult, there where they were needed most of all. That brought up the question: Is in God's eyes our emigration like the flight of Saul to Tarsus? I thought in this context of the church in Pergamum. Describing the spiritual condition of this church, Christ points to a very special advantage: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is;" (Rev. 2:13). Here the Greek word *katoikeo* is used, which means to have a "place of permanent residence". This is very unusual for Christians are usually described with the word

"*parakatikes*", which means a "temporary place of residence" and stresses the transient nature of our sojourn on earth. That's how Christ describes the need to remain at one's own place at the most critical time when matters of life and death are decided. Though having the chance to emigrate, the residents of Pergamum testified of their faith and submission to God.

Yet it is well-known that Pergamum was the administrative centre of the province of Asia. That means it was also the centre of the Caesar's cult for the entire province. Veneration of Caesar was a test of political loyalty, symbolic recognition of Caesar's rule over all of life and the human spirit. Therefore, on a day determined by the government, the people would get into line, approach the kettle of incense, throw in a corn of incense and cry: "Caesar is Lord!" Those who refused were threatened with a ghastly death. But the Christians of Pergamum were not confronted with the question: „To be or not to be“. Remaining loyal to God was

their primary concern and an expression of their sacrificial love for him. If I love God, my primary concern is the struggle to remain faithful to him. And that means to be at that place of service for which God has prepared me. To be salt and light for a crumbling society.

My decision was confirmed when I first saw the legendary, grand oak tree in Zaporoshe, Ukraine, under which Mennonite settlers had celebrated their first church service after arriving on Russian soil. Yet that tree now makes a rather distressing impression, it seems to carry in it the mark of death. For me that oak became a symbol for the history of Russian Mennonites. The only thing which gladdened my heart were the green leaves on this nearly -dead tree. They symbolize the self-sacrifice and devotion of those few Mennonites who remain in Russia. They remind us that our mission in Russia is not yet over.

There are small groups spread throughout Western Siberia: the village of Neudachino near Omsk has 15 persons, Tomsk has 15, the Altai region four, Ordinsk has 10. And all of these, except for Neudachino, are nurtured by our 30-member congregation in Novosibirsk. That's why I'm here. And those who still care about the fate of Russian Mennonites have the opportunity to express real support through their prayers and material aid – in order that we might honourably fulfil the mission to which we have been called. May God help us in this!

Andrei Peters (born 1970), Pastor of the Novosibirsk Mennonite Church
Translated in Moscow, 29 October 2006



The Road Between GC and MB

By Peter Penner

Introduction:

General Conference, GC and Mennonite Brethren, MB were two different branches of Mennonites. In this article, Peter wonders why the two groups built up separate congregations across the road between them when they had so many things in common.

Both the General Conference (GC) and Mennonite Brethren (MB) families were a church-going people and church attendance and Sunday afternoon visiting made up most of our social life. We brought that with us from 'the old country'. There were many social and cultural reasons to think twice before separating for doctrinal or ecclesial reasons. Yet this is what happened. The Mennonite church – the Kirchliche – in Russia experienced the secession of a small group in 1860. This was the beginning of the MB church. The secessionists pointed to general 'decadence' and indifference to standards of Christian living for church membership. They wanted to start over, as it were. Ultimately this forced many church adherents to choose up sides.

When we came to Vineland in 1931 we found a small GC congregation called, in English, the Vineland United Mennonite (die Vereinigte Mennoniten Gemeinde). And this is where I learned to know Elder Wichert and his group. When many of our people left the dry prairies to move west or east, most of the latter came to Vineland first before moving on to Virgil or the city of St. Catharines.

There I was in Vineland,

so to speak, to welcome the new arrivals as they came east through-out the 'Thirties' from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta locations. By 1937 they could be told that in Vineland there were, for their convenience, ready-made congregations to welcome them. Some joined on the west side of Victoria Avenue, the others on the east side, culturally speaking the same language, for them the colloquial Low German (Plautdietsch), singing the same songs, some even related by marriage.



A young Peter Penner in Vineland in the Thirties

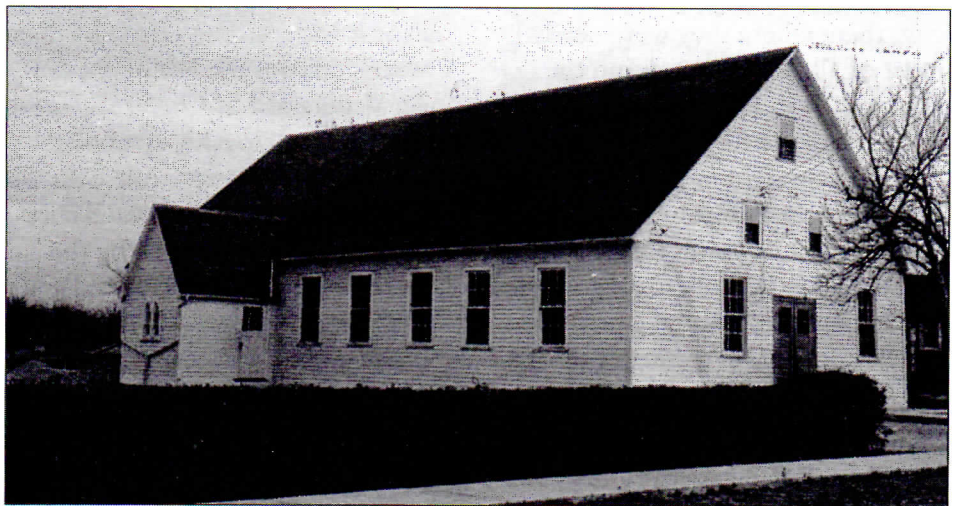
What did I make of all that – those church divisions, those differences – the continued separation of our similarities in two modes – until GC and MB could join in a Canadian Mennonite University three quarters of a century later?

When the United Mennonite (Kirchlich) came to Vineland they fixed up an old abandoned sawmill and welcomed the first

Mennonite Brethren to come to Vineland to worship with them. Many did, as did we. Johann Wichert was elected Aeltester (Elder or Bishop) in 1927 and, as his membership grew by influx from the West, they built a new meetinghouse on the west side of Victoria Avenue, mostly by voluntary labour, completed by December 1935.

In spite of the welcome received by Wichert's group, some MB leaders began to gather up those who leaned toward the MB and by 1932 they had 27 members and their own church council. They started a Sunday School, a monthly youth service in 1934, a church choir in 1935, and even a Saturday school of German language teaching. For a short time, the MB gathered in neighbouring Beamsville. The Brethren however purchased the old sawmill in 1937, renovated it and used it until 1959. Both groups built new church building about that time, but in different parts of the town.

Meanwhile, our family continued to worship with John Wichert. After all, my father was his workmate at Chris Fretz farms. This was also natural since we were



The Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church circa 1946.

Incidentally, Peter Penner and Justina were married in this church in 1949

not MB then. My father had been baptized by sprinkling in Orlovo in 1915 and my mother in 1919 (both at about age 19-20). About 1936, however, this all changed. Influenced by a preacher who was a family friend, either Henry H. Janzen, Kitchener, or Dietrich Klassen, or both, my grandparents Peter and Katharina Wiebe, and my parents were rebaptized by immersion in Lake Ontario. In 1937 we joined those who moved from the Beamsville location to Vineland.

By and large there were no ill feelings, but what did those ignorant of our history think, the passerby who stopped to ask questions? As said, on the one side of the road the GC had built a church sanctuary with room for all. Across the street the MB created their own church with different assumptions about membership and how to become one, and tried to make sure that all who knocked on the entrance door understood the reasons for the road between. There were unfortunately many MB who did not recognize the GC path into membership as a valid and effective conversion.

Some on both sides of the road may have known of the separation in the story that follows, but I could not fathom these things as a seven-year old and could not but wonder at the decisions my immediate family made at my age 11 in 1936.

Gerhard Lohrenz gave an example of the difference from Sagraadowka, Province Kherson. In 1907 preacher Franz Martens became convinced he needed to come out of the general Mennonite church, the Kirchliche. Moving to Ohrloff he founded an "Evangelical MB Church". There he gathered people who could claim an experience of conversion,

were willing to 'come out and be ye separate,' and were prepared to be baptized by immersion. Others like Elder Wilhelm Voth held to the principle that his church needed to serve all the youth, not separate them because they had not had Damascus Road-like experience of conversion.

In Vineland preachers like Dietrich Klassen followed the example of Franz Martens in Russia, while Bishop Wichert, our friend since 1931, held to convictions similar to Elder Wilhelm Voth. Thus the lines continued to be drawn creating 'the road between'! I could not have known all the nuances at that time, nor could I have known what I would do in future on that road between these two groups. ♦

Letters to the Editor

I was pleased to receive and read your Newsletter of March, 2012.

The article by John B. Toews on the Alberta Mennonite High School and the pictures it contained brought back fond memories of the two years I spent there in grade 9 and 10, in 1952 and 1953.

My situation was a little different from the majority of students. My widowed mother was hoping to make a major change in my attitude by shipping me all the way from Three Hills to Coaldale. I had just barely scraped through five years of elementary school at Prairie Bible Institute, and had been told not to come back. It was a tough life being one of the only kids not to make a personal confession. So, it was either the regular Three Hills High School or Alberta Mennonite High School. Secondly,

we were very poor, much more so than most of the families that sent their kids to Coaldale. Third, although I could speak some Low German, I had never learned High German.

Those of us from outside of Coaldale, and this included other girls and boys from Calgary, Purple Springs, Pincher Creek, etc., stayed either in the homes of locals, or the basement of the school (girls). A number of boys and I lived part of my first year in the home of a Funk family, then transferred over to the home of the vice-principal, Peter Borgen for the rest of the year, probably because we were too raucous a bunch for the Funks. Peter Borgen, as you may know went on to greater things in the Alberta School system, spending most of his latter career in Edmonton. The principal at the time was a hard-nosed, science and math teacher, Peter Klassen, who went back to Manitoba to teach at one of the colleges there.

For my second year, grade 10, a number of us stayed at a second home on the property of B.B. Janz. I don't remember whether it had any plumbing inside, but I recall freezing my butt off in his outhouse during the winter months. Mrs. Janz felt sorry for me and did my clothes washing. I don't remember how the other fellows managed.

Some of my memories: Playing "prisoners base" during recesses and noon hour. Fun for me because I was one of the faster kids. Playing ping-pong in the other half of the school basement. Making some extra money hoeing sugar beets in the spring and harvesting them in the fall. Hitch-hiking all over southern Alberta on weekends. Hitch-hiking all the way home on an Easter break. Playing

hockey without skates – so I got to be the goalie. Hitch-hiking to Lethbridge to watch the other guys skate in their arena. Being “in love” with some of the cute girls in school. Listening to Anne Kornelsen hammer away on the school piano doing her “scales”. Having to go to church services, even though I didn’t want to. Being astonished at the ability of some of the students in math, science, German, and particularly singing, – the men’s quartet with Rudy Wiebe, John Pauls, John Toews, and Werner Schmidt. And Rita Langemann singing soprano. Wow! The school geniuses were everywhere; you never saw such a studious group. This was particularly obvious when I completed my high schooling in Three Hills later. And eating Mrs. Loewen’s wonderful meals, with as many plate-size pancakes as you could eat on a Saturday morning.

I went back to a school reunion (50 years?) held in Calgary to meet some of the students who had gone to school with me. Those that had made something of themselves came, others who hadn’t, didn’t. Still, some had done some amazing things with their lives and had reached the top in their careers and professions. A number had died. Me, I was just average; spent five years in the navy after high school; married well to another good-looking agnostic Irish gal; helped raise three bright and good-looking children; got a couple of degrees at UBC; taught high school for 25 years; maintained the Mennonite tradition of farming (apple orchard) at the same time as teaching; retired at age 55 and have lived the good life since; travelled to Russia twice to visit kin-folk in the ‘80s; and then travelled to Germany many times to see them all again.

But, I remember the years at Coaldale with real fondness. Even lacking some of the amenities of the more modern schools at the time, the education I got there held me in good stead. I’ve always been proud of my Mennonite heritage.

Thanks for the memories,
John B. Toews.

Sincerely,
Frank Martens,
Summerland, BC.

Hi Dave & Lorne,

Yesterday at church Bill Janzen gave me a copy of the MHSA newsletter for our church. I was surprised to see my picture on the front page. I didn’t think that I or my story were that special, but I was happy to see myself and my story there. I hope that your members enjoy reading it.

I was at our church’s 30+ gathering this past week when we had Ted Regehr give a presentation. It was quite interesting. He also spoke about how in Coaldale (and other places) the various Mennonites could get along and cooperate in all other aspects of life, whether it was business, school or negotiating with the government, but they could not get along between churches. That reminded me of what I wrote in my story. I hope that will strike a chord with other readers as well.

Thanks for including my writing.

William Loewen
Pastor, Trinity Mennonite Church
❖

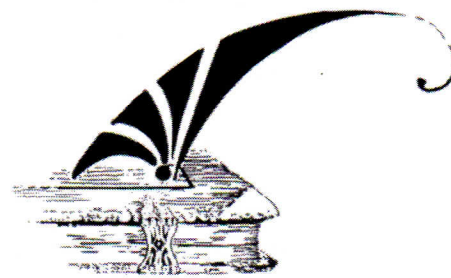
Erratum

In the March 2012 issue of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Newsletter an error occurred on page 17 third

paragraph from the top. The paragraph should have read as follows.

The Society’s Award of Excellence for 2012 was given to Irene Klassen, a founding member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta (MHSA). She has written countless articles for the Alberta Society’s Newsletter, and has been the organization’s secretary for many years. She has been a regular volunteer at the MHSA’s Archives and Library located in Calgary. Irene has edited the First Mennonite Church, Calgary Newsletter for 16 years. Klassen has published several books, including *Their Mark: Their Legacy*, a compilation of biographies of significant leaders in the history of the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta (now Mennonite Church Alberta). ❖

Elements of our MHSA logo



The book makes reference to all the volumes in our library and encourages people to publish their own family histories.

The quill represents an instrument for writing Mennonite family histories.

The clasp on the book signifies that all archive material is safeguarded for posterity.

The feather represents our part of the world and the extended tail is touching and inviting contact with the rest of the world. ❖

If you aren't a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta or if you know someone who might be interested in joining the Society, please use the application form below and mail it to the address at the bottom of the form.

MHSA Membership Application Form - "Pass it on to a Friend"

Please take time to join the membership of the MHSA. Memberships will include personalized invitations to our meetings that occur twice a year in various parts of Alberta and will include copies of our newsletter issued three times a year. It will also support the ongoing efforts of the MHSA to become aware of, learn about, and preserve the history of Mennonites in Alberta. The membership year is January to December. Persons joining midyear will receive all back issues for that year, at time of joining.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Membership:

_____ Membership: \$30 starting 2012

_____ Life Membership: \$500

Donations:

Any donations made to the MHSA in addition to the membership amount will be recognized with a receipt eligible for income tax deduction. I'm enclosing an additional \$_____ as a donation to the MHSA. See also Mennonite history and family history publications available for sale from the MHSA.

Mail to:

MHSA - Membership

2946 - 32 Street NE

Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE 2012 MHSA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE 2012 MHSA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

