



# Newsletter

## Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XIII, No. 2

September 2010

### Our Experiences in Waldheim and Surroundings

by Rosemarie and Arnold Thiessen

In 2004, the year of the bicentennial of the Mennonites in Molotschna, our family was invited by the Ukrainian Government to attend the celebration of the Waldheim Hospital. As two of my brothers were physicians and had already visited the area, we had some knowledge of this hospital from our grandparents.

Cornelius H. Warkentin and Aganetha Janz Warkentin built this hospital in 1907 and it was dedicated on Jan. 13, 1908. The hospital was built on the property of the Warkentins and with their own funds. Cornelius was a merchant. He had a store on the property and was also the mayor of the town. Aganetha was a midwife, who trained in Vienna for six months in 1903-1904. Her desire to serve the community as a midwife developed due to a vow she made to God for

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### Jeffares: Mennonite by Choice

by David Jeffares

My lineage is Irish and English. My father's family left northern France at the time of the Huguenots and settled on the southeast coast of Ireland. There were three main branches of endeavour in his family: engineering, farming, and practicing medicine. My father's branch consisted of farmers and other agricultural specialists. As well as a large farm, Grandfather Jeffares owned a stable full of race horses. My father followed the family tradition of farming, both in Eire and in Alberta. Grandmother Jeffares' family also farmed; she was an accomplished pianist as well as homemaker to nine children, my father being the eldest. The family belonged to the Church of Ireland which my wife found offered worship services very much like those of the General Conference of Mennonites!

My mother's family came from England. Grandfather Bampffield was born into a family of Church of England clergymen in Cornwall. He was to have joined the clergy but studies and preaching were not his cup of tea. After a few years of unsuccessful schooling, he was relegated to Canada where he could pursue his passion for ranching, first in Ontario, then the Okanagan, and, finally, in Alberta where he took up a pre-emption in the late 1890s. My maternal grandmother was one of nine children, all of whom were raised in Yorkshire where the family brewed Tetley ale. She was a governess who spent five years on Madeira Island tutoring a vintner's children. While there, she became fluent in French and pursued her greatest love, that of being a concert pianist. She came to the Pine Lake region east of Red Deer in the late 1890s to keep house for her two brothers who had settled there a few years before. My mother's



James & Sheila Jeffares, parents of David Jeffares

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#### MHSA Fall Event: Saturday, November 20, 2010

Four presentations on **Mennonites Outside Canada**

Location: First Mennonite Church, 3650-91 St, Edmonton (789-436-3431)

1:00-1:30 pm	Vince Friesen—Paraguay	3:00-3:30 pm	Menno Klaassen—Uzbekistan
1:30-2:00 pm	Dave Toews—Ukraine	3:30-4:00 pm	Colin Neufeldt—Siberia
2:00-2:30 pm	Question Period	4:00-4:30 pm	Question Period
2:30-3:00 pm	Coffee		

If you have questions, please call Colin Neufeldt 780-433-2127

## Editorial Reflections:

by Lorne Buhr

Some of the memories of a year ago will never vanish. Nor should they. July 1, 2009 saw us taking flights to South America, and to Paraguay in particular. Asuncion, Paraguay's capital, was to be the site of the 15th Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Upwards of 6,000 Men-



nonites, from the world's approximately 1.5 million, were in attendance. With such a vast array of people one North American myth is set to rest. On our continent it is common to debate if Mennonite is a religious or an ethnic group. But the MWC is about gathering as a church from the corners of the world and so now our number includes many, many languages and a delightful range of colours. A quote from 30 or more years ago is apropos. Journalist Margaret Loewen Reimer said this of the 10th MWC held in Wichita, Kansas in 1978—"To say that Mennonites are church and not an ethnic group is ridiculous. We are obviously no longer made up of only two or three groups but we are now a group including probably hundreds of different cultures. This summer's World Conference with representatives from 44 countries, was a vivid illustration of this multiplicity." Thus, it did not seem odd at all that the official language of MWC 2009 was Spanish.

I was one of the ones who had many opinions, views, and some information about life in Paraguay. Before embarking I asked someone familiar with Paraguay for advice. "Just remember, Mennonites have been there for 75 years," he said. Right. Our hosts worked mightily to ensure that some of our myths were put to rest. Of course they put forth their best efforts, but I sensed an openness and frankness about the problems they face, even after the "Green Hell" as the desert-like Chaco had once been labelled, has been somewhat conquered.

Most impressive to me was the way the Mennonites have showed their gratitude to Paraguay for taking them in. They show their thanks by now aiding the indige-

nous folk just as the original peoples had helped them more than 75 years ago. Medical help is a clear example of how Mennonites wish to share. In Sommerfeld Colony, for example, there is a newer hospital reserved to serve non-Mennonites funded by Mennonites. Care statistics over a year are impressive. Km 81 is a hospital dedicated to the treatment of people who have contracted leprosy. Yalve Sanga is an example of community development in areas of education, health, and agriculture. These were just some of what we saw. Settlers who came from revolution and war torn Europe said it wasn't good enough to say thanks and prosper; they had to make a difference by assisting local people in whatever ways possible.

The cooperative movement has been a way to make sure that survival is possible in years when drought strikes—perhaps two every five years; that and the Trans Chaco Highway, which gets goods to market. Paraguay is landlocked. Farming is always challenging in a region where temperatures are extremely high in summer and where rains are not to be depended on.

Music was the capstone at the MWC sessions. Music which came from the corners of the world. I was most moved by a Paraguayan choir directed by music educator Ed Toews. One of the pieces they sang was a Creole Mass, quite surprising in and of itself. If you ever get a chance to visit Paraguay—go; you will be greatly enriched. ♦

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## Chairman's Corner

by William Janzen

My wife and I were invited and travelled from Camrose to Red Deer on July 12, 1986 for a meeting to explore the idea of organiz-

ing a Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta. It was the first meeting after the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta and Saskatchewan realized that it was cumbersome for the two provinces to work together.



Checking back, I realize that a number of people that attended that first meeting are still involved. The organizational meeting took place on November 1, 1986 in Red Deer. In the life of a person, that is a long time but in the life of an organization it is a brief time.

When sitting in the MHSA centre, observing the activity, the collection of materials, the thrill for people when finding information about their ancestors, the realization of how important this organization is becomes clear.

Unfortunately, in my youth and working years, the years I had the opportunity to listen to the stories of my parents and the people in our church and community, my energies wanted to go in other directions. Now I hear other people lament the same thought, "Why did I not ask my parents before it was too late?" Now we pick up the

pieces and try to fit them together into a meaningful account of what life was like in our ancestors' time.

I have spent time in the MHSA centre and at times I try to be of some help. As I work, I am interrupted by materials that catch my eye and the desire to read them, simply because I once heard about the work of an individual and would like to know more. I realize time gets more precious as we get older and we are not guaranteed years of opportunity to write what we know of the story of our ancestors and then our own story.

I have come to believe that short stories of my youth, something about my work and how things were when I attended school, started work, etc., will become very important for my children and grandchildren when they get to be my age. I encourage each of you not to procrastinate like I have for many years. Collect information and write it down before the day comes when we no longer are capable of doing so.

The Board had a brief meeting after the Annual General Meeting in April and then we met once more on May 13 for an orientation meeting, learning to know each other and the volunteers in the MHSA centre. The agenda was

very flexible because we were attempting to determine where the organization is and begin dealing with items that the Board should work on so they can provide direction for the organization. We met again in September with a more structured agenda to address some of the questions that have arisen.

MHSA has been promoting itself with a display table at the MCC Alberta Relief Sale and further by having a table of books for sale at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Calgary. I have been in touch with some area representatives. We will try to stay in touch and provide assistance. We treasure the opportunity to speak with people and share what is available at the MHSA centre. Any suggestions you may have for letting the people in Alberta know what is available at the centre will be carefully considered. We hope to begin Special Interest Groups again and if you have any particular interest that you would like to meet with others for discussions and searches, please let us know.

At present our centre is open on Thursday of each week, but should there be someone that finds it difficult to come at that time, let us know and we will try our best to make the centre available. ❖

*(Continued from page 1)*

family members were faithful Anglicans.

My father left Eire in 1925 with plans to settle in Australia. He passed through Calgary and, after finding nothing but fog and rain in Vancouver, he returned to sunny Alberta where he became a linesman for the McGregor Power Company in Edmonton. After the crash in 1929, he homesteaded be-

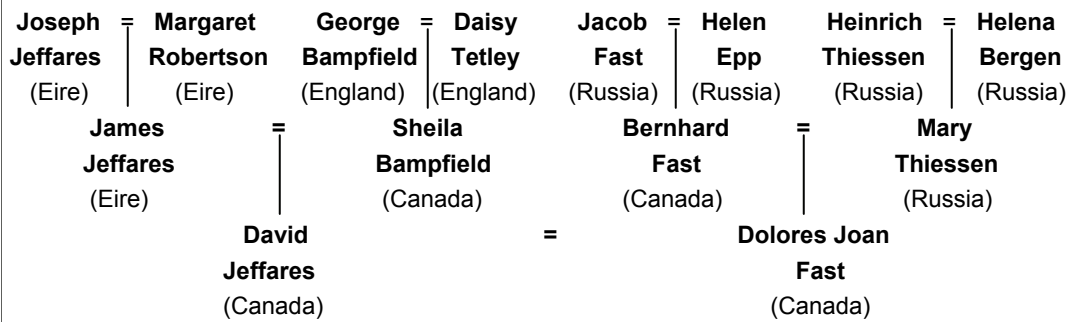
fore joining a huge threshing outfit which landed him on a farm across the Three Hills Creek from my mother's family. Imagination will tell the reader what happened next. My father farmed all his life. My mother was a capable homemaker who was active in her church and community affairs; she wrote news columns for several regional papers, enjoyed working on history book committees, and was an active member of the Alberta Women's Institute for over



David & Dolores Jeffares

for over





July 19, 1969 saw us standing before my father-in-law who accepted our wedding vows and challenged us with verses 1-5 in John 2. He did all things well and he exemplified everything that was good about the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada.



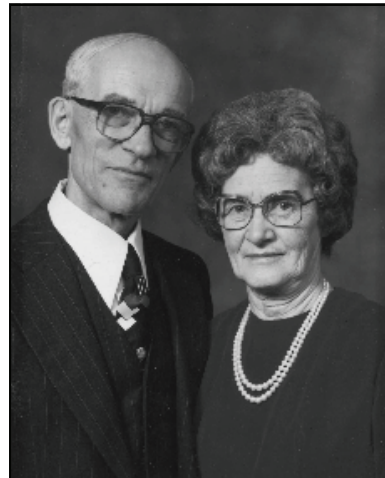
Jacob & Helena Fast, parents of Bernhard Fast

60 years.

My wife's lineage is Mennonite. Her father's family came to the Laird district north of Saskatoon during the "first wave." Her grandfather was very involved in formulating the German-English Academy in Rosthern which is now known as Rosthern Junior College (RJC).

My father-in-law graduated from the Academy; my wife and her two brothers attended RJC from which our children both graduated. Father-in-law, Bernhard Fast, was a remarkable man who earned three degrees. That education permitted him to teach, be a school principal and serve as a pastor all at once! My mother-in-law was a cook *par excellence* and she supported her husband in many ways as an active pastor's wife, homemaker for many student teachers and a faithful Sunday school teacher and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker. My wife's maternal grandmother escaped from Russia with all but one of her children during the "last wave" in the mid-twenties. They fortunately made it through the Red Gate and found their way to England from which they sailed on the S.S. Melita to find a safe home with their sponsors near Laird, Saskatchewan. Most of that family moved to BC where they carved out a very good living in market gardening.

My teaching career included three years in one-room rural schools, eight years in Red Deer, three years with the Department of National Defense in France, two years as Director of the Center of Education Studies at the Armidale Teacher's College in New South Wales, and five years at the University of Alberta. In 1967, while at University to complete my Bachelor of Education degree, I met my wife-to-be who was completing her M. Ed. at the time. Since I had not established myself in any particular church that year, I asked to accompany her to services at First Mennonite Church. That was the beginning of the "Choice." Who could resist the four-part harmony—something I had never heard so well-sung in the Anglican churches I had attended at home near our farm, in Calgary, in Red Deer, or even in England!



Bernhard & Mary Fast, parents of Dolores Jeffares

While we lived in Calgary, Menno Epp was our ecumenically-minded pastor who often travelled with me on the bus to work on the days when he was ministering at Providence Centre. Foothills Mennonite Church accepted my infant baptism and my confirmation as an equivalent for adult baptism. The membership service provided a meaningful entry into my decision to become *Mennonite by Choice*. The communion service was fashioned in the Anglican tradition as only Menno could do. I remember the tears in my mother's eyes as we took communion together that day. Sunday school teaching and a Christmas scene prepared by my class topped off the early stages of the road to becoming as good a Mennonite-Anglican/Anglican Mennonite as I could be. From then on, there were many significant elements that lay ahead of me to discover in the comprehensive tapestry of Mennonitism! My experiences have been richly blessed by unconditional acceptance in both Foothills Mennonite and First Mennonite (Edmonton) congregations. I have served on various church committees and have enjoyed leading worship and providing the children's feature during regular services. I have worked with the organizers of the annual Alberta MCC sale and, in one instance, with a crew doing Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) restoration in southern Alberta. I have

loved my involvement with the board responsible for the Ten Thousand Villages store on Whyte Avenue in Edmonton. I have shared some of my organizational and artistic skills related to the annual passion week services in Edmonton and the 50th anniversary of First Mennonite Church (Edmonton).

I am often in awe of what the many sides of the MCC accomplish in the world. I marvel at the fearless way in which young Mennonites go into deprived and sometimes dangerous settings to put God's intentions to work in demonstrable ways. Of great interest to me are the astounding stories of Mennonites who lived through incredible circumstances to settle in Canada and become significant influences in all walks of life, not only in Canada, but across the entire world. Ever since I saw *When They Shall Ask* several years ago, I have maintained the utmost of respect for Mennonite history and the ongoing influence present-day Mennonites exert upon me and the world.

In conclusion, although I occasionally appreciate a brush with my Anglican roots, I have never regretted the decision I made in the early 1970s to become a Mennonite by Choice. That was one of the wisest decisions I ever made! ❖

## What I Did on My Summer Vacation

by Colin Neufeldt

In May and June I travelled to Russia and Uzbekistan. One of the stops on my trip was Omsk, Western Siberia where I presented a paper at a conference entitled "Germans of Siberia: History and Culture" (June 2-4). The conference – which was sponsored by



Conference participants enjoying a Sunday picnic with members of the Apollonovka Church west of Omsk, Siberia

the F.M. Dostoevsky Omsk State University, the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, and Fresno Pacific University—attracted scholars and observers from Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Germany, the United States and Canada.

For many North American Mennonites, the word "Siberia" conjures up images of suffering and tribulation in Soviet gulags, but as participants of the conference learned, Siberia was more than a place of punishment and forced labour. In the first decade of the 20th century, Mennonites from Ukraine and other regions of Russia migrated to the Omsk and Slavgorod regions in southern Siberia where they looked forward to starting a new life.

More than 30 conference papers shed new light on the challenges faced by these Siberian Mennonite pioneers, as well as the plight of Mennonites exiled to Siberia and the struggles of Siberian Mennonites in the post-Stalinist era. Some of topics covered in the papers included the following: "Siberia in the Mennonite Imagination," "Mennonite Midwives in Siberia," "Asiatic Russia and Canada," and the "Experience of Mennonite Kulaks in Siberian Special Settlements during the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-1932." There are also plans to have some of the papers published in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*; abstracts of the papers have also been published in *Немцы Сибири: История и Культура / отв. Ред. Т. Б. Смирнова, Н.А. Томилов. Омск: Издательский дом << Наука >>; изд-во ОмГПУ, 2010.*

The conference was more than just three days of fascinating and scholarly presentations. It also included a talent show presented by students at F.M. Dostoevsky Omsk State University, a visit to the Omsk Museum of Regional History, and a tour of villages at the German National District just outside of Omsk.

One of the highlights of the conference was a weekend visit to Men-



nonite Brethren villages located approximately a hundred kilometres west of Omsk. When we arrived at the villages of Mirolyubovka (formerly Alexanderkrone), Issilkul, Solntsevka (formerly Rosenort, Friedensruh, Tiegerweide) and Apollonovka (formerly Waldheim), we were greeted by freckled-faced boys and little girls in long dresses chattering away in Low German. Life in these Mennonite Brethren settlements centres on agriculture, as most villagers are shareholders and workers in the village *kollektivs* (agricultural cooperatives).

The inhabitants of these villages have surnames such as Enns, Neufeld, Toews, and Wiens, and many are members of the regional Christian association known as the *Omsk Brüderschaft* (brotherhood). First organized in 1907, the *Brüderschaft* was re-established in the late 1950s after decades of state oppression. By the late 1980s the *Brüderschaft* had more than 2,300 members, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union the membership declined sharply with the emigration of a number of Baptist families to Germany. Today the *Brüderschaft* numbers approximately 1,000 women and nearly 500 men. The “patriarch” for many of these believers is Nikolai Dikman (Dueckmann) who spent many years between 1950 and 1975 in exile for his religious work and leadership.

Two other people who have had a tremendous impact on these Siberian Mennonite communities are Walter and Ann Willms from British Columbia. Over the past few years the Willms have spent up to six months of each year in Apollonovka helping Mennonite farmers develop and expand their agricultural enterprises. The Willms were instrumental in importing modern farm machinery to the area and constructing a large grain mill and bakery. As a result of the Willms’ work, the Mennonites of Apollonovka

have become economic leaders in the region and they are very optimistic about their future.

When I asked some residents of Apollonovka about whether they plan to immigrate to Germany, most said they had no intention of leaving Russia. They confided that their relatives in Germany have warned them not to come to Germany for a number of reasons: Mennonite children often lose their faith and leave the church in Germany, farm land in Germany is prohibitively expensive, and life in Germany is too busy and alienating. For many Russian Mennonites, Siberia is a land of great economic and agricultural potential, and thus they have no intention of moving anywhere else. The Russian government gives each Mennonite family up to \$10,000 to build a new home—another incentive to stay in Siberia. ❖

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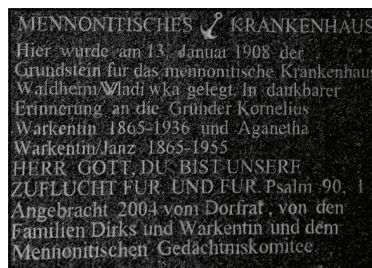
a request she had prayed for several years. Her prayer was answered and she was constrained to go through with her promise. Aganetha delivered many babies in that community in the hospital and also did home deliveries.

When the Bolsheviks appeared on the scene, the country was in chaos and anarchy reigned. Machno, a marauding pirate in the Ukraine was attacking Mennonite villages—stealing and murdering—many of the inhabitants. Grandfather Warkentin audaciously requested that Machno see him about his concerns. This was arranged and they had a very spirited discussion about the raids and the opportunity for his wounded soldiers to be treated at the Wald-

heim hospital. This was agreed to on the proviso that he would never raid the Waldheim village.

The hospital staff treated many of Machno’s soldiers. The success of this pact spared raids from Machno but did not prevent the Bolsheviks to attack later with similar results.

The communists developed full control of the village in their campaign of 1920 and 1921, with the hospital being the last building to be under their direct influence by 1922. Aganetha Warkentin realized her post as midwife and manager of the hospital was concluded; she no longer could serve in the same capacity. Her husband Cornelius had already left for North America in 1920, and in 1923 she crossed the Ocean to North America with their three children. In 1924 they



moved from Newport, Washington to Winkler Manitoba and shortly after that to Winnipeg in 1925. She had hoped to continue her midwifery work in Winnipeg but licensing was not available. The Warkentins' oldest son studied medicine in St. Petersburg and completed his degree in Odessa in 1914, intending to work in the Waldheim Hospital. However, as soon as the war began, he was sent to the front lines to care for wounded soldiers. In 1918 he left for the Netherlands and worked in the Dutch Embassy as a secretary. In 1925 he went to Canada and worked for the CPR as an immigration agent. As acquiring a licence to practice medicine in Canada would require him to rewrite exams and do an internship or residency he never pursued that possibility. He enjoyed working with refugees and remained with the CPR until his retirement in 1956.

When we visited in June of 2004, the community had made every effort to spruce up the place. In fact, our shoes stuck to the new paint on the floor, because they had just finished painting that morning. The old laboratory equipment left much to be desired but we were impressed with the cleanliness and efforts made by the staff. A lot of the equipment in the small hospital resembled the equipment in the Winnipeg General Hospital in the 1950s.

Today the hospital is used for seniors who are homeless or incapable of coping on their own. When we visited, 10 beds were occupied; bathroom facilities contained only sinks and no flush toilets. There was also a problem with the roof, leaking on rainy days. The windows looked old, but the trim had been painted many times to give a better appearance. The exte-



rior grounds were beautiful many perennials were blooming and there were small pathways in the garden for patients to walk about and enjoy the beauty.

At the welcoming ceremony, a local band played the national anthems as well as other musical selections. The hospital staff sang to us and the mayor of Waldheim welcomed us. The State Health Minister gave a short address.

Our family, five in all, were called to the platform and presented with floral bouquets. The plaque that had been placed on the walls was unveiled. We presented the hospital with photos of our grandparents, which later were placed in the foyer of the hospital.

Our family contributed money for the hospital to repair or replace the roof and to install toilets. This was completed the following year. Today they wish to improve the hospital by adding more laboratory equipment and an electrocardiogram machine. It was the family's request to keep the hospital open for maternity and well baby clinics, as originally it was built for obstetric use. Communication with representatives in Halbstadt say that the hospital continues to function and is an asset to the community.

We are thrilled that our ancestors have been involved in something as pivotal as medical care in the village of Waldheim, early in the twentieth century. ❖

## From Canada to Mexico and Back

by Angelica Dyck,  
Winnipeg, AB

*(Editor's note: Angelica Dyck, a student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, was summer student pastor at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton. She agreed to tell us of her family history which involves living in Mexico. Here-with her account.)*

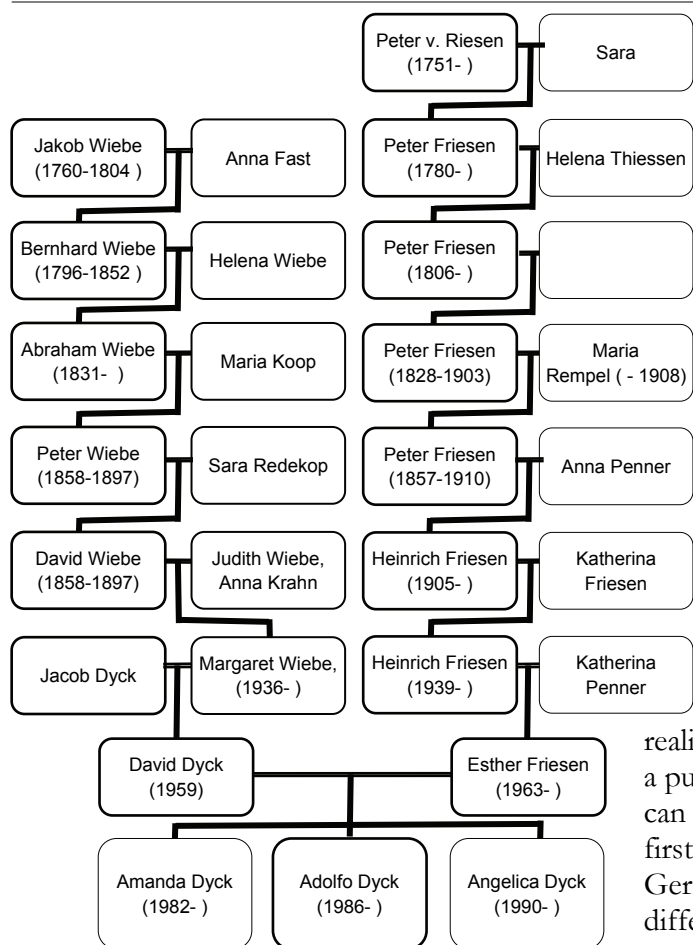
I have always claimed that when getting a dog, it is



Back: Amanda (sister), Adolfo (brother), Angelica (author), David (father), Esther (mother), Ellie Zacharias (mom's sister), Hans Zacharias (uncle)

Front: Carla Zacharias (cousin), Tina Friesen (grandmother), Henry Friesen (grandfather), Patricia Zacharias (cousin).





best to get a mutt because they are cheaper, friendlier, and healthier. Pure bred dogs are simply a waste because with the amount of money put into them, they return the favour with genetic diseases and chronic disabilities. That has always been my take on the issue.

I had an “aha!” moment the other day when I realized that I myself am a purebred. I am a Mexican Mennonite whose first language is Low German. I think it works differently with humans

was educated in a private school in the Bergthal Colony and has left behind a journal that has helped piece his life together. He and his wife Maria Rempel landed in Quebec on July 19, 1875 after the journey on the S.S. Canadian. They settled in the West Reserve (Manitoba), a founding family of Rosenort (known now as Rosetown). There was a rift in the Old Colony Church (Old Colony being Chortiza Colony) and Peter did not agree with their conservative position. His family joined the Bergthal group, also known as Sommerfelders and moved to Halbstadt around 1880. Peter and Maria remained there and farmed until Peter's death in 1903. Maria died five years later.

Peter's son Peter was born in 1857 in Russia but left in 1875 with his parents. He died at a young age in 1910, leaving behind a family built with Anna Penner. This family moved to Mexico in the 1920s. This is where my family leaves the direct Peter line as my great grandfather was the youngest of the sons and was named Heinrich, born in 1905 in Canada. Heinrich married a Katherina Friesen and had only two sons, Heinrich and David. Heinrich is my grandfather, whom I call *Opa*, born in 1939. *Opa* married a Katherina Penner and farmed in the *Darp* (village) of Santa Clara in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. My mother Esther was born in 1963, the oldest of three children.

Now on to the other side, the Wiebe side, it can be traced about as far back as the Friesen line. Take note that I'm tracing my Father's matriarchal line. The farthest back that anyone has been able to trace is Jakob Wiebe, born in 1760. Jakob lived on the Vistula Delta in Poland, where the Low German

though, because in true Mexican Mennonite fashion I am quite thrifty, I am healthy, and I would consider myself quite friendly towards others. I have a strongly rooted Anabaptist background that makes its way through western Europe, Russia, Canada, and Mexico. I am fortunate that both sides of my family have produced books that trace the family tree as far back as they were able to go. I find such things quite thrilling. The issue has now become which side do I find most interesting? Which story do I find most worth telling? The simple truth is that I just cannot decide. I will attempt to share with all of you the story of the Wiebe and Friesen families.

My mother, Esther Dyck, is originally a Friesen girl. An interesting fact about our name is that the earliest ancestor traced, Peter Friesen, is shown in many records as named Von Riesen. That last name first originates from a province in Holland back to around 1547. The simplest explanation for the change is that it was sometimes written as v. Riesen and “v” in German is pronounced like an “f.” The change became inevitable. Peter Von Riesen (Friesen) was born in 1751 in Poland, which eventually became Prussian territory. After his wife Sara died, Peter took his two children to Russia in 1788, settling in the village of Neuendorf in the Chortiza colony in 1789. Peter had a son he named Peter, born in 1780. This was the beginning of nine generations of a direct line of Peter Friesens which ended with the death of an infant boy.

This second Peter Friesen married a Helena Thiessen and moved to the village of Burwalde in 1803. He did not take up farming like his father, but was known as a *Tischler* (woodworker). His son Peter, born in 1806, died young leaving only two sons. The Peter Friesen born in 1828



language is known to have originated. In 1789, Jakob and his wife Anna (Fast) Wiebe settled in Russia. He died in 1804 in the same village in which he had settled. As far as I know I am the first to realize the following discovery as my parents were unaware of the fact. Peter Friesen and Jakob Wiebe both settled in Russia in 1789 and they both made Neuendorf village of the Chortiza Colony their home. So perhaps way back in the late 1700s my parent's ancestral families knew each other.

Jakob's son Bernhard was born in 1796. Bernhard was only eight when his father died. In 1823 he and his wife Helena (Wiebe) Wiebe moved to Neuhorst village where they remained until his death in 1852. Abraham Wiebe was born to Bernhard and Helena in 1831. Abraham's family helped establish Fuerstenland Colony in 1864. In the same year he was also called to minister. The lease on the land from the Russian government was due to expire in 1879 and the renewal terms did not look promising. Abraham, his wife Maria (Koop) Wiebe, and children immigrated to Canada on the S.S. Quebec, landing on June 8, 1876. This is only a year after Peter Friesen and family landed in Quebec. Abraham settled his family in the West Reserve in the Hochfeld settlement.

Abraham's son Peter was born in 1858 in Neuhorst, Russia but moved with the family to Canada. Two years after arrival Peter was baptized into the Reinlander Mennoniten Gemeinde (Old Colony Church) and married Sara Redekop. The two moved from Hochfeld to Blumenhof and then Reinfeld in 1881. Peter died in 1897 of tuberculosis, which is tragic because two years earlier his son

David was born. David Wiebe married Judith Wiebe, a first wife who died leaving him one child. He later remarried to Anna Krahn who blessed the world with six more children. David was a minister who made his living as a farmer. He had moved with his first wife to Mexico in the 1920s. It was not until the age of 43 that he received his call into the ministry while he was living in Blumenort, Chihuahua, Mexico. He was a much loved man whose death followed a long journey of suffering. This was my great-grandfather.

David left behind a daughter, my *Oma* (grandmother), Margaret Wiebe born in 1936 in Blumenort. She was baptized at the age of 19, in 1955 in the *Altkolonier* (Old Colony) church and married Jacob Dyck. Jacob's uncle, Isaak Dyck, was the *Aeltester* (Pastor who has the authority to baptize and serve communion) of the Old Colony church in Canada and led the first migration to Mexico.

Jacob and Margaret Dyck moved to Gnadenfeld, Chihuahua where they still reside to this day. They have ten children, one of whom died at age 17 in a car accident. Their second-born son was my father, David Dyck, born 1959 in Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, Mexico.

My parents met at the Quinta Lupita school which my father attended after his family left the Old Colony tradition. My parents married in 1982 in the Blumenau Church which could be considered a "Conference" church. Two years later my older sister Amanda was born, followed by Adolfo in 1986, and then myself, Angelica, in 1990. My parents farmed as a living and served as deacons in an Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church from 1988-1991. In 1993 David and Esther Dyck left Mexico due to the economy and travelled to Leamington, Ontario. Their plan was to stay for only six months, yet they never found their way back. Leamington was where I grew up. I have made many visits to Mexico where the majority of my family remains but I now spend most of my time in Winnipeg, Manitoba studying Theology and Counseling. I noticed in my research that my family has had quite a few Aeltesters and ministers, but I would be the first female pastor from either side of the family. ❖

## 2009 MHSA Annual General Meeting

by Erna Goerzen

The 2009 AGM of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta at Abbeydale Christian Fellowship, on April 10, 2010 was attended by 39 people.

Chairman Colin Neufeldt reported that a survey was done to investigate the volunteer situation in MHSA. Victor Wiebe, a retired senior librarian at the University of Saskatchewan, conducted 20-30 interviews in person or by e-mail and then reported to the MHSA Board. His recommendations are being considered and implemented by the Board.

In the financial report, we learned that the MHSA had \$17,134 in revenue, expenses were \$14,265 and there was a bank balance of \$7,836 at year-end on December 31, 2009. The budg-





et for 2010 is set at \$20,200. Treasurer Dave Pankratz explained that the budget is based on the premise that at year-end there should be enough money in the bank to cover the projected core costs for the coming year, which are foreseen to be about \$7,700.

MCC has raised the rent for MHSA space in the MCC building from \$300 to \$450 a month. The MHSA Board is negotiating its agreement with MCC.

The MHSA is now open to the public on Thursday of each week instead of Saturday. Forty-three accessions were added to the archives this year. There are 2,500 catalogued books in the library and 1,300 photos have been described in a database. Visitors to the MHSA are encouraged to help identify people in the photos. The website has 830 pages and was visited 4,400 times in 2009. About five volunteers work with Judith Rempel, Coordinator of the MHSA.

Elections brought in five people to various positions:

- Bill Janzen, Calgary, Chairman of MHSA
- Anna Marie Boyes, Calgary, Board member at large
- Ellie Janz, Calgary, Treasurer.
- David Wiebe-Neufeldt, Lethbridge, Board member at large

and Representative for the Coaldale area

- Mary Burkholder, Duchess, Board member at large and Representative for the Eastern Irrigation District.

Elected for the Nominating Committee were: Dave Wiebe-Neufeldt for Southern Alberta, Irene Klassen for Calgary, Vince Friesen and Colin Neufeldt for Edmonton.

Scrolls in appreciation for their work in MHSA were presented by Henry Goerzen to Irene Klassen, the friendly greeter and multi-tasker at the MHSA; and to Dave Pankratz who strives to keep MHSA user-friendly and has done such careful and thorough work in it.

A Mennonite Heritage Picnic was held July 31, 2010 at the Ernie Wiens acreage just outside of Sherwood Park. While not an MHSA event, MHSA members were heartily invited to attend.

The morning session was adjourned at this point and the afternoon promised three very interesting presentations by Eleanore (Rempel) Woollard, Ted Regehr and Dave Pankratz. ♦



## Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta – Report on Presentations made at the April 10, 2010 Calgary Meeting

by Henry Janzen

The presentations at the April 10, 2010 meeting of the MHSA in Calgary provided the most interesting of reflections by three different authors: Eleanore Woollard, who regards herself as “The Reluctant Author;” Dr. Ted Regehr, well-known historian and author; and Dave Pankratz, who is working on a book on his parents’ diaries. The authors launched their respective books with MHSA and in Dave’s case shared his work to date.

### “The Reluctant Author”

Eleanore Woollard

Eleanore presented her experiences related to co-authoring the book entitled, *Consider the Threshing Stone*, a collaborative effort with her brother-in-law David Smucker. She referred to a photograph in the book of five people in their caskets whose identity had re-



mained a mystery – this prompted her interest in their story which led to research into the experiences of her grandfather in particular. The book's cover has a photograph of a broken threshing stone, a photograph she took in 2003 while on her trip to Russia to visit the region of her grandparents.

This threshing stone became symbolic of her people and their village. The threshing stone was a farm implement pulled by a horse and used for the threshing of grain at the time. It has become an iconic symbol connecting her family's present generation to its forebears who lived in the Russia.

The photograph of the five people in their caskets is a photograph of some 90 years ago, in which the deceased had not been identified to her—five murder victims of Russian revolutionary times all known by her grandparents who had been at the funeral. Her father had the names of the individuals who were members of her father's extended Thiessen family.

Prior to her trip Eleanore had collaborated with David Smucker, who had located copies of her grandfather's writings in Winnipeg. Included was a picture of her grandfather, Jacob J. Rempel, who was attired in a medical corps uniform. The preparatory work gave her the impetus for on-site fact finding on her trip to the family's former Tiegenhof estate, situated some 38 kilometers northeast of Zaporozhe in today's Ukraine. Her grandfather together with Russian children had attended school on the estate. She searched for historical markers on her trip and the threshing stone turned out to be the most significant.

Her grandfather Jacob needed to leave the estate for higher edu-

cation. However, he was called home at the age of 16 to work the farm. After his marriage he relocated to his wife's village, Blumenthal, to farm. During World War I he was assigned by the state to the medical corps. The medical ship to which he was deployed was painted in a military grey and served as a medical facility. He received training in medicines and treatment of wounds while on the Black Sea, training which would serve his family well for what was to happen in the future.

In late 1917 Jacob Rempel returned home and found their community in turmoil due to roving bandits. In January 1918 the murder of the Thiesens took place and others fled. Her grandfather went back to Tiegenhof where peasants from the nearby village came to request that a cooperative be formed. Jacob became one of three managers. The cooperative was successful for a short time. Her grandfather operated the mill as he had operated a similar mill in Tiegenhof. As a refugee he later operated a mill in Landskrone and subsequently, undertook operations of a farm in Petershagen where they lived until their emigration. While at Petershagen he was invited to a conference in Tiege in 1923, where he met with B.B. Janz to discuss possibilities for emigration. He became part of a three person committee to work at developing a plan for group emigration from Molotschna, work which eventually also took him to Kharkov.

Returning from Kharkov, Rempel was again asked to work in medical services during the typhoid epidemic in 1922. He immigrated to Canada in 1924 with his second wife and two surviving children, his first wife and two daughters having died in 1921. He continued his paramedical work in Ontario for a brief time and then moved to Grunthal, Manitoba where he farmed and worked with the National Trust Company which he was qualified to do with his facility in the English language. He later took on responsibilities as a municipal councilor. He moved to Niagara Township to farm, where he also was involved on the board of the Credit Union. Eleanore knew her grandfather as a person keenly aware of what his grandchildren were doing, an able and quick learner up to his death in 1980.

As to the process and work of preparing the book, Eleanore was modest as to her own contributions giving most of the credit to the others who were involved in one way or another in producing the book. She provided a good sense of her experience searching for leads and connections and found some of her grandfather's writings in German Mennonite periodicals.

## ***A Generation of Vigilance***

*Dr. Ted Regehr*

Dr. Ted Regehr, presented his experience with his most recent book the *Generation of Vigilance* a story of two church communities in the 1950s and 1960s, Coaldale and Yarrow.

His interpretation of the story, principally covering a 20 year period of the life of Johannes and Tina Harder, a Mennonite minister and his wife at Yarrow from 1930 to 1950. The story is one of confronting the issue of what





is sinful and how to address it. His presentation enabled listeners to place themselves into the situation. It was also refreshing because it brought to light in a balanced way the kinds of things that had profound consequences in the life of a congregation. This generated an appreciation for the greater openness which we experience today. Writing the book would have been a challenging task both in capturing the interest of readers while correctly finding balance among the many sensitivities of the time. In researching the book he appreciated his contact with Peter Penner who had grown up with in the community and who facilitated access to the materials of Johannes and Tina Harder, minister and spouse at the Yarrow Mennonite Church in the 1930s and 1940s, and with Jacob A. Loewen, who grew up in the Harder home.

The author showed how the church's focus of the time was to identify

what was sinful, a practice not restricted to the Yarrow church but a rather broadly based approach of the time. He cited the example of Goshen College which needed to shut down for a year because the professors had become much too liberal in their theology. The efforts of church leaders to ensure clarity on questions of what is sinful resulted in much

discussion and debate. Drawing from the Amish where electricity was not allowed, the question had come up about whether it was wrong to use electricity to run a printing press to produce religious materials. After careful consideration an exception needed to be made. Similarly, the Old Order Mennonites in Ontario had struggled with the question of use of the telephone an instrument of gossip and therefore sinful. It was concluded that since the telephone was important for agricultural business, it was acceptable if located in the barn. Thus, examples were drawn for theological consideration. Mutual concern, admonition and censure became the options for disciplinary actions. Censure took different forms with different groups and included not allowing the parishioner to attend communion until matters were straightened out, not being able to shake hands, and prohibiting marital relations.

The Harder diaries indicated their focus upon strict enforcement at one stage prompting a debate among churches as to which church the Lord had entrusted to be the custodian of the greatest number of rules. To be ad-

ressed in this context were acts such as reading novels, using playing cards, attending public amusements, membership in secret societies, roller skating, women wearing slacks or any artificial adornments, owning a television set, going to court and attending Youth for Christ meetings which were altogether too worldly. As use of perfume was forbidden but deodorant was not, what decision would be made on perfumed deodorant? After setting

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*...the church's focus of the time was to [precisely] identify what was sinful, a practice not restricted to the Yarrow church but a rather broadly based approach of the time.*

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*Later, there was a ... movement away from rules toward principles...*

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forth the rules all variances were to be treated with harshness.

Tina Harder took it upon herself to ensure that women were appropriately attired in the Yarrow church. Bridal gowns needed to be inspected prior to the wedding. On one occasion Johannes refused to marry a couple until appropriate clothing was worn to meet Tina's standards.

The author indicated that the Yarrow church during this time

was not without its success as many parishioners had recently emigrated from Russia where they had experienced destruction and loss, had difficulty with the English language and were now struggling for survival.

They too saw the outside world as hostile and evil where the general Canadian society and urbanization were threats to their security. In time the English-German dichotomy became an issue within the church. Among the successes were that the church grew in numbers from 200 to 2,000 people during the Harders' ministry. Despite this the Harders' vigilance began to collapse.

The Harders' eldest son joined the military and the church needed to make adjustments. Another son brought home his girlfriend who had a different background and



whom Tina refused to let in the house. Their daughter married an outsider. The Harders' rule against having radios no longer carried relevance when Harder himself began to be part of religious radio broadcasts. There was a growing recognition within the church of the ways in which parishioners had been treated. Jacob A. Loewen whom the Harders had taken in, became a missionary and subsequently earned a PhD. He modified his own views previously developed through Harder's mentoring and delivered a paper which challenged the view previously held by the Mission Board which Harder chaired that the concept of missions meant "overseas" mission. It now included not only overseas mission but also local mission work according to Loewen's view. Harder declared that this view would render in vain the mission work he had been involved with for 20 years. Harder died of a heart attack in 1964 having been a church leader from 1931 to 1949. Regrettably, Loewen felt that he had contributed to his adopted father's death.

The author observed that there are pendulum movements when churches change their views on what is sinful and their vigilance of their parishioners. Sometimes these are influenced by changes in their social and economic environments resulting from urbanization and industrialization, as well as the personalities of their leaders. He questioned whether the movement away from rules toward principles isn't more sustainable in the long term, much as Jesus' example of tearing down walls whilst the Scribes and Pharisees were building up walls. The earlier experiences of the Yarrow and Coaldale churches could be contrasted for

example with the Ottawa Mennonite Church. One issue for the churches was the question of which projects should receive the support of the church. The Ottawa church placed a container at the door for anyone wishing to contribute toward a particular project. There was no emphasis on the collection of donations during the service. The Yarrow and Coaldale churches had regarded higher education with a great deal of suspicion while in contrast at the Ottawa church most adults had university degrees.



### ***In Their Own Words: The Diaries of My Parents David and Martha Pankratz***

*Dave Pankratz*

Dave Pankratz presented his writing project respecting the diaries of his parents by sharing his experience in three dimensions – what the diaries are about, the challenges he has experienced thus far, and what he himself has learned in the process, as well as a few surprises for him.

Dave's father had spent his formative years in the Russian region of Omsk from where he immigrated to Canada with his remaining parental family members. In 1992 and at age 92, Dave's father, while in a nursing home and legally blind, determined that Dave was to have their diaries ensuring that they would not be lost or destroyed. Dave's mother had passed away some three years earlier. His father who was a religious man had lived by faith but was still haunted in the latter years of his life by the experiences in Russia as a youth.

Dave received the suitcases containing the diaries in 1992, together with photographs and a 13 page memoir his father had written of his recollections of life in Russia. Initially Dave translated the memoir and distributed it to his family. He concluded that as his children did not understand the German language in which the diaries were written, he would try to place the content of the diaries into English to make the story of his parents known to his children and grandchildren.

The diaries cover three periods totaling more than 25 years of his parents' 54 year marriage with one period from 1936 to 1940 at Fannystelle, Manitoba; 1948 to 1952 at Greendale in the Fraser Valley; and from 1963 to 1983 in Vancouver. One discovery was that the Great Depression of the 1930s had little impact upon his father. Poverty and work were there before, during and after the Depression. During the first period of time they had lived on a rented farm together with his father's parents and siblings.

The diaries refer not only to weather conditions day to day, but importantly to the "distant drum beats of war" – German rearmament and Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. While the execution of Dave's grandfather in 1921 continued to haunt his father, finding expression in his diaries, the diaries made reference to a daily faith component by way of a scripture passage. Later the diaries were written by his mother. For the period from

1949 to 1951, her entries were made on particular squares of boxboard which indicated the level of frugality of his parents. A hole had been made at the top so that they could be tied together with string. For the latest period exercise books were used.

During the second period his family had lived north of Yarrow at Greendale, a predominantly Mennonite community where Dave grew up, and tended dairy, mushroom, and chicken farms. His parents did not own the land and made a living working for others. Raspberries and strawberries were an important part of their livelihood, which became also the preoccupation. Produce grown on the land was marketed including the sale of bundles of raspberry canes at \$10 per thousand. During the summer beans, gladiolas, and cucumbers were also grown. Odd jobs were taken on to supplement family income odd jobs, such as picking fruit and hops.

Dave grew up in a Mennonite church in Greendale which others called the “cowboy” church due to differences of vigilance. He attended the church-supported Mennonite school. He recalled that apart from a roller skating rink of interest only to

the young people, the social life of his home consisted of his parents and three or four other couples coming together to visit with the men in the living room and the women in the kitchen until there was a call for *Faspa*, the afternoon lunch prepared by his mother. She had been active as a Sunday school teacher and in the ladies’ mission group. Dave observed that his parents maintained a high interest in relatives, family trees, and relationships to which he attributes their keeping of diaries.

The last set of the diaries for 1963 and 1970 to 1983 cover the time his parents lived in Vancouver where his parents worked as caretakers of apartment buildings and where they took up residency in the Menno Court retirement home. He notes that his mother’s family was regarded as liberal by Mennonite standards but he remembered his Mom as pragmatic.

Dave indicated that challenges in the work with the diaries were that they are written in German and used words and sayings of the time making it necessary for one to think in German. In addition, the brevity of entries presented a challenge. He found no clear English equivalents for some of the German expressions.

He researched much Mennonite history to provide context. His biggest challenge, however, was finding time to work on the project. His solution was to spend a bit of time every day on one more of the diaries.

The diaries are repetitious. For example, in the 1936 to 1940 diaries his father was continually dismayed both with the inability to acquire their own place and not living in a Mennonite community. However, some entries began with “A new year, new hope...” No crops had been lost. His parents did not own the land and they walked to church, they had friends and were occupied with labour, always asking God for his blessing. Dave concluded that it was evident from the diaries that the years 1948 to 1952 were the happiest years of his parents’ lives. The diaries written at Greendale held a different tone; the war was over and the Canadian economy was improved. The author came across some surprises in the diaries.

An interesting anecdote from 1938 was that his father had attended a party in Winnipeg on the birthday of Hitler. He reported that Hitler’s stand against communism appealed to him, perhaps not surprisingly, as he had come through the Russian revolution. It was evident that his parents favoured the monarchy rather than “rule by the masses”—an influence from the Russian experience.

His work to date on the diaries has been done mostly on his father’s diaries and he is interested now in working on his mother’s diaries. He believes that diaries while “in the moment” give an understanding of life as it unfolded and the “here and now” experiences of the people concerned. However, they are about the preoccupations of the day. He felt fortunate in having been given the diaries for the unique insight they brought him into his parents’ world. He found that reading the diaries over time allowed him to savour the experience and to enjoy the memories. “It is like having a visit or conversation with my parents,” becoming more meaningful as the time becomes more distant. Two important things are reinforced: faith and life. He believes that his parents wrote the diaries for themselves. He hopes for the courage to leave them to the archivists after the work is done.

In conclusion, my personal reaction is one of gratitude and surprise; gratitude for the authors bringing to life their stories. These authors have done a great deal of work to find, discover and relate in a balanced way someone else’s story for our benefit. ♦

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*... diaries ... in the moment give an understanding of life as it unfolded and the “here and now” experiences... . However, they are about the preoccupations of the day.*

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## Salem Mennonite Church 100th Anniversary

by Mary Burkholder

A celebration was held at the Salem Mennonite Church, Tofield, on July 24th & 25th, 2010 with approximately 600 guests in attendance. All activities were held at the church grounds, including the registration, which was held in the huge tent beside the church on Saturday. This was also a place for renewing acquaintances and visiting. Each registered guest had a preprinted name tag that served as a head count and an identification for those that needed a reminder of names.

A wonderful supper, which was catered by the local congregation, was enjoyed by all the registered guests. After supper, there was a 65 voice choir practice held in the main sanctuary in preparation for the Sunday morning service and the afternoon Celebration.

The auction for the first printed copy of the 2010 Salem Mennonite Church history book was held after the supper meal with Graham Wideman of Camrose making the highest bid of \$1,500. During the evening youth activities for ages 14 and over were organized by Milo Stauffer. Portable playground equipment was set up in the front of the church for the children of many ages to enjoy on Saturday.

Sunday morning service began with congregational singing *a capella* of "Come We That Love the Lord" in honour of Paul Voegtlin followed by "Therefore the Redeemed." Pastor Mark Loeven of the Salem Mennonite Church had the call to worship and was Master of Ceremonies for the morning. Levi Smoker, a former pastor



of the Salem Mennonite Church, had the children's feature entitled "Remember What God Has Done, 1910-2010." Ray Landis, who was a former Northwest Mennonite Conference Pastor, was "looking back" on the last 100 years, and Mal Braun, the current NWMC Pastor, was "looking ahead" to the next 100 years. Jim Boettger, an early choir leader in the 1970s, led the mass choir singing "Come, Come Ye Saints" and "Praise the Lord, Sing Hallelujah." Other congregational songs that were sung during the morning service were "Oh For a Heart to Praise My God," and "Christ Returneth."

Carl Hansen, a former pastor of the Salem Church, had prayer for the noon meal followed by singing "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." A wonderful noon meal was catered by A-1 Catering from the Camrose area.

The afternoon celebration began at 2 pm with the welcome and prayer by Merlin Stauffer, the MC for the afternoon. Presentations and congratulations were received by Lonnie Lauber, Salem Elder Board Chairman. Don Kauffman, historian and grandson of Deacon J.E. Kauffman, gave a historical view of the Salem church which is a part of the Northwest Mennonite Conference once known as the Alberta-Saskatchewan Conference. He was limited by time constraints but had so much more to tell us. An offering was taken to cover the weekend expenses, which thankfully were met. Favourite congregational songs that were sung for the afternoon were "He Hideth My Soul," "Faith of Our Fathers," and "Great is Thy faithfulness" The mass choir sang "Lift Your Glad Voices" and "Go In Love," again led by Jim Boettger. Closing prayer and grace was followed by the singing of "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." A light refreshment was served before the guests departed.

The planning committee consisting of Joe and Elaine Kauffman, Roger and Margaret Stutzman and Marvin and Margaret Weber made a short weekend a very memorable time. Every detail was planned and executed: RV parking, Car parking, bathroom facilities, playground equipment, displays of clubs, archival material, family heirlooms, and Snack Shop provided by the Salem MYF. The weekend was a great experience for me even though I did not grow up in the church but have relatives in the area.

Orders for the history book can be placed with Diane Martin by phone (her phone number is 780-662-2946) or by email to the church office. See



review below.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be all glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Jude v. 24 & 25. ❖

***A Mennonite History: A Century of God's Faithfulness at Salem Mennonite Church Tofield, Alberta, 1910 - 2010, Written by the People, Edited by Joseph J. Voegtlin***

This book is a historical review of how the Salem Mennonite Church began and about the early settlers from the neighbouring towns that formed the congregation. The introduction was written by Joseph Voegtlin and the foreword by Don Kauffman. A chronological report lists many births, marriages, deaths and other events from the time of the church formation until 1924.

The book gives a biographical review of all the ministers, bishops and deacons who have served to the present. “More than 165 writers contributed to this work.”

The book includes many pictures of the different faces of the church building. The church clubs and their contributions are described. In addition, the major contributions to the church made by Sunday School, Prison Ministry, Teachers, Farming, Business, etc. are identified.

A large part of the book is de-

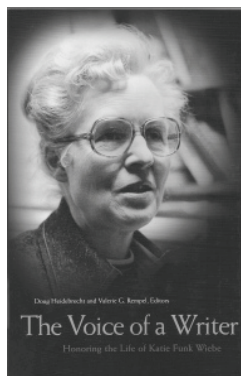
voted to Family Histories which have been written by those that attended the Salem Mennonite Church and have supplied family pictures.

This book has an ISBN of 978-0-9809439-2-4 with 288 pages including a detailed index. Orders for the Salem Mennonite history book can be placed with Diane Martin - her phone number is 780-662-2946; or, by email to the church office at salemchurch@live.ca The cost is \$35 for the book, plus an additional \$10 for shipping and handling. ❖

***Review of The Voice of a Writer: Honoring the Life of Katie Funk Wiebe***

by Peter Penner

*Published in Goessel, Kansas and Winnipeg by Kindred Productions, 2010, edited by Doug Heidebrecht and Valerie G. Rempel, fully documented, including a comprehensive bibliography of 93 pages; 354 pages in all.*



Katie Funk Wiebe, the writer from Canada who wondered whether she would ever be heard in her church, has now been chosen as among the most influential leaders in the Mennonite Brethren Church, both in MB Canada and MB USA. [1] Harold Jantz particularly brought this out in his many “voices of affirmation” from within her denomination. She was finally recognized as a “woman among the brethren” (133). Not only there, the editors of *The Mennonite*, the paper of Mennonite Church USA, have named Katie among

“the top twenty people during the 20th century who had significantly influenced the faith and life of the Mennonite people....” Based in Hillsboro and Wichita since 1962 she has topped everyone in sheer volume, having published more books, columns, articles, reviews and made more presentations than anyone else in MB, perhaps in Mennonite, history. [2]

All of this she produced after she was widowed in 1962 and left with the responsibility of four young children. She did what she had to do to care for her family, but her typewriter had a place in the kitchen. The untimely death of her husband, Walter Wiebe opened the journalistic door for her. She credited her zeal and direction to the inspiration she received from Oswald Chamber’s devotional readings in *My Utmost for His Highest*. This is brought out most fully by Valerie Rempel and Lorraine Dyck in the final chapter entitled “Yielding and Reaching” (237).

Several years ago Doug Heidebrecht and Valerie Rempel combined with Susan Huebert and Dave Giesbrecht to honour KFW for her achievements as a Christian Mennonite writer. Heidebrecht and Rempel as editors invited ten others writers to join them in an appraisal of the *Voice* of KFW as writer as it came to be heard and listened to in the various stages of her 50 years of ceaseless production on so many themes of significance to her church, the Mennonite church at large, and the wider world. She was especially heard, sometimes bringing irritation, on the question of women, beginning with some forcefulness in the late 1960s.

Here is a brief excerpt from Wally Kroeker who was Katie’s

editor at the *Christian Leader*, Hillsboro, for 10 years:

*For three decades hers was the most consistent pastoral voice heard by US Mennonite Brethren. Regular readers would, over time, receive a robust mini-course in spiritual formation, servant-hood, church polity, modern media, pastoral theology, Mennonite literature, and more.*

*She did so on a blizzard of topics: racism, healing of memories, the new morality, artists in society, failure, parenting styles, the good life (crimped in those days by a fuel shortage), and the military draft (including women), which the US government was considering resuming. She tackled evangelism, Bible study, sexist language, individualism, missions, "churchspeak," and all the latest bromides that flowed from those keen to shed their Anabaptist identity in an effort to seem more inviting to the unchurched.*

To illustrate, following each of the 13 chapters are appropriate selections, a total of 21, from Katie's columns, most of them from her 30 years of writing for the *Christian Leader* (the US equivalent to the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*) twice a month. These alone total half a million words, and many were picked up by other church periodicals, also by those outside of Mennonite circles. For example, "A Problem Without a Name," Katie's response in 1965 to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*; "Why Mennonites Can't Laugh at Themselves," 1974; and having done her own Bible study she asked: "Who Should be Ordained [anyway]?" 1990.

As editors, Heidebrecht began with a welcome biographical overview of Katie's life, while Rempel followed with a chapter on "Katie in Context" as a Mennonite, as a woman "coming of age," and then beginning to, and succeeding, in writing her life's story. Potential readers will not regret being intro-

(Continued on page 18)

## Untypical Large Mennonite Family

*From the collections of Peter Goertzen, submitted by Jim Driedger*

After several years of genealogical research among my Mennonite ancestors I have become quite accustomed to large families, very early remarriages of widows and widowers and the repetition of given names. However when a friend recently asked me to check on a family for him I came across a most exceptional example of these characteristics.

It started with a Gerhard Niebuhr (born 1818), who married Margaretha Braun in 1838. The couple had eight children after which Jacob passed away and his widow married one Daniel Teichroeb. Four children later Margaretha died and her widower married a younger woman, Elisabeth Nickel, who bore him an additional ten children. Shortly after, Daniel passed away and Elisabeth decided to marry a widower, Jacob Fehr.

In order to completely understand Jacob Fehr's marital status I had to go back to Anna Thiessen (born 1831), who married a Peter Peters. This couple had nine children when Peter passed on and Anna married Jacob Fehr. Jacob brought along nine children from his first marriage. Now Anna and Jacob had two children and when Anna died, Jacob married Aganetha Giesbrecht who bore him four children. It was after Aganetha died that Jacob married the widow Elisabeth, mentioned above, in 1895.

This last union made the couple parents, in a sense, to all of the following: eight NIEBUHR-BRAUN children; four TEICHROEB-BRAUN children; ten TEICHROEB-NICKEL children; nine PETERS-THIESSEN children; nine FEHR-(??) children; two FEHR-THIESSEN children and four FEHR-GIESBRECHT children. A grand total of 46 offspring!

I also noted that the oldest "parent" was born in 1817 while the youngest didn't arrive until 1851. Of the eight marriages that took place among the various fathers and mothers, the first occurred in 1838 and the last in 1895—almost 60 years later. The difference in age between the oldest and the youngest child was 55 years. (Peter Niebuhr b 1839—Maria Teichroeb b 1894). Three "sisters and brothers" were born in 1859 and there was only one set of twins born in 1863.

The names of the children proved no less interesting. There was one Gerhard, David, Julius, Cornelius, Herman, and Daniel. There were two each of; Katharina, Agatha, Elisabeth, Sara, Helena, Isaak, and Aron. The family had three Johanns, Marias, and Aganethas as well as four Peters, Jacobs, and Annas. The most popular name, however, was Margaretha, of which there were five!

As I filed the last of the information for my friend I found myself wondering how this family would have reacted to such modern terms as "planned parenthood," "birth control," "generation gap," or "single parent family."

Gerhard Niebuhr m Margaretha Braun  
8 children

Daniel Teichroeb m **Margaretha Braun**  
4 children

**Daniel Teichroeb** m Elisabeth Nickel  
10 children

Anna Thiessen m Peter Peters  
9 children

Jacob Fehr (w 9 children) m **Anna Thiessen**  
2 children

**Jacob Fehr** m Aganetha Giesbrecht  
4 children

**Elisabeth Nickel m Jacob Fehr**



(Continued from page 17)

duced to Katie by her daughter Joanne, and not least by Wally Kroeker. In Hillsboro Don Isaac wrote of Katie's ultimately successful career as Professor of English at Tabor College, and Peggy Goertzen, Director of the Center for MB Studies, Hillsboro, about how Katie translated her story into many books such as *The Storekeeper's Daughter* (1997).

Though her questions went far beyond her concern for recognition of women's gifts and the right to their place in the church, Marlene Epp in her chapter "Lifting the Fog" could show that Katie Funk Wiebe brought them into daylight alongside men as no one else could. This will always be brought forward as Katie's hallmark, as is evidenced by the repetition of this and other themes in nearly every chapter. As much as she was a "blessed" and necessary irritant on that question, she will be remembered for much more beyond her home church. ♦

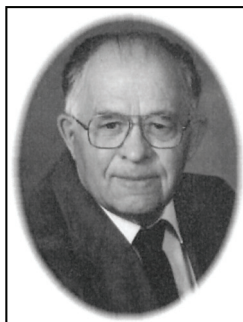
## MHSA Members Pass Away

*Three long time members of MHSA died during the summer of 2010. We honour their memory by publishing their obituaries.*

### Cornelius Friesen (1914-2010)

Cornelius Friesen was born in Russia, to Kornelius and Katherine Friesen. The family immigrated to Canada in 1925, settling in eastern Alberta. He had fond memories of growing up in the short-lived Mennonite community in the Provost/ Macklin area, and loved to tell stories of those days. The family later farmed in the Lacombe area. However he spent most of his adult years in Calgary working as a finishing carpenter. There he met and married Helen Pauls, who had immigrated after WW2. Both of them were interested in the Mennonite people and their history, and saved and recorded much of what they remembered. Even after he was hampered by his loss of hearing, Cornie loved to tell the stories of his childhood.

They have one daughter, Laura Hawthorne, one granddaughter,



Arabella and one great Grand-daughter Caelen.

- Born October 19, 1914
- Married Helen Pauls August 12 1951
- Died July 19 2010

### Herta Evangeline Anderson (nee Braun) (1944-2010)

Born in Winnipeg on September 24, 1944, to Jacob and Sarah Braun, the youngest of eleven children. She was educated in Winnipeg and at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. Later was employed in a Royal Bank in Winnipeg, but was transferred to Calgary in 1979, where she then worked until 1991. Her passion for music, especially organ, led her to study under renowned organists. For many years she played in the churches, and for weddings and funerals. She served as organist for the military base



until it was moved from Calgary. She received the "Proficiency in Service Playing" from the National Council of the Royal Canadian College of Organists in July 2004. Among her other passions was genealogy, scrap-booking and collecting the writings of her father. She had the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta scan and store her collection of her father's letters and some of his school books.

Herta struggled with bouts of cancer for several years and passed away on June 20, 2010. Her grit and determination to fulfill her life's service was strong to the end, and she will be remembered for her love for her Lord.

- Born September 24, 1944
- Married (1) Alfred Dilk 1964
- Children: Renate Angelika (Dilk) Pilon, Marlies Ingrid Dilk, Monika Aneliese (Dilk) Fourlas.
- Grandchildren: Jacob, Olivier, Yohann, Katerina, Athena, Anastasia, Nicholas
- Married (2) Orlin Anderson, 1990
- Died June 20, 2010

### Louise Emma (nee Toews) Friesen (1912-2010)

Louise was born on a snowy winter day in Rosethorn, Saskatchewan on December 19, 1912 to David and Margaret Toews, the sixth of nine children. She had a happy childhood and did well in school. In 1930 Louise graduated from the German English Academy, now Rosthern Junior College. After receiving a degree in Piano and Theory Teaching from the Royal Con-



servatory of Music in Toronto, she started a small music class in Rosstern, while also playing for the Rosstern Mennonite Church and accompanying two choirs and numerous singers.

On October 9, 1944 she married Blake Friesen and they moved to Regina Saskatchewan, where Blake became assessor and auditor for the Government of Canada. Their three sons, Gary, Alan and Howard were born here. Louise continued playing for church and teaching piano and theory, having up to 75 students per week.

After about 32 years they moved to St Albert, Alberta, where they became active members in First Mennonite Church (Edmonton), while she continued teaching music. When Blake retired they moved first to Clearbrook, British Columbia, then to Calgary, where Blake took up another career with Mennonite Foundation.

Louise and Blake enjoyed traveling, making many friends, and spending time in Phoenix, Arizona. They had a love for Mennonite heritage. Their last move was to the Harbours of Newport Seniors Retirement Residence in Calgary. Louise passed away on July 28, 2010 at the age of 97, after a long life of commitment and service to her church and her family.

- Born December 19, 1912
- Married Blake Friesen October 9, 1944
- Children: Gary (Anne), Alan (Sharon), Howard (Julie)
- Grandchildren: Kristina (Josh Thiessen), Scott, Shaun, Erin (Garver Wong), Kim and Mark
- Died July 28, 2010

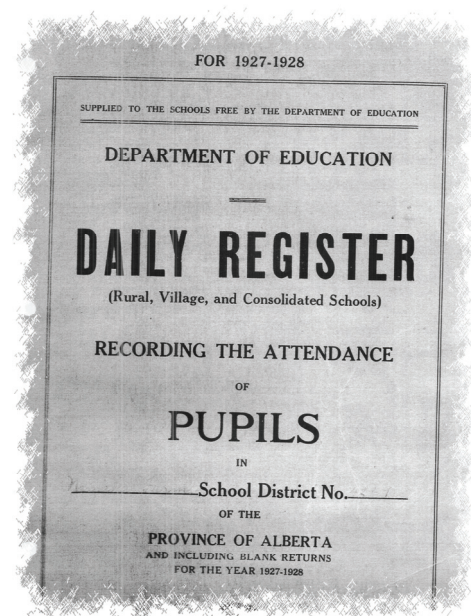
## Namaka is Important To Us

Namaka School District No. 1919 was officially established on January 8, 1909 by the Alberta Department of Education. The school was built on two acres of land on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Namaka, which had been purchased from J. Shouldice. At first one teacher was hired and a second by the mid 1920s. The school was demolished and reopened as a two-room building in 1928 – only to be destroyed by fire in 1935. That was in March and by September the school was rebuilt.

It became known as the Namaka Farm School and an additional Namaka School District (no. 4249) was formed with junior and senior grades.

Namaka has been the site of historic attention by the MHSA through a reunion in 2000. As part of that Reunion, Henry Goerzen prepared a small summary of the “goings on” of the community, identifying plots of land, their owners, etc. culminating in a small history. The original manuscript was donated to the MHSA by Henry and resides in our archival vault.

Recently, the collection of Namaka items grew, with the addition of record books donated by former resident Abe Quiring. The items are *School Attendance Registers* for the Namaka Farm school as well as the advanced grades school and cover the years 1927-1937 and 1941-1953. For the Namaka Junior School District (No. 1919), the Registers cover the years 1944-1953; and for the Namaka Senior School, they cover the years 1941-1953. The registers include month by month accounts of attendance, the grades pursued, and any official or so-called “Mennonite” holidays



from school work such as Easter! The books also may include the names of parent (father), community of residence, and the birthdate of the students. Thus, they represent a capture of school participation at the time as well as information useful to genealogical researchers.

On the same occasion, Abe donated two Burial Registers from the Namaka Mennonite Cemetery operated by the Mennonite Brethren at the time. When completed, such registers are to be returned to the Province. As a result, we have made copies of the information in the Registers and are in the process of shipping them to Service Alberta, which in turn will determine if they are to be deposited in the Provincial Archives of Alberta. As in the case of the school registers, these offer an insight as to who lived in the area of Namaka at the time. They cover the periods from 1929-1947.

Note: The Namaka history prepared by Henry Goerzen is out of print but a slightly revised version will be available very soon in print and in e-book form for those



with Sony E-Readers. Contact us with your order: (403) 250-1121 or [queries@mennonitehistory.org](mailto:queries@mennonitehistory.org) ❖

## Archival Images

It doesn't seem right to refer you to two impressive virtual exhibits (meaning exhibits that are online rather than requiring a visit to a physical archives, museum, or library) at once, but, that's how I heard about them and I definitely want to share these with all of you.

Note that in both virtual exhibits you can click on the image and get detailed information about it.

## Working in Saskatchewan

University of Saskatchewan's archives has done a great job of assembling a beautiful set of images and developing them into a virtual exhibit.

The exhibit was developed to counter the stereotype of Saskatchewan, which "conjures up waving wheatfields, not smokestacks; grain elevators, not factories....as with many aspects of the political, economic, and social history of the province, this history has features that mark it as distinctive and unique in Canada...."

To develop a manageable exhibit they confined the images to labour as depicted by "the social class who does manual or physical work for wages" and "productive, especially physical, work done for wages." they acknowledge that there is "the very considerable work of farm owners... [or] the unpaid work, usually done by women, in their homes.... [or] the work of

those working in professions..."

A couple will be of special interest—look for one "Old Dobbin delivers milk and other dairy products produced by the Mennonite Youth Farm at Rosthern."

The images come from:

- Saskatchewan Archives Board
- City of Saskatoon Archives
- University of Saskatchewan Library special Collections
- Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room

Please see the exhibit at: <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/labour/>

## Wish You Were Here

These 4,500 postcard images were collected from the archival centres across Saskatchewan and cover a large scope of subjects.

Use the search tool and your imagination. Note that the search tool is particularly good. You can search on one term .... and then do a subordinate search within the first. If you change your mind about the first – you can simply click on the "x" and the search is altered to only focus on the sub-search term. This is the new wave of search approaches being introduced – so watch for it elsewhere as well. (e.g. LDS genealogy website, National Archives of Canada, Ancestry.com, etc.)

- Archives of the Humboldt & District Museum & Gallery
- City of Saskatoon Archives
- City of Yorkton Archives
- Diefenbaker Canada Centre Archives
- Prince Albert Historical Society –

Bill Smiley Archives  
• Rosetown & District

Centennial Library Archives

- Saskatchewan Archives Board
- Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room
- University of Regina Archives & Special Collections
- University of Saskatchewan Archives & Library Special Collections

Please see the exhibit at: <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/postcards/>

## MHSA's Photograph Collection

We have a very modest set of photographs (focused on posed shots of Mennonites gathered to participate in a meeting, be baptized, attend Daily Vacation Bible School, or celebrate with food.

Irene Klassen is developing a descriptive database so that we can find a photos when it's needed. So far there are about 1,200 photographs described.

We can use more help if anyone is interested in identifying the content (persons or places in the photos for instance), enter the information into the database, or help us think about how our own virtual exhibit could be crafted from what we have.

## MHSA's Postcard Exhibit

We also have a modest exhibit. Please see: [www.mennonitehistory.org/projects/postcards/](http://www.mennonitehistory.org/projects/postcards/) ❖

## From our Bibliophile

A new history of Ukraine was published in June 2010. Professor Paul Robert Magocsi brought out an updated and revised edition of his *History of Ukraine; the Land and its Peoples*, 896 pages. Magocsi is the chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto. UT Press is the publisher of his book.

