



Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XIV, No. 1

March 2011

MHSA Fall Event Report

by Henry Janzen, Edmonton



The November 20, 2010 gathering of the MHSA members and interested observers, held at the First Mennonite Church in Edmon-

ton, provided attendees with the vicarious opportunity to travel to three continents geographically and visit six generations historically. The four presentations were generous in photographs, uniquely gathered information and personal reflections.

Friesen Took us to Paraguay

Vincent Friesen in the first of four presentations in the afternoon program took us to Paraguay where he had visited in 2009 and attended the World Mennonite Conference. Friesen traced the earliest of three colonies, the Menno colony, to Mennonites who origi-

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From Refugee to Businessman to Pastor

by Chau Hong Dang, Calgary

The Journey at the Sea

Since 1977, after 11 times failed to escape Vietnam, in March 1979, this time, myself together with another 556 people made it to the international water with the registered fishing wooden boat.

With that many people, we had to sit tightly close to each other in that 12 metre boat. There was not enough oxygen to breath even though there were many vents. The sea at that time was calm so we did not get any seasick but also posed problem for those who sat in the bottom floor. I wished there was wind so that we can have some fresh air.

Among 556 passengers, there was me and my younger sister. I was 20 years of age at the time and my sister was 16. The boat was on the sea for three days. We faced two Thai pirate boats. For some reasons, the pirate boats did not come close to rob us as too many other unfortunate cases who were robbed and killed by them.



556 people on a 12 metre ship

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MHSA Annual General Meeting: Saturday, April 9, 2011 Gem of the West Museum, Coaldale Alberta

Registration & Coffee	9:00 am	• From Russia to Canada to Mexico to Canada—Dr. Ted Regehr, Calgary
Annual Meeting	10:00 am	
Lunch	12:00 noon	• From Mexico to Canada—Mr. and Mrs. Ben and Eva Stoesz, Hays
Presentations	1:00 pm	

Editorial Reflections:

by Dave Toews,
Edmonton

The farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see. Winston Churchill



It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you a new member to the volunteer staff of The Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Newsletter, Dave Hil-

debrand. Dave was born in 1938 into a Mennonite family in Altona, Manitoba, ninth of ten children. He has worked in the construction industry his entire career, as carpenter, supervisor and in various management positions in Saskatoon and Calgary. Dave is retired and lives in Crossfield, Alberta with his wife Kay. They have three children, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. In 2004 Dave became interested in Mennonite history, he has researched his family's genealogy and documented it at (<http://dave.tribalpages.com>). Dave was instrumental in the completion of the interior of the present MHSA facility, as well as building the desks and tables for the reference and records processing rooms. In addition to management and layout, Dave has agreed to work as a reporter for Southern Alberta to source articles and items for the newsletter.



In this edition we have two articles from people who came to be Mennonites in circumstances other than that of being born into a Mennonite family. Chau Hong Dang, tells us his story of coming to Canada with the Vietnamese boat people, learning English and becoming a successful business man. On hearing God's call, he went to Bible College and is now the pastor of the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Calgary. Len Franz, chronicles his Aboriginal mixed birth parents lineage, also that of his adoptive European parents and how he came to be adopted into a family of Mennonite heritage.

Peter Penner, blogger and au-

thor extraordinaire, gives us an interesting chapter of his memoirs, The Mennonite Centre, London, era. Peter has also written a critical review of Leaders Who Shaped Us: Canadian Mennonite Brethren: 1910 - 2010.

We write, to taste life twice.

Anais Nin.

We are happy to announce that the MHSA Newsletter is growing more vital. As of this year, it will be coming to your mailbox three times a year. Let us know if you'd rather we sent it to your inbox or your mailbox - that is easily managed.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter. We welcome your comments and contributions. The deadline for submissions to the next issue is May 1, 2011. ♦

Chairman's Corner

by William Janzen

The days are getting longer and yet they appear to be passing more quickly. In our youth, we couldn't wait to grow up and now in our older years we want to put on the brakes. One man expressed it this way. "At five you are going five miles an hour and at 75 you are going 75 miles an hour." At least that is what it seems like to me too.



We live in a time when we have access to so much information. We explore one small bit of information and find there is such an abundance of information that it overwhelms us. It has taken years to bring about this abundance of

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available information. Gutenberg was probably one of the greatest inventors of all time when he invented moveable type and made the printed word available to many people. It resulted in great changes in all aspects of life including the reformation. During our life time we have also experienced further changes. I am thinking of how we cranked the record player in the 1940s and by the late 1950s we were buying hi-fi record players with very good sound quality. In the 1960s came the reel to reel tape recorder, then the cassette recorder and now we can store a shelf full of records in an MP3 player. Today's youth have to learn to be very selective because of the volumes of material to choose from.

It is the same advancement that I see in archives. We are at the cross roads and need to grapple with the decision of possibly digitizing much of the information that has been collected. At one time we were told that compact discs would retain good quality for at least a century and a few years later one article claimed seven years was the time a CD would retain high quality. Further, they are inventing more and more ways of storing information into smaller packages. All this adds to a variety of opinions.

A further concern of course is that we are all getting occupied with a variety of activities and all the new inventions that there is little time to volunteer. It is a time consuming task to prepare materials for the archives. There is much work to be done, but little time.

We are all busy people. I believe one thing we should include in our busy schedule is to write our story so that when we pass on, the next generation will not need to say, "I should have asked." Any

recorded information will be appreciated in the future. It is of further importance that after you have written your story that you give direction what shall be done with it when you pass away. A good way to store information for future generations is the archives at the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Centre.

We are working on the plans for the Annual Meeting and want to focus on the story of the Mennonite people moving from Mexico to Alberta. We hope to be able to announce details by the end of February.

I am thankful for the support given to MHSA, the volunteers in the Centre, the co-editors, board members and area representatives. Thank you all! ♦

(Continued from page 1)

Our boat finally rescued by Thai commercial ship. We had to leave our belonging behind, just carried enough in a back pack when we left our sunken boat to board the ship.

The ship made it to Thai's harbour safely after two days journey on the sea. However, we would not allow to leave the ship. All of our fellow ship people had to stay on the deck of the ship for 45 days. I am still so thankful for the fishing villagers who brought us foods such as rice, steam fishes and water to feed all of us, 556 people every day, three times a day.

After the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees intervened and promised to Thai government that they would take care and sent all of us to the western country for settlement, we were landed to Bangkok, Thai capital city.

We stayed in transit center in Bangkok for three months. After meetings and interviewed with the Canadian immigration officers, my sister and I were accepted and boarded the airplane to Calgary, Canada on the 26th day of June, 1979.

At the airport, we were met by Mr. Thiessen, Director of Mennonite Central Committee who informed our sponsor who came to pick us up at 3 am.

We stayed at our sponsor home, Mr. and Mrs. G. Klassen in Marlbor-



Hong Dang Family

Back row l.-r.: Christine, Chau and Donna Hong Dang, Sarah, Laura

Front Row l.-r.: Nahan, Andrew, Matthew

ough community for approximately one year who helped us to settle a new life in Calgary. During this time, I took English as a second language class at Alberta Vocational Centre at night and worked as an apprentice electrician. My sister attended grade 10 high school. I also was introduced to church and Christian faith.

This was the end of a journey as boat people and refugee. Another chapter opened up.

Reunited with the Rest of the Family

With the help of our sponsor, we brought the rest of our family consisting of 12 including our parents from Indonesia refugee camp and in Vietnam to Calgary, Canada. The last family member arrived in 1985.

Becoming Pastor

I met my wife, Donna, a devoted Christian girl and we married in 1987. At this time I got my Master Electrician certificate and ran my own business as an electrical contractor. Things went well in terms of family and work until the fall of 1993, my wife and I responded to God's call leaving my career behind and pursued a new goal in life, to be God's servant. We moved from Calgary to Regina attending Canadian Bible College.

After graduating in 1995, we accepted an invitation from Missions & Service Committee of Conference of Mennonite in Alberta to be church planter in Edmonton, Alberta. As a result of that, now there is an Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite church.

In summer 2002, we accepted another invitation from Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite church to be their pastor. Resigned from Edmonton Vietnamese church, we've moved to this stampede city and serve the congregation there until present time. ❖

(Continued from page 1)



l.-r.: Colin Neufeldt, Menno Klaassen, Dave Toews, & Vince Friesen

nated principally from the Bergthal Colony joined later by the Chortitza and Sommerfelder churches. To avoid forced public education they emigrated to Paraguay.

The Fernheim Colony's ancestors left the Soviet Union in the late 1920s at a time when emigration

became necessary but Canada was less sympathetic to them. Joined by 373 people who had crossed from the Soviet Union into China in the region of Harbin, this distinction is known today through use of the term "*Harbiner eke*." Wars between Bolivia and Paraguay during the 1930s, caused the Mennonites to consolidate resources in an effort to survive. Some spoke of returning to the Soviet Union and were expelled from the colony as a result.

The Neuland Colony is the most recent and was formed through emigration of Mennonites from eastern Europe following World War II. They continue to maintain connections with Mennonites in Europe while the Menno colony maintains connections with Mennonites in southern Manitoba.

Although the history of each of the colonies is distinctive, Friesen sees growing unity between the colonies. Creating challenges with the indigenous peoples of the area is the fact that they are seeking presidential confirmation that the land is theirs.

Toews' Journey to Ukraine

Dave Toews took us on a journey "in his family's footsteps" based upon his recent trip to Europe and joining a Mennonite Heritage Cruise in Ukraine. His motivation was to go on a pilgrimage and wanted, "just to feel the wind in my hair in the village where my parents grew up."

He recalled his parents' pursuit of trying to connect with separated family members through letters and pictures to bring them from memories to reality once more and with the hope of discovering what had happened to them. Interestingly, Toews pursued both his mother's and father's ancestry with similar success: their previous locations in Russia, family members, homes and occupations together with vivid details of their living conditions. He provided examples of how family members survived through ingenuity such as making available their mechanical skills to meet the needs of their oppressors.

His considerable research to make various connections of what exists today to the story he could put together from the past brought



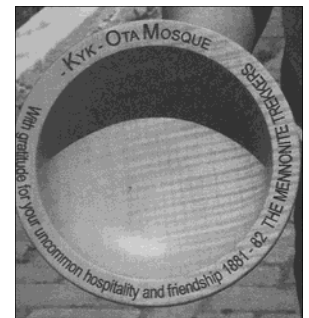
home the meaning he now found in his parents' comments, their beliefs, and their incredible story which emerged. Illustrative of this was his search and validation of the location of the home of his Toews grandparents in Russia which still exists today, the roof lines of which are now remodelled, and the unique story of now meeting the lady who lives in the very same house and persuading her to open her home to them.

Klaassen Trekled to Uzbekistan

Menno Klaassen used photographs and a detailed account of his trip to Uzbekistan, for insight into "Understanding the Great Trek of 1880." His great grandfather together with his family, had joined the migration of Mennonites who under the leadership of Claus Epp had gone East. According to Klaassen the reason for this move by the Mennonites was that the Russian government had brought in the provision that the German language was to be replaced with Russian in their schools and military service was to become mandatory. In addition, their decision to migrate east was influenced by their interpretation of Scripture. Following a delegation which in-

vestigated the new region and assurances by a General Kaufman, some 600 Mennonites left on a wagon train to the east, his great grandfather together with his family were included. This prompted Klaassen's research and discovery of their amazing story of endurance.

His pursuit of his grandfather's footsteps took him to interesting places in the region of Tashkent, through the "hungry steppes" and along a portion of the Silk Road. They stopped at the rock gate that was described in his grandfather's diary near Samarkand and visited a small, country mosque in Serabulak where his ancestors found refuge for the winter of 1881. Klaassen crafted a wooden bowl inscribed with an expression of gratitude which he presented to the Uzbek Kyk-Ota mosque where his ancestors sought refuge under trying circumstances and where they were invited to worship in the mosque during their temporary stay. In Khiva the Mennonites installed an intricate parquet floor in the Summer Palace of the Khan in order to bolster their dwindling finances. While walking on that intricately designed floor created over a century ago, Klaassen deeply appreciated the incredible skill required to complete such a project.



Neufeldt on Study Tour to Omsk, Siberia

The fourth presentation by Colin Neufeldt detailed his recent trip to Siberia, Russia where he continued his research of the Mennonite experience in the early 1930s. He spoke of the Mennonite experience of those judged to be Kulaks, a class of citizenry which was to be liquidated under the Stalinist regime. He detailed the three types of Kulaks in Stalin's decree: 1) the counter-revolutionary Kulaks who were to be summarily arrested, and then either executed or exiled; 2) the Kulak aktiv who were to be exiled; and 3) the Kulaks who were to be relocated in Kulak settlements near their home villages and assigned to work for the state in local construction projects. While the Stalinist regime wanted to liquidate the Kulaks, it did not have a plan to do this, and this led to chaotic disorder.

Neufeldt has found that Mennonites were both the victims of *dekulakization* and were themselves frequently the agents of repression. Some Mennonites found themselves to be involved with implementing decisions for the regime at

Journeys of Understanding

- *Harbiner eke*
- *Feel the wind*
- *The Great Trek*
- *Dekulakization*

the Soviet council level overseeing villages, with orders against Mennonite individuals signed by Mennonite officials. *Dekulakization* was an effective means of dissolving the religious, social, and political cohesiveness of the Mennonite villages.

Deportations of Mennonites involved loading them at gunpoint onto

cattle cars and exiling them to new settlements at locations in the far reaches of the USSR, including Siberia.

During this process men were often separated from the women and children; they were also denied adequate food, clothing and shelter, and the horrible conditions often resulted in frostbite and amputations. The death of two or three exiles was a daily occurrence in the camps. In some cases their Mennonite acquaintances who had been spared exile made noble efforts to send food and money which was invariably taken by the camp commandants and guards.

Neufeldt concluded that terror and panic that arose as a result of *dekulakization* helped the government to collectivize Mennonite farms; *dekulakization* also decapitated the Mennonite leadership and dissolved Mennonite cohesiveness. These experiences had profound social and emotional consequences, and resulted in some Mennonites abandoning their pacifist and religious beliefs. For most Mennonites, practising their faith in these circumstances provided the means for coping and survival.

One of the attendees at the four presentations commented to me after, that he would like someone to present the big picture. We can be thankful for the efforts and energy of the four who gave presentations their time, energy and devotion to pursuing factual information to give us insight into the past and to further build the stories of our Mennonite ancestors. Could it not also meet our need to give voice to what our forefathers found difficult to express, explain their outlook on life and provide a needed form of intergenerational catharsis. ❖

The Mennonites of Siberia

by Lawrence Klippenstein

It was my privilege recently to visit Siberia in east Russia again. I had come to meet with friends and present a paper about a teacher, Heinrich P. Wieler, at the Germans in Siberia conference held at Omsk June 2-4, 2010.

My first trip to Siberia took place in 1979 when I joined a student tour specialized in visiting churches and religious groups in the Soviet Union. Our visit then included conversations with Mennonites in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk. They belonged to a church led by Rev. Bernhard Sawatzky at that time. Rev. Sawatzky has passed away, but the congregation still exists.

I want to share more experiences with, and information about, Mennonites, in that vast largely unsettled part of Russia. Through the years Siberia has sounded like a place one would like to keep away from if at all possible—a place for criminals, gulag concentration camps, exiles and very harsh living for anyone who gets stuck there. It is not that at all today.

Mennonites celebrated a centennial of living in Siberia in 1997. The first Mennonites to settle there, as far as we know, were Peter and Justina Wiens who went to Omsk on the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1897 to set up a farm machinery business.

Wiens may have known something about changing Russian colonizing

policies, and new settler movements that would bring thousands of Mennonites, along with others, to Siberia in the next decade and more. With a new business at Omsk he would be ready to help settlers who would come to farm the large open prairie lands (steppes) from about 1900 on.

In his book *Sibirien* historian J.J. Hildebrand gives us a detailed picture of these settlement beginnings. First, he notes that other Mennonite settlers came to the region in 1897 also. These early farmers had lived in the Molotschna settlement in southern Russia (Ukraine), as had the Wiens family. These families would make their pioneer homes in the Semipalatinsk region south of Novosibirsk (Mennonites called it Palatinski).

Families from the Molotschna and Alt Samara areas established the first village in 1899 and 1900 not far from Omsk. They named it Tchunaevka after the previous landowner Tchunaev. The families of Johann Mathies and Franz Balzer from Lichtfelde in the Molotschna along with Nikolai P., Johann P., and Peter P. Friesen, together with the Gerhard and Heinrich Ewerts from Alt-Samara, were among the first families. They were members of the MB church, whereas most of the 1897 pioneers belonged to the Kirchliche Congregation.

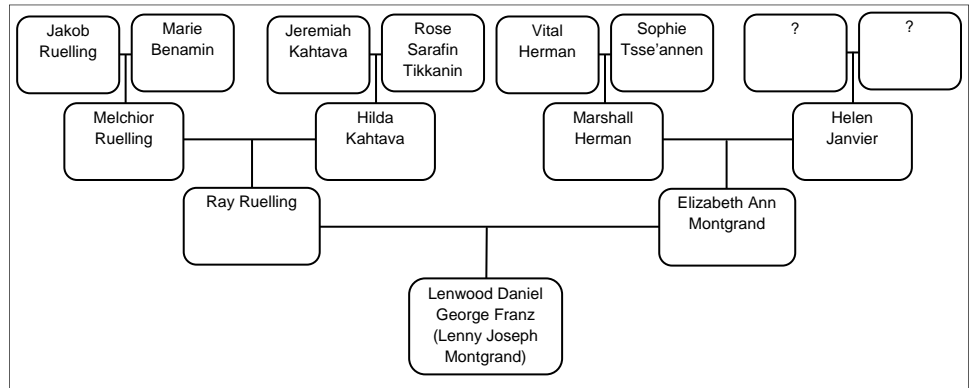
Families who came later preferred a German name so they named their end of the village Ohrloff while the other end retained the Russian name.

Contacts made at the Omsk conference helped us understand these changes better. One of the presenters was Kate, a descendant of Peter and Justina Wiens. She told us that the place where he had



set up his business in Omsk was now a park on Marx and Lenin St. kitty-corner from the hotel, Ibis Sibir, where the conference was held.

Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, with his wife LaVerna, served as Mennonite Central Committee country representatives in Moscow, Russia, in 1992-93. They reside in Steinbach, Manitoba.



A Man of Mixed Blood Ancestry

by Len Franz

My name is Lenwood Daniel George Franz, but that wasn't always my name. The nuns at La Loche, a village in north western Saskatchewan where I was born, christened me Lenny Joseph Montgrand.



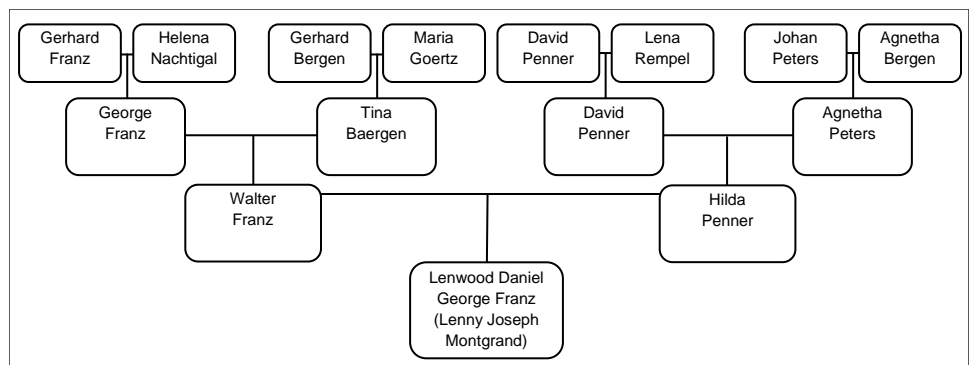
I am of mixed blood ancestry, my Aboriginal mother was of Cree and Denesuline (Dene) origin and my European father of German and Finnish roots. My mother, Elizabeth Ann Montgrand, born in La Loche was the daughter of Marshall and Helen (Janvier) Herman. Marshall's, Dene parents, were Vital Herman and Sophie Tsse'annen. My grandmother, Helen Janvier a Cree, migrated to La Loche from Lac La Biche, Alberta. The man who fathered me was a bush pilot named Ray Ruelling from Turtle Lake, Saskatchewan. He lived across the lake from Speedwell where author Rudy Wiebe grew up. Ray's parents were Melchior Ruelling and Hilda Kahtava. Melchior arrived in Canada in 1925 from Haltern, Germany with his parents Jakob Ruelling and Marie Benamin. Hilda emigrated with her parents

Jeremiah Kahtava and Rose Sarafin Tikkanin in 1917 from Alavieska Finland.

Now back to me, I was born in August of 1968. My parents were married, just not to each other, which may or may not have led to my foster care and subsequent adoption. My maternal grandmother, Helen Janvier cared for me until I was seven months old, when I was put into foster care. I was taken to Ile a la Crosse Saskatchewan and stayed there until I was two or three years old.

After that I went to live with Frank and Anna Sopracolli in Goodsoil, Saskatchewan. The Sopracollis were retired homesteaders originally from the Tyrolean area of Italy and Austria. This is when my first memories began. Their faith and love helped me learn the basics: walking, talking and my faith foundation.

After completing grade one in 1975, I was adopted by Walter and Hilda Franz. Walter was born in Tofield, Alberta in 1940 and Hilda in Winnipegosis, Manitoba, both to Russian Mennonite immigrant parents. They were living in Swift Current, Saskatchewan at the time and had three children: Laurie, Chris and Tamara. My dad was the principal of the Swift Current Bible Institute (SCBI). Mom a teacher, looked after us, kept house, worked at the play school, and taught piano. For them faith and life were inseparable: it was almost immediately after adoption, that I was introduced to the Mennonite faith. As a child I attended the Swift Current Zion Mennonite Church and in Altona, the Berghthaler Church where dad was the minister. We had moved to Manitoba in the summer of 1979 and in 1988 I left to attend SCBI. In the years that followed I seldom went to church, until I arrived in Edmonton in 1991. A group of friends from SCBI were living there, so I would occasionally attend First Mennonite Church (FMC). As the years went by I started going more often and by the late 1990s almost bi-weekly.



My parents' Mennonite roots go back to Russia. My dad Walter was born to George and Tina Franz, his dad's name was Gerhard Franz. Grandma, who was born in The Terek near present day Dagestan Russia, came to Canada in 1927 with her parents Gerhard and Maria (Goertz) Baergen. My mom's family arrived in 1923 and settled in Manitoba. Her parents were David and Aganetha Penner. David took his father's name; his mother's name was Lena Rempel. Grandma was born to Johan and Agatha (Bergen) Peters who hailed from village #5 Nieder-Chortitza, Chortitza Colony.

I now attend FMC Edmonton regularly. I enjoy participating in Sunday School classes, I also serve on the Service and Outreach Branch. Some of my favourite events are the potluck lunches and visiting with fellow Mennonites from diverse backgrounds. I realize that it is a global faith.

Thanks for allowing me to share my story. I have been truly blessed in my life, having been raised in such a loving family and faith community. ❖

Memories of My Time in London, England

by Peter Penner, Calgary

From the personal memoirs of Peter Penner, Emeritus Professor, Calgary, Alberta: The Road Between: The University Years 1965 -1992. Part 1 of 2

After the War, the Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM), Elkhart, Indiana, decided to return to London by opening a centre for MBM Anabaptist witness in that metropolis. In 1940 they sent John Coffman, the son of Bishop S.F. Coffman of Vineland, Ontario, to help deliver and distribute Mennonite relief during the War. They began this from a large house at 80 Shepherds Hill, Highgate. In 1953, MBM purchased 14 Shepherds Hill, just down the road from the former centre, for £6,000. Quintus and Miriam Leatherman volunteered to lead the new venture. Both had retired from teaching and nursing in 1952.

According to Alan Kreider, this couple "established the Centre and its characteristic ethos." They brought two of their three children and created a family-like atmosphere, "functioning as parents to generations of students from all over the world who felt displaced from their families and cultures. Miriam cooked countless meals for students, she also presided properly at tea-time, which became another Centre institution." Under their care and guidance, the Centre be-

came "a kind of international village [where] smells of Ugandan, Chinese and Indian cooking wafted from the Centre's various kitchens to mingle in the entrance." The Leathermans' Christian witness, "not bookish or verbal," was surprisingly influential in that people became Christians in this atmosphere of "loving hospitality." The London Mennonite Fellowship (LMF) met weekly under Quintus' leadership, providing a chaplaincy to students.

The Summer of 1968 in London, England

Even though I did not fit the image of a student who desperately needed an international home, I was allowed to stay at the Centre at age 43. Though my contributions, besides paying for a room and selected meals, were not profound, except to enlarge the Canadian exposure to the influence of the Centre, I was grateful to this home.¹ Though Highgate was actually far from the heart of London where most of my libraries were situated, that ride did not take long on the Northern Line of the "tube". The bottom of the escalator was very deep underground, so when one exited at the top into the greenery of Shepherd's Hill, it was always a refreshing experience. Moreover, one could always expect to receive some spiritual refreshing as well as surprises in terms of the people who might show up.

My photo collection has reminded me of the activities and company at Highgate, and the rose garden cared for by Richard Kwan (and his wife Mae) from South East Asia. There I got to know Eileen (Pells) Coffman whom John had married when he stayed in London after the War. Irma Hunsberger from Baden, Ontario, was the cook and became a good



Summer 1968: London Highgate: Eileen and John Coffman, Derek Hum, NB Rhodes Scholar, the Leathermans, and Justina

friend. Alan and Eleanor Kreider, Goshen graduates, were leaders among the student residents.

On May 23rd I wrote Justina about my walking tours and of my first interviews with various well-known scholars at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies. This brought me to the University of London and the British Museum where I was making progress in research. I also had prospects of going to Edinburgh for research. I was able to hear the Manitoba Consort, featuring Joyce Redekopp-Penner as harpsicordist, and Victor Martens as soloist. On Sunday they came to the Center bringing Dorothy Martens and Joyce's mother Katharine (Unruh) Redekopp. I spent quite a bit of time with Victor and Dorothy who were fellow-students at MBBC in the 1950s.

It was a welcome event for me to have Frank H. Epp visit the Centre. We became close friends in the 1960s before we moved to the Maritimes and into ever more responsible positions in

Mennonite Church Canada and beyond. His first remarkable achievements were producing the *Canadian Mennonite* (1953) and his *Mennonite Exodus: Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (1962).

Oxford and Edinburgh

One of my most amazing experiences was to visit Derek Hum at Oxford. He, a New Brunswick resident of Chinese ancestry, was Mount Allison's Rhodes Scholar for 1967.² Though much junior to me, we got on well and became



close friends. As a result of my visit I had the privilege of finding overnight accommodation in Lincoln College, the college of John and Charles Wesley. With Derek at Exeter we were joined by other Canadian Rhodes Scholars and we visited Magdalen, Christ Church and Oriel colleges. When Derek saw me off to Paddington Station in London, he considered coming to stay with me at the Mennonite Centre for a few days after I had been to Edinburgh. This he did for part of July and all of August 1968. Not only did he almost become an Anabaptist, he met his future wife there! All this I explained to wide-eyed Justina in Sackville who could hardly wait to get underway.

After that we kept in touch with Derek. He got a teaching job at the University of Manitoba. In April 1970 he showed up in Sackville unexpectedly. His sixteen-year old sister had been killed in a car accident in Bathurst. He told us he was engaged to Mary Mow, from Lae, Papua New Guinea. They met in Highgate when Mary was there as a guest of Richard and May Kwan. The wedding was scheduled for September 30, 1970. I was invited to the wedding that took place in Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, Toronto.

According to a number of sources, Derek has become the leading Canadian economist in the field of immigration and labour. His niece Jacqueline Wong was Mount Allison's Rhodes Scholar for 1989.

In Edinburgh I was able to stay with Marina and Walter Unger, whom I had first learned to know in Winnipeg. She was from a family that I had known for many years. Walter was away in France working for the CBC, but as it was I was able to spend 16 days (14 days of sunshine!) exploring the Monuments of Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India 1848-56, in the Scottish National Library. The Ungers took me on a car trip to Loch Lomond, north of Glasgow, and I did a side trip to visit the David Livingstone Memorial at Blantyre.

Later, the Ungers visited me at the Centre in London. In 1995 they became well known as the couple who, resident in Toronto, organized the annual Mennonite Heritage Cruise, taking about 160 people down the Dnepr river from Kiev to the Molotschna and into the Crimea and Odessa.

Justina Came to London

Justina was able to join me for three weeks during the summer of 1968. But first she had to drive with our children, Robert and Ruth, from south-eastern New Brunswick to Ontario where they would stay with their grandparents, the Janzens.

Once Justina arrived, one of the first things we did was plan an outing with Erica Jantzen. We especially enjoyed the little village of Kersey, where we got "tea in bed at eight" and I even slept between pink sheets (I hate pink) in a 300-year old house. Justina and I went to see Lady Hardinge in Kent County and she welcomed me to come to her estate to look at the papers of her husband's forbear, Sir



Henry Hardinge, Governor-General of India from 1844-1848.

With the help of John Coffman I was able to plan a trip to the Netherlands for Justina and me, with the particular object of visiting Witmarsum, the site of Menno Simons' activity in the 1530s. On the occasion of the Mennonite World Conference of the previous year in Amsterdam, about 1,400 delegates had converged on Witmarsum. This was as close as we were going to get to the virgin soil of Mennos' Anabaptism and the source of a Mennonite migration eastward to Prussia, and then Russia. Our planned trip took us to famed Utrecht, to Leeuwarden where we looked up the Mennonite church pastor, then to Haarlingen with its water canals, and on to Witmarsum in Friesland. There we got off the bus to find a half dozen wooden-shoed Dutchmen sitting, just waiting to answer our question: "Where is the Menno Simons' Church?"

At the church there was a sign: "*De Schletel es bee Numma Dre*" (the key is at # 3). At that house we were pleasantly greeted by Mrs. Burma who showed us the inside of the church and the register of all the guests of the previous year. That we could exclaim about a lot of familiar names gave us Mennonite credibility! She gladly walked across the field with us to see and photograph the Menno Simons monument. What we found remarkable is that we could easily understand each other as she spoke her Fries dialect and we spoke our Low German.³

Marx and Berlioz



The nearby Highgate Cemetery was made famous with the burial of Karl Marx (1818-1883). Though many distinguished persons were buried there, none attracted as much attention as Karl Heinrich Marx. When, on July 7th, 1968 a small group of us, including Derek Hum, decided to walk over to see this monument, we were not necessarily thinking of the near revolution in France. But who should come into the site singing the Marseillaise, the National Anthem of France, but leaders of that revolutionary activity shaking up Paris, among them Daniel "Danny the Red" Cohn-Bendit a student leader during these times of unrest. We just watched as they sang with raised fists and

left.

With the help of Friedrich Engels, a wealthy entrepreneur, Marx wrote and published *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. Later, after assiduous research in the reading room of the British Museum which I learned to know well, he produced *Das Kapital* (*Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*) in 1867. While many have claimed Marx as the father of Communism, some like David McLellan, have likened him to another Amos-like prophet!⁴

Prompted by Eileen Coffman from the Centre, the very next day I went to the British Museum to read and then to St. Paul's Cathedral to meet her and a few others in order to hear a work written about the same time as *The Communist Manifesto*, the *Te Deum* by Hector Berlioz. Seated near the main isle, we had a good view of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip as they en-

tered in to begin the London Festival with this matchless work of glorious music. If only the latter could have moderated the influence of the former.

To be continued. In the second segment, Peter talks about subsequent trips to England and Scotland with his family, the many interesting people they met and places visited. He also reflects on Anabaptism in Britain today.

Notes:

- [1] Alan Kreider, "The London Mennonite Centre's First Fifty Years," *Anabaptism Today* (Issue 32, 2003)
- [2] Mount Allison University, a small liberal arts school, situated in what was Wesleyan Methodist country in 1839, has in fact led all Canadian universities in supplying graduates selected as Rhodes Scholars
- [3] Daybook, July 25-27, 1968
- [4] *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* by David McClellan (1974) ♦

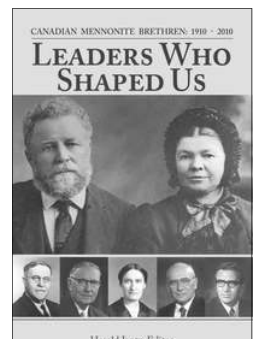
Review Article: Leaders Who Shaped Us

by Peter Penner

Harold Jantz, Editor, *Leaders Who Shaped Us: Canadian Mennonite Brethren: 1910-2010*, (Kindred Productions, 2010), 323 pages

Introduction

AD 2010 was a milestone year for the Mennonite Brethren (MB) conference. It's general conference celebrated 150 years since it's founding in 1860 in Russia; its Canadian section celebrated 100 years since its formal establishment as the Northern District Conference in 1910. Harold Jantz, given the responsibility for this volume, selected 25 MB persons spread over the century of Canadian conference witness and



activity, 1910 to 2010, and wrote: "This book is an expression of gratitude to God for what He's given us through the people who've gone before us."

That statement betrays an underlying assumption that high profile leaders are more formative, than say, schools, the press, the Bible and hymnbook in combination. Nevertheless, Jantz is to be commended for getting such a volume together for the 100th anniversary. No one should bypass his introductory statement, "Getting to Know Ourselves Better." This shows Jantz as a master editor and should be read first, and not hurried over.

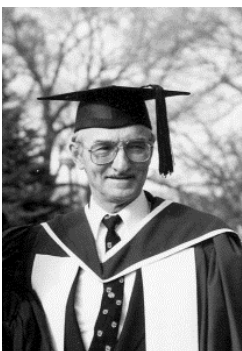
Harold Jantz seems to have had liberty of choice. He himself wrote six biographies. Among others chosen were the well-known Wally Kroecker, Rudy Wiebe, Abraham Friesen, Bruce L. Guenther, Doug Heidebrecht, James Toews, and Dora Dueck.

Wally Kroecker
Rudy Wiebe
Abraham Friesen
Bruce L. Guenther
Doug Heidebrecht
James Toews
Dora Dueck

Heidebrecht,
James Toews, and Dora Dueck.

My Purpose

So that *MHSA Newsletter* readers are not left in the dark as to his choices, I will touch each, comment on a few, and then point to at



Peter Penner,
Emeritus Professor
of History

least three big holes that were not filled. My review article should provide some reconsideration as, I have serious reservations about several of the interpretations.

For the first 70 years, Winnipeg's North End Church and Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) provided the metropole for most of the choices from Manitoba, the Prairies, and Ontario. Many moved about, and only Henry H. Janzen and Wally Unger may be said to have come from Ontario. The scene shifted to British Columbia for the last generation and the last six choices. Three (John F. Harms, G.W. Peters, and J.B. Toews) could just as easily have been left for a potential similar selection for the American MB conference. In fact I will show that Peters could have been left out altogether.

Henry H. Janzen
Wally Unger
John F. Harms
G.W. Peters
J.B. Toews

Here then are the people chosen for their lasting contribution to the culture and ethos (the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community), of the Canadian MB Church. It held steady for about two-thirds of this century, until 1980. Much changed after that, especially as about 45 percent of all MBs had moved to British Columbia. Abbotsford became the stronghold of a new ethos in the observable adoption of the hard sell principles of the Church Growth Movement (CGM). Only Wally Unger and his Columbia Bible College (CBC) held the CGM in check. Gone was self-dependence in "the priesthood of all believers;" leader dependency so characteristic of MB people anyway easily succumbed to the dynamic leadership principle inherent in CGM.

The First Three

We must not miss the fact that the first three leaders, shapers all: David Dyck, John Harms, and Henry S. Voth (the American equivalent of *Kanadier*) did not like the idea of *Russlaender* coming over to Canada in the 1920s. They feared being overwhelmed, as indeed they were, in numbers and with people qualified to displace them in positions of influence in the conference, congregations, and schools. Voth carried his objections into the Board of Foreign Missions. Nevertheless, these three did some great things and John Harms' gift of the *Zionsbote* (1888) is immeasurable.

David Dyck
John Harms
Henry S. Voth

The Next Three

The next three, Heinrich Neufeld, Anna Thiessen, and C.N. Hiebert became intimately involved with the *Russlaender* of the 1920s. Heinrich A. Neufeld was a surprise choice, but Jantz made a convincing case for his pivotal role in helping David Toews bring 20,000 Mennonites to Canada.

Cornelius N. Hiebert from Minnesota, a gentle evangelist, had no influence beyond Manitoba but fortunately gave us Esther his eldest daughter who married Ben Horch. She had considerable influence as a writer, as Dean of Women at MBBC, in social work, and through a children's radio program.¹

Anna certainly shaped the lives of hundreds of young daughters in a way that may have been profound. They influenced future husbands and church members! But she surely is not as significant as H.F. Klassen and his three newspapers.

Heinrich Neufeld
Anna Thiessen
C.N. Hiebert
David Toews
H.F. Klassen

Klassen and his

This was the "Age of Giants"

Yes, this was an Age of Giants especially in the first two generations. By

comparison, the last thirty years demonstrated a severe dearth. I can only mention their names in passing: Abram H. Unruh, unquestioned, and John A. Toews, one of a handful of Anabaptists. Long ago when there were genuine debates on the conference floor and these two spoke, usually to wrap things up, delegates listened and voted with them. How perceptive one reviewer was to think of today's spiritual leadership as primarily therapeutic. Does he mean we need a pill?

In the 1940s, Benjamin B. Janz, rescuer of the 20,000, became a biased critic of Tabor College, the Henry H. Janzen, one of the rescued, revealed oratorical skills, persuasive powers, great administration, but he was basically a fundamentalist who had imbibed dispensationalism. The influence here of J.W. Reimer, William Bestvater and Henry Regehr with their forty-foot canvas charts was our misfortune.

While John B. Toews, Fresno, could be counted on the American side, his contributions in Hepburn, MBBC, 10 years as General Secretary in the Hillsboro office with the Mission, and his leadership for the redirection of the Seminary in Fresno entitles him to inclusion. He helped to reshape the MB church into an Anabaptist one.

Frank C. Peters, also basically a fundamentalist with two doctoral degrees, was, as we might say today, "a great guy," a personality, a celebrity, an exceptional speaker, influential, actually a good new testament expositor. Not as good as David Ewert whose influence was felt in Coaldale, Winnipeg, Fresno, and Harrisonburg, who was a superb Bible scholar and who also vanquished the dispensationalists and literalists.

Henry S. Rempel was a very likeable popular preacher who was fortunate to marry Anna Neufeld and together they ran the Mennonite Home for Women in Saskatoon. Their work with immigrants was equivalent to that of Anna Thiessen in Winnipeg. No one ever thought that Anna needed a husband!

Two Business Leaders

Of C. A. DeFehr I will only say that his sons and son-in-law approved of his taking time to sit on many boards having to do with education, Mennonite Central Committee, and South America. Hard to estimate, but as Jantz wrote, he "used his entrepreneurial abilities to build the institutions of the church." Read his autobiography, *Memories of My Life* (1967).

Abram A. Kroeker, Winkler, taught by Frederick Philip Grove, created excitement as an agricultural entrepreneur. His innovative techniques were matched by his dynamic entry into Bible, church, and camping interests - first in Manitoba, and then conference-wide. He used his position in the Winkler Bible School to change both Sunday school practices and its literature.²

Two Deserving Women

Katy Penner as an MB missionary nurse to the Belgian Congo worked successfully at Kajiji before 1960. Following several forced evacuations, she

Abram H. Unruh
John A. Toews
Benjamin B. Janz
Henry H. Janzen
J.W. Reimer
William Bestvater
Henry Regehr
John B. Toews
Frank C. Peters
David Ewert
Henry S. Rempel

was asked to return during President Mobutu's time to take the position of Director of Nursing in the main hospital in Kinshasa, overseeing dozens of trained personnel. Yet when she came back to Canada she found conference leaders far from even having women on national church boards. When she was elected to the Board of Missions and Services in 1975, she finally broke a barrier for women to sit on major boards of the conference.

Katy Penner
Katie Funk Wiebe
Marie Wiebe
Margaret Willems
Anne Ediger

Katie Funk Wiebe, one of four women chosen, who once confided in her diary that "no one will ever see these things I write," may very well turn out to have the widest and longest lasting influence of them all, bar none, in Canada. Yet she lived in Kansas since 1962.

In consideration of all the current hype about the *Festschrift* for Katie, there is not much focus given to the wives who stood behind the leaders or stayed at home out of sight! But Marie Wiebe was not chosen for that reason and standing alone without her husband does not qualify for inclusion. I would have thought of Margaret Willems, missionary in India and self-supporting wheat farmer who is said to have made 250 presentations far and wide after 1961, or Anne Ediger, another missionary to India with a mind of her own who, seconded to Radio FEBA, had a world-wide audience from New Delhi and came home as a cancer victim.

The Late Surge in BC

Herb Neufeld was once my student in East Chilliwack. From

C.A. DeFehr
Abram A. Kroeker

there he went to Regina to an Alliance school. He came back to the MB Mission in British Columbia where he experienced renewal and then eventually accepted a pastoral position in Willingdon Church, Burnaby. When we visited there in 1982 he had a very large edifice overflowing with people. Bill Klassen had a choir of 80 voices, the women in long dresses who, having sung from Handel's Messiah, returned to the pew, the drums began, and they all sang off-the-wall choruses! Unbelievable.

Herb Neufeld
Bill Klassen
Nick Dyck
Vern Heidebrecht
Walter Unger

Herb has provided leadership for the big ideas of CGM and has been a powerhouse. That, however, is not MB but rather North American evangelicalism.

Nick Dyck, from good *Rüsslaender* stock, grew up in Saskatchewan and moved to the Fraser Valley in 1941. His humility was a trademark, also his integrity when I learned to know him about 1958. He built Central Heights, Abbotsford, on the leadership principle in CGM. These brethren accepted Wimberism³ and the like and seemingly found success. They wanted numbers and financed big budgets. Should Vern Heidebrecht be mentioned?

Walter Unger went from St. Catharines to MBBC to Waterloo to Deerfield where he matured as a scholar and leader. He helped to establish Fairview MB in St. Catharines. It was fortunate, however, that he could be found to take over CBC, Abbotsford. He matured as Bible scholar, provided wise and very articulate antidotes to the craze for Wimberism and became an exceptionally good principal for

CBC, an Anabaptist MB.

BIG Omissions

Even if we concede that 25 were correctly chosen, even then I find three important omissions: those who guided music for the church, those who gave us the newspapers, and above all, our schools which graduated the people who probably most shaped the ethos in the congregations. From among these one can easily bring forward Ben Horch of the *Gesangbuchkomitee*, Henry F. Klassen of the Christian Press, and Abram H. Unruh of the Bible schools. These three movers and shakers influenced the many who preserved the culture and ethos of the Canadian MB Church for the first two generations.

Ben Horch
Henry F. Klassen
Abram H. Unruh

We were people of two books - the Bible and the hymnbook - and we hardly needed theology, much less 1970s and 1980s missiology.

The music makers who shaped music best over three generations were Franz Thiessen, Ben Horch, and Holda Reimer Fast Redekop. hey gave us conducting and choir training, new hymnbooks and new songs at decent intervals, and Holda transformed this tradition for use in the so-called "liturgical service" at Bakerview Church in Abbotsford.

Franz Thiessen
Ben Horch
Holda Reimer Fast
Redekop

Turning to the Bible schools, the shaping influence of Winkler Bible School and Hepburn's Bethany Bible School was profound. Though there were sharp differences in training for mission in the 1930s as long as Gerhard W. Peters was leading at Hepburn, nevertheless, class after class went into their congregations providing continuity in worship music and Sunday School teaching, some becoming pastors, some on to MBBC to become missionaries and many finding their life's partners there.

Gerhard W. Peters
Harold Jantz
Henry F. Klassen

I think Jantz, the journalist, forgot that the pen is mightier than the spoken word. He should have been included for his 21 years at the helm of the *MB Herald*, through crucial years. Given the power of the press I am amazed that Henry F. Klassen was not chosen for his Christian Press work which supported three papers: the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* and the *Mennonite Observer* and in which he wrote some editorials for about 25 years.

Leaders who Almost Misshaped the MB Conference

This is the first paragraph (p. 109) on Gerhard W. Peters as a shaper of the MB Church: "Sometimes God surprises us. If George W. Peters hadn't come to the Hepburn community in Saskatchewan to do evangelistic work in 1933, the life of the Canadian MB Church might have taken a quite different turn, the overseas mission of the church might look much different today, Fresno Pacific University might be a different place and the MB Biblical Seminary might have developed quite differently."

Gerhard W. Peters
J. B. Toews
A.J. Klassen
John H. Redekop
James Toews

This is myth! Though an outsider, according to my researched information and publications, we should all be grateful that none of these institu-

tions were shaped primarily by Peters. Take note, with reference to the years 1933-1963. If Gerhard W. Peters had not appeared in Hepburn, J.B. Toews and his father were there; missionaries would have gone to Africa, India, Japan, and eventually to South America without him. The idea of an MB school in Fresno was born without Peters and there were enough fundamentalists without him, if they were needed. The seminary might not have had the turmoil that it did with him there for some years.

That Peters was not recognized for any of these things is shown by his total omission in the 1967 *Festschrift* for J.B. Toews, edited by A. J. Klassen. When a *Festschrift* for Peters was issued by the *Liebenzeller Mission* in 1988,⁴ J.B. Toews has the leading chapter on Gerhard W. Peters and wrote: "In God's providence Bethany became the platform for Peters to become a leader in world mission." This may be so, but it does not make him a shaper of the Canadian MB conference. In that same chapter J.B. Toews stated that Gerhard W. Peters left the MB conference because the reach of his agenda always exceeded what his committees or boards could support. Upon rejection he would resign in frustration. From 1943 onwards he was in the United States and in 1963 he went to Dallas and later to Germany. Moreover, even if he wrote books cherished by missiologists, very few people, much less lay persons, ever read missiology. The *Liebenzeller* book is quite beyond me!

We have to acknowledge that Peters made two contributions to Canada: first, using some extraordinary measures, he was able to send four or five missionaries to Columbia from Canada in the early 1940s. (The Western Children's Mission was not dependent on him). His most solid contribution for all was his history of the MB foreign mission which he did as a doctoral study while at Hartford, Connecticut, completed in 1947.⁵

John H. Redekop of exceptional abilities, perhaps a genius, moved from Herbert to Abbotsford. He did doctoral work in Seattle rather than a Canadian school, never attended Bible school or College, eventually made his intellectual home at Waterloo Lutheran University and retired to Abbotsford.

James Toews' leadership eulogy could easily lead to myth-making. Where James depended on personal interviews and dwelt on John's political science ventures, I have combed the *MB Herald* where John was revealed as a frequent irritant in giving both sides. He surely tried harder than anyone

to be a shaper, but he was often a divider, not a leader, over such issues as ethnicity and identity. He had to be right, he had to have his way. Many looked for a touch of modesty which would suggest that he did not have to be the dictator of the pace or the result in every conference issue. Hey, he was sometimes right!

To repeat what Harold Jantz wrote, *Leaders Who Shaped Us* "... is an expression of gratitude to God for what He's given us through the people who've gone before us."

Notes:

[1] C.N. Hiebert was my Father (1979)

[2] As an aside, Kroecker got Justina and me involved at Camp Arnes for two summers. This telling incident happened in 1952 when he drove us to Arnes on the rough gravel highway at about 10 mph above the speed limit and, perhaps prompted by a remark from us about his exceeding the speed limit, he said rather gleefully said: "I have more money than time!"

[3] Wimberism—John Wimber said: "Christians are called to grow up. A baby Christian that feeds on milk and often wets their pants is one thing. On the other hand, a 20 year old Christian that is still acting that way isn't pretty."

[4] Hans Kasdorf/Klaus W. Mueller, editors, *Reflection and Projection: Missiology at the Threshold of 2001* (VLM: Bad Liebenzell, 1988)

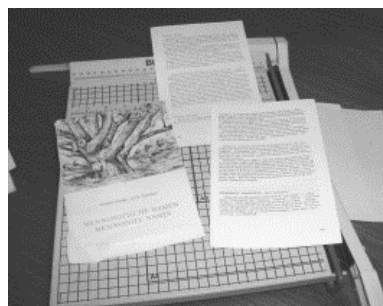
[5] G.W. Peters, *The Growth of Foreign Missions in the MB Church* (1947; published in Hillsboro in 1952) ❖

Could You Digitize Your Shelves?

by Judith Rempel

I've made a major decision to digitize my bookshelf (as if there were only one)! Especially my reference books. This means I'm:

- slicing their spines with a box cutter, metal ruler and beaten-up wooden cutting board (well, that's how I started, I now have an official paper cutter/guillotine)
- scanning the front and back of each page in my multi-function printer that is equipped an ADF (auto-

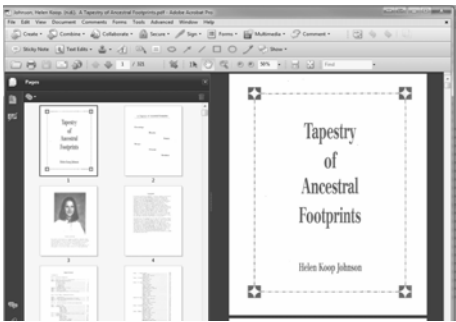


document feeder) – it cost about \$300

- using

Adobe Acrobat to convert the images into text with its OCR (Optical Character Recognition) tool

- resorting the pages in the correct sequence (my print-



er will scan front and back at the same time, but tends to jam unfortunately)

- saving each book into its own PDF file

In this way *Mennonite Treasury* takes up 14 MB on my hard drive. If I have trouble in the future with inadequate space on the hard drive, I'll start to burn DVDs that have a defined collection (e.g. Mennonites in Russia, Cookbooks, Genealogy, Computing, etc.) on each DVD.

Perhaps you're asking why I would do this. Well, I've been using an electronic reader (Sony e-book) for most of my casual reading for 14 months now and love it. I have easy access to my computer and way too many books/shelves.

Advantages for Me:

- When I'm looking for a recipe for beet pickles, I simply type that word into the computer search tool (Ctrl+F) and it scans all my cookbooks (they're stored in a specific directory on my hard drive called: C:/data/books/cookbooks/) for every occasion that "beet" appears. If all my cookbooks had indexes that could help too – but they often don't (especially the *Mennonite Treasury* which I COUNT on!)
- If a book has an index, the search tool will look at it too

- I've eliminated about two feet of books on my shelf since late October, so there is space for other things that are not as easily digitized (my collection of men's hats from Ukraine and Africa, snuff bottles from China, our fish tanks, etc.) I'm aiming for two to three books a week. Periodicals that are reference works are great to have scanned and searchable too.
- If I want to see what's in my "Digital Bookshelf," I can use Windows Explorer to browse through the collection. But, since I'm also html-savvy, I've built an extensive set of html files that point to online links that I use regularly. One page of that "intranet" now contains links to the books on my hard drive.

FYI - There's no violation of copyright if I don't give the physical books to someone else and I recycle the scanned pages; I'm simply rehousing the material in a more effective way for me.

I do admit that I am loathe to digitize my collection of author-signed copies (Frank Epp, Ted Regehr, Rudy Friesen, Rudy Wiebe),

in which case the item has its own "aura" and so it represents something worth keeping in physical form. ❖

What are YOU Reading?

by Judith Rempel

There are lots of reasons to think that reading and writing is important to Mennonites. I believe we have more than our proportionate share of journalists and self-published authors. We have accomplished authors who have won awards (e.g. Rudy Wiebe, Miriam Toews, David Bergen). Others have diligently pursued advanced education and publish as part of their professorial careers (Ted Regehr, Peter Penner, etc.). There is a steady stream of new books that are privately and formally published in the Mennonite community. We keep several publishing houses very busy.

In the MHSA, we send our newsletter out to members and congregations. With organizations that have similar mandates (Mennonite, historical, genealogical), we participate in newsletter exchanges. On an occasional basis we publish a monograph or book (Irene Klassen, Henry Goerzen, John Bergen).

The MHSA also has a sizeable library of books – about 3,000 catalogued and many more waiting to be processed. And, our vault has thousands of periodical issues ready to access.

Calgary and Edmonton MHSA members are also active in several book clubs that gather



So called "Infinite bookshelf" that is said to "represent the infinite power of books and learning".

regularly to discuss what they're reading. Others are solitary readers and delight in reading for pleasure, or developing their own writing project (a memoir or family history). Others read for spiritual edification.

But back to you. What are you reading? Which are the Mennonite books that you wouldn't dream of removing from your bookshelf? When a family member or a neighbour asks for a "good Mennonite (or even Mennonite history) book to read," what do you recommend? What should be on every Mennonite reader's bookshelf?

Non-Mennonite books: do you like to read fiction or non-fiction; hard cover or soft cover; narrative or factual; illustrated or to the point; paper or electronic? Do you have a favourite author?

Are you even an author? Do you have a draft book that you think the MHSA would consider publishing? Or are you on a journey to write one? Would you like to form a writer's group? We'd love to host it at the MHSA.

Why not tell us? If you're a reader, writing about what you're reading or writing will be easy. There is no word or page limit. Tell us in two sentences or two pages. Your comments will help ensure our MHSA library has "the right stuff" on its shelves and our "books for sale" shelves are also well populated. Your comments can also suggest content for the MHSA newsletter.

Contact
dave.toews@Mennonite history.
org if you have something to share
for the newsletter, chairman@
mennonitehistory.org if you have a
publishing idea, and judith@men-
nonitehistory.org if you would like
to form a reading or writing group

at the MHSA.

See:

- www.mennonitehistory.org/publications - for books that we now sell and copies of back newsletters
- www.mennonitehistory.org/library/ - for our catalogued library books
- www.mennonitehistory.org/members_blogs_websites - for electronic publishing done by our members ❖

Reading Books at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton

by Lorne Buhr

For several decades there has been a group at FMC, Edmonton who read books for enjoyment and discussion. We meet monthly between September and June (December falls out). So far these are the books in 2010/11 which have been chosen:

- John Carlin's *Invictus; Nelson Mandela and the Game that made a Nation*
- Barbara Kingsolver's *The Lacuna*
- Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma; a Natural History of Four Meals*
- Keith Leckie's *Coppermine* (a novel based on the murder of two priests in the Northwest Territories)
- Vernon Wishart's *What Lies behind the Picture? a Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Rev. Wishart is a local author and will attend the April session)

Group members make suggestions of what to read. We take turns hosting in our homes and we also rotate discussion leaders.

Lorne Buhr ❖

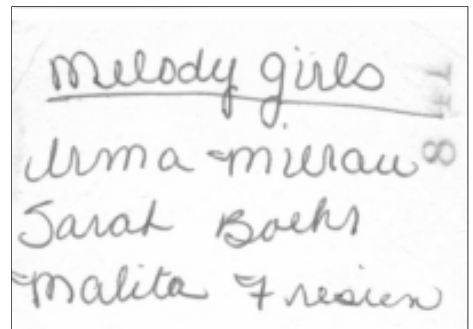
Photographs Repatriated

by Dave Hildebrand

In the Sept 2008 edition of the

MHSA Alberta Newsletter, Al Mierau wrote an article "Swap Meet 'Finds' Repatriated to Canada." The article reported that in the summer of 2007, a young artist, Elizabeth "Liz" McGhee, came into possession of about 150 old photos from a swap meet in San Diego. Liz noticed that some of the photos were named and when she noticed one of the names, Mierau, on a Family Tree Maker website she made contact with Al Mierau in Canada.

Liz sent some images to Al by e-mail. Al consulted with his Aunt Florence and she was able to identify her cousin, Mary, amongst the photos. When Al told Liz that the photos were definitely part of his family, Liz sorted out about 80 of the original batch and sent them to Al. And that's how the "Repatriation" took place and that's where Al's article ended.



In later collaboration between Liz and Al they used a combination of information from the photos, Liz' knowledge of California locations with the technology of *Google* and *Facebook*. They located and made images of Irma Mierau Gustafson and contacted Irma's granddaughter, Sarah Roemer in San Diego, who was delighted that photos that she thought had been lost long ago were back





with the family.

Once in a while events like these happen to people doing genealogical research. They are always extremely rewarding and encourage us to keep working on our projects. What's even more important is that we share these success sto-

ries because unless they are circulated, the effect of these finds is lost or at least extremely limited. It's truly remarkable that a bunch of old photos could contain enough information to connect cousins separated by three or four generations and bring great delight to children and grand children of

the subjects.

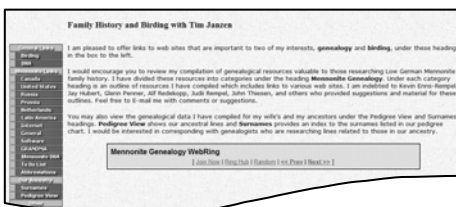
Many of the pictures had notes written on them and other than the obvious information, some pictures, like the School District #90 one provide much more information. By estimating the age of Irma at about 10, one could identify many of the students from 1930 school records.

Judith Rempel, MHSA's in house archivist, was able to construct the genealogical chart starting with information provided by Al and from the photos and then going online to work back. Now many of these old images have been digitally processed and are being preserved in family histories and will be viewed by who knows how many future generations and surely this is what genealogy is all about. ♦

Blogs & Websites of Note

Our membership is getting oh-so-modern! Apart from the MHSA websites, members are jumping in and developing their own sites as well. Here's a short list of the ones we know about. Do you know others?

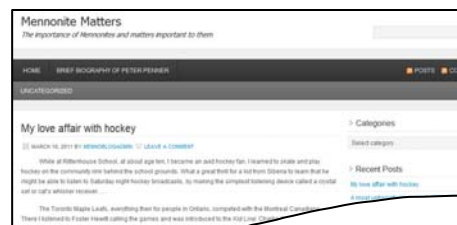
- Family History and Birding – www.timjanzen.com - A resource site for those pursuing Mennonite family history (Tim Janzen, Portland, Oregon)



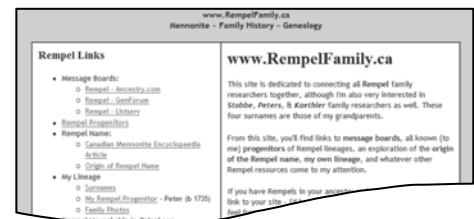
- Eppisode & Eppisode Blog - www.eppisode.ca - Celebrating the Epp Family in the Past and Today (Marty-Anne Epp Grams, Calgary)
- Mennonite Matters - <http://www.mennonitematters.com>



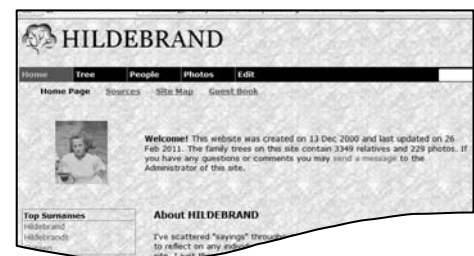
[mennonitematters.com](http://www.mennonitematters.com) - The importance of Mennonites and matters important to them (Peter Penner, Calgary)



- Rempel Family - www.rempelfamily.ca - One-name Study of Rempels over time and geography (Judith Rempel, Calgary)



- Hildebrand - <http://dave.tribalpages.com> - Dedicated to the Hildebrand Family, starting with Heinrich, b about 1700 in Prussia (David Hildebrand, Crossfield)



Laugh! Long ago, when ladies wore corsets that laced up in the front, a proper and dignified woman was known as "straight laced" when she wore a tightly tied lace.

Archives Corner: Congregational Life and History

What do we know about your congregation?

What will future Alberta Mennonites and researchers know about your congregation? There are a few congregations in Alberta for which we have a detailed collection of records (documents, booklets, published histories) that tell the tale of a congregation and its members' lives. Too frequently those records only come to us after a congregation is dissolved and the only records provided sum up by the financial and legal business – the activities of the congregation are not preserved.

We'd like to help your congregation have a more comprehensive picture of itself preserved in a central and safe place. The MHSA archival vault is temperature and humidity controlled and access to the records is on a request basis. Access can be restricted to certain time lapses and purposes if privacy considerations require this and the restrictions are clearly outlined.

But, for us to provide that help, the records need to come to the MHSA. Historical work is based on four steps: collection, organization, preservation and provision of access. We can help with the last three, but we need congregational partners for the collection step.

What can your congregation can do to assure its history is preserved?

It's really quite simple, not hard work, and neither time-consuming nor expensive.

Identify a volunteer who is socially inclined, likes history, and is organized (or any combination of those three characteristics) and ask

them to be the MHSA liaison. You may already have a Congregational Historian or Librarian, who might be the perfect person. He or she need only dedicate less than 30 minutes a month to this role.

Here's their job description:

- Collect any electronic or paper document that is issued by the congregation to its members (list below)
- Deliver these documents to the MHSA (in person, via an MHSA representative for your area, or by tracked postal package) to the MHSA when your bundle becomes a suitable stack – at minimum once a year.

Electronic/Paper Documents

- Weekly worship bulletins
- Monthly, quarterly, and annual minutes of church meetings (membership, board and executive) – include committee ones too if possible
- Annual Financial Statements (audited version preferred)

- Newsletters
- Lists of persons born, baptized, married, or buried by the congregation.

On a catch-up basis, see if you can:

- Find the current and past constitutions and bylaws for the congregation
- List the ministers that have led the congregation – include their full names (and that of their spouses and children if known) and the years of service. If you know their birth or death date, include those details as well.
- Find documents that have been used to summarize congregational life, the congregation's history, or major projects of the whole congregation or a group. Don't forget the power of photographs—we would love to look after your older photographs.

Any questions? Any ideas of other things you'd like to see the

Query from MHSA Member, Miriam Roberts

This photo is from the Mary Heinrich Harder (b 1865 to Heinrich Martin Harder and Marie Olfert) and Jacob Andres (b to Frank Andres and Helena Lepp) family. Would anyone who knows their children and the whereabouts of this family please contact meiriona@telus.net ❖



MHSA keep for your congregation – so the historical record can be as complete as possible?

To see a reasonably comprehensive list of the Mennonite congregations that have existed in Alberta, please go to: www.mennonitehistory.org/projects/finding_aid_congregations.html. If we have records or publications associated with a congregation, they are listed there.

Will future generations know your congregation's activities and accomplishments?

Archives Contact:

Judith Rempel, MHSA, 2946-32 Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7, 403 250-1121, or 403 969 5115 judith@mennonitehistory.org

Area Representatives:

Calgary: Irene Klassen, irene@mennonitehistory.org

Northern Alberta: Suzane Braun Hanser, La Crete, suzane@mennonitehistory.org

Edmonton: Colin Neufeldt colin@mennonitehistory.org

Eastern Irrigation District: Mary Burkholder, Duchess, mary@mennonitehistory.org

Southern Alberta: Dave Neufeldt, Lethbridge, dave.neufeldt@mennonitehistory.org

41st Annual Germans from Russia Heritage Society International Convention

The 41st Annual Convention of Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS) will be held at The Davenport Hotel & Tower in Spokane, Washington July 20-24, 2011. The library and bookstore will be open on July 20th, and a city tour that day as well as a dinner cruise that evening on nearby Lake Coeur d'Alene is planned. Opening Cere-

monies begin on the morning of July 21, followed by a variety of workshops on genealogy, history, cultural cooking and programs relating to today's technology in using DNA. Visit our website at www.grhs.org and click on the Convention page for more information or call the GRHS headquarters at (701) 223-6167. Special accommodation rates are available for convention attendees if you mention "Germans from Russia." The hotel reservation number is (800) 899-1482

Who are the Germans from Russia? We are a unique group! Our ancestors left Germany back in the late 1700s-early 1800s to settle along the Volga River and in South Russia, along the Black Sea where free land was being offered by the government to those looking for land and political freedoms.

They built up prosperous communities and thrived until the political winds changed their course; it was evident that they were no longer exempt from military drafts, high taxes, and their religious freedom was being jeopardized. Many began leaving during the late 1800s and came to the Americas. Those that stayed behind soon regretted that decision, as more and more hardships were placed on them, until about 1918 when the Bolsheviks began raiding their villages and killing the colonists. Forced families by the government and unjustified arrests and imprisonments and killings were common everywhere. Many of the villagers were sent to labor camps in the Ural Mountains and Kazakhstan.

Today, the descendants of those families live all over the world, with many in the USA and Canada.

The annual GRHS convention

is an exciting time for all Germans from Russia to come together in one location to learn more about their history, their German customs and heritage. They have the opportunity to do genealogical research in our library, take in workshops on interesting topics and share good food while enjoying the company of new-found relatives and new and old friends. We hope to see you there! ❖

Friends of the Mennonite Centre - Ukraine

A book originally intended to help North American Mennonites discover their roots in the former Mennonite settlements in South Russia (now Ukraine) is now helping Ukrainians recover their ethnic history.

Building on the Past: Mennonite Architecture, Landscape and Settlements



Professor Fedor Turchenko congratulates Rudy Friesen at book launch
photo credit: David Regehr

in Russia / Ukraine by Winnipeg architect and historian Rudy P. Friesen, was recently translated into Ukrainian and launched at the Mennonite Centre in Molochansk (formerly Halbstadt, Molotschna Colony) on October 11, 2010, in the presence of more than 30 Ukrainian educators including teachers, school directors and superintendents. ❖

Henry Bartel Photographs Scanned

Henry came to the MHSA a few weeks ago and asked if we could assist in identifying some of the people in family photographs that he held. We've spent some time poring over them and he agreed that we could scan them for our collection. In addition, we want to share them with you—can you assist with further identification?

GRANDMA has information on some these people.

2011.002-06: Could this be Dietrich Bartel (1842-1922) with wife Sara Klaassen (1847-1911). See GRANDMA #97368 for this possibility. They did have nine children. Does it look like it was taken in about 1890?



2011.002-06 The older couple in the middle are likely Dietrich Bartel and his wife. But, which Dietrich? What was his wife's name? And of those around, most are likely children—but are they all? What are their names?



2011.002-05 Henry believes that the older couple are Jakob and Susanna (daughter of Abram Penner) Neufeld, that they have some tie to a Susie Martens, and that a second person in the picture may also be a Jakob Neufeld. Can anyone help us out with additional names and/or corrections? This photo

2011.002-05: These are possibly Jakob Neufeld (1873-1928) and Susanna Penner (1880-1944) who had seven children. See GRANDMA #117956 for this possibility. Could this have been taken about 1923?

2011.002-07: Helena Peters (1900-2003) can be found in GRANDMA as #460495



2011.002-07 The children are Helena Peters, her teacher, her cousin, and her brother William. This was taken when she was 11, in 1911. Does anyone know the name of the teacher or cousin? The location is Bachmut.