

mennonite mirror

volume 9/number 8
april 1980



10-81
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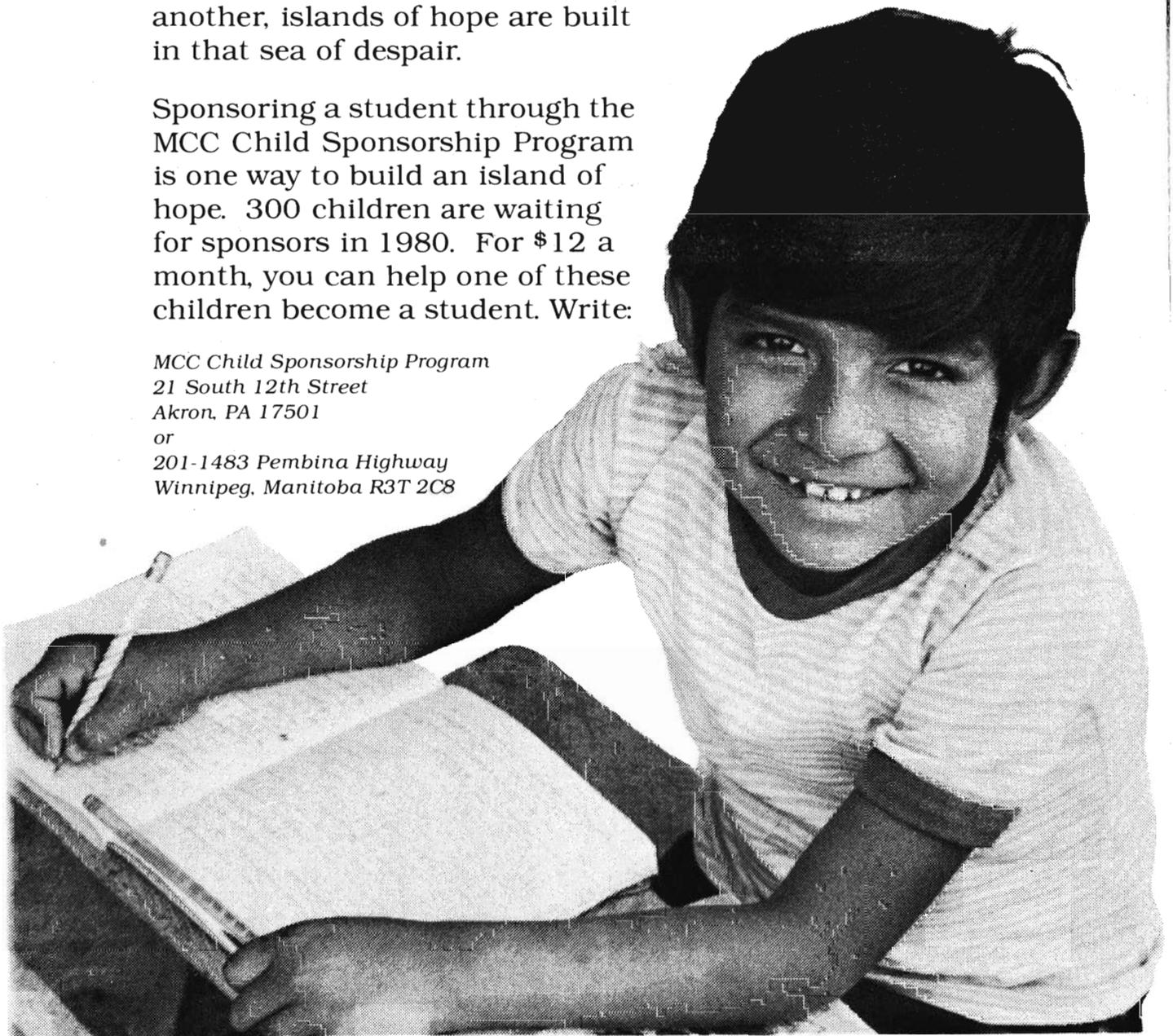
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There is one winner to declare this month and two corrections to be made.

First, Mrs. John P. Dyck of Winkler is the winner of the March contest. Her entry was drawn from among 58 entries.

Second, last issue the contest results should have shown that M. Hildebrand of Austin, Manitoba, was the winner for February, and that H. Goossen, of Eastwood Drive, Winnipeg, was the winner for January.

Answers to the March puzzle are grim, drift, blast, fierce, shovel, and storms.

The letters are to be re-arranged and written in the squares to form words. Letters which fall into the squares with circles within them are to be arranged to complete the answer at the bottom of the puzzle.

A winner will be drawn at random from among the correct entries and a prize will be awarded.

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by April 21, 1980.

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HUTTERITE COLONY GETS INDOCHINESE REFUGEE

Parkview Hutterite colony, thirty-seven km. north of Neepawa, after submitting an application for a Vietnamese refugee family with the Mennonite Central Committee last August, had a family of six arriving at the colony just before the new year. Despite the fact that the family members are all in their twenties except for sixteen year old Tran Hue Quang, the colony was very happy to accept them. They had originally hoped for a family with younger children because the colony is better prepared to care for children, says Jake Waldner, the colony's minister.

Because he speaks a better English, Le Van Bi, the group's main spokesman, helps Waldner in the colony's motor shop. A second man works in the chicken barn, a third in the carpenter shop and the others wherever they are needed. Tran Van Hai's wife enjoys working in the community kitchen and volunteers for any and all tasks as she adjusts to the work schedule of the colony women.

Van Bi, better schooled in English than the others, explains that he was imprisoned in Vietnam for three months last summer until his family could buy his freedom. Following his release he and four friends united with five other people and fled Vietnam in a nine-meter-long boat owned by the father of one of the boys.

After circling around the communist boats in the South China Sea for some six days, they reached the beaches of Malaysia in mid-July, where they received assistance from a Canadian reporter. His kindness prompted them to choose

Canada as their home after they arrived in a refugee camp in Kuala Lumpur.

Besides the six refugees now in Parkview, there are two other refugee families living at Parkview's parent colony at Elie, Manitoba. In both colonies the Vietnamese have been provided with a suite which contains necessary appliances for making a cup of tea or a snack. Colony members have also sewn quilts, bedding and other clothes for the new

residents.

By way of other news from James Valley colony, Joshua Hofer, a leader at the colony, left the colony for Japan on the twenty-fourth of February. Hofer's first stop took him to Alberta where he joined three Hutterian brethren from that province for the long flight overseas on the twenty-sixth. The group went to visit a young colony in Japan which enjoys their support.

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Enns visits Enns in a quest for an Austrian namesake

By Mary M. Enns

Enns, a small city hidden away in the Enns Valley, is Austria's oldest city. Winding its way through the valley and skirting the town is the river by the same name. Because we, too, carry that name and had spent some time there seven years ago we knew we had to make a return trip, this time by way of a pilgrimage. This time the search would be resumed in the old cemetery adjoining the St. Laurenz Basilica, the search for the family name ENNS on a tombstone, somewhere. Though there are no families in Enns by that name now, we felt, surely, there might have been at one time.

Our train arrived at the station on the near side of the city of Enns early on a Sunday morning last July. In the distance we heard the church bells, probably one of the loveliest tones ever produced, from the stately Basilica St. Laurenz. On our previous visit we had sought refuge from the hot sun in the cool interior of the cathedral. Its only visitors, how could we have imagined that we would sit entranced, listening to the organ master at work on repertoire.

Now the pealing of the bells called the towns people to worship. It also called unmistakably to us. *Kommt zur Andacht, Kommt zur Andacht.* (Come worship). Quickly we checked our luggage at the only Gasthof near the station, saying we would be back after the morning service at the Basilica. The innkeeper was quietly obliging. We realized that just five days earlier they had buried his father in that cemetery. We saw the new grave, the fresh flowers, the name.

We reached the steps of the Basilica

just as its Pfarrer Herr Doktor Markgoth was arriving. He welcomed us as obvious travellers and when we had identified ourselves as *Enns aus Kanada* he invited us into his office and then to the sanctuary where the worship was about to begin. Quite a number of people, young and old, had arrived for early mass. Almost every woman in the congregation wore a hat, not one wore trousers.

Our *Gasthaus zum Bahnhof* included an excellent dining room. In the four days we spent here we enjoyed varied, rather hearty Austrian fare such as *Schweine Schnitzel und Knoedel* (pork roast and dumplings). Just once we went off the beaten track and indulged in their vilely rich, succulent Torte, but with a two month sojourn on the continent ahead of us we declined most of that sort of thing.

On impulse, while the financier of the family was at the bank changing travellers cheques into shillings, I nipped across the town square and into City Hall. Because the hour was right I was taken into the buergermeister's presence almost immediately. Once again the family name Enns was our open sesame. Herr Otto Gatterbauer made an appointment to see us the following morning. In the meantime his assistant Gruenwald was assigned to take us on a walking tour of the historic section of the city.

The city has taken its name from the Enns River. The official spelling is ENNS, the scientific one being ENS. The Celtic form ANISA, changed by the Romans to Anisus and further into the Latin ENASUM, then the Germanic ENS and finally, since the nineteenth century, ENNS.



Mary Enns interviewing the mayor of Enns.

Staedtchen is the best name for it. It dates back some 2000 years and can be reached easily by car, midway between Salzburg and Vienna, not 200 Kilometers from either, in the most enchanting of Austrian valleys. Travelling this way in 1972 was slow because we were stopping every little while for more spectacular scenery. By train, a rapid, nonsense and business-like manner of travelling, you transfer at Linz on the Danube River and before you can say Jack Robinson you're in Enns. We walked down the age-old Juden Strasse, so named because that was where the Jewish sector was found and from where they conducted their business affairs. The Baecker Strasse was where the bakers plied their marvelous wares many years ago. We saw the City Tower, built in 1564, from which point all commerce branches out, and the historic Town Houses. A small sign shows the Anton Bruckner House where the great composer studied Contrabas. We finally came upon the old Enns Castle, formerly used as night lodging for Sovereigns, the palace, no longer used as such, and the medieval fortress, all with the old beaver-tail tiled roofs.

In the tour of the Basilica St. Laurenz the chaplain took us down into the crypt to view and walk amongst the archaeological diggings and findings and restorations of Roman temple and cathedral remnants. Of interest in the City Museum, besides many Roman artifacts, is the City Charter granted by Duke Leopold VI in 1212.

In contrast to the historic points of interest Enns has tennis courts, restaurants and night clubs, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, target shooting ranges and mini golf for entertainment.



The tower in Enns, Austria.

This city of 10,000 (95% of which is Catholic, 5% Evangelical) prides itself on the fact that they have virtually no unemployment. Their chemistry plant, the iron foundry, the sugar beet factory assure employment for its inhabitants. Large concrete silos are filled each year with feed corn from the farmers' fields. Add to this the highly prized industry of jewelry and glass manufacture and it becomes clear these are a contented, reasonably secure people.

Buergermeister Gatterbauer substantiated this when we spoke to him about his town and its people during our interview. He was pleased to discuss the possibility of having the feature on Enns published in Canada. "Just recently a Swedish journalist came to us with a

similar idea," he said. The mayor showed us every courtesy and as a representative of his city, presented us with gifts. He made an appointment for us with Herr Nemecek, the director of the Gablonzer Exhibition Hall, to view their marvelous exhibits.

Frau Zita Siecker, a public relations person at city hall, is also the director of her own business. When her husband died some years ago she and her family decided to carry on with his construction business. Her daughter went into study of this highly male-oriented profession and upon graduation became the firm's manager. Herself a Gablonzer, we were fortunate in having Frau Siecker with us on our tour of the jewelry and crystal

exhibition hall in Neu-Gablonz, a suburb of Enns.

The above named industry originated in North Bohemia as a result of the sterility of the soil and the harsh climate of the Isergebirge. The German settlers were forced to turn to handcrafting trades such as glass, crystal and jewelry fashioning to supplement the agricultural lacks. Later, when they were driven from Czechoslovakia, a great many fled to Austria. Some 500 have lived there for the past 35 years. Today 130 Gablonzer factories in Austria, begun as modest family concerns, employ 2000 people plus 500 whose work is still done in their homes; 95% of these products are used for export.

We continued in Frau Siecker's Peugeot in order to see the famous and imposing 17th century Stifts-Kirche (Collegiate Church) and the Augustine Monastery in St. Florian, five kilometers from Enns. Florian was a civil administrator in the town adjoining Enns. Because he confessed Christ before men, he died a martyr's death, being drowned in the Enns River. During our drive, our hostess told us the intriguing story of her escape from Czechoslovakia.

Long ago the St. Augustine Canons contributed to the Bavarian settlements not only in services of liturgy but in the clearing of woodlands and in the founding of villages and churches. The complex we visited was splendid indeed built as it was during the most fruitful era of Baroque art in Austria. Besides the cathedral and monastery there is a fine library, the Aldorfer Gallery, and the sumptuous apartments of emperors, princes and popes with priceless art treasures and paintings, goblin tapestries and furniture. Music was of great importance. Anton Bruckner was choir boy, teacher and organist here. He was buried below the great Bruckner organ. Dinner in the large Moenchen Keller (Monk's Cellar) was excellent.

There is just no better way to fulfill a pilgrimage than by walking and exploring. We did this for four days. The many beautiful old chestnut, acacia and linden trees, the fruit trees hanging low with pears or apples, the wealth of flowers, the cobblestoned streets, the gentle kurrur of the morning dove imprinted themselves indelibly upon our minds. It became very natural for us to return the greeting "Gruess Gott" of the townspeople. It seemed almost like a benediction on their part. It translates very roughly "God salute you," as was explained to us in the Austrian dialect.

Mission accomplished, though we found no family name like ours, we boarded a boat at Linz and relaxed as we made our way down the Danube toward Vienna and a world far removed from tiny Enns. **mm**

Doodles, Donkin and Drool, Sara Binks comes alive

All but a dozen seats of the Midland Collegiate were sold out by the night of the performance. It was an unusual and rare event, especially for the people of Carmen, who saw their long-time celebrity, Dr. Paul Hiebert, affectionately known as "Mr. Binks", escorted to a front-row seat for the playing of *The Wonderful World of Sarah Binks*.

The show is an adaptation for stage of the book, *Sarah Binks*, which won for Hiebert the first Stephen Leacock Medal for humour. The show is a hilarious one-man characterization, played by Canadian actor Eric Donkin, of self-proclaimed literary critic, Miss Rosalind Drool. Greying, sentimental and mischievous, she is Sarah's ultimate fan.

Donkin approaches Sarah Binks' poetry through Miss Drool, the literary critic and Binks' admirer, who is merely mentioned in Hiebert's book. In the manner that Hiebert created Sarah Binks from one-time "doodles on the marge", Donkin has elaborated on the Drool character, and produces her as "a 65 year old academic critic and an exponent of theatrical elocution".

Ostentatiously Miss Rosalind Drool made her entry amidst flapping capes, chains of jewellery, and a clutter of baggage. Producing her high-heeled shoes from a white plastic Dominion store shopping bag and putting on her spectacles dangling from a string about her neck, Miss Drool proceeds to speak in her very cultured voice. From the moment of her arrival swinging through the audience to her final poignant withdrawal, Miss Drool presents a lively portrait of the "Sweet Songstress of Saskatchewan": Sarah Binks 1906-1929. She has allowed her imagination to run away with her, and makes it difficult, as Professor Marrowfat would insist, "to decide which is Binks and which is Drool".

Miss Drool, a woman of formidable countenance, quotes frequently and at some length from the many references at her disposal (like the *Horse-breeders' Gazette*) in an effort to bring to our attention the background and reasons for her protegee's success as a venerable poet. Horace P. Marrowfat, however,

cannot be regarded as one without an unbiased opinion of Binksian literature, and his comprehensive criticism is duly pushed under the table in a sweeping gesture of disdain persuasively executed. Sarah's sweet songs have been more favorably discussed by Miss Drool in her literary study, *Great Lives and Great Loves*, published by Bunnybooks Ltd., and displayed on her table.

Never-to-be-forgotten are Miss Drool's spirited recitations of Sarah's immortal verses—particularly memorable are her readings of *Steeds*, *Hordes of Sheep*, and the tell-tale *Wash Out on the Line*. In *Steeds*, the observer soon forgets the presence of the literary Rosalind, seated astride on a high stool, arms waving, and enthusiastic in descriptions of Sarah's team of horses, Dairy Queen and Buttercup, while the Sweet Songstress comes alive again in



Donkin as Drool.

the dash of her poetry. By now the audience is lost in wonder and admiration for this poetess and her works—the Poet Laureate of Saskatchewan!

Much more than the artistic expression of her age, Sarah Binks is the product of the people who influenced her, immortalized as noble characters in her lively compositions. There was Ole the hired man, the noble steeds, Dairy Queen and Buttercup, the Snearth in spring, Snooky the pig, the German translation she attempted ("what she might have done with translations from the Greek or Portuguese, one cannot say!"), and the influence of her grandfather, who could read but not write, and had such an imposing nature, that, when he died, he was "stuffed and presented to the Nation . . . as a candidate for the Liberal Party". There was also Henry Welkin, the travelling implement salesman who "took her . . . to Regina, the Athens of Saskatchewan".

Nurtured furthermore by the alkaline soil of the prairies; keenly aware of the beauty of calves, skunks and bugs; sympathetic to Ole and devoted to her friend Mathilda Schwantzacker, Sarah Binks, Miss Drool reminds us again, eventually won the coveted Wheat Pool Medal, and although she never married, and met an untimely death at the age of 23, she nonetheless was a woman and lived fully. There was no doubt about that, from the evidence presented by the notes Miss Drool.

To say the least, Eric Donkin's performance as Miss Drool is magnificent, and should not be missed when it comes to Winnipeg.

Friends of Dr. Hiebert had previously planned a special evening in his honour in January, at which time the western Canadian historian, Dr. Grant MacEwan, was scheduled to appear but the whole idea blew when a blizzard howled into Manitoba and prevented Dr. MacEwan from coming to Carman. Consequently the organizers of the Paul Hiebert Night decided to postpone the honours until Donkin's show came to town. For this special portion of the evening, Hiebert was seated on stage and strained to hear the message of congratulations, good wishes and comments from letters and telegrams.

Dr. Hiebert obviously enjoyed the splendid performance of Eric Donkin, and was seen in high spirits throughout the presentations—pretending that it was enough of honours, that he wanted to go home. After a final word from Hiebert, who said that it continues to surprise him that those simple doodles that he and his brother used to write when they were kids should have finally found their way all across Canada, the evening ended with Donkin quoting the last line of a Binksian special: "Let's all go home!" by Peter Paetkau mm

Pavilion set for Mennonites at Folklorama '80



John Friesen

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg and the Mennonite Collegiate at Gretna, will be co-sponsoring a Mennonite Pavilion at Winnipeg's Folklorama this summer. The week of Folklorama runs from August 10th to August 17th. Folklorama is one of the most popular cultural activities in Winnipeg. Each year more than 30 pavilions representing different religious and cultural groups host hundreds of thousands of visitors from both inside and outside Manitoba. The purpose of the Folklorama week is to acquaint persons with the various groups that make up the population of Manitoba and to provide them with a week of interesting activities.

The boards of the MCI and WMC decided last fall to apply for a pavilion for 1980. Permission was received at the end of February from the Community Folk Arts Council. The Mennonite pavilion will be in the University of Winnipeg. Since no alcoholic beverages will be served this arrangement is satisfactory both to the university and to the sponsoring groups.

The *Mirror* asked Mr. John Friesen, chairman of the board at MCI, associate registrar at the University of Winnipeg, and also chairman of the Mennonite pavilion committee some questions about this new venture.

Mirror: What prompted your board and the board of WMC to apply for a pavilion for Folklorama?

Friesen: A significant portion of the money needed to operate the Mennonite Collegiate Institute and Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Institute has to be raised through special projects such as work days, fund-raising banquets and the Mennonite Festival of Arts and Crafts. It occurred to some of us that a Mennonite pavilion might be another way to raise some money for our schools. But we also felt that the Mennonites have contributed significantly to the cultural life of our province and we wanted to tell the community in which we live a bit about the contributions we have made. We felt that a Mennonite

pavilion would be one avenue of communicating what we are to a large segment of Manitoba's population.

Mirror: What kind of image of Mennonites will the pavilion project?

Friesen: Our cultural life and our religious faith have always been linked quite closely. Our literature, our art, the way we think, our "Weltanschauung" and even our social institutions have all been influenced by our religion. This religious faith and the ways in which we express it must be projected in the Mennonite pavilion.

We will strive to do this by telling people about such things as the work of Mennonite Central Committee and of Mennonite Disaster Service. The entertainment, too, will include both secular and sacred music so that people, who listen, will notice very quickly that our faith in God influences also our musical culture.

Mirror: Is there any danger that the general image of Folklorama will be an embarrassment to the Mennonite community?

Friesen: I have never noticed that Folklorama has had a negative image with the public so I do not see why being a part of it should present any danger of embarrassment to the Mennonite community. While we may not approve of all of the activities that occur in the different pavilions we do not have to undertake similar activities in the Mennonite pavilion. As Christians we are "in the world" but not "of the world" and I think this applies to nature of activities in the Mennonite pavilion. By providing good wholesome entertainment, by not serving alcoholic beverages and by the nature of our displays we will get visitors to notice that our pavilion is different from most others.

Mirror: Could you describe precisely what will take place at the pavilion?

Friesen: Not all the activities and events have been planned yet but I can outline a number of the things that will take place.

In Riddell Hall Cafeteria, where the

ladies will be serving Mennonite food, we will set up a stage on which we plan to present lighter entertainment. Small musical ensembles will perform folk songs and other music, we might have some poetry readings and possibly some skits. People will watch this entertainment while they taste the delicious food. We may also have an area where we have young people demonstrate some of the circle games, such as "Schluesselbund", which were so popular among our young people not so very long ago. Another Mennonite social pasttime, "Tjnipstrat" will be played in another area; the public will be able to participate.

In the University of Winnipeg's 250 seat theatre in Centennial Hall, we will feature our school choirs, community choirs, some of our accomplished pianists, violinists, etc. and vocalists in half-hour performances. Any group wishing to perform on one or more evenings should contact Mrs. Mary Pauls, 247 Cordova Street (Ph. 489-6373); she will try to accommodate as many performers and groups as possible.

In the display area we will be showing some of our people's handicrafts and displaying Mennonite literature and art. Many of these items will be for sale to the public. We also hope to have people on hand who will demonstrate crafts and skills.

We are preparing a multi-media display which will use sound, recordings, slides and graphics to tell the story of the Mennonites.

Mirror: What will be the main sources of funds that will be raised in this venture?

Friesen: We will be selling passports for Folklorama and this will be one source of funds. We also expect to make a profit from the sale of food, crafts and literature.

Mirror: How many visitors do you expect? How many can you accommodate for dinner each evening?

Friesen: It is really difficult to estimate how many visitors will come to the Mennonite pavilion.

The seating capacity of Riddell Hall cafeteria is about 300 persons. Since people usually visit three or four pavilions in one evening we should be able to accommodate several thousand each evening.

Mirror: What's on the menu?

Friesen: The ladies, under the direction of Mrs. Margaret Lundin, have planned a menu of typical Mennonite food. They will be serving *Einbacks* with farmer sausage (I suppose we could call these Mennonite nips), *borscht*, *fleischpiroschki*, *wereneki* with cream gravy, *fleischbubbat*, *plumi moos*, *rollkucken* with watermelon, *fruitplatz* and *porzeltji*. mm

Looking back doesn't always bring fond memories of school

"What is taught is not always what is desired, and vice versa; what is taught is not always what is learned and vice versa. Moreover, there are almost always unintended consequences in education; indeed they are frequently more significant than the intended consequences. Hence educational transactions are often marked by profound irony."

Lawrence A. Cremin

by Kathy Martens

"Katie, du wirst noch mal zurueck schauen und dann wirst du uns noch mal schreiben, dass wir doch Recht hatten." These words were spoken to me 25 years ago by Mr. Shaefer when I was a student in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, as I am sure, they were said to any student who questioned the rules and the philosophy of the school. I have never been tempted to write that letter but perhaps some other evaluation of my early education is in order.

A church school is by definition interested in teaching its values. What were some of these values? How were they taught and was the school successful or were there a host of other values being transmitted quite inadvertently?

One of the aims of the school was to present the gospel to every student, ostensibly for the students' own good. But, it was known that students could be expected to present fewer behavior problems after making a public declaration of commitment to Christ. These annual evangelistic meetings, customarily held in mid-winter, were moved to November the first year I attended MCI, presumably in the hope that discipline problems would be nipped in the bud at an earlier stage.

Early in the week, a group of recalcitrant students sat in Pete's Cafe, imbibing Coca Cola, when a wordly wise Grade 12 student sized me up: "You'll be converted, you're just the type. Vulnerable."

"Why do you say that, what makes you so sure?"

"Oh I can tell, you're the kind that

always succumbs before the week is over."

"But I'm already converted, in fact more than one time."

A series of daily vacation Bible schools, summer camps and evangelistic meetings and the resultant onslaughts on my emotional nature had proved his analysis of me was already accurate.

"That doesn't matter, for their purposes you're not saved. Not if you question the rules of the school, or you stay away from Prayer Meetings," the student added.

To this day, I have refused to allow a strong group to pressure me to conform. The hysteria that accompanied the conversion phenomenon degraded it and destroyed what should be a spontaneous experience originating within the person in his or her search for meaning. The religious community was less concerned with the actual state of the soul than it was with the verbal commitment and the corresponding conformity in behaviour.

Another explicit aim was to enculturate students with the dominant values of Mennonite culture and heritage, which presented a paradox: in church history the Mennonites were the left wing of the reformation leading the innocent to believe we had a heritage of questioning and valuing, of independent inquiry; in practice though that time for us was in the past, now we were to accept the values handed down to us by our forefathers. Of these, obedience, conformity and uniformity ranked high. The school, which was well known for its strict rules regarding social life between the sexes, really had two classes of students - those who lived near by and could go home for weekends, and those who spent most weekends in Gretna. The latter class of students had no social outlets for weeks on end, for no activities outside of church services and prayer meetings were planned for the weekends. Attempts on the part of the students to discuss the rules of the school were met with incomprehension or defensiveness. The intent of the rules

was to keep order. What was learned by many a student was that with ingenuity it was possible to beat the system.

What values were taught by the method of instruction in the various religious subjects such as *Bibelkunde*, *Glaubenlehre*, *Ethik*, and *Characterbildung*? I can remember being surprised that all of them consisted of interpretations and question and answer formats in which the student was rewarded for word-for-word regurgitation of the material. This was easily tested by two intrepid students who risked failure by learning the meaning of the answers and writing the answers in their own words. Their subsequent low marks revealed the folly of that tactic and henceforth they memorized the answers again. But surely in the advanced Grade 12 year when we took *Ethik* and *Characterbildung* there would be the opportunity to discuss, debate, and explore urgent questions pertaining to life. That even these subjects consisted of a question and answer format was a lingering disappointment and betrayal.

The secular subjects were taught in a similar manner. History, drama, poetry, novel and composition, which could have lent themselves to discussion were taught in an authoritarian manner, i.e. the assumption being that there is one acceptable interpretation of a piece of literature and you need only find the authority to tell you how to interpret it. Thus passivity and dependence were fostered and taught. Was that intended?

The mere fact that we attended a Mennonite school implied that unless we were Christians when we left, the school would have failed. It was not enough to be law-abiding, thinking citizens, we must accept unquestioningly the Christian Mennonite perspective or we were a dishonour to the school. New ideas, then, would always need to be checked to see if they fit in with the prescribed belief system. Intellectual development is stifled when doubts or questions are suppressed. It used to puzzle me that religious doubts could only be expressed after the doubter had already emerged victorious on the side of the dominant community, ready to affirm anew the faith of the fathers. The implication being that the process of questioning, searching, valuing, and yes, agonizing are only valid if the end result is a committed Christian.

The sensitive artistic personality, often at odds with the dominant society, found the Mennonite society a particularly hostile one. To think differently was to be a misfit. Individuality was considered pride and the mark of an unruly, undisciplined personality, evoking the strongest responses, so that a certain docility, or in some cases, duplicity, coupled with a strong sense of

guilt became a distinguishing characteristic of Mennonites. Thus was creativity stifled.

I could go on to describe how the pursuit of pleasure was discouraged, how we learned that there should be a moral purpose to everything we did, so that play was something that children did, and it had to be learned again when we grew up and found our lives were flat and sterile without play.

In writing a critical article I am negating my early training which said, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all," or stronger, "Don't air your dirty linen in public." So for years I have kept silent, thinking I might still find that I was just out of step with the rest of the community and I could get in step. As a minority group we were mindful that we must protect and insult: criticism was labelled disloyalty. I felt I was lucky to have been educated at all, many are not so fortunate. Now I see my past as part of my present, which I must come to accept in its totality, I claim the right to speak out and still be proud to call myself a Mennonite. My definition of a Mennonite is one who has the courage to dissent.

Die Stillen im Lande are becoming integrated into all aspects of modern life in Canada, so that it is hard to tell a Mennonite by his appearance, so perhaps I could suggest the title could now apply to those Mennonites who have rejected the narrow confines of patriarchal religion, without joining another church or being lost in depravity. These are the truly silent Mennonites without a voice. Paradoxically, the end result of analysing my education has taught me to be

critical of dogma and authority of all institutions.

And how did growing up female in a Mennonite community color my perceptions?

"An interesting personality among the first generation of Mennonite writers in Canada is Maria Penner, out standing as the only woman among her people who indulged in the luxury of writing. Luxury it seemed in a community of farmers, but she never neglected her family in spite of her hobby. She loved children and the true art of homemaking." (taken from the forward to *Unter dem Nordlicht*, an anthology of German-Mennonite writing. Italics are mine.)

Read that again and substitute for Maria Penner the name of Arnold Dyck if you will. A man is expected to use his talents to the best of his abilities, a woman may indulge herself if she has time left after attending to the needs of her family.

What in the upbringing and socialization of the Mennonite society helped to make Mennonite women the treasured helpmeets they are or have been until now?

I can only describe my own experiences, when with the acute sense of curiosity that children lose only too soon, I was fascinated by the lessons I learned only too early. I played church on the farmyard mounting the wooden platform of the drill to preach a powerful sermon, only to be ridiculed by my brothers, "Girls don't become preachers". What could I say, it was an oversight on my part, truth I had never seen one; the closest I could come to the first ambition was to aspire to be a missionary. In church the Word of God was preached by a male minister, called to his ministry by a male God, proclaiming a gospel in which I could be saved by a male Christ. The sermons were directed to the men who in turn were responsible for the women, who belonged to them. There was one woman who often spoke up in the occasional impromptu business meetings held immediately after a Sunday morning service. (The *Bruderschaft* meetings being off limits to women.) When this woman's voice shattered the male dominated discussions, coming as it did from the left hand side of the church, all eyes would turn and I fully expected the wrath of God to come down on her for ignoring Paul's admonition, "Let the women learn in silence and in all subjugation." I asked and I learned that women could make their concerns known at home and have their husbands bring their concerns to public meetings.

What about women's power in the home? Yes, power behind the throne was often female, ludicrously hidden, why was it not shared openly both at home and in public? The image of women be-

ing unfit to speak in public lingers long after the rules change. Silence has been bred into many generations of women.

The Bible which I read and reread, reiterated the theme of a patriarchal structure, the prophets, the apostles being men. Stories of women were filtered through male consciousness and the women were judged on the basis of whether they helped or hindered male superiority. There were good worthy women like Ruth, who left her people to go with her husband, and clearly bad ones like Delilah who stole Samson's power, or Potiphar's wife, a seductress. To escape the inferiority of my sex I chose men as role models, a choice which could only lead to conflicts. Every step along the path of Christian discipleship meant a negation of my essential self; how could I be true to my own nature and deny my sexual identity at the same time?

Christ honoured the virgin mother who conceived without intercourse and the prostitute who resigned from it. Both are alike, only opposites. Christian morality imposes an unnatural bad-good dichotomy on our lives giving women two choices on how we wish to be exploited. For example, pornography which is condemned by moralists, is the other side of morality. Both pornography and morality seek to limit and control women, the former by overt violence or threats of violence in the depiction of women, the latter by limiting options to women. Indirectly moralists also use the threat of violence, in the subtle threat that "good" women will be safe, "bad" women get what they deserve. Both punish women for being sexual beings. I reject both and I believe it is possible to integrate genuine erotic love with freedom of choice and an absence of exploitation in relationships between men and women. Not sexuality, but selfishness and exploitation need to be controlled.

It is the myths and images of religion which shape and form the fabric of our lives, so it matters that the story of Eve's fall forms the basis of the Christian's identification of female sexuality with temptation that men must resist. Adam's curse was to work by the sweat of his brow, but Eve's punishment involved her whole identity. She is defined not as a human being, but as a sexual being who having been seduced, seduces Adam and is punished for her sexuality. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. And thy desire shall be to thy husband. And he shall rule over thee." It is passages like these which condone the double standard of morality and prompt the hard line against abortion and birth control taken by so many Christians. That curiosity is punished by life long banishment from Eden is a very power-

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ful lesson to learn in Sunday School.

Paul's misogynous utterances on women, though they caused me pain for many years and forced me into mental gymnastics to understand the context in which he wrote them, no longer matter, because I no longer look upon the Bible as the final authority to all life's questions. There is no final authority to which I can submit and yield myself. To do so is to give up responsibility for my choices, to give up power.

The lessons of a lifetime are not rejected in one swoop, but are held up to careful scrutiny whenever they fail to solve the problems I am facing. Learning new ways of living requires a willingness to question everything, to take risks, to reflect and explore, and for me that has often been associated with over-riding anxiety. Sometimes one event stands out with clarity, as does the birth and death of our first child more than a decade ago. I had just returned to my room on the sixth floor of a hospital after being told that our baby had suffered brain damage during birth and would not live more than twenty-four hours. Outside the hot humid September day had ended in a torrential thunderstorm reminding me of the prairie storms of my childhood in which I had literally believed that God was speaking. I faced my fear of a vengeful God at that moment and resolved I would never again rely on either God or man to get me through a tough spot. The medical doctors who had attended me at birth had encouraged my submission to their rules, dependence on their expertise, refused to let my husband stay with me in the labour room, encouraged me to take a drug, ("Don't be a martyr") and dismissed my desire to use breathing techniques. My early training in submission led to acquiescence, making me an accomplice in the death of my child. Feminine images of childbrith precluded taking an active part; I was not giving birth that time, I was to be delivered of a child.

Following that intense experience I began to explore the strong woman-mother in me, the one who would fight for life, not passively yield up my power. In my quest for identity and autonomy I discovered the sisterhood of women and the process of re-creation and rebirth began. I respect and reverence the process of becoming in others and in myself.

"Kathy, you will look back some day and then you will write us and tell us we were right after all." mm

Refugee wedding a true Landmark

The wedding February 23rd of Laotian refugees Phet Chansavang and Boun Heng Sivilay in the Landmark Evangelical Mennonite Church marked the happy ending to an unusual drama in the small community.

It all began sometime before Christmas when the D.F. Penner family, sponsors of the Sivilays, a Laotian refugee family, first learned that the two young people wished to marry. Until then, the Penners had assumed that nineteen-year-old Phet and Boun Heng, 22, were sister and brother. So, apparently, had immigration officials.

According to Wes and Ruth Penner, spokesmen for the Penner family, Phet Chansavang entered Canada on the basis of a forged birth certificate which named her as Phet Sivilay. The Penners believe that the family obtained the document at considerable expense, in order to ensure that Phet would be eligible for immigration to this country. Government policy gives preference to families of refugees over single persons.

The Penners contacted government officials with the story and were assured that the Laotians could be given a marriage license. Documentation was to be corrected after the ceremony. With this understanding, the Penner family made plans for a wedding to take place on January 26. A home was found and organized for the couple, food prepared for the wedding supper, and tuxedos rented. When the couple applied for a marriage license several days before the wedding, however, they were refused. The celebration had to be cancelled abruptly.

Because a CBC crew had arrived to film the event, only to find an empty church, the story of the forged document made news across the country. Media from Toronto to Vancouver carried items on the unfortunate lovers.

After further consultation with immi-

gration officials and the preparation of legal affidavits, Phet and Boun Heng were finally granted a marriage license by provincial authorities on February 12.

The Sivilays specifically requested a "Mennonite wedding" for the two young people. "We were Buddhists in Laos," they told the Penners, "But in Canada, we are Mennonites."

The Penner family and the community did their utmost to honour the request for a traditional wedding. Phet, radiant in a white dress, headpiece, and veil borrowed from three different brides for the occasion, walked down the aisle to the music of Handel's Largo. Boun Heng was handsome in a dark tuxedo rented for the double-ring ceremony. The hundred wedding guests, among them several other refugee families and their sponsors, sat down to a cold supper in the lower auditorium of the church.

The ceremony itself was less typical, conducted jointly by Rev. Edwin Plett of the Landmark EMC and Rev. Francis Tung of the Winnipeg Mandarin Mennonite Church. Both ministers gave brief meditations on the Christian concept of marriage, Rev. Plett in English and Rev. Tung in Mandarin Chinese. Although the bride and groom replied in hesitant English to the questions of the wedding service, the questions were first translated by Rev. Tung.

In one of their duets during the ceremony, Winston and Viola Penner sang, "These are the friends whom the Lord has given." The words, of course, were lost on the bride and groom. But Boun Heng's faltering attempt to thank the guests at the reception and Phet's tremulous smile as she opened her wedding gifts suggested that the couple did understand the quality of friendship which has been proffered to them by this Mennonite community.

-by Mavis Reimer

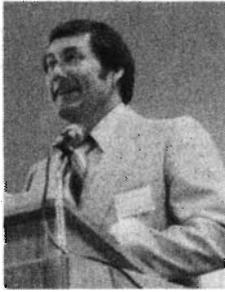
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Manitoba news



The annual meeting of the Mennonite Disaster Service was held on Feb. 8 and 9, 1980 at the First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Approximately 475 MDS'ers from the United States and Canada attended. Syd Reimer of Rosenort, Manitoba, was elected chairman of the bi-national organization.

Harold H. Koslowsky, presently employed as assistant secretary for personnel services for MCC Akron, has been appointed executive director for MCC (B.C.). Koslowsky replaces Wally Kroeker, who plans to enroll in a course of studies at the Fresno Seminary. The new appointment is to take effect in August, 1980. From 1975 to 1978 Harold and Martha Koslowsky served a two and a half year term of VS with MCC in Swaziland. Since then they have been in Akron, where Harold has served in the personnel services department. Harold is the son of John and Lydia Koslowsky of Abbotsford, BC, and Martha is the daughter of Jacob and Katherine of Winnipeg. They are both members of the River East MB church in Winnipeg.

An expanded and revised slate of practical theology offerings will add some significant new features to the 1980/81 program of studies at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College. There will be a new course in Foundations of Christian Education and new courses in counselling and The Church and Ministry. Additional staff will allow a greater variety of learning experiences and resource and library holdings will be expanded. More

learning opportunities will be offered for part-time students in off-campus locations as well as on-campus. Interested churches are invited to contact the academic dean as soon as possible with requests and course proposals for 1980.

CMBC held special courses for church-workers during the two-week period of Feb. 4-15, 1980. These courses were jointly sponsored by the college together with the congregational Board of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. The main feature of the first week was a seminar on evangelism led by Dr. Dennis Oliver, outreach consultant for West Toronto Presbyterian Church.

Together with the CMBC Singers, participants in the Church Music Seminar performed for the first time Esther Wiebe's *Joyful Sound*, a cantata based on the Biblical Great Commission. The cantata had been composed especially for the evangelism conference.

CMBC has announced that the following three faculty members have completed doctoral studies: Adolf Ens, Ph.D. (University of Ottawa), Gerald Gerbrandt, Th.D. (Union Theological Seminary, Virginia), and George Wiebe, D. Mus. (University of Indiana). Helmut Harder and Waldemar Janzen will return to full-time teaching duties for the 1980-81 academic year. A few other faculty changes are foreseen for next year. Peter Fast is slated to take a sabbatical. Gerald Gerbrandt has been reappointed for an additional year to serve half-time as Co-ordinator of Extension Education. A study leave has been granted to Rudy Regehr, who will continue to give a third of his time to the administration of the college. Helmut Harder has been promoted to the rank of full professor of theology and George Wiebe to full professor of music.

Wayne and Kathy Baerg left recently for an MCC assignment in Bangladesh. They are members of the River East MB church.

WILL CARMAN GET A FLOODWAY?

There is no doubt about it, future developments in the town of Carman depend very much on whether or not a floodway diversion will become a reality here in the near future. Meanwhile however, Carman is "dry" again, and dozens of devastated homes have been mopped until another catastrophe hits.

The frequency of flooding along the Boyne during the 1970s has convinced everyone of the real need for a floodway. After four serious floods in the past nine years home owners have become determined to leave the stricken areas. Immediately after the 1979 flood "For Sale" signs posted up by real estate agents became as plentiful as lilac bushes in the flood zone. "I think it is the flood that made up their minds - definitely", said Ron G. Peters of Triangle Realty.

Meanwhile, Gerry Lush, president of the Carman and District Water Diversion Committee, continues to be "more positive than ever" that this diverse agricultural community will get its diversion. Brian Ransom, the provincial resources minister was quick to tender a commitment that negotiations with the federal government for cost sharing would soon be finalized.

The Carman diversion committee has been compiling a flood damage report in conjunction with the retail merchants committee in order to assist the government in revising the cost-benefit ratio. The estimated cost of the 1979 flood in Carman was almost \$1 million.

Although much of the business section is presently located in the flood zone, there is a good deal of town property on higher ground outside the danger area. One businessman, Ken Dick, the proprietor of Carman Radio and Television, relocated a few years ago into the worst of the flood bowl but built on a high foundation, has remained dry during succeeding floods of 1974 and 1979. Somewhat ironically, while there is much ado about home-owners leaving and future growth doomed, Carman has in fact enjoyed record growth by way of construction, valued over \$4 million during 1979.



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Mennonite Festival of Art and Music will be held in Polo Park again this year. The committee invites pre Grade 12 children to exhibit art or crafts at the festival. Poems and short stories may be included. Individual and group participation invited. Call Kathy Peters at 338-4304 or Jean Rempel, 284-9391.

Steinbach Treble Teens director, **Shirley Penner** has announced that she will resign from her position as director effective June 30, 1980. Her job as cultural development officer with the provincial government has made it impossible for her to continue work with the choir. Mrs. Penner founded the girls' choir in 1964, and since that time it has gained a considerable reputation both locally and nationally. The group has performed on a number of local and network television shows, radio shows and concerts, and in August of 1979 the group performed at the World Youth Festival in Vienna and participated in other concerts during their tour of Germany and Austria.



John A. Peters, presently practising law with the Winnipeg Law Firm of David Friesen and Associates, has accepted a position with the Montreal Law Firm of Lemay, Weinstein, Caron & Gaucher. After a month's training period in Montreal, Mr. Peters will be responsible for the Düsseldorf office of the firm as of the beginning of June. Lemay, Weinstein, Caron & Gaucher is the only law firm in Canada with an office in West Germany. Mr. Peters is the son of Mrs. Irene Peters, Winnipeg, Professor of Education at the University of Manitoba, and of the late Dr. John Peters.

NEW HISTORICAL GROUP HOLDS FIRST MEETING

A new Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society held its organizational meeting on Saturday, March 1 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. The cold snap deterred a few persons perhaps, but thirty-two persons present vigorously discussed a set of by-laws and a constitution, and by lunch time also elected a thirteen-member board.

Sub-committee proposals in the by-laws include six work areas for the new society: a) research, scholarship and publications b) arts and inter-disciplinary studies c) preservation of artifacts and historical sites d) education and resources e) inter-Mennonite faith and unity f) membership and publicity. Chairpersons for these committees will come from the board, but additional members will be drawn from interested society members at large. The head office will be in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The membership and publicity committee will be meeting to establish a fee schedule. Any one able to identify with the aims and program of the Society is invited to membership in the organization.

Elected to the Board for two-year terms were: Adolf Ens, Winnipeg; Doreen Klassen, Steinbach-Winnipeg; Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg; Harry Loewen, Winnipeg; Al Reimer, Winnipeg; Ken Reddig, Winnipeg; and Hermann Rempel, Morden, Manitoba. Additional members in a one-year term include: Vic Doerksen, Winnipeg; Ted Friesen, Altona, Manitoba; Bill Schroeder, Winnipeg; Frank Zacharias, Gretna; Peter Zacharias, Gretna and Elizabeth Peters, Winnipeg.

Persons interested in joining are asked to write to MMHS, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4.

The annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada took place at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg on Saturday, February 9, 1980. Representatives from the provincial Mennonite Societies, as well as

observers from two Canadian Conferences (MB and EMC) were present at the meeting.

Reports from the provinces historical societies noted the following activities:

B.C. MHS, with a society of about 100, is incorporating and planning a Mennonite museum. The Golden Age Society has a very active program in progress. Alberta-Saskatchewan is laying plans to establish a Saskatchewan Valley Historical Museum at Rosthern. Manitoba is in the process of reorganizing the society, an event scheduled for Saturday, March 1. In Ontario the focus has been on writing congregational histories. Jan Gleysteen was a guest in the most recent annual meeting of the group.

In other business the Canadian Society heard a progress report on the second volume of *Mennonites in Canada*. A manuscript is expected to be ready for publication by the end of 1980. F.H. Epp's congregational history writing manual, *Stories with Meaning* was published last fall and the December issue of *Mennonite Life* (Canadian content) will be appearing shortly.

Final revisions on the by-laws were passed so incorporation of MHSC can be completed. An archives consultation meeting is being planned, and provision was made to have the Anna Baerg diary prepared in manuscript for publication as an English translation. It is hoped that support can be given also to completing the index to *Canadian Mennonite* (1954-1971), begun some years ago.

The executive of the previous year was re-elected: Ted Regehr, president; George Groening, vice-president; Sam Steiner, treasurer; Ted Friesen, secretary; and Herbert Giesbrecht, member at large.



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WESTGATES CLASSROOM BELOW ZERO

As part of our curriculum at Westgate we have an interterm between two semesters. During this time, students may participate in a great variety of mini-courses ranging from cooking to outdoor education.

A group of five students, Elvera Dyck, Bernice Dyck, Henry Klassen, Dwayne Regehr, Jonathan Ens, one Alumni Student Rob Warkentin, and a Westgate teacher, Will Barmeier, went on an outdoor education trip to contend with nature at its best or worst as the case may be. This trip was offered to anyone who took a sincere interest in environmental and outdoor study and was willing to risk cold feet and hands at times. Our expedition took us to the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Upon arriving there we skied north across Caddy Lake and made our camp on the beautiful scenic shores of South Cross Lake. We were there for three days and two nights. When we reached our campsite we built our Quin-zhees and then built a much needed fire. During the evening we sat around the fire and watched a spectacular full moon rise above the trees on the opposite shore. Without the light pollution of the big city, it was soon dark.

After some stargazing, we crawled into our sleeping bags for a good night's rest. Most of the second day was spent skiing and eating. Rob and Mr. Barmeier, being very nature oriented, taught us a lot about living out doors, and using basic essentials to survive and enjoy a cold, quiet beautiful winter-wonder land. We stargazed, talked about 25 different types of snow, about the food that even a winter-scape such as it was may provide and how to use a dial watch for a compass. Animal tracks of a great variety were printed upon the endless lake.

The third day we ate a hearty breakfast, packed our things and started on the 5 kilometer ski back to the cars. The lonesome sound of the skis cutting through the snow, the sound of your heart beat after a long wholesome trip across the ice, the call of the gray jays in the morning and the time around the campfire will be long remembered.

—by Bernice Dyck

Larry Kehler, pastor of the Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, was released from that position from late February to the end of May to serve with Mennonite Central Committee in Southeast Asia. In the past 10 years at the church and with *The Mennonite*, which he edited, Kehler has been released several times to take on various special assignments. In this new MCC assignment he will be located in Bangkok, Thailand, and will concentrate on refugee and hunger needs in Southeast Asia.

Churches combine for services. Rev. John Neufeld and Rev. Jake Harms recently participated in joint services on two consecutive Sunday evenings in the Sargent Avenue and First Mennonite Churches respectively. The combined choirs served the congregations, who met later for coffee and refreshments.

The building used by the Sargent Self-Help Centre has been purchased for \$42,500. The money is to be raised by June 30, 1980. Help in donations or interest-free loans are needed. Donations can be made at 1483 Pembina Highway.

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The following tape cassettes are available for program resources on two current themes:

Doing Justice to the Sojourner

by Dr. George Epp, president of CMBC; a recording of an address given to the January meeting of MCC (Canada), in Ontario.

Hoes or Handouts

(relief or development), by Edgar Stoesz, associate executive secretary, MCC overseas service.

Both tapes may be ordered at a cost of \$3 from:



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MENNONITE HELP FIRST BOAT PEOPLE IN 1533

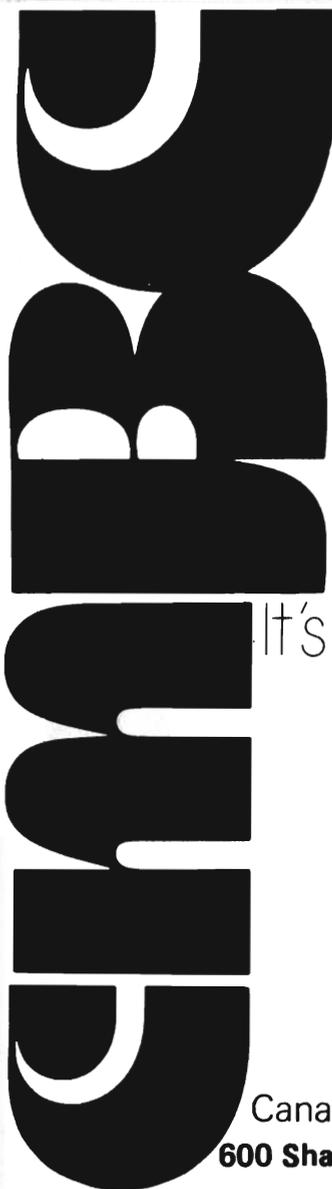
A lot of ink has flowed to describe how Canadians and Mennonites have rallied to help the so-called boat people of Southeast Asia. Mennonite involvement with refugees dates back to the century of their establishment in Europe.

H.S. Bender, in writing a short biography of Menno Simons as an introduction to *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* includes the following incident:

"A boatload of Reformed refugees from London who had been driven out of England by persecution, arrived off the

harbor of Wismar on December 21, 1533. The Mennonites of the city were the only ones willing to help the needy refugees whose ship had frozen fast in the ice some distance from shore."

The Reformed group entered into doctrinal discussions with the Wismar Mennonites which eventually culminated in a series of three debates involving each group's leaders, Menno Simons and Martin Micron. Tinged with bitterness the debates ended with an agreement to disagree.



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View from the Pew: The strangers visit Home Street

FIRST VIEW

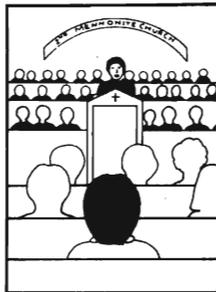
The Home Street Mennonite Church is conveniently located a stone's throw from Portage Avenue. However, parking is a problem and visitors are advised to arrive early in order to make it on time for the 11 a.m. service. On March 2, when I visited the Home Street Church I carelessly arrived at 11:05.

A brisk jog brought me to church on time anyway, but the triumph of my closely-timed arrival was dampened by the absence of the customary church member vestibule, offering a welcome and a program—programs and bulletins were spread over a table at the back of the church and it was apparently a self-serve affair. This was only a minor disappointment and I quickly took my place in the pews to witness what turned out to be a fine service.

The highlights of the service were a thoughtful sermon, strong congregational singing, and an excellent solo performance by a member of the congregation accompanied by piano. Unfortunately the choir had been given a rare day off, so that the regular music program at Home Street cannot be evaluated on the basis of this visit.

The sermon was titled Jerusalem, the Divided City. The minister used descriptions of the beauties and the tragedies of Jerusalem to illustrate the problems involved in the translation of faith into practice. Although it is the physical locus of the Christian and Judaic religions, Jerusalem is a city beset by contradictions and divisions: here the old and the new, believers and unbelievers, Jews and Moslems co-exist in an uneasy and dynamic relationship. The parallels to modern life are obvious, and the minister carefully drew out the meanings of each story he told. In this sense the sermon contained all of the elements which a good sermon should contain. The context was simple and the examples were quite accessible, yet the sermon provoked serious thought. Instead of smothering his core ideas with tedious ancient passages, the minister chose simple metaphors which brought the subject to life. As a result, I found it easy to concentrate on what was being said.

As is generally the case in the churches I have visited, the church bulletin is full of evidence that a lot of people are very active in the Home Street Mennonite Church. The congregation seem-



ed genuinely friendly, and the several warm welcomes which I received on my way out of the church was more than compensated for the one I didn't receive when I entered late.

—by a young person

SECOND VIEW

Just off Portage Avenue at Home St. the faded brown, rather plain building sitting almost on the street, bears "Home Street Mennonite Church". Below this sign a little to the left is a smaller one etched in the stone facade of the building—"Home Street United Church A.D. 1920."

Just five years ago a General Conference congregation bought the building from the United Church and they have left it just as it was. The foyer is unique in that you enter from the street into the vestibule, then walk up a flight of stairs to the rear of the church.

It is designed the way the old United Churches were with the organist sitting in a recessed area behind the pulpit where he or she could watch the choir master in a mirror.

This morning the church was just filling up but there was a hurried, friendly atmosphere at the back where everyone was hanging up their coats. Ushers were on hand to guide us to our seats and give us a bulletin. I really wish ushers could take themselves less seriously and if they could manage both a sincere smile and hello, it would be such a treat!

Large dieffenbachia plants were the only adornment on either side of the platform but with the great golden organ pipes soaring almost to the ceiling behind the choir loft, no more was needed. Many of the front pews remained empty and I wondered about that but was told most of the girls from the church were at Camp Assiniboia for the weekend, as well as many of their teachers. The choir too was missing due to the fact that the choir leader, Garry Froese, was away with the Westgate choir this morning, serving at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church.

The service was about to begin and the minister, Rev. John Friesen, walked to the pulpit from a side door, accompanied by the choir leader for today, Mr. Abe Teichroeb.

In his invocation, Rev. Friesen men-

tioned that there was a special reason to feel thankful this day due to the latest peace overtures by Israel and Egypt. His prayer following included all those within the church and those who had chosen not to come for various reasons.

After the responsive reading we sang an old favorite of mine, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. The scripture read was Isaiah 40: verses 1-11 and Luke 13 verses 31-35.

I studied the bulletin during the announcements and wondered how everyone could manage such a busy schedule. Clearly it didn't need to be fancy rugs and stained glass windows to draw a congregation together in worship and dedicated service.

The "special music" following was a song by the congregation after which Rev. Friesen began his sermon on Jerusalem, the Divided City. The church was very quiet while he spoke about all the areas of division with Jerusalem. Just so are we as individuals made up of good and bad, old ideas and new, and our characters are shaped according to the decisions we make each day whenever we are confronted with a choice.

After the benediction and the closing hymn, I felt again the friendliness of this group of people, and was glad I had been able to share their service with them.

—by an older person

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Ein Denkmal Der Mennonitennot

von Gerhard Lohrenz

Im Fruhsommer 1789 kam die erste Gruppe mennonitischer Siedler im Sueden Russlands an. Hier hatte die Regierung ihnen eine grosse Landflaeche zur Besiedelung zugewiesen.

Das war damals aber nicht eine besonders wertvolle Gabe. Ungeheure Gebiete des suedlichen und oestlichen Russlands waren damals noch unbesiedelt und man konnte viele Meilen reisen ohne auf eine menschliche Wohnung zu stossen. Russland hatte nicht die noetigen Siedler fuer diese Gebiete. Der Bauer war damals noch Leibeigener und als solcher auch nicht frei zu siedeln wo er wollte, auch war er, vielleicht in Folge seiner Generationen langen Knechtschaft, nicht geeignet fuer selbststaendige Pionierarbeit. Ihm fehlte es am Wissen und am Koennen.

Daher wandte die russische Regierung sich ins Ausland und suchte dort Siedler fuer ihre freiliegenden Gebiete. Tausende Deutsche folgten diesem Ruf und auch andere Voelker, Schweden, Bulgaren Griechen und Etlich Franzosen, kamen.

Die Mennoniten waren aber die einzigen, die organisiert einwanderten und auf Grund eines zwischen ihnen und der Regierung geschlossenen Kontrakt ansiedelten.

Unsere Leute sprachen von diesem Kontrakt spaeter immer als von "den Privilegien", das heisst Vorrechten oder Sonderrechten. Nicht ein einziges dieser "Vorrechten" war ihnen auf Kosten der russischen Bevoelkerung gegeben. Die Mennoniten hatten sich fuer die endlose schwere und kostspielige Pionierarbeit auf jungfraeulichem Boden, weit von allen Kulturzentren, wohlweisslich Bedingungen gesichert, unter denen eine erfolgreiche Siedlung stattfinden konnte. Die Zukunft hat gezeigt, wie einsichtvoll und weitblicken diese Pioniervaeter gehandelt hatten.

Die Hauptpunkte dieses Abkommens mit der Regierung waren: (1) Religionsfreiheit, (2) eigene Schulen, (3) Selbstverwaltung, (4) Freiheit vom Militaerdienst. Die Siedlung in ausschliesslich mennonitischen Doerfern wuenschten nicht nur die Siedler sondern auch die russische Regierung bestand darauf. Diese, und besonders die maechtige Landeskirche, wuenschten keine Vermischung mit Russen. Die Fremdlinge sollten den Einheimischen Lehrer in der Landwirtschaft sein. Und das wurden sie auch.

Die ersten Jahrzehnte der Ansiedlung waren fuer unsere Leute endlos schwer.

Nur harte Arbeit von Alt und Jung, grosse Sparsamkeit und zielbewusstes Streben bewahrte sie vor dem Untergang.

Spaeter umringten neu angesiedelte russische Doerfer die mennonitischen Siedlungen. Der russische Bauer war arm an Geist, Seele und allem Materiellem. Eine Regierung, der es an Einsicht fehlte, eine Oberschicht, die selbstsuechtig und korrupt war, und eine reiche, aber in toten Formen erstarrte Kirche sorgten dafuer, dass der russische Bauer, die Mehrheit der Nation, arm und unwissend blieb.

Im ersten Jahrhundert ihres Weilens in Russland gab es in den mennonitischen Siedlungen nur wenige russische Arbeiter aber um die Jahrhundertwende aenderte sich das Bild. Recht viele Mennoniten beschaeftigten russische Arbeiter mit denen sie, soweit es sich um Bauern handelte, Seite an Seite arbeiteten. Das Verhaeltnis zwischen den Mennoniten und ihren russischen Nachbarn, war fast immer ein gutes.

Dann kam der Erste Weltkrieg: Russland gegen Deutschland. Jetzt fing die Hetze an. So ein Krieg weckt ja immer das schlummernde Nationalgefuehl. An der Front standen die Sachen fuer die russische Armeen nicht gut. Die unfaeihige Regierung und die alle Fremde hassende Staatskirche suchten jetzt fuer all ihre Fehlschlaege einen Suendenbock, und den fanden sie in den Deutschen Russlands. Die Zeitungen wurden nicht muede jetzt Boeses ueber die Deutschen Russlands zu berichten. Da der Deutsche dem Russen wirtschaftlich weit ueberlegen war, war es ganz natuerlich, dass der Neid dem Nationalhass jetzt zur Hilfe kam. Fuer die Deutschen Russlands waren die Kriegsjahre 1914-1918 schwer.

Dann kamm die soziale Revolution, wo der Arme gegen den Besitzen den aufgestachelt wurde. In den Augen der armen russischen Bevoelkerung waren die Deutschen, und auch besonders die Mennoniten, sehr reich. Als alle Ordnung am Boden lag, es weder Polizei noch Gerichte gab und jeder ungestraft tun konnte, was ihm gut duenkte, wurde unser Voelklein in den Schmerztiegel getan. Jahrelang uebte der Poebel des Landes an uns aus, was ihm gut duenkte: Rauben, Vergewaltigen, Morden und das sinnlose Vernichten grosser Gueter waren and der Tagesordnung.

Als dann die Soviet-Regierung erst fest im Satel sass, dann fing die systematische Vernichtung unserer Intelligenz und aller selbststaendig denkender Menschen an. Hunderte wurden erschos-

sen oder eingeschlossen in die oede Randgebiete des noerdlichen Russlands oder Sibiriens. Hier erwartete dieser Ungluecklichen ein Schicksal, das weit schlimmer war als was die Juden unter Hitler erlebten. In den Gasoeffen zu sterben war leichter als langsmal von Hunger, Kaelte und erlebten Brutalitaeten zu Grunde zu gehen. Das Elend, das ueber unser Voelklein kam, ist unbeschreiblich.

Ein Teil der Russlandmennoniten konnten das Land verlassen. Hier in Kanada haben sie eine neue Heimat gefunden und viele von ihnen sind wieder zu Vermoegen gekommen.

Nun entsteht die Frage: Was bedeutet uns unsere bewegte Vergangenheit? Haben wir aus ihr gelernt und sind wir willens zu lernen? Oder wollen wir uns von der Vergangenheit so schnell wie moeglich distanzieren?

Eine Gemeinschaft, die die Vergangenheit nicht kennt und schaezt, hat keine Zukunft. Sie ist nicht mehr wie Kulturduenger fuer ein anders Volk oder eine andere Gemeinschaft. Nie haette der Jude sich durch die tausende Jahre der Zerstreuung und Bedrueckung erhalten koennen, haette er seine Vergangenheit nicht gekannt und geschaezt.

Es gibt Menschen denen es darum zu tun ist in allem sich ihrer Umgebung anzupassen, in ihren Ansichten wie auch in ihrer Lebensweise wollen sie so sein wie "alle andere". So ein Mensch hat keine eigene Ueberzeugungen, ist farblos und uebt auf seine Mitmenschen keinen Einfluss aus.

Wir Mennoniten haben aber ein kostbares Erbe von unseren Vorfahren. Die hatten den Mut ihre eigene Ueberzeugung zu haben und sich auch zu ihr zu bekennen. Da sie ihre Erkenntnis aus dem Worte Gottes schoepften, waren sie in vielen Stuecker ihrer Umgebung weit voraus. Sie proklamierten die Gleichheit aller Menschen, die Freiheit des Gewissens, die Trennung von Staat und Kirche und die Verpflichtung des Bemittelten dem Armen gegenueber. Als es im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert Gang und Gebe war, dass der Arbeitgeber seinen Arbeiter schlagen duerfe falls der seine Sache nicht gut mache, da verbot die mennonitische Gemeinde es ihren Gliedern auf entschiedenste. Als die Mennoniten hier nach Amerika kamen, wo damals Sklaverei noch allgemein war, da verboten sie ihren Gliedern das Sklavenhalten. Sie waren auch die ersten, die in den Staaten oeffentlich gegen das Sklavenhalten protestierten.

Unsere Gemeinschaft ist in ihrer religiösen Erkenntnis mit dem Worte Gottes identisch wie vielleicht keine zweite. Leider leben wir unsere Erkenntnis nicht immer aus, und leider wissen recht viele unserer Glieder nicht was wir eigentlich glauben. Dies muessen wir zu geben. Wir koennen aber doch sagen

dass wir als Gemeinden eine klare Gotteserkenntnis haben und dies wirkt sich in unserem Berufsleben und in unseren Familien aus. Wir besitzen etwas, das viele andere nicht haben. Daher sollten wir nicht mitläufer sondern Wegweiser sein; nicht nur unser Erbe fuer uns behalten wollen sondern es auch anderen mitteilen. Wir muessen zu dem Missionsbewusstsein der Urkirche zurueckkehren.

Wir haben schon lange erkannt, dass wenn wir unseren Kindern "das Erbe der Vaeter" weitergeben wollen, wir unsere eigenen Schulen und andere Organisationen haben muessen. Eines aber haben wir zu oft vernachlaessigt, naemlich, unsere Kinder unsere eigene Geschichte zu lehren. Das muss anders werden.

Es sind nun eine Anzahl von Buechern erschienen die geeignet sind in dieser Sache mit-zu-helfen. Es fehlt nun nur noch dass wir es lernen solche Buecher zu kaufen (Sonst anders koennen sie nicht in Druck erscheinen) und mit unseren Kindern zusammen auch lesen. Das muessen wir noch lernen.

Es ist angeregt worden dass wir den tausenden unseres Voelkleins, die in Europa in den Jahren 1918-1980 tragisch zu Tode kamen ein Denkmal stellen. Es soll uns, unsere Kinder und unsere Mitbuerger an die gross Tragodie in Europa erinnern, und so uns allen ein Mahner sein. Es wuerde uns daran erinnern, dass Krieg und Buergerkrieg ein grosses Unglueck sind; dass ein Buergerkrieg dann entfeammt, wenn es im Lande an sozialer Gerechtigkeit fehlt. So ein Denkmal wuerde dazu beitragen, dass unsere Soehne und Toechter uns Fragen stellen wuerden: "Wie war es? Was geschah und warum geschah es?" Solche Gespraechе zwischen Vater und Sohn, zwischen Lehrer und Schueler wuerden uns bereichern, uns mehr Erkenntnis und Verstaendnis fuers Leben geben; uns daran erinnern, dass wir nicht nur dazu auf dieser Erde sind materielle Gueter zu erwerben und das Leben zu geniessen, sondern dass wir auch Pflichten haben. Kurz und gut, so ein Denkmal wuerde fuer Generationen hinaus einen veredelnden Einfluss auf unzählbare Menschen ausueben.

Welcher Art sollte das Denkmal sein? Das waere noch zu entscheiden. Es duerfte aber eine Granitsaeule, vier mal vier Fuss und zwei Fuss hoch sein. An den Seiten wuerde mit Bild und Wort die Leidensgeschichte unseres Voelkleins dargestellt werden. Das Denkmal duerfte hier in Winnipeg auf dem Parlamentsplatz gestellt werden.

Wir brauchen Leute, die gewillt sind fuer diese Sache einzustehen und ein Opfer in Zeit und Geld zu bringen. Wuerden Sie, der Leser, so eine Person sein? mm

She was my teacher in Altona way back when. I liked her too. NE

Unsere "Miss Wiebe" Ihrem Andenken In Liebe gewidmet

von E. Peters

Vielen Lesern wird der name "Agnes Wiebe" ein Begriff sein. Laengst schon war eine kleine Widmung ihrer Taetigkeit als Lehrerin, die sich wohl weit ueber 40 Jahre streckte, faellig. Aber auch ihrer Herzensguete, ihrer warmen Menschlichkeit und ihres gesunden Humors soll hier gedacht werden.

Als ich Miss Wiebe kennenlernte, war ich 29 Jahre alt, sie wohl schon eine Fuenfzigerin. Ich hatte ein wenig Angst vor ihr, hatte man doch erzaehlt, wie tuechtig und streng sie sei. Sie und mein Mann und mein Bruder Hein unterrichteten damals an einer dreistufigen Schule in Sued-Manitoba, wo Miss Wiebe die unteren Klassen betreute. Wir wohnten alle unter einem Dach in der kleinen aber gemuetlichen Lehrerwohnung, die immer von Licht und Sonne durchflutet war, weil jede Hausseite mehrere Fenster hatte. Das recht kleine Haus, in dem sommers und winters die Blumenstoecke mit Begeisterung bluehten, lag freundlich im Gruenen, neben der schoenen Schule, die ebenfalls auf der einen Seite lauter Fenster hatte. Die Baueme wuchsen zwar nicht sehr hoch, da der Boden lehmig war, aber sie umstanden frisch und gruen die Schule, und die Boegel hatten ihre wahre Lust an ihnen. Fuer mich zaehlt diese Zeit zu der schoensten meines Lebens, und Miss Wiebe gehoert unbedingt dazu.

Sie hatte ihre Zimmer an der Nordseite der Lehrerwohnung, wir bewohnten mit meinem Bruder den sonnigen suedlichen Teil. Es war charakteristisch fuer Miss Wiebe, dass sie uns immer ihr Zimmer am Wochenende zur Verfuegung stellte, denn da wir ganz nah an der Strasse lagen, die von Highway No. 3 bis nach Highway No. 75 fuehrte, hatten wir sehr oft Nachtgaeste. Schon bei unserm Einzug war sie der rettende Engel: Mein Mann zog einige Tage frueher ein als wir, da ich mit unserem damals einjaehrigen Toechterchen mit dem Moebeltransport zusammen ankommen sollte. Der Aermste war also fuer die erste Nacht ohne Bett, aber Miss Wiebe kam, wie immer, zu Hilfe. Sie besass eine Couch, die sich leicht auseinanderziehen

liess, so dass man zwei Einzelbetten draus machen konnte. So trug mein Mann einen Teil der Couch in unsere Wohnung und schlief herrlich darauf bis wir in den naechsten Tagen anrueckten. Als man Miss Wiebe gefragt hatte, wie denn der neue Lehrer in der leeren Wohnung schlief, hatte sie arglos geantwortet: "Oh, ich gab ihm die Haelfte meines Bettes ab." Lange noch schmunzelten die Leute ueber die Antwort—Miss Wiebe genoss den Witz am allermeisten.

Im Haushalt war sie musterhaft tuechtig. Wie habe ich sie auf diesem Gebiet bewundert, bis sie mich ueberzeugte, dass ich in dieser Hinsicht noch viel zu lernen hatte, und mich energisch "anlernte". Mit tiefem Stoehnen und heimlichem Widerstand fuegte ich mich und unterwarf mich diesem Unterricht—ich lernte Gemuese einmariniern und Fleish poekeln, Hemden naehen, und Kleidchen stricken. Nur zum Haekeln habe ich's selbst unter ihrer Anleitung nie gebracht, eine Tatsache die sie als Miserfolg ihrerseits auslegte, obwohl das bestimmt nur an meiner verstockten Abneigung gegen diese Handarbeit lag. "Uck de Dommste haben bi mi Haetjeln jleeat", sagte sie, "blos du nich. Etj jleew du west nich!" und gab mich schliesslich auf.

In der Schule handelte Miss Wiebe noch dem Prinzip: Gerecht und strenge. Fuer sie war die Schule nur zu einem Zweck da, zum Lernen, und es wurde gelernt. Man musste staunen, was sie mit den Kindern leistete. Das Staedchen, in dem wir wohnten, hatte zu der Zeit oefters temporaere Einwohner, die im Herbst zuzogen (weil es bei uns viele billige kleine Wohnungen gab), dann wieder weiterzogen oder auch, in manchen Faellen, laenger blieben. Das "Bildungsniveau" dieser ewig umherziehender Kinder war natuelich nicht das hoechste, bis Miss Wiebe sich ins Werk legte. Bei Miss Wiebe lernten alle lesen, auch die, die nicht lernfaehig waren, so dass man wohl manchmal sagen musste "sie tun so als ob sie lesen koennen," denn sie lasen alle. Alle lernten viele Gedichte und Lieder auswendig hersagen, alle lernten Schoenschreiben. Vielleicht lag das weniger an Miss Wiebes

Methode als an ihrer aehen Beharrlichkeit, Ausdauer, und Geduld. Unbedingt aber mussten die Kinder jeden Tag einen Fragebogen fuer Hygiene ausfuellen, wo Zaehneputzen, Haendewaschen, usw. zu Gewissensfragen wurden. Wer mit einem ehrlichen "ja" antworten konnte, bekam ein kleines, goldenes Sternchen auf den Bogen aufgeklebt. Alle Kinder hatten sauber gewaschen und frisch gekaemmt zur Schule zu kommen. Im Flur war ein Spiegel in Augenhoehe der Kinder aufgehaengt, und jedes Kind war beflissen, recht ordentlich auszusehen. Mein Mann und mein Bruder behaupteten, dass sie morgens immer sehr rasch durch den Flur gingen, damit Miss Wiebe sie nicht aus Verfehl mitwusch.

Nach einem Jahr verliess mein Bruder die Schule; mein Mann uebernahm alle "high school" Klassen, und ich die Grade fuenf bis acht. Mein Klassenzimmer lag unmittelbar neben Miss Wiebes, es war nur durch eine verhaeltnismaessig duenne, verstellbare Wand getrennt, so dass wir uns immer hoeren konnten. Eines morgens wurde in dem Raum nebenan besonders eifrig "gelernt", man sprach nach, wiederholte, usw. Bei uns war es ganze still, da wir gerade eine schriftliche Arbeit machten. Ploetzlich hoerte ich eine halblaute Bemerkung von einem Schueler, der erst kuerzlich aus der vierten in die fuenfte

Klassen versetzt worden war: "Oba de learin wadda!" Miss Wiebe und ich lachten beide herzlich darueber als ich ihr die Begebenheit spaeter erzaehte. Im Grunde genommen war ja die negativ gedachte Bemerkung fuer uns beide negativ.

Wir hatten damals eine Familie, die recht entfernt von der Schule wohnte. Da die Mutter kraenklich war, der Vater mit der Farmarbeit ueberbuerdet, mussten die Kinder, ein Junge von 9 und ein Maedchen von 7 Jahren, sich schon recht junge selbstaendig versorgern. So kamen die beiden oft an bitterkalten Tagen mit Pferd und Schlitten den weiten Weg zur Schule, zweifelhaft gewaschen und nur sehr oberflaechlich gekaemmt. Ihr Zustand erweckte sofort den Eifer von Miss Wiebe. "Habt ihr euch gewaschen?" war ihre Frage. "Nur ein bisschen — das Wasser in der Waschuessel war heute Nacht eingefroren, auch das Handtuch war noch gefroren." war oefters die Antwort. "Dann kommt ihr erst mal zu mir", sprach Miss Wiebe, "das holen wir alles nach, damit ihr dann auch einen Stern bekommt." Damit nahm sie die beiden halb-erstarren Kleinen zu sich ins Zimmer, gab ihnen warmes Waschwasser und ein Handtuch, das sie sich extra zu solchen Zwecken angeschafft hatte, und machte ihnen noch schnell einen heissen Kakao mit Toast und Honig. Mit der Zeit lohnte es sich einen elektrischen Wasserkessel mit dem noetigen Zubehoer im Flur der Schule aufzubewahren, da sich die Szene in den kalten Wintermonaten oefters wiederholte. Eine grosse Buechse mit einer weichen Handcreme stand immer auf einem Regal bereit, denn die Haende der kleinen Pferdlenker waren von Wind und Kaelte immer rot und verplatzt, und sogen gierig die Creme ein. Nie hat Miss Wiebe ihre kleinen Dienste der Barmherzigkeit an den Pranger gestellt — ich glaube, nur wir Kollegen wussten darum, aber gerade deshalb will ich ja heute ueber Miss Wiebe schreiben.

Am "Musical Festival" wurde immer begeistert teilgenommen. Endlos lange paukte Miss Wiebe mit den Kindern Chorsprechen, Gedichte hersagen, und "Singing Games". Letztere waren eigentlich kleine Volkstaenze, aber ich glaube Miss Wiebe konnte ihre religioesen Ueberzeugungen nicht ganz in Vereinbarung mit dem Wort "Tanz" bringen, und nannte sie lieber "singing games". Sie identifizierte sich stark mit ihren Schuelern, die sie in ihrer Art aufrichtig liebte; zum Festival mussten alle besonders nett aussehen, auch die oben-erwaehnten benachteiligten Kinder. Die wuschen sich brav selber die Koepfe zu dieser wichtigen Angelegenheit, aber nie fanden die etwas steif verseiften Haare Gnade vor Miss Wiebes Augen. Unter unterdruecktem Protest wurden sie zu ihr in die Wohnung geholt und mit

gutem Shampoo frisiert. Mit der Zeit hatte sie auch mich zum Schuelerhaarewaschen eingespannt — die Kinder wollten aber immer lieber von mir gewaschen werden, sie sagten, ich sei nicht "so rough". Aber wie glaenzte dann auch das goldblonde Haar des kleinen Maedchens! Miss Wiebe zeigte es ihr im Spiegel und band ihr eine grosse Schleife ins Haar, die sie extra dazu erstanden hatte. Wenn die Gruppe abends meistens siegreich vom Schlachtfeld des Musical Festivals zurueckkehrte, wurde die Schleife vorsichtig wieder aus dem Haar genommen, "wiels se daut Baund doch blos febommelt", sagte Miss Wiebe.

Fortsetzung folgt



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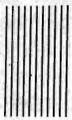
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MENNONITES IN POLITICS: NO RADICALS

Canadian Mennonites in growing numbers are participating in politics at all levels. No fewer than sixteen Mennonite candidates ran in the recent federal election, of whom three—two Conservatives and one Liberal—won seats. Several others lost by narrow margins. There was even a Mennonite cabinet minister in the last parliament, although his term was short-lived. Here in Manitoba there are currently two cabinet ministers in the Conservative administration. Many other office-holders serve at civic and municipal levels.

The traditional Mennonite distrust of involvement in politics seems to be a thing of the past. Both church and community now accept politics as a respectable career or part-time pursuit. And most Mennonite politicians today are Mennonites in good standing, which was not always the case in the past. Typically, the new-breed Mennonite politician is motivated by a sincere desire to help society through public service. He may be a member of any denomination or conference: five of the recent federal candidates, for example, belong to M.B. churches. Better a Mennonite Christian in office than a worldly politician, so runs the argument. As might be expected, the majority of Mennonite politicians are members of the old-line parties. Very few are political radicals or even moderate socialists, as indicated by the fact that only two among the federal candidates represented the NDP.

Contrary perhaps to popular belief, there is nothing new about Mennonite participation in politics. In a sense we are just catching up to our European brethren. Much as Mennonites tried to withdraw from the world, they found early in their history that they could not escape political involvement completely. Governments of the day regarded the early Anabaptists with their heretical opposition to the state church, their refusal to bear arms, their self-contained economic system coupled with their defiant concept of religious liberty as a distinct threat to state security. Small wonder that Mennonites were driven from pillar to post for centuries.

Perhaps in sheer self-defense, the Mennonites of Holland and Germany began running for political office as early as the second half of the eighteenth century. In Holland Mennonites are said to have held every important elective office except that of prime minister. In nineteenth-century Russia there was no elected system of government to participate in, but a man like Johann Cornies was an important government-appointed official who wielded almost unlimited political power in the Mennonite colonies (and beyond). Not far behind were some of the super-mayors and district secretaries. Many of them were politicians to their fingertips. And almost as soon as a national parliament—the Duma—was set up in pre-revolutionary Russia, Mennonites participated in it. Hermann Bergmann, a wealthy landowner, and Peter Schroeder served in several Dumas before the Revolution. In Siberia at least four Mennonites were elected to the Siberian Duma after the Revolution.

Mennonite participation in politics, both past and present,

raises an interesting question. Why is it that Mennonite politicians by and large tend to identify with the more conservative elements of society? Isn't there a certain irony in this, considering that the Anabaptists began as a radical minority group, and that Mennonites throughout their history have found themselves in confrontation with state authorities in the various countries in which they have lived? Then again, both in Russia and here in North America Mennonites have been boldly innovative when it came to providing social services such as hospitals, special schools, and institutions for the aged and the needy. Such internationally recognized organizations as MCC and MDS are anything but conservative in nature. Mennonite faith and convictions have often translated themselves into radical programs of action and service to others.

Why then, to repeat the question, do our politicians tend to be either middle-of-the-road or right wing? Would it not be reasonable to assume that a non-conformist Christian position would go hand-in-hand with a non-conformist political position? The answer in strictly Anabaptist terms would seem to be no. The state was seen as divinely ordained and to be accepted and obeyed without question (Romans 13:1) except in spiritual matters. This traditional view provides a ready sanction for the modern Mennonite who, as a member of the safe and stable middle class, does not believe in rocking the boat or changing the comfortable status quo. This conformist attitude is further strengthened by the highly conservative brand of religious fundamentalism many Mennonites have adopted here and in the U.S. Finally, the tragic experience of the Russian Mennonites gave them and their immediate descendants an understandable hatred for and suspicion of all shades of socialism and political innovation no matter how moderate or reasonable.

But a problem remains. Our forefathers chose to be radical Christians outside a political context. We modern Mennonites have chosen to participate in the political process. As part of that process we can do one of two things. We can seal off our spiritual convictions from our secular politics and pretend that the two have nothing to do with each other. Or can we try to express our Christian convictions through political action, even if that means sometimes engaging in unsafe or unpopular politics. A young Mennonite Christian in Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* says: "(Christ) was alive, on earth to lead a revolution! A revolution for social justice, the terrible question of his day as it is in ours was and is social injustice to the poor, to the racially oppressed, to the retarded and the helpless."

We can only hope that our Mennonite politicians, of whatever party or denomination, will remain committed to such a program of radical Christian action, and not just be content, like so many other politicians, to master the smug art of getting elected and remaining elected for as long as possible while paying mere lip service to political ideals of human justice.

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