

Mennonite MIRROR

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ForeWord

The common thread of this issue is an examination of the experience of a number of women who have been, or are part of, the Mennonite community in its largest sense.

Many people have heard of the *maedchenheim* from grandmothers or older aunts, and thus live on in the dim recesses of many memories, except in the memories of those who lived in them. The homes served a useful purpose during the years they were open, serving as a safe haven for young women on their first jobs, their first experience of the city, and their first time away from home. These days the concept of the homes seems rather quaint, but for those who benefitted from them, they provided a necessary support network.

About a decade ago, Heidi Quiring won the Miss Canada pageant. The experience set her up for a quite different career pattern than would have been the case if she hadn't broken out of the mould she was then in. In a follow-up article this issue, one still finds that Ms. Quiring still has her eye on a career path and is determined to make her mark as a competent professional communicator.

Di Brandt has gained considerable fame in recent years as a poet; she was nominated for a governor-general's literary award last year. An article in this issue describes her, and the experiences which play an important role in the themes she selects for her poems. For those who like her work, two recent examples are included.

Melita Rempel, who now is part of the Open Circle program in Manitoba, is an example of a person who did not let her middle class, private school experience, become a cocoon. Beginning with visits to the disadvantaged elderly during high school, followed by an MCC assignment as a prisoner advocate, seminary, and now Open Circle, she has found that while there is much cruelty and injustice in the world, there is a lot of room for compassion.

To catch a sense of excitement from someone who has a passion for something is always a "neat" experience. Florence Wiens has nurtured an apparently lifelong interest in tapestries into a business. For those who are looking for something different for their walls, you may find her enthusiasm hard to resist. Our two "observers" are back: Vic Penner is convinced that planting trees for shelter and conservation will become fashionable this year, while Roy Vogt tries to shed the winter blues with thoughts of golf.

For those of us who live in the city and have learned to cope with urban addresses leading us to "coves" that run off "bays" and "boulevards," the idea that the same sense of order applies to the "country" is something we can barely grasp. Yet there is, provided you know about how farmland is surveyed. And, you encounter a unique feature of the system in the "correction" line. In her article Anne Konrad sees the correction in the road as a metaphor for certain aspects of life.

Anne Martens found she had more time on her hands during a recent visit to Iraq that she expected. But quite unexpectedly, a reading of the Old Testament prophet Daniel turned the visit into something memorable and relevant to the modern condition.

Typical of most editions, this one closes with articles in Low German and German. Our Word is a guest editorial by Mary Lou Driedger, who reflects on the role mothers and women play in the lives of the famous and not-so-famous.

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Five "graduates" of a Winnipeg "girls home," whose experience is described below, from left: Betty Krahn, Anna Rosenfield, Hele Warkentin, Barbara Banman, and Katie Rempel.

From country to city: five women recall the fear and the rewards of leaving home for the first time

by Mary Lou Driedger

"On Mondays I got up at five a.m. to do the laundry. By seven it was finished and I was preparing and serving a hot breakfast to a family of eight."

"One couple I worked for often fought at supper time. They would actually be hurling knives and forks across the table at each other!"

"The young men who lived in River Heights knew that Thursday was 'maids night off.' They used to stand at the street car stop and wait for us. They never got anywhere with the Mennonite girls."

"We didn't need aerobics classes to get in shape. We were well muscled from

scrubbing hardwood floors, lifting children, dusting and sweeping. We were on our feet from 7 a.m. till 11 p.m."

"I barely knew any English, so I had to keep my eyes and ears open and learn as quickly as I could. I remember once my employer laughed at me because I said, 'I'll 'broom' the floor. I didn't know the word 'sweep.'"

"The lady of the house always had a crystal vase of cut flowers on her piano. It kept getting knocked over and she blamed me, when all along it was the family cat who was tipping it."

"One man I worked for had the habit of

sleeping in till noon, yet his wife insisted that all the upstairs bedrooms had to be cleaned by twelve. I just couldn't go into a bedroom with a *man* sleeping in it! So when I started my upstairs cleaning chores I would sing as loudly as I could, "Can't go to heaven in a rocking chair, God won't take any lazy folks there!" That always got him out of bed and gave me just enough time to clean his room before I had to start preparing lunch."

I am spending an unforgettable evening with five interesting and intelligent Steinbach grandmothers. Gathered

around a dining room table they talk and reminisce while I write furiously to capture all the details of the interesting anecdotes, humorous stories and memorable experiences that came at me from two or three directions.

All the women I am chatting with have several things in common. They were all born in the Soviet Union and immigrated to Canada as youngsters. When they turned 15 they all left their family's farms in rural Manitoba and Saskatchewan and went to live in the city to work as maids. Their reasons for seeking employment and wages in Winnipeg and Saskatoon and Swift Current were much like those of hundreds of other Mennonite girls their age who made the same decision. Their families were poor and owed a large transportation debt (*Reiseschuld*) to the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Of the five, only Mrs. Anna Rosenfeld made the move from Herbert, Saskatchewan, to a house-keeping position in Swift Current for a different reason — her mother needed surgery and she took the job at \$10 a month to help her father pay for their \$100 medical bill.

Another thing the women all have in common is that they still remember the fear they felt at leaving the warmth and security of their homes and moving far away from their parents. "Now that I have raised a teenager of my own, I can just imagine how my mother must have felt sending me to Saskatoon," says Betty Krahn. Barbara Banman agrees. "I knew Mom was crying at home in Grunthal when I left. I was crying too. But I had to go. There was no choice." "I will never forget how scared I was," says Helen Warkentin, "my mother and father sent me from Gretna to Winnipeg on the train with a Mr. Bueckert. He never spoke to me on the long trip. I was literally shaking when we arrived at the train station in Winnipeg." Anna Rosenfeld recalls that the horse and buggy ride from her parents' home in Herbert, to Swift Current took almost an entire day. Her Dad was pretty quiet the whole time but at one point he offered her this bit of advice. "Don't do anything you would be ashamed of and don't do anything your mother and I would be ashamed of."

Arriving in the big city which they had always been taught was a place of immorality and a haven for every kind of sinful behaviour the girls entered a whole new world.

For some, like Helen Warkentin, it was first to the *maedchenheim* or girls home. Established in the mid 1920's by the General Conference Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and Winnipeg, these homes

acted as a refuge, a place of socialization and worship, and an employment agency for young Mennonite women. While Helen Warkentin waited at the Ebenezer Girls Home in Winnipeg, perspective employers phoned Helen Epp, its headmistress. She carefully questioned the callers and if she approved of them she would send Helen Warkentin or one of the other young women who had just arrived in the city to take the job.

Some girls found their employment in different ways. Barbara Banman's older sister Katie had been working in Winnipeg for several years before Barbara turned 15. When Katie was offered a better paying position she told her former employers about her sister and they gladly hired her.

The homes these young women entered as servants were very different from the ones they had left behind in Grunthal and Gretna and Tugaskie and Herbert. "We'd never seen running water, electric lights, an electric iron or a washing machine," remembers Anna Rosenfeld. Barbara Banman recalls the culture shock she experienced. "Suddenly I was wearing a black and white uniform and emp-

For the most part, the young women were treated well by their employers, but each can recall an incidents that weren't very pleasant.

tying ashtrays and serving cocktails at a dinner party. I'd never even heard of *hors de'oeuvres* before, let alone made them. And a cucumber sandwich! What kind of thing was that to eat? At home we had always spoken German and now I had to answer the phone, place orders at the butcher shop, and deal with the milkman, the baker and the Eaton's delivery boy. I learned English pretty quickly."

Another adjustment for the girls who all came from exclusively Mennonite communities was an exposure to the varying religious faiths of their employers. They worked for United Church members, Jewish people, Christian Scientists, and families that had no church affiliation whatsoever.

For the most part the young women were treated well by their employers, but each can recall incidents that weren't very pleasant. Katie Rempel was working for a wealthy family prominent in the newspaper business. She recalls that "once after a party an expensive silver tray was missing. The children's nanny

told me that our employers suspected I had taken it. When I came home from Bible study at the *Maedchenheim* on Thursday night I could tell they had been through my room looking for it. Later I found the tray on a high shelf in the basement. My boss remembered then that the night of the party he had put it up there so it would be out of the way when he played pool with his friends." No one ever apologized to Katie for falsely accusing her. That is a story that most of the women can reiterate.

One of Barbara Banman's employers routinely lost his gold cuff links and would roar at her, "Barbara things are starting to disappear in this house!" He'd always find his cuff links but never told Barbara he was sorry for having suspected her. Helen Warkentin can remember when the police were called in to investigate because she was under suspicion for stealing about \$20 in quarters from her employer's oldest son. As it turned out the boy's father, in need of some ready cash, had taken the coins.

There were other hardships for the girls. Young, innocent and attractive, they often received unwanted attention from the River Heights boys on the street car. They also tell me about "the milkman who put a hand on my leg," and their employer's male friends who got drunk at cocktail parties and made unwanted advances. Barbara Banman recalls how at one such party she was working in the kitchen when her boss came up behind her and started rubbing her neck. "I whirled around so fast", she remembers, "And I said, 'Don't you ever do that again!' And he never did."

Mostly the young women felt alone and scared. "I would always lock the door of my room at night," says Helen Warkentin. "One woman I worked for insisted I come in the back door," remembers Barbara Banman. "She would get very angry if I used the main entrance. When I came home after my Thursday evening off it would be pitch black in that alleyway behind the house. My mistress refused to leave a light on for me. My heart would just be pounding as I tried to fit my key into the lock in the dark. To this day I have nightmares that I am in that back lane and something jumps out at me."

It wasn't always easy for the girls to make the transition from beloved daughter in a large and happy family to a "servant" who had to eat alone in the kitchen and "keep her place." Mrs. Katie Rempel had one mistress who was fond of reminding her that *she* had been to finishing school. They had taught her how to

"handle" maids there. Mrs. Anna Rosenfeld had an employer who was always dissatisfied. "She told me I never did anything right. She had this sour look on her face whenever she spoke to me. Finally I told her, 'If you can't even smile at me, I'm leaving.' And I did!"

All five women have some fond memories too of good times and kind employers. Barbara Banman remembers a gift of perfume she was given by a man she worked for. "He had to go away on a business trip and asked me to give up my day off to stay with his wife who had just had a miscarriage. He was grateful for my kindness to his family. Anna Rosenfeld has a special place in her heart for a young boy she looked after who had hydrocephalus, an accumulation of fluid in his head. "Nowadays they can correct that sort of thing with surgery, but at the time he was bedridden. He was so sad because he couldn't do the things the other boys did." Mrs. Betty Krahn recalls a judge and his wife who employed her. "They treated me more like a daughter than a maid." Katie Rempel tells of her unique relationship with a deaf woman she cared for. "I learned to interpret when her friends called on the phone. We had our own kind of sign language and I mouthed the words very carefully." Mrs. Helen Warkentin enjoyed the children in the homes she worked in. "I loved to sing to them and tell them stories. They were very sad when I left."

Many of the women's good times during their years of maid service revolved around the *Maedchenheim* or girls home. Every Thursday night hundreds of Mennonite girls from all over the city flocked to the *Maedchenheim* for Bible study and socializing. In Winnipeg Rev. Benjamin Ewert led the devotional sessions at the Ebenezer Girls' Home. In Saskatoon Rev. J. J. Thiessen was in charge. After the meeting the women ate a lunch they had brought along. On both Thursdays and Sundays truckloads of young men from the girls' home communities would arrive at the *Maedchenheim* to take the young women for rides, to go to the park to have picnics or even step out to a movie. The girls in Winnipeg recall how Pastor Ewert would deliberately lengthen his prayers and devotions if he knew the boys were waiting outside.

The girls' homes hosted Christmas parties and bridal showers. They were a place to go if you were sick, or in-between jobs or just needed someone to talk to. All the women agree that it was good to know that someone cared about you and was concerned about your welfare. Mrs. Betty Krahn remembers how

Rev. J. J. Thiessen, who ran the home in Saskatoon, kept careful track of all the Mennonite girls in the city. "If you missed a Thursday night Bible study for any reason you could be sure Rev. Thiessen would phone you the very next morning to find out why you had been absent." Helen Epp, who was the leader of the Winnipeg Home was no different. If Miss Epp didn't see a girl or hear from her for two weeks she would get on the phone or the street car to track the girl down and find out what was going on. Barbara Banman and Katie Rempel are sure their parents felt a little more secure in sending them to Winnipeg knowing that the personnel at the *Maedchenheim* would keep an eye on them.

Besides the socialization provided by events at the girls' home the women had little other leisure time or activities. Two of them recall, however, that books were an important source of solace and enjoyment for them. Since all of the women had left school to work in the city they missed out on a high school education. Barbara Banman worked for several people who had extensive libraries. She read voraciously. Anna Rosenfeld worked right across the street from the public library in Swift Current. A Mrs. Rice who was the librarian there helped her to select books and she read late at night after all her work was done. "That's how I got my education", she says.

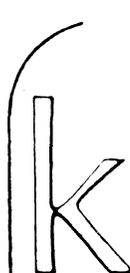
The wages the five women worked for varied from \$5 to \$20 a month. "I made \$10 a month at my first job," recalls Anna Rosenfeld. "But my employer only started paying me after a four-week trial period during which I received no wages whatsoever." Helen Warkentin earned \$5 a month. "I sent \$4.50 home to help pay for the *Reiseschuld*. I gave 35 cents to the *Maedchenheim* and saved two cents for the stamp for a letter to my family. That left me with 13 cents of my own." Mrs. Betty Krahn also earned \$5 a month. She reminds me though "that you have to remember a new dress at Eaton's was \$4.95. We worked a long time to earn enough money for luxuries like that."

All five women eventually quit their jobs in the city. Katie Rempel returned home after her family's *Reiseschuld* was all paid. Anna Rosenfeld went back to her parents' farm because her mother was expecting another baby and needed her help. Betty Krahn decided to attend Bible school in Rosthern for a year and Barbara Banman and Helen Warkentin both left their employment to get married.

Although at the time they were often scared and lonely all five women feel the years spent working in the city were

important in shaping their characters and setting a direction for their lives. Barbara Banman sums it up for all of them. "It was a very hard experience for us but it taught us to cope with things. I know it has helped me to cope with other difficulties in my life. What saw us through was our security in our family and in our church. A man once came to our home to do a survey about the members of our household. One of the questions he asked me was if I had any sort of educational degree. I said, "Yes, I did. I had earned a degree in home economics" I didn't lie. Those years I spent working for the wealthy of Winnipeg gave me an education that has served me well throughout my life. Unlike many other young women of my time I was forced to learn to be responsible for myself and make my own decisions."

Mrs. Katie Rempel chuckles and adds, "When my husband married me some people who knew how many years I had worked in Winnipeg asked him, "And what do you want with a city girl?" After spending an evening with the five special women I know their husbands were fortunate to find wives with such strong determination and lively spirit. They made the best of a situation they could not change and learned and grew because of it. The men they married were lucky indeed to have wed a "City girl!" mm



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Heidi Quiring



by Dana Mohr

Reaching for the stars... Heidi Quiring sets her career agenda

"I think many women, including myself, tend to underestimate themselves, and are their own worst enemies in terms of setting goals. I want to work on believing I can reach for the stars, and grasp them."

It is just this indomitable spirit which has propelled Heidi Quiring, former Miss Canada, into her present position. As the editor of the fledgling *Uptown Gazette*, a bi-weekly business and lifestyle magazine, Quiring feels somewhat of a pioneer in being a female editor in a traditionally male-dominated field.

During the 10 years following her reign as Miss Canada, Quiring has become increasingly involved in the communications field. However, it was ultimately her success as Miss Canada which opened up the first set of doors, doors which otherwise may have remained closed.

In the third year of pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in French and English at the University of Winnipeg, Quiring felt there was something more for her out there. Although involved in many extra-curricular activities such as jazz dancing and singing in the church choir, she "wasn't all that excited about university. I wanted

something to jazz up my life a bit." In a decidedly un-Mennonite move, she sought the spotlight, won the Miss Canada title, and went on to spend a year, based in Toronto, as Canada's ambassador.

While the establishment of business contacts and the improvement of her self-confidence were motives, Quiring found that above all else, the year taught her invaluable lessons in self-discipline, while honing her communications skills, skills which will always remain with her. At the end of her term, Quiring was thrown back into everyday life, and found that completing her education no longer seemed a priority. "After a year of jetting around I just wasn't in the frame of mind to go back to university," she confesses.

Instead, she opted to stay in Toronto, and it was on to job number one in communications. Hoping to establish a career in broadcast journalism, she approached CFTO, the CTV network station, and landed a job as program organizer. "They started me out right at the bottom of the production department." After a year and a half, says Quiring, she decided that it wasn't her cup of tea. She knew she liked

media, but she'd have to search further to find her niche. In 1981, in the middle of a recession, she quit and with the full knowledge that she had no marketable skills, and no degree, she started pounding the pavement of downtown Toronto.

Eventually she was accepted as a receptionist/secretary for *Chatelaine*, a division of MacLean Hunter. "I couldn't type, but I convinced them they needed someone with people skills in reception." During those six years of employment she took on increasing responsibility and rose to the position of supervisor of administration and distribution for *New Mother* magazine, distributed to maternity hospitals nation-wide. "I didn't write the editorial, but I made sure everything happened to get it produced...I was the front line liaison to over 700 hospitals. It started at 400 and I pushed it up to over 700."

Although she was pleased with her career, during her later years in Toronto she became aware of a void in her life. She had a good job, and numerous friends, but she says, "there was something missing in the sense of family, roots, heritage, community." She tried to fill that need by

flying to Winnipeg more often, but each time it became more difficult to return to Toronto. She was torn between a career in the big city and a family in Winnipeg.

In May, 1987, a decision was made. There was nothing at all to stop her from having a career in Winnipeg. And, in fact, now that she's returned she's found she is progressing much further, much faster than she suspects she would have in Toronto.

After an initial re-adjustment period, she attended Small Business Week in October, 1987, where she bumped into *UptownGazette* co-publisher Bruce Johnson. This chance meeting initiated a two month dialogue leading up to her assuming a full-time editorial position at the paper. "I think it was just in the stars. The *Uptown Gazette* had caught my eye because it started coming out the month I got home...it was a creative, fresh publication." While she was green at the outset, she has quickly learned the ins and outs of the publishing biz, and admits, "I've been at it for a year now and I just love it. Of course, it has its frustrations — you know what deadlines are all about, but that's a stress you always deal with in publishing."

Once again an ambassador, this time Quiring is promoting the *Gazette*, and our city. "I like the paper so much because it is positive...it's constantly evolving. There's no limit to this job and I think that's why it's so exciting." One of the mandates of the paper is to increase civic pride in Winnipeg — a big job. "I would feel I had accomplished something if I was part of the movement that established Winnipeg as a world class city. I think the *Gazette* could do that because it's one of the best communication vehicles this city has."

A thoroughly modern business woman, Quiring is out to make her mark. "I never liked the idea of men conquering the world and women staying at home cooking and cleaning. I hate that. I want to conquer the world." Always diligent, she puts in many long hours at the office, but she is careful to maintain a sense of balance in her life. "I like stimulation from a lot of facets in life. I'm involved in fitness; I sing in the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir; I make public appearances in the community. The key to a happy prosperous life is balance and each person has to find their own balance."

While she has no immediate plans to settle down, she has not ruled it out as a possibility. But that does not necessarily mean, either, that she'd stop working. "I don't think it's an either/or situation. You can do both, understanding your own limitations."

At age 30, Quiring has found a fulfilling career. She has also found that her Mennonite upbringing provided her with a very strong foundation of ethics, honesty and morals which are essential in the business world. In her eyes, "religion is a very quiet, internal belief system...It's very basic, very subconscious. It motivates how I do things."

Quiring has chosen to do things her own way. "I feel people can make choices and I admire people who have the strength to stand behind their choices, whatever they may be." Perhaps she took a few unexpected, unusual detours, and who knows which direction her life would have taken had she finished university, but Quiring couldn't be happier about where she is today. She's back in Winnipeg, she's back with her family, and she's embarked on an exciting new career. Who knows what the future holds for her? **mm**



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Di Brandt

Finding a place for me: The poetry of Di Brandt

No one was more surprised than Di Brandt when, in January, 1988, she learned she had been nominated for the 1987 Governor-General's Award for Poetry for her first collection of poems, *Questions i asked my mother*. Not only is such a nomination an honour more typically accorded established writers with several volumes of poetry behind them, but, says Di, until she heard about the nomination she didn't quite believe her book was out there being read by people. The citation confirmed that her poetry was indeed read and acknowledged, and that her voice was among the most significant to be heard in Canadian poetry.

Such a judgment was pretty heady stuff for a kid from Rhineland. Growing up in one of the small Mennonite villages clustered in southwestern Manitoba, Di saw the world as a series of concentric circles. At the heart of it was her family, surrounded in turn by extended family, church, and village. The edge of the knowable world was Winkler. Winnipeg seemed another world altogether, part of "the worldly world out there full of complicity and sin," as Di calls it in her autobiographical essay in Harry Loewen's *Why I am a Mennonite*. The size and stability of her world was such that it seems to her now "like growing up in the 16th century. The village had maybe 250 people. My grandmother had been born just thirty miles away."

Di's world grew slowly. She attended Garden Valley High School in Winkler for two years and the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna for her two senior

years, and then registered in the early 1970s at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in "the worldly world out there," easing into life in Winnipeg by applying as a residence student. Without the relative security of the residence, claims Di, Winnipeg would have been impossible for her to cope with. To this day she finds the city difficult to navigate.

Like many college students, Di found her years of introduction to higher education tremendously exciting. The books, discussions, and new ideas opened up unimagined worlds for her. It soon became clear that there was no way back to the garden of her childhood; having launched herself into a new world, she would have to find a place in it for herself. A "closet writer" since high school, Di has used her poetry to explore the implosion of her old ways of thinking and to look for the outlines of a new world.

Loss has been an impetus for creating poetry and a thematic concern for many writers. But when Di Brandt looked for articulations in other writers' work of the loss she, as a Mennonite woman, had experienced, and looked for models of thought that might move her past her loss, she found none. There were no public Mennonite women's voices anywhere and she felt she was "writing out of a vacuum," she says, recreating a world from nothing and with nothing. The sense of bewilderment is evident in much of the poetry in *Questions i asked my mother*,

but there is also an insistent energy, a refusal to be denied:

in my dreams i walk down long
exitless corridors find myself
in barred hospital rooms swim
hopelessly against the motion
of black conveyor belts knock
on twelve inch doors please i
gotto go real bad getting past
the frowning fat lady....

Giving birth to herself is a recurrent motif both in Di's poetry and in her recollections of the process of writing it. "I knew a lot of rules about why I couldn't be a writer," says Di, rules from her background about what women should be and about talking in public about personal doubts. In an abrogation of the role of parent, she found that "I had to give myself permission to do it."

While Di Brandt's poetry has no direct antecedent, there are a number of influences she counts as formative. Perhaps the most significant of these was the publication in 1972 of Patrick Friesen's first collection of poems, *bluebottle*, written in response to the death of his father. Like him, she says, her subject is primarily the death of the father. While the difference in their genders has clearly affected their respective experiences of Mennonitism, Di saw Friesen's poetry as proof that the Mennonite story could be told and that it mattered. Di was also a member of *hiatus*, a group of seven women writers in Winnipeg who "took themselves seriously as writers" and who met regularly for some years to discuss the writing process. Her graduate studies in English at the University of Manitoba, particularly her thinking

by Mavis Reimer

about feminist and deconstructive critical theories, were central to her poetic practice. Di continues her theoretical and analytical work with literature: she has begun work on a doctoral dissertation about the absent mother in the narrative tradition and teaches part-time at the University of Winnipeg.

But the need to ask questions and the love of telling stories Di roots in her own family background. The Janzen family was oriented to language, her father an articulate and argumentative man who worked hard at making his experiences fit the mold given him by his church, and her mother a rich source of anecdotal history about community and family members. Di acknowledges that her role in the family was always that of rebel. She was the child who seemed to ask the wrong questions, the questions that were heard as dangerous or challenging by her parents. By the time she was a young adult, the questions were meant to challenge, admits Di, but in her recollections of childhood, she remembers the questions as being attempts to "get it right," to understand what was being asked of her and to provide it.

Despite the connections Di sees with her heritage, there is little doubt that her poetry is read with difficulty by many Mennonite readers. Hers is not an intellectualized anguish: she experiences the loss of her old world as a visceral fissure and insists that her reader take account of that pain on a literal level. As a result, the poetry returns again and again to explicit images of the female body, in the acts of birthing, of loving, of being violated. The power of her vision, recognized in the nomination for the Governor-General's award, has also been acknowledged less directly by responses from the Mennonite community. People feel betrayed. Some have asked Di's mother whether, and how, she can still love her daughter. Others have remonstrated with her about what her father would think were he alive to read the poetry.

Mennonite men, says Di, seem to hear only anger when they read her poetry. Many Mennonite women have spoken to her about the fear they feel running through the poems. It seems to her to be only her non-Mennonite readers who talk about the fierce courage of her project. Asked to respond to the criticism, from a Mennonite man, that she chooses to present herself only as victim, she shrugs off the question. "I wrote to the edge of what I know in that book," she says. There will be other poems. While she could write very little during the year after the book

was finished, there are some new poems now. She thinks she may know more in these poems. At least they look different and they feel different to her. She thinks she may be writing towards something. What that is, is not yet knowable. But many Canadian readers of poetry — and, it is to be hoped, many Mennonite women and men — will wait for Di Brandt, because she has given us already some new words to use in the deconstruction

and reconstruction of our shared experiences:

i want you to know who are so
willing to wait so long i am
coming i am coming....
...a naked woman
with full breasts kneels before
living water drinks in darkness
your hot hungry love waits like
you for a new tender flowering
mm

so this is the world & here i am
after all in the middle of it one of
the many broken hearted so far
across the centuries away from
home living each day for what it
may bring without sorrow or pity
for the lost kingdom face to the wind
this time mother please don't take
away my pain let's just say it is
mine & this is the world & here i am
in it hidden amazed among the trees
one of the many lost & found if you
can believe it across all this space
& i think i can say this from so far
away that i love you i love you

the man in the pulpit quotes Jesus
and Shakespeare to prove the world
is still round a perfect circle in
God's eye in spite of acid rain & the
hole above Antarctica ripping the sky
he believes the world is made
of words let me not the words are
magic to the marriage of true minds
if he pulls enough magenta colored
scarves from his coatsleeves we
will believe the hole in our minds
will disappear & the dead lakes rise
up & dance with the trees admit
impediments while this white bride
kisses this black prince & all around
us there is the faint rustling of leaves

Di Brandt

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Melita Rempel found you can't assume people will do "what's good"

The charge has often been made against private schools that they "shelter" students and protect them from the realities of life. Yet it was at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate that Melita Rempel first came to the realization that "not everyone lives in suburbia."

Teacher Rudy Friesen had initiated a class project involving visits to lonely and disadvantaged elderly women living in the area of the Crossroads Centre. This exposure to the poor started Melita on a career of helping people who live on the fringes of society. She is now director of Open Circle, a program of MCC Manitoba which provides an opportunity for Christians to visit people in prison.

After graduating from Westgate, Melita obtained a degree in education from the University of Manitoba and taught for several years. She then accepted an MCC assignment to work in New Orleans, Louisiana, as a prisoner advocate. Her job entailed working with the families of people in prison, and increasingly developed into work with prisoners themselves, including the group on death row. Most horrifying to her was the brutality that occurred, particularly in the maximum security prison, where she cited an example of one prisoner she saw who had lost most of his teeth and had boot marks on his neck — the result of an assault from one of the guards. "And I grew up," she said, "assuming that people do what's good."

Working in the prison hospital she was appalled at the awful conditions and where one person died from infected bed sores. She was part of the advocacy organization which lodged complaints against these violations, complaints which sometimes resulted in lawsuits by government agencies, then a curtailment of access on the part of prison officials. Her visits to



Melita Rempel

men on death row involved listening to the concerns of these people, simply being a caring presence, sensing what it must be like to live constantly with death on your back. She also served as a paralegal and worked as a liaison between men on death row and their lawyers.

Asked about how she was able to relate to these people, Melita answered quietly that "once you meet the people, you realize that we are more alike than different." She also felt strongly that "there but for the grace of God go I." But she was deeply troubled by the dreadful conditions in the prisons and the cruel treatment afforded the prisoners. She had a growing sense of the evil in the world, and began to ask herself, "Where is God?"

by Ruth Vogt

Why isn't God intervening?" She confesses that at this point she found it difficult to pray, but was comforted by a sense that others were praying for her.

Melita did not give in to despair or cynicism. Following her two-year assignment in New Orleans, she decided to enrol in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, both to work at the theological issues confronting her, and to obtain more vocational training. She wanted to continue working with people in prison, and decided that training in pastoral counselling would be of benefit to her. She graduated with a master's degree in divinity in the area of pastoral counselling in 1985. By this time she had arrived at "a sense of how God is present and suffers with us; of how much God wants everyone to be able to live fully and know the wholeness of life that can come with being in relationship to God. There is a need for us to incarnate God's presence and be God's voice to others."

During her seminary training, a practicum working in a women's prison was most helpful, especially as it helped her become more aware of the unique issues faced by women in prison.

Following seminary, Melita spent some time with her parents, Art and Helen Rempel, in Taiwan. They were on an assignment with the General Conference Commission on Overseas Missions. Here she taught English, learned something of the eastern perspective, and learned what it is like to be a "visible minority" in a country.

She was then called by the Western Ontario Mennonite Mission Board to work as a chaplain in a low income housing community. Her job was to visit the people, independent of any institutions, to be a presence of the church, listening to them, providing services such as a

women's group, a children's club, and directing others to helping agencies. Since this was a three-fifth time position, she was also on the staff of a task force on domestic violence sponsored by MCC Canada. There is a pressing need, she says, for the Mennonite community to become aware of domestic violence and how to deal with it.

Her two years of chaplaincy finished in May, 1987. At that time, an opportunity to work with Open Circle came up, and since Melita had always intended to continue her prison ministry, she accepted the position. At the time she was attending the Valleyview Mennonite Church, and the congregation suggested that she be ordained so that she could go into the prisons as a recognized minister of the church. Melita feels that this is a growing edge for the church, having women in ministry. She sees "clear affirmation for women in ministry and leadership in both the Old and the New Testament."

"The church," she says, "needs to see the special gifts that women bring: that women can sometimes open doors that men can't." But acceptance of women as pastors will be slow, she realizes, and "must be done sensitively." She pointed out that there are more women in ministry in the Ontario Mennonite churches than in Manitoba, and the fact that there are more models does open doors for others. Her own ordination was unique in that it took place in a Mennonite Conference church in Ontario, with the Conference Minister from the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba participating in the ceremony.

Open Circle was started in 1973 by C.N. Friesen. It is a one-to-one visitation program matching people who are Christians with prisoners who don't get visitors. The purpose of the program is to provide friendship and to show a sense of caring, perhaps also to provide a positive role model for the prisoners and a link with the outside world. There are regular chapel services in the prison to meet the spiritual needs of the prisoners in a direct way. Over half of the inmates of the four prisons — Stony Mountain, Rockwood Minimum Security Prison Farm, Headingley Correctional Institute and Portage Correctional Institution for Women — never receive any visitors. Those who wish to be a part of the Open Circle program may request to do so. Melita's job is to interview the inmates and prospective volunteers, and to match them. Males are matched with men or couples, while females are matched with women or couples.

Volunteers are recruited by word of

mouth and promotion in churches. Melita says that often just the right person will show up for a given prisoner, like an answer to prayer. Many volunteers continue their relationship after their term is finished; with some this is not possible because of distance or for other reasons. Volunteers visit every two weeks, for just over two hours at a time. Sometimes the prisoners like to talk — about the past, the future, or perhaps about their struggles. Some are quiet; for these, games like cards provide a sense of companionship without the necessity for much conversation. There is always an orientation session for new volunteers at the prison where prison rules are discussed. The volunteers get together four times a year for sharing and fellowship, and games nights are held in Rockwood Prison three times a year.

Most of the volunteers in the Open Circle program are Mennonites. Melita says that occasionally it does happen that the volunteers are not suitable; they may be more interested in Bible study, and for them participation in the chapel program is a better option. Others find that they prefer working in groups rather than the one-to-one basis of Open Circle. Avenues of service can be found for them to work also.

Melita has some definite views about the prison system both here and in the United States. There are 400 men at Stony Mountain and 400 at Headingley. She feels this is a waste of individuals, particularly because the reasons why people commit crimes are not dealt with. Primarily she feels that the prison system, incarceration, does not help offenders to take responsibility for their crimes, nor does it help their victims. People who commit crimes, she says, should take responsibility for them. They should have to make restitution for what they have done, be made to understand the

implications of what they have done, and should be led toward reconciliation with their victims.

She admits that some people who are violent or dangerous do need a controlled setting, but believes that most offenders should not be in prison for more than a year. She also believes that the dynamics of people coming out need to be thought through. One of the discouraging parts of her job is watching people come out, without adequate supports, experiencing extreme loneliness, and often failing as a result. Unfortunately, the system as it exists does not address the real issues connected with crime: alcoholism and drug abuse, and the lack of meaningful relationships in people's lives.

After reading about the life and concerns of Melita Rempel, one might expect to meet an aggressive, almost intimidating individual, not the quiet, soft-spoken person that she is. She impresses one with her evident compassion and sense of purpose in life. Her aim, she says, is to help people to have a whole life and a sense of what it means to be cared for. Her model is the ministry of Jesus. If more people were to follow that model, the world would indeed be a kinder and a gentler place in which to live. **mm**



The Open Circle logo



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A tale of tapestry charms, as shopper replaces his 'matador-art'

by J. Braun

When a *femme du monde* of close acquaintance whose taste in decor I regard as *dernier chic* dropped by the other evening to condemn my Struggling-Artist Bull and Matador to the trash heap, I found myself a few days later in despair on the doorstep of a tony little boutique a stone's thrown east of Winnipeg's fashionable Tuxedo district and was graciously granted entrance by a woman whose proffered card introduced her as Florence Wiens, the personable, indeed, charming proprietress of Tapestries International — "From Gothic to Modern, Elegance for Home and Office" — at 1724 Corydon Avenue.

"Good evening. I'm very pleased to meet you," I said in two simple declarative sentences. Wiens quickly gave me the Grand Tour complete with an informative lecture in the history of an ancient and — in Western terms — unusual art form.

"Tapestry, as you can see around you here," she began, "is a woven fabric art that has been with us for centuries. Historically, it may be divided into three main periods: the Gothic, the Classical, and the Contemporary. The art really began in earnest and became popularized in Western Europe in the Gothic period — the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Before that time there is fragmentary evidence which indicates a strong Egyptian interest; the Copts created tapestry as early as the fourth century."

Wiens went on to detail the distinguishing marks of a Gothic. "In this period tapestry is an art in itself. Let me

explain. It is stylistically different from other periods, of course, but, more importantly, in Gothic we have the weaver-as-artist. The weaver acts autonomously; he is the sole creator of the image on the completed fabric, as opposed to the Classical period where the weaver works in collaboration with a painter, where the weaver attempts to reproduce as closely as possible someone else's painting."

"What sort of image, then, are we likely to see in Gothic? Medieval?" I asked.

"Some, yes," Wiens acknowledged, "though Medieval actually predates Gothic. Incidentally, the most famous-of-all-time tapestry is Medieval. The Bayeux Tapestry, made between 1066 and 1068, depicts a series of episodes surrounding the Norman Conquest. Medieval art was nurtured by the church for cathedral wall decoration. However, demand for 'religious' tapestry declined with the desire for more window and tomb space. Coincidentally, we see a steady increase



An example of tapestry

in demand for 'secular' tapestry for castles, palaces, and stately homes. Thus, later in the Gothic period, weavers begin to depict military subjects, lives of heroes, romances of courtly love, hunting scenes, and such. The best-known Gothic work is the semi-religious Lady With the Unicorn *mille fleur* tapestry series — six of them — in which the mythological unicorn symbolizes, of course, purity. They are known for their elegant design and magnificent colours."

Also magnificent were the examples of Classical tapestry. "In this period, as I said before, tapestries are no longer made according to the weaver's fancy. Patterns are made, often by great painters, and reproduced in fabric. In the sixteenth century — the beginning of Classical period which includes Renaissance and Romantic styles — Raphael was commissioned by the Pope for ten Acts of the Apostles 'cartoons' from which a Flemish master-weaver copies to make a series to decorate the Sistine Chapel. Other painters whose work was copied were Bernard van Orley, Rubens, and Charles le Brun whose style significantly influenced future generations; the great Royal Gobelin workshops in Paris produced tapestry under his leadership. Then there's Contemporary tapestry which is by and large abstract in design."

Slightly overwhelmed by this however brief overview, I opted for a *segue* to the craft of the *tapessier*.

"Making tapestry is a long, arduous task," Wiens explained as I attempted to envision. "First, a client commissions a tapestry and names an artist-designer, or a selection of an existing painting is made. The colour sketch or painting is then

enlarged, by photographic or geometrical projection, to the full-size of the intended finished tapestry. This sheet is transferred to the loom, placed directly behind and facing a panel of hundreds of parallel warp threads. Following the pattern, sometimes traced directly onto the warp threads, the weaver passes a bobbin of coloured weft thread from left to right and back again perpendicularly straight through the warp threads. Thus the pattern is slowly woven to the finished product, which is cut from the loom and the selvedge is stitched."

"Today the majority of tapestries are commercially made by machine in France, Belgium and Italy, though there are many artists who have kept alive the traditional art of hand-weaving. I have visited several manufacturers in Europe; the quality of their reproductions is, of course, being European, excellent. My buying is done direct — not through a Canadian distributorship. People seem quite pleased by my selection.

"How did I become interested in this? Well, I spent two years in Paris — as a student. My professors would bring in these beautiful tapestries and many discussions centred on the contribution, and the significance of this art form to the development of art through the centuries. We toured the galleries, the shops, the factories. Needless to say, the impression remained and I returned to Winnipeg convinced this city needed the introduction."

Knowing that Mennonites dip into their wallets only on the value-for-your-dollar principle, I asked Wiens about tapestry as an investment.

"The works that appreciate in value are, as in any other art, those made singly or in very limited production. If you're interested in sound investment, look for some of these names." We flipped through a current catalogue. "These are hand-tufted, each done in a limited edition of ten. Robert Bolt, \$1,800. A Harold Town for \$3,400. You can spend up to \$7,600 for a Kenneth Lochheed. Here's one of his. Isn't that beautiful?"

I could only agree. However, I confessed, I was a little overdrawn and Auto-pac was coming up in a few weeks.

"Not to worry. By far the majority of my sales are from the displays on these walls and the gallery in the basement. Some of these are as low as \$40, even less for seat cushions and tablecloths. Look at this tapestry here. Thirty-six by forty-eight, just right for your feature wall or over the love seat. Let's see here — only \$160. For a grand master reproduction imported from France, that's quite reasonable. Of course the framing is extra;

we don't do that. Or you may wish to free-hang it as it is from a brass rod like this one over here. It's your preference."

"Sounds like a good deal," I said in my best Mennonite accent. Then I present Wiens with my dilemma: 'Out with the MCC Thrift Shop, in with the *Architectural Digest*. Have: one bedroom, with river view, hardwood floors, fake fireplace Ikea furniture, plasterboard white. Wanted: don't know, placate woman.' Isn't this a little old-fashioned for the suburban high-rise?"

Wiens gave me a look. "Oh no, not at all! Certainly many of my customers come in from River Heights and Crescentwood, but for you suburbanites I see it this way. Quite frankly, the design of many modern homes is boring and conventional. With

tapestry you have something original, an art form that immediately transforms a room's character. It creates a certain ambience. Tapestry makes a statement. Ageless beauty. Tranquility. Warmth. History. Panoramic majesty."

Last night my Bullfighter went to heaven. In its space atop the mantelpiece, I am pleased to report, a shining-armoured knight presides in palatial splendour. Compliments accepted by appointment. We'll do sushi.

Hark! The door chimes do herald the arrival of my art critic at the front stoop! And what, pray tell, will her response be to my go-ye-into-all-the-world harvest-yet-to-reap Congo sunset scene?

Stay tuned for further adventures! mm

REVIEW

A shared ministry is biblical

comment by Harry Loewen

John Howard Yoder's writings are always stimulating, challenging and direction-giving. Whether he deals with specific ethical issues related to the church and state (*What Would You Do?*), or historical subjects and biblical exegesis (*Anabaptist studies*; *The Politics of Jesus*) Yoder is both profound and practical, always concerned about the church and the individual in society.

In *The Fullness of Christ*, originally published in *Concern* #17 (1969), Yoder deals with what he calls "universal ministry," meaning a ministry in the church as taught and practiced in the New Testament (NT). According to Yoder's reading of Paul's epistles, the great teacher of the early church does not favour a one-pastor system in the church, nor does the NT know anything about a "laity," that is, members who have no functions in the church. "The use of the word 'lay' to mean 'non-minister' is heretical, and arises only generations later" (p.14).

While Yoder is far from seeking to abolish the jack-of-all-trade "pastoral role," he shows that in the NT and in the early church the elders, teachers, evangelists, deacons and other ministers served the church with their various gifts and that no one person or "pastor" was responsible for all the functions and services. Yoder suggests that especially in today's society with its specialization and

professionalism — which is also reflected in the church — there is a need for a multiplicity of ministers and services in the church. Just as there is "division of labour" in business, industry and education, so there has to be division of functions in the church to serve its members adequately.

Yoder's argument is as timely today as it was 20 years ago. At a time when there is much talk about leadership, lack of pastors, and pastoral vacancies, congregations are urged to rethink the one-pastor system and learn from the NT what it means to shepherd the flock of Christ. For Mennonites, ironically, to rethink the salaried pastoral system and leadership, may mean "to go back" to a system in the not too distant past where ministers and leaders were chosen from among physicians, farmers, teachers, and other "lay" members who served the church without remuneration and yet with a sense of high calling.

This attractive and well-written booklet is to be highly recommended to church study groups in general and pastoral search committees in particular.

John Howard Yoder, *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Vision of Universal Ministry*; (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Press, 1987.) Paperback, 108 pages, \$8.95 US.

LOOKING OVER THE PRAIRIE



Vic Penner

Of winter storms, and country shelterbelts

I saved this column for a stormy day, and today is it. A winter storm has blown in from Alaska via Edmonton and Saskatoon. I can hear it howling and moaning around the gables of my roof. Through the light tracery of frost crystals on my window I can see grey outlines of maple trees that grow beside my garage. The garage roof that was piled high with snow last week is almost bare today. Two days of thawing temperatures have done that. Yesterday water from the melting snow was running in the streets. Today the mercury has dropped to -35 degrees C and on the radio they're chattering about exposed flesh freezing in less than a minute. Obviously the best place to be is in your favorite easy chair with a good book. But for me that will come only as a reward after a frostbite-defying trek to the local post office. City people kick up a royal fuss if their mail isn't brought to their doors. Out here where I live we count our daily pilgrimage to the PO a privilege. I'm bound to meet at least a dozen friends and neighbors either there or enroute to or from. Chances are pretty good that the postmaster will greet me in the hope that by being friendly he can deflect any insults I may be harboring about Canada Post or CUPW. He forgets that I no longer write critical editorials in the local paper, but only good things in the *Mennonite Mirror*. Because of the storm the post office is sparsely populated this morning. Four or five farmers, with their four-wheel drive pickups laying down a fog of exhaust fumes outside are picking up their copies of *The Western Producer*. In our down-filled parkas and furry hoods neither they nor I are recognizable to each other. So, instead of joining some coffee-drinking friend and wading across the street to the Chicken Chef, where for 60 cents (refills are free) it is easy to spend a convivial hour or two ingesting caffeine and discussing such disasters of the day as the stock market, corporate mergers, or

the drought, I decide to see if Ben the Barber has braved the elements and is on duty. He is. I like Ben, partly because he has never called himself a hair stylist but mostly because he is a great conversationalist. I know that while he is chopping off my hair we will have a good talk about things that really matter. You see, Ben is a strawberry farmer first, and a barber second. Because of some wise soil and water conservation strategies Ben's farm was spared the ravages of drought many of his neighbors suffered last summer. We talk about the renewed interest among local farmers in shelterbelt planting. For some years now young farmers unfamiliar with the dry years of the Great Depression (except for those tiresome tales their fathers told them) have been bulldozing down the rows of trees planted to try and reduce wind velocity and the accompanying erosion of the soil. The expectation was that a few additional acres of cropland would help reduce that ballooning bank debt brought on by the purchase of bigger and bigger equipment. Ben's strawberries produced wonderfully in spite of the drought, luring farm and townfolk by the hundreds (if not thousands) to his U-pick patch. He also branched out into watermelons and supplied rural and urban stores with that fruit throughout southern Manitoba. In Ben's chair I boast about my own enthusiasm for shelterbelts. I planted over a mile of them on an acreage I bought a decade and a half ago. I was looking for an acre or two of river property and ended up buying 75. The river runs through the middle of it, dividing it neatly into half bush and half farmland. Because some 30 acres is pretty well treeless (except along the river bank) I set to drafting a farm husbandry plan. Indian Head Nursery supplied a couple of hundred trees, which, together with my two sons and my neighbor John, we planted in two neat rows and one crooked one along a

drainage ditch. For two years I cultivated the trees with an old Ford 9N tractor I bought specifically for that purpose. Then the 9N's battery died and along with it my interest in hands-on farming. The shelterbelts today are about waist-high (maybe chest-high in some places). Ben knows a lot about shelterbelts and which species makes the best ones. Caraganas, he says, make rotten shelterbelts. What kind have I got, he asks. Caragana, I admit sheepishly. Ben is merciful and turns the conversation to the forest fires in Yellowstone Park last summer. I think he wants me to burn my shelterbelts. It's getting more obvious every day that shelterbelts are going to be very popular in this part of the prairies next summer. Already some 80 local farmers have formed the Buffalo Soil Conservation Association (the name comes from a creek that meanders through Rhineland Municipality where they live) and indications are that they will put aside their bulldozers for tree planters in spring. Last week about 200 farmers and I congregated in the Winkler hockey arena to hear local MLA Jack Penner, the natural resources minister, and his sidekick Harry Siemens, solicit "local input" on the subject of Land and Water Strategy. That our man Jack is quickly adapting to the politician's role was evident as he glibly spoke of Demand Management, Heritage Resources, Non-Point Sources of Pollution, Sustainable Development, and Water Quality Objectives. By the time he had finished (backed up by Harry) farmers were ready to embark on a virtual reforestation of the prairies. **mm**

Together We're Better!

Let's Eliminate Racial Discrimination in Canada



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OBSERVED ALONG THE WAY

Thoughts of golf, noisy hotels,
and the rewards of teaching

Spring is on the way, another university year is drawing to a close, and a new golf season beckons. With or without illusions the future looks good (I can even face the possibility that I will slice a few balls this summer and Al Reimer will occasionally beat me). The immediate past was also okay, and as I think about it there is much reason to be thankful.

As January turned to February this year the cold finally hit us, but as usual there was much indoors to keep us warm. On the Friday of a memorable weekend we are privileged to participate in the wedding of friends whose road up to this point has been somewhat rocky. The occasion is filled with promise and joy, however, because of the obvious love they have discovered for each other. A reception later at the Carleton Club evolves into a much more personal and touching event than is usually the case.

The small group clusters around the piano where Judith Siebert and Andy Klassen create an incredibly warm mood with piano and saxophone. Even Basin Street Blues lifts the spirit on this occasion. This spirit is carried forward on the next evening with the mass choir performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Since this is reviewed elsewhere by a much more knowledgeable music lover I will confine myself to a general impression. I must admit first of all that I seldom really enjoy such performances. I have still not been admitted to the inner recesses of such great musical minds as Bach, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. Mozart, Beethoven, and Handel seem more accessible. However, let me record that at this event I am surprised by joy. Perhaps it is because we have seats very near the front, so that we can catch the drama of the performers, particularly the astonishing conductor. At times both of his feet seem to lift from the ground as he cajoles and encourages the combined choir and orchestra. He always lands without a sound. This drama is as impressive to me as the music: people



by Roy Vogt

completely caught up in what they are doing.

The drama of the story of Elijah is, of course, interesting in itself, and the soloists and choir manage to convey it very effectively. I will never forget the powerful bass, Peter Lika, singing, *Es ist genug!* (It is enough!), or Edith Wiens holding our attention both with her voice and her intense presence on the stage. That very next afternoon she moves us again with a recital of Lieder and hymns. Her rendition of *Nacht und Traueme*, and her singing of the three hymns, affects me more deeply than almost anything else in the recent past. I am not sure what kind of vision of God her father (the late D.B. Wiens) or her maternal grandfather (B.B. Janz) had, but the vision that she conveys through songs like *There's A Wideness in God's Mercy*, and *Like a River Glorious* is profoundly inspiring. Because of this one afternoon's performance alone I am glad that I was not in Hawaii at the end of January this year.

The first weekend in February takes us to Grand Forks where we join about 30 other "middlers" (those coping with, or enjoying, the years after 40) for a retreat. We spend Saturday morning, evening, and Sunday morning, discussing our experiences and searching for ways to reflect more of the joy and purpose in our lives that God surely intends for us. The discussions are refreshingly honest and my wife and I both feel that we learn a lot from them. There is time, of course, to relax between sessions, to visit informally and to try out the shopping at the Columbia Mall.

A rather noisy poolside party unfortunately disrupts our sleep on Saturday evening. I wish Peter Lika, the powerful bass, were here. He could simply walk up to the revellers and shout, *Es ist genug!*

Even this night turns out better than one we had at the Holiday Inn in Fargo a few years ago. There our room was right next to the pool, and we woke up with a

fright when a noisy party spilled out from one of the rooms and carried on around the pool. We called the desk clerk and asked him to do something.

He acknowledged that the partygoers were breaking the rules but insisted that there was nothing he could do about it. We said that if he wouldn't we would call the local police. He didn't, and we did. The police then called the desk clerk and said that if he didn't get the party out of the pool area immediately they would come down and do it. The desk clerk didn't want any police intervention, so he marched reluctantly to the pool and told the guests they had to leave. Our relief, however, was short lived. He informed the disgruntled guests that he was being forced to do this by the people in room 127. They all marched to our window and banged on it angrily. Next morning we lodged a formal complaint with the manager. He gave us the room free for the previous night and assigned us to another room, away from the pool, for the next night. We thought we had won at least a small moral victory. However, the manager obviously intended to have the last laugh. The room to which we moved faced on to a huge garbage container. That is evidently the room reserved exclusively for complainers. Needless to say we have never been back to the Holiday Inn.

Compared to that our stay at the Town House Inn in Grand Forks this weekend is extremely relaxing.

The news is filled these days with companies merging or closing down. We would like to know, of course, how much of this is due to the new era inaugurated by the free trade deal with the United States. One effect of this deal can be observed in changes announced by Loewen Windows in Steinbach. In the future a good part of their labour force will be required to work an evening shift, because — so their announcement goes — unless they use their buildings and

machinery more intensely they won't be able to compete with firms like Marvin Windows just south of the border. It doesn't seem to be a big change, but some workers are very upset by it. Life in Steinbach has been family centered, with very little work done in the evening hours. This will now change. For better or worse, free trade with the U.S will continue to change the ways in which we have lived.

Even at the university things change. Our department has lost many teachers over the past few years, without many replacements. This year, however, we are able to hire two new professors. As a member of the hiring committee I am interested in the number and quality of the applications we receive. About 30 graduating students from across North America apply for our two positions, many of them with very good credentials. The market seems to be getting tighter. Several weeks are taken up almost entirely, outside of class, with interviews and seminars.

Each candidate on the short list is invited to the university to present a paper, so that both teaching ability and intellectual talent can be evaluated. Despite the prospect of two new teachers the teaching load continues to increase. Next year, I have been informed, I will be teaching up to 300 students in one class. A starting professor, with a doctor's degree, can now expect to begin with a salary of about \$ 30,000.

Teaching continues to have many other rewards. During a week's break in February I am able to participate in an all-day seminar on business ethics, with some of the leading Catholic businessmen in Winnipeg. It is refreshing to exchange ideas with them. A MEDA luncheon that same week is also interesting. Things are brought to a romantic conclusion on Valentine's Day. The idea for this day may have been dreamt up by a creative advertiser, but even hokey ideas can be put to good use. My wife and I enjoy a quiet dinner at one of our favorite eating places, Chamberlyn's. The food is excellent, the service the best in the city, and the atmosphere is intimate. Even the prices come close to a typical Mennonite budget. After such a warm evening we know indeed that Spring is not far away. **mm**

REVIEW

Tough choices and difficult theology

reviewed by **Bernie Wiebe**

If you have been looking for some solid material to help your church face some of the tough moral decisions about today's health care, e.g. abortion, homosexuality, AIDS, euthanasia, surrogate motherhood, genetic engineering, organ donation and transplants — here is an excellent resource.

Graydon Snyder is a Church of the Brethren theologian teaching at Chicago Theological Seminary. In this book he takes the "covenant theology" of the Believers' Church tradition and interprets for us a "narrative ethics" that grows out of our theology. He proceeds to apply this ethic to the plethora of health care issues.

Especially striking are his comments on abortion and on death. Snyder argues that life at its beginning and ending must be viewed in the context of community. Abortion always involves more than the issue of a fetus and a woman. What about the man who caused the pregnancy? What happened to our "community" that women could become subject to "use" and/or "abuse" and that people would generate new life without weighing or accepting consequences? Death happens when people lose all capacity to relate. Organisms without relationships are already dead, argues Snyder.

Ethical decision-making will never be easy, but this book provides biblical and theological substance in keeping with the Anabaptist/Mennonite/Brethren Free Church tradition, and gives excellent examples of how this relates to the modern dilemmas. Included are case illustrations that make the reader think globally.

This is an excellent group study resource and the book ought to be in every Mennonite library.

Tough Choices: Health Care Decisions and the Faith Community, by Graydon F. Snyder (Brethren Press, 1988). 129 pages.

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by Anne Konrad

Reflections on missing "corrections" the in the road

U ntil August, this year, when Harvey and I visited Southern Manitoba, I knew nothing about geographical "corrections."

Now I think there might be hope for people who don't remember numbers, who can't navigate with the help of clear maps, or who always travel in parallel lines.

I used to think it was a male-female difference (before the days of right-brain, left-brain). You know, boys like math, girls like literature. I had plenty of proof. I was saying how one might just understand why friends like the Neufelds could leave our Toronto and return to the Prairies: Saskatchewan, Saskatoon and Batoche and Dauphin, the sky, the small towns and mechanized dinosaurs harvesting with night lights — they were just not seen enough in glossy travel weekend sections.

"How large was Rosthern again?" I asked Harvey as we approached the grain elevators of Elm Creek, Manitoba. "1,609" he said without blinking. I checked the Visitors' Guide we had been given in Ewald Epp's office at *The Saskatchewan Valley News* in Rosthern; it said, "1,609."

Numbers, population figures, highway numbers, I know they're really important, but somehow they just glitch by, not even a bump on the brain. What I remembered was that the receptionist at the newspaper office had a vase of almost black sweetpeas on her desk (picked for her by her son) and that a customer called up and his business cards had not yet been printed. Sorry.

Harvey remembered too that the Winkler, Manitoba, realtor had said a "correction" occurs every six miles — that's at Winkler's longitude. Shortly after we visited the realtor, travelling along, finger pressed on something called Route

#75 on the map (a dull, heavy red line beside a nice faded-blue squiggle line coming out of a big lake, jammed by a large blob called Winnipeg and then flowing down between yellow North Dakota and pink Minnesota), I had forgotten it was "six" miles.

What I remembered was a heavy brown desk almost blocking the main office area, a desk totally bare, nothing on it except possibilities. The senior Mr. Realtor sat behind the desk and his son, an agreeable man in white shirt sleeves, stood most of the time in the side office doorway. The senior wife (she wore white sandals and an unbuttoned white synthetic cardigan) came in and placed her white purse on a grey filing cabinet in the back room. These two had known Harvey's father and we laughed over fond reminiscences of bygone Winkler.

The whole story actually began the day before the real estate office visit. Harvey and I had taken a table near the *Stammtisch* where a clutch of "regulars," men in tractor hats that no longer sat on tractors, were sitting in a booth drinking afternoon coffee. Stiff and airy, the tractor hats looked like organdy prayer caps on top of grey heads. The men nodded solemnly about the most recent TV news disasters (the Dallas air crash) and the hats bobbed as seats changed, as one wisecrack followed another. A blond waitress, in spiked heels, red, and a too tight black skirt for carrying all those coffees, took our order. An off-duty cook, black hair, whose second wife lived in Winnipeg and he worked in Winkler on the late night shift where it's better to have a man, sat at an empty table smoking and reading a novel with slightly raised silver-coloured letters on the spine spelling what looked like *Surrender*. Another "regular," without a tractor cap,

came in and occupied a newly vacated warmed seat in the *Stammtisch* booth.

I could go on like this, but somehow the man without the hat and Harvey began talking about "the good old days" when Harvey's father had been a high school teacher in Winkler (for 24 years) and pretty soon we had the keys to the city, so to speak.

The man without the hat was a manufacturer of tractor cabs. He offered to give us a guided tour of the town the next morning. So that's when we found out that watchmaker Dycks were called "Ticka Dicka" and Policeman Felde stood on the street corner Saturdays, all dressed up in his uniform, taking off time from operating the town road grader the rest of the week, and enforced the law. One time an American asked him about Winkler's population. Felde stood very proudly, "Oh, I'd say maybe twelve hundred. Maybe even a thousand."

The man without the hat was obviously a man of numbers. He hadn't missed any "corrections." He showed us the Light Industry Park, all the new factories and buildings you'd drive right by and not notice that every one is a locally generated plant employing people, creating jobs. Not one multi-national needed. He was a generous, informed host, entertaining, and we drove around in a lovely cushioned automobile. I volunteered to sit in the back, of course, Mennonite style. We drove to Reinfeld.

He was only a *Knirps* of seven when he left Winkler, but Harvey remembered it was two miles both there and back. He had to walk then since he had forgotten his jacket when playing with the Adrian boys of Reinfeld. His sister walked with him.

Reinfeld is a "bedroom suburb" now, often for "Mexican" Mennonites who

work in the Winkler factories and live in the Reinfeld houses built by the 1875 arrivals. Those Mennonites liked doing things the way they were used to it. Harvey says they "transplanted," so they put the house, barn, and machine shed all in a row in one continuous building, just like in Russia.

These were the places we wanted to see.

"Are there any left?"

"Oh, look, there's one still the same — you see, the house still has the shutters and the bar is red with those criss-cross white boards on the door."

"No, there's no barn left there."

"Dormer windows upstairs! That's supposed to be the attic where they used to store the grain."

"For sale. But it's totally modern."

Back in town we thanked our kind host, got into the blue Reliant and drove to the Mall. To the real estate office. "Do any of the village farmhouses, I mean original ones, ever come up for sale?" Harvey asked.

This is the part where we come back to "corrections."

"Sure. Well, there's a place. Go to the main village street. Then hang a right at the correction and then..."

He had lost me. Fortunately I'm old enough now to be allowed to just ask when I don't know a simple thing every-one else seems to know. "Correction? *Woat meent doat?*"

A "correction," the younger realtor explained, is that jag in the road where you've been purring along nicely and suddenly the road stops and you have to take an elbow to continue. That's not how he said it, naturally. Realtors are people who know numbers. It's a surveying term. Every six miles in Winkler (the distance varies depending on where you are on the globe. The numbers increase the closer you get to the Pole), the road takes a quarter mile turn and then runs straight again. It pulls itself together, gives its thin black lines a break before it stretches out again along the proscribed parallels of longitude (or is it latitude? No, no, they girdle the globe) to reach the North Pole. That's a "correction."

If the road didn't bend, those skinny lines on globes gathering dust on Grand and Toy Ltd. store shelves (including the dotted International Date Line) would never be able to squeeze together enough to be tied in a knot at the top of the world. So you see, when you're "hanging a right at the correction," you're contributing to the order of the universe.

I keep thinking about those "corrections."

Geographically it's easy to see that bending all the roads and imaginary black lines is a very good thing. It allows our globe to be a sphere. And on this earth ball there we are, all spinning around within those parallel lines, mathematically calculated out to perfection. So then when someone comes along who doesn't keep to the straight lines, a television preacher who sins, a kid who smokes pot, a cook who bakes flat *zwieback*, are they missing on the "correction"? Are they spinning off? Into the atmosphere like Mary Poppins?

Up through the atmosphere,
Up where the air is clear.

Oh, let's go fly a kite.

No, no, nothing is random. Reinfeld is two miles, 3.226 km. east of Winkler. If you miss the right turn you might get onto a gravel road and end up in Gnadenfeld. Watch that map. Count the numbers.

...but Gnadenfeld, a field of grace, that was the village with the parade of trees, that's where we had met the Mexican Mennonite woman who let us see inside her house...new made bars of soap enough for years (I've got the recipe), brightly painted walls, raised eight children, one who helped her with that garden

...just by missing a straightened road...

It all makes you think, if the world still spins when you miss a "correction" (check a map, southern Manitoba is bullseye centre in North America), it might not be so bad either to be "poor at numbers." Just think of all the females accused of being weak in math, take nuns or abbesses, for example (No good at arithmetic? Go, join the church), when the dispute about how many angels can sit on the head of a pin came up, do you think they caused that schism?

Remember the sweetpeas and how they grow.

mm

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Daniel

The Old Testament story becomes startlingly relevant during Iraq visit

by Anne Martens

As we began the descent into Baghdad airport, our Captain spoke to us over the intercom. "Please remember you are entering a country that is at war, and it is advisable to act with caution." That was the first warning I was to receive that day.

My husband, a world grain consultant, had been asked by the government of Iraq to investigate its troubled grain industry, particularly in the milling and baking areas, and to come up with some answers. We were their guests and I was allowed to accompany him.

Culture shock can overtake the most seasoned travelers, especially when communications get tangled up. Our embassy in Baghdad had failed to check out the hotel. We found ourselves in a cubby hole of a room where we had to squash against the wall to pass one another. An American girl in the hotel, married to an Iraqi, warned me not to get into a taxi alone, or I'd disappear.

That evening as I talked eagerly to our hosts about Nineveh and Ur of Chaldea, and my plans to explore these places, they said that I would in all probability not get there as the war front was never more than 60 miles away, at the Iraq/Iran border.

I was left with nothing more than two months of reading in a small room without too much hope of going anywhere. Besides, I had a cockroach the size of my thumb in my bathroom which refused to give up his territorial rights.

The working day begins at 7:30 here because of the heat. I tried not to seem unhappy when I said good-bye to my husband, as he was to begin an almost impossible task and could do without a disgruntled wife. Besides, I would not see him till mid-afternoon. Despondently, I stared at the wall in front of me. There had to be a solution to this.

In desperation I reached for my Bible. It fell open in the most heavily marked pages of my research of the past months in preparation for this trip. Particularly the book of Daniel. I remembered then that Daniel had come here to Babylonia under much more difficult situations than I found myself in. What had he done to ward off despondency?

After all, he was a hostage far away from home with his youthful dreams shattered. His restrictions under guard were even more confining than mine. What did he feel inside? Was he angry like I was, and frustrated?

On seeing the sights of the magnificent city of Babylon, had he been overwhelmed by the majesty of this place? It was considered one of the seven wonders of the world.

Daniel was marched under heavy guard down Procession Street through the enormous Ishtar Gate that his new ruler, King Nebuchadnezzar, built in honour of this goddess of fertility. The way the victors usually brought home the spoils, he must have caught a glimpse of the towering Ziggurat in the glow of the evening sun. He knew this was a heathen place where he would be expected to worship idols, or die. What plan of action was he formulating in his mind on which he would have to act soon or not at all?

For one thing Daniel took a hold of the situation before it took hold of him. He talked to God, as he had always done, three times a day, giving thanks first, then getting direction from Him as to what he was to do under the circumstances. He knew that he must trust God to act.

I went to the window too, as Daniel may well have done, and offered my prayer of thanks to God, which I had neglected to do. After all, the sun was shining.

Daniel had decided when his first meal arrived from the King's table. He would have to declare that he was a child of the living God and that "he would not defile himself" (Daniel, 1:8) with food which had been sacrificed to idols. Nor did he drink the wine. No. Daniel dared to stand alone. He convinced his friends to eat the same diet.

My battle was with fear. I would not succumb either. I, too, had a God who watched over me. I dressed, then gave the cockroach a parting squirt of my hair spray just as he was emerging out of the crevasse in the wall and stuffed a tissue in it. With determination, I walked out into my new world and forgot the warning in my enjoyment at what I saw.

We had been brave enough to say that

we would have to have better quarters. The little hotel to which we moved was situated on the Tigris and neatly run by Egyptians. We began to think that things were not as bad as they had seemed at first. But there were a few more hurdles to overcome.

The heat at night made it impossible to sleep without the whirring sound of the air conditioner, which we turned off about three, when the cooler air of the morning rushed in. But around four a.m. the dogs began to bark. They seemed wild roamed around in bunches. This was the ritual for our entire stay in Iraq. Then by five o'clock the blaring sound of the call to prayer, which was recorded and tinny, came from the minarets. This gave us another jolt. At this point I would get up, though my husband managed another hour of sleep.

I stepped out onto a small balcony and was surprised at the beauty around me. The sky was still a burnished gold but the palm trees and the onion domed shape of the temple were black against the rising

I went to the window, too, as Daniel may well have done, and offered my prayer...

sun. I thought I had stepped into a Christmas card scene, one that depicts the wise men, following a star, with the city of Bethlehem in the distance.

So over-awed was I that I began to sing: "Oh Lord in the morning, will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will to come." I had asked my daughter to record, on tape, the songs of praise she sings. They were to be a background for my rickety voice. I played with them while I worked in kitchen, or travelled in the car. Now I was grateful that I knew them off by heart. They brought me a sense of peace and nearness to the Lord.

Daniel knew these Psalms too. They were part of his religion. It was easy to see him looking toward Jerusalem saying "I love you Lord and I lift my voice. To worship you. Oh my soul rejoice." Or, "Give ear to my prayer, Oh Lord, consider my

meditation." (Psalm 5.)

While my husband shaved, I sang "The Lord's my Shepherd." I heard his voice join mine. It was to be the bond between us, something we did every morning. Weary from a sleepless night and still bleary-eyed, we took this promise unto ourselves and faced the day victoriously. But this was just preparation for the things yet to come.

After two weeks our passports came back to us stamped "cancelled." This meant we couldn't leave the country. We went into a tailspin. Our host said "No problem, we are here," But we had experienced that at times they were just not available. Anything could happen. Fear is a strange thing; it colours the imagination.

Every day I walked without official documents. I knew the streets well now, but I wanted to get to the Iraq Museum that housed the winged bulls excavated at Nimrod and the ivories taken by Nineveh by Sennacherib, so I learned to read the bus numbers to get there.

Finally, the day arrived when our hosts were to take us to Babylon. But instead of the joy we expected, a great sadness overtook us. The embassy gave me a telegram that said my sister had died of cancer. I knew she was very ill when I left. I had been in touch with her daily by letter, dreading to leave her. Now it was all over. This was my greatest trial.

Standing on the excavated walls of Babylon, I watched the wind blow up a thin veil of sand one layer at a time. I could see how eventually cities could be obliterated from our sight, never to be seen again. I thought of the fallibility of man.

We all must die. The heaps of brick around me declared a truth that I so often forget. Whether we are great or small we are destined to crumble once again to dust. Only our relationship to God and what we do for others is eternal.

I picked up a brick that had the stamp of Nebuchadnezzar on it and thought of the great kingdoms that lay about me in the sand-swept dunes. Even Alexander of Macedonia who came later met his end here, in Babylon, at 32. These crumbled stone bricks were a monument, not to man's greatness, but to the infallibility of the living God.

Daniel's last trial, his greatest test of faith, came when he was an old man. Darius, on taking over Babylonia, was about to make Daniel the supreme supervisor of the land, because of his exceptional abilities. Jealousy, greed and a lust for power made the other supervisors and satraps use treachery to do away with

Daniel, for he was a righteous man and could not be bought. Darius unknowingly signed an irrevocable decree that would be the trap that would place him in the lion's den.

We too were hard pressed by political intrigue to remain forthright and honest. It would have been easier for my husband had he tried less, and looked away from the problems instead of looking deeper and probing more. It sometimes angered those in power in the grain industry. In this they were no different from people in any other country.

They withheld important information from us, moving the blame to others when fault was discovered. In the last analysis, what they really wanted was the more sophisticated computerized equipment for their grain industry, which the West had developed. Unfortunately, they do not have the hard currency to trade for these items. Though Iraq has great wealth in oil, she has at present no ports, hence no bargaining power.

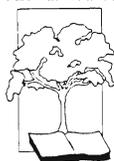
But we could not give them the promise of making this equipment available. We were not the only ones in similar situations. In our little hotel were technologists from many countries such as Switzerland, Australia, Germany and Japan. They were there to supply technical know-how to a country that is determined to be entirely western. Certainly the end result would be trade with Iraq and her commodities.

As we came to the end of our stay it remained for my husband to give a paper on his findings. He presented it orally to someone that sat in the council of Hussein, who like Darius acted upon the recommendations swiftly. We parted friends, supplying technology by our very presence, helping physically to build a better milling and baking industry.

Daniel's story helped us to realize that men and women of faith can resist temptation and conquer adversity.

"But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you." (Psalm 5:11.) mm

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The Conference of Mennonites in Canada has established a new pastoral counselling fund with money from **A Call to Kingdom Commitments**, the General Conference Mennonite Church development fund. It is designed to help pastors cope with the stresses of the ministry.

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One of a series of Bach Festival concerts

MANITOBA NEWS

Will and Carole Feldbusch were commissioned November 27 as pastor couple in the Thompson, Manitoba Christian Centre.

The Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg received a grant of \$85,850 to complete the indexing of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. The grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada,

under its "Canadian Studies Research Tools Program" will be spread over three years, and includes money for new computer equipment. Bert Friesen is the indexer for this project.

Esther Wiens who teaches English at MBBC has had her play *Sanctuary* chosen by the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre as its spring production. The play presents a typical modern Mennonite family in California faced with the dilemma of harboring a refugee family from Central America. The Theatre plans this or another play for the Mennonite World Conference in 1990.

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D H A B I A



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S I L E N T

From the 11 entries to the January puzzle, Tina Kehler of Altona, was selected winner.

Answers to January are skate, horse, leash, share, siren, and snake.

The letters are to be re-arranged and written in the squares to form words. Letters which fall into the squares with circles are to be arranged to complete the answer at the bottom of the puzzle; the drawing to the right provides a clue.

A winner will be drawn from among the contest entries and the prize awarded.

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by April 18, 1989.

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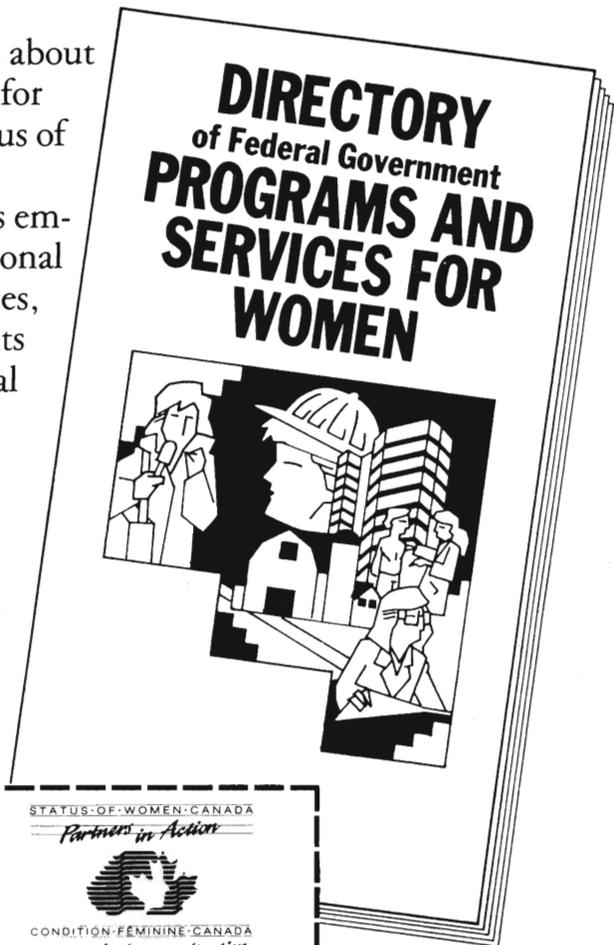
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YOUR WORD

Hardly imaginary

I find it strange, that J. Braun thinks that stories in old family albums have to be imaginary. Does he/she not trust those pictures to have real true stories, more interesting more tragic, than he/she ever could compose. Is it simpler and quicker to make up a bogus story, than do a little research?

When I received the January copy of MM, I saw the picture on page 12. I felt a surge of gratitude, that someone had remembered Dr. Isaak Thiessen and his family, but when I read, what it said there, I found it bizzare.

Dr. Isaak Thiessen was the chief physician of the Psychiatric Hospital Bethania on the Dnieper river. Bethania was first a Mennonite establishment. Later government owned. The whole area was flooded in 1927 or 28 to build a dam for a hydro-electric station.

The picture on page 12 of the MM was taken in Bethania. With Dr. Thiessen in the picture are his wife Katja Wallmann — my father's sister — and their three children. The little girl squatting on the left is a neighbor.

The first time Dr. Thiessen was arrested was in 1922. He was sent into exile for five years, but was allowed to take his family with him. Before that time was over, he was arrested again and his wife

just a little later. Mrs. Thiessen died within a year of her arrest in 1938.

The oldest daughter and their son survived. The little one, on her father's lap, died somewhere in Kasachstan from hunger and tuberculosis at the age of 16 years...Dr. Thiessen also survived. After many years in different labour camps and jails, he was freed from Stalin's death..

Last summer I made it a point to see his niece, one of the Aussiedler in Germany, to find out more about the family.

Dr. Thiessen had lived in a small village near Moscow, good people took care of him and he was in touch with his children and grandchildren. He lived in a little room with a bed, a table and a chair in it. In the mid seventies he had a stroke and died soon after that. His body was cremated. He had told his niece, that only because he was a physician, he had survived.

This is a very short version of the story to the picture on page 12. If it was told right, it could fill a book, but often one thinks — who really wants to know.

Mary Knittel,
Waterloo, Ontario.

Editor's note: Truth, as the writer observed, is often more complex and more interesting than fiction. The Mirror staff regrets any embarrassment the use of the picture might have caused to family members.

Applause

I applaud all the workers of this publication. The MM adds greatly to the cultural and, lets hope, to the ethical aspiration of our people.

Margaret Albrecht,
Winnipeg.

Gay and Mennonite?

I was interested in the article and subsequent letters about homosexuality. Perhaps it would be enlightening to hear from some Mennonite homosexuals. What has been their experience of being Mennonite and homosexual. What is it like to be a gay male or a lesbian in the Mennonite community? A faithful reader,
W. Ruth Wood,
Vancouver.

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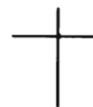
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A prairie evening of music

Prairie Performances Manitoba Inc., The University Singers, University of Manitoba, with Prof. Henry Engbrecht, conductor, and Shirley Elias Sawatzky, pianist and guest accompanist; February 16 and 17, Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Although the Muriel Richardson Auditorium was barely half-full on one of the coldest evenings of the winter, those who braved the frosty air were rewarded with an evening of good music.

Overall, the selections were not what one would call "familiar," or even "easy listening," but there sufficient range to ensure that every person heard at least one item of interest. The range of selections also demonstrated the range of the choir itself.

The University Singers have earned a reputation for consistently good performances. This is an achievement that in the context of a university can come only with great difficulty because the conductor of a university choir is faced with a more or less complete turnover of choir members once every three to four years. The attrition is easily explained — the student members graduate and leave the university. It is the conductor, in this case Engbrecht, who provides the continuity from one year to the next and who must re-mould the ensemble each year into a pleasing whole.

Each half of the concert program included a solo piece by Shirley Elias Sawatzky. *Three Mazurkas, Opus 59* in the first half were followed in the second by *Piano Caprice 16* by S.C. Eckhardt-Grammatte in the second. The latter had more than passing significance, in that Ms. Sawatzky previously had the honor of premiering this piece with others in an earlier concert and on this evening the audience included Ferdinand Eckhardt, husband of the late composer.

It was an evening well spent, and this reviewer's advice to those who like choral music: if you have a chance to hear the University Singers, take it, you won't be disappointed.

— Ed Unrau

Stoawe

fom Jack Thiessen

Enn Mexico wort Sinndachnomeddach pienijch fetalt. Dee Kjinja weare Tüs, daut Fernsee wea nijch folla causes enn concerns: kjeene blinje, besopne Indieauna ooda sowaut ... daut Telephon schreajch uck nijch jiede haulwe Minut, enn de Kjinja prachade nijch aulatoop no Paupe siene Koare, enn de Früljed weare soo's Gott daut wull: toofräd enn räde kratjt soo's Barbara Frum enn daut Toakel *nijch* räde doone.

Dee Manna knackte Sot bie de Japsfoll, enn de Früljed fetalde sitj fonn Schwienschlachte enn woofäl Schmolt see fäaje Wäatj utjebrot haude.

Enne Rund saut uck een Kanädja, enn äwabrestja Ooltnäs, eent fonne weinje, wouna noch Plautdietsch kunn, enn doabie sogoa oppe Universität sitj eenen Heiljenschein aune Leiwenbetjse jeschiet haud. Enn dee wort fondoag fäajenome, soo's ditt: "Ess daut soo, daut enn Kanada dee Mejales, enn sogoa dee Wiewa, enn dee Früljed lange Betjse droage, enn foaken mea Hoa oppe Täne habe aus Simson oppem Kopp?"

"Jo."

"Enn ess daut uck soo, daut'et Mood jeworde ess, daut mennische Kjinja mau eene Sproak, enjelsch, räde enn dee mau prost?"

"Jo."

Enn donn wort'et bedentjlich stell, meist soo's wann'et bute een schratjeljet Jewitta jäwe wudd.

"Jo, jo, daut haud sitj de leewe Gott uck nich aules biefaulde lote, aus'a de Mensche büe deed, meen etj," säd Obraum Klosse.

"Dee leewe Gott haud enn soone Sache uck nich fäl Erfoarung, waut Education-büildung aunbelangt, ooda Hee wull dee gauntse Sementocha ütem Strijch gone, sonst haud'a Adam enn Eva nijch foats aus groote Mensche toopjetjliestat," säd Wellem Boaje.

"Daut deed'a fleijcht, omm an de schratjelje Rietinj biem Täne wausse too spoare," säd Peeta Niefeld nu, enn dee must'ett woll weete: däm haude se aul met 14 Joa de Täne aula rütjetrocke, enn hee rannd nu mett en Jebiss romm, woun't klackad enn jenjeld enn schockeld.

Isaak Enns wisst woll, daut bie soone deepe theologische Diskussjoone nijch fäl Goodet rütkome wudd, enn ea daut nu boold eene niee Kjoatje-Jemeend jäwe

sull, lenjt hee daut Jesprajch opp eene aundre Jleis: "Ha jie aul jeheat, daut Diedrich Ditj fäje Wätj jessorwe ess? Enn Numma drettian? Enn sien Enj wea uck kjeen besondra Säjen."

"Na, wooromm nijch?" fruach Kloss Hiebat.

"Well, Diedrich, daut wea je noch mien kjliena Fada fonne Muttaschkaunt—wea je noch goanijch soo oolt, meist 53 Joa foll, oba hee must aul wajch. Hee haud noch sien Hoawstjtjel, sien kjlienen Dertj, daut ess de alfjoascha mett dee steile jreene Mets-kome lote, aus'a storf enn dee must bie am oppem Benjstje sette, aus 'et mett sien Foda too Enj jintj.

Na, nu lach dee cola Dertj doa oppe Schlopbenjstje enne groote Stow, enn kued ut: daut wort emma weinja mett am. Hee haud noch däm kjlienen Dertj jesajt, daut'a siene Mame jehorche sull, enn uck enne School sitj de Waute ute Ua Nāme, enn uck daut waut hee, aulsoo, sien Foda am biejebrocht haud, schmock behoole sull. Enn donn haud dee oola Dertj sitj oppe Sied jelajt enn lieseltjes "Oppwadaseene" jesajt.

Oba daut wea dochwoll noch *nijch* gaunts sowiet, enn mett eemol haud'a sitj wada tridjedreit enn jefroacht. "Waut ritjt doa soo scheen? Dertj, go mol enne Kjätj, enn froag Mame, waut doa soo onjeheia scheen ritje deit."

Na, eene Minute fief lota, kjemt dee kliena Dertj tridj enn sajt: "Mame backt Tweeback!"

"Go mol tridj enne Kjätj nenn, enn sajt Mame, etj well eenen haulwen Tweeback ea etj stoaw. Go!"

Enn Dertj nu tridj enne Kjätj nenn, oba boold kjemt hee tridj enn sajt: "Mame sajt, dee Tweeback sent nijch goot fe Jünt, dee sent noch too fresch!"

"Du jeist nu fuats tridj enne Kjätj, enn sajt Mame: "Eenen haulwen Tweeback fe Paupe!"

Oba Dertj kaum aulwada mett ladje Henj tridj. Enn nu räjd sitj dee cola Dertj Ditj doch noch en bätje opp, enn säd: "Etj sajt toom latsten mol, Tweeback!"

Enn dee junge Dertj jintj uck fuats loos, oba hee kaum wada mett ladje Henj tridj enn säd: "Paupe, Mame sajt daut blif doabie, dee Tweeback bliewe toom Bejrafnis!"

Wilder Honig

Geschichten aus Heide und Moor *

von Hedi Knoop

*Hedwig Knoop ist bekannt als Dichter und Autorin. Schon als junges Mädchen hat sie in der Zeitschrift ihres Vaters, **Die Mennonitische Warte**, Gedichte veröffentlicht. Nach dem Krieg in Deutschland wohnhaft hat sie nicht nur Gedichte und Geschichten geschrieben, sondern auch einen Verlag gegründet (Sonnentau Verlag). Nebenher hat sie eine Familie erzogen und ist viele Jahre Deutschlehrerin gewesen. Nun hat sie ein Buch*

*geschrieben, das in manchem das Werk ihres Vaters, Arnold Dyck, ähnelt. Die Geschichte ist autobiographisch und beschreibt die Welt so wie es Dyck auch in seinem Buch **Verloren in der Steppe** getan hat. Aus diesem Buch bringen wir einige Abschnitte in Folgen. Man bestelle sich aber am besten das Büchlein selbst von Mennonite Books, 208, 1317A Portage Avenue, Winnipeg R3G 0V3. (*Aurora und Knoth Verlag, 1988)*

Ein Mord vor der Haustür

Unser Moorhof war zuerst nichts weiter als ein Stück Ödland, also eine unerschlossene Moorlandschaft mit Kiefern, Birken, Heidekraut, Wollgras, Moorkuhlen und Torfhaufen. Mitten in diesem menschenleeren Fleckchen Erde baute Wilhelm unser klitzekleines Haus mit einer Wohnküche und zwei kleinen Zimmern, kaum groß genug für die sieben Zwerge.

Auf einem Ochsenwagen transportierten wir unser Hab und Gut und unser einjähriges Töchterchen Kora zum neuen Haus; wir räumten alles schön ein, bezogen die neuen Betten, machten Feuer im Herd und kochten uns den ersten Kaffee.

Bunte Vorhänge zierten das Fenster

der kleinen Wohnküche; das noch unmöblierte Wohnzimmer aber diente vorläufig als Abstellraum. Eine schmale Treppe führte hinauf auf den Boden, eine andere hinunter in den kleinen Vorratskeller.

Wir wohnten kaum eine Woche hier, als ich einen durchdringenden Schrei vernahm und zur Tür hinausstürzte. Da ertönte der Schrei wieder, schrill und laut und voller Entsetzen. Kora war es gottlob nicht, die so schrie. Die hatte Wilhelm mit einem langen Seil an einen Baum gebunden, damit sie nicht in unseren Abflußgraben fallen konnte. Nun saß sie da, Däumchen im Mund, und sah mich fragend an, als warte sie ab, was jetzt passieren würde.

Ich sah mich um, aber etwas, das so

laut schreien konnte, war nirgendwo zu erblicken, weder auf dem Hof noch auf der angrenzenden Viehweide. Vielleicht ist da etwas in den Graben geraten, dachte ich und rannte hin. Dieser Graben zog sich an der Grenze des Grundstücks entlang, und in ihm versickerte unser Abwasser. Wirklich, an seinem äußersten Ende bewegte sich etwas Dunkles, und als ich mich ihm näherte, erkannte ich ein ganz junges, ganz schwarzes Reh. Ich bückte mich, um es herauszuheben. Da schrie es dreimal in Todesangst; dann aber war es still und ergab sich wiederstandlos seinem Schicksal.

„Hab keine Angst, ich tu dir nichts“, sagte ich, als ich es behutsam auf den Arm nahm. Nun trug ich es ins Haus und gab ihm ein warmes, weiches Plätzchen hinter der Tür. Da blieb es liegen und rührte sich nicht.

Als Wilhelm heimkam, standen wir drei um das Tierlein herum und überlegten, was zu tun sei. Kora und ich wollten es behalten und aufziehen, aber Wilhelm sagte: „Dat geht nich, wi hebbt keene Melk doaför.“

Er hatte recht. Wir mußten alles, was wir zum Leben brauchten: Brot, Butter, Eier, Marmelade, die Tageszeitung und auch die Milch für Kora im fünf Kilometer entfernten Städtchen einkaufen und auf dem Rad nach Hause transportieren. Noch hatten wir keinen Garten, der uns Gemüse, kein Huhn, das uns Eier und erst recht keine Ziege, die uns Milch gegeben hätte. Wir hatten nur Kora und eine halbe Million Bienen; denn Wilhelm war ein Imker.

Also trugen wir nach Dunkelwerden schweren Herzens unseren kleinen Findling hinaus auf die Weide und legten ihn ins hohe Gras, damit die Mutter ihn abholen konnte.

An einem Sonntagmorgen, eine Woche danach, bekamen wir Hühner, und zwar zwölf rebhuhnfarbige Italiener; das heißt, vorerst waren es Eintagsküken, muntere Flaumkügelchen mit ihrer aufgeplusterten, stets eifrig lockenden Glucke.

An diesem Sonntagmorgen aber geschah im Moor etwas Schauerliches.

Wilhelm war, um die Küken abzuholen, ins Städtchen gefahren, Kora und ich waren allein zu Hause. Da sehe ich eine schwarze Limousine den Moorweg entlang auf unser Haus zufahren. Was ist heute schon Besonderes an einem Auto? Jeder Mensch hat eines oder auch zwei. Aber damals, kurz nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, da war ein Auto etwas ganz Seltenes, jedenfalls auf unserem Moorhof. Der hatte bestimmt noch niemals eines gesehen. Lastwagen waren schon dagewesen, denn die hatten Baumaterial



herangefahren, aber eine große schwarze Limousine war hier schon etwas Einmaliges, und die hatte sicher nichts Gutes zu bedeuten.

Sie hielt also an, und ein baumlangler Mann stieg eilig aus und kam mit Riesenschritten auf unser Haus zu. Er machte ein so finsternes Gesicht, daß ich Kora hurtig auf den Arm nahm und mich auf Schlimmes gefaßt machte. „Haben Sie etwas von dem Mord gehört?“ fragte der unheimliche Gast.

Da haben wir's, dachte ich, er hat Böses im Sinn, er spricht ja schon von Mord.

„Nein“, sagte ich und faßte Kora fester, „ich hab nichts von einem Mord gehört. Wieso?“

„Wo ist Ihr Mann?“ fragte er nun.

Aha, dachte ich, er will sich nur verwissern, daß ich hier mit Kora allein bin.

„Dort hinterm Haus“, sagte ich und hoffte, ihn mit dieser Notlüge von bösen Taten abzuhalten.

Dann aber erzählte er, daß an diesem Morgen, einen Kilometer von uns entfernt, eine Leiche gefunden worden sei, die Leiche einer Frau, und daß man den Mörder suche. Dieser müsse in einem Auto, wahrscheinlich einem Jeep, mit der Frau durch diese Gegend gefahren sein. „Haben Sie hier einen Jeep fahren sehen?“ fragte er.

„Nein, hier ist kein Jeep vorbeigefahren“, sagte ich, und dann setzte sich der Mann auch sogleich in sein Auto und fuhr davon. Er war also ein Kriminalbeamter gewesen.

Als Wilhelm mit den Küken nach Hause kam, hatte er viel zu erzählen. Das ganze Dorf wisse bereits von dem Mordfall, und eine halbe Völkerwanderung befinde sich schon auf dem Weg zum Tatort. Spielende Kinder hatten den nur dürrftig vergrabenen Lechnam entdeckt, die Kopfhare hatten aus dem Erdboden herausgeragt. Vor zwei Wochen etwa sollte der Mord begangen worden sein.

„Vor zwei Wochen? Dann habe ich den Jeep gesehen!“ fiel mir nun ein.

Ja, wir hatten genau vor zwei Wochen die erste Hälfte unserer Habe auf dem Ochsenwagen ins Moor gefahren. Wilhelm sollte bereits im neuen Haus übernachten, während ich noch zurück in die alte Wohnung im Ort fahren wollte. Allein auf dem Fahrrad in der beginnenden Dämmerung wurde es mir auf dem einsamen Moorweg ein wenig unheimlich. Da aber, auf halbem Wege, kam mir ein Jeep entgegengefahren, und mich packte ein Schrecken. Es brauchten nur ein paar skrupellose Gesellen darin zu sein, dann war ich für sie eine billige Beute, auch wenn ich aus Leibeskräften

schrie.

Doch in dem Jeep saß neben einem Mann in englischer Uniform eine etwa dreißigjährige Frau. Mir wurde leichter; die fahren ins Grüne, dachte ich, für mich interessieren die sich gewiß nicht. Aber als ich im Vorbeifahren einen Blick in das freudlose Gesicht der Frau warf, hatte ich meine Zweifel, ob dies eine vergnügliche Fahrt ins Grüne sei.

An demselben Abend, ein wenig später, hörte Wilhelm einige Schüsse und glaubte, es seien Wilderer unterwegs. Aber diese Schüsse müssen das Ende des Ausflugs und das Ende der armen Frau gewesen sein.

Die *Mordkurve* hieß fortan die Stelle, an der diese Tat verübt wurde. Sie konnte niemals aufgeklärt werden, obschon ich nicht versäumte, meine Beobachtung nachträglich auf der Polizeiwache zu Protokoll zu geben.

Es wuchsen in dieser Kurve besonders viele Brombeersträucher, und ich wollte sie in *Brombeereck* umbenennen; aber nein, *Mordkurve* war und blieb ihr schauriger Name.

Unsere Bienen summen

Wir hatten also neben Kora und unseren fünfzig Bienenstöcken nun auch eine Glucke mit Küken. Die nächste Errungenschaft war nun schon Hans, der Imkerlehrling. Wilhelm war zwar erst vierundzwanzig Jahre alt, aber bereits Imkermeister, und so konnte er einen Lehrling einstellen.

Er war also eines Tages da, der Hans, mit seinen fünfzehn Lenzen und dem unglaublichen Eifer, den nur ein nagelneuer Lehrling an den Tag legt. Kaum hatten ihn die Eltern bei uns abgeliefert — die Tinte unter dem Lehrvertrag war noch nicht ganz trocken —, da mußte sich Hans schon aufs Fahrrad schwingen und mit seinem neuen Meister zu den Bienen fahren und imkern. Es war Mai, und die Arbeit des Imkers in vollem Gange. Wilhelm hatte die Bienen in kleineren Ständen auf mehrere Dörfer der Umgegend verteilt, das heißt, er war mit ihnen in die Obstblüte gewandert, und nun mußte er aufpassen, daß sie auch Nektar eintrugen und nicht in Schwarmstimmung gerieten und davonflogen.

So fuhren sie, mit Imkergeräten beladen, los, und den ganzen Tag rauchten ihre Imkerpfeifen hinter den Ständen. Vorsichtig zog Wilhelm Rähmchen für Rähmchen aus dem warmen Stock, strich mit einer Gän-

sefeder behutsam die umhereilenden Bienen von der Wabe und begutachtete diese nach dem Glanz ihrer nektargetüllten Zellen and nach ihrem Gewicht, aber auch nach dem Stadium der enthaltenen Brut. Hans versuchte die ihm angewiesenen Handreichungen zu begreifen und auszuführen, aber mit der qualmenden Imkerpfeife zwischen den Zähnen wollte das anfänglich nur mäßig gelingen. Immer wieder ging die Pfeife aus, die Bienen schwirrten ihm um Mund und Nase und stachen zu, wo sie konnten.

Die Stiche schmerzten grausam, und die betroffenen Stellen schwellen an, so daß Hans, wenn er abends nach getaner Arbeit heimkam, jedesmal anders aussah als am Tag zuvor, immer wieder neu und wunderlich. Mal konnte er nur aus einem Auge gucken, weil das andere zuge-schwollen war, mal hatte er eine dicke Backe, als käme er vom Zahnarzt oder als hätten wir ihn nur einseitig ernährt, mal hatte er eine aufgeworfene Lippe, als wäre er dem afrikanischen Busch entsprungen. Nur allmählich fanden sich seine Gesichtszüge wieder zurecht, und dann erkannte man, wie er wirklich aussah — völlig normal.

Ja, Hans biß die Zähne zusammen, so gut das mit einer Imkerpfeife im Mund ging, und ertrug stoisch Schmach und Schmerzen. Er war tapfer, aber das mußte er auch sein, denn nachts schlief er nicht in unserem viel zu kleinen Wohnhaus, sondern allein in einer Bauhütte hinterm Haus.

An einem Abend geschah es, daß er nach Dunkelwerden von einer Dienstfahrt nach Hause kam und kreidebleich in die Küche stürzte. Außer Atem stieß er hervor, daßsoeben wieder jemand im Moor ermorder worden sei.

„Nanu, all wea“, sagte Wilhelm ungerührt.

Hans beteuerte, mehrere gellende Schreie gehört zu haben. Daraufhin sei er in Graus und Schrecken so schnell nach Hause geradelt, daß er ein Pedal verloren habe.

„Dor hätt'n Bock blökt“, sagte Wilhelm, „de well na siene Brut.“

Hans verschlug es die Sprache. Kein Mord, nur ein verliebter Rehbock! Beleidigt zog er sich zurück in sein Gemach. Aber fortan schlief er mit offenem Taschenmesser auf dem Nachttisch.

Wilhelm schaffte in diesem ersten Jahr auf dem Moorhof mit Hilfe eines Kredites fünfzig neue Bienenkästen an und stockte dadurch unseren Bestand auf hundert Völker auf. Aber auch ich war nicht untätig gewesen und schickte mich nun an, unser zweites Kind zur Welt zu bringen. Das ging so vor sich:

Als sich an einem Dezembereabend die Wehen einstellten, schickten wir Hans ins Städtchen, um die Hebamme zu holen. Als sie endlich auf dem Fahrrad angeschnauft kam — sie war selber im achten Monat schwanger —, da hatten sich die Wehen verflüchtigt, und ich mußte nun fleißig meine Füße baden, um sie wieder anzuregen.

Es wurde dunkel, und wir zündeten zwei Kerzen an, denn Strom hatten wir nicht auf dem Moorhof.

Als die Wehen wieder einsetzten und das Kinderkriegen zügig im Gang war, hielt Wilhelm meine Hand und fühlte sich sehr ungemütlich zwischen zwei Hochschwangeren.

„Nicht locker laten“, sagte er, und das half. Mächtige Preßwehen förderten schließlich einen Sohn ans Kerzenlicht.

Das Baby und ich wurden versorgt, Wilhelm aber schwang sich aufs Fahrrad, um noch in derselben Nacht unseren Bekannten und Verwandten die Geburt eines Sohnes anzuzeigen. Als Kora zur Welt kam, war er genauso glücklich gewesen, aber nur mäßig stolz. Und damals fügte er der Mitteilung, daß er eine Tochter bekommen habe, hinzu: „Fürder hett min Talent nicht recket.“

Nun aber hatte sich sein Talent zu schönster Blüte entfaltet. Meinte er.

Er war also Winter. In unserem eisernen Herd mit seinen vier absehbaren Herdplatten und einem kleinen Backofen flackerte ein munteres Torffeuer, das unser Essen kochte und unsere Wohnküche heizte. Kora spielte auf dem Fußboden mit ihren Spielsachen, und der kleine Klaus lag im Körbchen und schlief.

Im Sommer hatten wir auf dem eigenen Grundstück Torf gestochen und getrocknet, und nun mußte Hans dafür sorgen, daß der Torfkasten neben dem Herd stets voller Heiztorf war. Hatte er ihn morgens vollgetragen, dann setzte er sich zu Wilhelm an den Küchentisch und half ihm beim Rähmchendrahten und beim Gießen der Mittelwände aus Bienenwachs. Ich kochte das Essen, wickelte die Kinder in trockene Windeln, schrubbte sonnenabends die Fußböden und backte sonntags einen Apfelkuchen.

Dieses Dasein war ein rechtes Abenteuer; draußen lag tiefer Schnee, es war gehörig kalt. Kein Mensch zeigte sich bei uns, nicht einmal ein Postbote, denn unsere Post mußten wir selbst vom Postamt abholen. Die Kinder ahnten nicht, daß es außer uns fünf noch weitere Menschen auf der Welt gab.

Im provisorischen Hühnerstall scharrten die herangewachsenen Hennen und legten ihre ersten Eier in die vorbereiteten Strohnester; einige Hähnchen

begannen vorsichtig und heiser zu krähen.

Als die Sonne allmählich höher stieg und der Frühling sich ankündigte, wurden die jungen Hennen über alle Erwartung fleißig; es waren neun, und jede legte täglich ein Ei. Natürlich fütterten wie sie gut, vor allem fanden sie zahlreiche Kerbtiere auf dem jungfräulichen Moorboden.

Zweimal in der Woche sammelte ich nun die Eier in einen Korb und fuhr ins Städtchen zum Kaufmann. Der zahlte gut für die stallfrischen Produkte, und von dem Erlös kaufte ich Lebensmittel ein: Erbsen und Bohnen, Brot und Wurst,



Margarine, Milch und Tabak für Wilhelm, den Pfeifenraucher. Alles bezahlte ich mit den Eiern unserer neun legeföhrenden Junghennen.

Mit den zu erwartenden Einkünften aus der Imkerei hofften wir größere Anschaffungen bestreiten zu können. Es fehlten eine Hobelbank und Werkzeuge; es fehlte dringend eine Schiebkarre und ebenso dringend eine Regenrinne. Vor allem aber mußte so bald wie möglich ein Nebengebäude entstehen; denn wir brauchten einen richtigen Stall für unsere Hühner und für die in Aussicht genommene Ziege. Vor allem brauchte Hans ein vernünftiges Zimmer und Wilhelm eine angemessene Werkstatt; für die Imkerei aber fehlten Schleuderraum und Honigkammer. Wir warteten also ungeduldig auf die nächste Honigernte, die uns dies alles ermöglichen sollte.

Wilhelm und Hans hatten die Bienen für den Winter reichlich mit Zuckerwasser versorgt und sie warm eingepackt, so daß sie auch einem langen und kalten Winter standhalten konnten. Der erste warme Frühlingstag, auch wenn der in den Februar fällt, lockt die Bienen scharenweise aus dem Stock zu ihrem Reinigungsflug. Sie wollen den Kot, der sich über die vielen Winterwochen in ihren Körpern angesammelt hat, so schnell wie möglich loswerden. Das sei nötig, sagte Wilhelm, damit sie nicht die

ruhr bekämen. Wehe mir, wenn an diesem Tag Wäsche auf der Leine hing, die war schnell voll brauner Tupfen und mußte noch einmal gewaschen werden. Versteckte sich die Sonne mal hinter einer Wolke, dann sanken die geschwächten Tierchen auf den Erdboden, oder sie landeten auf Wilhelms Jacke und wärmten sich bei ihm ihre Füßchen.

Dann kam der Sommer, und unsere Bienen flogen und flogen. Zuerst hatten sie in ihren Höschen Blütenstaub von den leuchtenden Weidenkätzchen heimgeholt, jetzt befliegen sie den Faulbaum, der unseren Heideweg säumte, auch den Weißklee auf den Wiesen und die blauschimmernden Reihen der Kornblume am Ackerrain. Im August würden sie den herben, zähflüssigen Heidehonig in die Zellen tragen, und wir würden ihn mittels einer handbetriebenen Honigschleuder und unter vielen Bienenstichen herausbefördern. Am Ende sollte dann eine hübsche Reihe zentnerschwerer Honigkübel zum Verkauf an Lebensmittelgeschäfte und Reformhäuser bereitstehen.

An warmen Sommerabenden stand Wilhelm gern vor dem Bienenhaus und genoß die süße Wärme, die aus den Fluglöchern drang. Zusammen beobachteten wir, wie die Tierchen auf ihren Flugbrettern mit den Flügeln emsig Luft in den überhitzten Stock fächelten und wie die Wachposten dienstfertig umherrannten und nach Feinden Ausschau hielten. Ja, alles hatte seine Ordnung in dem Bienenstaat. Kam jedoch ein verspätetes Bienchen mit seiner Honiglast noch angeschleppt, dann konnte es sein, daß Wilhelm es bei den zarten Flügeln ergriff und behutsam seinen prallen Leib drückte, so daß es den Honig wieder ausschied.

„Vondage hätt' düchtig honigt“, sagte er angesichts des glitzernden Tröpfchens auf seiner Hand und entließ das verdatterte Insekt.

Unsere Tagesarbeit war getan, die Kinder in den Betten, Hans in der Küche, vielleicht über einem Fachbuch oder über einem Schundroman.

Auf einmal hören wir hinter uns kleine, leise Schrittschritte. Es ist Kora, barfuß und im Nachthemdchen.

„Wat schall dat!“ sagt Wilhelm und nimmt sein Töchterchen stolz auf den Arm. Dann gehen wir zurück ins Haus, das Kind zwischen uns. Vor Lebensfreude und Elternstolz schaukeln wir es an den Ärmchen hin und her. Kora juchzt vor Lust, und dann schreit sie plötzlich vor Schmerz. Wir haben ihr Ärmchen ausgekugelt. Nun muß sie schleunigst zum Arzt.

(Fortsetzung folgt)

OUR WORD

What Does Mother Do?

The week before Mother's Day, in my second grade classroom, I asked the children to write a story about something important that their mothers did. "Try to think," I said. "of one of the most important things your mother does."

The stories seemed easy to write, and within ten minutes or so my desktop was covered with literary efforts. That evening after supper I began to read their stories. "My mother cooks...My mother makes the beds...My mother vacuums...My mother washes dishes...My mother does the laundry...My mom makes my lunch...My mom looks after our baby...My mother cleans up."

The next morning I sat down with the children on the rug at the front of the classroom. "I realize," I said to my students, "that all these things you have written about are things you see your mother do all the time. You like it very much that she does these things for your family. But I want you to write your stories again and this time I want you to think of something your mother does that has nothing to do with housework. Think of something really special your mother can do that maybe no one else's mom can do."

The children returned to their seats. Grubby hands moved stubby pencils painstakingly across the page. Tongues were sticking out and sweat glistened on several brows. My new assignment didn't seem as easy as the first. By the end of the day, however, I was able to leave for home with 25 new stories in my briefcase.

I had a thoroughly enjoyable evening reading their new efforts. "My mom can turn somersaults...My mom can play the piano...My mother grows beautiful plants...My mother is a Sunday school teacher...My mom works in the old folks' home... My mom sews dresses for brides...My mother can draw just excellent!"

Two stories really stuck in my mind. Two girls wrote about the work their mothers did on the family farm. Their combined efforts went something like this:

"My mother works on our farm. She feeds the animals and looks after them. When one of the cows has babies, she helps. My mom mows all the grass on our big farmyard. She helped my dad pour the concrete for the floor of our new barn. She drives the truck when we combine. She gathers eggs and milks the cows. Sometimes she even manures out the barn. My mother does a lot of important work on our farm!"

That year my students and I prepared a luncheon the Friday before Mother's Day and invited our moms to school to share it with us. After the meal we put on a little program. One of the girls read her story about "My Mother the Farmer." I watched the tears trickle down her mother's cheeks as her daughter recounted the important work her mother did on the farm.

Clearly children are conditioned at an early age to report that their mothers' most important work is domestic, although they may, in fact, see their mothers engaged in a wide range of other activities. It seems likely that eventually such children would not be able to see that there *is* anything else to report.

A striking example of a woman ignored by history because she didn't fit the appropriate categories is Edna May Brower, the first wife of John Diefenbaker. Most Canadians are familiar with Olive Diefenbaker, his wife during his years as prime minister. Few

have heard of Edna May. Her story can be found in the book *The Other Mrs. Diefenbaker*, by Simma Holt. Ms. Holt followed the life of John Diefenbaker closely both as a journalist and a fellow member of Parliament. After his death she was shocked to learn that he had been married twice. In all her reading about Mr. Diefenbaker, and on the many occasions she had talked with him privately, he had never once mentioned his first wife.

Ms. Holt searched Mr. Diefenbaker's memoirs. In three volumes and almost a thousand pages he briefly referred to Edna May just three times. The curator of the Diefenbaker Centre told Ms. Holt that if the prime minister had done things his way even those three footnotes about his first wife would have been omitted. His advisors, however, managed to convince him that failing to make mention of someone he had been married to for 22 years might reflect on the credibility of his autobiography.

According to friends, family and fellow politicians, if it had not been for his first wife, Edna May, Mr. Diefenbaker would never have made it into politics and would have remained a small town lawyer. One of the former prime minister's nephews recalls the difficulty in relating to people his aloof uncle had. Mr. Diefenbaker's shy and rather cool manner was a real drawback in his initial attempt to gain a seat in the House of Commons. Edna May, on the other hand, was lively and outgoing and readily made hundreds of friends for her husband. The people in his constituency loved her and she warmly welcomed them into her home. She tirelessly campaigned door to door and wholeheartedly supported Mr. Diefenbaker in his bid to gain the leadership of the Conservative Party. Although the prime minister appeared devoted to his first wife he never mentioned her or referred to her after she passed away. Why not?

Simma Holt, Edna May's biographer, suggests that Mr. Diefenbaker simply did not like to be reminded of the fact that it was largely his wife's charisma, energy, and hard work that got him elected to Parliament.

The fate of the first Mrs. Diefenbaker is not unlike that of many women in history. They worked hard for their husbands and children and were the real impetus behind their careers, accomplishments and successes and yet they have received no public recognition for these contributions.

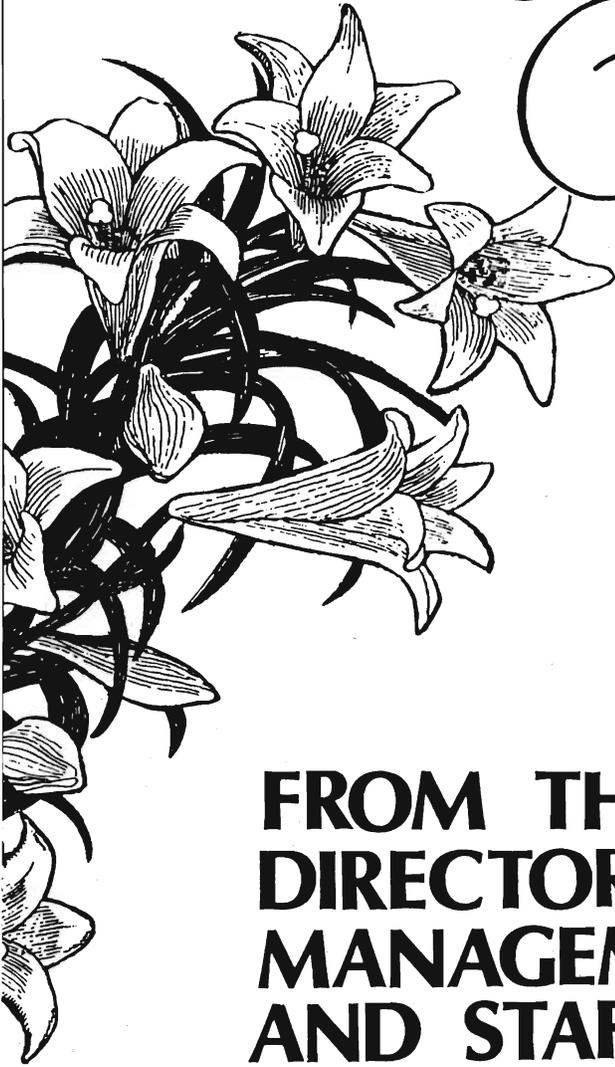
In the last two decades we have begun to reward more openly and acknowledge women for their achievements. We must not neglect, however, to tell our children, both sons and daughters, the stories of women of previous generations. Young people need to hear about the women in their families, communities and countries who influenced the past and shaped the future. It is not too late to recognize the hard work and diligent efforts of our foremothers and give them the prominent place in history that they so richly deserve.

I happened to teach the younger sister of one of the girls who had written about the contribution her mother made to the family farm. At the beginning of the year I sent home the standard form to be filled out asking for birthdates, parents' occupations, etc. The previous year the mother had written "housewife" in the blank beside "mother's occupation." This year, it said in the same blank, in capital letters, FARMER.

—Mary Lou Driedger

*This is a partial reprint of this article that was previously published in **The Daughters of Sarah**, March/April, 1988, Chicago, Illinois.*

Easter Wishes



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