

# *Mennonite* MIRROR

volume 18 / number 6 / february, 1990

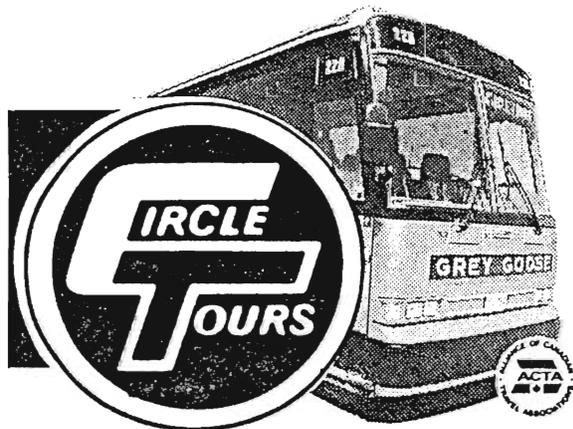


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## ForeWord

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We often hear about "great writers" and seldom get a chance to see them much less met them. This was even more the case decades ago when transportation was much more limited than now. Back then, we only read about the great and near-great. For Victor Peters meeting a cousin of the great English writer, Thomas Hardy during the 1930s was important. He had read Hardy's books and the chance encounter made the hard work of the decade easier to bear. Peters describes his visit in this issue.

The birth of babies is described as a time for joy, and rightly so. But there is another side to the experience. For the women, there can be as much pain as joy. Katherine Martens was part of an oral history project to record women's experiences of childbirth. She writes about childbirth in this issue.

James Urry is spending his study leave from the University of Wellington in Winnipeg this year. He is well known to readers of MM, and many have already purchased his book, *None But Saints*. In this issue he reflects on the changing attitudes on writing Russian Mennonite history.

Tim Wiebe describes the wedding of an "older" couple, Roy Vogt explores the way we reconcile principles with criticism, and H.W. Friesen writes from B.C. on how a foghorn becomes a symbol of national unity.

Perhaps the event that most significantly symbolizes the changed political world was the opening of the Berlin Wall. Duncan Schellenberg, a U of M student, celebrated New Year's on the wall and in this issue writes about the history-making experience.

In quite another tone, Karl and Grete Fast describe in another instalment of an English translation of their series on the persecution Mennonites endured in the Soviet Union in decades past.

**THE COVER:** Joyce Redekop-Fink, a Manitoban now resident in Europe where she maintains a concert career, will appear in concert March 4, at 8 p.m., in the auditorium of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College.

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## Mennonite Mirror

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# *A chance encounter with a cousin of Thomas Hardy made it easier to endure the mice*

by Victor Peters

I was a farm-labourer in the mid-thirties on a farm located between Rosser and the Assiniboine River, some miles outside of Winnipeg. It was more of an estate than a farm, and in the summer it had about a dozen hired farm-hands to look after the dairy and farm operations. The farm belonged to the Argue Brothers real estate agency in Winnipeg.

The farm-hands were outside all day and at night had quarters in no longer used granaries. These were furnished only with sleeping bunks and bedding. They were satisfactory except that they were overrun by mice.

## **Defensive measures**

The mice were not only a nuisance but also a problem. At night you had to tuck the sides of the blanket in around your body. If you failed to do so and the blankets reached to the floor the mice would come up and what flitted across your face were not moon beams but something more tangible. If you had been reading a book before you went to sleep and it slid to the floor as you slipped into the land of dreams, you would find in the morning that the back of the book had been chewed away by the rodents.

You had to be very careful with your Sunday clothes. We had them suspended from rafters on long wires. If a shirt slid off the hanger and fell to the floor it would be ruined in the morning. In those days white shirts were a must for Sunday dress, and our shirts were laundered by the Chinese laundries in Winnipeg. They used generous starch for the collars and cuffs and for this reason these were ideal for the dietary

needs of the mice. Four or five mice could shred cuffs and collars in a matter of minutes. Sundays I usually spent in Winnipeg, going in on Saturday night and spending the night at one of the rooming houses on Lily, George or Martha street.

## **Offer of lodging**

One Saturday I drove in with one of the Argue sons who was about my age. I wanted to let some rooming-house owner know that I would be staying for the night. We did not make "reservations," for the rooming-houses always had some empty bed, even if you had to share the room with ten or twelve men. The cost per bed was 25 cents. But we could not locate a telephone and young Argue suggested we go to the basement of his uncle's church, which had several

telephones. His uncle was a Pentecostal minister and their place of worship was the "Jesus Saves" church -- so read the neon sign -- on William Avenue.

We went into the basement and to my surprise it was being used for a prayer meeting, with about 100 people praying individually or collectively, some loud, some quietly, while others holding a very disturbed dialogue with their Maker. It was my introduction to glossolalia, the speaking in tongues, and I almost felt like a fellow-inmate of the Marquis de Sade.

One Saturday I went to Winnipeg early and decided to visit my aunt, who was a housekeeper in a large house on Anderson Avenue. The occupant of the home was a crotchety woman over 90 years old. She was a lively lady with



One of the last scenes in Thomas Hardy's *Tess* takes place at Stonehenge, Dorset, and which is known as "Hardy Country."

very sharp features, sharp mind and sharp tongue. God could consider himself lucky that she did not engage in glossolalia. Her name was Mrs. Riddell, and ages

ago, when her husband had been alive, they had farmed, in the Carman district I think.

If Mrs. Riddell ever had any friends, she had long outlived them. By now she was quite pleased to have the occasional visitor with whom she could chat. We sat comfortably in the dark-panelled library, lined with fine books and furnished with easy chairs and a leisure couch. Quite unexpectedly, Mrs. Riddell turned to me and said that if I cared to stay for the night I could sleep on the couch. I immediately accepted and as I turned around to inspect the back of the couch I noticed a framed picture of Thomas Hardy.

Hardy was, and has remained, one of my favourite novelists, and I asked Mrs. Riddell how she had acquired the picture.

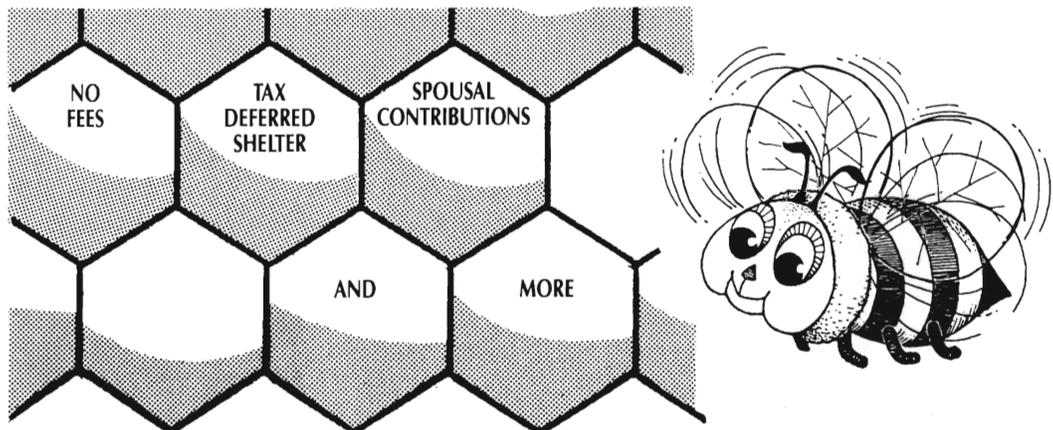
#### From Hardy himself

"Oh, Tommy gave it to me," she said simply, as if it was the most natural thing in the world. "Tommy and I were first cousins," she continued, "and since we were about the same age we spent many of our early childhood years playing together." She had come to Canada as a young woman, and since my aunt and I were recent immigrants she may have felt a covert empathy for us. I also found out that some time before Hardy died he had given a public reading from his works in Winnipeg, and had spent much of his time in the very library we were in.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was dead

by now, but we spent several hours talking about the man whom she also greatly admired. Hardy and Mrs. Riddell had the same sharp features, lean noses and thin lips. Their resemblance was astonishing. There were other similarities; both had married and neither of them had children. Our discussion revealed that to a degree Mrs. Riddell shared Hardy's agnostic philosophy. Whether this had a common root or had evolved independently with each one of them, I don't know.

In any case, the unexpected encounter with Hardy's cousin made life on the Rosser farm, with its mosquitoes, mice and hard-to-milk cows, more bearable.  
**mm**



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# There is as much pain as joy in women's descriptions of childbirth

by Katherine Martens

IN August, 1935, on a farm in southern Manitoba, eight children play late into the summer evening while their parents visit with relatives who have returned from South America. The mother moves slowly and languidly through the house, then tries to sit on the couch but she can't seem to find a comfortable position. She is due to give birth any day now and she keeps reminding herself she must be aware when labour starts as this will be a hospital birth. The first eight were born at home with a doctor or midwife, but this time they will go to Winnipeg, to the Mennonite Concordia hospital.

She notices the first unmistakable signs of labour early in the evening but says nothing, since she is shy with the guests, her husband's relatives, who are practically strangers to her. Surely they will go home soon and after the children are in bed...But the guests don't leave until late and her husband reproaches her for her lack of interest. "You hardly spoke to my relatives," he scolds. "I was hoping they would go soon, because the baby is going to come tonight," she replies.

There is no gasoline in the car and the prospect of an 80-mile drive at night is certainly not an adventure but there is no thought of turning back. The doctor is expecting them. Almost immediately upon arrival at Concordia in the wee hours of the morning the baby is born. "Mrs. Klassen, you have a baby girl. But look at that! Your baby has red bumps on her forehead; she must have been trying to be born. I guess you didn't want to have a baby in the car,"

jokes the nurse who brought the baby for feeding in the morning. "What are you going to do, nurse or bottle feed?" "Oh, I've decided to take a holiday from nursing -- she will be bottle fed."

When Mother and baby return home after the customary 10 days in the hospital her milk has dried up already. The grandmothers look askance at the bottle and tut-tut about the baby, predicting dire consequences to this unnatural method of infant feeding. No doubt they agree that any problems the baby might have will be due to the new-fangled "English way" of feeding babies.

## Decades later

It is September, 1962. The young woman born that night in Winnipeg 27 years ago has just checked into a large hospital in Toronto to have her first baby. She is passionately determined to breast feed her baby and hopes to give birth in as natural a way as possible, but on entering the huge hospital she is overwhelmed by the strangeness of the place where she knows no one. At home her labour pains were strong and frequent but they become weaker and less frequent when she enters the hospital. She feels abandoned by everyone, longs for a familiar face, a hand to hold hers, someone to touch her with tenderness, but not even her doctor is here; he has a substitute. Her husband is told to go home. The doctor comes to tell her not to be a martyr, to take something for pain and try to get some sleep and the baby will be born in good time. It sounds so easy. When morning

comes and the doctor returns there are no labour pains, only a tired and worn out young woman who is not used to taking drugs.

What is this woman doing in a hospital when birth is not a disease but a natural process? Where are her sisters and her mother, or the women who used to take care of the birthing mother? Why is she surrounded by strangers when birth is an intimate and sensual experience. Could she not be surrounded by her husband or her women friends? What kind of culture is it where women are stripped of all personal power and decision-making during the rite of passage in which they give life? The medical profession has for the past century had birthing women assume the worst possible position, one that is unsafe for both mother and child, but convenient for the doctor.

The baby was delivered with the use of forceps in the late afternoon after the mother had been given a drug to stimulate labour pains. He was brain damaged and lived less than 24 hours. I was that woman in labour.

## Continuing memory

Images of that experience come back to haunt me in the anniversary year when the child which did not live would have been 25 years old. My hope to resolve an old grief prompted me to apply for an oral history project called Childbirth in the Mennonite Community in which I interviewed 42 women on their birth experiences. Women of all ages, ranging from 20 to 90 years, remembered the events and the feelings, calling into

question the old saying that childbirth, because it is painful, is quickly forgotten. In fact that truism only held if the outcome was good and if the process of birth had no unhappy interventions. A wide range of experiences is covered in the tapes: birth in the home with midwives in the twenties and thirties, birth of children when the mother feared abnormalities, Caesarean birth in the high tech atmosphere of a big city hospital, the burden of repeated pregnancies, and the agony of infertility in the Mennonite community where having a child was the necessary ticket to adulthood.

### **Natural is difficult**

One articulate woman describes how her first childbirth experience caused her to live in her body, in stark contrast to the intellectual activity of graduate English study. The range of feelings prompted by childbirth runs the gamut of joy and excitement to the depression cited by some who declined to be interviewed.

I was interested to find out why women had abandoned breastfeeding and why it was and still is difficult for women to feed their babies the natural way. Because I felt so strongly about it I wanted to be careful not to convey the strength of my own feelings in my questioning. In time I found that in listening to another woman's story, if I concentrated on understanding her feelings and actions in the total context of her life there was no way I could possibly judge her, just as I could not blame and judge myself for not having a home birth in 1962.

Out of the mouth of one of the women who talked "Plautdietsch" came the observation that when a young woman said she did not have enough milk it was in her heart that she did not have enough milk. The enormous workload carried by the women with large families was enough to cause them to lose confidence in their ability to breastfeed or to let other work take first priority. In a culture in which women are prized more for their beauty as sex objects than valued as mothers, the decline of breastfeeding is not surpris-

ing.

I wanted to hear about the return of the midwife-assisted births at home or in the hospital which are currently in vogue. One extreme usually begets another. After childbirth, which is not an illness, became medicated, structured and dominated by hospital routines and techniques, it was no wonder that some consumers (in this case also the producers, i.e. the women) began to want to be actively involved in their own labour. I was able to interview four women who had given birth to babies at home in the 1980s.

### **Midwives more natural**

In no way were they merely returning to the old ways. The modern woman choosing to give birth at home is well educated, self-assured and makes the choice out of informed knowledge. The midwife is not just a woman who comes along for the birth. The pregnant woman has been seeing her for most of the nine months for up to an hour at a time, usually in her own home where the midwife can also meet the husband and family. Positive images of childbirth are nurtured during this time along with prenatal preparation.

The midwife does not necessarily have medical training; she is, after all, preparing for a normal birth, a process which has been going on for centuries. One of the interviewees saw both a medical doctor and a midwife. She found the medical visits focused on pathology and provoked anxiety, while the visits of the midwife were centred on nutrition and ways of ensuring a healthy pregnancy. Midwives have come back in response to a need for their services. The majority of women still prefer a hospital birth for the guarantee of a safe birth and changes have been made in hospital routines since 1962. Among the interviews are two with doctors and one with a director of nursing where these changes are described.

During the time that I was interviewing women my mother's life was coming to an end. The time spent talking to women became a spiritual quest for me to make my peace with my mother

and to honour the eternal female, giver of life. I saw some parallels between the beginning of life and the end of life. At both times we are facing the great unknown. In both cases we have moved from the home to the hospital to save ourselves inconvenience; but I believe we are paying a high price for this. We need to examine what the institutionalization of birth and death do to the family and to our sense of community. The setting for the activities we engage in sets the tone for the quality of the experience.

Though the project is called Childbirth in the Mennonite Community, women did give birth in the context of their lives so the tapes include many other subjects with the major focus on childbirth. Copies of the tapes and a typed index of each tape are stored in the Mennonite Heritage Centre and in the Provincial Archives and are available for research purposes. I began the project with fear and trembling but as time went by I became convinced that each woman has a story to tell and I was privileged to be the midwife as she brought it forth. **mm**



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# Truth and Fantasy: The Writing of Russian Mennonite Histories

by James Urry

*The recent Symposium on the Bicentennial of Mennonites in Russia held in Winnipeg (November 9-11) engendered discussion and debate on the writing of Mennonite history. Dr. James Urry whose book on the Russian Mennonite experience in Russia **None But Saints the Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889** (Hyperion Press for the Mennonite Literary Society) has recently appeared, reflects upon changing attitudes to the presentation and writing of Mennonite Russian history.*

## **The Mennonite past and Mennonite history.**

All people have a past but not all have history. The emergence of a historical imagination requires that a people become conscious that their present lives are different from their immediate past and that of their forebears. But history requires more than just a new consciousness. It also requires people to be willing and able to chronicle the differences between their present and their past.

Russian Mennonite consciousness of their past as history emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In part this was a response to the massive changes that occurred in Russian Mennonite life during this period. Mennonites became aware of not just the differences between their way of life and that of their forebears, but they were also eager to apply this awareness to planning their future. History was more than just an idle interest in the past; it was also to serve a didactic purpose. The young could learn from

the past: they could model themselves on the lives of those leading figures who had guided the Mennonites on the paths of progress and enlightenment. For the community, history could chart Mennonite success and Mennonite achievements in the Russian environment.

The first historical accounts of Russian Mennonite life written before 1914 were mainly written by lay-people, usually teachers who were often also ministers. They were largely untrained in historical scholarship and they judiciously "edited" out aspects of the Mennonite story which might cause community conflict or put their people in a negative light. While such "historians" collected community documents and linked these sources with aspects of Mennonite oral tradition, they did little other research and failed to link Mennonite history with wider events in Russian and European history.

War and revolution shattered the Mennonite world after 1917 and many of the plans drawn up before 1914 to establish Mennonite historical archives and to write new histories for use in the schools were abandoned. The later emigration of Mennonites from Russian and the break-up of the Mennonite communities that remained altered Mennonite attitudes to their past and to the writing of history. The emigrants cherished the pre-1914 histories as accounts of an ideal, but now lost world, belonging to a golden age. In Canada they republished these accounts, or wrote new ones while at the same time recording the horrors of revolution and suffering which had destroyed their splendid utopia. For those who re-

mained in Russia, however, memories of this pre-world war life faded. The repressive political and social system they were forced to subsist under attempted to erase their earlier history while at the same time their struggle for existence forced them to concentrate on their immediate survival.

The emigrants to Canada in the 1920s were determined to write the history of their lost worlds. The publications of the Echo Verlag in the 1940s and 1950s stand out as a valiant attempt to republish earlier works and to write new accounts of Russian communities and their leaders. The new works often followed a set formula, outlining all aspects of a community's social and cultural life. But again none of the authors were trained historians, merely informed lay-people.

During the 1950s and 1960s a new generation of Mennonite scholars appeared, usually trained in academic methods. The historians among them could apply new standards to the research and writing of Mennonite history. However, most of these historians were attracted less to recent events, including the Mennonites' Russian past, and more to the early foundation period of Mennonite life: the Anabaptist origins in the sixteenth century.

## **The Twilight zone.**

At the same time as the study of the Mennonite past became more critical and scholarly, a counter tendency emerged in the understanding of the Russian Mennonite past. In the study of the recent past there is a strange twilight zone where history and memory

meet. As the older emigrants from Russia died, with them passed the memory of the full complexity of life in the old country. The younger generation, who had been only children in Russia before emigration, now became the memory-link with the past. But their view of the Russian world was seen through child-like eyes and their memories coloured by the tales they had heard their parents tell over and over again, of their lost world, their shattered lives, their suffering.

To enhance these hazy recollections and to give them shape, cohesion and legitimacy, a new figure emerged to mediate between memory and history. This was the "expert," usually a figure steeped in the old tradition of patriarchal authority who, though lacking historical training, could pronounce upon the past on the basis of superior "knowledge." Often this "knowledge" was based upon a strangely sanitized version of Mennonite life in Russia, with a highly simplistic explanation of the sequence of events and their causation. For instance the causes and events of the Russian revolution and civil war have often been greatly simplified or misrepresented.

Building on the earlier emphases of Mennonite "history," a highly uncritical view of the Mennonite past emerged. This was extremely normative, an idealised view of the golden age, where Mennonites living in an undifferentiated and cohesive community were the innocent and often the only victims to suffer in war and revolution, purely because they were a "people of faith." Such "histories" were intended merely to confirm and reaffirm what was known; they were not to be challenged by new research or by attempts to place Mennonite life and events in a broader historical context.

If the writing of such histories was not to be influenced by concerns of historical scholarship, the accounts were still to be presented in a particular style. Under the sway of the pious Mennonite prose so popular in Mennonite religious journals, the accounts were often presented as Good News History in which an easy moral could be drawn and

Mennonites shown in a good light. More insidious was the strengthening of the older tradition of recording Mennonite achievements into Triumphant History, a history with racist overtones. Triumphant History chronicled Mennonite success, emphasising how Mennonites were the first to achieve this or that, were the best or the most blessed, while at the same time it deprecated the way of life of their neighbours and fellow citizens.

The twilight zone between history and memory, at least for the pre 1914 period, has fast faded. The authority figures who gave it shape and substance have largely passed on. While some younger figures have attempted to assume the mantle of these older "experts," they have not succeeded as well as they hoped. The old have less power than before, and a younger, more educated population is less willing than older generations to accept the rhetoric of an idealised past.

#### **Towards new histories**

Historians and other scholars with a more critical attitude to the Russian Mennonite past have begun to assert themselves in recent years. Healthy debate has replaced consensus views of the Mennonite past. Such discussions concern not only the nature of past Russian Mennonite society, but also how to write history and what aspects to focus upon in understanding the past. While a few people may still claim that they can write the history of the Mennonites in Russia, or to be doing **real** history, most historians working in the field are more sophisticated in their thinking. There are many approaches to the study of history. That is why I speak of histories and not history.

One subject discussed at the recent Symposium on the Mennonite experience in Russia concerned the focus of Russian Mennonite history. Some felt that the focus should perhaps be more on the religious life of Mennonites rather than on the social or cultural aspects of Mennonite life. I would prefer to see this as merely a matter of emphases and approach. Of course one cannot

discuss Mennonite life without taking into account its religious aspect. But it must also be recognised that Mennonites lived in social groups, as part of larger societies; they were concerned as much with the mundane and material aspects of everyday life as with religious issues; they were involved with the political nature of human existence from the family level to regional and even national politics. To deal with these broader aspects of Mennonite history requires the acquisition of new skills from modern scholarship and a wider understanding of the context of Mennonite life beyond the parochial world of Mennonite society and institutions.

There must also be a recognition that writing history involves more than just the endless compilation of statistics (often expressed by that ugly word "data"), and skills greater than just the translation and editing of diaries and documents. History requires the historian to assert herself or himself, to write narrative, to be creative. Facts, statistics and documents do not tell a story: ultimately this is the responsibility of the historian. As such, history involves not only the development of basic research skills (the mining of sources), but also a complex process of interpretation and explanation, even a degree of generalization (the building of historical accounts). This is the future challenge of Mennonite history and unites all the various approaches and foci under the banner of a creative, critical and fearless historiography.

#### **The past, the present and the future.**

Some readers might protest that the new history fails to serve the Mennonite community in the same way as the older forms of history which "told a good story." But surely such histories possessed a sense of deceit. Those who wish to sanitize Mennonite history, to leave some things better unsaid or who attempt to muzzle those who speak out on both the good and the bad in the Mennonite past, are surely falsifying the past. Mennonites can learn a great deal from their history and they can perhaps learn more from an honest history than

from a dishonest history.

There is a point of view I have often heard expressed in Mennonite circles that history is about a dead past. People who research, write and read history are supposedly wasting their time. The past is behind us, only the future lies ahead. This point of view is particularly favoured by those of a particular evangelical persuasion who see merely the future salvation of their individual souls and the past, including the rich world of the Mennonite past, as so much cultural encumbrance, to be discarded as quickly as possible. I find this view extremely sad and narrow minded. If you do not know where you came from, you will never know who you are. And if you do not know who you are, and what you share in common with others, either through a shared experience or ancestry, how can a community of believers be built in which people can sustain each other in a Christian life?

Such questions, however, are not mine to answer. Perhaps they are not even mine to pose. But this at least I know: history is part of all our consciousness in a modern world and we cannot deny either its existence or its significance. The past is part of our present and our future is shaped by our attitude to that past. This is the challenge we must all face. **mm**

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## REVIEW

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### No one missed Wiens' sense of joy in singing

*Lieder Recital by Edith Wiens, soprano, and Irmgard Baerg, piano, Co-sponsored by Women's Musical Club and MBBC, at Jubilee Place, January 10, 1990.*

reviewed by **Al Reimer**

A tall, elegant, willowy blonde, Edith Wiens projects an arresting stage presence. More importantly, she is a singing artist possessed of a large, stately voice that she used with warmth and confidence in this recital to interpret lieder by Schubert, Schumann and Richard Strauss, with a few British and Irish folksongs thrown in for contrast. Every moment she sang Ms. Wiens made her listeners aware of how much she enjoys singing and of how important it is to her to transmit the rich inner meanings of her songs. It's always a special pleasure to listen to a singer who is in the absolute prime of her career. And that Edith Wiens is -- gloriously.

After a rather restrained start (which she made up for later by repeating her first two Schubert numbers as encores), she found her stride with Schubert's dramatic "Die Junge Nonne." After that it was all blue-sky sailing for this Mennonite artist who performs mainly in Europe in oratorio, recitals and, occasionally, opera. As a German-trained singer, Ms. Wiens is, of course, completely at home with the German lieder repertoire. She sang her seven Schubert songs beautifully, then sang the eight songs of Schumann's *Frauneliebe und Leben* even more beautifully, although the Schumann songs are a shade less melodious than Schubert's. She concluded her recital with three songs by Richard Strauss (including the always moving *Zeugnung*), which were for me the most rewarding items in a very

accomplished recital. Not surprisingly, the four British and Irish folksongs arranged by Benjamin Britten, while fetchingly sung, seemed a little less confident in style.

Throughout, Ms. Wiens was everything a good lieder recitalist should be -- secure in her technique (she has a lovely way of floating mezza voce and sotto voce top notes), sensitive in her interpretations, and always aware that she was on stage to communicate to an audience of involved listeners. And Irmgard Baerg's accompaniments matched the calibre of Edith Wiens' singing in every respect. Mrs. Baerg knows how to project her talent and integrity as a musician without in any way upstaging the soloist, and that's a special gift of character and insight to add to her other shining gifts as an artist.

Last summer I had the privilege of hearing Edith Wiens sing in Mozart's *Krönungsmesse* in Würzburg. Now that I've heard her in recital (I missed her recital here last winter), I can appreciate what a versatile performer she is and how fortunate we are to be able to claim her as one of our own. Indeed, now that I know she is the granddaughter of B.B.Janz, I can't help thinking again of how the ironies of history can assert themselves to our advantage. More than any other individual, B.B.Janz was responsible for getting a whole generation of Russian-Mennonites (including his own family) out of the Soviet Union and into Canada. And here, two generations later, is granddaughter Edith Wiens enriching us all with her inspired and dedicated artistry. "Oh brave new world, / That has such people in't!"

**mm**

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### Our North Re-examined

reviewed by Andre Oberle

IN recent years there has been a renewed interest in our North and this, of course, has been accompanied by a lot of boastful talk about "our nordicity." Most of this interest has, however, been little more than talk. Though many of us are genuinely intrigued by our North and would really like to find out more about it we never do much to come to a better understanding of the Arctic. Perhaps we are apprehensive about the possibly painful process of having to re-educate ourselves and about having to adjust our preconceived notions about the North. Then again, perhaps we are simply too complacent.

However, with the timely appearance of Rudy Wiebe's well-written and challenging collection of essays we have been given another chance. This collection consists of three essays entitled "Exercising Reflection," "On Being Motionless" and "In Your Own Head" and introduction entitled "The Origin of Ice." While each of the sections of the book could be read independently and has its own particular theme, all are connected by the common concern of their author to come closer to a better understanding of the North. Perhaps Wiebe voices his concern most eloquently in his last essay when he writes:

"I need wisdom. Wisdom to understand why Canadians have so little comprehension of our **nordicity**, that we are a northern nation and that, until we grasp imaginatively and realize imaginatively in word, song, image and consciousness that North is both the true nature of our world and also our graspable destiny we will always go whoring after the mocking palm trees and beaches of the Caribbean and Florida and Hawaii; will always be wishing ourselves something we aren't, always stand staring south across that mocking-

ly invisible border longing for the leeks and onions of our ancient Egyptian nemesis, the United States. Is climate, is **weather** to be all that determines what we think ourselves to be?" (P.111)

As an introduction to his collection of essays the author quotes the story "The Origin of Ice" as told by Ikpakhuaq and Uloqsaq, Copper Inuit, 1913-1916. At once we are transported into another world altogether, a world which presents its own logic and its own explanations for the natural phenomena that surround us. Typically, these explanations are at the same time very different from our own and strike us as being entirely reasonable. This wonderful myth and a map entitled "Inuit View to the South" which reverses the usual way we see the Canadian landscape -- the conventional map has been turned upside down, we in the south are the vast blank spaces at the top, and the north, at the bottom, has all the names -- sets us up neatly for the authors further reflections.

The essays as well confront us with a different perspective from that to which we are accustomed and challenge our traditional ways of rationalizing about the North. The essays contain reflections on the physical nature of the North, particularly the effect of the vast expanses of water and land, reflections on the language of the Inuit, particularly the concept of linear movement and aural stillness, the stories of the "well-known" explorers, of adventurers and vagabonds and, of course, the fascinating story of the Inuit themselves, their myths and their songs.

Again and again the author points out how our unsympathetic and stubbornly narrow view of the North have consistently led to death and destruction and have persistently contributed to deepen our misunderstanding and alienation even further. Our smugness in seeing ourselves as a most civilized and cultured society is constantly chastised. The stories of the well-known explorers are re-examined with a great deal of critical scepticism and wit. The explorers do not, of course, remain the heroes our history books have made

them out to be quite the contrary! The true heroes are those we have traditionally labelled "savage" and "primitive" -- the Inuit.

Every step along the way Wiebe shows us that our traditional view of the North desperately needs a thorough revision. He maintains that our North is not just some place "up there" of little concern to us, not just a passage to another place, but a vital part of our history as a nation and a tremendously important component of our national identity. He demonstrates to us that until we learn to see the North from the point of view of its inhabitants -- and their language and culture, particularly their rich oral tradition, are invaluable aids in this -- the North will always remain a remote and very hostile domain to us, a foreign country, as it were.

This book makes for most interesting reading and is a must for all who wish to come to a better understanding of our North and relish the risk of having their present views on the subject radically challenged. Rudy Wiebe is to be congratulated for the most valuable contribution he has made to our understanding of a complex problem. The fact that the book is exceptionally well-written and beautifully presented by the publishers makes Wiebe's newest opus even more attractive.

*Rudy Wiebe, **Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic** (Edmonton: NeWest, 1989). 160 pages; quality paperback \$12.95; clothbound \$22.95.*

*Andre Oberle is associate professor and chairman of German studies at the University of Winnipeg.*

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## THIS WORD FROM DOWN EAST

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by Tim Wiebe



### Of vintage weddings and certain slants of light

I was at a vintage wedding not so long ago. No, it wasn't an occasion where the wine flowed freely. In fact, the reception fare featured nothing stronger than tea and coffee for the dessert, and for the truly brave at heart, horseradish for the roast beef. The event wasn't even that boisterous an affair. Still, the ceremony and reception had their own sense of joy all the same.

You see, this was not your typical bridal couple. The groom, a widower, had already fathered a large family by his first wife. All were in attendance. As he jokingly remarked, "It's best to let your kids grow up before you get married. That way, you get lots of help!" The bride, like her husband within a decade or so of retirement age, was marrying for the first time. Not quite your run-of-the-mill wedding scenario.

#### Dimension of experience

Between them, bride and groom brought to the wedding ceremony a wealth of experience -- some of it joyful, some of it sorrowful. Together, they radiated a quiet confidence and tempered idealism which lent a relaxed and mature tone to the day's proceedings. There was no difficulty telling, as maybe there is with some younger couples, where infatuation ended and love began. Perhaps that's why the ceremony was so profoundly direct and simple. These were two people who knew what they were doing.

The reception featured wonderful

food, creative songs from each table (a ditty with "love" in it earned you a display of wedded affection) and lots of gentle, low key Swiss Mennonite humour. There was also a wonderful intertwining of community as tribute was paid to bride and groom and new family alignments recognized and celebrated. The bride was not just adding the role of wife to her life's responsibilities -- she was also taking on the jobs of mother, grandmother, aunt and in-law! It was as if a whole new family was being formed on the spot. I couldn't help wondering whether these changes weren't a bit overwhelming for the bride and groom and their families.

#### No hurry to leave

Surprisingly, though, things weren't at all rushed. We'd lots of time for an extra cup of coffee or an additional slab of dessert. We had as long as we wished, in this peaceful atmosphere, to savour the poignant vintage of over 100 years' experience blending into one distinct wedded life. I'm sure each of us took some of this precious mixture home as we eased out of the church hall toward our cars on that chilly autumn night.

The poet Emily Dickinson has a verse that suggests "There is a certain slant of light/On winter afternoons/That oppresses like the heft/Of cathedral tunes." This day had its own kind of light, too, but it was in no way oppressive. It was warm and illuminating; not brilliant, but quietly glowing; not harsh,

but soft and peaceful. If you've read the First Letter of John recently -- especially the part about "God is light, in him there is no darkness at all" -- maybe you'll get an inkling of what I mean. Sometimes you're just gifted with a time and space in which you can bask in a sense of love and acceptance. This was one such precious occasion.

I suppose the feelings drawn out by that weekend have faded a bit by now. They're not as sharply etched in memory now as they were on that cold Fall day. But looking back to the event from a different angle, in a different light, I'd have to say that the experience hasn't dulled or lost meaning--it's simply matured and become richer with age. mm



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# Celebrating New Years on the Berlin Wall

by Duncan Schellenberg

"I rang in the 90s on the Berlin Wall!" That's what I'll tell my grandkids someday when they ask, "Grandpa, what's the biggest New Year's party you were ever at?"

New Year's Eve, 1989: 500,000 people from all over the world lined the streets from the Brandenburg Gate to the East German parliament on the East, and to the Victory Eagle on the West. A column of people packed in a block a mile long, and 200 meters wide with a bulge in the centre. (You might say they were packed wall to wall if that wasn't a bit corny for Berlin). Everywhere, people hugged and kissed and drank champagne. Rockets screamed out from the middle of the crowd and burst on the Brandenburg Gate. At midnight the sky exploded in a fury of light and sound that shook the city; and the wall crumbled a little bit more. I thought so this is what it must have been like in Jericho.

How to describe the euphoria. For the citizens of Berlin it was not just the start of a new year or even a new decade. It was the beginning of an era where they would be one city again. For 28 years the 16 foot high wall had neatly dissected the city, cutting off streets, demolishing homes and separating families. For both cities of Berlin the wall left a deep psychological scar which was immediately palpable to any visitor of Berlin.

Now the wall which encircled West Berlin and imprisoned East Germany had been defeated. It was time to celebrate -- and celebrate they did! People chipped at and danced around, on top of, and even inside the wall. Others scaled "Batman" style up a cable on the Brandenburg Gate and ran flags up the flagpole. The East German flag, the West German flag, the East and West

flags tied together, the City of Berlin flag. Each met with wild enthusiasm from the crowd.

At about 12:30 a.m. my friend, Conrad, and David and I pushed and shoved our way up to the Brandenburg Gate so we could smash our champagne bottles on it. We were almost there when the masses erupted in a frenzy of cheering and applauding to raise the dead. I looked up to see what the cause of this latest outburst was. To my surprise, there, flying 12 meters above the crowd, was the Canadian Maple Leaf! For a minute I was never prouder to be a Canadian even though I wasn't quite sure why this flag would draw that kind of response. I caught on a minute later when some underpants ran up the flagpole and that drew an even louder response.

The crowd was unstoppable. Broken bottles littered the pavement. The border guards gave up even trying to check passports. Any attempts on the part of the authorities to organize the party were squelched by the sheer numbers. All they could do was to keep a steady supply of ambulances on call. At 1:30 a.m. a six meter high scaffolding with

a TV screen collapsed as people tried to scale it to get on the Gate. 165 people were crushed, but only one died. ("It was a wonder more didn't die" ran the headlines the next day.) Even my brother didn't escape injury. When he jumped off the wall he misjudged the height and tipped over too far. He took the weight on his arm and broke it. Of course he and his cast are famous now. Friends ask him,

"Hey, where'd you get that?"

"Um, well, I fell off the Berlin Wall."

"Heh, heh.....No really, how'd you do that?"

For the 500,000 citizens of the world gathered in Berlin on New Year's Eve, 1989, it was a celebration they'll never forget. The lights, the noise, the crowd, the smoke, the champagne, the sense of being a part of history. Yes, that's definitely a story for my grandchildren.

*Duncan is a student at the University of Manitoba, majoring in economics and science.*



*New Year's eve at the Berlin Wall -- the crowd begins to assemble*

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# Targets of persecution, and living in utter misery, many Mennonites endured and survived

by Karl and Grete Fast  
translated by Agnes Wall

## With Malice

Most of the Mennonites still living in the Soviet Union today (about 50,000) only know the world outside their country from Soviet papers, books and films. The Ministry of Propaganda is a master at brainwashing the Soviet citizen with both information and misinformation. The media, the songs, the theater, the art and the literature were aimed at promoting Communism. A large section of the post-war generation is under the corrupt influence of this so-called re-education and so they think, eat and behave according to what they have been taught.

This propaganda is aimed at all non-Communist countries, but is especially negative toward the Federal Republic of Germany. According to this information, it is an established fact that West Germany has been the centre of all evil. There is nothing good nor has there been a glimmer of compassion and kindness in the German people.

"And that's where our misguided citizens are going, right to this terrible land," the propagandists have said.

So effective was the brainwashing that someone from Orenburg was filled with so much hatred that he remarked, "Everyone who is unhappy in the Soviet Union should be sent to the region where the ships dock but once a year." What was meant, Magadan, Verchajansk or Kolydna? These places were among the worst labour camps of the Gulag.

It's not surprising that the Umsiedler were happy to move away from such

abuse. There was a time when there was no defence against the animosity of the surrounding peoples. No mercy or compassion was ever shown. Today many of our people are in West Germany and glad to be free, although some of the old fear will never leave them. Yet their relief at being in Germany was always evident when we visited them. The prayers of these people were a witness of thankfulness for the wonderful guidance of the Lord. Time and time again we were astonished that the Umsiedler spoke totally without rancour or resentment about their experiences in those troubled times. They looked into the future and were full of hope for themselves and their children.

We met and visited with Mr. and Mrs. Berg, an older couple. When we came into the room they were sitting very close together and their eyes glowed with happiness. Today was their golden wedding anniversary. They had quietly married in 1938, when there were endless reprisals. The father had been arrested that year too. He never returned home, it was as if the earth had swallowed him.

When the war started, the Bergs were spared and not sent east like so many others. Later, when everybody was fleeing before the Soviets, they joined the trek to the west, but the Red Army caught up to them and they were sent to the east, far into Asia until the train came to the region of Aktjubinsk. They were to stay in Kasachstan, much to the chagrin of the natives, the Kasachs.

These people hated the refugees

because they were German. They cursed the newcomers, beat them cruelly and robbed them whenever there was an opportunity. The authorities looked the other way or even joined in the harassment.

"One day my friend and I went into the forest to gather wild berries for our children," said Mrs. Berg. "I filled a can and was happy that I had something for their hungry mouths. I had nothing else to give them for supper except these few berries. We were already on the way home when we met two policemen mounted on horses. They demanded to see what was in our cans. When they found the berries we were accused of robbing the state because we had picked them in the forests of Kasachstan and they were state property. So the police scattered the berries on the road and trampled them into a blue mixture of sand and pulp. No supper for the children! We wept as we turned to the miserable huts which were our homes."

They became so hungry, these women and children, that they dared to go into the villages of the Kasachs and beg for food. Police on horseback chased the children back to their huts, beating them about their heads with clubs or whips until they reached their homes and could run in for safety. "You'll get nothing but beatings in our villages," the police screamed after them.

Mrs. Berg continued, "One year, I think it was in 1948, they couldn't harvest the wheat. It snowed very early in the year and a white blanket covered

the still full ears of grain. We sent the children to try and gather some of this wheat from under the snow. They had hardly begun when the police came storming into the fields and beat the children until they ran away. Then, out of pure malice, they set fire to the fields. We were not even allowed to find and pick up some of the scorched kernels of grain. For us Germans, there was nothing."

The Bergs folded their hands and asked us to pray with them.

#### **Deathmill of Korkino.**

"Yes, that's him. That is how I knew him in the Central School (Zentralschule) in Pretoria, Orenburger settlement." This is what I heard when I approached a group of Umsiedler. I looked at the speaker, but couldn't remember him. Brother P. started to talk about those far-off days and we established that we had indeed attended the same school. He was a few years younger than I.

When the war started he and all the other German teenagers had to leave school. No more would they be pampered. Children of German parents, these Fascists, had no business getting an education anyway. They were required to labour in the working army. Because so many workers in the plants and factories had been drafted into the Red Army, the working army had to step in.

Most of the weapon industry of the U.S.S.R. was concentrated in the Urals. The workers from Orenburg, those of German descent, were given the hardest jobs like digging, with primitive tools, the ditches and huge trenches for underground installations. The whole region of the Urals was like a huge prison camp.

The most infamous camp was Korkina with its more than seven thousand people. One of the men here was brother P.; two others were my own brothers. The conditions were terrible here and brother P. doubted whether we would believe the stories he had to tell about the inhuman suffering and the many deaths in those years.

The barracks the men lived in were

not winterized or heated. They were so incredibly crowded that it was difficult for the men to breathe the foul and stinking air. Two thin soups a day brought starvation ever closer. Many of our people here died an untimely and wretched death. There were no physicians in the camps, but each morning several men came through the barracks and collected those who still lay in their bunks. These people had died in the night, alone, completely forsaken. Maybe with a silent prayer on their lips? But often in such cases it was too late for prayer. All strength had left the man's body.

The bodies of the dead could not be buried, since the ground was frozen to a meter or more into the earth. Besides, who had the strength, the time and the love to chisel a grave out of the unfriendly earth? The dead were piled on a sleigh and taken into the forest where they were simply dumped into the snow. They stayed there until nature and the wild animals of the forest disposed of them.

Brother P.'s voice became very quiet and weak when he told us this story. "Your brother Gerhard could not stand the camp any longer. One day he went to work and from there he walked off into the forest. Many men, in hopeless despair, took the way into the forest. It is said that freezing to death is the easiest death of all. You fall asleep and never wake up again."

Brother P. sighed heavily, looked down at his folded hands and said softly, as if speaking to himself, "Thanks be to God, all this is over."

#### **Barnaul-Slawgorod.**

We found Mr. and Mrs. S. to be congenial and talked with them for a long time. Their surname didn't sound as if they were Mennonite, so we thought they were people from the Volga Republic until we discovered they both spoke Low German. Mrs. S' maiden name was Martens. They came from Barnaul, from one of the settlements near Slawgorod in Siberia.

They had had their share and more of tragedy and suffering, yet when we talked about those hard times, it seemed

they accepted them as a matter of fact. The topic was hunger and what it can do and how it had affected the lives of our people. It was particularly hopeless in the years 1943-44.

People died in their homes, in the streets and on the roads. The managers of the collective farms went from house to house each morning and asked if anyone had died in the night. If there was a dead body, and there often was, the manager got a hook from his sled and with his hook he dragged the corpse onto the sleigh and drove it to an open mass grave. There he dumped the bodies which he had collected over the edge and then casually and without pity went on his way. The suffering of starvation had robbed many people of all feeling and the life of a human being was very cheap.

It was different when a horse was near death. Then the people crowded around the animal and patiently waited for it to die. Now a veterinary doctor was fetched and he had to confirm the death by signing a death certificate, for the people wanted to slaughter the horse. Horses were the property of the state and it was a crime against the state to slaughter a living horse. Once the legalities were over, the carcass was divided equally among the people. After everything was done, there was nothing left of the animal. Everything could be eaten, even the bones. They were first burned and the ashes ground into powder. This powder could be used to make soup and this would fill at least part of an empty stomach.

When the brothers and sisters talked about such experiences, we looked at them in amazement. They had survived! We felt that God sent them to us as proof of His great love. Later they, the people of Slawgorod, were happier when conditions improved. They looked on the hunger and persecution as something buried in the past.

The congregation applied to build a church and, after a very long wait, they got permission to do so. Not that there wasn't a church building in the village. It was there, but it had been taken from the people and remodelled into a

clubhouse in the late twenties. The regulations for building a church were very strict and had to be followed to the letter. It was hard to get the materials needed for the construction. With much difficulty they found out where steel posts were to be had and paid a great deal of money for them. Then they were told that the use of such posts was forbidden and they were confiscated. The search for materials started anew.

Finally it was finished. In the U.S.S.R. all churches are automatically the property of the state. Therefore the state determines what is to be done with its property. At this time the collective farm decided it needed new business offices and laboratories. The new house of prayer was finished just at the right time, it seemed. So the building intended for a church was expropriated to be used for the administrative staff of the farm. The congregation continued to meet for worship in private houses, just as they had done so far.

Neither the congregation, the family S. nor another family we spoke with had become bitter because of this chicanery and injustice. Astounding!

#### University Babushka.

"You're bringing us a Bible?" asked the man when he came to the door. "Then you must come when our babushka is home. She is the believer in the family."

If it weren't for these grandmothers, rearing the children would have been a much more difficult task. The belief in Jesus Christ may not have been upheld, had the babushkas not been in the homes. At the time of their immigration they were about sixty to seventy years old. They had received a decent education in the good old days and they knew their Bibles. They fostered the German language and thanks to them, many of their children and grandchildren speak it also. They knew all kinds of important and significant things about the families, things they would have to know when they had to fill out registration forms.

They represented the family when it came to their Christian belief. They

had more experience in these matters than the younger people and a lot more courage when it came to bear witness for Christ. Even the authorities had a healthy respect for these women with their stooped-over backs and their work-worn hands. The officials might not necessarily grant the babushkas' requests, but they didn't have the audacity to lay a hand on them or harass them.

If a child had an Oma like this in the house, that child learned a lot. It was said that such a lucky boy or girl had attended the University of Babushka. In this university there was always something to learn.

When it came to the registration in Friedland or Unna-Massen, Oma was the one who did the work and became the head of the family. She knew dates, places, births and deaths and had all the information required when it came to filling out forms and applications. When questioned about religious affiliation, she answered, "Mennonite." As a result, this applied to the rest of the clan too. It was often the case that the grandmother was the only believer there, she alone, but the others were listed as Mennonites also.

Here it must be remembered that the good Lord has only children, not grandchildren. Babushka knows this very well herself and she will do her utmost to regulate everything and see to it that all will be well in the end. mm

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BLIND

From the 12 entries to the December puzzle, Ernie Hiebert, of Carman, was selected the winner.

Answers to December, are lyre, snipe, saint, beast, and unity.

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 provides a clue.

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

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by March 13.

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Send entries to: Mix-up Contest,  
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## OBSERVED ALONG THE WAY

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by Roy Vogt



### We show our strength by the way we respond to criticism and assert our principles

**These observations** are being written in the beginning of February and my heart is full of sadness for all those unlucky people who left Manitoba in January this year for places like Florida and Hawaii, and missed our beautiful weather. Maybe next year they'll vacation in Churchill, and really enjoy themselves. Actually, on the very cold days when even our spirits sag, and we wish we were in Hawaii, my wife and I find some solace in brochures on Greece, which we hope to visit this spring.

For us, Manitoba winters are no longer completely user friendly. As a boy I used to love jumping into the snow, and I never felt that it was cold. Now when it blows relentlessly into my face as I trudge down University Crescent I do not feel so benevolent toward it. It is only when we ski through the beautiful woods at Hecla or Birds Hill that snow becomes a friend again.

**Our condition** is not to be pitied; we are definitely not desperate. **Desperation**, someone reminded us the other day, is when a middle-aged person is caught inside his or her car in a huge traffic jam, having just consumed two cups of coffee and a muffin.

**The quieter times of winter** also allow one to indulge hobbies for which the other seasons never provide enough time. My father left me with some interesting records of his past, and in my spare hours I now derive a lot of pleasure from researching his family history. I am glad that his family was not too large; there were only 10 child-

ren. My mother came from the Reimers and the Wiebes, and they were much more fruitful. Both of her grandparents had 25 children. In those days, of course, children were **useful**, as well as interesting. I admire the persons who produced a book on the Reimer family tree; it is more than 200 pages, and they had no computer. I remember going to a Reimer family gathering in Blumenort about 25 years ago, and more than 2,000 people showed up. "Those," I said proudly to my wife, "are all my cousins."

There is always a certain danger in digging through one's family roots; you are never quite sure what you are going to find. I have already discovered, for example, that I am a third cousin to Roland Penner (some people may be tempted to say that that explains a lot). I am not sure that he would be flattered. We also had a few vagabonds in our history, who were not up to much good. That is a polite way of saying that there were horse thieves and other interesting types in our distant past. That is all behind us, of course, and we are now all safe, civilized people.

**In the past few issues** of the *Mirror* we have criticized the decision of the Board of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute to cancel a speaking engagement by Stephen Lewis. The decision of the board was made after pressure had been applied by a few individuals and a few supporting churches, and it was this "caving in to pressure" that we lamented. Several persons have since told us that we were out of line. The decision, in their opinion, was not that

important. We disagree. One of the greatest dangers facing a closely-knit group like the Mennonites is the pressure to conform. Freedom of expression is always threatened, precisely because people take their faith seriously. I observed this over many years while serving on the board of one of our private schools. Because people **cared** what went on the school they not only got personally involved, in a positive way, but they also wanted to impose their own values on the school. They couldn't always see that people with different ideas might also be right.

One of the few virtues of indifference may be tolerance, and one of the few, but serious, liabilities of a zealous faith is intolerance. Therefore, it is precisely those communities that take a certain faith very seriously who must combat most vigorously any attempts to stifle the freedom of groups and individuals. There is a lot of politics in the Mennonite Church, power games are being played all the time, because the church is still taken seriously. (I always find it somewhat amusing when Mennonites condemn politics; a lot of it is occurring right under their nose, in the church). In the midst of such politics it is extremely important that leaders in education and persons in the media show more than average courage in resisting pressures to conform. One of the things we teach young people in our private schools is to follow their conscience; to stand alone if needs be, even if they suffer as a result. The example of a school board changing a decision because of political pressure undermines all of this good teaching, and must

therefore be criticized. Someone said to us that it would be irresponsible to put the MCI into danger just because of a prior commitment to Stephen Lewis. Is that really what we want to teach our children: that institutions are more important than principles? This is indeed a serious matter.

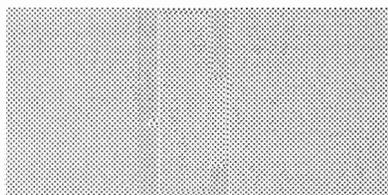
**I am sorry** that this month's column has taken on such a serious tone, but it is important for us to take a good look at ourselves. We Mennonites are now admired by many people -- sometimes possibly for good reasons, sometimes because we manage to fool them. There is always the danger that we will take such admiration seriously. The fact is that there are many good people from our community doing good things, but there is also much that is wrong. We are not, on the whole, very tolerant, very generous (except to our own causes) or even very just. Just listen to the voices of our most sensitive young people -- those that choose to stay in the community. They like some things that they have experienced, but there is also much that dismays them.

We have no reason to be very proud, and every reason to listen to criticism. This magazine has always tried to be positive in its approach -- perhaps too positive, because whenever we take a critical position we find that those being criticized become extremely defensive. That is a sure sign of unwarranted smugness. We are **not** better than other people. Let's admit this, and then ask for courage to do better the next time around.

**The Mirror** sent out a questionnaire to a random sample of its readers in January, to determine what they like and don't like about us. If we are going to criticize we'll also have to take criticism. The returns are now coming in -- both positive and negative -- and we'll report on this in the next issue. In the meantime, let's continue to keep our chin up and our nose down. **mm**

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## WORDS FROM THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS

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by H.W. Friesen

### In B.C. a foghorn reminds all that there is a Canada, as the VIA loses its role as a symbol of unity

**Downtown** Vancouver's noontime horn with its "O Canada" blast was a 1967 centennial project of B.C. Hydro, and no one is quite sure who came up with the idea, or why. It serves to remind locals that they are still part of Canada, that the anthem is not to be forgotten and at least the first few notes should be part of even the most unmusical BCer's repertoire. It may be of benefit to the many newcomers to B.C., a ghetto blaster reminding one and all that B.C. is still a part of Canada. Such reminder may well be needed, perhaps more so on the west coast than in other Canadian regions.

The airhorn atop the B.C. Hydro building on Burrard Street thunders out the first few notes of "O Canada" five days a week, startling tourists as well as the downtown lunch crowds. Its sound is predictable; an urban foghorn with a tune distorted only by unusual fluctuations in atmospheric conditions.

It seems an odd innovation, this explosion of our anthem. Its roots may well lie in the prairies, where some towns regularly sound their fire sirens at noon. This enables our prairie cousins to find out who is new in town; newcomers are likely to look up and down the streets for signs of smoke; the locals simply drop whatever they're doing and go for lunch. Has any prairie town ever had the siren sound at exactly noon because of a fire? Half of the

buildings in town could be up in smoke while the volunteers enjoy their meal.

The Fathers of Confederation tried to tie this country together by building a railway across its expanse. Then, just to make sure, another one was added. Now those ties seem to be weakening as VIA's existence is threatened. With the rail links diminishing the B.C. Hydro horn might be an appropriate contemporary symbol as we enter the 21st century. Prairie towns could change their noontime sirens to the O Canada tune, joining B.C. Hydro's foghorn. But then, few prairie towns need such a reminder, at least not five days a week. Vancouver needs it.

BCers tend to be oriented toward the Far East or Asia, or toward the warmer California coast rather than to the east on the other side of the Rockies; so the daily reminder is appropriate. Viewing the world from a different perspective than other Canadians may be caused by the rain, salt water, and fog; all of which exist here in abundance, and often at the same time. Gazing over the Pacific Ocean here means that our backs are turned to the rest of Canada, a posture which some people here do not find uncomfortable.

The BC Hydro horn is accepted by Vancouverites as are the sirens in prairie towns; life goes on, we get accustomed to its sound and at times we ask if it already sounded; maybe we

missed it. In the midst of diverse ethnicity, urban sprawl and traffic which always seems to move faster than the speed limit, the few notes of O Canada are a reminder that bounces around the downtown glass towers and echoes from the north shore mountains. A jarring sound; an essential reminder. **mm**

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## MANITOBA NEWS

**John Friesen**, instructor at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, has begun a six-year term on the board of trustees of trustees of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

**Lou-Ann Buhr** has been appointed as assistant deputy minister in Culture, Heritage and Recreation programs division of the Government of Manitoba. The appointment took effect on August 1, 1989. Buhr is married to former Altonan Kenneth Buhr, a professional engineer. They have two children, Kevin and Kristin.

**David Dyck**, River East Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, has begun an 11-month MVS assignment as a child-care worker for Community Mennonite Day Care Centre, Markham, Illinois. His parents are David and Mildred Dyck.

**Marlee Enns**, Grace Church, Winkler, has begun a one-year MVS assignment as a nurse at Healing Hands Health Clinic, Oklahoma City. Her parents are David and Anne Enns.

**Gordon Zerbe** will become assistant professor New Testament at Canadian Mennonite Bible College next July. He will fill the position vacated by David Schroeder who retires in June. Zerbe is completing his doctoral work for Princeton Theological Seminary on the topic: "Nonretaliation" in early Judaism and Paul. Continuity and Variation of an ethical theme." Zerbe has taught at Columbia Bible College in B.C. and at CMBC as a sessional lecturer since 1988. He is married to Wendy Kroeker who teaches at Mennonite Brethren Bible College. They attend Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

**Bernie Wiebe**, Winnipeg, former editor of *The Mennonite* (1976-1986), is the writer for the Advent devotionals in *Rejoice!* the inter-Mennonite worship book.



**Janet Schmidt** of Winnipeg is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg, where she will be working as a social worker. Schmidt received a master's degree in counselling and administration from University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. She is a member of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Winnipeg. She is married to David Pancratz.



**David Penner** of Winnipeg, is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg, where he will be working as a counsellor. Penner received a bachelor's degree in education from University of Manitoba and is currently working on his master's degree at Winnipeg Bible College Theological Seminary. He was last employed as a teacher in Winnipeg School Division. Penner is a member of Richmond Gospel Fellowship in Winnipeg. His wife, Gladys Penner, accompanied him at orientation. They have five grown children.



**Stephen Murphy** of Winnipeg is

beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg, where he will be doing community work. Stephen received a bachelor's degree in music composition and religious studies from the University of Winnipeg. He is a member of Grain of Wheat Community Church in Winnipeg. His wife, Linda Murphy, accompanied him at orientation. They have one son, Joel Stephen.



**Vivian Giesbrecht** of Winnipeg, is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Akron, where she will be working as administrative secretary for personnel services. Giesbrecht is a member of Calvary Temple in Winnipeg. Her mother is Olga Giesbrecht of Selkirk.

**Anne and John Friesen** of Winnipeg are beginning three-year Mennonite Central Committee assignments in Akron and Ephrata. Anne will be working as a waitress and cook at the SelfHelp Crafts tea room and John as a packer at the SelfHelp Crafts warehouse. Anne received a bachelor's degree in education from University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. John received a master's degree in geography/soils from the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Anne was last employed as a teacher in Winnipeg. John last worked as senior land use planner in Winnipeg. The Friesens are members of Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg.

**David and Sandra Roberts**, Winnipeg, have begun 23-month assignments on October 1 at Pleasant Valley Outdoor Centre, Woodstock,

Illinois. David serves as a maintenance worker and Sandra as support staff person. They recently completed an MCC alignment in Lesotho.

**Charlotte Siemens**, Winnipeg, has resigned as MVS associate director for Canada effective in May 1990, completing five years.

**Carla Zacharias**, Reinland EMMC, Winkler, has begun a one-year MVS assignment as assistant teacher at Friendship Day-Care Centres, Hutchinson, Kansas. Her parents are Bernie and Lydia Zacharias.



**Monica Friesen**, of Winnipeg is beginning a year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg, where she will be working as an administrative assistant for Mediation Services. Friesen is a member of Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church. She attended Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg. Her husband, Robert Friesen, accompanied her at orientation. Her parents are Peter and Rose Fehr of Morden.

A Sherridon woman who saved a nine-year-old boy from a pack of dogs was one of three Manitobans awarded Medals of Bravery recently. **Rosemary Reimer** of Sherridon was among 46 people who received bravery awards from Governor General Jeanne Sauve in Ottawa. On Jan 6, 1988, Reimer saved nine-year-old Scott Head, who was being mauled by four dogs. At the time, RCMP said Head, who required about 360 stitches to close his wounds, was lucky to be alive. Reimer scared off the dogs and carried the boy to her home, with the barking dogs following.

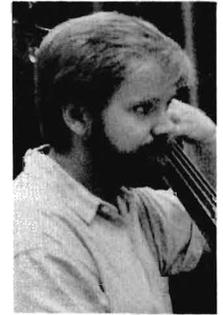
The Queen's Commendation for

valuable service in the Air was awarded to **Capt. Gregg J. Wiebe** for his bravery during the rescue of two Light Infantry soldiers caught in a fast-flowing river during manoeuvres in Kenya last year. Capt. Wiebe, a Canadian forces pilot, flew in "appalling flying conditions" to lift the men off the roof of their partly submerged lorry. Wiebe is the son of Jac and Shirley Wiebe of Kenora, Ont.

In an effort aimed at boosting employment of disabled people, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC Manitoba) recently approved a **greenhouse project for southern Manitoba**. The Plum Coulee project will employ a core of ten handicapped people from nearby areas. According to project spokesperson Tom Edge, the greenhouse venture will focus on fundraising during 1990 for the 20,250 sq.ft. operation. Expected cost will be \$580,000 for the greenhouse, other structures, and equipment. Federal and provincial programs, foundations, institutions, and individual donations will fund the project. "To raise this amount of money will require a concerted effort by everyone involved," said Edge with emphasis. "It's important that area residents see the benefits for the entire community." Manitobans with handicaps experience unemployment rates of about 10 times those of the general population. While the area has some sheltered workshops, there is a lack of employment creation programs for handicapped persons. Greenhouse horticulture affords an excellent year-round setting for productive work and training by people whose physical, mental, or sensory handicaps place them at a disadvantage when seeking employment. A greenhouse provides an attractive work environment that enhances physical and emotional well-being. The work is labour intensive, and thus well suited to the goal of job creation. Greenhouse operations in Winnipeg, Moose Jaw, and Edmonton have been successful in providing adults with a history of severe work disadvantage with useful and gainful employment.



**Melinda Enns**



**Peter Loewen**

**Melinda Enns** daughter of Ernie and Louise Enns of Elmwood MB church will sing Mozart's Exultate Jubilate with the **Mennonite Community Orchestra** at the Spring Concert. 3:00 pm, March 18, 1990 at Jubilee Place, 181 Riverton Avenue. Miss Enns is a fourth year music student at MBBC.

Also performing as string bass soloist will be **Peter Loewen**, son of Victor and Lily Loewen of First Mennonite Church. Peter Loewen, 26, will be playing the Giovanni Bottesini Concerto #2 in A minor. Peter was born in Mblaa, Uganda, Africa, where his father was teaching in a British school. Then his family moved to Winnipeg and when he was nine they settled in the town of Selkirk. After completing his music studies at the U of M in 1987, Peter and his wife, Cheryl Lee went to Paris where he studied with Francois Rabbath. Currently he is studying with the famous string bass teacher, Paul Ellison in Los Angeles. When he has completed his studies he hopes to play principal bass in a professional orchestra. Several business people of Manitoba are helping to sponsor this concert of the **Mennonite Community Orchestra**, conducted by John P. Klassen.

**Coming Events:**

February 23, 6:30 pm annual banquet of Manitoba Parents for German Education at the MBBC, 169 Riverton Avenue.

March 13th, 7:30. Mennonite Genealogy Workshop at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Speaker: James Urry, U. of Wellington, Wellington, NZ.

## FALL CONVOCATION

### University of Winnipeg

**Bachelor of Science:** Caspar Zanza Willow Friesen.

**Bachelor of Education:** Calvin Bradley Barkman; Elizabeth Bergen; Elfrieda Mary Nikkel; **Bachelor of Arts Honours:** Norman Philip Friesen; Robert Verdun Teigrob.

**Bachelor of Arts (4-year):** Lori Elizabeth Dueck.

**Bachelor of Arts:** Martha Abrahams; Daniel John Balzer; David Cornelius Balzer; Melvin Keith Barkman; Lorna Suzanne Derksen; Shannon Elizabeth Elias; Daniel Bruce Friesen; Mary Anne Funk; Terry Catherine Marie Harms; Paul Victor Heidebrecht, Joanne Ruth Klassen; Leonard Jason Martens; Jacqueline Beth Neufeld; Brenda Roxanne Neufeld-Penner; Sandy Parisi-Unger; Deborah Lynn Reimer; Brenda Arlene Sawatzky; Werner Sawatzky; Agatha Sharon Wall; Brenda Lynn Wohlgemuthl.

### University of Manitoba

**Doctor of Philosophy:** David Alexander Wall

**Master of Arts:** Ronald Lawrence Baerg; Cornelius Buller; Carol Elizabeth Enns; Robert Wayne Enns; Kathryn Mary Huebert; Joel David Pauls;

**Master of Education:** Barbara Lynn Schmidt; Peter Alvin Toews; Marjorie Arlene Winter.

**Master of Nursing:** Olive Carolyn Hildur Vogt.

**Master of Science:** Larry Paul Dyck; Richard James Epp; Catherine Gail Penner; Curtis Brian Rempel; Gary Edward Warkentine.

**Master of Social Work:** Hilda Anne Hildebrand.

**Diploma in Agriculture:** Beverly Lynn Funk.

**Bachelor of Interior Design:** Christine Beverley Siemens.

**Bachelor of Arts:** Luella Sue Bartel; James John Dyck; Carol Lynn Falk; Craig Errol Friesen; Steven Henning; Loretta May Hiebert; Frieda Janzen; Randall George Janzen; Evan Kroeker;

Philip Floyd Penner; Miriam Helen Toews; Darrell James Unger; Melanie Joy Wall.

**Bachelor of Education:** Clarice Ruth Zacharias Dyck; Edith Dianne Dyck; Catherine Dorothy Heide, Judi Carol Neufeld;.

**Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Education:** Linda Maureen Blatz; Lorna Gayle Hiebert; Edith Helen Kampen; Frieda Loewen; Hildegard Loewen; Blair Claude Unger.

**Bachelor of Computer Science (Honors):** Robert Kent Dyck.

**Bachelor of Science-Major:** Robert John Penner; Philip Peter Unger; Robert Henry Zacharias.

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## **JOYCE REDEKOP-FINK IN CONCERT**

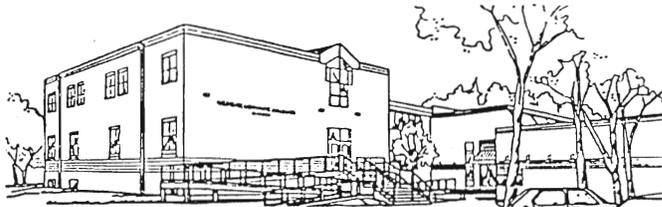
A **native** Manitoban, now a very successful performing artist in Europe, will make a guest appearance at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College Auditorium in Winnipeg on March 4.

**Joyce Redekop-Fink** was born in Winkler and graduated from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in 1960. During her stay in Winnipeg she won the Aikens Memorial Trophy (the highest instrumental award of the Winnipeg Music Festival) and was awarded the University Gold Medal and a travelling scholarship for highest marks in the examinations of the University of Manitoba. She later studied at Yale and in Germany under Canada Council scholarships, and frequently performed with the CBC and in numerous concerts.

Joyce Redekop-Fink now resides in Cologne, West Germany, where she is closer to the European concert stage. In the last few years she has followed invitations to play the harpsichord in the major concert halls of Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig, and has been invited to give a solo recital tour in the Soviet Union in April, 1991.

Her concert in Winnipeg will take place on March 4, at 8 p.m. and is co-sponsored by the Mennonite Literary Society and the music department of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. Tickets may be purchased in advance from Assiniboine Travel Service, 1317 Portage Ave, from Mennonite Brethren Bible College, or at the door on the evening of the performance. A reception follows the performance. **mm**

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## REVIEW

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### Well-crafted without being crafty

reviewed by Al Reimer

And now we have Douglas Reimer. Amazing, how gifted new Mennonite writers keep popping up in this area in a seemingly endless supply. Turnstone Press in Winnipeg keeps finding them (or they it) and introducing them to the general public, to whom Mennonite writers must be as familiar by now as any ethnic writers in the country.

In recent years Turnstone has published works by Patrick Friesen, Di Brandt, Sandra Birdsell, David Waltner-Toews, Armin Wiebe, Audrey Poetker, Sarah Klassen, Lois Braun and John Weier. A veritable who's who of Mennonite writers in Canada.

Douglas Reimer is the latest name to be added to that list. The sixteen short stories that make up *Older Than Ravens* offer a stunning, albeit somewhat uneven, assortment of fiction searing in its honesty and sure to prove controversial for its frank, witty, and unsentimental treatment of contemporary life in small Mennonite communities in southern Manitoba. The best of these stories -- e.g., "A Picture of Jesus," "A Few Green Branches in Spring," "Red and White," "The Retarded Dycks," "Fishing Men," and "The Cable Slider," -- will jolt you, amuse you, make you marvel at the author's wisdom and insights, perhaps outrage you, then move you to tears. All are recognizably "Mennonite" not only in their settings and characters, but in their themes and concerns. A common theme that runs through most of them is the way in which sin and transgression -- real or merely perceived -- set up guilt and secret agonies of conscience in the sensitive narrators who tell the stories.

Peter Regier is the character who appears most frequently in these stories. Peter is intense, sensitive, uninhibited, questing, compassionate and greedy for

life. Some of the early stories deal with Peter's trials and tribulations as an adolescent, while some of the later ones deal with the problems Peter encounters as a father with his own children to raise. Freedom and understanding are the states he cultivates most assiduously, the freedom to be himself without hurting others too badly, and the understanding that comes from his various, sometimes violently unexpected experiences or the experiences of others close to him. How to be in a Mennonite society that is often mean-spirited, parochial, cruel, insensitive, pious and oppressive is the problem faced by most of the characters in these well-crafted but never just craft-y stories. But the various protagonists are also beset by their own sinful traits: cruelty, cowardice, hypocrisy, selfishness.

For Reimer the village of Altwelt represents Mennonite society in miniature, and he dissects it with an honesty and frankness that are rapidly becoming the hallmarks of Mennonite writing. He pulls no punches, refuses to pay lip service to conventional Mennonite "respectability," and makes no pretense of glossing over the weaknesses and failures of his Mennonite characters. He will almost certainly be accused in some quarters of "attacking" Mennonitism, of "demeaning" it by exposing so many of its less than Christian tendencies and actions. The truth, however, is that Douglas Reimer, judging by these stories, is not condemning his people but trying to set up a meaningful dialogue with them, to set up a creative line of communication, so to speak. Or, if you prefer, he is holding up a mirror to the Mennonite community in which it can see itself whole and clear without trick lighting or flattering angles. I suspect that in the process of exposing the pretensions and self-delusions of his Mennonite characters (and they come, after all, from the deepest part of himself), he is also rediscovering the underground cables of love and loyalty that bind him to his people.

Make no mistake, Douglas Reimer

can write. He is a true diviner. Where he has been as a writer up to now is a good question. This is his first published volume of fiction, but most of these stories show such maturity of technique and insight that one can't help wondering how long he has actually been practising the craft of fiction (he is over forty). At every turn these stories show a first-rate mind at work, not just a developed sensibility riding high on technique.

Not all the stories are equally good, of course. A few are rather pedestrian in situation and treatment and a couple of others rely on tricky technical effects that attract too much attention to themselves to be really effective. But if you can read stories like "The Retarded Dycks" and "A Picture of Jesus" without feeling that the very heart of Mennonite darkness has been revealed to you, then you are probably impervious to the power of superior fiction altogether. With this first collection Douglas Reimer establishes an important new presence in Canadian-Mennonite literature.

*Douglas Reimer, Older Than Ravens. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1989, 158 pages.*

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION AND FUNDRAISING CO-ORDINATOR

Bethania Mennonite Personal Care Home intends to begin immediately to raise donation funds in an organized way to support the development and implementation of new programs and facilities. It is also intended to make people generally aware about what is already available for the infirm elderly and others who require outside support at certain stages of their lives.

The home would prefer to locate a qualified individual who could undertake this challenge on a volunteer basis. But it would also like to hear from others who would only be available if they could be paid. It is expected that fluency in the German language would be important.

To enquire, in confidence, please call the administrator, Helmut Epp, at 667 0795 or 452 4273 evenings and weekends.

# DEE EAD ESS PLAUT

fonn Agnes Waul

Aus etj noch kjeen wea onn oppe Schoolbentj saut, fetald ons dee Leara eenes Doages daut dee Ead runt wea. Ditt wea mie gaunss waut Nies. Etj wist nijch aus etj ditt jleewe wull ooda nijch. Fleijht sponst dee Leare blooss? Hee deed daut maunjchmol. Pape onn Mama haude mie ditt fonne Ead uck niemols fetalt. Dee wudde mie doch soowaut wijchtjet jesajcht habe? "Ditt mol weet dee Leara daut nijch rajcht," docht etj, "wann etj Groospa ditt fetal, woat hee wada saje, Dee Leara lijcht."

Hee säd daut emma fomm Leara wann etj am näajenkluaak waut ute School fetald. Dann lacht hee äwa mie wann etj wäajen eene Sach too iewrijch wort.

Leara Rampel haud oba noch lang nijch aules fonne Ead jesajcht. "Onse Ead ess soo aus en Baul," säda, "aus een sea goota Baul onn dee henjt enne Loft. Jieda 24 Stund dreit see sitj eenmol enne Rund, oba daut ess noch lang nijch aules. Nä, noch lang nijch aules. Buta sitj jieden Dach eenmol gaunss omdreie soo aus en Brommtjriesel, wankt dee Ead uck noch romm daut Sonntje, oba daut diat äa een gaunssset Joa. Daut Montje wankt jieda Moonat romme Ead."

Dee Ellre haude mie jeleat, onntlijch too senne. Enne School sull etj nijch grootmulijch woare, etj sull däm Leara jehorjche onn am jleewe. Soo säd etj leewa nuscht too siene Eadjeschijcht onn fruach kjeene Froage. Enn mienem Hoat wist etj jenuu daut dee Leara jeflunkad haud. Etj wundad mie blooss daut dee aundre Kjinja soone Dommheit jleewe kunne. Etj funk lota ut daut Leara Rampel nijch jespost haud. Hee docht werklijch dee Ead wea runt, soo uck miene Ellre, soogoa Groospa jleewd daut onn aul daut Frintschoft. Mie wea daut kratjt eendoont, etj weens jleewd daut nijch. Nijch bott fonndoag dän Dach.

Aus etj dann groot wort onn selfst Leara wea, fetald etj dee Kjinja nuscht

fonne Ead. Nijch daut dee runt wea onn uck nijch daut dee plaut wea. Etj docht wann dee Schoolinspatja mie mol doawäajen froage wudd, kunn etj saje daut etj dän Dach krank jewäse wea aus etj daut fetale sull. Hee fruach niemols, soo ess am ditt fleijcht eendoont jewäse.

Mie ess daut too wadre, oba etj kunn doch nijch waut unjarejchte waut etj selfst nijch jleewd. Wann dee Ead soo runt aus en Baul ess, wuaronn kaun etj daut dann nijch seene? Etj sie nijch blint. Doa sennt je opp Städe fäl Boaj onn fäl Lääjchte, soo daut daut fleijcht soo sitt, daudet runt senne kunn. Daut jlitjt sitj oba wada ut onn woat plaut. Kjrattjt eendoont wua wie aul mol hanjefoare sennt, emma wada see etj eene plaute Ead, nijch eene runde. Daut ess doch kloa onn noch emma soo jewäse. Bowe ess dee Himmel onn unje ess dee Ead. Aundasch jeit daut nijch. Doa mott een bowe onn een unje senne onn woo jeit soo waut opp'm Baul? Daut Wota rannt doch fonn bowe no unje? Wann doa oba kjeen bowe onn unje ess, wua saul daut Wota enne Ritsche hanrane? Etj woa meist derjchhan wann etj aun aul dissem dentje doo.

Wann eena eenen grooten Baul nemt onn doa eenen Kjniipa noppst onn dän Baul enne Loft henjt, felt dee Kjniipa jewess rauf. Wann wie werklijch opp eenen grooten Baul enne Loft weare wea wie aul lang aula raufjefolle, kjrattjt soo aus dee Kjniipa onn aulet aundre waut opp'e Ead loos henjt. Ons Wota wea uck aul länjst aula rutjeplenschat. Soogoa aulet Wota emm Mäa.

Kolumbus docht dee Ead wea runt. Hee wull daut bewiese. Jo,jo. Hee wull romme Ead säajle, nomm Waste onn bott hee no Kjiena emm Ooste kaun. Hee beräd dee sponsche Kjeenijsche daut see am doatoo Jelt lied. Onn kaun hee no Kjiena? Nä, hee kaun doa nijch han. Hee kaun no Aumerikau emm Waste. Hee säajeld

nijch romm'e Ead. Daut wea äwajens sea goot daut hee Aumerikau funk, wiels nu kunne onse Menniste doa hantratje aus daut enn Russlaunt aula enne Bromm jintj.

Daut ess aul schlemm jenuach daut dee Ead saul soo aus en Baul senne. Oba daut dee sitj noch stoatj enn'e Rund dreit? Wäa kaun soo waut jleewe? Dann wea wie je aula soo dieslijch daut wie nijch wiste waut wie deede! Sennt doa nijch aul jenuach Schosels enne Welt? Onn dann saul dee Ead uck noch romm daut Sonntje gone? Onn daut Montje romme Ead? Wäa lat sitj ditt ennbille? Aus see dän Rockeet mett däm Maun nomm Montje tselde, woo wudd daut äwahaupt jegone senne wann daut Montje nijch stell hilt onn dee Ead sitj pienijch enne Rund dreid onn doabie noch romm daut Sonntje waundat? Daut mott aula opp Oat onn Städ jewäse senne, äwahaupt daut Montje, wiels dee Maun kaum jletjlijch han onn jintj doa uck bowe romm. Irjent waut ess doa faust aunjemoakt. Oba fäle Lied dentje doawäjen doch daut dreit sitj aula onn wankt emm Himmel romm.

Oba nijch etj. Etj weens jleew daut nijch. Etj laus uck daut enn jewäsna President ute Stäts uck docht dee Ead ess plaut. Wann President Aundrees Jackson fonne Stäts daut jleewd, dann kaun etj daut uck ruijch dentje. Doa ess uck 'ne Jesalschoft, dee heet "Dee Plaute Ead Jemeenschoft," onn fäle wichtje Lied jeheare doatoo. Onn haft dee Kjeenijsche fonn Enjlaunt mol diretjt jesajt, daut see jleeft dee Ead ess runt? Wann dee jegrommde Kjeadels enn dee Jesalschoft, een President fonne Stäts, fleijcht dee enjelsche Kjeenijsche, onn mien Plemenitj Wellem Derjtse bie Altoona aula saje dee Ead ess plaut, dann ess dee Ead plaut.

Ooda nä? mm

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## Nachricht aus Deutschland Unsere Jubilare

**Dr. Herbert Wiens wurde 70.**

Am 24.12.1989 wurde mit Dr. Herbert Wiens eines jener Mitglieder unsere Landsmannschaft 70 Jahre, denen es gelungen ist, sowohl innerhalb der russlanddeutschen Volksgruppe als auch in der Öffentlichkeit hohes Ansehen und Würdigung dank unermüdlicher persönlicher Anstrengungen zu erlangen. Dabei stand während seiner aktiven beruflichen Laufbahn das Engagement im öffentlichen Leben an erster Stelle, während nach seiner Pensionierung 1980 die landsmannschaftliche Arbeit immer mehr an Bedeutung gewann und mit seiner Wahl in den Bundesvorstand der Landsmannschaft (1985) und der Berufung zum stellvertretenden Bundesvorsitzenden (1987-1989) ihren Höhepunkt erreichte.

Herbert Wiens entstammt einer mennonitischen Lehrer-familie aus Nikolaifeld im Kreis Kronau (Ukraine). Seine Hochschulreife erlangte er an der Arbeiterfakultät in Chortitza bei Saporoshje, und er studierte Geschichte am Deutschen Pädagogischen Institut in Odessa von 1936 bis zur Verhaftung seiner drei Brüder im Jahr 1938. Anschliessend war er Lehrer und im Krieg Angehöriger der Wehrmacht. Nach schwerer Verwundung im Februar 1943 konnte er sein Studium in Marburg, Posen und Göttingen fortsetzen und promovierte 1946 in Göttingen (Slwistik). Nach dem Staatsexamen in Geschichte, Deutsch und Russisch 1949 war Dr. Wiens bis 1980 Lehrer im höheren Schuldienst und zuletzt Direktor des Are-Gymnasiums Bad Neuenahr (Oberstudiendirektor). Daneben war er von 1956 bis 1986 Fraktionsvorsitzender (SPD) im Stadtrat von Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler und von 1956 bis 1989 Mitglied des Kreistages Ahrweiler, davon 22 Jahre als Fraktionsvorsitzender. Er erhielt

während dieser Zeit viele Auszeichnungen, so den Wappenteller seiner Heimatstadt, das Verdienstkreuz am Bande des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, die besonders hoch geschätzte Freiherr-vom-Stein-Plakette sowie andere Plaketten, Medaillen und Ehrenteller.

Der Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland gehört Dr. Wiens seit ihrer Gründung (1950) an. Obwohl er nicht mehr im Bundesvorstand ist, gehört Dr. Wiens nach wie vor zu den gesuchtesten Referenten und Chronisten

zu russlanddeutschen Fragen. Privat ist der Vater von vier Kindern und Grossvater von neun Enkeln ein wunderbarer Gesprächspartner, mit dem man über alles reden kann-von der hohen Politik bis zu seinem liebsten Hobby, dem Schachspiel, dem er als Vorsitzender des Schachclubs Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, zwölfmaliger Stadtmeister und Ausrichter vieler Deutscher Einzelmeisterschaften besonders zugetan ist.

**(van Volk auf dem Weg)**

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### VON DJNEPRS UFERN

Von Djneprs Ufern klagen ferne Lieder,  
Der Strom der Zeit vermindert nicht ihr Ton;  
Bekunden oft und staendig und schon wieder;  
Vergaenglichkeits-Tribute sind der Menschenlohn.

Dort knieten einst die Mennos Erdenpilger,  
Dort Freuten sich die Bauern ob der Pracht  
Der Felder ueppig reif; der Gaerten emsig Tilger...  
Dor heilt die Hand der Guet Staendig Wacht.

Dort lagen Doerfer, die vor Wohlstand bluehten  
Dort herrschte Muttersprache in dem Vaterland;  
Die Herde, wie die Haeuser, heimisch-innig gluehten,  
Dort war Gemeinschaft, der erstribte Stand.

Dort weidet Vieh auf den Gemeinschaftswiesen,  
Der Schaefer fuehrte Herden zu dem Hort;  
Es war ein Fest der Eintracht, Segen spriessen,  
Es war ersehnte Ankunft, endlich, vielerort.

Dann rollten Wolken des Gewitters schwer, nie-ended  
Dort wuetete Gewalt und Mord und Hohn:  
Und Hoffnung, selbst das Leben gar verschwendend  
Denn Luzifer behauptete den schwarzen Thron.

Es praegten Raetsel ganzer Generationen,  
Es wurden Menschen sich zum Gegenstand  
Des Untergangs, und der Verzweiflungs-Endstationen...  
Denn grausamalt den Tod die unsichtbare Hand.

Dann meldete der Gnade heimlich Kunde,  
Sie oeffnete des nachts mit einmal Tor und Tuer;  
so geht denn heute durch die festlich frohe Runde:  
Ein innig Dank der Guete fuer und fuer!

-- von Jack Thiessen

### **Mennonite Brethren and Higher Education: Running from the profane, pursuing the sacred and in danger of losing it all**

**Communities** with a sense of history and the importance of their heritage build and develop schools. Communities opposed to their tradition let their schools die or kill them outright. The report on higher education in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (January 12, 1990), is a chilling example of Canadian Mennonite Brethren (MB) attitudes toward higher education in general and liberal arts in particular.

Almost a hundred years ago the MB historian P.M. Friesen spoke of Mennonites who rejected education to their own ruin. Such despisers of education were, in Friesen's words, obscurantists wallowing in the swamp of mediocrity and ignorance. Friesen and many other educated leaders did all they could to raise the levels of theological and liberal education in the Russian-Mennonite communities. Their efforts paid off well.

Today, in the last decade of the 20th century, MB leaders and the constituencies they represent and influence are not only afraid of a liberal education, but also do all in their power to close the schools that seek to prepare young people for the world in which they live.

The January 12 issue of the *MB Herald* carries several articles about an MB "vision" for the 1990s and changes that must take place to meet the challenges of the future. An institution like the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC), established in 1944, apparently no longer fulfils the mandate of preparing young people for ministries in the churches and conference. It is alleged that the theological and liberal arts training which students receive in this institution makes them unfit for services in their communities. Especially MBBC's affiliation with the University of Winnipeg is unacceptable to some MB leaders and their followers. What these people seem to want is schools which teach the Bible and certain evangelical values only, similar to the programs of the Bible schools of the 1930s and 40s.

#### **Who considers graduates and students?**

With regard to MBBC and its programs, several questions are in order. Have the students who attend MBBC -- at great cost to themselves and their supporters -- ever been consulted about why they chose this institution? Have they been asked why they seek to combine their theological education in their

conference school with a liberal arts education at the university? Don't the MB leaders realize that a higher theological and liberal arts education is needed today to serve the church and society adequately? And don't the leaders appreciate the fact that there are many Christian-Mennonite professors who teach at the University of Winnipeg and other Canadian universities? Surely the liberal arts and universities can't be all that threatening to the faith of today's MB students!

MBBC has served our churches and conferences well, and with its limited financial resources continues to provide our young people with a good and balanced higher education. Its music program is one of the best of its kind. Its faculty is well qualified and dedicated to the task of teaching and serving the MB communities. Its library and associated archive facilities have a fine reputation among students and scholars in Winnipeg and beyond. And its students enjoy the respect of university professors and graduate schools.

#### **No money for the mind**

To close MBBC, to downgrade it academically, or to transform it into a Capernwray-type institution, as some are suggesting, would result in the loss of serious MB education, academic excellence, and the best of our students. It would confirm the perception among other Mennonites that the MBs are anti-intellectual and anti-education.

There is no doubt that education is costly and demands sacrifices on the part of all MB members. Regionalism may indeed be a reality today, as some argue, but if a community believes in certain values it should be willing to transcend regionalism and make appropriate provisions to communicate those values to its children and grandchildren. There seems to be no lack of finances when it comes to erecting elaborate, even luxurious, church buildings. Pastors and members seem to be convinced that multi-million dollar facilities are needed to worship God adequately and to attract outsiders to their church. Conference delegates are quite willing to accept large budgets for evangelism and "church planting" abroad, but for schools and education there are insufficient finances. Does this make sense?

A community with a strong sense of its heritage, its

biblical-historical principles and its values should be prepared to promote the best education possible. There is evidence to suggest that many MB leaders, including pastors, do not value the God-given heritage of their conference. The elimination of the Mennonite name from local churches, the ignorance of, and aversion to, Anabaptist-Mennonite history among many MB members, and the down-grading of Christian-Mennonite principles indicates clearly that many MBs are moving away from their historic roots. These facts explain no doubt the weak emphasis of Mennonite studies in our conference schools, students' attending other evangelical institutions, and our leaders' suspicions, even fears, of those MB members who plead for a strong Anabaptist-Mennonite emphasis in the constituencies.

### **Education for control**

What many MBs are apparently looking for is an education which stresses the Bible with a strong "evangelical" slant, an education which indoctrinates students with a narrow fundamentalist orthodoxy, and teaches skills to communicate to the unchurched "the four spiritual laws." A good liberal arts education, it is feared, will make people think for themselves, to examine the assumptions of their leadership, and even oppose some views and practices of their elders. This fear of losing control and authority is one important reason why the educated, independent thinker is generally not welcomed by the MB leadership. Let it be said that the educated young men and women would love to contribute their knowledge and skills to the building of our faith community. Instead they are rejected, ignored and pushed to the periphery of Mennonite Brethren life.

In reading the report in the *MB Herald* the thought occurred to me that perhaps the time has come at last to cooperate with other Mennonites in higher education, pooling resources, facilities, and faculty, in a joint educational venture. But then when I read in the same issue self-righteous and judgmental words about other Mennonites, my heart sank and I saw very little immediate hope for our educational crisis. John Redekop asks: "Can evangelical anabaptists in the '90s continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with those Mennonite Christians who question the unique efficacy of Christ's atonement?" Redekop is referring to Norman Kraus, a dedicated Mennonite missionary, whose ideas and opinions he misunderstands and thus misrepresents. Other examples of this attitude could be cited.

Perhaps all we can do at this time is pray that God might change the hearts and minds of our leaders, or, failing that, grant us men and women who truly have a vision for our time. The words about vision in the mouths of our present leaders ring hypocritical and hollow.

-- Harry Loewen

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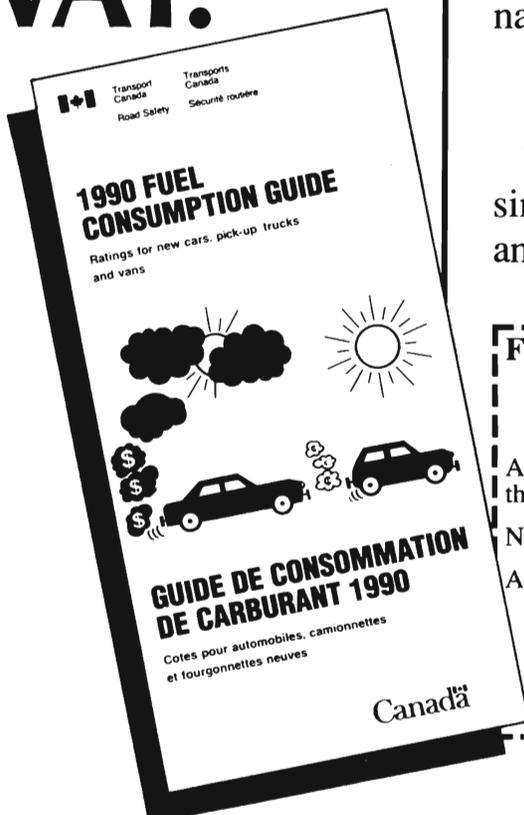
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