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# ForeWord

This edition opens with a feature article on the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna. It is nearing its 100th anniversary and is vastly changed in physical facilities and focus. While it looks back on a strong educational tradition, it is also exhibiting the optimism of a young institution as it works to revise its outlook for the modern context.

North Kildonan has long been known as "Mennonite country" because that is where many newly arrived Mennonites settled after their arrival in Canada and Manitoba. Those whose memories go back to the earliest days in NK will remember farms and very large yards, which for the most part have been "developed" into urban Winnipeg by now. An interview with Dietrich Klassen recalls those early days.

The merits of home birth are hotly debated by professionals and others, nevertheless a decision to give birth at home is something a couple must consciously choose. Those who do follow through find it an intensely rewarding experience. The article in this issue describes one such experience.

There are three major book reviews in this issue, two dealing with a different kind of "grim reality;" Andreas Schroeder explores the personality of a strange-but-true Prairie resident in his first novel, *Dustship Glory*, while the concept of a modern "underground railway" is described in the second review as a way to respond to the political persecution in Central America.

A third book review, quite different from the others, is of an anthology of works by Mennonite writers in the book, edited by Harry Loewen and Al Reimer, called *Visions and Realities*.

A further review, this time of the movie *The Color Purple*, explores some parallels between Mennonites and Black America.

In accordance with previous years, we are publishing the names of Mennonite graduates of high educational institutions. In the case of the "secular" universities we have selected those names which are typically Mennonite along with those graduates with non-Mennonite names who are known to us. Accordingly, we know in advance there are those who will be left out (and those who are not Mennonite, who are included). If you are someone who is left out, or know of someone who is, please let us know, so we can include a "late list" next edition.

In the German section, your attention is drawn to the fine article by Elisabeth Peters.

This edition brings down the curtain on the last issue of volume 15, and the end of 15 years of publishing. The *Mirror* will be back in September.

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# Mennonite Mirror

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june, 1986

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Serving the Mennonite People of Manitoba

# MCI: almost a century old, but still young in its vision

by Allan Dueck

On September 2, 1986, for the 96th consecutive autumn, students will arrive at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna to begin a new academic year. Although its name was changed twice during the first seventeen years of its existence, the "Gretna school" was the first post-elementary Mennonite school to be established in Canada. A residential school, the MCI has been supported from the beginning by churches choosing to join the school's society. Through the now nearly 100 years of its history, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute reflects the challenges, the failures, and the triumphs of an institution dedicated to the task of providing a thorough, well-rounded education, which is based unapologetically upon the teachings and model of Jesus Christ.

Already in 1885, Reinland teacher Wilhelm Rempel and other progressive church leaders met in the Altberghal school with the Bergthaler *Lehrdienst* to explore ways of improving education in the schools on the West Reserve. At a meeting in 1888, influential Bergthaler Elder Johann Funk lent his support to the group's plan for a teacher-training school. The curriculum was to have a broad base, but with emphasis upon German and a Christian atmosphere. The school's primary task was to educate teachers for Mennonite community schools in southern Manitoba.

When classes at the Gretna Normal School began in September 1889, some 60 students attended. Wilhelm Rempel, the school's first teacher, faced the difficult task of teaching a broad spectrum of pupils ranging from those who couldn't read to teachers in training. Because he decided that the task was too difficult for him, the school closed in 1890.

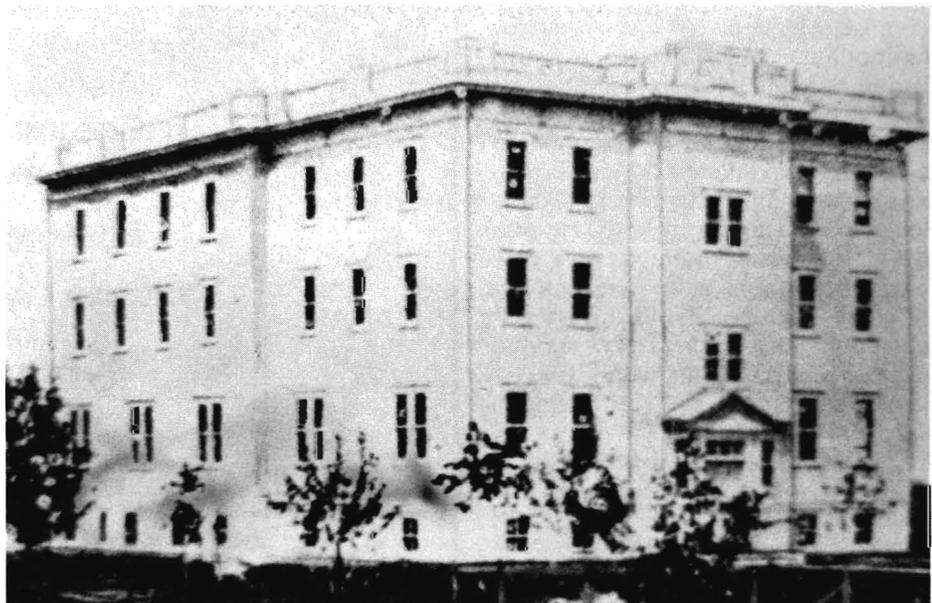
With the passage of the first public schools act in 1890, the Manitoba government recognized the need to gain Mennonite support for public schools in

the West Reserve. Seeing a potential ally in the Gretna Normal School, the government sent Dr. George Bryce to Newton, Kansas, in order to seek the assistance of Heinrich H. Ewert, principal of the Halstead Seminary, in locating a Mennonite educational leader who might serve as Mennonite inspector of schools in the West Reserve and as principal of the Normal School. Bryce soon decided to invite Ewert himself to the position. After repeated encouragements from the government and the school's society and despite the opposition of his wife and the Kansas Mennonites, Ewert finally decided to come.

From 1891-98 under the dedicated leadership of Ewert, the Gretna Normal School grew, but the zeal of Elder Funk, H. H. Ewert and the society for education accentuated the conflicting views among Bergthaler Mennonites towards education, and became one significant factor contributing to the separation of the Sommerfelder Mennonites from the Bergthalers in 1892. Believing that for-

mal education — beyond elementary school at least — would inevitably lead away from agrarian life, the Sommerfelders opposed Ewert and his school. On the other hand, Ewert believed that the best way to preserve Mennonite values was to accept public schools for the area, but to staff them with well-qualified Mennonite teachers.

In 1898, the Gretna Normal School was renamed the Mennonite Educational Institute. When in 1903 it became evident that the MEI building in Gretna would soon have to be replaced, bitter conflict developed over whether the school was to be rebuilt in Gretna, Altona, or Winkler. Because of his outspoken opposition to evangelical fundamentalism and his personal style — thought by some to be arrogant and dictatorial — Ewert had acquired some enemies. Inter-town rivalry between Gretna and Altona added heat to the controversy over the school's possible relocation. Elder Funk, a staunch supporter of the Gretna school during the



MCI as it was in 1912.

early years, now threw his support to the Altona group. Irregularities in the proceedings plagued the search for a decision, and brought considerable pain. Finally, in 1908, the MEI moved to Altona where it continued to operate until 1926 when the building burned. Meanwhile, in 1908, the supporters of the Gretna location decided to rebuild there. After initially pledging support for the move to Altona, H. H. Ewert determined to stay with the Gretna group. And so, in 1908, the Gretna school finally received its current name — Mennonite Collegiate Institute.

During the early years, enrollment at the MCI fluctuated, but the influx of *Russländer* Mennonites during the 1920s brought a new clientele to the school. Because of the MCI's emphasis on German culture and its theological orientation, most *Russländer* teachers were attracted more to the MCI than to the MEI in Altona, which had been pushed by several of its many principals — notably J. J. Balzer — towards evangelical fundamentalism. When enrollment difficulties and financial pressures again faced the MCI at the beginning of the depression, Mr. Ewert donated back half of his salary and insisted that the school carry on. When Ewert died in 1934, few disputed the view that he had been the soul of the school for the first 40 years of its existence.

To replace Mr. Ewert, the MCI's board by a narrow margin chose G. H. Peters over John K. Friesen, a very popular teacher and a native of Altona. Gerhard Ens has speculated whether the long acrimony between Altona and Gretna over the MEI relocation might have been mollified had Friesen been appointed principal instead of Peters. A first-rate scientist, Mr. Peters was, however, a traditionalist in education. Under his leadership, the school continued to stress German, religious training, and character building. Rigorously opposed to "modernism," Peters during his tenure saw enrollment climb from 48 students in 1935 to 114 in 1948. He also presided over the building of a new school building in 1946. One factor in the school's success during this era was the popularity of teacher D. P. Esau who inspired many students with his innovative courses and lively instruction in German literature.

The MCI personality best known to Manitoba Mennonites today is undoubtedly Paul J. Schaefer, who served as MCI's principal from 1946-67. An engaging and fatherly leader, "Lehra Schaefer" inspired students and teachers to come to the school. Under his

leadership, the MCI achieved notable academic strength. An auditorium was built in 1952, and a new residence, which still serves today, in 1955. After the academic building of 1946 was destroyed by fire in 1963, a new academic building, the one presently in use, was completed in 1964. Although the emphasis on teacher training diminished early in the sixties, the MCI during Mr. Schaefer's era continued to produce teachers for Mennonite schools in southern Manitoba. Students of this period recall that towards the end of each year, trustees would visit the MCI in an effort to hire grade 12 students as teachers for various Mennonite community schools.

In summary, from 1891 until the early 1960s, the MCI made an invaluable contribution to the Manitoba Mennonite community by providing hundreds of teachers with a thorough academic education in the context of Russian-Mennonite culture and Mennonite theological perspectives. The substantial impact of the school and, indeed, its very survival are inconceivable without the single-minded, self-sacrificing, and visionary leadership provided by principals Ewert, Peters, and Schaefer.

From 1967-76 Gerhard G. Ens, a long-time teacher at the MCI and "lieutenant" to Mr. Schaefer, assumed the principalship. During his decade, the



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school's primary language of instruction changed from German to English, participation in intervarsity sports began, and drama and music flourished. The contribution of Henry Engbrecht to musical excellence at the school was considerable. Near the end of Mr. Ens' term, the MCI's present gymnasium was constructed. Already declining in importance near the end of Mr. Schaefer's principalship, the MCI's long-standing role as teacher-training center now ended. And so, under Mr. Ens, a new rationale for the school's existence evolved, that of educating Mennonite young people to the broader ministries of church and community leadership.

Ken H. Loewen, only the fifth principal in MCI's long history, served from 1976-86. Although deeply committed to the church school, Mr. Loewen nudged the school closer to the educational mainstream. Enrollments climbed to a notable high of about 225 during the late 1970s. Mr. Loewen, who had encouraged the gymnasium project under Mr. Ens, now presided over the construction of a new library, named after the beloved Mr. Schaefer. He also supported the revision and the provincial accreditation of the religious studies curriculum, and encouraged the introduction of new programs in French and computer science.

Thus, from 1967 until 1985 the MCI's purpose broadened. No longer exclusively training teachers, the school continued its emphasis on academic excellence, entered the arena of intervarsity athletics, and gained strength in drama and music. The school's facilities were improved by the addition of a gymnasium and a library. Continuing to receive the support of society churches, the MCI equipped hundreds of young people not only with academic creden-



*MCI front entrance and Schaefer Library, 1986.*

tials, but with an understanding of Mennonite history and faith, and a personal commitment to Christian service. Many graduates of the school from the Ens-Loewen decades entered service professions — whether as teachers, nurses, social workers, ministers, or MCC service workers.

With the resignation of Ken Loewen as principal in 1985, the MCI's board hired Allan Dueck as principal and, for the first time, hired a vice-principal in the person of Dave Regehr. Dueck assumed primary responsibility for leadership of the school's academic program, whereas Regehr took charge of the residential life program. These men, together with the board, face the exciting prospect of leading the institution as it seeks to renew its vision for the coming generation of students.

As a result of several years of dreaming and planning by previous principal Ken Loewen and members of the board, a direction-setting event for the MCI took place on January 3-5, 1986, at Villa Maria, a quiet retreat center in St. Norbert. The purpose of this "think tank" was to reflect upon the school's future and to establish concrete plans and priorities for the coming five years or so. Under the capable direction of Dr. John Neufeld, president of CMBC, members of the board and staff and many of their spouses began their deliberations by wrestling with the fundamental question of the school's purpose.

Out of this exchange emerged a strong consensus that the MCI's purpose is to provide young people with an Anabaptist/Christian context in which to develop their God-given gifts and to cultivate in them an appreciation of our Mennonite heritage. The statement of purpose adopted at think tank concluded with these words:

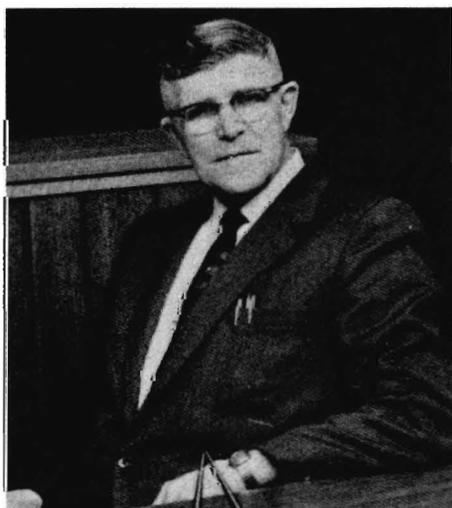
Our aim is that our students accept Christ as Lord and that they be disciples who express Christian hope by

serving others, promoting peace, and providing Christ-like leadership within the church community and the secular world.

These conclusions regarding the school's purpose underline the realization capably expressed by Karl Fast, guest speaker at MCI's annual meeting in 1985, that the primary reason for the existence of our church schools is the religious one. Public schools can match church schools in most aspects of academic and extracurricular programming, but only the church school has a mandate to explore and promote in a committed way Anabaptist/Mennonite values such as discipleship, Biblical faithfulness, and service.

In light of the MCI's basic purpose, think tank generated many concrete, exciting recommendations in such areas as residence life, facilities, personnel, and curriculum. Although many former MCI students consider one of the highlights of their MCI experience to have been the residence, the "res" has historically been regarded as a place for students to live rather than as a distinctive feature of school life for which careful programming is essential. Among the recommendations for the residence, think tank directed the staff to modify daily schedules to allow greater flexibility in evening programming, so that it can include such activities as intramural sports, fine arts nights, Bible studies, and social activities. And, in staffing the residence, the board is placing increased emphasis upon the staff members' abilities in counselling, recreational leadership, and spiritual guidance.

Another significant area of planning called for improved facilities. Think tank approved exploration of two possible projects. The first project entails reconstruction of the chapel to extend backstage capacity for staging major musical and dramatic productions, and installa-



*Paul Schaefer*

tion of inclined "theater" seating to enhance the chapel's usefulness for daily chapels as well as for choir rehearsals and dramatic productions. Research has also been initiated to determine the feasibility of embarking on a second project, that of building a new residence which, among other features, might incorporate a modular living arrangement and increased recreational facilities.

To strengthen the emphasis upon Anabaptist/Christian values in the school, think tank directed the board's personnel committee to give preference — in hiring new staff members — to applicants with post-high school training in Bible and/or Anabaptist studies, and to encourage current staff members to expand their knowledge of Bible and Mennonite history and theology during leaves of absence or other opportunities for professional development.

Think tank also affirmed the intention of continuing the school's historical commitment to music. Although the particular options will be reshaped, choral work will continue to receive primary emphasis in MCI's music program. Students who sing in auditioned specialty choirs — chamber or ensemble — or perform in band or orchestra will be awarded academic credit, and rehearsals will be scheduled within the academic day to allow greater flexibility for evening scheduling in the residence. Think tank also called for the expansion of the current band into a full orchestra as adequate numbers of string players become available.

In reviewing the MCI's curriculum, think tank urged the school to maintain its commitment to academic excellence. To heighten the benefit of courses in Bible and church history, board and staff promoted a hands-on approach. Invitations to students to present "personal pilgrimages" in chapel, to do local history, to take on service assignments, and to tour Mennonite centers such as Lancaster County were suggested avenues for greater student involvement.

In the MCI's near future, the major event is its centennial in 1990. One exciting project has already been launched, the preparation of a thorough history of the school. Gerhard Ens, Jr., son of former principal Gerhard Ens and a historian well-acquainted with the MCI, has agreed to research and write the history. Intentions are that the book be completed on time for the centennial year.

As the MCI approaches 1990, it can look back on a colorful and productive past. For its first 75 years, despite some

unfortunate controversy, the school contributed enormously to the educational and cultural development of Mennonites in Manitoba. Not only did the school prepare countless teachers for Mennonite community schools, but it gave many Mennonite church and community leaders a sense of Mennonite identity and a clarity of Christian commitment.

Today, as the think tank directives demonstrate, the MCI is finding new ways to strengthen its contribution to its community. The buildings and staffing have changed over the years, athletic programs have flourished, and only a few of today's students will become teachers. But the MCI continues to strive for academic excellence in the context of Anabaptist/Christian values, and to challenge young people to reject society's materialistic values in favor of peace-making, social concern, and service as exemplified by our Lord. **mm**

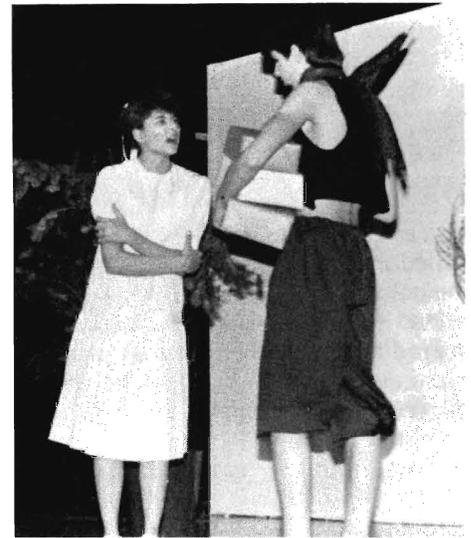
## Students observations of MCI

One activity I particularly appreciate at the MCI is the twice-weekly Bible study. "Bible study," however, is a very loose term, as these sessions can range from an actual study of a Bible passage to a discussion of war or a sing-song.

It is at Bible study that we students can openly respond to things we've been taught in classes and chapel. Some discussions that have developed out of a topic at a Bible study have been very

thought-provoking. On one occasion we got into a discussion of Christians obeying rules and although we didn't really come up with many concrete rules to live by, the discussion really forced me to examine if I live as a Christian ought to live. We can also discuss our personal thoughts and questions with our fellow students, and sometimes with staff members. Often a good discussion helps to clear up our questions or gets us on the way to finding some answers. One Bible study showed us why evolutionism is not biblical and helped us to form responses to people who believe in it.

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Spring drama, 1986.



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of dedicated Christians at Bible study is very rewarding to me, and I believe that it has helped me to grow in my faith.

**Janet Ens**  
Grade 12

In the 1985–86 school year, MCI gave me numerous opportunities to expand in my musical experience. I sang in both all-school and concert choirs as well as the ensemble, a specialty choir formed just this year. As a 14-member choir under the direction of Marlene Wiebe, we sang Christian contemporary songs such as a short cantata entitled *Go Ye Children*. We also performed dramas dealing with love, peace, and acceptance of others. Performances required travelling to churches on the weekends. We worshipped with youth groups on Friday or Saturday evenings and occasionally performed for the entire congregation on Sunday mornings. We also joined the chamber choir for a tour to Rosthern. With weekly rehearsals the year was busy, but being part of MCI's first ensemble was rewarding in that it taught me a lot about music and the enjoyment of performing for others.

**Sandra Hildebrand**  
Grade 10

Residence life has, for me, been both the most enjoyable and the most educational aspect of MCI. When I arrived at school, people began invading the personal space I had labelled "No Trespassing." As they crowded closer, they saw through my masks, perceived my faults, and discovered who I really was; yet, surprisingly, they accepted me any-

way. In return, they removed their own barriers and made themselves vulnerable to my acceptance or rejection. The ensuing friendships were open and grew as the year progressed, even amid some disagreements. Because most students shared Christian beliefs, it was easy to talk about God and the Christian faith. For instance, in one late night discussion my roommate and I discussed the importance of baptism and involvement in the church. On the other hand, different beliefs and opinions made me more open-minded, widening my outlook on life. Throughout all my experiences this year, I discovered the importance of honesty and forgiveness in relationships. Not only did I learn to accept others despite their faults, but I also came to a deeper understanding of myself.

**Judith Friesen**  
Grade 11

An activity that I have grown to appreciate at MCI is the chapel. This break from the academic day allows students and staff alike to forget their busy schedules. With tests and projects forgotten, we worship and fellowship together. Chapels feature guest speakers, choirs, and specialty groups as well as staff and student input. We take this time to *listen* to others' ideas and experiences. For me a chapel highlight this year was Rev. David F. Friesen's (Gretna Berghthaler Church) sharing his life story. his faith when, as a CO during the war years, he hauled coal and worked as a hospital orderly was an inspiration that typifies the chapel experience.

**Myron Penner**  
Grade 11

With subdued excitement, the words "let's go" are whispered before we take our bow at the curtain call. MCI stages two major dramatic productions each year, the fall musical with its large cast and the spring drama with its serious theme.

I had the privilege of being a lead character in the spring drama, C. S. Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew*. I learned a lot — especially in the area of covering up mistakes! For instance, one time when a glass beaker broke on stage, another actor and I had to improvise to integrate the sweeping up of the glass with our acting.

**Andrew Hiebert**  
Grade 12

## your word

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### ANOTHER WORD

Roy Vogt (our word, mm May) suggests that Mennonites may have some answers to world problems but that non-violence is not such an answer. According to him "the Anabaptists did not feel that non-violence was a practical way of overcoming violence in the world." I don't know enough to be able to disprove this statement but I sincerely hope that Roy Vogt is wrong.

I thought that from their reading of Scripture and especially the Sermon on the Mount our forefathers had indeed taken Jesus at his word. Of course when one reads what Jesus taught about the birds and the flowers and, in the same spirit, about non-resistance (of real evil I suppose), then it is natural to think that such teaching is anything but practical. Maybe that is why so few people have ever taken these words seriously. Instead of pointing to the Anabaptists as limited, perhaps Vogt's argument should be extended radically (or *konsequent*, as A. H. Unruh used to say) and Jesus' position should be found wanting. After all, look at what happened to him!

There is much that could be said about this thought-provoking editorial. Let me make two points: 1. Has mankind "contained the evil in the world" and if so what does that mean? Have not wars led to more terrible wars? Has non-violence ever been tried? 2. Doing good is certainly better than doing evil. Why then did Jesus, instead of those curious statements that tradition has saved for us, not simply say: People, be nice! Sincerely,  
Victor Doerksen  
Winnipeg

# A North Kildonan pioneer remembers the early years: transplants before the roots

by Paul Redekop

During the turbulent years in Russia, many Mennonites left to find new homes in Canada. They became the new pioneers in a country in the throes of rapid urbanization, where the traditional agricultural way of life was rapidly disappearing. Among these new pioneers was the Klassen family.

Dietrich Klassen arrived in Canada with his parents, two brothers and five sisters, in October, 1925, at the age of 18. The younger members of the family had persuaded their parents to come to Canada to farm. During the period in which the Klassen family came to Canada the Canadian government had in its wisdom decided that these Mennonite settlers should be required to settle in rural areas and located in specific rural communities more or less arbitrarily. "We had a very bad beginning," Mr. Klassen recalls. The Klassen family was simply told that they were to be let off in a place called Plum Coulee, although they had originally wanted to locate in Ontario where they had relatives. Dick still remembers their arrival in this place vividly. They were let off at a deserted railway station, with no one there to greet them: "There was no one who said Hello to us. It was 10 above Fahrenheit, and a cold wind."

After a time, they did find a man who abruptly informed them that he needed "eene Mejal onn een Benjel" to work for him. So young Dietrich went with his oldest sister, to work on this farm. This was only for two weeks, though, to help with the harvest, and then it was on to looking for work on other farms in the area.

After about a year in the Plum Coulee area the Klassen family bought a farm near Steinbach. They had hoped to be able to farm there, but found the land to be "only bush and stone." However, they stayed on, working where they could to pay for the land. Dick, as he came to be known in Canada, tells the story of the time when he had travelled

to Morris, Manitoba, in search of work. When a man approached him at the train station to ask if he was looking for work, he accepted. They had been told that there were many French-speaking people in this area, so Dick asked the man whether he was French.

"No," the man replied, "Are you?"

"No, I'm German."

"I'm German too," said the man, "Mennonite."

"Dann räd wie Plautdietsch," Dick concludes with a hearty laugh.

The Klassens had to suspend their hopes of farming after a year of struggle, and decided to move into Winnipeg. The daughters of the family (Dick's sisters) had been able to obtain domestic work in the city, and so the move to Winnipeg reunited the members of this large but close family. They shared a home with another Mennonite family in the North End of Winnipeg until the spring of 1928. They moved to North Kildonan where they had purchased a five-acre plot of land at the foot of Edison Avenue. They built their own home on this plot of land. The elder Mr. Klassen's plan was "do some gardening." He would grow vegetables and take them by wagon to the more populated neighborhoods to the south to sell. So, on May 17 of that year, the week they moved, they planted potatoes. "That was the beginning," says Dick.

This area in North Kildonan had been purchased by the Winnipeg Mennonite Immigrant Community from the municipality of North Kildonan. The purpose from the outset was to divide this land into "chicken and garden plots" to be sold in turn to Mennonite immigrants. The Mennonite community had first tried to purchase a piece of land on the West side of Winnipeg, but had been turned down by the council for that area who, not knowing what Mennonites were, expressed suspicion of these immigrants. In North Kildonan, one of the councilmen was a funeral director

named Bardal, who put in a good word for these aspiring settlers. "They're good people," he had said, thus persuading his fellow counsellors to approve the sale of the land. Since that time many Mennonites from North Kildonan have had the Bardal Funeral Home handle the arrangements when there was a death in the family.

This purchase of land was the basis for what American sociologist J. W. Fretz would, after a visit in the late forties, call the "first urban colony." It was a place where Mennonites could live cheaply with their own people while taking advantage of the opportunities for jobs that the city had to offer. The community remains a haven for new generations of immigrants coming now from such places as Mexico and South America.

When they first arrived in Winnipeg, the Klassen family attended a Mennonite Brethren "Mission Church" on Burrows Avenue. It was called the "North End" church. When they first moved to North Kildonan, they were too far from this church to travel there. As it was too far to walk and there were only two cars in the entire community, they began to hold services in one another's homes. Dick's brother George had studied the Bible in Russia and had been involved in church work, so he became the first minister to his newly-formed



Gertrude Klassen, with first house and first child.

congregation. At first the Klassen home was the place of worship. Then another Klassen, who lived a little nearer the centre of the community and who had a slightly larger room, had the services in his home. However, these Klassens had their barn attached to their house, and the worship services had their moments. Dick recalls: "The cow was in there too, and it would depend on which way the wind was blowing. We didn't mind it, though," he adds. "We even had a choir there. It was very simple and we were all in the same boat, the same 'richness'."

The Mennonite immigrants built a church in North Kildonan in 1930. They started to build the church on November 10, and held their first council meeting there on December 15. The new church was also the site of the Christmas service that year: "We built that church all together: a Mennonite church and an MB church all together. It was a good time," says Dick. He worked together with members from the General Conference of Mennonites for many years, and "that was very good," he says. There is a note of sadness in his voice when he tells of the day in 1935 that he found out that the "GCs" in their group were splitting off to begin their own church. Despite the separation of the two congregations, their church continued to grow. They had built an addition in 1932, and had to build on again in 1941, and once again in 1950.

Dick got married on August 9, 1931. In 1930 he had found the right girl, Gertrude Langemann. Her family was willing to accept him, but on one condition; that they wait for one year. Dick thought that wasn't too bad, but they set the date right away. They were married in the little church on Devon Avenue which had been built the winter before. That spring Dick's boss had said:

"You're crazy to get married." They had no money. "We love each other and the Lord will provide for us," Dick replied. "How can He provide when you have nothing?" had been the response. Dick did find enough work that spring to raise \$150, which he used to buy lumber. In the meantime, the Klassen family had divided the family's five-acre lot into five one-acre parcels; one each for the three brothers, one for the father, and one for "business." That spring, with the lumber he had bought Dick began to build a house for himself and his prospective bride on his one-acre plot of land. He did the work when the time was available: "Each morning before going to the job, four rows of shingles could be done. And in the evening until dark we worked." Dick even painted the shingles, so he could have clean run-off water. The house was small; 14x20, with the bedroom 8 by 10 feet, but well made and comfortable.

In Winnipeg in the early years Dick Klassen held many different jobs. He had worked for a time during the first winter in a candy factory. In the spring he got a job in a machine shop repairing machinery. After he had arrived in North Kildonan he was able to get a job as a carpenter. This was a job he liked. He worked for a number of years for the same man, who liked him equally. When this man, a Mr. Moore, needed another worker he would ask Dick: "Do you know somebody?" Through this connection he was able to get jobs for "many, many people," members of the Mennonite community.

However, steady work continued to be difficult to find. Eventually Dick and his brothers started their own business. This began in 1935, when they were approached by a man to make screw-on heels for ladies' high-heel shoes, at two

cents a pair, all materials supplied. The Klassen brothers worked hard that winter to produce these heels, and by spring they were ready. Those who had commissioned the work were not, however. They had been unable to sell these new heels, and went bankrupt. That was the start, though, of this family enterprise. They were able to keep the machines with which their employers had provided them: a three-horsepower motor, a lathe, and a punch press. In 1936 the brothers began a working relationship which was to last the next 33 years.

In the meantime, family life was also important: "The Lord gave us six children — four boys and two girls; first two boys, then two girls, then two more boys, all born between 1933 and 1947." All of the children live in the general vicinity of North Kildonan, as do all of the grandchildren but one, who lives in Calgary. One son and a son-in-law now operate the family business. Two sons are firemen, and the other son and son-in-law own businesses in the community. One daughter worked at the Children's Hospital before she got married. The other works at Klassen Brothers, where she manages the office. Mr. Klassen also has 18 grandchildren and now 14 great-grandchildren, so that, he says, with spouses "at the present time we are 54." "And they come home gladly, all of them!"

mm



Gertrude and Dietrich Klassen.

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# Home Birth: an incredible experience

by Peter Petkau

Vic and Kathy Pankratz are a young couple with two children, David and Jason. Recently Vic and Kathy had a terrific experience. Their son Jason was born on April 9, at home.

For many of us the idea of childbirth at home is strange and unsafe. We have become accustomed to the hospitals and the medical profession being the place and the people who deliver babies. A generation or two ago mothers were persuaded to come to the hospitals where special maternity wards were prepared. There were just too many possibilities for complications and problems developing in the home. Vic and Kathy also had those feelings. They had the arguments for hospital deliveries from the medical profession as well as from friends and relatives. But it was because of a number of circumstances that they began to explore the homebirth concept.

When their first son David was born in the hospital three years ago the parents were happy, but they felt something was missing. The hospital staff and their doctor were professionals and medically competent. They did their jobs well. But both Vic and Kathy felt that there had been an emotional distance between them and the hospital people. Kathy had the feeling that she was not in control of her natural birthing rhythm. She was given pain killing drugs and intravenous injections. These affected her ability to be fully aware of herself and how she was responding physically and emotionally to the birth of her own child.

Because there were so many strangers, nurses and other staff present, she felt a sense of interference. Both Vic and

Kathy expressed an uneasiness and uncertainty. It was difficult for them to accept them in this time when they felt intimate and close to each other. They referred to a feeling of over-protection and at the same time there was also an awareness of professional distance from the hospital staff to them. Vic had the perception that it was only another operation that needed medical attention.

Both also realized that David was their first birth experience and everything that happened was for the first time. This added to their tension. But they felt that these needs should have been addressed by their doctor during prenatal checkups. They needed to have been more prepared to understand the sterile clean atmosphere of the hospital. So for their next child they were determined to read and gain more information. They wanted the next time to be a better time. It was a coincidence that a friend gave her a card from a Manitoba midwife. Upon her recommendation Kathy went to a different doctor. Kathy found the new doctor more understanding and open to their feelings and concerns. At this time her sister, who was living in Ontario, gave birth at her hospital with the aid of a midwife. By now Kathy was considering a home birth. They received support and information from the midwife.

From their family and friends they got a more mixed reaction. Vic's mother expressed her concern and wanted them to have the baby in the hospital. Even though she asked a number of times whether they had changed their mind, Vic and Kathy still felt her support and caring. Some of their brothers and sisters were strongly in favour, others were not. Kathy recalled the questions they asked, but most of them were still supportive and helpful.

The book, *Birth Reborn* by Dr. Michel

O'dent of France, was a great help, as were some of the writings of Sheila Kittinger. Dr. O'dent has established birthing centres in France that are staffed by doctors and midwives. In his book he states that women are better able to deal with the pain if they are aware of their body's natural birthing rhythms. Kathy wanted to experience such a natural birth. She and her husband wanted to feel in control and experience a greater sense of possession. They also wanted to be together as a family. They did not want Vic at home, David with relatives, and Kathy and the baby in the hospital. If they had the baby at home they would not be separated.

When they asked their doctor, he cooperated and said he would be available if there was any need. Kathy went to see him for the prenatal checkups. As the pregnancy progressed, Kathy and Vic prepared for the home birth. They promised their doctor that they would phone him when the labor began. Otherwise they, with the midwife, were in complete control of the birthing process. With the emotional and factual support of the midwife they felt they were ready.

The midwife came to their home regularly throughout Kathy's pregnancy. She would do a thorough prenatal checkup each time. She made friends with David and let him be her helper. David, Vic and Kathy accepted her as their birthing companion. This relationship provided opportunities to ask many questions. The midwife explained every aspect of the birth experience and shared her optimism and strength. They felt secure knowing that it was safe to have the baby at home. If complications developed, the midwife, the doctor and the hospital were there to assist.

Kathy vividly recalls the night of April 9, 1986. She and Vic had been timing





slice or hook. From now on the ball will go *straight* into the bush. Which it does, often, on my very first game at Pine Ridge. Even my illusions seem to have a shorter life these days.

- This spirit of melancholy is broken in a wonderful way one morning in May when our son-in-law, who is still suffering the pangs of an early defeat to the Calgary Flames, calls us to let us know that we have become grandparents for a second time. Another seemingly healthy boy, Ryan John, with a shock of dark red hair. They have planned well; the birth falls exactly on grandmother's birthday and at a time of year when it is easy for grandmother to spend some time in Edmonton relieving the new mother. The new mother seems to be fitter than all the rest of us; the day of the birth she walks to the hospital cafeteria with a friend for dinner. Nothing astonishes me more than the miracle of birth itself, and the new life that it brings into a family. We look forward to having them all at our cottage this summer.

- And oh yes, the cottage. We wait patiently through most of April and May for the rains to end. Then on the Victoria Day weekend the time is ripe to start the plumbing system for another season. Someone, unfortunately, broke into the place during the winter, but a broken screen seems all that was damaged. Then, with the help of our good neighbor, the pump is made to work very quickly. We are just congratulating ourselves over the smooth operation when we notice water spewing out of the hose next to the hot water tank. Oh joy! The system must be shut off and some repair work is hastily undertaken. Once again I marvel at the resourcefulness of our neighbor. He must be wondering by now who inflicted us on him. However, a few hours later everything is functioning well and I have learned a few practical lessons in the process. A long walk through the woods restores our equilibrium and we look forward to a long warm summer.

- Before that summer arrives there is, of course, some work to be done. About 4,000 academics are landing at the University of Manitoba in late May, early June, to share their research findings. I am reporting on two different projects, and there is naturally a last-minute drive to get everything done.

- During these summer days there is also an interesting wedding to attend and numerous meetings regarding the Mennonite Village Museum and the *Mennonite Mirror*. We also welcome Peter and Greti Peters back from India for a short visit. Having spent the last

two years in Calcutta they now find Winnipeg to be almost a deserted city. They can't get over our spacious, empty streets and lawns. They also breathe in our fresh air with gratitude.

- Before June is over we plan a visit of several weeks to England. We have talked our son into going back to Oxford University for his graduation, so that we can observe that ancient ceremony. Then we will travel into the west country, as far as Land's End in Cornwall. Ever since I read Thomas Hardy's novel, *Return of the Native* in Grade 12, under the inspiration of our teacher, the late Jacob Peters, I have been haunted by the Wessex moors which feature so prominently in his works. We now want to find these moors in Dorset and Cornwall. Perhaps we will also find Eustacia Vye, the girl from *Return of the Native* with whom all the boys fell in love. Actually, that girl came to Winnipeg from England in 1954 and I managed to catch her before anyone else did. She was, after all, a Celtic lassie with beautiful brown eyes. Together with Eustacia Vye I now look forward to exploring Hardy country.

- One more very pleasant experience awaits us this summer: the marriage of our son at the end of July. He heeded his grandfather's advice (which I ignored), that a man should not marry before the age of 25. We look forward especially to the inclusion of a new daughter in our family. We hope that

you too will have a good summer, and look forward to meeting you again through this column in September. Bon Voyage. mm

 **HITACHI**

**RCA**   
**SONY**

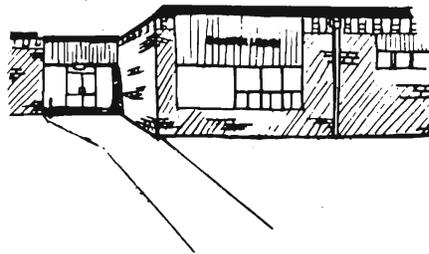
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# A powerful first novel

A review by Al Reimer

Andreas Schroeder, *Dustship Glory*, Doubleday Canada, 1986, 218 pp., \$19.95.

If you're looking for a light summer read, something to while away a few relaxed hours at the cottage or on a flight to Expo in Vancouver, you may as well skip the rest of this review. This powerful first novel by Andreas Schroeder demands a reader who is willing to read with total attention, is more interested in truth than entertainment, and has a stomach strong enough to accept some of the most revolting details and unsavory images I have ever encountered in a novel.

With this short but densely packed novel Andreas Schroeder joins a select group of prairie novelists ranging from Phillip Frederick Grove and Sinclair Ross to Margaret Laurence and Rudy Wiebe. *Dustship Glory* is a Depression-era docu-novel about a mad "prophet" who dared to act out his "vision" by singlehandedly constructing an ocean-going steel ship on the bald Saskatchewan prairie a thousand miles from any sea. His name was Tom Sukanen and he was a Finnish homesteader who like thousands of other European immigrants had come to the New World in search of a better life. But he was hardly a typical homesteader. The bitter victim of an ill-advised marriage in Minnesota, he was an eccentric loner, suspicious of everyone, incapable of friendship or ordinary social intercourse. He was also a self-taught mechanical genius who knew how to improvise and manipulate his mad dream into reality.

The facts of this grim story are starkly simple. For ten years — from 1931-41 — Sukanen labored on his self-designed ship, shaping huge hull timbers, rolling steel sheets, driving rivets, all with a singleminded purpose that amounted to an insane obsession, at least so his hostile neighbors saw it. They called him a "ringading nutcase," "that Devil's messenger," and worse. They accused him of frightening their children, insulting the wives (he believed women were either mindless "chickens" or "witches" out to harm men), and of living like a filthy beast.

What appeared to be a ludicrously harebrained project, had actually been planned down to the last practical detail. Old Tom intended to drag his finished ship 15 miles to the South Saskatchewan, then float it (the massive keel on a separate raft) through the northern Canadian river system to Hudson Bay, and ultimately steam back to Finland. To accomplish this plan, the "crazy Finn" worked literally night and day, year after year, and the steady beat of his twin forge hammers on sheets of steel drove his closest neighbors almost to distraction.

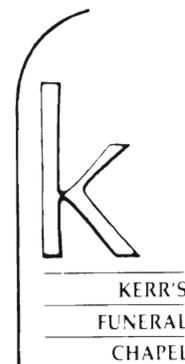
In the grip of his vision, Sukanen eventually sacrificed everything — first his farm, then his animals and finally his own health. In the depths of the Depression, his money and resources gone, he resorted to eating grasshoppers, raw grain soaked in water, and putrid, raw horse meat. After he had finished the hull of his ship he moved into it, emerging only to work at his forge and to forage for food and scrap materials. He stank like a hundred goats and his mouth bled from the steel bars with screws for teeth which he had fashioned as crude dentures after his teeth had rotted out. In the end he was weak and sick but still working outside in 30 below winter weather. Finally, men from the community came to take him away so that he could be committed to an institution. He died in a North Battleford clinic in 1943, a pathetic shell of a human being as completely withdrawn into himself as he had once immured himself in the bowels of his ship.

Those are some of the bare-boned facts from which Schroeder has reconstructed this disturbing, almost unbearable novel. The story is told in bits and pieces by various "witnesses," members of the community who even in retrospect say disparaging, even hateful things about the strange man who defied the community at a time when it was being ground down in a churning dust bowl that knew no mercy. This multiple-narrator technique provides a documentary-style authenticity (the author claims to have invented the characters but not what they have to say), but it

does not make for a smooth-reading narrative line. Interwoven with the personal reminiscences are dramatized flashbacks to his earlier life and gritty, often repellent descriptions of his relentless work on his project.

Schroeder's major challenge in this novel is to make his repulsive, driven hermit-eccentric into a primitive but believable "prophet," that is a man with a real vision and the strength of will and courage to pursue that vision in spite of all natural obstacles and the mean-spirited opposition of the lesser people around him who consider him a threat to themselves and a shame to their society. That he succeeds says much for Schroeder's skill and integrity as a writer. A lesser writer might have inflated such a protagonist to mythological dimensions, or else "humanized" him by sanitizing him, that is removing

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the more distasteful elements from his character and substituting at least a few redeeming traits that would make him more sympathetic to the reader. Schroeder does neither. He depicts Sukanen with all the personal ugliness of character and the anti-social and brutish habits he had in real life.

By counterpointing Sukanen's fierce creative energy against the overwhelmingly destructive forces of the prairie drought, Schroeder gives depth and resonance to the mad Finn's quest without having to resort to melodrama and character distortion. The community sees only the despised outsider, the crazed hermit who can't even see to his own material well-being, who lacks the "common sense" to see what a stubborn, self-defeating fool he is. As sober, decent, morally outraged members of the community they are blind entirely to his higher perceptions, his integrity of character, his inexhaustible courage. They fail to see how the diabolical forces of nature oppressing them have reduced their human vision, coarsened their perceptions, soured their feelings.

Sukanen, for his part, refuses to sentimentalize his own feelings towards the community. He hardens himself to their insults and rebuffs, despises them for their craven conformity and selfish petty concerns. "Egyptians," he calls them, people for whom material well-being is the be-all and end-all of life, miserable busybodies and time-servers addicted only to concrete reality and safe ways, creatures of habit who live in a noisy "circus" known as society and lack the imagination and nerve ever to get out of themselves, transcend their narrow personal interests. Old Tom is a prophet because he had the intelligence and courage to peer into the unknown. As one witness says, he was "always lookin' for something' that ya couldn't buy."

As neighbor, husband, father and

member of a human community, Sukanen must be seen as a failure (as indeed in some sense are all prophets), but as a shaper of his own destiny, as an indomitable fighter against the brute insensibility of the physical world and the selfish incomprehension of the small-minded people around him, he displays some of the elements of the tragic hero. His loyalty is towards a higher reality than that clung to by the other characters in the novel, even than those few who like his nephew Avro and the Finnish farmer Vihtori Markulla sympathize with him and at least try to understand him. When his brother Aleksis asks him why he can't go back to Finland on a passenger ship that would cost only \$88, Tom's lofty answer is: "The Cunard Line . . . sails only to places where people like you want to go."

But the others want no part of Old Tom's vision. Lost in a boiling sea of dust and wind, they reject his ark as unreal, as an illusion as diabolical as the drought itself. They can't forgive him for ignoring their plight as well as his own, for not caring about their material concerns, for being so much stronger, for being dedicated to a cause so much less selfish than their own. So they vilify him for living like an animal, try to disrupt his building and to hound him out of the community. He is their convenient scapegoat, and like all scapegoats is hated and despised for the sins and weaknesses of those who create the scapegoat. Ironically, Sukanen accepts his own lowliness, learns the humility of the true prophet. In what is the dramatic and thematic climax of the novel, he is caught in a savage twister that hurls him to the ground with such force he is rendered unconscious. It is a symbolic death from which he awakens to discover another survivor — a tiny dung-beetle. Tom toys with the beetle, testing its will to survive. He builds a little ring

of fire around the insect and watches in admiration as it escapes a fiery death by burrowing straight down into the ground. He names his ship *Sontianen*, shit-beetle.

This, I repeat, is not a pleasant novel to read. Some readers will chafe at the extremely tight control Schroeder maintains over his material from beginning to end. Tom Sukanen is surely the most unprepossessing, the coarsest and most cross-grained prophet ever to appear in a novel. The author does not even permit himself "to know Sukanen's inner thoughts," as he says in his Preface. All he has attempted to do "is merely to clarify the forces at work in the man and the decade, leaving the reader in a better position to make whatever judgements he deems necessary. . . ."

For some readers that may not suffice. They will wish for more direction, a stronger sense of identification with a protagonist who ranges from unattractive to downright repulsive, except for rare moments of spiritual illumination. There will be readers, however — many one hopes — who will find rewards enough in Schroeder's vividly iconic prose, his complex structural craftsmanship and above all in his rugged integrity and purity of vision as a novelist concerned with the subtle truths glimmering faintly in the dung-heaps of human experience. mm

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what people were going to think about my culture, nor that some woman writer was hanging all this dirty laundry out for all the world to see. Keep in mind, too, that, in general, a Black man's manhood is more threatened than a white man's, if for no other reason than that an important component to manhood is holding a job, and the Black unemployment rate is far higher than the American national average.

Is there a case for censorship, then? Should *The Color Purple* be banned from the movie screens of the world because of the harm it is doing to Black men? No one on the Phil Donahue show suggested this. Even if it were possible it would have the unpleasant flavour of the suppression of the right of freedom of expression.

A sensible alternative was suggested, however: that the problem is that too few movies about Black people are made. If more were made, a more comprehensive and balanced picture of the Black experience would emerge.

The same could be said of Mennonites. We have a respectable amount of material to turn to if we want to read our story, if we want to see it in print. But in film (is it the medium's emotion and old associations with immorality that we fear?) there is not much, there is not enough.

The fact is that incest and wife-beating are not unknown among Mennonites, either in the past or in the present. Perhaps these things were appropriate for *The Color Purple* because they function as metaphors for oppression, and oppression is central to the experience of Blacks both in the U.S. and Africa.

Oppression, both political and spiritual, is also part of the Mennonite experience. All kinds of books attest to this. But which film, up to now, has shown the elementary truth that Mennonites are in certain ways their own worst oppressors? **mm**

## review

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# Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad

Review by John Friesen

Renny Golden and Michael McConnell, *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad*, (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 105545, 1986), 214 pages paperback.

Renny Golden and Michael McConnell have given us a fascinating, often frightening, but comprehensive report on, and from, the sanctuary movement in the United States and Mexico. They appear to cover it all — how it began, what it is accomplishing today, what it hopes to accomplish, how churches are learning to work with refugees, how the experience has affected communities of faith, and what might be in store for the future. Michael is a United Church of Christ minister and Renny is a professor at Northeastern Illinois University. This is not a critical report. Both authors are members of the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America and are experienced 'conductors' on the underground railroad. Their involvement in the movement is evident — their account is intimate and passionate.

The sanctuary movement began on March 24, 1982, on the second anniversary of the murder in El Salvador of Archbishop Romero, when the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tuscon, Arizona, and 5 East Bay, California, churches declared their buildings to be sanctuaries for Guatemalan and El Salvadoran refugees. Since then hundreds of faith communities across United States have done the same, declaring their opposition to the U.S. Administration's policy regarding Central American refugees and its policy of economic exploitation and military intervention. According to the authors, 70,000 people have participated in the sanctuary movement.

For many churches and synagogues this has meant division among members and months of intense debate, self

examination and prayer. This process, often a slow and agonizing one, is described well. It is a process that took congregations beyond liberalism, past charity, and on to liberation. Revolutionary attitudes and actions do not come easily to middle-class, church-going, white Americans.

Those who opened themselves to sanctuary, opened themselves to a new historical, political, and theological understanding of the world as voiced by the lowliest in our midst. In general, this meant a shift from seeing the violence of Central America as just an aberration of a few "sick" torturers or ruthless dictators to an understanding of the systematic violence, the daily denial of life to the poor. There was also a shift away from calls for particularized reform to seeing the legitimate rights of revolution. And finally, the search for the roots of the violence led North Americans to see the complicity of the United States in the impoverishment and deprivation of the poor, a complicity that did not start with this administration but went back to the early nineteenth century.

As the congregations hear the stories told to them by the refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala, their understanding grows. And so does the number of churches and congregations willing to harbour refugees and protect them from the clutches of immigration officials and the police. The government maintains the actions of these churches are criminal. Violators face a fine of \$2,000 and up to five years in prison for their act of solidarity with the oppressed peoples of Central America.

Each of the seven chapters in this book begins with a story by a Central American witness who has entered sanctuary in the United States. For example, Pedro, who went out on his first day to document the dead bodies, victims of the death squads. He came

across the body of a woman lying in the road.

She had been pregnant. Her stomach was split open. Inside her stomach the fetus had been cut and in its place was the head of the woman's husband. Several yards away lay the body of her husband. The fetus was placed where the head should have been.

This book contains many stories of terror and violence, all the more horrific because they are told by the victims themselves. They cry out to us for help, to stop the violence against them. This book is also a crying out to North Americans to recognize what we are doing to the people in Central America, and to make a choice for justice.

The book describes what happens to those who make it across the border and then face the cruelty of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents who do everything in their power, legal or otherwise, to get them into a plane and back to their country of origin.

The authors draw a parallel to the abolitionist movement. They claim that the sanctuary movement is facing many of the same problems: extremist labeling (anti-slavery activists were often called communists and atheists), fear of collaborating with groups outside of the church, morally compromising moderation and gradualism, racism, and liberalism.

Sanctuary supporters say the U.S. interprets immigration laws in a manner that violates United Nations rulings, and is in contradiction to the 1949 Geneva Convention, international obligations considered binding to signatory nations. Even those refugees who managed to apply for political refugee status are refused as a matter of policy (only a two per cent success rate), although the government claims applications are judged on an individual case basis.

The book's anecdotal style works well. Pages of firsthand accounts give it life — the ring of truth. One such account is an attempt by one of the authors at being a 'coyote' (someone who guides immigrants past immigration officials). The story of their journey deep into Mexican territory is exciting, suspenseful, and sometimes even comical. That adventure was with Jim Corbett, an Arizona church worker, who the authors claim is the most successful coyote. Since 1981 he has brought in 700 refugees.

The authors have much to tell us about American involvement in the repression and institutionalized violence in Central America. They point out that

American military funding and training personnel increased rapidly within weeks after the murder of Archbishop Romero in 1981, and the rape and murder by government agents of four American female missionaries in El Salvador that same year. Hundreds of soldiers were brought to the United States for training. American counterinsurgency planes dropped antipersonnel bombs on villages full of innocent people. U.S.-supplied Huey helicopters strafed innocent women and children by the thousands as they fled from their homes. As U.S. financing increased, so did the number of civilians being killed. American jet fighters and spotter planes made it possible to kill thousands of innocent villagers. And as President Reagan lied to the public about the decrease in deaths, the number of deaths actually increased according to independent human rights organizations. Catechists, lay ministers, doctors, nurses, teachers, agricultural workers, refugee workers, in fact anyone who came in contact with the poor, were being targeted by government death squads.

And so these American Christian communities see themselves as having a duty beyond simply helping people in trouble. They learn, the authors say, to understand their own place in the context of wealth in the north and poverty in the south. They begin to understand why American soldiers have invaded Central America 36 times since 1900. They understand the cost of America's economic empire building over the past 150 years — its cost in misery and death for innocent people. They begin to see how they themselves have been among the beneficiaries of America's policies of economic expansion, military intervention, and racism — policies that have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Central Americans. And so, the sanctuary churches gradually begin to see themselves also as a political movement, one that understands the need to make fundamental changes to the social and economic system in their own country.

The authors say the churches are well aware of the means of repression available to the government. Many sanctuary workers have now been arrested in the U.S. and some have been to trial. At the time the authors were writing this book, none had yet spent long periods in jail. But there is little doubt that many church leaders, perhaps some very prominent ones, will be jailed by an increasingly repressive American government. Thousands of pastors, priests, bishops

and church workers understand very well what they are up against, and their decision to resist has not been made lightly.

It is equally true that the Reagan administration realizes the strength of conviction of church people and is concerned about how to combat this new political foe. The government realizes that in this movement there is, for the first time, a potentially serious threat coming from the mainline churches. This serious and growing difference between the government and the church has led to more arrests and FBI infiltration into church organizations.

The scenario becomes more chilling when the authors describe lawyer Dan Sheehan of the Christic Institute telling church delegates at the National Sanctuary Convocation of 1985 about a government plan code-named "Rex 84." According to this plan, 400,000 'illegal aliens' would be incarcerated in detention camps at key army defense commands if the U.S. decides to once more launch an invasion of Central America. He also described a potential arrest list put together by the government of 26,000 North American citizens who could also be put into these prison camps.

Many questions are raised. Will government repression increase? Will the churches be able to meet such a challenge? Will the conservative and progressive churches turn on each other and battle it out? (Many conservative churches in the U.S. support their government's intervention in Central America and are actively raising funds to support the anti-Sandinista Contras attacking Nicaragua.) Will the churches' resistance be strengthened, or will it wither away? The authors believe that true Christianity will come alive in this conflict, that a people's church is being born, that sides are being chosen. They are convinced this "spiritual conviction is the combustive moral force Reagan cannot jail, infiltrate, or kill. It smoulders now but it could burst into flames."

Hot off the 'alternative press' this revealing, horrifying, but spiritually uplifting book will leave no honest reader quite the same. It is must reading for everyone concerned with justice issues, and also for those calling themselves Christians.

No wishy-washy liberal pablum here. This movement is facing the toughest foe it could imagine — its own government. This is politics in the raw. The lines are drawn.

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## review

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# An astonishingly diverse anthology that explores Mennonite issues

A review by André Oberlé

*Visions and Realities: Essays, Poems, and Fiction Dealing With Mennonite Issues.* Edited by Harry Loewen and Al Reimer. Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1985. Quality Paperback, 260 pages. \$15.95.

This exceptionally well-thought-out anthology presents the reader with an astonishingly diverse selection of material, both critical and creative, on various Mennonite issues. The volume is dedicated to Johannes Harder, who is also a contributor to the anthology. The dedication, presented on the first pages of the book, is an affectionate and well-deserved tribute to a great Mennonite individual.

*Visions and Realities* is beautifully printed and illustrated with etchings from the *Martyrs Mirror* (1660) by Thielemann J. van Braght. A portrait of Johannes Harder graces the dedication to him.

The material is presented in four sections. The first section, "Visions of the End," presents an important critical essay by Walter Klaassen in which the author places the Anabaptist reformers in the unbroken medieval tradition of apocalyptic literature and theology. The well-written and solidly researched article is furnished with a generous number of very helpful footnotes.

The second section, "Between Heaven and Earth," contains essays by Harry Loewen, Walter Schmiedehaus and Calvin Redekop. Loewen ably scrutinizes the Anabaptist chapter of Grimelshausen's novel *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* in an interesting and well-researched manner. Walter Schmiedehaus provides the reader with a sympathetic description of the old-colonist Mennonites of Mexico. Redekop,

in his two fascinating essays ("The Mennonite Romance With the Land" and "The Mennonite Transformation: from *Gelassenheit* to Capitalism") looks at social and moral issues that continue to confront Mennonites.

The third section, "No Permanent Home," contains creative works by Maurice Mierau, Harry Loewen, Peter G. Epp, Al Reimer, Fritz Senn, Johannes Harder, Patrick Friesen and David Waltner-Toews. The editors are to be lauded on their discriminating selection of works to mirror main trends in Mennonite literary activities. Mierau, in his cycle of poems "The Martyrdom Method", constructs, as it were, a modern-day version of the *Martyrs Mirror*. Loewen's ambitious poem "The Land" presents an interesting confrontation between the Mennonites and the people of Israel. Peter Pauls provides a sensitive and creative translation of excerpts from Peter G. Epp's *Eine Mutter*. The third section also contains excerpts from already well-known works such as Friesen's *The Shunning* and Waltner-Toews's collection of poems *Good Housekeeping*. Many works are printed here for the first time. These include promising excerpts from Al Reimer's novel *My Harp is Turned to Mourning*, which was published in its entirety after the appearance of the anthology. Victor Doerksen gives us the first complete version of Senn's *Hinterm Pflug/Stimmungen* and provides a most helpful introduction and footnotes to this important work. Finally there is Johannes Harder's impressive poem "Heimweh nach der Steppe" which fittingly concludes this section of the book.

In the fourth section of the anthology, "Voices and Critiques," various authors

present their critical evaluations of a number of aspects of creative Mennonite literature. The section opens with Johannes Harder's sensitive and compelling interpretation of Senn's *Hinterm Pflug/Stimmungen* (written in German). Peter Pauls provides us with a well-executed analysis of aspects of Epp's *Eine Mutter*. Peter C. Erb takes a challenging look at approaches to Mennonite culture in Canada. Herbert Giesbrecht investigates with good insight the significance of "Words and, Above All, Voice" in the fiction of Rudy Wiebe. Katie Funk Wiebe writes a most interesting account on the role of women in Mennonite fiction. The section concludes with an interview of Patrick Friesen and David Waltner-Toews, conducted by Margaret Loewen Reimer and Paul G. Tiessen in which the place of the two poets' Mennonite background in their respective works is established.

The anthology closes with brief biographical notes on the various contributors to this work and a most helpful and rather detailed index.

The editors are to be congratulated on their well-executed, exciting and challenging anthology. *Visions and Realities* will remain a very important contribution to the examination of Mennonite issues. While the book is important for scholars of Mennonite history and culture it also has a great deal to offer to the general readership. Between its covers everyone will be able to find things of particular interest to him in the overwhelming choice of material presented. *Visions and Realities* is a must for anyone interested in Mennonite heritage and culture.

André Oberlé is associate professor of German at the University of Winnipeg.

# Graduation: The Class of 1986

## University of Manitoba

### *Doctor of Philosophy*

Robert Wayne Derksen

### *Master of Architecture*

Wilmer Edward Koop  
Harry Toews Wiebe

### *Master of Science*

Clayton Douglas Block  
Gerhard Wilhelm Dueck  
Wolfgang Amadeus Otto Jansen  
Robert Jay Klassen  
Gordon David Sawatzky  
John James Schellenberg  
Rudy Horst Schmidtke  
Albert John Siemens

### *Bachelor of Science in Agriculture*

Peter Henry Bergen  
Frank Robert Derksen  
Daniel Alfred Fast  
Gordon Leonard Janzen  
Curtis Brian Rempel

### *Bachelor of Environmental Studies*

Curtis Dana Krahn

### *Bachelor of Interior Design*

Diana Joan Derksen  
Marilyn Katherine Pankratz

### *Bachelor of Computer Science (Honours)*

Joanne Lynne Braun

### *Bachelor of Science (Honours)*

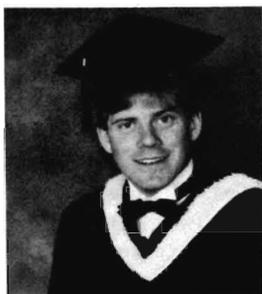
Lindsay Morton Berger

### *Bachelor of Science (Major)*

Robert Paul Berger  
Wesley Alan Friesen  
Richard Wayne Klippenstein  
Russell Paul Letkeman

### *Bachelor of Science*

Robert Henry Zacharias



Lloyd Phillip Kornelsen graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Manitoba this spring, winning the university gold medal in education. Lloyd majored in geography during his four years of study at the university and is presently seeking a teaching position for 1986-87. For the summer, Lloyd is self-employed in building construction. He lives in Rose-nort, Manitoba with his wife, Karen (nee Eidse), and their four-month-old son.

### *Diploma in Agriculture*

Kelly Dean Brandt  
Cameron Arthur Cornelsen  
John Henry Dueck  
Allan James Enns  
Darrell Kent Friesen  
Lyndon Grant Friesen  
Randall James Klassen  
Calvin Vernon Penner  
Gordon Keith Penner  
Lyndon Harvey Peters  
Stanley Donald Reimer  
Scott Barton Warkentin  
Gary Edward Warkentine  
Lester John Wiebe

### *Master of Arts*

Susan Elaine Dueck  
Anthony Roger Leonard Fast

### *Master of Social Work*

Loti Friesen

### *Bachelor of Arts (Honours)*

Delmar Brian Epp  
Russell Bradley Giesbrecht  
Joel David Pauls  
Carolyn Elaine Wiebe

### *Bachelor of Arts*

Ava Louise Block  
Theodor Ernst Bock  
Wilfried Braun  
Terry Norman Dyck  
Gerald Keith Enns  
Shelley Leah Falk  
Kimberly Lynn Friesen  
Lisa Marie Froese  
Murray Wayne Froese  
Dianne Marie Hildebrand  
Elizabeth Helen Janz  
Wendy Ann Janz  
Johnny David Janzen  
Lorraine Fern Janzen  
Norman Kenneth Kehler  
Darlene Alice Krahn  
Dolores Eileen Kroeker  
Irene Carol Kroeker  
Karen Ruth Neustaedter  
Coleen Katherine Helen Peters  
Ryan Jeffrey Poetker  
Henry David Reimer  
Christopher David Schellenberg  
Alvin Lloyd Thiessen  
Kevin Eugene Thiessen  
Donna Lynn Unruh  
Miriam Kaye Unruh  
Sandra Lorraine Voth  
Jake Kenneth Warkentin  
Gordon Edward Zacharias

### *Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)*

Lydia Ann Hildebrandt

### *Bachelor of Fine Arts*

Aneta Joan Enns

### *Bachelor of Human Ecology*

Janet Evelyn Buhr.

### *Bachelor of Human Ecology (Family Studies)*

Rita Marie Enns

### *Bachelor of Education*

Helen Baergen  
Ralph Neil Bartel  
Jack Martin Berger  
Sheryle Denise Bergman  
Janet Evelyn Buhr  
Eleanor Elaine Dueck  
Kenneth Edward Fast Dueck  
Darrel Gene Dyck  
Karen Lynette Dyck  
Veronica Mae Dyck  
Grace Laverne Eidse  
Cara Susanne Enns  
Paul Ernest John Enns  
Evelyn Friesen  
Glenys Frances Friesen  
Gwen Victoria Friesen  
Wendy Elaine Froese  
Edward Funk  
Hannelore Hildebrand  
Kathryn Marie Hildebrand  
Manfred Hildebrand  
Bernie Victor Janzen  
Cheryl Diane Janzen  
Lori Jane Janzen  
Mary Kehler  
Agatha Klassen  
Susanne Krahn  
Alice Louise Loepp  
William Dale Martens  
Caroline Ruth Neufeld  
Robert Dale Neufeld  
Evelyn Janet Pankratz  
Victor James Pankratz  
Brenda Penner  
Helen Elfrieda Peters  
Carolyn Dawn Plett  
Valerie Mae Plett  
Linda Margaret Regehr  
LaVerne Keith Reimer  
Martha Susanna Reimer  
Catherine Helene Rempel  
Marjorie Eileen Sawatzky  
Martha Suess  
Kenneth Herman Thiessen  
Ruthanne Marie Toews  
Edith Katherin Unruh

### *Master of Education*

Reynold Victor Redekopp  
Sharon Janice Schultz  
David Robert Banting



Rosemarie Agnes (Dyck) Vanderhooft, Bachelor of Music, U of M, won the university gold medal in music. Rosemarie specialized in vocal performance, studying with Dr. Karen Jensen. She hopes eventually to study for a Master of Music, but will spend next winter teaching singing for the preparatory division of the School of Music and performing with CBC's Hymn Sing Chorus. Rosemarie is married to Ron Vanderhooft of Winnipeg.

**Bachelor of Music (Performance)**

Shannon Vivian Hiebert  
Rosemarie Agnes Vanderhoof

**Bachelor of Social Work**

Bernhard Dueck  
Beverly Lynn Dyck  
Carolyn Elaine Neufeld  
Larry Robert Reimer  
Ronald Henry James Sawatzky

**Master of Business Administration**

Nancy Joan Elias

**Bachelor of Commerce (Honours)**

Bruce Adrian Bergman  
Kari Lynne Dyck  
Gerry Lee Friesen  
Robert Keith Froese  
Yvonne Christine Marie Giesbrecht  
Jonathan Arnold Goossen  
Peter John Jansen  
Brian Douglas Janzen  
Derrick James Neufeld  
George Neufeld  
Philip Peter Pauls  
Darrell Grant Penner  
Richard Helmut Peters  
Elsie Ruth Redekopp  
Donald Frank Sawatzky  
David Alfred Schellenberg  
Daniel Bryan Tobias Voth  
Tannis Grace Wiebe

**Certificate in Education**

Arnold Menno Schellenberg

**Bachelor of Laws**

Bernhard Roland Dueck  
Kelly Lynne Esau  
Sandra Mae Hoepfner  
Albert Henry Redekopp

**Master of Nursing**

Monica Anne Redekopp

**Diploma in Dental Hygiene**

Glenda Darlene Dueck  
Muriel Ruth Dyck  
Marlene Mae Friesen

**Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Civil)**

Kelvin Lindsay Falk  
Rodney David Peters

**Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Electrical)**

Richard James Epp  
Peter Charles Isaak  
Philip Andrew Klassen  
Renée Louise Martens  
Albert Frank Penner

**Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Mechanical)**

John Jeffrey Dueck  
Dale Robert Friesen  
John Henry Guenther  
Mark Albert Loewen  
Ralph Martin Penner  
Jeffrey Neil Rempel

**Doctor of Medicine**

Gregory Mark Alexander Berg  
Warren George Froese  
Timothy Charles Goertzen  
Elizabeth Nadine Loewen  
Karin Jane Neufeld  
David Henry Peters  
Donald Wayne Schellenberg  
Cornelius Jakob Woelk

**Bachelor of Science in Medicine**

Warren George Froese  
Karin Jane Neufeld  
David Henry Peters  
Donald Wayne Schellenberg

**Bachelor of Medical Rehabilitation (Physical Therapy)**

Andrew Ernest Dyck  
Christine Rae Neufeld

**Bachelor of Nursing**

Patricia Vivian Block  
Darlene Gloria Driedger  
Carol Joy Penner  
Naomi Marci Penner  
Julie Anne Wiebe

**Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy**

Sharon Anne Enns  
Douglas Theodore Steinke

**Bachelor of Physical Education**

Daniel James Bergen

**Bachelor of Recreation Studies**

Gerald James Barkman  
Christopher Glenn Wiebe

**Baccalauréat ès Arts**

Bernadette Marie Juliette Fehr

**Baccalauréat en Education**

Walter John Nikkel

**University of Winnipeg**

**Bachelor of Science (4-Year)**

Kimberly Susan Toews

**Bachelor of Science**

Joyce Kaehler  
Chin Mei Penner  
Patricia Diane Reimer  
Sonia Schellenberg  
Susan Linnea Schroeder  
Jason Matthew Siemens

**Bachelor of Education**

Keith Julius Patrick Berg  
Laura Christine Bock  
Kenneth John Dueck  
Russell Elmer Goossen  
Randall Edward Klassen  
Arthur Koop  
Barbara Jean Neufeld  
Barbara Eileen Peters  
Allison Elizabeth Reimer  
Roland Schmidt

Brenda-Lee Joan Schultz  
Mark Douglas Schultz  
Marjorie Sharon Toews

**Bachelor of Arts**

Tara Joy Classon  
John Stanley Dick  
Margaretha Dirks  
Annette Maria Enns  
Robert Brian Epp  
Ruth Marie Epp  
Tracey Lynn Epp  
Delcie Marie Gerbrandt  
Raymond Glenn Giesbrecht  
John Hiebert  
Ruth Ann Isaac  
Mark Allan Loewen  
Ruth Helen Debra Martens  
Jacqueline Dale Neufeld  
Ava Ardis Nickel  
Cheryl Irene Pauls  
Gregory Allan Penner  
Ronald Penner  
Gerald Philip Peters  
Hans Peter Regier  
Elizabeth Daryl Reimer  
Phyllis Diane Reimer  
Marilee Rempel  
Martin Williams Rempel  
Peter Henry Rempel  
Harvey Grant Sawatzky  
Randy Stuart Schroeder  
Daniel Siemens  
Werner Robert Thiessen  
Norma Toews  
David John Toews-Baerg  
Jenny Catherine Wiebe  
Menno Franklin Wiebe  
Lois Ann Wiens

**Canadian Mennonite Bible College**

**Bachelor of Theology**

Anita Joy Bergen  
Ruth Elizabeth Boehm  
Alden John Braul  
Darrell John Bueckert  
Shelley Diane Bueckert  
Donna Louise Kampen Entz



Margaretha Dirks, graduating from the University of Winnipeg at recent convocation exercises, was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree and the university gold medal in German. Margaretha expects to begin graduate studies in Russian at the UM this fall and hopes to work as either a translator or language teacher in the future. This summer Margaretha is employed at MB Communications as a typist and translator. She is the daughter of Henry and Kathy Dirks of Winnipeg.



Cheryl Irene Pauls graduated from U of W with a B.A. and from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College with a Music Major at spring services, winning the university gold medal in music. This winter Cheryl also completed Toronto Conservatory exams for the ARCT degree in performance, achieving first class honours. She hopes to study for a Master of Music at the University of Arizona next year. Cheryl is the daughter of Henry and Luella Pauls of St. Catharines, Ontario.

Joanne Jeanne Epp  
 Deborah Lynn Fast  
 Walter Christian Franz  
 Laurie Anne Friesen  
 Patty Jo Friesen  
 Allan Rudy Froese  
 Linden Mark Gossen  
 Leslie Dwayne Hamm  
 Randal Allan Heidebrecht  
 Dennis Ray Helmuth  
 Helene Inghram  
 Eileen Mae Klassen  
 Marion Ruth Klippenstein  
 Maureen Joyce Klippenstein  
 Gerald Bernard Krahn  
 Kim Harvey Peter Krahn  
 Bonita Jayne Martens  
 Joel Jeffrey Martin  
 Donald Bruce Neufeld  
 Michael David Neufeld  
 Rudy David Niebuhr  
 Theodore Paul Paetkau  
 David Franz Peters  
 Ingrid Annette Peters  
 Paul Wilfred Reesor  
 Joel David Reimer  
 Byron Peter Remple  
 Rose Marie Retzlaff  
 Timothy Roy Sawatzky  
 Gary Alan Schapansky  
 Robert Claire John Schellenberg  
 Kristine Beth Steckley  
 Jenny Lynne VonGuten  
 Alice Ruth Wiens  
 Edwin Wiebe  
 Melvin Dean Wiens

**Bachelor of Church Music**

Joanne Jeanne Epp  
 Carole Ann Jantzen

Richard John Janzen  
 Glenn Jacob Klassen  
 Sandra Michelle Klassen  
 David Jonathan Matthies  
 Angela Lisa Neufeld  
 Gayle Yvonne Unger Neufeld  
 Timothy Karl Taves  
 Adeline Toews  
 Erdman Krahn Toews  
 Peter John Wiens

**Certificate in Theology**

Paul Duane Bergen  
 Randy Rene Hildebrand  
 Donald William Paetkau  
 Sharon Schwartztruber  
 Lori Faye Yantzi

**Certificate in Church Music**

Kenton Ross Janzen  
 Lori Deborah Klassen  
 Wilmeade Metlon Pryce  
 Ann Lynette Schulz

**Mennonite Brethren Bible College**

**Contemporary Ministries**

Marvin George Henry Bergen  
 Wendy Ilene Corbett  
 Virginia Ann Reimer  
 Marilse Rempel  
 Abram Wiens  
 Rodney James Willems

**Music**

Erwin Baier  
 Karen Joanne Falk  
 Candace Shelly Gibson  
 Lillian Ann Gurney  
 Robert John Neufeld  
 Cheryl Irene Pauls

Heidi Lynne Poetker  
 Alfred Philip Wiebe

**Theology Major**

Calvin James Bergen  
 Kenneth Lorne Braun  
 Melvin Rodney Dick  
 Raymond Roy Epp  
 Ramona Joyce Falk  
 Renita Anne Hamm  
 Ruth Ann Isaac  
 Heather Marie Konrad  
 Daniel Mark Neufeld  
 Colin Peter Neufeld  
 Gregory Allan Penner  
 Lloyd Alan Penner  
 Ron Penner  
 Ruth Penner  
 Helmut Heinz Plett  
 D. Bruce Reimer  
 Phyllis Diane Reimer  
 Daniel Siemens  
 Shirley Evonne Toews  
 James Vernon Wiebe  
 John Wiens

**Brandon University**

**Bachelor of Arts**

Randall Wayne Sawatzky  
 Heather Wedel  
 Vera Ellen Wiebe

**Bachelor of Science**

Gregory Vaughn Dyck  
 Audrey Joyce Giesbrecht  
 Glenn Paul Hildebrand  
 Charlotte Anne Penner  
 Gregory A. Schmidt

**Bachelor of Science (4-Year General)**

Edward Alan Fast  
 Bruce David Penner  
 Gregory John Schmidt

**Bachelor of Education (4-Year)**

Douglas Allan Willems

**Education I Certificate**

Angela Grace Dick

**Bachelor of General Studies**

Joan Elizabeth Merino Lepp  
 Bonita Lynn Sawatzky

**Leslie Ian Teichroew**, 1986 BA (Honours) graduate and gold medalist in sociology at University of Winnipeg this spring, has received an award of \$9000 from Carleton University at Ottawa to enable him to pursue further studies in sociology. Leslie is the son of Edwin and Tina Teichroew, members at Home Street Mennonite church.

La Verendrye MLA **Helmut Pankratz** has resigned as mayor of the Town of Steinbach. Council has decided not to fill the vacancy until the regular municipal election in November. Until then, Councilor **Ernie Friesen** will serve as acting mayor.



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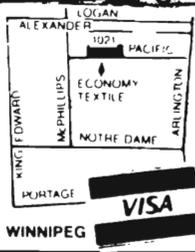
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# Wilhelmine Siefkes: Eine niederdeutsche Autorin, die Mut hatte

von Harry Loewen

In der März 1986-Nummer des *Mennonite Mirror* erschien ein Artikel von mir, „Mennoniten und ein Abschnitt ihrer Geschichte“, in dem auf das Versagen der Kirche in den dreissigen Jahren hingewiesen wird. Herr Reuben Epp, Dawson Creek, British Columbia, schrieb mir darauf einen anerkennenden Brief und wies mich darauf hin, dass es damals auch mutige Menschen gab, die sich der braunen Macht entzogen und ihr sogar Widerstand leisteten. Solch eine mutige Frau war Wilhelmine Siefkes, eine niederdeutsche Autorin, die vor einigen Jahren verstorben ist.

In ihrem Buch *Erinnerungen* (Leer: Verlag Schuster, 1979), das Herr Epp mir freundlicherweise zugeschickt hat, hat Wilhelmine Siefkes auch einiges über die Mennoniten in ihrer Heimatstadt Leer, Ost-Friesland, zu berichten.

Schon als Kind hatte die lutherisch-getaufte Wilhelmine die Mennoniten in Leer kennengelernt. Sie schreibt in ihren *Erinnerungen*: „Mir imponierten die Mennoniten, die sich so konsequent an Christi Forderungen hielten. ‚Eure Rede sei ja, ja-nein, nein, was darüber ist, das ist vom Übel!‘ hiess es in der Bibel — und sie verweigerten den Eid; ‚Du sollst nicht töten!‘ — und sie lehnten den Kriegsdienst ab. Mir erschienen daneben unsere Katechismen so schrecklich wortreich und eigentlich neben der Bibel überflüssig“ (S. 45).

Inzwischen war Wilhelmine Siefkes in den Lehrerberuf getreten und schrieb auch niederdeutsche Erzählungen und Kindergeschichten. Als dann die Nationalsozialisten 1933 an die Macht kamen, war sie unter den wenigen Persönlichkeiten ihrer Stadt, die es wagten nicht mitzulaufen. In ihren *Erinnerungen* erzählt sie, wie an einem 1. Mai, dem Festtag der Arbeiterbewegung, jeder Deutsche im Reich seine Verbundenheit und Treue dem Nazi-Staat bekunden musste.

„Man erhob den Tag zum Staatsfeiertag der Arbeiter . . . an dem jeder Arbeiter sich der ‚grossen Volksgemeinschaft‘ zugehörig wissen und zeigen sollte. Als äusseres Zeichen dafür

wurden im ganzen Reich, in jeder Stadt und in jedem Dorf, grosse Umzüge arrangiert“ (S. 96).

In Wilhelmine Siefkes „bäumte sich alles auf — das konnte ich nicht! Mir war hundeeelend zumute. Was tun? Als Ausweg fiel mir plötzlich ein: Geh zum Arzt, und lass dich krankschreiben!“ (S. 96). Sie hatte es so getan und fand zu ihrem Erstaunen, dass auch der Arzt ein Nazi-Gegner war.

Der Umzug wurde durchgeführt. Siefkes sah „die verbissenen Gesichter der Arbeiter, die zum erstenmal gezwungen wurden, einen Tag zu ‚feiern‘ . . . . Jetzt trieb sie die Angst, ihren Arbeitsplatz zu verlieren. Lustlos trabten sie dahin, bis einer intonierte: ‚Es geht alles vorüber, es geht alles vorbei‘ . . .“ (S. 97).

## zur diskussion

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## Gedanken nach Tschernobyl

„Ja, so ist das Leben nun einmal: Menschen versagen, seit es Menschen gibt. Sie werden krank, sie trinken, nehmen Drogen, drehen durch, schlafen ein; es soll sogar solche geben, die absichtlich Unheil anrichten. Den neuen Menschen, bei dem das alles anders ist, haben Kommunisten nicht geschaffen, den Verfechtern der Atomtechnik wird es auch nicht gelingen. . . . Eine Technik, gegenüber der Menschen nicht versagen dürfen, ohne dass eine gänzlich unbekannte Zahl von Kindern im Laufe von Jahrzehnten daran zugrunde geht, ist wohl keine menschengerechte Technik. Wenn früher der Kutscher auf dem Bock einschlieft, so waren die Pferde meist vernünftig genug, diesem „menschlichen Versagen“ nichts Schlimmes folgen zu

„In geschlossenen Formationen marschierten sie: die Angestellten von Behörden und Firmen, die Beamten, die Kollegien der einzelnen Schulen, ja, eine Gruppe Primaner mit ihren Mützen — ich hörte sie schon von weitem laut und begeistert singen: ‚Haut den Juden mit dem Schädel an die Wand‘ . . . Und direkt dahinter — mir stockte der Herzschlag — da gingen unsere lutherischen Pastoren! Das war zu viel für mich. Für alle andern konnte ich Verständnis aufbringen: für die Urteilslosen, für die um ihre Stellung Bangenden, für die, die Angst um ihre Familie hatten. Aber dass diese vorgeblichen Hüter des Christentums, die ihres Meisters Lehren anderen predigten, nun hinter solchen ‚Sängern‘ hermarschierten und nicht den Mut aufbrachten, wegzutreten und sich zu distanzieren — das versetzte mir einen Schlag, und ich sagte mir: In diese Kirche gehörst du nicht mehr! Am nächsten Tag ging ich zum Amtsgericht und erklärte meinen Austritt aus der Kirche. Etwas später bin ich dann bei den Mennoniten eingetreten, und das habe ich nie bereut“ (S. 97-98).

Wilhelmine Siefkes Widerstandsmut hatte seine Folgen. Am 31. August 1933 erhielt sie die amtliche Mitteilung, dass sie aus dem Schuldienst entlassen sei.

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lassen. Das menschliche Versagen eines Jumbo Piloten hat Auswirkungen, die schon kaum mehr zu verantworten sind. Das menschliche Versagen oder der menschliche Zerstörungswahn in einem Brüter (reactor) hätte Folgen, die weit jenseits alles Verantwortbaren lägen. Es wird Zeit, dass wir nicht abstrakt über die Risiken der Technik, sondern über das Verhältnis zwischen Mensch und Technik nachdenken. Von einer Technik, die einen anderen Menschen verlangt, sollten wir die Finger lassen und nach einer Technik suchen, die fehlbaren Menschen angemessen ist. Und bei der Energieerzeugung gibt es sie längst. Neue, regenerierbare Energiequellen brauchen menschliche Zuverlässigkeit nicht zu überfordern. . . .“

Aus „Wer ist verantwortlich?“ von Erhard Eppler (*Die Zeit*, 16.5.86). mm

# Müszoagelbrüt

von Elisabeth Peters

Sie hüpfte von Stelle zu Stelle auf der grossen grünen Weide darauf die Kühe ästen. Satt und fett von dem grünen Frühlingsgras blickten sie neugierig auf das junge Wesen, das da so behende hin und her sprang, einen Wassereimer behutsam mitschwingend, damit der Inhalt nicht unnütz verschüttet würde. Hätten sie nur gewusst, dass das junge Mädchen eine heimlich verlobte „Braut“ war, im mennonitischen Sinne, sie hätten wahrscheinlich nicht so interessenlos an ihr vorbeiglotzt, ohne sich zu bewegen.

Ja, sie war Braut, und im August sollte die Hochzeit sein. Ihre Hochzeit, die Hochzeit der armen, unbeachteten Krohnen Tin, die in der besseren Gesellschaft der „andern“, des kleinen Städtchens in dem sie aufgewachsen war, nie eine Rolle gespielt hatte und auch nie spielen würde. Ihr Vater war ein Trunkenbold, der, wenn er gerade einmal Arbeit hatte, den letzten Pfennig vertrank ehe er heim stolperte in das armselige Anwesen, das für ihn und die seinen „zu Hause“ war. Er war kein schlechter Mann, aber die wirtschaftlich schweren Jahre hatten ihm arg mitgespielt. Früher war er einmal in einem Getreidespeicher angestellt gewesen, zwar nur als Getreideschaufler, aber als der Getreidehandel während der Depressionsjahre einging, verlor auch er seine Stelle. Anfangs hoffte man hoch auf ein Wunder, auf eine andere Anstellung, aber diese Hoffnung zerschellte sehr bald — es gab eben keine Arbeit.

Der alte Krahn sass also tagaus tagein in seiner ärmlichen Hütte und verkürzte sich den langen Tag indem er seine uralte Geige spielte — meisterhaft spielte, obwohl er nie eine einzige Stunde Unterricht bekommen hatte. Er wusste es wohl selber nicht, dass er an der Wiege eine reiche, künstlerische Begabung mitbekommen hatte. Jedes Instrument, das ihm in die Hand kam, spielte er; er malte und zeichnete ausserordentlich gut, aber was galt das schon in einem nüchternen kleinen Ort, dessen brave Bürger genug mit ihrem eigenen Fortkommen zu schaffen hatten. Zuletzt aber war die Geige kaputt gegangen, ganz kaputt, und selbst der geschickte alte Krahn konnte sie nicht wieder heil machen, ohne einige Teile

die er zu hohem Preis hätte erstehen müssen. Verzweifelt hatte er an jenem Abend als die Geige zerbrach den Bogen zu dem Häuflein der Geigenreste gelegt und war zu einem Kumpel über die Strasse gegangen. Dort fand er volles Verständnis für seinen Kummer, der dann durch einige Gläschen Schnaps verdrängt wurde.

Lange nach Mitternacht torkelte er in seine Hütte und schlief seinen Rausch bis zum Mittagessen aus. Seine vielgeprüfte geduldige Frau rang verzweifelt die Hände als das Ereignis sich tagtäglich wiederholte, bis es ihr klar wurde, dass ihr Mann zum Trunkenbold geworden war. Die Familie war längst auf „Relief“ (Wohlfahrt), aber wie die Familienmutter auch wirtschaftete und sparte, es langte immer noch nicht für die grosse Kinderschar, fünf Buben und zwei Mädchen.

Eines Tages fand man den alten Krahn tot am Grabenrand seiner Hütte. Ein Herzinfarkt hatte seinem leidvollen Leben ein Ende gemacht. Die Witwe trug ihren Verlust so gut sie konnte und versuchte ihren Kindern wenigstens Nahrung und Kleidung zu verschaffen. Tag für Tag schuftete sie beim Grosseinmachen in den bemittelteren Häusern des Städtchens, um dann ihren kärglichen Lohn vorsichtig einzuteilen. Nachdem die Kinder erwachsen waren blieb nur noch ihre jüngste Tochter, die Jreet, bei ihr. Jreet war ein froher Mensch mit einer sonnigen Natur. Sie hatte sich immer wieder bemüht mit den andern Kindern in der Schule, und später, als sie die Schule verlassen hatte, mit der Jugend zu verkehren. Oft kam sie aber niedergedrückt nach Hause und auf der Mutter Fragen antwortete sie traurig: „Mi welle see nich. See wellen mi uck nich, aus etj noch Tjind wea. Etj sie to oam.“

Nein, in Jreets Jugend gab es nicht viel zu lachen, so heiter sie auch veranlagt war. Für die „andern“, christlich wie sie auch erzo-gen sein mochten, blieb sie nur die „vame Krohnen Jreet.“ Mit der Zeit merkte sie, dass man einem Verkehr mit ihr auswich, ja, dass man sie meidete. Sie zog sich still zurück und war auf dem besten Weg mit achtzehn Jahren abgeschlossen und einsam zu leben, bis Jiesbrachts Obram in das

kleine Städtchen zog. Auch Obrams Eltern waren bitter arm, auch er fühlte sich fremd und ausgestossen trotz Kirche und Jugendverein, und auch er merkte bald, dass er unter den „ändern“ nicht zählte. Was Wunder, dass sich Jreets Wege mit den seinen kreuzten, waren sie doch in gewissem Sinne Leidensgenossen. So war die Liebe, die keinen Standesunterschied kennt, in ihre Herzen eingezogen. Jreets lockiges Blondhaar umflatterte wieder lustig ihr lachendes Gesicht, und ihre blauen Augen strahlten wie die Sterne wenn Oram und sie von ihrer Hochzeit im Sommer träumten.

Ein Wermutstropfen war aber doch in ihren Freudenkelch gefallen — sie hatten beide kein Geld. Jreet ergab sich schon darin, dass sie keine Aussteuer in die Ehe bringen würde, aber der Gedanke an die Hochzeit, die es ja ohne Geld nicht gab, betrückte sie unendlich. Schon als kleines Kind hatte sie immer von einem weissen Brautkleid mit Schleppe, duftigem Schleier und Myrtenkranz geträumt. Es musste doch einen Weg geben sich das nötige Geld zu beschaffen um nur einmal im Leben auch so schön zu sein wie die „ändern“. Wenn sie Oram vorjammerte, dass sie keine Aussteuer besäße ausser drei Küchenhandtücher aus gebleichten Mehlsäcken die sie allerdings schön bestickt hatte, dann lachte er nur, zog sie an sich, und sagte: „Etj frie di, nicht diene Metjefft.“ Dann war sie glücklich, aber abends beim Schlafengehen gaukelte ihr doch immer wieder das duftige Brautkleid vor Augen.

Morgens lief sie dann wieder von Haus zu Haus und bat um Putzarbeit. Die Leute waren aber in den dreissiger Jahren noch ärmer geworden als sie es Ende der zwanziger waren. Die meisten machten ihre Putzarbeit selber, und jeden Abend kam sie bedrückt und niedergeschlagen nach Hause, ohne Erfolg.

Eines Tages las sie eine Zeitungsannonce die in einem Lebensmittelgeschäft am Fenster ausgehängt war. Da in Kanada zur Zeit eine unheimlich grosse Feldmäuseplage herrsche, biete die Regierung für jeden Mausechwanz einen Cent. Die Mäuse sollten auf den Feldern getötet, die Schwänze im Geschäft abgegeben werden. Jreet stand wie gebannt am Fenster. „Mein Kleid! Mein Brautkleid!“ jubelte sie und lief nach Hause.

Jeden Tag zog sie nun mit einer kleinen Tonne Wasser auf einem geborgten hölzernen Wägelchen auf die Felder und Wiesen. Eimer um Eimer Wasser goss sie in die Mauselöcher, stand dann mit einem Knüppel bereit, tötete die ausgesäufte Maus, und schnitt dann den Schwanz ab, um ihn behutsam in eine kleine Tasche zu tun. Beim ersten Mal hatte sie sich übergeben müssen, so furchtbar kam ihr ihre Handlung vor. Mit der Zeit gewöhnte sie sich dran und wünschte sich manchesmal im Stillen: „Wenn doch jede Maus zwei Schwänze hätte.“ Jeden Tag, obs regnete oder sonnig war, die Jreet säufte von früh bis spät die Feldmäuse aus, und siehe da, bis August hatten sie die Summe für ein bescheidenes Brautkleid mit Schleier zusammengebracht. Die geschickten Hände der Mutter schafften ein wahres Wunder aus duftigem wenn auch billigem Batist und Tüll, und Jreet war selig.

Es war eine wundervolle Hochzeit an einem herrlich warmen aber nicht heissen Augusttag. Jreet und ihre Familie hatten die Kirche aufs schönste mit Wiesenblumen geschmückt. Der Prediger hielt ihr, der armen Krohnen Jreet, eine Hochzeitsandacht wie er sie selten gehalten, war er doch tief beeindruckt von dem Mut und der Zuversicht dieses Paares, das es wagte, ohne einen Cent ihren weiteren Lebensweg zusammen zu wandern. Die Organistin spielten brausend den Hochzeitsmarsch, und Jreet trat strahlend am Arm ihres Obrams den Triumphzug zum Ausgang an, gefolgt von beider Familienangehörigen. Sie waren fast an der Tür angelangt wo eine Bank von neugierigen Jungen und Mädchen voll besetzt war. Jreet warf zufällig einen freudigen Blick auf sie — sie waren gekommen, diese Jugend, die zu den „ändern“ zählten, sie waren zu ihrem Ehrentag gekommen, sie wollten ihr Glück wünschen, ihr, der armen Krohnen Jreet. Plötzlich ertönte ganz nah an ihr von der Bank her zischend eine halblautes Wort: „Müszoagelbrüt“.

Etwas erlosch in Jreets Gesicht. Ihr federnder Schritt verwandelte sich in ein schweres Schreiten. Hochaufgerichteten Hauptes, den Hochzeitsstraus aus weissen Gladiolen krampfhaft umklammert, schritt sie stolz durch die Tür. Der Tag war so wunderschön, ihr Traum war erfüllt, nur — man hatte ihm den Glanz genommen. mm

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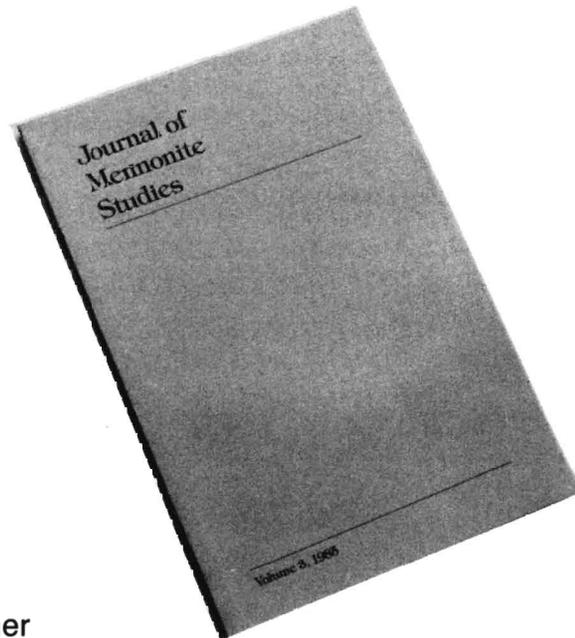
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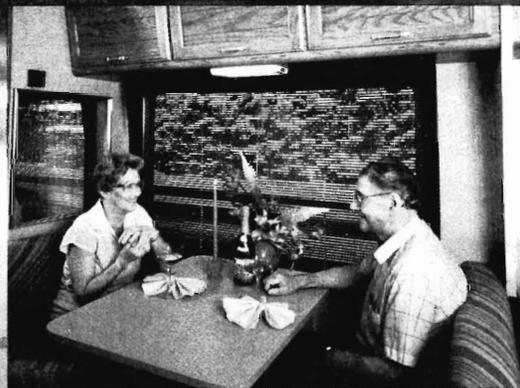
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