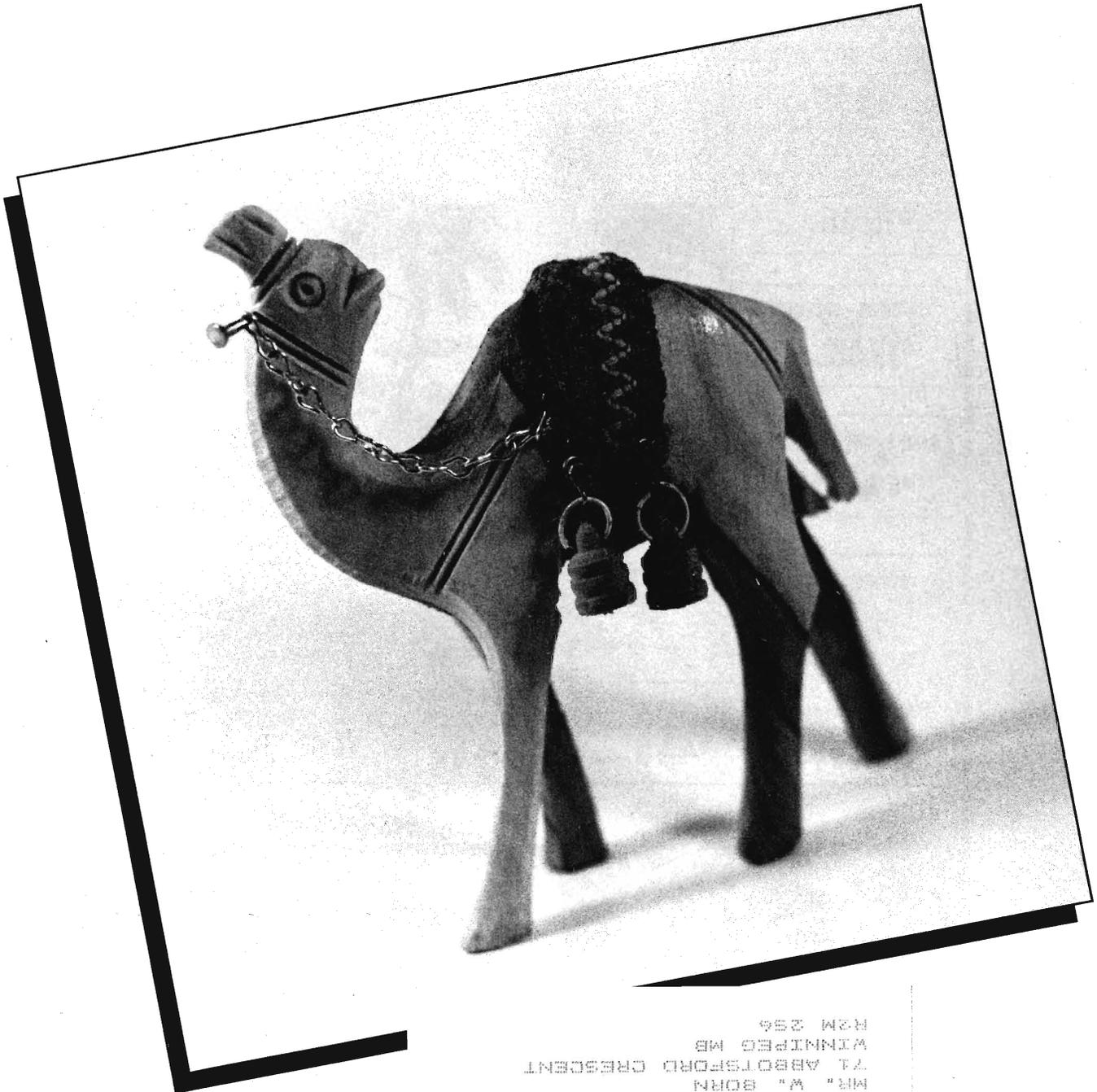


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volume 20 / number 4 / December, 1990



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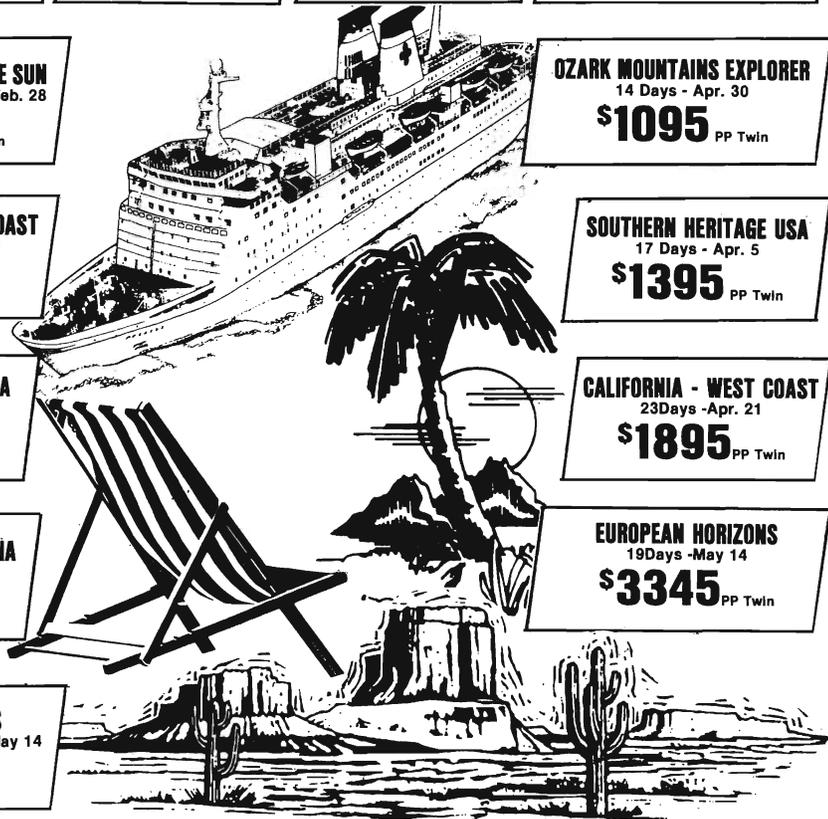
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ForeWord

By the time you receive this issue, the Christmas season will be fully upon us. With that focus it is, of course, fitting, that some of the articles in this issue reflect the season. The two Low German pieces explore an aspect of the season: with Christmas programs, the other with smoke in the chimney.

Our editorial this month deals with belief. The word and the concept is certainly familiar to Christians. What is not so obvious is that other people "believe" too. In this Our Word, Roy Vogt describes some of those similarities.

How do you convince someone that Christian belief is something worthwhile? Sermons and similar ways of telling the word isn't persuasive. The strongest message Christianity can present is the example of committed Christians and the practical demonstration of their belief. John Bowen explores this in an article this edition.

Omi's pantry is a tiny restaurant that is as much a labor of love as it is an eating establishment. In this issue Agnes Wall spends an afternoon with Olga Friesen Muller as she describes her approach to the business but also her other achievements in life, all very tasteful, of course.

A short story by James Coggins in this issue makes a point about how blind we can be about "being different," while Tim Wiebe gives us his reflections on a special edition of Prairie Fire that explore Mennonite writing.

In his Observed Along the Way, Roy Vogt touches on the Christmas season, the deepening of winter. In a further reflection on the changes in Eastern Europe, he recounts two versions of an allegorical tale that show how easterners look at their changed world.

Poetry, some observations of the political situation in the Middle East, several readers' letters and the Manitoba News are also to be found in this edition that ends the year.

"Quilting Love"

by P. Buckley Moss

All proceeds from the sale of these limited edition prints benefit Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) programs in Africa.

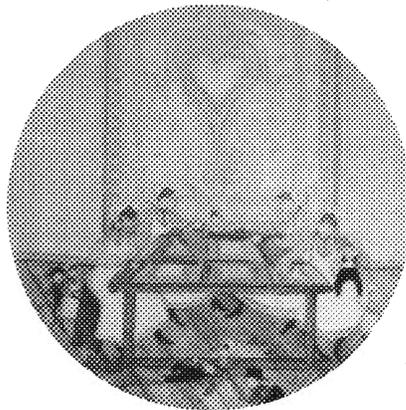
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Mennonite Mirror

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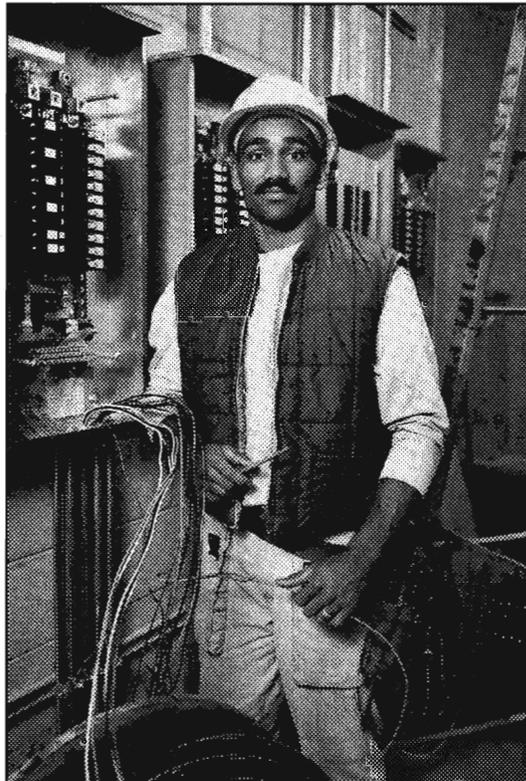
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The many talents of Omi are all in good taste

by Agnes Wall

The deli is cosy, seating only about 24 people, the decor pretty and feminine. Several landscapes, done in oil, are hung on the walls wherever there is space. A large mural comprises one section of a partition of the dining area.

Omi, Olga Muller Friesen, is seated at one of the glass-topped, octagonal tables, holding her youngest grandchild on her knee. "Help yourselves to everything on this counter here," she smiles as she points to an array of food set out in the back of the restaurant.

Omi has prepared all the dishes from scratch right there in her Pantry. The smell of her homebaked eight-grain bread lingers in the air as her mini loaves rise in the oven before our eyes. The food, always served buffet style, is cooked to perfection, and so delicately seasoned with herbs and spices and other good things that condiments of any kind are never needed, not even salt and pepper.

"I cook by baking, broiling, stewing or boiling" says Omi, "And I never deep-fry anything. My gravies and

sausages are healthy because they have no fat in them. I pride myself on buying only fresh meat and vegetables with no additives or preservatives. The food you eat here is wholesome and if it tastes good to you, I'm happy. I specialize in preparing desserts. I usually have some kind of fruit in them. I'm careful about calories too, but I admit I go a bit overboard when it comes to my cheesecake."

Musical menu

Though she is Mennonite, her restaurant does not specialize exclusively in Mennonite cuisine. It offers ethnic food of many nations, from French quiche and Swedish meatballs to Arabian lamb stew with dumplings and Jewish blintzes. I could see no menu when I first came in, but there was one, and only one, hardly noticeable, mounted in a glass frame beside the cash register. As a musician, Ms. Muller Friesen can't resist presenting her bill of fare in the form of a symphony with variations on a theme, starting with the prelude of

Russian Tea with German Schnecken. The main theme is lunch, the recapitulation and the finale is supper and the postlude is a list of non-alcoholic beverages. The prices are reasonable, lunch at \$6 and dinner \$9.25. This menu, served in rotation, offers an incredible variety of food items. I counted 54 in all.

Muller Friesen suggests that if you wish to entertain a group between 12 and 25 that you reserve the whole restaurant. If you give her enough notice, you can choose your menu for the evening. Once you and your friends have arrived, no one else is admitted. Your hostess and chef will be Omi herself because she does it all. You will have a feast.

Family days

She comes from a large, immigrant, Mennonite family. There were ten children in all and all musical. Learning to play an instrument or two was a natural part of their growing up. At a tender age young Olga already accompanied the church choir and the congregational singing on the piano. As she grew older, she continued her music studies. She holds diplomas in piano, organ and voice, and degrees in music and education. Her accomplishments are impressive indeed -- organist and choir director, piano and voice teacher, director of children's choirs, adjudicator of Manitoba music festivals and the composer of a full-length operetta, to name only a few.

But she did not excel in music alone. She recalls her formative years with affection. Her mother was a caring and nurturing woman, an excellent cook and a fine example to all her offspring. Each of the children shared in the work of the household. "I admired my mother as she prepared gargantuan



The tiny inside of Omi's pantry

meals for us every day and I wanted to be just like her. My share of the chores was to help with the cooking. It came very naturally to me and I enjoyed it. I was already baking bread when I was 13 years old. I loved preparing all kinds of dainties and delicacies for parties and presenting them in an original manner."

This artistry is reflected in her evident pleasure as she arrays her food on the buffet tables in the most appetizing order. "The Yorkshire Pudding can add a certain something to the meal when arranged around a succulent roast beef. I sometimes serve chicken surrounded by Mennonite Bubbatt (stuffing). I call it my Hen-in-a-Nest." she laughs. "I've been told it's a showpiece."

I enquire about the paintings. "Oh, I did those myself. Someone showed me how to do it and since I needed pictures for my walls here, I painted a few," she mentions almost casually.

Other enterprises

Running the restaurant single-handedly should be enough to fill the days of this energetic woman, but there is more. She owns the building which not only

houses the deli but also her other two businesses, a laundromat and a hair salon. "I think it's a novel concept," she says. "While someone waits for her laundry to be washed and dried, she need not be bored or waste her time. She can have lunch here in the deli, get her hair cut in the hair salon and then go home with a basket full of clean clothes."

Omi has put every inch of space into good use. Her basement, once a salon for music recitals, is now a banquet room seating 40 for meals. One piano remains there and may be used for musical entertainment.

"Although I'd had some experience setting up a laundry including a beautician's shop," recalls Muller Friesen, "It wasn't easy getting started here. The business world is still a man's world. I usually pay top dollar at wholesalers and suppliers just because I'm a woman. I have to plan very carefully to make my enterprises show a profit. At present things don't look very rosy for small entrepreneurs, be they men or women. The way I see it, it will be

hard to stay afloat for the next few years. Sometimes I think I should retire."

It's hard to imagine Omi retiring, even as she sits and plays with her granddaughter. But, when some day she does retire, she's bound to be involved with something. Something artistic, innovative and exciting. **mm**

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Your Christmas Music Stations!

No preaching, no crusades, just the example of committed people

by John Bowen

Last Christmas I learned something about evangelism, and from a surprising source. My wife and I visited with a couple of old friends for an afternoon tea of Christmas cake and mince-tarts. While the children watched a video, we talked. Jane, who is not a convinced Christian, has become a pretty strong feminist during the 10 years we have known her. Over the third cup of tea, I asked Jane what had formed the basis of her feminism.

Had she, for instance, read the classic feminist texts -- Germaine Greer and all that? No, she replied thoughtfully, but certainly books by women. Books about feminism? I asked. Again, no. Books about anything? Yes, and not least, novels by Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and others. Their points-of-view as women were persuasive she said because they struck an answering chord in Jane which male writers had never done.

Jane had also taken a union job a few years back as its representative on affirmative action. That had put her into a position where she had to face the issues feminists were talking about, and to become painfully aware of how other women were hurting in ways she herself had never experienced. That job also put her alongside people who had thought through a lot of the issues -- unequal work opportunities, day-care, sexual abuse, discrimination -- and who were putting their lives on the line to work towards a better day for women.

Anything else, I asked? "Well," replied Jane, "when I began to look back on my life from a feminist vantage-point, I realised how much I had

put up with over the years simply because I was a woman." She talked with feeling about the supervisor at work who just referred to her as "the one with the big breasts." As far as he was concerned, that was her only significant characteristic. Not her personality, not her skills in the workplace, not even her name.

What feminism had done for Jane was to give her a philosophical framework from which to critique that kind of experience, and give her a community of friends who had been through the same sort of thing.

A little parable of C.S. Lewis' came to my mind. He describes standing in an old wood-shed one sunny afternoon, and noticing a shaft of light coming through the crack at the top of the door. As he looked at the light, he noticed the specks of dust dancing in it. But then his eye was drawn in the direction from which the light came, and he realised that by looking through the space at the top of the door, he could see the outside world -- with the help of that same light.

I told Jane the parable. "Lewis was saying there are two ways of responding to truth. One is to look at and consider it objectively. The other is to look along it, and see how it sheds light on the world. Seems to me the way you became a feminist was by looking along the claims of feminism rather than by looking at them." She reflected for a moment: "Mm, that's good." I decided it wasn't the moment to tell her Lewis was talking about Christian truth, and the conversation moved on.

As we left the warmth of the fireside, and started the drive back home, my

mind couldn't let the conversation go. Jane had a conversion experience, though not the one I hoped (and still hope) for her. We tried to figure out how it had happened.

First, she had been attracted by the creative work of people who all happened to hold the same philosophy. Not that they were writing about their philosophy. They were simply writing about life, but they did so in a way that was attractive and which made sense.

Then she had worked alongside people who had impressed her by their wholeheartedness, their willingness to sacrifice for their cause, and by the clear-cut truth and justice of much they were saying. These were not people who had been to college to study feminism and how to spread it. They were just thoughtful, real, passionate people -- amateurs, in the literal sense of people who act for the love of their cause.

And finally, Jane had found in feminism a way of making sense of her life, almost a philosophy of history. It explained her past, it gave her purpose for the present, and it offered bright hope for the future.

No crusades. Not a lot of preaching. No door-to-door visitation. Just convinced people doing their thing. As we might say, lifestyle evangelism of a pretty high order. Personal testimonies of the non-preachy variety. People who integrated their faith and their work, people who practised what they believed.

And of course, it's not just Jane who has been converted. All of western society has been touched. The world will never be the same again. Is it just possible that feminists have done a

better job that Christians in communicating their message over the past 25 years?

As we pulled into the driveway, I sighed. This was supposed to have been a relaxing visit. Certainly, I had been open for to say something about my faith if the opportunity came. But I hadn't bargained on God's speaking to me, least of all to say something about evangelism through a secular feminist. Ah well, I suppose humility is one of the lessons of Christmas.

John Bowen is eastern Ontario director for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, an interdenominational youth organization. He serves on the evangelism committee for the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa.

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Surely the people

a short story by James R. Coggins

"The train is ready for boarding," the official said.

Peter and Andrew rose heavily to their feet and began moving toward the platform. But the official stood in front of them, staring into their faces, as if there were more.

"You will not come back," he said.

"No," they answered.

It had been a question.

"You believe you are going to your promised land?" the official continued.

"Yes, our God loves us and will bless us."

"You?" he asked. "Why you?"

"Because we are his people," Peter replied. "We are Peter and Andrew, named after his chief followers. We have been his people since birth. We are his people," he repeated.

The official was silent a moment.

"And us?" he said.

"You are not of us. You are not his people. The new land does not belong to you."

"You would not invite me to join you, would you?"

"The new land..." Andrew said, "you would not want to come."

"In the new land," Peter added curtly, "we will have no need of officials."

They knew this official, Peter and Andrew. He had lived near their village, but he was not one of them. They did not know his name. They did not wish to know.

"You know nothing of the new land," Peter continued. "You are an ignorant man."

The official looked into their eyes one more time. "I'm glad you are going," he said. Then he slowly, deliberately stepped aside so they could pass.

They walked out onto the platform

and followed the other passengers into the train. They stowed their baggage under their seats and settled down onto the hard benches. Turning, they saw the face of the official at the window. Without taking his eyes from the official, Andrew lowered the window.

The official smiled a half smile and looked again into their eyes. "Surely you are the people," he said, "and wisdom will depart with you."

He turned abruptly and disappeared into the station. After a moment, the train jerked and slowly moved out of the station, gathering momentum as it went.

Inside, the train, Andrew stared straight ahead of him. "What do you suppose he meant by that?" he said.

"He recognized who we are," Peter replied. "Even the officials must recognize the true people in the end."

"Yes, I suppose," Andrew admitted. After a moment, he added, "But it seemed like he meant something by it, a veiled suggestion he didn't think we would understand."

Peter merely grunted.

"It was like a quotation," Andrew asserted, "a quotation from a book he had studied often and knew well. He said it like it was a passage from his favourite book and he knew we wouldn't understand."

"Probably it was from one of his communist books," Peter responded firmly, sounding a little annoyed.

"Yes, but which book?" Andrew asked.

"I don't know. Perhaps we'll find it one day. Yes, some day I'll have to look for it." Peter shut his eyes and leaned back, bringing the conversation to a close. **mm**

by H.W. Friesen

In B.C. the Mennonite Brethren get set to jettison their embarrassing name

Mennonite Brethren in B.C. do not want to be called Mennonites any more.

"Mennonite" has become an undesirable word in some quarters. There is no outright denial of being Mennonite, rather an increasing disuse of the name.

"MB" in the Vancouver Sun usually refers to Macmillan Bloedel, the giant lumber company, and not to a religious group. Any possible confusion between Mennonite Brethren and the lumber barons is not the reason for this change.

B.C. has more than 11,000 MBs representing more than 40 per cent of the Canadian MB constituency. They meet in 70 congregations and worship in eight languages. The MB conference plan for church growth in B.C. targets four new congregations each year. In 1989 five congregations were established; six are in formation in 1990. There are blueprints for inception, conference subsidies for new churches and proposals for their independence and growth.

MB power play

This new found success enables B.C. MBs to flex their muscles. The proposal to terminate financial support for MBBC in Winnipeg reflects, amongst other things, the shift of the MB power base from Henderson Highway to the Fraser Highway. Phone an MB church in B.C. and likely the person answering will not identify it as a Mennonite Brethren church. "Main Street Church," or "Hillside Community Church" are typical responses. No mention of Mennonites. Or Brethren. More than half of British Columbia MB churches do not use "Mennonite" in their name. This has not displeased their leaders.

Similarly, newspaper advertisements or articles about MB churches usually omit any mention of denomination,

although the initials "MB" might appear somewhere in small print. One congregation's promotional literature made no mention of MBs and some recipients of this material looking for a Mennonite church went elsewhere since there was no way of establishing that it came from a Mennonite church. How does one know a church is Mennonite if it refuses to call itself by that name?

Despite the disuse of "Mennonite" the MB churches are expected to follow their conference statement of faith -- A requirement resulting in a situation where churches adhere to the MB statement of faith but do not call themselves Mennonites. In the past it may have been tolerable to call themselves Mennonite Brethren; now it seems desirable to distance oneself from that name. MB's prefer not to see themselves as Mennonites; they genuinely believe they are Christians and what comes thereafter is not important.

Tradition gives way to tunes

A new MB congregation is advised, as part of the growth formula, not to use a Mennonite hymnary since newcomers not familiar with harmony singing might feel uncomfortable. A history of rich choral music is replaced with choruses projected on a screen. Columbia Bible College has been criticized for retaining a sound choral tradition. B.C. MBs are straining to sing new tunes.

MBs want a new symbol. Names of groups are symbols which point to the inclinations of the group; they identify a past as well as the current reality. "Mennonite Brethren" reflects a theological orientation and a heritage. Dropping the "Mennonite" symbol points to the theological direction MBs are deciding not to travel and leading one seasoned observer to predict that MBs will not be Mennonites in the next

decade.

The eagerness to discard the Mennonite label may be understandable since some MBs receive no nurture from their Anabaptist roots. Changing the name in itself may not be bad if it can be done without losing the spiritual heritage. There are trade-offs in forsaking the past and buying into mainstream evangelicalism. Diminishing use of the Mennonite name has coincided with a commitment to contemporary evangelicalism and its cultural baggage. The new baggage includes a gospel that justifies and pursues success.

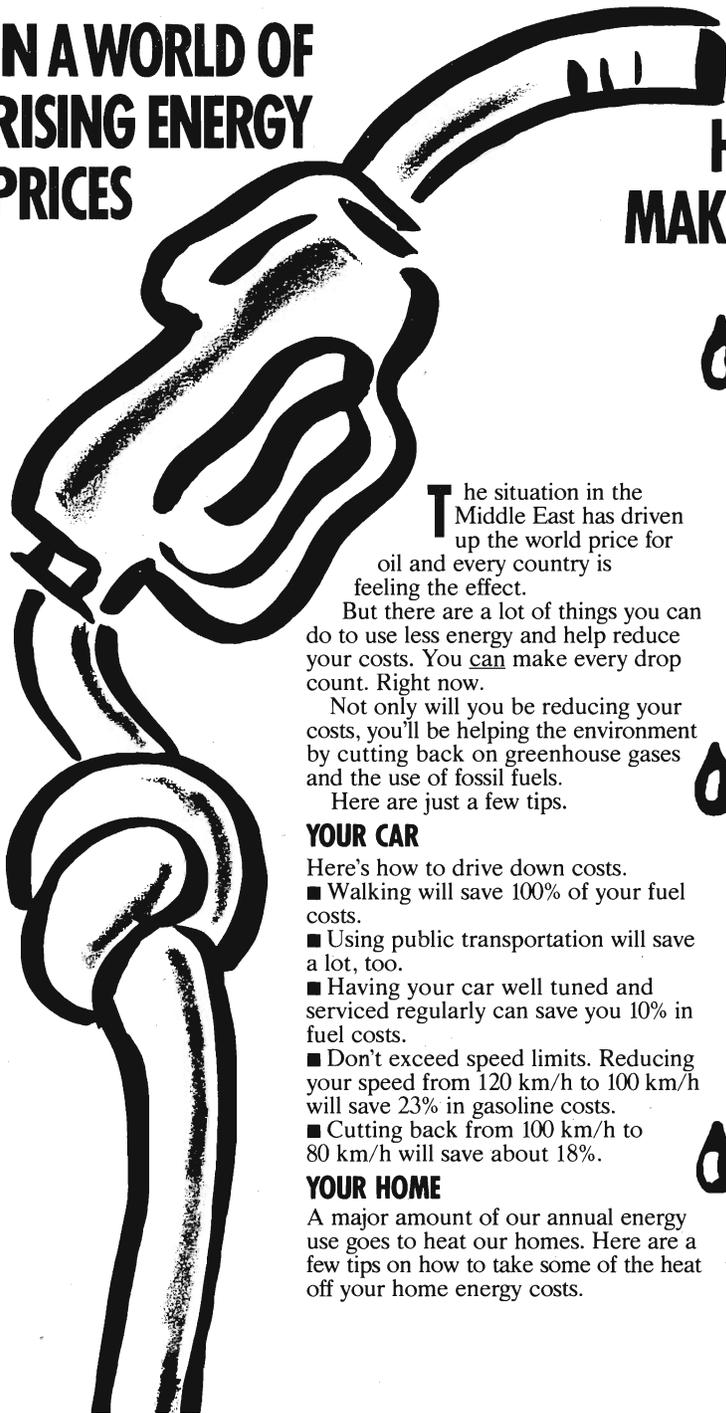
The success of MB church growth is too easily equated with numerical growth; this may mirror a theology with considerable mass appeal. Make the gospel popular and increase the numbers. Popular acceptance might be facilitated by diluting a theological heritage.

A prairie visitor sees B.C. Mennonites competing for money, status, and power individually and between churches. These success ladders offer swimming pools, hot tubs, elaborate houses, private tennis courts, luxury cars, and church positions as rewards for those who climb them. The prairie observer sees few empty rungs.

The GCs, a minority among Mennonites here, admire the MB church growth with mild envy while approaching their own identity crisis. Rather than watching the MBs, the GCs should be nurturing their own theological roots. MB here will soon mean only MacMillan Bloedel, and what happens with MB on the west coast could spread across Canada. **mm**

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Canada

by Roy Vogt



Peace is an elusive quality at best; two political allegories about Hungary

The most enduring symbol of Christmas is peace. At this time of the year especially we long for peace in the world and peace in our homes. Unfortunately, neither is assured. Everyone should read in this issue the extremely helpful but disturbing interpretation of events in the Mideast which Ed and Norilyn Epp sent to us. We need to see these events from a different perspective than is usually given to us in the daily press. The peace of the world is threatened as much by us as by anyone else. And in our homes? Well, there too peace is sometimes more longed for than achieved.

Maybe the Christmas story has given us the wrong impression. We imagine a quiet night without conflict, and a quiet stable where even the baby Jesus made no noise. But how do we know that the shepherds weren't quarrelling among themselves, and that the baby Jesus didn't add his own loud cries to the braying of donkeys around him? Actually, I don't suppose it was a very quiet Christmas.

You might ask what prompts me to begin this column by dwelling on the possibility of noise at Christmas. I'm not sure. It couldn't possibly have something to do with the fact that we are anticipating the presence of five grandchildren in our home over Christmas! Did I mention donkeys braying? I feign innocence. While it is unlikely to be a quiet Christmas, we are looking forward to a very joyful and peaceful time. Peace, after all, has more to do with the presence of love and fellowship than with the absence of noise.

And, God be thanked, fellowship and love are present in our home.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas an evening of joy and fellowship is experienced at the annual fundraising dinner for the Bethania Personal Care Home. This is the home which my Uncle Abram and my Aunt Marie helped to found, and where my parents received wonderful care. Though there is a lot of sadness in such a home, there is also a surprising amount of joy. The dinner and program this evening reflect this. Al Reimer does a masterful job of easing the pain of ageing with wry observations and sage advice. Despite all past protestations, he admits that he will be spending a good part of the coming winter in a senior citizens' trailer park in Arizona. It would be a pleasure to see him bobbing and weaving in the heated pool.

He also reminds us of the futile things that we sometimes do: like the 81 year old gentleman who married a much younger woman so that he might still have an heir. Nothing happened, however, and after a checkup the doctor gave him the sad news. "You may be heir-minded," the doctor said, "but you aren't heir-conditioned."

Good gifts for Christmas are often hard to find. This year, as often in the past, my wife and I search for a single gift for each other. We find it in the home of the artist, Les Brandt: an evocative painting of a prairie elevator, with lush

red and brown colors. Framed carefully by Paul Neustaedter -- we have no talent in such matters -- it brightens our home as no other gift could.

By now many people may be tired of hearing about the constant change in Eastern Europe, but evidently many others aren't. After my return from Germany in October I am invited to speak to several groups, including high school social science teachers, and a class of newly-arrived immigrants. I am impressed that on a mid Friday afternoon several dozen teachers stick around to discuss the issues arising out of the reconstruction of Eastern Europe.

At a university conference on Eastern Europe in late November two wonderful allegories are told by two Hungarian scholars with very different views. The first acknowledges that socialism in Hungary didn't satisfy the people, but he fears that they are now jumping too quickly and uncritically into the capitalist camp. He tells the following story to illustrate his fears:

"It is 1989," he begins, "and in a little country that I shall call Hungary the people are unhappy with their lot. Suddenly they see in the sky a hot air balloon descending toward them. On the side of the balloon are the words 'capitalism.' They rush to the centre of the city where the balloon is landing. They would love to get on it and rise above the surrounding misery. However, when they arrive at the balloon site many people are already on board, and there clearly isn't room for every-

body. In fact, some are being pushed off to lighten the load. Those on board shout to the others: "Stoke the fires, we need more hot air to get the balloon aloft!" The people on the ground work hard and slowly the balloon rises toward the sky. Those on the ground look upward longingly. They hope there will be another balloon, but they can't be sure. Meanwhile, the ones riding the balloon are celebrating. In their joy they quickly forget about the ones left on the ground. What the lucky ones don't realize, however, is that the balloon has a slow leak, and sometime in the near future it may go crashing to the ground."

Thus far the parable of the first speaker.

The second speaker changes the parable as follows: "Let us imagine," he says, "that it is 1945, and we are in a country called Hungary. The people have just gone through a terrible war and don't know where to turn. Suddenly a train, not a balloon, pulls into town. The train is called 'socialism,' and the operators step out and invite the people inside. 'You will be taken on a wonderful journey,' the operators promise, 'to a much better kind of world.' Some believe and step into the train willingly. The majority, however, are skeptical and refuse to enter. Suddenly armed guards appear and force everyone into the train. The train departs, but as it moves through the countryside the passengers note that the country is becoming poorer, not better. They begin to grumble. The guards then put shades on all the windows and urge the passengers to watch a movie instead. The movie depicts a prosperous and happy Hungary. At first the passengers are somewhat entertained, but after a while even the movie wears out, and people begin to peek out the windows. They see that the real world outside has become even worse. Finally, they revolt, and even some of the conductors revolt with them. The train is stopped, and when they stagger outside they find they are in the middle of a bleak wilderness. They are close to despair. It is at that point that the balloon 'capitalism' appears in the sky."

Well, there you have two very differ-

ent views of Eastern Europe's past and of its newest hope.

After hearing these parables, and after reflecting on the tremendous economic power of a unified Germany -- a power which will surely enable Germany to penetrate economically very successfully into most of the East European countries -- I am prompted to add the following conclusion to the preceding allegories. When the people stumble out of the train, after experiencing 45 years of socialism, they see not a balloon but a sleek, brand-new train pull speedily into an adjoining track. They run toward the train, and wait for it to stop. A smart-looking porter steps out and shouts authoritatively but in a welcoming way to them: "*Bitte einsteigen!*" They all jump in and the train takes off with a burst of speed. The people are on the way again. Where the journey will end no one knows, though we hope, with the poet, that "the story will end in God's glory."

I also wish for you a glorious Christmas season and a promising New Year.
mm

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The age of Constantine: A reflection on the "Mennonite writing" edition of *Prairie Fire*

by Tim Wiebe

In Church history, we speak of the Constantinian Synthesis; an era during which church and state, as though by application of some ideological crazy glue, were inseparably linked. Having just read the "Mennonite Writing" edition of *Prairie Fire* magazine (Summer, 1990), it occurs to me that there exists, somewhere in the Mennonite experience, a similar sort of collective, monolithic past.

At least it exists in the hearts and minds, bleeds from the pens (a nice enough image, although computers are doubtless the more tidy technological tool of choice by now), of a goodly number of Mennonite writers.

Far be it from me to stereotype, but this past -- a holdover, perhaps, from an experience in Russia which stretched a similar synthesis of sacred and secular over a quarter of a millenium's frame -- seems to hold an almost mythical fascination for the "Liars and Rascals" (to borrow a term from Hildi Froese Thiessen's anthology of the same title) among our flock.

The questions

For some among us, that pastoral past seems, on the one hand, just that: an ideal period of security during which all things were known. Father knows best, and God is the ultimate Father and the church hierarchy has it on good authority from the Boss Himself that they've been passing on the right information for quite some time, thank-you very much. You can live a lifetime in that kind of world, supposedly, and ask very few questions. When a community has all the answers, questions are a distraction.

But when the more radical, probing minds begin asking some of those taboo

sorts of questions -- about God, sex, morality, and the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible -- the supposed synthesis of our mythical, collective past, a secure niche for others, becomes for them an oppressive monolith. No institution appreciates someone chipping away at its ideological foundations.

And then, of course, there is backlash from the community being criticized, and counter-response from the troubled souls who've gone on artistic record, and a gradual edging away, one from the other, which, at the same time, is also a longing, each FOR the other; a longing for reconciliation, for understanding, for reformation.

Peace with words

But it doesn't happen. Or, at least, seems seldom to happen. Or, at best, seems to involve, for the Mennonite artists in question, a long process of searching and agonizing and gradually coming to terms with places and people long since past, so that the best a writer can do is to make his or her peace with words and concepts on a page in the hope that somewhere, in heaven maybe (or, in darker moments, another, less savory locale), everyone who needs to can hear, and understand, and, if God is really at work in this world like s/he claims to be, forgive.

And so, you end up with structural remnants of a monolithic past, needing a prophetic voice to point out their beauty AND their bestiality; and a loose-knit cadre of artists, clinging ambiguously, if at all, to the "Mennonite" name, who write out of an experience with which, because of their ambivalence, they are increasingly out of touch. At best, they achieve (aside from awards for artistic brilliance) a

literary voice best characterized, as one academic has said, by "ambivalent lament."

Maybe we need another revolution. Another reformation. One in which the Liars and Rascals are allowed to share powerfully what they have to say by structures which realize that they need to hear a strong word. One in which our ambiguously Mennonite artists are allowed and encouraged to use their art to redeem and make more genuinely human those structures.

But then, you're talking two different languages: the institutional language of structure and order as opposed to the freewheeling dialect of artistic license; a dialect which seems to require the space of relative isolation so that its practitioners can hone their critique of the community in which they have, however ambivalently, been shaped. Your average synthesis -- real or imagined -- has a way of crushing dissent, even in a movement rooted in a dynamic of radical opposition to the status quo. It's tempting to think that Jesus only had to come once, and that we can then return to normal, prosperous, Mennonite living. There are those among us, Liars and Rascals, who are trying to tell us different.

Finding a place

As for where I fit in as a writer who wishes to embrace BOTH the religious and cultural aspects of being Mennonite -- and if one truly follows Christ, how can there be a division between sacred and secular? -- it's hard to say. I do know that my grandpa lived near Plum Coulee in the heart of the country which is the well-spring of at least some of the "ambivalent lament" which seems to characterize the Mennonite

literary voice. And I know that he went to church often enough to be respectable (and was either being deeply reverent or profoundly bored when he bowed his head in his hands during the service), and that he hardly ever said a word about religion in his life -- at least not that I can recall.

And I also know that he was one of the kindest, gentlest, most compassionate people I've ever known -- 210 pounds of tall, lean, raw-boned muscle, with big, calloused hands, and pockets big enough to hold a few packs of Juicy Fruit from which there was always enough for an eager grandkid. I know that he would help out anyone who would ask, or lend out a tool or piece of machinery if it was needed, and that if he thought he deserved something in return he seldom made an issue of it.

I suppose he was also a stubborn man, although I only know that from other people, who also loved him in spite of it, and I know that the memories I have of his place -- THE FARM -- have accumulated into another kind of mythology; one in which I'm always eight or nine years old and holding grandpa's hand on the way back from the barn. He's swinging a full milk pail in rhythm with each stride, and smiling gently as the cluck of chickens and the buzz of farmyard life signals the beginning of another new day.

Later, after the farm burned, and my grandparents moved to town to spend their last few years, it wasn't quite the same. It was hard to see someone once so strong hardly able to mow the lawn without leaving patches of uncut grass. Still, when we laid grandpa to rest beside his beloved wife of 65 years; and when we fixed Bloomfield cemetery in our collective unconscious as the place to which all of us would someday go home, I was grateful for whatever forces had brought grandpa to this land. And as a writer, as a human being, I still am.

Effects still evident

And I know that the effects of the Mennonite synthesis are still being dispersed into the present generation; and that it was and is often oppressive to questioning spirits and minds. But

my memories of that kind, quiet man on a farm near Plum Coulee remind me that there are also many good people in that past -- people who would help you out during harvest or after a fire without a word said or a favor expected. People who spent their lives struggling, doubting, praying, loving, caring for family, and, in some awkward, rough-hewn way, following the example of Jesus through life, to the grave, and into whatever existence it is that lies beyond.

We need our expressions of ambivalent lament; our outpourings of frustration and anger with a past which has been, at times, insensitive to the eloquent, insistent voices crying, from the periphery of the Mennonite community,

for change. But somewhere, somehow, from that monolithic landscape of our fused sacred and secular Mennonite mythology, we must also rescue the stories of goodness, of beauty, of forgiveness, of redemption.

As with the examples of the Waldensians and Hussites and Anabaptists and Wesleyans and others who lived radically in the midst of institutional syntheses of various kinds, THESE stories of hope must also be allowed to color the voice, the inflections, and the spirit with which we sing about our past, present, and future as a Mennonite people. mm

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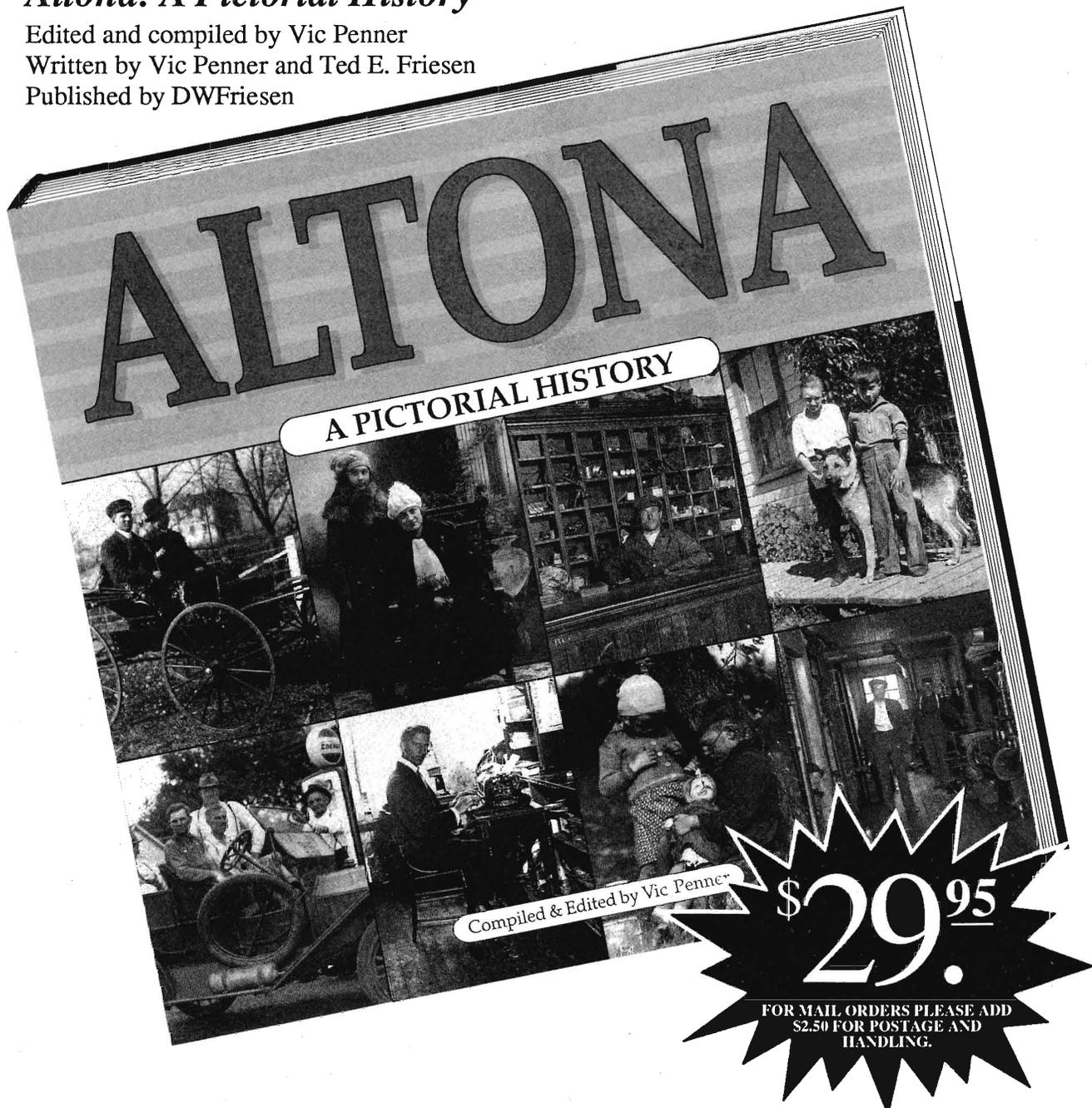
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THE POET'S WORD

Execution

We do it better each year
perfecting endlessly the simple flick of a switch
the way we withhold bread.

Our flawless toxins permeate
unfiltered the pristine minds of the unborn.
They seep unhindered into the unprotesting air.

Swift, clean thrust of the knife
brutality of barbed wire.
We've mastered all the fine points.

Jaded we move on
to virgin jungles, the unsuspecting
desert. There's no place

safe from our volatile hate.
We spread it evenly like cheese across the world's face
and up to the innocent stars.

Our words become shrill and bloated
with malice. They multiply
like weeds.

We have as I said
perfected the art of annihilation.
Our ingenuity has

nothing to do with imagination
which lies dead as nails, discarded
under a heap of dried thorns.

-- Sarah Klassen

Eucharist

When the silence of four walls
becomes unbearable
my mother attends funerals.
Always funerals
in the grey stone church
beside the wide freeway.

My mother crosses circumspectly
at the lights. Looks both ways.
She can quote you a string of deaths
at this intersection. Today

they bury the old arthritic man
from the high rise.
Last week Mrs. Martin
unnoticed ninety years
was praised and laid to rest.

My mother sits near the back
with other widows, a whole row.
They keep faith-
ful notes of eulogies and roses.
Wipe tears from their eyes.

When they have rejoiced
at one more pilgrim released
from bondage to life
they descend uncertainly, lured
by the lively aroma of coffee

downstairs. Rows of bent hands
curl fervently around warm cups
and break small pieces
of fragrant raisin bread, fresh
from the new bakeshop
on McIvor Mall.

-- Sarah Klassen

THE POET'S WORD

BOXING DAY

I ease into a favorite chair
stretch with languorous pleasure
turn toward a cold sun
(now flooding the room with light)
drink in leftover brightness
from the fading season.

I roll a warm mug of coffee
between stiff hands
listen to the slow sounds
of a rising household
and drift within --
light snow scouring frozen fields --
over the landscape
of this fast-closing year.

I fleetingly pass
like Dickinson's dying subject
over the kaleidoscope
of my humanity fearing
failure and fall landing
 abruptly, surprised
on the brink of change;
 the precipice
 of hope.

Outside, all is still
the aftermath of peace, goodwill
tinging the day
with color and calm;
counselling quiet
as strength is regained
promising newness
 as a future
 is made.

-- Tim Wiebe

Hidden Acres

The air is busy
with autumn --
sights, smells, sounds
cram the senses
crisp sun girds limbs
with urgent warmth
whirring cicada wings
buzz benediction
over rolling tracts
of ripe late summer corn.

A rutted path
aimless as you please
is your genial guide
open to whims
on this ad hoc tour of grace.

A cement silo stretches skyward
like some benevolent Babel
surveys cacophony rooted
in a single language...
"Day to day pours forth speech"
and for a season fills you
with a precious harvest
of solitude and peace.

-- Tim Wiebe

An American and western inability to see nuances adds to the crisis in the Gulf

Once again the Middle East is on the brink of war. As the main protagonists, Iraq and the United States, entrench themselves in positions of no compromise, the Western media has become the front line. Unfortunately, most of the western media fails to understand or portray the real position of many Middle Easterners.

Western media repeatedly say Saddam Hussein, the Iraq president, enjoys huge popular support in Jordan, among Palestinians, and parts of Syria and Lebanon. Indeed, this support is the reason given for ending the dialogue between Israeli peace groups and the Palestinians. As well, Jordan finds itself isolated even as it tries to play its usual moderate role.

Hussein as symbol

However, to claim Saddam Hussein enjoys popular support is misleading. For a variety of reasons, Hussein has become a symbol of Arab opposition to certain states and philosophies. So what support there is for Saddam is really an anti-American, anti-Israeli, anti-Gulf states, and anti-theocratic Islamic sentiment. The irony is that if the United States acted with less zeal and with more thought, much of Saddam Hussein's support would dissipate.

The Palestinians support Saddam Hussein against Israel and the United States; at the same time the U.S., Israel, and Britain refuse to see the parallels between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and their support of Israel which more than 40 years ago displaced millions when that state "occupied" Palestine and subsequently moved into other territory as well.

The basic facts of one powerful country occupying a territory through force and refusing self-determination to the people, are the same. The United

Nations attempted to pass numerous resolutions condemning the Israeli occupation; however, the ones with teeth were consistently vetoed by the U.S. The Palestinians wonder how long the Israeli occupation of their land would have lasted if there had been a total economic and military embargo against Israel. Many Palestinians say that if the U.S. would force its "protectorate," Israel, to negotiate with the Palestinians, much Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein would vanish.

In Jordan the feelings are similar. Jordanians, like the Palestinians, point to U.S. inconsistency. They also deplore the lack of Middle East understanding by Americans. Jordanians, along with the rest of the Middle East, were stunned by pictures of George Bush golfing and fishing during the run up to the crisis. When King Hussein was forced to travel to Bush's golf course to defuse the crisis, feelings turned to one of anger and betrayal. King Hussein has consistently tried to be moderate and now stands to lose most.

Gulf wealth resented

There is an additional equation to the perception of support for Saddam Hussein. For years Jordan and Lebanon have been dependant on the Gulf States for survival. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have bankrolled Jordan since the British pulled out, while many villages in Lebanon survived by remittances sent by family members who worked in the gulf. Development projects and mosques have been built by gulf money. However, as this dependency grew, a hatred towards the gulf also grew. The relationship dynamics of the "haves" and the "have nots" began to play a factor. Stories of corruption,

degradation, and wastage were commonplace. Now, there is little sympathy for countries that, according to many Arabs, gave only a portion of what they should have to support others in their time of need.

Finally, there is the feeling that Saddam Hussein represents resistance to theocratic Islamic governments. Under such regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, and other Gulf States, Christians and the intelligentsia have suffered. Whereas these people are quick to declare their repugnance to the regime of Saddam Hussein, they do promote a rebuff to the Islamic governments. It will be interesting to see how this support plays itself out now that Saddam Hussein is trying to invoke the "Islamic card" for his regime. (Saddam is increasingly using Islamic terminology to gain more support from Muslim fundamentalists.)

What is almost universal in Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon is the belief that the crisis is not one of the ideals and freedoms spoken of by George Bush. People point to Grenada and Panama where the United States was the invading force. They point to Cyprus where the Turkish occupation has lasted 30 years, and the Palestinian occupation which has now lasted 40. Both occupations could not have lasted without the tacit or open support of the world powers. The Lebanese point to their country, which is now occupied by Syria and Israel. Here the U.S. supports one and turns a blind eye to the other. No, the history of the world is too inconsistent to support the theory that this is a crisis of ideals and freedoms.

Oil no soothing balm

What many do believe is that the crisis in the gulf is one of oil and money. It is

widely believed here that Kuwait was carved out of Iraq by the British for the purpose of protecting its rights to the oil and that the United States is only acting in the interests of the oil lobby, and in the interests of a president who wishes to be re-elected. It is frightening to people that the security of their homes and families is dependent on these factors.

If the U.S. is concerned about overwhelming support in some quarters for Saddam Hussein there are ways to limit it. The U.S. can begin to seriously

look for compromise and a way for Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait and save face. They can cease their bellicose threats of bombing Baghdad and stop claiming the right to be the world's policeman. They can revive the peace process in Palestine. They can reopen the case of Lebanon and its occupations. If the above were to be done, Saddam Hussein would be left with little popular support. It would also be easier to be a North American in the Middle East.

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YOUR WORD

PRAIRIE ABUSE?

Who is H.W. Friesen and why do you let him/her consistently patronize the prairies? He or she must have a very narrow, TV induced view of life where only the big or sensational is important. I am from the prairies (Plains -- as s/he says is an American word, not in my vocabulary) and am now living in Ontario. However, rather than claim in all smugness that either the prairies or my new home is more scenic, I am willing to see and enjoy the beauty in both places. I admit to longing for the prairies where my vision is not brought up short by tall buildings, hills or even forested areas (not forests any more in lumbered-out southern Ontario). I also admit to smugness when "Easterners" divulge their feelings of fear in the vast expanses of central Canada. I will not claim in all arrogance that one part of Canada or even the world is more beautiful than all the rest. However, the prairies offer a 360 degrees cinema to rival the largest cinesphere -- and puts on amazing shows for kids in the car on the way to and from Winnipeg and Saskatoon. I was never bored. The prairie farmer who retired in B.C. said "The mountains are fine, but they sure do block the view." And Piet Hein said

When great things
whose greatness
is destined to fall
have turned out
too little
to matter at all,
then stoop
and discover
the great and the small (called **The Great and the Small**)

So please, H.W., look again, get out of your car, stop breaking the speed laws, go camping or walk by a slough and count the number of different birds you see. On my last trip from Winnipeg to Saskatchewan it took us three days to drive back because there was **so much to see and do!**

One last thing. Before you condemn the viewless prairies, look to your own province where clearcutting mountain-

sides and old-growth tropical forests goes on almost unhindered, and besides causing untold harm to the world's environment these activities certainly mar the view.

Gaynette Friesen (no relation),
Kleinburg, Ontario.

THE MANITOBA CONNECTIONS

I have enjoyed reading the MM for several years.... very enjoyable and stimulating reading. However, it is so totally Manitoba oriented that people that don't know better would think only Manitoba has Mennonites. But maybe that is the policy of the MM and let it be. Since we have a daughter and son-in-law (Southern Manitoba farmer) living in Landmark, and a son studying at the University of Manitoba (both, son and the said daughter graduated from CMBC) we are quite closely related to you people of Manitoba....

Now it is somewhat ironic to read in the issue, Volume 20 October No. 2 the very well written "Our Word" by Ruth, about the Mennonite churches discriminating against women etc. and in the same issue you, Mr. Vogt, state that you visited "the lovely old home of the Ray Hamm's" and that "the pumpkin pie is out of this world". Where is the name Marilyn? Is she not the owner of the lovely old home? Who made the pumpkin pie? Ray or Marilyn? That was a typical slip of many Mennonite men, but you should have done better than that! By the way, Marilyn Houser Hamm was a fantastic songleader at the Conference. For me the singing at the MWC was the highlight of my experiences. *Nichts für ungut, Herr Vogt*, I will continue to read your articles with interest.

Helen Wiens,
Abbotsford, B.C.

Publisher's comment: Touché!

OCTOBER WORD VALUED

I would like to thank you for the editorial in the October '90 issue of the MM. There are too many young and/or feminist women who have become disenfranchised by the church's refusal to

address equality issues. I no longer consider myself to be Mennonite in any way other than heritage; at the same time, I still carry a strong bond to that heritage. The editorial took much courage (and, I am certain, much anger) for you to print and I anticipate you will receive some backlash to it. Please register my strong support and approval for it. Perhaps it can help soften the sting of the negative feedback I am sure you will receive.

Lynnette Dueck,
Winnipeg

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YOUR WORD

WORTHY EDITION

You did yourself proud by issuing your journal just in time for the Mennonite World Conference. And a very attractive and interesting book it is too! Congratulations! I gave mine to a conference guest. Proudly.

I hope you were not serious when you mentioned the possibility of stopping publishing the Mirror; we certainly, all Winnipeg, would miss it.

And wasn't the MWC something?

Looking forward to the next issue of the MM, I am,
Margaret Albrecht,
Winnipeg.

MWC AND MONEY

Enclosed is a copy of a letter to the MWC. If you wish, you have my permission to use it as a letter to the Editor in your publication. J.E.Kroeker,
Winkler.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I received your recent letter asking for money to help pay for the shortfall or deficit of Assembly 12. I gave my donation at the Assembly in Winnipeg and I do not wish to pay any more.

There were many positive aspects to Assembly 12, and much work and effort went into the planning and administration of the Conference. I was at the opening session and I was indeed "blessed" to be there. Far be it for me to condemn the whole affair.

However, I was also at the closing session in the Stadium on Sunday. Allow me, please, a few comments, particularly in respect to this.

1. The session Sunday a.m. in the Stadium was far too long and moving too slowly, so that you lost the attention of many.

2. There was far too much reading of long statements and declarations, in four or five languages, boring for those that could not understand, and repetitious for those who could.

3. The choice of congregational songs was certainly not the best. Most

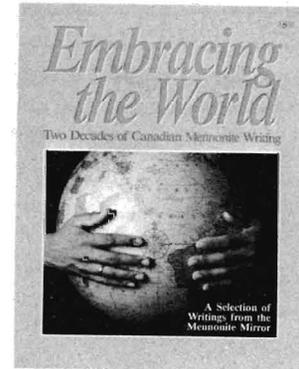
were unfamiliar and were difficult to sing. They should have been more popular tunes with a livelier melody. Furthermore, many persons present did not have the texts or words.

4. I honestly asked myself, if I was not a Christian believer, what influence would this service have been to me? The answer: NEGATIVE. Was not the motto "WITNESSING TO CHRIST IN TODAY'S WORLD?" I say that in this regard we failed bitterly. I say that a good evangelical sermon, preached with fervour and conviction, the likes of Billy Graham, would have done more for the cause of Christ, than all this formal rhetoric.

5. Finally, I resent and object to the opportunity this conference gave to the homosexuals and gays to advocate their sinful lifestyle. I personally witnessed a group of 20 or so gays gather in the foyer of the stadium and act in a manner very unbecoming. I found this sight very sickening and repulsive. The Bible teaches very clearly in Romans and elsewhere that "thee who practise this are an abomination to the Lord and shall not inherit the Kingdom of God" Why did the conference give them a "platform" to promote their sinful ways? I know well enough that God can forgive the sinner, but first he must repent and be willing to give up his sinful lifestyle.

6. The conference executive must

take a firm stand on this issue and make a statement denouncing homosexuality, no ifs or buts and let the World know of their stand. Failing this -- all their efforts are in vain, and the witness, the purpose and all is lost. May you ask God that His Will be done, and may God give you all the wisdom, the courage, and the strength to do His Will.



Still available

You may still purchase additional copies of the Mennonite World Conference special edition, Embracing the World.

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The stamp of Heroism

as told to Helen Rose Pauls

The British barracks were stark and our possessions few, but boys will be boys and our games and hobbies abounded.

Instead of mourning our separation from our parents who had gone on to Canada, immigrating with our brothers and sisters, we rather enjoyed the freedom from work and constant supervision.

The supposed eye disease which had held us back, troubled us not at all, but we submitted to the medical treatments in hopes of passing the physical examinations necessary for rejoining our families abroad. Meanwhile, we passed the time in the medical detainee compound.

One of our favourite pastimes was stamp collecting and trading. Our accumulations were impressive. Among them were rare stamps from Herzogovina -- one of the six republics of Yugoslavia -- the capital of which was Sarajevo, where the assassination of Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand helped to precipitate World War One. In 1926, these were precious stamps indeed to Mennonite boys whose lives had been profoundly affected by that war and its aftermath in Russia.

One morning as Jacob and I perused his collection conveniently stored in a suitcase under his bunk, a neighbouring Jewish boy happened to walk through the bunk room. His eyes lit up as he saw the valuable stamps. Animatedly, he asked questions, sizing up the room and our storage arrangements.

Shortly after, we left for breakfast, our precious stamps secreted under the bed. Suddenly, I froze in my tracks as a revelation came to me. "Jacob," I hissed urgently as I pulled on his arm. "He's going to sneak in and steal your stamps. He's going to find the stamps!"

Stealthily, we doubled back. There he was: the suitcase open; his hands making selections. We had caught him in the act.

High pitched wails bounced off the

bunk room walls. He cried and cried, "My father will kill me if he finds out! He will hit me and hit me until I die!"

"We won't tell a soul," Jacob promised reassuringly, his heart softened by the bitter tears, including me in the blanket statement without my enthusiasm.

I was very put out. My clever intuition had saved the priceless stamps and now, because of Jacob's promise, I would never be able to take credit for it and play the part of the bunkroom hero. What a gripping story to have been able to tell the other boys! It took great self-discipline on my part for me to keep the secret, but somehow, I managed to keep Jacob's promise.

Years later, in 1943, I happened to meet Jacob, my old barracks friend again when he came out to Arnold, B.C. to visit a friend. I had settled there with my young family and was pleasantly surprised to run into him at the train stop.

"Jacob," I studied him carefully, "Did you ever tell anyone about the stamps?"

Immediately, he caught my reference. "No, I never did," he replied.

It had been a hard lesson in non-resistance for me at the time, but now I realized who the true hero had been.

So now, 64 years later, perhaps the story can be told. **mm**

MIRROR MIX-UP

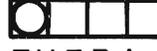
ARTE



META



PAMEL



THERA



CARTE



From the letters in Christmas one can find CRASS and TRASH but there's also MIRTH and ○○○○○.

From the 18 entries to the October puzzle, Ella Bergen of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, was selected the winner.

Answers to October, are cheap, vault, organ, flair, terse, and cheerful giver.

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

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

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by January 17, 1991.

name

address

city/town

postal code

Send entries to: Mix-up Contest, Mennonite Mirror, 207 - 1317A Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0V3.

MANITOBA NEWS

Christopher Wiebe, a 1990 W.C. Miller graduate from Altona, is a 1990-91 recipient of a Canada Scholarship, worth \$2,000 and renewable for up to three years. Chris, the son of Don and Barb Wiebe of Altona is in science at the University of Winnipeg. Awarded by the government of Canada through the Ministry of State for Science and Technology, these awards are designed to recognize and encourage outstanding high school graduates to pursue degrees in the natural sciences, engineering and related disciplines.

Vera Isaak of Ottawa has begun work as the new director of SelfHelp Crafts Canada. She last worked as a project officer with Partnership Africa Canada, a consortium of non-governmental organizations which distributed Canadian government funds to African organizations. She has served three terms with MCC-in Europe, Bangladesh and Thailand and is a member of Springstein Mennonite Church.

Ken Reddig resigned as conference archivist and director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada after 11 years to accept an appointment as head of textual records and public service with the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Eleanor Loewen was installed as associate pastor at the Knox United Church on September 30, with **Helmut Harder** (CMBC) preaching.

Darlene Driedger was named as the vice-moderator of the Manitoba Conference until February 1991, replacing **Henry Loewen**, the new appointed CMM executive secretary.

David Neufeld of Landmark and **Kevin Hamm** of Isle des Chenes won awards at the Manitoba Softball Association annual awards banquet recently. David received the Jean Mayne Memorial Award for the top male player in the Midget/Bantam category. Kevin was the

top male player in the Pee Wee category.

TOO MUCH SUCCESS:

The Edmonton Recycling Society (ERS) has a problem -- it's too successful. When ERS received a \$6.4 million contract in 1988 to pick up recyclables from 64,000 homes in north Edmonton, the Mennonite Central Committee-supported program expected to receive 30 tonnes of recyclables a day. Today it gets between 40 to 50 tonnes on average, and some days collects as much as 60 tonnes of paper, glass, metal and plastic. It's all because Edmontonians have enthusiastically embraced curbside blue box recycling, says Dave Hubert, ERS chair. When ERS started, it was expected that around 75 per cent of the city's residents would participate. But surveys show a participation rate of 92 per cent. The volume of recyclables pouring into the ERS sorting depot shows "people want to put into action their concern about the environment," Hubert says. But the success of the program has led to some problems -- as evidence by the mountain of plastic in the ERS depot. At present there is little demand for "post-consumer" plastic, although Hubert is confident that a viable market will appear soon.

Two Mennonite farmers from southern Manitoba went to the Soviet Union to explore the creation of a Mennonite Central Committee agricultural exchange between Canadian, American and Soviet farmers. The two, **Harold Penner** of Arnaud and **Ernie Wiens** of Glenlea, left October 17 and returned November 13. They spent part of their time with an agricultural tour to the Soviet Union and spent one week travelling for MCC Canada in the Orenburg region, where many Mennonites live. The decision to explore the exchange was made following a request from Alim Djambourchin, agricultural counsellor at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa. In a letter to MCC Canada he suggested that MCC could

help Soviet farmers change from collective to private farming, as well as provide training in modern farming methods. While in the Soviet Union Penner and Wiens were to see if there is merit in pursuing the exchange. Objectives of such an exchange for MCC Canada include person-to-person relationships, responsible farming methods, community building, relations with church-based agricultural projects and encouragement for Christians and others.

Romanian relief: Mennonite Central Committee personnel delivered relief supplies valued at \$25,000 to a health clinic in Curtici, Romania, in October. The supplies included dental and medical equipment, vitamins, syringes, infant health food and winter clothes; it was the third time MCC has taken truckloads of supplies into Romania. In addition to delivering the supplies, German **Dr. Peter Rempel** who joined MCC representatives **Hugo and Katharine Jantz** for the trip, checked with recipients of earlier MCC aid to see how the medical equipment is functioning. Rempel tested an electrocardiograph machine, a diabetes monitor, an inhaler and sterilization equipment and found they were functioning well. Hugo Jantz found that previous MCC gifts of vegetable seeds had been useful. All of the seeds, especially the cabbage, "produced very well," he reported. Community people expressed great appreciation for the goods and for the way MCC has related to them, Jantz said. The mayor of Curtici, the greenhouse manager and clinic staff were surprised that "we wanted to relate to all the community people equally and that we didn't show preference for the Baptist church people." The Jantzes, Rempels and two other German travel companions found economic deterioration in Romania "continues unabated."

North Kildonan Mennonite Church paid tribute to **Rev and Mrs. Edward Enns** this fall on their retirement from

that congregation.

The Menno H. Epp family has established an endowment fund at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in memory of their wife and mother, **Irma Epp**. This fund will support CMBC students who are pursuing studies in church music. Irma Epp, who died in September, devoted her life to furthering and improving music in churches and schools of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Her efforts centred on providing good piano and organ accompaniment for congregational singing and for choirs. In her work as piano teacher, Irma not only helped young students develop their skills but also inspired them in their love and appreciation for music. Irma graduated from CMBC in 1956 with a Bachelor of Church Music degree; she also taught piano and theory at the same school for several years. Her daughter Charlene and son-in-law David Epp are 1984 CMBC music graduates. Irma's major service to the cause of church music in Conference churches and schools happened at Bethel Bible Institute in Abbotsford; Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary; and Leamington United Mennonite Church. Since her death in September over \$10,000 has been donated to the endowment fund. Contributions may be sent to the Irma Epp Memorial Fund, 60 Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg, R3P 0M4.

MENNONIGHT IMPRESSES WITH DIVERSITY

Tim Brandt calls Mennonites "a bunch of naval-gazers." Marjorie Toews calls herself "the post-Mennonite paradigm -- someone who makes her own terms." Poet Sarah Klassen does not categorize herself as a Mennonite writer. Maurice Mireau refers to "the outrageous vision of our ancestors." Lois Braun apologizes "for not being Mennonite enough."

The common bond of heritage, and the quest for self-definition were themes explored in an evening performance by Mennonite writers in MennoNight, one in a seven-part series of the Second Annual Words on Stage, held in early

November.

Local writer Di Brandt hosted MennoNight, introducing the performers as part of "an exciting explosion of community in Mennonite writing, a relatively new phenomenon in Canada."

The style and content of the writing ranged from traditional to experimental, displaying a wide diversity that seemed to reflect the diversity in the larger Mennonite community, a culture that has experienced tremendous social change in the twentieth century.

Doug Reimer, author of **Older Than Ravens**, presented a disturbing story of sexual abuse and incest in an immigrant Mennonite family, in a reading of "Lena, Rebecca, Elana, and Marie," a challenging and difficult work exploring this taboo topic.

The predominantly Mennonite audience appreciated the dry wit of "Cornie and Elizabeth" by Tim Brandt. Toilet paper and video tape play symbolic roles in this tale about a Mennonite wedding worldly enough to hold a reception dance.

Braun, author of **A Stone Watermelon** and **The Pumpkin Eaters**, read "The Montreal Cats," a polished story conspicuously lacking Mennonite references. The story is set near Montreal and features two urban cats who lack survival skills on the farm where they have been transferred.

Sarah Klassen, a feminist poet and a teacher, said she had to search for pieces suitable to the Mennonite theme. She read a well-received series of poems, ending with a poem about an Obscure Old Testament concubine, Jael.

"Mennonite Genealogy," a series of poems by Marjorie Toews, was prefaced by a description of the Mennonite tradition of "family books" which provides a seemingly endless documentation of births, marriages, and deaths. Toews' poems "all deal with sisterhood in some way," and her strong performance augmented the power in her pieces, which lend a feminist perspective to traditional Mennonite institutions and practises.

Maurice Mireau delivered a series of poems dedicated to a friend "who chose to end his life early," entitled "The Pain

Problem." These are skilfully crafted pieces dealing with the theme of social injustice. A second series, "Evening the Score," seems to provide an enigmatic epitaph.

What defines someone as a Mennonite writer? MennoNight asked this question but appeared unable to answer it.

"We have a problem identifying what it means to be Mennonite," said Mireau. "We don't have a definition. If there was, there'd be less of us (writers), and we'd be more boring than we are." -- **Lynette Dueck**

MCI LOOKS BACK ON MANY ANNUAL SALES

A number of ladies in the communities around MCI in Gretna, often voiced an opinion about forming an auxiliary. In 1964 we called our first meeting in the Gretna church with women from about 10 churches in attendance. Some of the core group were Annie Ens, Eva Janzen, Mary Plett, Tina Schroeder, Margaret Loewen, and myself.

After much discussion our first executive was chosen with Annie Ens as president, Mary Plett as secretary and Tina Schroeder as treasurer. We informed all the ladies groups in Manitoba that had an interest in the MCI that they could belong to the auxiliary with a fee of 25 cents per member. In 1965 our first fundraising began with an auction sale. The auction sale brought in \$538 and a lunch was served which raised \$55. With that money we updated the kitchen needs. We also started having MCI banquets. Funds raised there were from \$3,769 to a high of close to \$7,000.

With the money we supplied funds for more library books, sewed curtains, did a lot of canning, brought in a change in uniform, changed dresses to graduation gowns, also planted flowers around the school and gave burseries. We did so well in raising money that the MCI board thought that it was time we included them on decisions in spending the money. By now I believe we would say that the MCI could not exist without its auxiliary.

-- **Susan Rempel**

Daut Wienachtsprogram

fonn Jack Driedger

Feraun enne Dartijch wond wie enn Bloomenheim. Daut wea eent fonn de Darpa onnjefää dartijch Miel nuaden fonn Saskatoon. Etj jintj donn no ne eentstowje School eene Miel fomm aundren Enj Darp. Daut Darp wea ne haulwe Miel lang. Aulsoo haud etj ne Miel onn ne Haulf no School too gonon.

Eent fonn de jratste Freiden fe ons Schooltjinja wea daut Wienachtsprogram. Medden emm Nowamba kjeemen dee measchte Kjinja wada tsiemlich räajelmäsijch no School. Mett Draschen, Eatschocken ütgrowen, onn Schwienschlachten halpen wearen see nu aula derjch. Weenijchstens túsjebläwen wearen dee Kjinja; auf see jeholpen hauden, daut wea ne aundre Sach. Dann wea daut aul Tiet aum Wienachtsprogram too dentjen. Dee Leara socht sitj eromm no paussende Plays, Wenschen onn Wienachtsleeda, soo daut jiedet Kjint kunn mett dee aundre toop sinjen onn weens emol no fäaren komen waut opptoosajen.

Waut paussendet ütläsen fe dee Kjinja wea nijch mau soone eefache Sach fe däm Leara. Eensje Kjinja wearen weatjlearijch onn kunnen ne lange Schnäd oppsajen. Aundre wada wearen hoatlearijch. Fe dän must hee waut leijchtet onn kortet ütläsen.

Wie freiden ons, wann wie eascht kunnen aufangen de School fe daut Wienachtsprogram ütstraumen. Dee Schooldeschen worden dann opp een Enj School aula gauns dijcht toopjesat. Dann wea doa jenuach Rum fe aul dee Bentjen onn Steela waut dee Lied enne Schooldistrict fonn Tüs brochten fe an toom bowe setten.

Wie wisten daut, wann onse Schooldeschen eascht emol aula toopjeschowen wearen, wudd wie bott no Niejoa nijch mea derwen Schooloabeid doonen. Twee Doag

ferr daut Program deed wie nuscht aus bloos onse Wienachtsleeda onn onse Oppsajachen eewen. Dee Kjinja wearen aula soo oppjerääjcht, daut see dän Tiet bott daut Wienachtsprogram meist nijch aufluren kunnen. Dann wea daut fe däm Leara uck kjeene kjiene Sach, dee Kjinja enn Ordniñj too hoolen.

Entlijch wea dee Dach doa. No Owentkost diad mie daut aul fäl too lang, bott Foda emol jintj dee Pead aunspaunen. Dee gaunse Famielje wankt no'm Wienachtsprogram. Wiel miene Breeda Jehaun onn Hendritj aul ute Schooljoaren wearen, jinjen see leewa dee Miel onn ne Haulf toofoot, aus mett dee Elren mettfoaren.

Daut wea kolt, onn dee Mon schiend kloa. Dee Schlädkuffen piepten opp dee hoade Schlädbon, dee Sälestrenj kjlinjaden, onn dee Pead schnurtjsten derjche Näs doamett an dee nijch tooftrearen wudd. Je noda wie no de School kjeemen, je dolla butst mie daut Hoat. Oppem Schoolhoff wearen aul meare Foatija, mett de Pead fonn dee kjasche Wintakold bedatjt onn aum Lienenpost jebungen.

Enne School traumt wie uns dän Schnee fonn de Steewlen, onn hongen unse Äwaratj opp. Dee Mauntellaump jüld, onn daut Fia knostad emm Owen. Daut funk sitj aun woam onn maklijch too feelen. Etj säd miene Wenschen noch eemol too mie selfst opp stelles, soo daut etj uck sejcha wea, daut etj dee onen Fäla oppsajen kunn. Dee Kjinja haude sitj aula schmock de Hoa jetjamt. Eenje Merjalen hauden soogoa en Eesenbaunt enne Hoa. Eenje Benjels hauden soogoa en niat Hamd aun. Wann etj haud ne Sesta jehaut, weet etj daut Mutta daut uck wudd jejanket haben, ar een Eesenbaunt enne Hoa too binjen. Oba wiels ar dee

ooltkoloniesche Kjoatj sea wijchtijch wea, wudd see sitj fonn soone weltlijche Stot jewäat haben. Dee fate Hendritj Hiebatsche haud sitj aul oppe fäaschte Sett jesat, wiel see nijch goot hearen kunn. Oba äa Jelach onn Fetal kunn wie aula goot hearen.

Entlijch jintj dee Leara no fäaren, daut Program auntoofangen. Hee must jeduldijch luren, bott de Hiebatsche daut emol ennwort, daut hee onn dee Kjinja nu aula reed wearen. Dän Leara leetet wunda schmock mett sien niemoodschet Kjleet, wittet Hamd onn biepausendet Haulsbaunt. Etj jleewd mie hee haud sitj ushent schmock aunjetrocken fe daut Wienachtsprogram. Dann kjitjt etj mie uck eromm, auf de aundre Menschen daut uck sagen, woo schmock am daut leet.

Aus dee Kjinja daut easchte Leet sungen, ratjhaulsdn dee Elren aul sea. See wullen seenen, auf äare Kjinja uck mank dee Häad wearen. One jesajcht wearen dee Kjinja uck sea narwees, wann see fäaren ferr aul dee Menschen stunden onn äare Elren ratjhaulsen sagen. Aus Hiebats Jehaun siene Wenschen oppsäd, säd dee fate Hiebatsche mett eemol too am opp ludes, soo daut aule Maun daut head, "Saj mau luda!" Oba haft dee oama Jehaun sitj jeschämt!

Nu wenschten dee Kjinja aul bloos, daut daut Program emol äwa wea. Dann wisten see, daut een jieda ne Wienachtslusch mett Pienät, jekofte Kuaken, onn feleijcht en Aupel kjrien wudd. Fomm Nätklos wea enn onse School nuscht, wiel dee measchte Famieljes entwäda Barjchtola ooda Ooltkolnia wearen. Soon weltlijchet wudd de Lied sea toowada sennen. Sooboolt aus daut Program dann eascht äwa wea, spatseaden dee Lied noch feks en bät, roopten äare Kjinja toop, pelsten sitj aun, onn fuaren nohus.

Plautdietsch, anyone?

by Agnes Wall

Kohmt met noh EXPOH is written by Mennonite authors G.A. Peters and T.G. Klassen for Mennonite people who cherish the Low German language. Patterned after Arnold Dyck's *Koop enn Bua* episodes, the book records, in simple prose, the day by day adventures of two couples as they motor to the west coast to attend the celebrations and see the sights of Expo '86.

The idea of writing down something about their experiences occurred to them while they travelled. Since all four enjoyed speaking Plautdietsch, they decided to write in this language. As stated in the preamble to the book, it was indeed a labour of love, intended to nourish and promote the use of Low German.

The book is a series of narratives, loosely linked together. These stories are touchingly naive and unsophisticated. Corney and Margaret Fehr, Manitoba farmers with their friends, John and Susan Penner, a teacher and a nurse, can well typify Mennonites as they live and work in today's society. During the long hours in the car, they have many opportunities to visit and to discuss various concerns. Soon they're talking about what it is to be a Mennonite. When they become too serious for Corney, he says, "*Wan etch jiwisst haud daut wie sooni wichthti en iernssti Sachin derch jreblin wuddin dan haud etch fehajischloagin daut wie een Biebelschool Liehara metnâmen sullin.*" [Had I known that we would worry through such serious matters I would have suggested we should take a Bible school teacher with us.]

And when the persecution of the first Mennonites is the topic of conversation, the women are especially thankful to God that they have complete religious freedom in our country. Here Corney becomes serious too and says to Susan, "*Hä, Ssuschtchi, waut jleewsst dü wud*

onns dee oola Mennoh fondoag saijin?" [Eh, Susan, what do you think old Menno would have to say to us today?]

However, the travellers do not spend too much time in serious discussion. They are in a holiday mood, the men sometimes indulging in boyish banter and in teasing each other or their wives. They've been fast friends since they met as students in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute [Em Ssie Ei] in Gretna. The book contains several reminiscences about their high school days, when John and Corney recall some of their childish pranks with a great deal of fondness and nostalgia.

The description of the countryside as they pass by in their *Donnafoagel* [thunderbird] is well done and adds to the atmosphere of cheerfulness and relaxation. I found the observation about the antics of a prairie gopher by the wayside particularly charming.

The droll humour in the book is created by the selection of Low German words, phrases and sayings, sometimes bordering on the crude, yet somehow whimsical and very, very familiar. I always have a question about the overuse of English words in Low German writings, but in these stories they seem quite appropriate and add to the pleasure of reading this language. Comments made about the sights and sounds of Expo, the different pavilions and the long lineups are funny simply because they are made in Plautdietsch. The same can be said about the day the men go golfing to Whistler, when, possibly for the first time in literature, the game is explained entirely in Low German.

The authors have altered the existing orthography of writing Low German and developed a spelling system of their own. Though, in their introduction, they go to great lengths to teach the reader to use this system, I found it difficult to read. I wonder why the

authors felt it necessary to introduce still another way of writing our favorite language? I fear this can become very confusing to many readers. But, once they have made the effort to learn the particular orthography in *Kohmt met noh EXPOH*, they will enjoy reading the story.

Kohmt met noh EXPOH, written by G.A. Peters and T.G. Klassen. Published by Bindery Publishing House, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Revised Edition, 1990, 129 pages.

Low German concluded

Daut Hus wea dann uck aul tsiemlijch aufjetjeelt, aus wie nohus kjeemen. Mutta päatjat fuats daut Fia emm Owen aun. Oba ons schleepaje Kjinja diad daut fäl too lang, bott daut Hus emol woam wea. Wie trocken ons feks ut onn kroopen schwind unja de Wolldatj. Daut diad uck goanijch lang, bott wie ennjeschlophen wearen. Oba daut schleep sitj wunda fein! mm



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Etj Sach dän Schorsteen Ruake

fonn Agnes Waul

Twee Doag ferr Wienachte kjreach etj een Breef fonn mienem festorwnen Haulfkosenj siene Fru enn Dietschlaunt. See wea jrod fonn Russlaunt doa hanjetrocke. Etj haud mett äa emm fegone Hoafst goot spatseat.

"Du hast dien Fesprätje nijch jehoole," loamd see fuats dropploos. "Du sädst du wuddst mie diene Mama äare russlendsche Wienachtskuakeretsapta schetje. Daut hast du nijch jedone."

Jo, jie woare dentje wann see selfst fonn Russlaunt kaum, sull see uck Russlendsche Retsapta fe Prantje habe. Oba see wea soo jepiesackt worde, onn wea fonn eene Städ no de aundre jejoacht worde, daut äa aule Jedanke aun Kuakeretsapta fegone weare onn kjeen Wunda. Butadäm wea daut waut enn dee Kuake nenn must, nijch mea enn Russlaunt too kjrie. Nu daut see enn Dietschlaunt wea wull see soone Kuake bake aus daut Freajoa jedone wort, aus aules noch soo scheen enn Russlaunt wea. Onn etj haud äa nijch een Retsapt jeschetjt. Daut wea je uck toom neewadrijch woare.

Mie wea daut too wadre daut etj soone wijchtje Sach feschlonst haud. Wann daut uck aul nijch fe dise Wienachte reed kaum, sad etj mie oba doch han onn schreef äa eenje Retsapta opp onn schetjt äa dee. Etj haud Mama äa Retsaptbuak jeorwe onn funk uck fuats wua no etj socht. Dee Bläda wua dee bowe weare oppjeschräwe, jinje meist fonn selfst op, soo foaken haud Mama doa aul nojetjijt, soo fäle, fäle Joare.

Fäle fonn dee Prantjeretsapta haude Herschhornsolt doa benne. Nu foll mie bie waut Mama ons mol fetalde. "Wie weare noch nijch een Joa enn Kanada onn daut wea Tiet Wienachtskuake too bake. Toom dee ennreare fäld mie Tsocka, Kokau,

Mäl, Herschhornsolt onn noch mea. Mien Brooda Doft wull no Gretna foare onn boot mie aun, etj kunn mett. Hee wull mett mie no Koblents äa Stua gone, doa kunn wie enntjeepe. Doa wea aules, onn bie Koblents räde see uck aula Plautdietsch."

Aus see han kaume, jintj Mama romm onn socht sitj toop waut see aula kjeepe wull onn läd daut opp'm Schaula dijcht bie dee Jeltkauss, wua see daut too latst betole wull. See haud aul ernea fäl toop, uck soont waut see nijch toom Bake bruckt. See wull aul fuats aundret bie dise Jeläajenheit kjeepe wiels see kaum nijch too foaken nom Stua enne Staut. Aus daut soo leet daut see foadijch senne kunn, fruach Koblents äa, "Ha' jie aules jefunge?"

"Nä, noch nijch gauns aules," säd Mama. "Etj kaun kjeene Hefta seene. Ha' jie Hefta?"

Koblents krautst sitj aum Kopp. "Nä, Hefta ha' wie nijch," meend'a schlieslijch.

Onkel Doft wea jrod hanjekome onn head waut dee Beid sitj fetalde. "Waut Jung, jie ha' nijch Skribblasch?" fruach hee.

"Jo, doch. Skribblasch ha' wie," säd Koblents onn hold een poa fe Mama.

Mama freid ditt daut Koblents nijch wist waut Hefta weare. Daut wea oba nijch toom freie daut hee nijch wist waut Herschhornsolt wea onn uck kjeen aundra enn Gretna wist waut daut wea onn doawäajen haud daut kjeena. Mama meend oba one Kuake mett Herschhornsolt doa benne wort daut nijch Wienachte. Woo see schlieslijch too Herschhornsolt too äare Prantje jekome ess, weet etj bott fonndoag dän Dach nijch. Oba soo lang aus etj mie dentje kaun backt Mama too Wienachte emma eenje Kuake wua Heschhornsolt nenn must. Onn nu doo etj daut kratjt soo.

Etj ha' ütjefunge daut Herschhornsolt opp Enjelsch Bakammonia heet onn soo aus Baksooda schauft. Mie jeit daut oba nijch soo aus Mama emm Stua enn Gretna wann etj daut kjeepe well. Wie wone enn Nuadkildoona--maunjchmol uck Mennistehimmel jenant fonn aufjensche Lied. Hia ha' dee Stua aules waut wie ons wensche kjenne. Wie sette diretjt aune Kjwal fonn aulet scheene. Enn onse Stua kjenne wie Jreewe, Jreeweschmolt, Lāwaworscht, Repspāa, ennjepätjelde Siltjees (schmatjt sea goot mett Äditj onn raue Tsippel jrod ferrem Schlopegone), jereatjade Schwienskjee, Schwoatemoage, onn aultonausche Ruakworscht daut runde Joa derjch kjeepe. Enne Ferrwienachtstiet, jleew etj, wudd Pana sitj nijch true sien Stua optoomoake wann hee nijch jenuach Halwa, Rakawaschäftje onn Herschhornsolt fe Aule haud.

Herschhornsolt haft eenen strenjen Jeroch; Eenje meene soogoä dee stinjt. Dee mott uck dijcht too emm Plastikbiedel senne, sonst scholt dee ut. Bie Pana mott eena doano froage wiels daut kaun nijch jrod soo romm stone. Doa kunn dann fleijcht een nieschiaja Nijchmennist biegone onn doa nennritje. Dee wudd sitj dann too sea tiere onn fleijcht uck domme Froage stale ooda opplatst fonn Nuadkildoona onn ditt Stua pludre. Etj froag emma no Herschhornsolt fäare aune Kauss onn dann holt daut Mätje een Biedeltje fonn unjrem Schaula fäa onn reatjt mie daut mett spetse Finjasch. Eenmol säd see mie daut wann see sitj fetjillt haud ritjt see enn eent fonn dee Biedeltjes nenn. Daut Herschhornsolt blod aule festoppte Lajcha emm Kopp fuats oppe Städ ut onn dee Schnopp weens wea wajch.

Wann etj mett disem Stoff Kuake

enrea, mott etj nijch too sea schneffle
wiels dann mott etj emmawäarent
prüste. Wann dee Kuake dann eascht
goa sennt onn etj dee Plot utem Owe
tratje mott, kjetm doa soo een Donst
rut daut etj meist bediesel. Soo ess
daut meist jefäärlijch Prantje too
bake, oba ons schmatje dee aula
scheen, soogoa dee nijchmennishche
Schwiadajchta foate no dee Kuake
fonn Herschhornsolt jebakt onn froage
no daut Retsapt.

Etj kunn noch sea fäl fetale fonn
dee Tiet wua dee Schorsteen bie ons
fomm Wienachtskuakebake reatjat.
Daut jeft Pöpamentskuake, soo strenj
daut dee Odem stellstone well. Daut
jeft hoade Kjrinsel onn Päpanät.
Eenje ha' soon Jeschetj aus een Kjlinja

ooda een Wienachtsboom. Dise sent
oppoat fe Groottjinja. Dann sennt doa
Honnijchskuake schmock fonn bute
beschmäat onn ütjstraumt. Dee ha'
fonn benne Wrenj, opp Enjelsch Jam
jenant. Daut diat twee Doag dee too
bake onn etj frei mie emma sea wann
dee eascht foadijch sennt.

Mienem Haulfkosenj siene Fru enn
Dietschlaunt wensch etj Jletj wann
Oppjoa bie äa dee Schorsteen aunft
too reatjre. Onn nijch blooss ferr
Wienachte mott dee Schorsteen
reatjre, doa ess uck noch Niejoa.
Dann back wie aula Portseltje, oba
daut ess wada een aundret Kapietel.

Oba äwa Portseltje ess een Jedijcht
jeschräwe onn daut jeit soo:

Etj sach dän Schorsteen ruake.
Etj wist uck waut see muake.
See bakte Niejoaschkuake.

Jäw jie mie Eene,
Bliew etj stone.
Jäw jie mie twee,
Dann fang etj aun too gone.
Jäw jie mie drie ooda fea toojlitj,
Wensch etj junt daut gaunse
Himmelritj. mm



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A TRADITION OF GREAT FINANCIAL SERVICE TO THE MENNONITE COMMUNITY OF MANITOBA.

Christianity and communism: some similarities among believers

The most promising and dramatic event in the world in the past year was undoubtedly the collapse of several totalitarian states in Eastern Europe. Those people who thought communism could never change without war were proven wrong. "Better dead than red" was never a comforting slogan. Now it has also proven to be an unnecessary one. Though the threat of war once again raises its ugly head in the Persian Gulf, and though there are undoubtedly turbulent times ahead in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Soviet Union, we can pause at Christmas and express our gratitude for the remarkably peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe.

Almost everywhere in the world communism seems to be in retreat. Those of our people who lived through the terrors of communism in the Soviet Union have special reason to rejoice. The system that was imposed on them, and on millions of others, is now collapsing. Western commentators are declaring: "Karl Marx was wrong. His vision was at best a sad illusion, at worst a horrible nightmare."

Most people never believed in the vision of Karl Marx. However, many did, and for such people the events of the past year are, at best, bittersweet. During my studies in Eastern Europe I met all kinds of communists: sincere believers, who believed that a communist system based on the teaching of Marx would be more just than other systems, and cynical opportunists who joined the communist party because it was a way of getting ahead.

Among the sincere believers there were various types: those with whom one could discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of communism, and those with whom such "human" dialogue was impossible because they were utterly convinced that communism was superior to any other system in the world. I was drawn most naturally to the first type. The second type -- the dogmatists -- repelled me. Even though they were sincere, I considered their faith to be extremely dangerous. Their conviction, that communism was mankind's most perfect vision, made them arrogant and gave them licence to coerce other people into believing the way they did. The dogmatists gave support to the opportunists in the creation of an intolerable political and economic system. Their world deserved to crumble. Nevertheless, I feel sorry for those true believers who remained respectful of the ideas and rights of others while simultaneously hoping the vision of Karl Marx would produce a better world. They have been betrayed, not by their opponents in capitalism but by those fellow-communists who sincerely and insincerely used Marxism for establishing power rather than justice.

There is a vision in Marx which, in the right hands, could still do much to improve our world. The capitalist system *seems* now to have triumphed, but that system, with its great inequalities and high rates of unemployment, is by no means perfect. Many criticisms by Marx and his followers should not be ignored, or condemned. Unfortunately, there were also elements in Marx's vision, particularly the notion of superior-

ity, which in the wrong hands could produce much harm. In the end communism could not escape Murphy's Law: "If things can go wrong, they usually do."

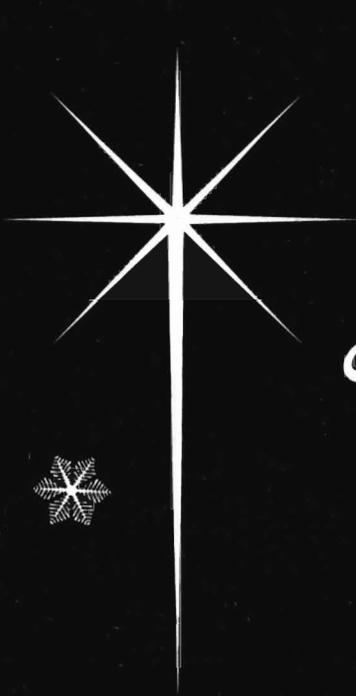
Faith in communism is crumbling. Because of the destructive form that it took in the twentieth century we all have reason to rejoice. However, for Christians the crumbling of another faith should lead to serious introspection as well as rejoicing. Like communism, the Christian faith too can be believed in for many reasons, in many ways. It too can be used by its followers either to bring greater justice to people, in the name of a loving God, or to destroy the lives of others through the exercise of power. The history of Christianity can never make Christians unduly proud. The terrible fact is: millions of people have been killed in the name of Christianity. Does this mean that the vision of the founder was faulty? Not necessarily, although one can't blame the victims of Christianity for thinking so.

What the history of the Christian Church should teach us is that people can act terribly badly in its name; that some interpretations of the Christian faith are wrong and dangerous, no matter how sincerely they are held. One doesn't have to go far back in history to observe this sad truth. The recent revelations of the brutal treatment of native people by Christian missionaries brings it to mind again. What we must acknowledge painfully is this: such incidents aren't accidents: (no more than Stalin was an "accident" in the Soviet Union). They are the terrible, inevitable result of a certain way of understanding the Christian faith. Such acts of oppression and violence originate in the minds of believers -- from whatever Christian denomination -- who think the Christian faith gives them the right -- nay, even the duty -- to impose their faith on others. It stems from those who feel that through the Christian faith they have been placed in a privileged position compared to others, and that they have an exclusive hold on the truth.

We are told by St. Paul that love is greater than faith. One might ask, aren't love and faith completely interconnected? Not necessarily. The faith of some communists I knew had little love or justice in it. They believed, and the people trembled. In the same way, Christian faith without love can be a fearful thing. Such faith produces dogmatism and arrogance, and ultimately coercion and even brutality.

Bertolt Brecht, the communist dramatist, once observed ruefully about himself and his fellow communists that "we sought to prepare the ground for friendliness, but forgot ourselves to be friendly." Christians at all times must start with a similar confession. The love which God chose to reveal to us in Jesus is not arrogant or rude. It humbles itself before the needs of others, seeking justice, not power. It insists not on its own superiority but helps others to discover their own worth.

-- Roy Vogt



UNTO THE WORLD
Peace . . .



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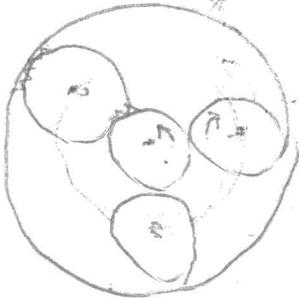
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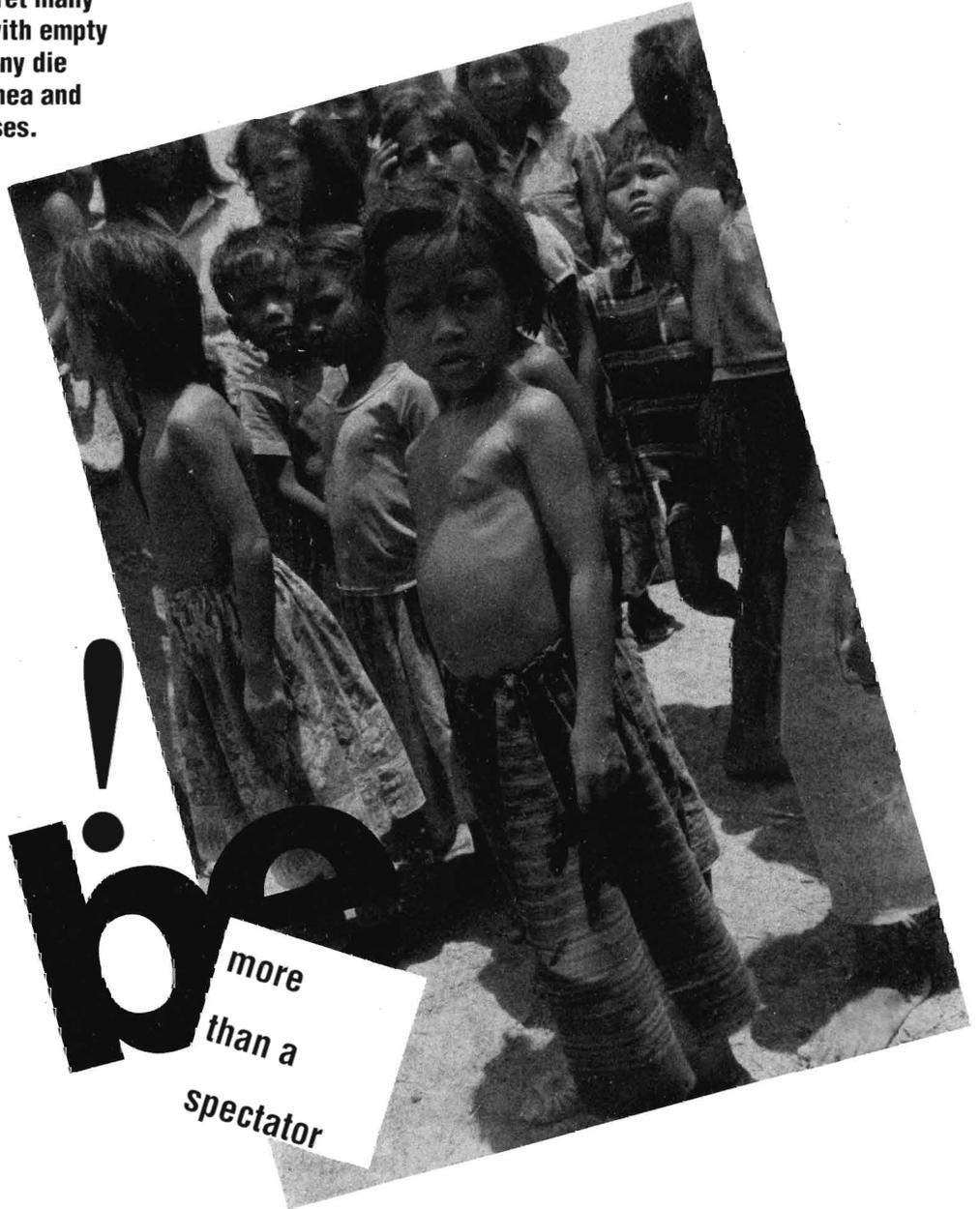
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