

SOPHIA

W I S D O M

*Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister."
Proverbs 7:4a*



FALL 1992 VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2

Mission Statement: *Sophia*

Sophia offers a forum for women in the MB church. Her pages provide room for dialogue, room for women to speak to each other about their place in the family, the church, the work place and the world. She recognizes that the MB sisterhood is rural, urban and suburban; that it represents all age groups; that it includes diverse interests and experiences; that its members speak with various voices.

Sophia offers herself as a rallying place for women in an uncertain, changing world. She is interested in women's stories, in their aspirations and disappointments, their successes and failures. She invites expression of joy and sorrow, concern and outrage. She encourages women in the use of their gifts in all spheres of life.

Although *Sophia* was conceived and brought to birth by and for MB women and celebrates sisterhood, it is her desire to be inclusive. She hopes to challenge both men and women; she welcomes their voices and invites them into dialogue.

Sophia acknowledges the authority of God, the giver of wisdom, and of the sacred Scriptures, the story of God's dealing with women and men. "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33).

A Word from the Publisher

With this issue, *Sophia* enters a new phase. We are growing. We want to share our concerns, ideas and opinions with women from many churches. We are grateful to McIvor's Covenant Fellowship whose hard work has laid a solid foundation on which we hope to build. The new editorial staff and the advisory committee, representing several Mennonite Brethren churches, have worked enthusiastically on this issue. We count on your support and look forward to hearing from you and publishing your voices. We hope you will want to make *Sophia* your magazine.

Ester DeFehr

SOPHIA is published
three times a year by an
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5 GLEANINGS

The Joy of Working

When I was a child I observed my mother at work. Especially fascinating for me was her Saturday ritual of dusting the furniture. Her hand swirled the duster in areas out of bounds for me: the dresser top, the barely-reachable shelves, the few knick-knacks the house contained. One Saturday I asked her if I might try. She agreed and I was in rapture, moving the cloth with my small hands into curlicues that decorated chair backs, around potted geraniums on the window sill, under crocheted doilies and into secret shelf corners.

The next Saturday I asked again, and once more was granted permission, to my great joy. This continued for a while, until the novelty of dusting furniture wore thin, as novelty usually does. I announced my resignation from Saturday duties. From now on I would play all day. To my dismay, my mother made the counter-announcement that she could not accept my resignation: she was satisfied that I had adequately demonstrated my ability to dust furniture and the job was mine. Permanently. I felt betrayed, and contemplated with utter gloom a lifetime (might as well say eternity) of weekly dusting. What had begun as a fascination had deteriorated into drudgery, devoid of all joy.

At a somewhat older age I was required to weed row after endless row of potatoes (or beets, or onions) in the family garden. I remember thinking that Elsie Dinsmore, that pious young heroine of a certain Christian novel series for young girls,



would not be so sweet and saintly if she had to weed my endless rows of beets.

I remember a sermon fragment from the time I was thinking about my own future work: "A person should really enjoy the work [s]he's chosen," the preacher said. That still appeals to me. It represents the ideal, and the ideal woman in Proverbs 31 *does* seem to enjoy her work. But the truth is that for many working people the work week is a dreary countdown to the weekend. Perhaps that reflects the curse that followed disobedience in the Genesis account, a curse that is expressed in terms of "painful toil" and "by the sweat of your brow."

Although we often work without joy, we *must* work and we *want* to work, both to earn a livelihood and to generate that feeling of worth that work brings. There's no shortage of examples of women and men who have lost, or are fearful of losing, employment and of those on the verge of retirement who ask themselves anxiously if they can live without scheduled work.

It's possible that contentment, if not always joy, will result when we can view our work, whether in the home or in another workplace, whether paid or unpaid, as a gift from God to be grateful for; when we work at it with a will and with integrity; and when we enter actively into the pain of the unemployed and those who are physically unable to work.

This issue of Sophia explores the work that women do and how it affects them, their families and the larger society. We welcome you to the following pages. Please consider, along with us, the guilt often placed on working mothers, the barriers to cultural adjustment and job opportunities that immigrant women face, the benefits of volunteering, the pain of unemployment and the exhilaration of a grandmother as she completes a 300-kilometer cycling trip, and more.

The staff enjoyed (mostly) producing this issue, but that joy will be incomplete until we share the articles with you. Please read, reflect, and write to us. We'd like to hear from women of all ages, and not just from Winnipeg. We eagerly await your responses and suggestions, as we gear up for the next issue which will examine the "Faith of Our Mothers." Until then we wish you, all our readers, a generous measure of joy in your work, wisdom in making choices and God's peace.

Sarah Klassen

✱ **Wilma Derksen** has been granted a year's leave of absence from her position as western editor of *The Mennonite Reporter*. She is enrolled in three Mennonite Studies courses at the University of Winnipeg, specializing in Mennonite Russian History in preparation for writing a fictionalized account of her grandmother's life. She also hopes to help build a lake front garden path at Camp Arnes.

✱ A memorial service was held for **Elsa Redekopp**, well-known author of three children's books, on July 23, 1992, in the River East MB Church where she was a member. Her most recent book, *Two Worlds for Yasch*, was released in 1991 by Windflower Press. Elsa was violist in the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for five years during the 60s and founded the Holiday String Quartet. She died on July 20, 1992.

✱ **Eleanor Martens**, member of the McIvor MB church, has been appointed to the board of Concord College.

✱ Freelance writer **Lorna Dueck's** exposé of author/speaker **Betty Malz** has won two national awards, one sponsored by the Canadian Church Press, the other by Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. The prize-winning article appeared in *ChristianWeek*. A mother of two, Lorna writes weekly for *Family News in Focus*. She is a member of the Steinbach MB Church.

✱ **Esther Wiens**, long-time instructor at MBBC, is professor of English and Theatre at Canadian Bible College in Regina.

✱ **Peggy Regehr** and **Erica Block**, members of the River East MB Church, were among the MB women attending "In a Mennonite Voice: Women doing

Theology," a conference held in June, 1992 in Waterloo, Ontario. The conference was sponsored jointly by MCC Canada Women's Concerns and Conrad Grebel College.

✱ **Susie Penner**, Eastview Community Church, is never short of orders for *Fleisch Perishki*. During November and December she bakes 40 dozen per day, five days a week!

✱ **Christy Unruh** won the gold medal in Religious Studies at the University of Winnipeg last spring.

✱ **Wilma Wiens** has supported her husband, **Dan**, as they complete the first shared farming venture in Canada. Shared farming makes organically grown vegetables available to the community. Although poor weather reduced the harvest, the response to the produce was encouraging.

"Being Bound / Being Free"

is the theme of a seminar to be held on
November 14

at the Grace Mennonite Church
in Winkler.

The one-day event is sponsored by the
Conference of Mennonite Churches in
Manitoba and is intended to
encourage women in leadership positions
in the church.

The speakers will be **Irma Fast Dueck**
and **Dr. David Schroeder**,
both on faculty at CMBC.

The presentations will focus on
the imagery from John 4,
the story of the woman at the well.

For more information call Rev. John
Klassen in Winkler at 325-4710.

Professor Magdalene Falk Redekop from the University of Toronto will lecture on the topic "Mennonite Makers" at the University of Winnipeg. There will be three lectures:

1. "Schockel, Schockel, Scheia: The Making of Mennonite Songs,"
November 5, 11:30 a.m.

2. "Escape From the Bloody Theatre:
The Making of Mennonite Stories,"
November 5, 7:30 p.m.

3. "The Graven Image: The Making of Mennonite Pictures,"
November 6, 7:30 p.m.

- ◆ Music and art slides to illustrate the lectures.
- ◆ Questions, comments, discussions to follow each lecture.
- ◆ Location: Room 2C01, University of Winnipeg.

This lecture series is organized annually by
the Chair of Mennonite Studies at
the University of Winnipeg.

One of the early lecturers in the series was **Ingrid Rinland**,
author of *The Wanderers*.

For more information call: 786-9104

Work and Worth

In the Story of Mennonite Women

By Alvina Block

"A person's work, or productive occupation, not only earns a living and fills time but also contributes to self-definition and shapes social identity."¹ Although Nancy Cott made this statement about American women, it applies equally anywhere. Mennonite women could not vote or even attend *Bruderschaft* meetings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but they knew that their communities relied on their contributions in order to function. Because the economies in the Prussian and south Russian Mennonite colonies depended upon both men's and women's work, Mennonite women experienced a high sense of self-esteem and satisfaction.

Little has been written about Mennonite women in Prussia. One story, however, describes the work of Sara Hoepfner, whose husband, Jacob Hoepfner, journeyed from Prussia to south Russia in 1786 to find suitable

land for the first wave of prospective settlers. The Hoepfner family lived two miles from town where they operated a little country store. Sara knew the importance of exercising caution and thrift in order to make any profit in the business. She was hesitant about letting her husband go, but the group that was eager to emigrate persuaded her that God would provide.

That year the North Sea cast up an abundant supply of amber, providing an above-average income for those who made their living from the ocean. This enabled them to make more purchases at the Hoepfner's store.

After a year's absence, Hoepfner returned to find receipts for more than 300 *Gulden* of debt paid off as a result of his wife's prudence, and the family business was in better financial condition than when he left.² This story demonstrates how God cares for his children, but it also illustrates the resourcefulness of Sara Hoepfner, who, no doubt, attained satisfaction through her successful management of the family business.

Information about the work and worth of Mennonite women must sometimes be gleaned by reading between the lines of history. One way to study Mennonite women in Russia is to contrast them with their contemporaries in other countries. According to some sources, women in America were going through a time of transition between 1800 and 1840. Small industries, in which some women participated, were moving out of the home and into the factory. Although many American women were employed in these factories, they worked under poor conditions and for low pay.³ In contrast, Mennonite women in south Russia worked together with their families to meet economic needs. Furthermore, while in

North America men were taking over the practice of obstetrics⁴ early in the nineteenth century, in the Mennonite colonies of Russia, midwifery continued to be a woman's prerogative.⁵ It seems reasonable to conclude that their roles as partners on the farm and as harbingers of life gave Mennonite women a high sense of worth in the community.

P.M. Friesen relates that in the early years in Russia "many a housewife had to take her infants and other small children with her into the field where, all day long, she would follow her husband, tying the cut grain into sheaves, later stacking these in shocks together with her husband."⁶ As soon as daughters were old enough to help, they replaced their mothers in the field. Although Friesen acknowledges that many mothers and daughters worked too hard, he also describes the contentment and fulfillment they derived from doing their part to provide for the family unit.

All the necessities of life were made in the colonies, often by women. Mothers and older daughters spent most of the winter spinning flax fibres into yarn which was woven into cloth by weavers (almost always male). The women bleached the cloth to make men's shirts and dyed it to make "fine Sunday dresses" that were "solid, practical, clean and pleasing but not conspicuous."⁷ Women washed and carded sheep's wool to make blankets, warm stockings and mittens. The silk industry was also dependent upon the women who did the spinning. Further, women stored vegetables and dried herbs and fruit to supplement the family diet in the winter months.⁸ They made butter and cheese, both for their own families and for the market.

The interdependence of women and men in family and colony is further illustrated by their haste to remarry after the death of a spouse. Bernhard Harder, the famous nineteenth century minister, teacher and poet, remarried four months after his first wife died.⁹ Historian Cornelius Krahn considers this a comparatively long mourning period. Any genealogist can give numerous examples of women who remarried shortly after the death of a spouse.

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Perhaps it is difficult to write women's history without taking the approach that Mennonite women were denied self-esteem and fulfilment, but to conclude automatically that all women in that patriarchal society were unhappy is to impose our twentieth century agenda upon a different time and place.

Endnotes

1. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 20.

2. Victor Peters, ed. *Zwei Dokumente: Quellen zum Geschichtsstudium der Mennoniten in Russland* (Winnipeg: Echo Verlag, 1965), 23.

3. See Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 10 (1969): 5, 7. See also Cott, 24-26, 35.

4. See W. Elliot Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee in *Women in the American Economy: A Documentary History, 1675 to 1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 264. Brownlee writes that "the high monetary returns that a growing urban middle class brought to the practise of obstetrics attracted men in increasing numbers to midwifery, and by 1800 they appeared to have monopolized the better opportunities."

5. John B. Toews, "Childbirth, Disease and Death Among the Mennonites in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 60.3 (July, 1986).

6. P.M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789-1910*, trans. J.B. Toews et. al. (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978), 176.

7. Friesen, 181.

8. James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989), 91.

9. Cornelius Krahn, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 1956 ed., S.V. "Harder, Bernhard."

Alvina Block is enrolled in a pre-masters history program at the University of Manitoba. She works in a supportive role alongside her husband, Isaac, pastor of the Sargent Mennonite Church.

POETRY

Measures

You said
what do you do
to keep busy?
as if
time were a thing
heavy on my hands
or something
so light
it need only be used.

I wanted to say
nothing
could prolong your illusion
that only money
weighs anything
in the measure of busyness.

But we have no time for that.

Lorraine Matties

Beating the Language Barrier

By Millie Kroeker



Macthoura was in a blind panic!

She'd managed to find her way to the hospital emergency ward, and help for her ailing child was within reach. She recognized his symptoms, but time was her enemy.

Time...and language.

As the child screamed in agony, Macthoura frantically tried to explain his condition to the medical staff. In Cambodia she'd have known just what to say. But this was Canada, her home for less than a year, and the English words just wouldn't come.

Finally the boy's screaming stopped. Though every medical effort had been made, Macthoura knew he was gone.

Amid the sorrow and despair of that day, Macthoura made a decision: she would conquer this language barrier that had cost her son's life. She would learn English, and she would make sure others in her Cambodian community would have the opportunity to do so as well.

When I first met Macthoura in 1989 she had been in Canada (Winnipeg) for five years. She and the Manitoba Interfaith Council invited me to teach English as Second Language (ESL) to a group of new immigrant women from Cambodia. By now, Macthoura had a part-time job as a community counter-

part and translator for the Khmer-speaking community in Winnipeg. She had become fluent in English and grasped many of the intricacies of North American culture. But what about the long journey since her ar-

rival? How had she, and countless others like her, learned to adjust to a whole new way of life?

Most of my ESL students arrive here as refugees with heartbreaking stories. They look to Canada as a place of opportunities, a place where they can work to make a happy life for themselves and their families. Before long, though, they encounter formidable obstacles in their adjustment to this new country.

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One of the most obvious barriers is language. Many new immigrants arrive in Canada with very little English, learned in a refugee camp. Trying to communicate in a new culture with only limited English can be discouraging. A routine task like grocery shopping takes on frustrating dimensions as these women try to learn about new foods, a new shopping system and new currency -- all in a new language.

Besides learning new vocabulary, newcomers must learn to cope with the various systems in our culture. Simply learning the definition and pronunciation of specific words doesn't ensure that they will understand the health, education, transportation and banking systems. Most immigrants get some orientation from settlement agencies or from seasoned members of their own community, but even beginning to function in these systems is another matter entirely.

Something as simple as taking a bus can be a challenge. Macthoura had learned the bus route to the health clinic, but she got lost when the bus didn't stop where she expected it to. She knew a few English words but not enough to ask directions of an English-speaker. She did finally reach her destination, but not without frustration and trauma.

The needs assessment, which we make before starting every English language program, identifies the problem of dealing with the health system as a priority. Women know that sooner or later they will need to communicate with family doctors, hospitals, dentists, etc. How does the whole system work? Once they understand this, how do they access the various services? Once they have found a family doctor, for example, how do they communicate what's the matter with them or their children? In our language classes we spend much time and energy explaining the system and learning the vocabulary so they can begin to talk about their health problems.

This ties in closely with another barrier all immigrants face. Who will help orient them to this new culture? If they are fortunate enough to find a community here that speaks their language and understands the culture to

some extent, the adjustment can be tackled within a more familiar context. However, even those who find such a community need social contacts from the dominant culture. Over the years I have come to realize that many (perhaps most) immigrants don't have friends outside of their own culture. The major problem then is the lack of a resource person to answer the endless questions new immigrants must ask.

One big question involves finding suitable work. When immigrants arrive here as adults, they have at least some training in a specific kind of work. Perhaps they had a well-established career which they would like to continue. Lack of English skills often forces them to take jobs which don't require much training but are likely low-paying and menial. A former student tells me she studied two-and-a-half years to become a mechanic and had a good job in her field before coming to Canada. Here she could find work only in a sewing factory. Because she couldn't understand instructions she made mistakes and had to endure in silence the anger of the supervisor.

I asked Macthourea what her dream job would be. With a smile she said that she had always wanted to be a doctor, but now, more realistically, she hopes to become a nurse. To fulfill this dream she must overcome barriers that haven't even been mentioned in this article. However, she knows that the challenges she has faced in life have strengthened her as a person. It's quite possible that one day there will be a wonderful nurse by the name of Macthourea, a caring woman who knows from personal experience what it means to overcome barriers.

Millie Kroeker has taught five years in the non-institutional ESL programs funded by both provincial and federal governments. These include several Workplace Language Training programs. She is a member of the River East MB Church.

This story about Macthourea had been completed and submitted to Sophia prior to a similar report in the Winnipeg Free Press on Sept. 8, 1992.

Qualified, Available, UNEMPLOYED

In planning this issue on the work that women do we didn't want to overlook the problem of unemployment. What's it like to need employment, to be qualified and willing to work, but unable to find a job? Lisa Bueckert graduated as a Registered Nurse from the Grace Hospital in 1990, and has been looking for a position ever since. She agreed to this interview with Sarah Klassen of Sophia. Lisa and her husband, Michael Dyck, who is a medical student, attend the River East MB Church.

Sophia: What made you decide to go into nurse's training?

LB: A combination of things. I was taking anthropology at university and wasn't quite satisfied with where a career in that might take me. I also reflected on who I was and knew I wanted more to do with people. So I applied to nursing school. I was two years out of high school.

Sophia: But why a career in the health services field?

LB: I didn't feel confident enough as a person to consider teaching -- talking in front of kids. But I liked people and felt I could work as a nurse. In January of 1989 my grandmother died. I observed the nurses, how they treated her, and how they related to people.

Sophia: Did you enjoy your training?

LB: Training was difficult. It was a difficult educational switch from university. Like going back to high school. Most nursing students aren't university trained, they come straight from high school and don't have a critical mindset. I already had a critical mindset. When I started, though, I was younger than most students of that year. The average age was older. A thirty-five-year-old student with children was treated like a high-schooler. You can't do that. Also, I'm not confident of their testing method. We were expected to do any procedure, even though we might not feel ready for it. I was often on edge. But there were some teachers who made it easier for us.

Sophia: During training, were you fearful about getting work?

LB: No. When I went into nursing, I wasn't worried about whether I'd get a job. In the group ahead of us, most graduates got jobs.

Sophia: What about your class?

LB: Many don't have jobs -- more than 50% of a class of 80 are still looking. The same is true of St. Boniface grads. Many have left the province or gone north. Some have term positions or find casual work.

Sophia: Is leaving Winnipeg an option for you?

LB: I'm beginning to consider it. I've applied to twenty hospitals in Minnesota and North Dakota. That way I could take a bus home when I get time off. I've even applied in Texas. That would mean being away up to a year.

Sophia: Does that scare you?

LB: Yeah, a lot. My hope is to get a six-month position. I could get some experience and come back here for a job.

Sophia: When did you start looking across the border?

LB: I started this summer.

Sophia: Why are jobs in your field so hard to get?

LB: It has to do with the bed closures, especially at St. Boniface and Health Sciences, due to budget cuts. Even Grace closed some beds. Older nurses, more experienced, are more likely to have jobs. And they need them.

Sophia: What's your view on these bed closures? A sound strategy?

LB: By closing beds they're being efficient, but the money saved isn't going into provisions for the elderly. The elderly *shouldn't* be in hospital beds, but there aren't enough places for them to go.

(continued on page 11)

How "Pro-Family" Are We?

By Eleanor Martens



*Contrary to
popular wisdom,
married women
do not all
work for "extras"
-- better clothes,
the second car or the
swimming pool
in the backyard*

A woman's unpaid work in the home rarely enjoys the same recognition as her paid employment outside the home. This anomaly is heightened in the light of a recent report by Statistics Canada which claims that unpaid labour within the home is worth 200 billion dollars to Canada's economy, more than one-third of its gross domestic product.

Perhaps the very fact that women's unpaid labour is essential to a healthy economy explains the reluctance to honour it by recognizing it as *real work* which might deserve a dollar value. This reluctance may be one of the insidious forces behind the opposition encountered by so many women with salaried jobs. But whether it is this, or disapproval levelled at those who step outside their "natural" roles, or at those who "steal" jobs from men who "need them more," it seems employed women absorb guilt, criticism and blame in ways that their male counterparts do not. Last spring *Time* magazine ran an expose of the negative ways in which the media, particularly film-makers, tend to portray working women. Does one ever see a working woman who is not frazzled, power-hungry, irresponsible as a parent or outrightly demented? Fuelling these images are the onslaughts of right-wing "pro-family" groups who fault working mothers for the loss of "traditional" family values and the disintegration of the American family.

The message is clear: Women who "work" are courting disaster. It is high time they hurried back home where they belong. Not surprisingly, a recent *Winnipeg Free Press* article on the resurgence of "momism" across Canada stated that shifting attitudes are resulting in a "celebration of the 1950s-style mom who polished floors,

kissed scraped knees and had a pot roast on the table at six p.m." (April 24, 1992).

For many of our employed sisters this is not an unappealing image. Disillusioned by discriminatory practices in the workplace (low pay, mundane work, lack of family supports), beset with guilt over neglecting their "primary" roles and worn out by the rigours of the "double day," they admit that, given a choice, they would head back home. Few, however, are actually doing so. According to recent statistics, female participation in the workforce remains at an all-time high, nearly equal to that of males.

At the heart of the matter for many is once again the issue of choice. Single women (including mothers) who wish to stay off welfare rolls seldom have the option not to work. Neither do poor women, who have always worked outside the home to support their families. And in these days of rising costs of living, unemployment and divorce, even middle-class, married women must work to forestall economic hardship for their families.

Contrary to popular wisdom, married women do not all work for "extras" -- better clothes, the second car or the swimming pool in the backyard. The Vanier Institute for the Family (Ottawa) reports that if women stopped working, the number of low-income families would rise by 62%.

There are also legitimate non-economic reasons why women work. The workplace has always given men a sense of worth and fulfilment and won for them a measure of respect within the community. Having decent, respectable work has been regarded as one of the most basic of human rights -- for men.

Women have begun to discover

They voice similar satisfaction with the workplace, especially because their traditional sphere has been undervalued by society. Despite the disturbing reality that large numbers of women continue to perform domestic chores even in the workplace (someone has noted that "women are housewives wherever they work") there are also those who thrill to the challenge of "making a difference" on a broader scale, who are committed to both career and family, and unwilling to choose between them.

Is it helpful then for so-called "pro-family" Christians to constantly berate and punish women for their efforts to cope with these realities of the nineties? Should working mothers be bearing the brunt of responsibility for the crises within our families, when perhaps more at fault is our failure to accommodate social and domestic arrangements to these changing work patterns?

Underlying the issue, as I see it, are larger questions about the gendered division of labour. Do Christian employers consider the impact that job-equity, job-sharing, quality child care and family medical leave might have, not only on productivity, but also on the quality of lives led by their female employees? Are Christian husbands willing to run the risk of appearing incompetent, less "masculine," or of sacrificing their own time in order to spare their wives the burden of double duty? Are we as women willing to admit we can't do it all and to share our traditional domain with others in the family? We all need release from worn out stereotypes that prolong the pain and guilt suffered by women who face difficult survival choices. We need to re-examine just how "pro-family" we are.

Eleanor Martens is a mother, a nurse and a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. She and her family attend the McIvor Avenue MB Church.

Sophia: Can you describe *how* you go about searching for work?

LB: I take a look at positions posted by the hospitals and go apply. I've applied mostly to St. Boniface, Health Sciences and Concordia. Grace and the Vic are smaller hospitals, they rarely have positions. I put in an application at Seven Oaks, but shortly after that they closed one unit and laid off nurses.

Sophia: What about casual work?

LB: I've applied for casual positions, to agencies like We Care and Drake Medox. But if you go in for casual they want you to know what you're doing and be fast about it. And nursing homes want supervising nurses with experience, or nursing assistants.

Sophia: A sort of Catch 22 situation, isn't it, since you haven't been given a chance to get experience? What about rural Manitoba? Do you find yourself competing with local women in those places?

LB: Yes. Many rural nurses are married to farmers who live in the community.

Sophia: How does all this affect you as a person?

LB: It's hard on your self-worth. This is a problem for me to begin with and all this doesn't help.

On the other hand, I think things will change. Maybe I can go somewhere else to get a job in nursing, whereas in some areas, like farm manufacturing, there may never be jobs available.

My generation has to realize we aren't going to have the affluence and security of our parents. There won't be lots of jobs. It doesn't matter if you have a PhD. I feel badly but I'm not so closed that I can't see how other people are affected.

Sophia: I sense that you're a hopeful person. Do you work at thinking positively?

LB: Yes I have to work at it. It's easy to feel that they won't want me as the time gap between now and my graduation gets larger.

Sophia: Do you have low points?

LB: I go through a cycle. Every few months I feel it's all my fault, even though intellectually I know that's not true. But it's hard not to feel responsible.

Sophia: Is time heavy on your hands?

LB: No, not really. I'm not a one-dimensional person. I can do other things. In January 1992 I went back to school, at the University of Winnipeg. I took religious studies and anthropology, tough new courses in areas I hadn't taken before.

Sophia: Was this to broaden your skill base? Were you thinking of other careers?

LB: No, not really. I feel eventually I'll get a job in nursing. I feel I should be doing some volunteering, like I did when I was a student. But if volunteering is the only thing I do, I don't want to do it. It's discouraging. People say, "Oh, you're on holidays." But suddenly you don't have motivation.

I like gardening and sewing, but there's only so much you can do without money.

Sophia: Where do you get your strength?

LB: Through relationships. Mike has been supportive all along. But there's also family and church family, people I have a lot in common with.

Sophia: Has your faith helped?

LB: Yes, definitely. It pervades you as a person. Also my faith affects how I look at the world. My job is not the most important thing. The world puts so much emphasis on material things and connections. Often we're affected more by the world than by Christ. You live in the world and can't get away from it. But you can choose to live differently.

Sophia: And you have chosen to live differently. Can you say something about that?

LB: Mike and I share a house with Mike's brother and his wife. The house has only one kitchen, and one laundry facility. So we operate like a family. We take turns shopping, cooking, and cleaning up. We eat together and use that time to talk about the day, find out what the others are doing.

Sophia: That sounds very intentional.

LB: Yes, we definitely went into it with the idea of being an intentional community. We've incorporated what others are doing and forged our own way too. Our living arrangement is part of showing the world you can live differently. The single family isn't the only way.

Sophia: Good luck with your job search.

LB: I think if I just get six months of experience --somewhere --I'll get a shot at a job.

Cycling

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

By: Elfrida Penner

Elfrida Penner, mother of four, grandmother of four, and a member of the McIvor Avenue MB Church pursues a variety of interests and hobbies. She knits, canoes, has hiked in Nepal, and keeps fit by swimming about 500 kilometers each year. She is also manager of the Kildonan Community Thrift Shop. "I enjoy having my children grown up," she says. "I've become more adventuresome."

Here she describes one recent adventure.



In my youth I dreamed of cycling from Winnipeg to Vancouver, but more important things intervened and I was content to cycle to Lockport about once a year. Almost fifty years later I read about the Golden Triangle; it rekindled a dream. The Golden Triangle is a 314-kilometer cycling adventure through the three national parks and three high passes in the Rocky Mountains. It begins in Golden, B.C., goes to Lake Louise, on to Radium, B.C., and back to Golden. Not quite Winnipeg to Vancouver but nevertheless a pretty tall order for someone whose idea of a cycling trip is a jaunt to Lockport.

My husband, Frank, and I holiday in the Rockies almost every summer, so with some persistence on my part we included my cycling trip in our schedule for 1991.

That summer we had a great time canoeing the Bowron Lakes circuit in B.C., then spent a few days in the alpine meadows in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Now that we were actually in the mountains there was a nagging fear in the back of my mind. I had never cycled in the mountains before and it looked daunting.

We arrived in Golden four days before Frank was scheduled to go to a climbing camp. By this time he had decided that I shouldn't go alone and that he would accompany me with our truck. I had four days for the trip, but thought I could do it in three—one leg of the triangle each day.

While doing laundry and shopping for groceries in Golden I almost changed my mind. The high bridge and steep climb to get on to the Trans-Canada highway from Golden seemed beyond my capabilities.

That first climb did seem endless and the lookout at the top was a welcome rest break. There I met a cyclist who had passed me on the way up. He was cycling from Vancouver to the East Coast and his bicycle was heavily loaded. He told me I was the first person he had passed so far. This was the wrong thing for him to say! I immediately disliked him intensely, but I think it was at this moment that I knew I could make it.

There is a lot of traffic between Golden and Lake Louise but it didn't really bother me, perhaps because I was work-

ing so hard. It was only later, after I had completed the circuit and was on my way home from Golden to Winnipeg, that I noticed the heavy traffic and the places where there were no shoulders. I had, however, noticed while cycling that sometimes there was as much broken glass beside the highway as gravel.

Cycling downhill was exhilarating but I couldn't help looking ahead to see how high the next hill would be. I was reminded of Til Eulenspiegel who laughed going uphill and was sad going downhill. When his companions asked about this strange behaviour he said, "When I'm going up all I can think of is how much fun it will be to go down, and when I'm going down all I can think of is how hard it will be to go up."

Our first night we camped at Lake Louise. The next morning I started cycling at about seven to avoid heavy traffic. It was cold and foggy and I was glad I had mittens. Soon I reached Castle Junction, the turnoff to Radium. There was construction at the corner and before I had completed the turn my tire was going flat. I had picked up a nail.

I walked the bicycle a while, then put a note on it and parked it beside the highway where I thought Frank, accompanying me by truck, couldn't miss it. I began to walk. A deer came out of the trees, but ran back startled when it saw me.

The fog lifted and the day was beautifully sunny. Wild flowers on both sides of the road included asters, daisies, lady's tresses, Indian paint brush, and purple fireweed. Hiking trails in the area looked inviting but I didn't have time to explore.

I wasn't concerned about the flat tire because I expected Frank to come along at any moment. The previous day he had checked up on me almost too frequently. The day became hot. I walked up Vermilion Pass but Frank still didn't come.

After I had walked 22 kilometers, he drove up. My bicycle was on the truck and we lost no time returning to Lake Louise to have it repaired. I was cycling again in about two hours; however, by this time I was tired and couldn't make it all the way to Radium.

We camped at McLeod Meadows and went to the hot

springs in Radium for the evening. What a wonderful relief for my tired muscles! Going to Radium was a mistake, though, because I saw where I would have to cycle the next day--an eleven-kilometer steep climb up Sinclair Pass and then a quick descent into Radium. I didn't know which I dreaded most and was so worried I couldn't sleep that night.

Your eyes play tricks on you in the mountains. Sometimes what looks like uphill is downhill and vice versa. But you can't fool your legs when you're on a bicycle. They let you know just how hard you're working.

I went up the pass very slowly but it wasn't as hard as I had expected. On my way up I had the most frightening experience of the trip. A car with a dog sitting by an open window passed me. The dog barked into my ear, startling me so that I almost fell.

I finally reached the top of the pass. Now I had to go down. Nothing in Manitoba prepares you for such a rapid descent. I zoomed past two emergency runouts for runaway trucks, through a tunnel, past the hot springs and right into the town of Radium. It was exhilarating.

The cycle from Radium to Golden follows the wide valley of the Columbia River. There were no more high passes and the traffic was light. Here cycling was enjoyable, but it was hot and the three days had taken their toll. I was sore and tired and stopped for the day about thirty kilometers short of Golden. The next morning I completed my trip with a great feeling of accomplishment.

That afternoon, while Frank went on to climbing camp, I was on my

way home by bus and saw part of the highway I had cycled. I could hardly believe I had cycled the Kicking Horse Pass. I asked the driver whether cyclists on the road bothered him. He said no, but first-time motorists in the Rockies were so awed by the beauty they didn't pay enough attention to the road.

Although cycling to Vancouver from Winnipeg is probably beyond my capabilities, it would be a great project. Cycling is a way of experiencing the mountains that is impossible to duplicate by driving through them and I'm very thankful I could have this opportunity.

*I zoomed past two
emergency runouts for
runaway trucks,
through a tunnel,
past the hot springs
and right into
the town of Radium.*

"If Everyone Did Something..."

By Agnes Dyck

In a society where salary negotiations and strikes for higher wages are familiar we may well be conditioned to undervalue unpaid work. Of course honest work deserves a decent wage, but money is not the reward expected by an army of volunteer workers whose labour benefits both themselves and society.

The health benefits of volunteering have been well documented in recent years. Writers such as Luks and Payne in *The Power of Doing Good* suggest that an individual's health can actually be improved, or the symptoms of ill health reversed, if the person becomes involved in helping other human beings. The authors describe the physical changes that can occur when volunteers discover a form of service that is right for them. Donating money or goods is not enough; concentrating only on family and friends may not

be the answer either.

The authors cite many examples of self-giving that has transformed lives; these stories make delightful reading. In attempting to lighten another's darkness, one's own darkness will be lightened. Scripture substantiates the truth that when we have helped others we will also benefit, "Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over" (Isaiah 58:8, *Jerusalem Bible*).

Working at the Volunteer Centre in

Winnipeg has been an enriching experience for me. In addition to participating in training programs and working with fine staff at the Centre, I have had the unique privilege of meeting a cross section of Winnipeg citizens from various ethnic and economic backgrounds. Recent applicants for volunteer positions included parolees in search of work experience, a turbaned Muslim, a victim of cerebral palsy with a Bliss board wanting work immediately, and an Iraqi from Kuwait who experienced difficulty in his search for work.

Volunteers apply for many reasons. Some want experience that would look good on a job resume; others, such as new immigrants, are seeking an opportunity to practise language skills through contact with English-speaking Canadians. Still others come for altruistic reasons: a seventy-two-year-old man, dressed in a dark suit with a white shirt and tie, quietly asked for a position as a friendly visitor in a nursing home. We were glad to connect him with a local facility. Some arrive having extra time on their hands because they have recently moved to Winnipeg or they are newly retired; many are experiencing the abandoned nest syndrome.

Applicants for volunteer positions sometimes apply with the help of caregivers who feel, perhaps, that the interview experience could benefit the individual in their care. Counsellors often advise their clients or patients to volunteer, believing that giving to other needy people might be of therapeutic value. Sometimes volunteers with various emotional and/or physical problems apply in the hope of having healing contact with others.

*In attempting
to lighten
another's darkness,
one's own darkness
will be
lightened.*

Another volunteer experience for me has been a tutoring position at a local prison. Getting to know individual inmates and hearing their stories is humbling because an imprisoned person seems to have an innate sense for what is posturing; you are unlikely to express something you do not feel in that heavy atmosphere. What is not spoken says more than what is being spoken in such a depressed environment.

However, the delight in knowing that an inmate enjoys reading for the first time in his life offsets any negative feelings one might have in relating to offenders. Just sensing the quiet appreciation for the volunteer help being given makes the energy and time expended, and yes, the money spent, worthwhile.

I gain as much as I give at the prison. The relationships with those who are dispossessed, those

who have been neglected or abused in their formative years, and those who are addicted to narcotics and alcohol has led me to sense that God is present for the poor in a special way. I have gained respect for the courage, sense of humour and patience exhibited by those whom Jean Vanier has called "the little ones." I have also learned to value the benefits of my own past.

Our volunteer forebears, accepted and often taken for granted, served the church sacrificially and did not necessarily require attention or gratitude from the recipients. Earlier pastors supported themselves by raising chickens and vegetables, by farming or other jobs. Up until 1953 pastors in the North Kildonan MB Church, for example, served without remuneration; pension benefits, dental plans, travel money and other extras were unheard of. Even after salaries for pastors were instituted, the

pastor's wife was often expected to be an unpaid worker. All church staff worked gratis and church buildings arose with volunteer labour and donated supplies.

We do well to look back at our past and honour those who have made the present possible. A sheltering church, created by women and men who freely volunteered their time and talents, provided a haven and a sense of security and order after the chaos of the Russian holocaust. This is our heritage.

Contemporary church programs are also heavily dependent on volunteers' faithful ministry in many areas of service. Recently, approximately forty volunteers ran a VBS in the Mclvor Avenue MB Church. It would have been impossible for the paid staff to provide such a service alone. Our Sunday School classes depend on many faithful workers who prepare lessons every week. A church member remarked recently, "If everyone did *something*, the work would get done."

The benefits of freely giving time to the church or other charitable organizations are numerous. Working on church committees can lead to genuine friendship when participants become aware of each others' needs through regular contact. Consider our priceless musical heritage imparted through many volunteer conductors and singers. The benefits can have lifelong repercussions in our personal lives and in the lives of those we serve.

Suggested reading:

Luks, Allan and Peggy Payne. *The Healing Power of Doing Good: The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.

Wilson, Marlene. *You Can Make a Difference: Helping Others and Yourself Through Volunteering*. Colorado: Volunteer Management Associates, 1990.

Agnes Dyck is a former school teacher who enjoys travelling, reading and volunteer work. She's a member of the Mclvor MB Church.



Hospitality with *Joy*

By Carolee Neufeld



*When we desire
to let God's love
flow through us to others,
we will discover
that we are ministering
to the
soul and spirit,
not only to
physical and social needs.*

I wince as I hang up the telephone. Should I be feeling guilty about saying no to Linda? She's looking for a host family to receive a university student from Botswana.

It seems to me that I'm letting down our friends in church who are involved in ministry to foreign students. Maybe I'm disappointing God, who tells us we shouldn't forget to entertain strangers. Certainly, our family will miss a meaningful time of interacting with someone new to Canada. And we may lose the opportunity of showing Christ's love to someone with little understanding of Christianity.

I reflect on my own pressures. I had hoped that summer would bring an opportunity to catch up but instead I'm getting further behind. Both home and career need more of my time and energy.

Life is incredibly busy for many of us. Our "To Do" lists are getting longer all the time. When the strain of modern living weighs us down, we sometimes look at the scriptural instruction to practise hospitality and wonder what God is expecting of us. After interacting with people at work all day, we may eagerly anticipate the serenity of being alone. The very thought of having guests saps our last bit of energy.

The biblical call to hospitality is God's invitation for us as believers to open our homes and our hearts. When we desire to let God's love flow through us to others, we will discover that we are ministering to the soul and spirit, not only to physical and social needs.

There are practical questions that confront us. How can we extend hospitality and not overextend ourselves? Whom should we invite? Will it be worth it? I would like to offer some suggestions that can help us in our struggle with time and energy constraints, priorities and motivation.

◆ We can keep meals simple. No hors d'oeuvres or elaborate desserts! Christian hospitality has to do with fellowship and ministry, not with impressing others.

◆ We can invite people to meet us at a restaurant for a snack or meal. That way we can give ourselves freely to the relationship within the time available.

◆ We can ask someone to join us in something we are already planning to do. Offering hospitality doesn't need to be an extra event.

◆ We can include guests in the work. At our house we used to visit in the living room after a meal. Now my husband leads the way in getting dishes started. (It's easier when he takes the initiative, but I've even gained the courage to do it myself!)

◆ We can allow guests to help themselves. They often appreciate the

HOSPITALITY

freedom. For example, overnight visitors can get their own breakfast when we have to leave early for work.

◆ We can make it a family affair. Our children often initiate games or activities, even with adult guests. Everyone can get in on the hosting and the work.

◆ We can pray about our hospitality, asking God whom He wants us to spend time with. He will draw our attention to those who need our companionship.

◆ We do well to clarify our hospitality goals and make a long-range plan that is manageable.

◆ We can extend some spontaneous invitations. Sometimes these are the most fun and the least pressure. At one time my husband would say, "Come home with us and we'll fix some wieners and beans." That freed us up to prepare anything simple that was handy.

◆ We shouldn't feel guilty about all that we can't do.

◆ We need to rely on God. He desires to be our source of love, joy and energy. According to Isaiah 40 He will renew our strength!

◆ We can graciously accept God's surprises. When he permits something that we weren't anticipating, we can look to him for the enabling that we need.

Christian hospitality given joyfully, in spite of our own busy schedules, will enrich others. As we share ourselves and our resources, we too will be enriched.

Carolee Neufeld is the mother of five sons, a daughter and a daughter-in-law. She and her husband, Ken, are the pastoral team in the St. Vital Mennonite Brethren Church.

POETRY

saturday after supper, washing the floor

when that song comes on i have to stop,
the cloth slack,
clouded water dripping between my fingers

through the window (across
the street) the
little girl in a white skirt lifting
her arms up in the air, the warm
spring air

and this music stretching out
empty handed

Melody Goetz
(Previously published in Dandelion)

Our Call: To Love God and our Neighbour

By Mary Friesen

Katrina was putting the youngest two of her eight children to bed when she heard her husband Jakob coming home. He had gone into the neighbouring village with two of their older boys to help with the harvest on his sister's farm. Her husband had died two weeks ago. Left with six young children, she just could not manage on her own.

Farming in this hot and dry country was not easy. Katrina was tired and wished she could just go away for a week to rest and think, but her husband and children needed her....

With these thoughts still on her mind, she met her husband as he came into the small kitchen. "Katrina, I hope you can find room for these four children. My sister is sick and her neighbours are looking after her and the two older boys, but somebody must care for these four until she gets well again."

One look at the scared and tired faces of the young children told Katrina that she had to find the time and energy to care for these little ones. Where would they sleep?

But first things first. "Sure, Jakob, I'll keep them as long as they need our care. Let me go and find something to eat for you and these children." With that she turned to the pantry, wiped a few tears from her eyes and started to prepare supper.

Katrina was my grandmother. In the pioneering days after 1927, when she and her family had moved to South America, the needs of family and community were overwhelming. The women worked very hard, and yet none of their achievements will ever be recorded in the history books. Although Katrina's life was spent in the "service of the Lord," no church records will include her name among the influential leaders of the com-

munity. If we could ask her about her "life of service," she would say, "All I ever did was to take care of the most urgent needs of the people around me."

Katrina's story reminds me of two stories recorded in Luke 10:25-42. In the first one, Jesus told a story about a traveller who was assaulted on the road and needed help. Two official "servants of the Lord" (a priest and a Levite) passed by but did not stop and offer first-aid to the injured man. They had to meet their obligations in the Temple of the Lord, and so could not risk rendering themselves ritually unclean by touching a wounded, perhaps even dead, man. The third person to pass by did not qualify for work in the Temple. He was a Samaritan, a foreigner, on a journey of some kind, perhaps a business trip. Of his response we read, "he felt compassion" (10:33). He was moved by the need of the person on the roadside and stopped to help. Jesus concluded the story by saying, "Go and do the same" (10:37).

The intent of this story is to answer the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:35). The commandment to love God and one's neighbour was well known to Jesus' listeners, but what were its practical implications? Jesus wished to convey that it is not religious activity that proves our love for God (no matter how committed we may be to the "work of the church"), but rather our compassion and offers of assistance to injured people we meet "on the road." Katrina used all her resources to do just that.

Before we conclude that Katrina's example of "serving the Lord" is prescriptive for all of us, let us consider the next story in Luke's Gospel (10:38-42). Jesus and his disciples

were welcomed into the home of Martha, where she was preoccupied with preparing the meal for them. She could have used the help of her sister, Mary, who had decided, rather, to join the group of men. What was Mary thinking, anyway, sitting at Jesus' feet? That was not proper behaviour for a woman of her time. But when Martha complained to Jesus about it, he replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part..." (10:41-42).

Interpretations of this statement vary, but the most popular one suggests that Jesus was telling Martha that the most important thing was to "feed on the word of God."

Are we to conclude that preparing food and offering hospitality are not important? Was Martha wasting her time? When considering other teachings in the New Testament, it is clear that serving at the table and extending hospitality are important gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12:13). Martha, however, seemed to be distracted by her work and service, while Mary took time to learn more of the truth Jesus taught. That she sat at the feet of the Master implies that she was a student, a disciple.

Jesus stated that Mary had chosen wisely. She took time to learn from him, even if it meant breaking through traditional barriers. This story not only reminds us to take time to meditate on the Word of God, it also encourages women to become students of the Bible. Mary felt her place was to be "at the feet of Jesus," and we are told that this sense of calling would "not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

Both stories remind us that it is possible to be anxious and troubled about a highly useful activity or program to



the point where we lose sight of their purpose: to know and love God, and to show compassion toward our neighbour.

Katrina worked very hard in the service of her family and community. Homemaking was her calling. Today, more and more women are finding their places of service in other areas, perhaps even in full-time church ministry. We all need to be reminded that the driving force behind whatever we do must be divine love. The apostle Paul summarizes this truth for us in Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of God" (New American Standard Version).

Mary Friesen teaches German and Bible at the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute. She is on leave this year as she completes a Master of Divinity program. Mary and her family are members of the River East MB Church.

Great Moments

AT THE IRONING BOARD

By Bruce Kliewer



It's 1959 and I'm twelve years old, growing up in Steinbach. We just got a new television set in our living room and I'm still trying to figure out how that happened. A year ago I'd been in trouble for sneaking down to the local appliance store to watch the television sets that Mr. Reimer kept at the back. My parents said that watching television was a sin but then Dad heard that one of our deacons had a new television set in his basement and I guess that was all he needed to hear because next thing I knew we had our very own RCA. And Dad, being the rebel that he was, decided our new set was going in our living room. Talk about living on the edge.

Anyway, my favourite show was "Leave it to Beaver." They were the Cleavers, just like us, and while I suspected they weren't Mennonites (at least I never saw June Cleaver serve up a platter of *varenika* and *cheeltya*) I did think that Wally was the coolest guy on earth and Ward and June were just about the best parents any kid could ask for.

There was, however, something about the show that just didn't figure.

It seemed that Ward Cleaver never went to work. He was always home, usually sitting in his study wearing his Perry Como sweater, waiting for "the Beav" to come along and say, "Gee, Dad, that's swell." And the other thing I didn't understand was that June Cleaver always did the cooking and the housework in a dress, pearl necklace and fancy earrings. Were there really people like that? I mean, I recognized that our households were similar in that the dads read the paper a lot and the moms did all the housework, but in a dress? My mom wore grungy old pedal-pushers and a big handkerchief tied around her head. It kept the rollers in place. How uncool! But, hey, these were traditional one-career families, right? Dads had the jobs, moms didn't work, they were just housewives.

Then my mom had this insane idea that I could become a better person if I helped her out by doing the dishes, waxing and polishing the floors and learning how to iron! C'mon Mom, Wally and the Beav don't have to do any of that stuff, so why me? Mom said if I was a television star I wouldn't have to do any housework either but in the meantime there was a pile of laundry downstairs so hop to it and maybe if I improved my attitude I might even learn to enjoy it. Fat chance. Well, then something weird happened. I discovered the joys of ironing. I remembered seeing Grandma Kliewer pressing some sheets, implementing her version of the steam iron. She'd take a big mouthful of water from this Pepsi bottle and then spew it out in a fine spray before applying the hot iron. Alright, with a bit of practice, I could get into this!

Now, thirty-some years later, the world

certainly has a different look to it. "Leave it to Beaver" has gone the way of the dinosaur. The one-career family is now a rarity in our culture. Mostly for reasons of economic necessity, few women of my generation are now "just housewives." So, what are the dynamics on the home front when both spouses work outside the home? Is the workload shared equally, or do the women continue to bear the greater burden of running the household?

A recent study in the U.S. suggests that the latter is indeed the case. A woman who works full-time was shown to spend forty hours per week on the job plus an additional thirty-seven hours per week on household and childrearing related activities. A man, on the other hand, was shown to spend forty-three hours on the job but only fifteen hours on household activities. So maybe we haven't come that far after all.

The American novelist Jack Kerouac once said, "The world will never find peace until men fall at their women's feet and ask for forgiveness." Well, I suppose that would be a start.

Now it's September, and for my wife and me that means back to school. We both teach junior high, and as if that didn't keep us stressed out enough, there's always that nasty business of trying to keep the household functioning at a reasonably sane level. On occasion our teenage daughter bounds into the house and asks, "You wanta know what happened in school today?" and Bev and I start screaming, but other than that

we all seem to cope quite well. The key, of course, is compromise and a refrigerator door covered with menu schedules and job charts. When one of us cooks, the other cleans up, we all do our own laundry, we check the chart to see whose turn it is to do the dishwasher, etc. And you know why this works for us? Because thirty years ago my mom wouldn't let me buy into the "Leave it to Beaver" unreality and now I can actually enjoy popping a Doors tape into the cassette deck and engaging in an hour of "subversive ironing." That's where I do wild and crazy things like put the iron on the "linen" setting and then do a cotton shirt just for the sheer thrill of it. Isn't this what being a 90s kind of guy is all about?

Hopefully, men will continue to become more involved in the home. For further inspiration, we can take some cues from Dagwood Bumstead, that bastion of slovenly, wife-suppressing, male chauvinism who apparently has plans to quit his desk job in the office of mean Mr. Dithers to work for his wife, Blondie, who made headlines last Labour Day by opening a catering business with her best friend, Tootsie. It seems Dagwood just can't take the corporate heat so he's coming home and into the kitchen -- with Blondie as his boss. Stay tuned and good luck, Dagwood.

Bruce Kliewer is a school teacher who irons his own shirts and enjoys "Leave it to Beaver" reruns. He and his wife, Bev, and their daughter, Jill, attend McIvor Avenue MB Church.

*June Cleaver always
did the cooking
and the housework
in a dress,
pearl necklace,
and fancy earrings.
Were there really
people like that?*

DO HOUSEWIVES WORK?

By Lorraine Matties

Do housewives work? Do housewives work? Let me tell you something. I stagger out of bed at eight-thirty in the morning, groggy from a night of answering the cries of my almost-four-year-old (I know, she should be over that by now) and my eighteen-month-old. The phone rings while I'm half dressed and the baby's dumping soggy Cheerios and milk all over the floor downstairs. I can hear him there. My husband put him there just before he walked out the door for work. The person on the phone is a guy we sort of know and would like to know better who's asking if I and my husband could teach Sunday school in his church for a six-week series. Who's going to babysit while we prepare, I think to myself. Okay, we'll think about it.

The car's been at the garage for the last two days so we have stale toast and the last of the Cheerios for breakfast. I have to go grocery shopping today. Ever take two preschoolers grocery shopping? So you know what I mean.

The first hurdle is getting them dressed. No, my dear, you can't wear that purple shirt with those orange shorts. I know they're your favorites but it's cold today. Remember how we put plastic over the tomatoes last night (in August, yet!)? Okay, wear the purple shirt with the red pants. When we get to the store I'll pretend you're not my kid.

Finally we get everyone dressed, the last-minute poopy diaper changed and we're out the door. I drive down the block and remember I forgot my daughter's birth certificate at home. We need it to register her for nursery school.

On the road again. I have to stop at the Olive Branch (where I volunteer once a week) to drop off some information cards I typed up for displays. No, no little one, you can't pick those nice silk flowers! And please put that pretty ceramic planter down--gently!

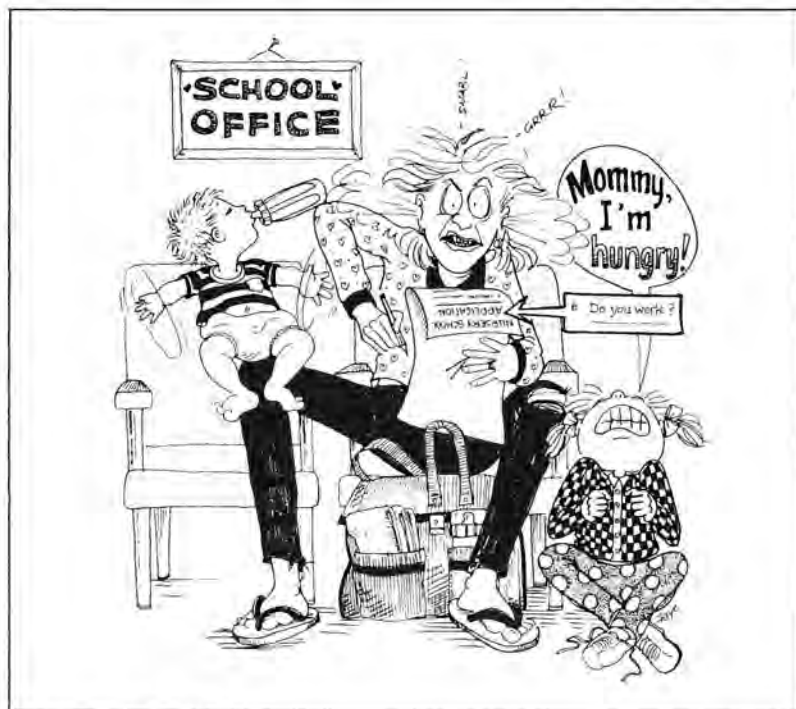


Illustration: Faye Kliever

Phew. Two more stops. If I can get them out of the car and into the grocery cart without one of them getting run over in the parking lot, I can relax for a few minutes. What? You want a whole package of lollipops? No way. They'll rot your pretty little teeth. Hey! Put all those bottles of shampoo back. We only need one this week. I know you're getting hungry, but we have to wait till we get home to eat the bread. I'll make you a nice peanut butter sandwich, okay?

One more stop. The school. No, Baby, please don't sit down in the middle of the road. There we go, up the steps and in the door. The secretary's gone for lunch? Couldn't you get her to come back just for a moment, while I still have the birth certificate where I can find it? Thanks a lot. It'll just take a minute to fill in these details. Daughter's name, birthdate, whom to contact if I'm not home. Do I work? Do I work?

Lorraine Matties works at homemaking, editing, writing and gardening. She and her husband, Gordon, and their two children, Zoe and Jesse, have just returned from a year's study leave in Israel.

Wilma Derksen. *Have You Seen Candace?* Wheaton, Illinois: Living Books; Tyndale Publishers, 1991.

April Yamasaki. *Remember Lot's Wife*; Elgin, IL: Faith Quest, 1991.

Reviewed by Agnes Dyck, member of the McIvor Avenue MB Church.



Wilma Derksen's superb reporting skills stood her in good stead when she embarked on the difficult and painful journey to write *Have You Seen Candace?* In deceptively simple prose, Derksen's account draws the reader into the book through an implied question: How does an individual or family cope in such horrific circumstances? Reliving the days and weeks surrounding the dis-

appearance of her daughter and the discovery of her body, and reflecting on all the life questions involved was not an easy task, according to Wilma Derksen, but she feels the writing has been therapeutic.

Derksen, willing to make herself vulnerable in order to tell her story, has constructed a carefully crafted and layered work. On the one hand she tells the story of her own family's sorrow; on the other hand we are treated to a vision of a loving and affirming community. Further, we are reading the larger Mennonite story within the context of a non-Mennonite world. Then there is the Derksen family's relationship with the investigative forces whose individual members are handled, I believe, very generously by Derksen.

In the description of the disappearance of Candace Derksen and the subsequent discovery of the body, weeks later, in a shack close to home, much is revealed about the Derksens' family life, background and culture. Often Derksen explains her thinking and acting by referring to her Mennonite tradition and upbringing.

The reader identifies with the TV audience which witnesses the heartfelt appeal of the parents for the return of their daughter. Derksen's search for authenticity of faith in the midst of a profound grief process becomes the reader's as well.

This is documentary writing at its best, difficult to read because of the content, but impressive because of the manner in which the author explores the hard life questions which we all must face sooner or later.

Remember Lot's Wife contains fifty meditations on the unnamed women in the Bible, (twenty-five from the Old Testament, twenty-five from the new) each ending in a meditation focus and a prayer. Suggestions for journaling and for small group use are included at the end of the book.

The tear-filled eyes of Lot's wife gaze out from the cover. Her story introduces the reader to a fresh vision of a familiar character in scripture. The author humanizes Lot's wife by imagining her particular circumstances and by reflecting on the routines of her life before she was abruptly torn from all that was familiar in her past. From this brief biblical account she draws inferences in order to personalize the story for the contemporary reader.

Yamasaki's investigation of the emotions felt by the characters and her speculation about each individual's life circumstances provide fresh insights into women whose biblical portraits contain only meagre details. The contemporary reader becomes aware that the problems faced by women of ancient times have universal aspects that she can identify with.

The author encourages the reader to be honest with God, to be comfortable with God and, through reflection, to experience a sense of quiet joy and, yes, a feeling of

being somehow recognized and justified.

Implicit in the discussion is an awareness that the original accounts were filtered through a particular point of view. They were told and evaluated by male writers speaking from the perspective of a male-oriented society in which women were socialized into submission, into assuming unobtrusive, supportive roles.

Yamasaki brings a woman's point of view to the sketchy stories of these unnamed women. Yet she is not a rabid feminist. Instead of grandstanding she leads the reader into quiet reflection on, and evaluation of, contemporary ministry possibilities for women in our generation.





*So let us not grow weary in doing
what is right, for we will reap at
harvest time if we do not give up.*

*So then, whenever we have an
opportunity, let us work for the good
of all, and especially for those of the
family of faith.*

Galations 6:9-10

(New Revised Standard Version)