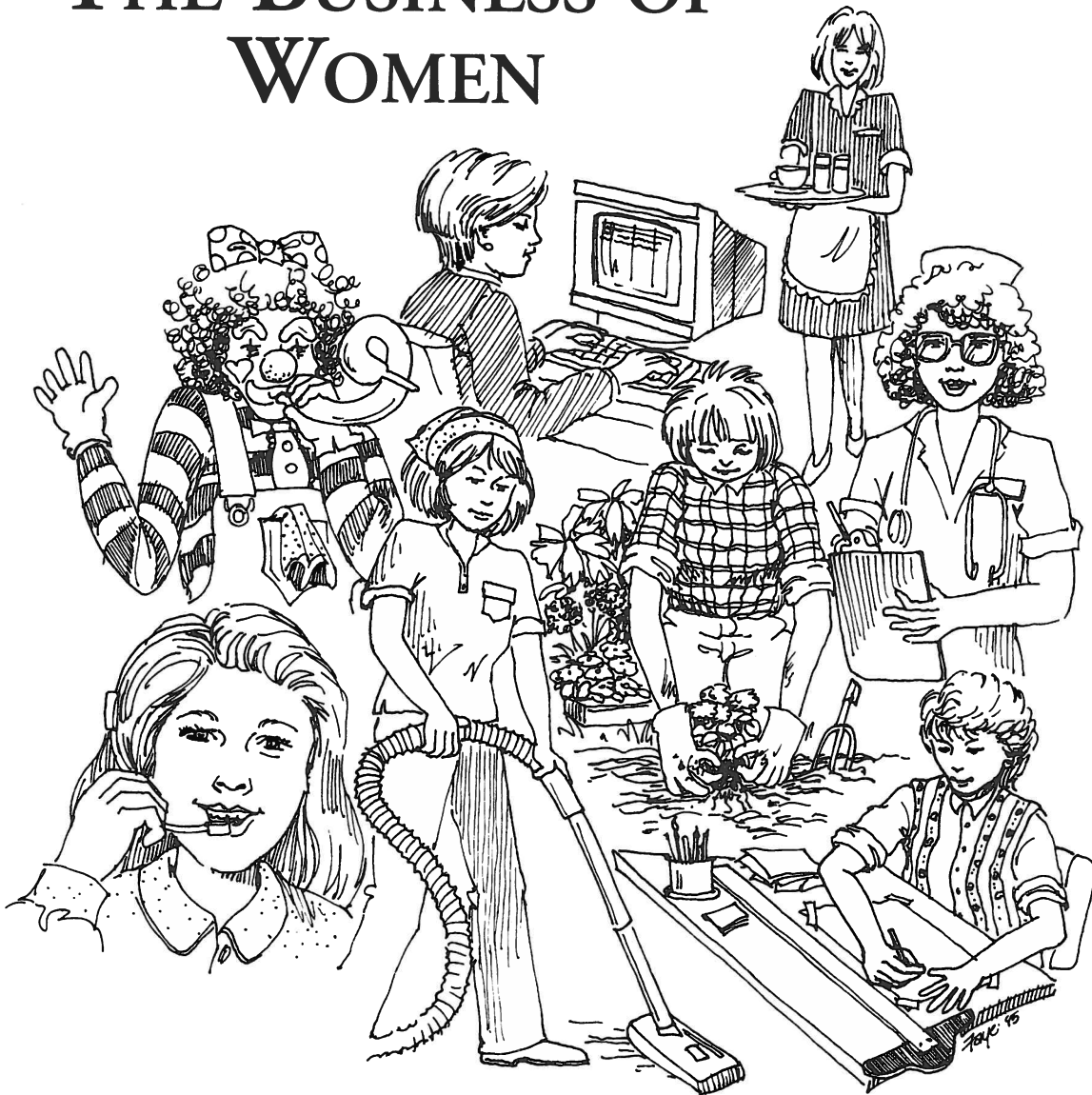


SOPHIA

W I S D O M

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

THE BUSINESS OF WOMEN



SPRING 1995 VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2

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SOPHIA:

A Greek feminine noun associated with the biblical wisdom tradition, translated "wisdom" and personified in the book of Proverbs; equivalent in the New Testament to *logos*, the creative word that was with God in the beginning, creating and giving life to the world.

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R3G 4E9

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Faye Kliever, our cover artist for this issue, combines career and motherhood. She is a freelance graphic artist involved in retail advertising layout design. Other related work includes making dried arrangements and other crafts which she sells at Mach Artworks, teaching crafts for church programs and making greeting cards. Faye and her computer consultant husband, Wern, have two children. They attend Portage Avenue MB Church, Winnipeg.



Women as Wealth Creators

by Agatha Doerksen

WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

When I began my career in business the message was, "You have to do business the same way (as businessmen) if you want equal treatment." Adapting to that environment, I acted in culturally appropriate ways to achieve my business goals. Years later, when a female friend said to me in exasperation, "You act just like a Mennonite businessman," I wasn't really surprised, but it just didn't feel like a compliment.

Business was modeled for me by my parents who owned and operated an appliance repair service. My mother did the accounting and managed the operation while my father made service calls. He was the *people* person whom everyone loved because he understood how to make people happy by listening and fixing things. Having their own business permitted them flexibility to do endless amounts of church work. They were successful in their community because they consistently put people first and made little distinction between church and business worlds. Their calling was to serve people—business and faith were integrated.

My Christian upbringing encouraged me in my business pursuits and indeed has been my mainstay. However, there have been significant constraints to doing business. For the most part my generation of businesswomen had no mentors. Few women managed businesses. Those who did were fully occupied balancing their workload between business and home. Others, like my mother, did not think of themselves as businesswomen and did not promote business as a career choice.

The conventional wisdom of our Mennonite community has held that women must be quiet, cooperative and nurturing, and certainly not aggressive in seeking roles of leadership, authority and power. It is easy to understand why

few women have pursued business careers and why those who have, haven't encouraged others. Those who have achieved success know the tremendous confidence needed to provide firm leadership to manage a business.

The Mennonite community has not been inconsistent with the secular world in its treatment of women.

Women have not had control of their rights, financial well-being, physical safety or access to opportunity, nor have they been in positions to influence politics, business or the church. Some who would have chosen to work in the family business were denied that opportunity. The Mennonite ideal for women has not included the ability to speak out, negotiate, lead and be strategic and deliberate in business and financial planning. Ultimately, the primary source of courage for women managers and business owners has been the confidence in their own ability to survive.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT REALITY?

In the last decade the number of new small businesses has flourished. Many are being created by women. These businesses are diverse and represent changes that are addressing the issues of child care, menopause and dismissal of fashion. Women are designing services and products that are calling for a balance in lifestyle, family and recreation. Women are redefining *how*, *when* and *where* these businesses are being done.

Women have developed skills from their abilities to tolerate ambiguity and juggle many responsibilities at once. They have learned how to create influence without having control. These skills are proving effective in the development of small business. A study, led by Lee Delp (former MEDA president) when he worked for National Liberty

Corporation, interviewed three thousand women and concluded that factors for successful women business owners include having a parent or parents owning a business, being between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five and having raised a family. This last factor was seen to be most significant for success because of the relational and logistical skills learned in raising a family.

Women's style of leadership is typically to share power and information, invite participation and be supportive of others. Tom Peters, author of *In Search of Excellence*, tells men "who wish to stay employed" to study women's ways of leadership. In her book, *Our Wildest Dreams*, Joline Godfrey suggests that women are less inclined to separate business and personal ethics. It is this assumption of integration that women bring to their business, not naively but wisely, as a sense of what works in relationships in and out of business. These are the characteristics that contribute to a restructuring of how business is done in women's terms.

Younger women are breaking new ground in finding ways to integrate profit and meaning, and for some it is sustainability with meaning. Their criteria include a sense of fair play and respect toward people, planet and society. Women are on the leading edge of this new paradigm. They are finding ways to adapt their work schedule to the strongly-held objectives that have guided them in their volunteer activities and family nurturing. Women are redefining the "bottom line" and creating a definition of wealth that includes profit in economic and social terms.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE AND HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR LEADERSHIP?

Patricia Aburdane and John Naisbitt in their book *Megatrends for*

(continued on next page)

Women estimate that by the year 2000 more than fifty percent of businesses in North America will be owned by women. These businesses will create seventy-five percent of the new jobs. Feminine principles of caring, nurturing and compassion coupled with new roles for women in the marketplace will continue to redefine how work is done and will deal creatively with issues from world population to affordable housing. Women have a transforming role to play in integrating values of nurturing with skills acquired and honed in a man's world.

We need to provide our daughters with positive, strong role models. With our support and encouragement to accept leadership roles, they will have the confidence and integrity to make choices.

We need to encourage full participation of women in economic, social, political and religious orders of our society at the highest levels of creativity and leadership. Firms and institutions need to integrate female values to create a new partnership that reflects the positive traits of women and men and results in the remaking of social and economic structures and subsequent governance.

We need to remove the labels and boxes that have restricted us and together create a new vision and a balanced social order. As has been in the past and continues to be now, it is important that we have the courage to beat back the fear of pursuing new challenges and dreams.

In preparation for leadership in business, we need to move forward humbly, with audacity, holding the hands of our children.

Agatha Doerksen managed a successful travel agency from 1984 to 1992. Since 1990 she has assisted in the startup of new business ventures, initiated community economic development activities and worked in program and project management. Currently she is implementing a Credit Circle Program for women micro-entrepreneurs. Agatha and her husband, Al, are members of Fort Garry MB Church, Winnipeg. They have two daughters.

Some years ago I saw a calendar in a Christian bookstore: "The Proverbs 31 Woman." Each month offered a new sketch of that fabulous woman, as though faithful women should somehow be able to excel as she has done. Ironically, however, the portrait in Proverbs 31 is saying much more than that in a rather remarkable way.

Each verse of the poem begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is a sense of thoroughness and order here, as well as playfulness, hyperbole and humour. This entrepreneurial woman can do everything, from A to Z. Who in the world can possibly match such a catalogue of virtuous activities?

Traditional interpretation has answered that question by suggesting that the poem describes the ideal wife. Although the book of Proverbs is interested in a "good" or "prudent" wife (12:4, 19:14), this poem describes a "strong woman" (31:10), not a "capable wife" (NRSV) or "a wife of noble character" (NIV). As we discover in the poem, she is married and has chil-

The **ENTREPRENEURIAL** **Proverbs 31:10-31**

dren. Her husband even benefits from her activity. But the poem is not about her roles as wife and mother. It reflects, rather, on her strength. As a "strong woman," she is a model of an eminently capable human being. She incarnates all the benefits of wisdom that the book of Proverbs advocates. In fact, she seems to be an embodiment of "wisdom woman," a poetic figure who appears throughout the wisdom tradition (Prov. 1:20-33; 3:13-18; 4:5-9; 8:1-9; 5; Sirach 24; 51:13-21; Wisdom of Solomon 7-9).

As a poetic character, wisdom woman represents intimacy with God, participation in the architecture of the universe and a nurturing and critical role in educating for moral formation. By following her "the world becomes intelligible and God can be known. From her comes understanding of reality and of humanity's place within it" (Kathleen M. O'Connor, *The Wisdom Literature* [Message of Biblical Spirituality 5]. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988, p. 69).

We find this woman taking initiative to draw seekers to herself, making bold claims about the benefits of wisdom and rebuking foolishness with the audacity of a prophet. Those who search for her with utmost diligence will find her, which suggests that those who would be truly wise must first of all be questing people for whom not everything is settled and certain. Those who risk all for the sake of the quest will be amply rewarded.

Sometimes we wonder whether she may not be promising too much. In the same way, I think, the poem of Prov. 31:10-31 says too much. And yet isn't that characteristic of the heroic genre?

Several observations will spell out the implications of this poem's affinities with the heroic hymns in the ancient world. First, the poem critiques the overtly sexual literature in praise of women that was common in the ancient Near East. It does not praise women from an erotic point of view nor does it present an ideal of perfection that was common in erotic poetry (cf. v. 30). Instead, the poem "glorifies the active good works of a woman in the ordinary affairs of family, community and business life — good works which for all their earthiness are rooted in the fear of the LORD" (Al Wolters, "Proverbs 31:10-31 as Heroic Hymn: A Form-Critical Analysis," *Vetus Testamentum* 38, 1988. p. 456-57).

Second, the poem offers a critique of the idea that wisdom is best expressed through an abstract intellectualism. The woman in the poem demonstrates that "concrete practical wisdom rooted in the fear of the LORD" is preferable to "impartial rationality" (Wolters, p. 457).

WOMAN, WHO CAN FIND?

Revisited *by Gordon Matties*

Third, the poem redefines language of power. Throughout the poem we find militaristic language used to describe the woman. It seems deliberately to describe this "strong woman" in the same language the writers have used to describe the "mighty men of valour" during David's time. The expression in Prov. 31:10 ("valiant woman") is echoed in v. 29, where the woman is described as "doing valiantly," a term used often in military contexts. Moreover, in vv. 17 and 25 the text uses several other words for "strength." Verse 29 uses an expression ("you surpass them all") that is used elsewhere for going out into battle. And v. 19 uses an expression ("puts her hands to the distaff") that has an aggressive connotation in all other texts (Wolters, p. 453).

The poem about the "strong woman," then, is no innocent portrayal of feminine virtues. It offers both a vision of how wisdom can be embodied in the many spheres of practical life and a criticism of portraits of women as sexual objects. And in its subversion of military language it criticizes the male modes of power that are most evident in the military enterprise.

If the poem is about the "strong woman"—the woman who embodies wisdom in all of life—and if the poem subverts several common assumptions about sexuality and

power, then one question remains. Why has this poem been placed at the end of the book of Proverbs?

It is not a tacked-on afterthought guiding a young man to find a good wife. Rather, this poem actually summarizes the thinking of the whole book of Proverbs (see Thomas P. McCreesh, "Wisdom as Wife: Proverbs 31:10-31," *Revue Biblique* 92/1 (1985) 25-46). As the introduction to the book of Proverbs suggests, "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (1:7). Now, at the end of the book we have a portrait of a woman who is to be praised because she fears the LORD (31:30).

Wisdom is not simply a quest, nor is it an essentially intellectual activity. Proverbs 31:10-31 portrays a woman in the midst of the business of life. This is not "everywoman." Nor is she the "ideal wife." This woman represents an extension of "wisdom woman," the woman in whose



behaviour all the virtues of wisdom are present. The praise that comes to her comes not by reason of her

marriage or her children but by virtue of her actions and her words.

Like the truly wise one depicted in Proverbs, she is the true entrepreneur (always larger than life) who risks all, laughs at the future, has vision for the impossible, tirelessly pursues her commitment to care, engages in diversified industry, is able to discern value when she sees it, acts generously toward the poor, cares for those in her household and teaches with authority and by example. She is indeed a woman for all to imitate. And she is worthy of imitation because she has demonstrated that wisdom can be incarnated. Her "proper place," therefore, "is in the world of human relationships, both public and private" (Claudia V. Camp, "Woman Wisdom as Root Metaphor: A Theological Consideration," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.* Edited by K. G. Hoglund et al. JSOT Press, 1987. p. 55). Both the house and the marketplace are appropriate spheres of human endeavour, equal contexts in which one can be empowered by wisdom.

In spite of that affirming conclusion, however, we return to the beginning of the poem to recognize that such a person is rare. Because true embodiment of wisdom appears to be the exception rather than the rule, the poem,

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Open Doors: Three Beginnings

by Lorie Battershill



From left: Pogo and Millicent



Trudy Reimer at the drawing board

Life's opportunities knock on everyone's door at one time or another but not everyone answers. Starting their own businesses has offered three Winnipeg women—Betty Plett, Trudy Reimer and Dorothy Froese—a chance to open the door to new challenges in the working world and to new growth in life and faith.

Betty Plett's business opportunity came knocking with a call to serve. The Sunday school superintendent at her church was looking for someone to do a clown act for the Sunday school picnic so Betty, along with her friend Trudy Reimer, accepted the challenge. They created a pair of lovable clowns to entertain the children. Their act was such a success that they received requests to repeat their act for other groups. Then Joy Klassen, a local day care director, offered them their first paying job and a new business venture was under way. "We didn't intend to continue," says Betty, "but we had so much fun." Soon Plain Old Pogo (Betty) and Millicent the Magnificent (Trudy)

were doing shows at corporate parties, agricultural fairs and children's birthday parties. After a busy beginning, the partners went separate ways. Now Betty does most of the shows on her own, sometimes working with Trudy at church functions.

Clowning offers an opportunity to have a positive impact on children. "We write a lot of our own skits. I

enjoy being able to get a message across to kids in a special way. We talk about honesty, friendship and that kind of thing."

"I don't really think of it as business," says Betty. "It's a bright spot in my life right now and it's good."

Trudy Reimer, meanwhile, opened another door that opportunity presented and found herself working in her favourite place—the garden. Brother-in-law Bob Dyck needed someone to help out in his yard service business, so he asked Trudy to do some landscape design and implementation. Soon she was working in her own landscaping business. It's a work that she really loves. "I like looking back on a project and saying, 'I think that looks good.' I've always wanted to work in something where God would be seen."

During the work season, from May to October, many days begin at six in the morning and last until nine at night. "I can't be that busy again this year," says Trudy. Last year she had to turn down work, so the big question this year will be whether or not to start hiring employees. "It's another step, which I think is important. You don't want to be stagnant. I like change, doing things differently."

For Dorothy Froese, the opportunity to think about starting her own business came when she took a year's leave of absence from her nursing job at the Selkirk Mental Health Center to upgrade her training. While working towards her Registered Nursing diploma at Red River Community College she met her soon-to-be business partner, Ellen McAskill. The two found that they both had a desire to try something on their own. The result of their shared vision is a new nursing business called Creative Care. Its focus is to help seniors access whatever services they need to remain independent. This

might include monitoring medication, acting as advocates when dealing with agencies, providing education and offering counselling when it comes time to make changes. Planning for the business began in August of 1994. The team has developed a five-year business plan and is beginning to advertise their new business in the community.

The opportunity to start their own business has provided these women with a time of personal growth.

Betty learned from this opportunity to follow where life is leading. The clowning business "fell into our laps and we ran with it," she says. "It's wonderful to be able to be creative and to enjoy what I am doing."

Now clowning has led to a chance to write and deliver singing telegrams. "God leads you through, this way and that. To go with the flow is not a bad thing."

Betty recently did a presentation about clowning at Career Day in her children's school. "The whole point of my presentation was, when life throws you a curve, go with it."

Accepting the challenge that opportunity presents has been an area of growth for Trudy. "It's difficult taking risks," she says. "I don't think anyone likes to fail at anything but with a business you have to take risks."



Dorothy Froese

Trudy is furthering her business venture through a correspondence course—Gardening, Horticulture and Design—from the University of Guelph. Has all the effort been worth it? Trudy thinks so. "You shouldn't be afraid of trying. So much can be accomplished in our lives if we're not afraid of that."

Even though her nursing business is still at the beginning stage, Dorothy has already learned that you need a big vision to do something like this on your own. "You need to know where your passions are and see what you really like doing."

After that it's important to find strength in support from family, friends and faith in God. "This is something that I have prayed over for a long time—where my career might be, where my future lies. I thank God in advance for what I know he's going to do in my life. Sometimes when Ellen and I have been frustrated by the timing of things, we sit down and pray together. Then somewhere down the road we realize that the timing was perfect—we couldn't have planned it better."

Taking up a challenging business opportunity can sometimes seem more like a wild roller coaster ride than a clear road to success. There are always many unexpected twists and turns to deal with, but for these three Winnipeg women, the ride means that a new phase of life is underway. And with their courage and faith, it looks like success is on the horizon.

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with its extravagant descriptions, invites the reader of Proverbs to probe by asking a more profound question. Who then can be wise?

The answer lies in "the fear of the LORD." The truly wise one, especially this "strong woman," is the one who humbly recognizes human limitations and who knows that all that is has been a gift. She therefore combines passion for discovery and exploration of God's good world with a commitment to offer wholeness, health and restoration to all relationships, with God, people and the earth. This truly is a life worthy to be praised.

Gordon Matties is an Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Concord College. He and his life partner, Lori, have two children. They attend River East MB Church, Winnipeg.

Lorie Battershill is a Winnipeg freelance writer. She and her family attend the Grace Lutheran Church, Winnipeg.

Tea with a Mission

by Agnes Dyck

Rose Lane Heritage House and Tea Room, situated on the edge of Rosenort, is a faith project begun by Mrs. Mary Friesen who saw an opportunity and felt that something could be done about it. Of its beginnings Mary Friesen comments, "We just leaped in with both feet and we've dealt with problems as they occurred."

The house at 31 Rose Lane has always been in the community. The original home was built in 1910 by Peter K. Goossen who raised thirteen children in it. Randall Goossen, grandson of the original owner, happened to be visiting the tea room with his sweet-faced Holdeman family on the day we arrived for lunch. He told us that his uncle George and aunt Sadie were the last Goossen family occupants of the home. Aunt Sadie served as community chiropractor for many years.

Mary Friesen, whose enjoyment is interior design, felt that the home was exactly the kind of house she had always dreamed of restoring. With the help of the community, the Friesens put up the initial funding, moved the house, renewed the foundation, painted and decorated. Visitors can now enjoy a bright, clean tea room when they arrive for lunch.

Two years ago, the Rosenort Housing Board, although they preferred to sell the property to a resident of Rosenort, were negotiating with an outsider. However, when they discovered that Mary was interested they gave her three days to decide.

Initially, Mary did not want leadership responsibility for this project because of her inexperience. Feeling very uncertain she "put out a fleece, so to speak" while on a long walk: "Lord, if this is your will for me and the com-

munity, by the time I get home, I want to have complete peace." When she returned home she was flooded with assurance that this was the way to go.

The participants in the tea room project are delighted with the way the tea room has been accepted. A significant part of the enterprise is the sale of local handicrafts. Mary comments,



*Rose Lane Heritage House
and Tea Room*



Mary Friesen

"My greatest enjoyment is working with people who do the crafts." She had expected that older women would be the main contributors, but she has been surprised by the response from younger women. All creators contribute 25 percent of the proceeds back into community projects, perhaps a senior housing complex, offering higher level health care to meet the community's needs. All tea room staff are paid employees.

A committee has formulated a statement of "Pledges and Goals" which include:

[We pledge] to always open our meetings with prayer, asking God for his infinite wisdom and guidance....

We are dedicated to using this project to celebrate our community, bringing together our many talents and personalities, with love and acceptance.

To uncover hidden talents in both young and old, and to encourage the priceless gift of creative art and craft....

To help develop appreciation for our past, for tradition....

To help support business in the community so that we can remain economically healthy.

Lunch at the Rose Lane Heritage House and Tea Room usually consists of a choice of homemade soup with wonderful bread and dessert baked on the premises. The atmosphere is relaxed and homey, and the service friendly. If you are lucky, multigrain bread, fresh from the oven, will be on sale for you. For reservations call (204) 746-6196.

Agnes Dyck is a member of the editorial collective of Sophia.

A Daughter in the Family Business

by Lois Fast

Tamara Fast has been with Willmar Windows since January 1992. She currently has responsibilities in two areas. As Marketing Coordinator, she is responsible for coordinating advertising and promotions for Willmar Windows, for both the Canadian and United States markets, and for coordinating some 28 home shows in Canada each year. Last year alone she was on the road 38 percent of the year. Second, she is the sales manager for southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, with the responsibility of motivating people who report directly to her.

At the age of eight, Tamara begged her father for a summer job. Her first job at Chemcrest Corporation — cleaning moulds for reuse — lasted two weeks and paid fifty cents an hour. She continued working a couple of weeks each summer at either Willmar Windows or Chemcrest, until the age of fifteen. Working with employees in the plant during the summers was a valuable learning experience for her. This is where she came to admire the respect her father had for his employees.

At the age of eighteen Tamara moved to Australia for approximately three years and worked in student and staff positions with Youth With A Mission.

Tamara grew up in a Christian business family and her father was a great example of a Christian business person. Employees and clients

were, and are, treated with respect and dignity at the work place and in their home. Tamara, however, swore she would never make a career of working at Willmar Windows even though it was made clear to her she would always be welcome. Working in the family business was something she never considered seriously.



Tamara Fast

The year 1991, however, proved to be a turning point in her life. Her younger brother, Willie Fast, died in early February from leukemia. Also, 1991 was a year of a difficult economic recession. She could see the struggle her father was having just to work. Tamara decided to join the business as a moral support to him. Within three days of joining Willmar Windows, Tamara found it an incredible place

to work and couldn't stay away. She literally fell in love with the business!

Working in a Christian environment meant there was help in dealing with ethical issues and Tamara is grateful for the Christian support she has at the office. Being female in a male dominated environment can prove to be very interesting. More often than not

Tamara is the only woman at sales meetings. There are only two women in the sales staff of thirty. She also works with a number of lumber dealers where women in ownership or management are the minority. Being a female has its benefits according to Tamara. Women bring a different perspective to problem situations, and therefore, can reach solutions in a different manner from men.

When asked if she had any hobbies, she mentioned the volunteer work she does with the

numerous boards she is affiliated with. She is a member of the Winnipeg 2000 Young Leaders Committee, the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), Concord College Board, and the Young Associates (University of Manitoba).

Through her work with MEDA, Tamara recently had the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua as part of the MEDA Trade mission. Here she was inspired by the persistence and

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Ms. Clean

by Linda Penner

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tenacity of women to provide for their families through businesses of their own.

As a Concord Board member, she recently visited Lithuania Christian College in Lithuania. She was also one of a group of eighteen North American business people who travelled to east Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities visiting with Palestinian business people and politicians. She enjoys the opportunity to learn about and be involved with people outside of business, and considers it a privilege to meet people from around the world.

Tamara has made it her goal to treat people, whatever their age, sex or race, the same way her father does, with respect and dignity.

Lois Fast attends McIvor Avenue MB Church with her husband and two children. She was for many years in charge of circulation for Sophia.

If it were possible, would you relinquish housework for good? Somehow the lion's share of domestic chores seems to fall on the woman's shoulders, and unless you're the type who really loves it, you may be looking for an out. Why haven't you hired a maid? Is it pride? Is it the old "why pay someone to do something I can do myself" rationale? Or do you think it'll be too costly? Maybe you're a person who gets up at the crack of dawn to clean the house hours before the maid is due, so the maid won't think you're a slob. For women who can no longer keep up a harried juggling act, hiring a professional to clean the house regularly is a safeguard against going bezerk.

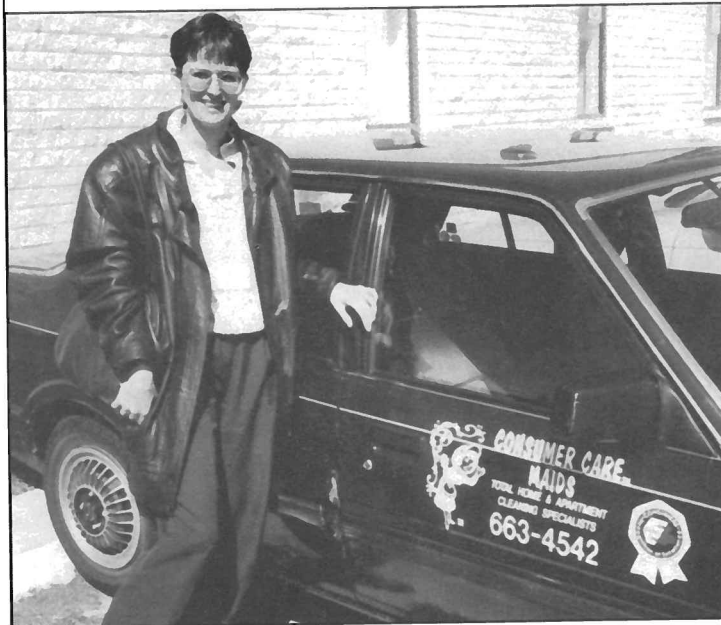
Having a maid and being one are two very different things. Linda Wiebe came to know this during a tour of duty as a missionary in South America. The demanding lifestyle placed her family in the unique posi-

tion of hiring a full-time housekeeper. During this five-and-a-half year period, Linda, Herb and their two sons saw the art of housekeeping from the other side. In Central/South America, it's not decadent to have a maid. A busy schedule and the time required for shopping the markets often make it essential. The Wiebes learned to become astute in the practice of hiring a domestic. Still, there were down sides to having a stranger who cooked, cleaned, melted and broke utensils and dishes. Linda took the good and the bad in stride and made mental notes of the qualities she least and most enjoyed.

Now settled in Winnipeg with her husband and two teenage sons—till there's enough money saved for further seminary studies—Linda has used her experience to benefit her new business. Ads in the local paper indicated a need for maids. She placed her own advertisement and was surprised

and disappointed at the lack of response. What had changed in the decade or so since her mother had independently started her own cleaning business?

Security, for one. No longer are strangers entrusted with a key to a home unless they're linked with a bonded, insured company. Linda researched existing cleaning companies and joined the one whose policies matched her own strict code of ethics.



Linda Wiebe ready for business

Consumer Care Maids was thrilled to have her. Likewise, Linda was thrilled with the long list of clients the company had to offer. Within a few short months, Linda was able to pay off the start-up loan from the bank that had enabled her to purchase her own franchise. There are no shortages of clients because, as Linda knows from experience, a good maid is hard to find.

Linda's own home bears the stamp of a godly, organized, clean woman. Her high standards are a direct result of her faith as a practising Christian. When she goes out to clean, Christian witness is on display. In many ways, a missionary and a maid are similar: both serve in humility, and both strive to bring order to a disrupted environment.

Linda is reliable. On days she's feeling ill or has run out of time to complete a job properly, she simply finishes up what she can and leaves a

note of explanation assuring the client satisfaction on the next visit. Her clients value her frank, up-front approach.

She always insists that the owner of the house walk her through it on the first visit, with clear instructions: what brand of cleaners to use and what to leave untouched even if it begs for scouring.

She never snoops. She avoids drawers and closets, leaving folded laundry on the beds.

She brings her own food and drink. She never assumes what's on the counter is meant for her.

Linda is bonded and insured, yet she still takes it upon herself to replace anything she accidentally breaks, something her maid in Bogota would never have done.

Pets can appear threatening at first, but amazingly (Guardian Angel?) even dobermans warm to her.

Good things happen, such as

finding things that have been lost for years. Linda says she never needs to consult an interior decorator for tips; her clients' homes provide ample inspiration. The generous Christmas gifts and bonuses received from her clients demonstrate to Linda how much they trust and value her.

Sure, you can put in a day at the office, pick up the kids, make a pit-stop for take-out food, throw a load into the dryer, vacuum, dust, scour. But maid service is affordable. Why not eliminate the pressures of routine demands of home?

On the other hand, if you're a Linda Wiebe prototype, her District Manager can verify that there's a long list of clients waiting for you.

Linda Penner is a mother of two children. She and her husband, Gerry, attend the Peace Lutheran Church in Winnipeg.

MISSION STATEMENT

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 expressions 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 dealings with women and men. "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33)

A Journey to India

by Melody Goetz

If only I could talk with them more, these women dressed in bright colours like tropical birds, laughing behind their veils. One old woman pulls me into her home, shows me where she sleeps; I stand dumb in the dimly lit dirt room, wanting to ask her something, but I can't imagine what—our lives are so different. She calls her grandson, they line up beside the mud hut, asking me to stay, to take one more picture.

I'm travelling with a small group of farmers and donors to India and Bangladesh to see how food donated through the organization I work for, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is being used to improve peoples' lives. I'm also looking forward to meeting the people—both the people who program the food (mostly MCC staff) and those who receive it—so that when I sit behind my computer at work, I see more than statistics, I see faces. I am looking for a connection.

The distance between my home in Winnipeg and the places we visit in South Asia is vast—not only in miles but also in ways of being, ways of relating. I want the impossible—to pull aside the

veil of culture, distance and lifestyle and simply talk as one person to another.

...an MCC/women's papermaking/marbling project in southern Bangladesh (with markets in Europe, North America, Japan). I speak through a translator to one woman who tells me her husband was paralysed, unable to work, how one night their home was washed into the river, leaving them destitute. She'd been

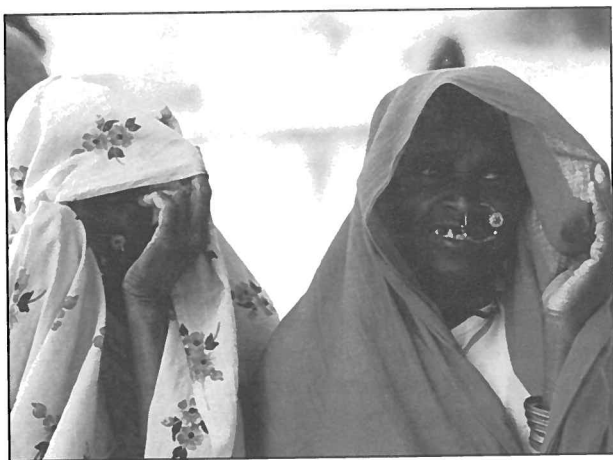
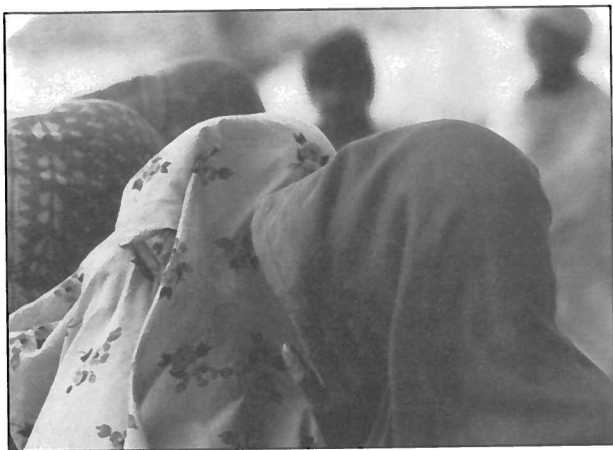
working in a biscuit factory, barely able to provide enough food for her family. She'd heard about this papermaking project, applied and was accepted to work; now she's able to afford healthcare and schooling for herself and her family. I try to imagine her life. I cannot.

...a women's shelter in Calcutta, supported with wheat and milk powder; here, the women make tablecloths, bedspreads, placemats. We're told many are the victims of dowry abuse, divorce. We are instructed not to ask them about their past. We exchange smiles; I feel foreign.

...in Rajistan, peacocks cross the road in front of our car, everywhere an exotic desert feel. We turn off the highway onto a winding dusty road, and here, with food as a wage/incentive, women in brightly coloured saris are dredging out the bottom of a dugout so it will collect a year's worth of monsoon rains—before it held only enough water for four months. One aging woman, openly curious, runs her hands all over a woman in our group; we laugh about it later. Was she thinking, like us, "are you like me?"

What is my connection to these women who live such desperate/disparate lives? Right now, I do not know. It is painful to imagine them as being like me, having the same fears and desires. For then their lives in one way are wretched—millions of them—and I cannot bear that; yet their lives cannot be measured only in terms of poverty....

...a women's meeting in a tiny mud hut in a small tribal village. On a table is incense, an oil wick lamp, a bowl of marigolds and dark red roses. We sit on benches at one end; at the other end, light shines through a window onto women in white saris. Incredibly,



in the space of two years, this small group of women has convinced the government to bring electricity and a literacy program to the village, has also bought a paddy thresher for rice which provides community income. The women read a poem they've written together about how women and men are both made in God's image, thus they want to be respected in the same way they respect their men. One older woman stands up and sings a song about thinking of others before yourself. When they insist on hearing from the women in our group, we tell them we see their strength and can learn from them; after the meeting is over, they crowd around and want to know so much about us.

...at one project, the women walk with us down the road to the next village—one woman making up many songs and the others then echoing each phrase back. They pick pod-like vegetables growing alongside the road, shell them and then give them to us (they roll like fresh green pearls in our hands, taste like a cross between a chickpea and a green pea—good!). We eat some, and give some to the children; we have no language but our own, but we are walking down this road together, laughing, eating, sharing our food. That is the closest it gets, that is the closest it ever gets.

Coming home, I get my pictures developed; the photos that move me most are the ones where two Rajistani women gave me two images—the first veiled, as the world sees them—then, laughing, they pulled the veils away from their faces to see me better, for me to see them.

Melody Goetz is a Winnipeg writer who works full-time for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an interchurch agency that collects and ships donated grain worldwide on behalf of 12 major Canadian church groups, including MCC. She attends Grain of Wheat Church.

Anna Rieger at the Blackboard

by Jean Janzen

As her stickmen warred
on the chalk-green hills,
her body swayed from army to army.

Gideon blew his trumpet
and with one swish of the eraser,
thousands fell, and her crepe dress

shivered. Her blue chalk
in a side-swoop taught us grace,
Moses' water cascading

out of a rock-struck-right.
Once in the girls' room,
we found her bent over,

brushing her hair, all tumbled
now out of its bun.
When she lifted herself up

to the mirror, her face
was flushed and strong.
Her comb held high,

she parted the brown silk and caught
it again, pushed the door open
with one full hip, and entered

the crowded halls. And we followed,
girls and boys, as on both sides
the sea walls stood
clear and bright and quivering.

(previously published in *Cincinnati Poetry Review*)

In Search of that Elusive One Great Idea

by Doreen Martens

People who know me well are aware that a good sense of timing is not my strong suit. While catching my breath after sprinting from the parking lot into the church committee meeting, I explain that I was born twenty minutes late and have been running behind ever since. So, blame it on the obstetrician.

At long last, I'm forced to admit that my long-suffering husband, who impressed prospective employers and annoyed hostesses by arriving fifteen minutes early for every event in his life until the day I entered the picture, may be right about promptness being next to godliness. At least, it may be next to successfulness.

Like many women, I've sometimes dreamed about becoming an entrepreneur. Being my own boss. Doing my own thing. Being ahead of my time—if only I could catch up to it first.

What's lacking is the One Great Idea that would make it all happen. Like the woman who got fed up with buying nice pumps only to have the lifts fall off or be ground to a shredded pulp a week or two later. She hated the high cost of those itty bitty pieces of rubber and (I imagine) the smug look on the face of the shoe-repair guy as he glued them on again. And again.

So she came up with her One Great Idea; a set of various-sized lifts, packaged together with glue, so that women could repair their own shoes—at a fraction of the cost. She peddled the idea to various companies, but the executives (all men, of course, and wearers of big flat heels with longevity that would shame a blacksmith) just didn't get it. That is, until she went out and did some research with actual shoe-wearing women, who heralded her idea as the best

*Like many women,
I've sometimes dreamed
about becoming an
entrepreneur.*



invention since toaster waffles. And as fast as you can say, "Man, I hate cheap pantyhose," she was in business.

Over the years, I've come up with various One Great Ideas, but none ever quite worked out. Recently I cooked one up with a friend from work.

Patty's a fine editor, but having been brought up in a big, happy, Baptist family in Arkansas, she's also a fabulous Southern cook who enjoys sharing her kitchen's bounty with the ever-grateful gang at the office. One afternoon, we were chortling, rather ungraciously, about a co-worker whose idea of home-baked cookies is splitting open a tube and slicing the contents onto a baking sheet. Oh well, I told Patty, I suppose we should take into account the fact that not everyone has the training, interest or time to achieve better. It's a shame some people have to be content with such inferior products just to experience the pleasure of a warm cookie now and then.

"That's true," Patty said, recalling how a colleague years ago used

to pay her to make up batches of her best recipes so she could take the dough home and bake cookies without the fuss of actually blending the ingredients.

We looked at each other for a long moment. Suddenly we woke up and smelled the chocolate chips. Hey! Why not make a better dough—yeah, that's it, a GOURMET cookie dough. What a brilliant idea for our own business! People won't have to go to the mall for a fancy cookie, they'll be able to pluck it from the freezer. Eat it raw if they like. Bake cookies in the dead of the night. Impress the kids in the neighbourhood. Make it all into one cookie so big they'll be saying, "I can't believe she baked the whole thing." It's a thoroughly original idea whose time has come, we told ourselves happily, forgetting that we are both, alas, among the chronologically impaired.

For two weeks we plotted and schemed. We considered flavours, thought about which recipes to test, considered a marketing plan. We dreamed up slogans, pondered which of our graphic designer friends would work on the packaging. We were as good as in business until the fateful morning when, sad-faced, Patty arrived at work with bad news.

"I was in the freezer section at the grocery store this morning, and guess what I saw. Mrs. Field's gourmet cookie dough!" she wailed.

Aaaack! Twenty minutes late with a good idea – again.

Neither of us could recall having seen that product advertised or sold before. And what made us feel even worse was the fact that our idea had been usurped by the woman who made kitchen entrepreneurship something to be reckoned with, the

(continued on page 15)

Letters

TRAVELLING EASY

You continue to delight and prod us with much food for thought. The Fall 1994 issue celebrating artists was wonderfully inspiring. The previous Spring/Summer 1994 issue, Travelling Light, was also excellent.

I found it particularly poignant since last year my husband and I spent seven weeks in Asia and later five weeks in Europe visiting MCC and church partners and projects. We tried to dispel stereotypical images of the overloaded American consumer. It was possible, even preferable, to travel with only carry-on luggage to be claimed. Life was much easier when we had to walk distances or when we had to fit our bags into small three wheeled "taksis" for two passengers. In many ways the trip was a transforming experience for which we are very grateful.

Keep up the good work.

*Gudrun Matthies
Elmira, Ontario*

(continued from page 14)

multimillionaire queen of the mall cookie shops who started out baking fancy cookies in her home oven. Now, she even has her own cookbook, for pity's sake. Undeniably, Mrs. Fields is a woman with good timing. And I'll bet she's never found herself pleading for mercy at the dental receptionist's desk at 3:45 when the appointment was for 3:15.

Well, some of us are destined to strike when the iron is hot, and the rest of us to experience wrinkles. I guess I'll just keep waiting for the One Great Idea to occur to me—before it occurs to someone else. But I suspect the next batch of cookies I make will be just a tad bittersweet.

Doreen Martens is a regular columnist for Sophia who lives and works in California. Her submission for this issue was definitely not twenty minutes late.

STRUGGLING

I do enjoy receiving Sophia magazine; discovering Mennonite feminist women exist, and that some of them even produce a magazine, was very exciting.

Our local church is just beginning to struggle with women's issues. Whereas in the past women could presumably have served on council, at this point existing council feels women have absolutely no place in leadership. MB policy seems to carry little weight around here.

I have just read Gender and Grace by Van Leeuwen (thanks to a book review in Sophia) and passed it on to a council member.

*Betty Neufeld
Black Creek, BC*

LIMITED SUCCESS

Just a quick note to send along with this literature from the Ligionier Ministries of Canada: The Teaching Fellowship of R.C. Sproul. [Includes list of theologians, all male].

Perhaps with your network, you would be able to supply leads to finding Christian women scholars.

I remember 30 years ago similar questions [where are the women?] were asked about artists/musicians. We have seen the limited degree of success of our nation's affirmative action program. As a life-time polio survivor, it's a joke, as I see it. Somehow the Esthers, Deborahs, Lydias and Dorcases were women who inspired many of us to aspire to leadership such as they showed in their day and circumstances.

I include a copy of "Living in Two Worlds," my research project that came out of 23 years of prison advocacy and military concerns. I need a network to promote the findings from Labrador to coastal B.C.

*Hilda Dahl
Victoria, B.C.*

*For further information about Hilda Dahl's research, readers may contact her at
101-1063 Foul Bay Road
Victoria, B.C. V8S 4J3.*

Letter from Nigeria

Dora Maendel interviewed her friend, **Judith Kleinsasser**, who recently spent several months in Nigeria. From this interview, Dora composed a letter as Judith might have written it.

Palmgrove Community
Abak-Abak, Nigeria
January 20, 1995

Dear Dora:

What a wonderful surprise to find your letters in my room as I returned from a swim in the stream late this afternoon! Thank you!

It is three months since we came to Nigeria and it seems impossible that we'll be returning to Manitoba next month. Leaving Winnipeg on October 17, flying via Amsterdam and arriving at Lagos two days later, was like sailing straight into a Manitoba summer, only here they call it the dry season, Hamattan. Days are hot, dusty and dry; nights and mornings cool. People actually suffer from colds, sore throat and cough. Wearing bulky sweaters all forenoon, they're chilly when we're most comfortable!



Dora Maendel with friend

Do I feel at home here, you ask, and the answer is yes, primarily because of the children. Upon arrival, when one is still struggling to orient oneself, along comes a moving mass of smiling faces and children's voices repeating, "Welcome!" over and over. I forget when I first became aware of a little hand in mine, but it's part of being here. Even now when they see me, I'm given one of their peerless smiles and a warm "Welcome!" Ironically, these "welcomes" are my only reminder that I'm not home.

I miss my children, of course, especially the four younger ones, but I also know they're in good hands with David and Anna. My accompanying Ed was contingent upon finding someone to stay with our family. It was almost time to start taking our shots and we still hadn't found anyone; then David and Anna volunteered.

Remember the spring of 1992 when we celebrated the successful completion of the second year of our Church History course with Dr. Epp at the University of Winnipeg? Ben Vetter of Baker Colony read a report he'd just received from Palmgrove, a Nigerian Hutterite colony newly-founded at that time. Next to speak was the new German consultant, Rupert Barensteiner, who surprised us all by his warm and enthusiastic response. He told us what a pleasure it had

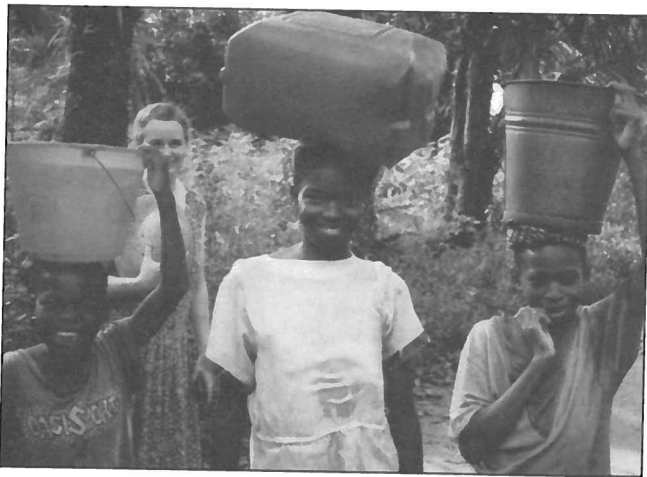
been to visit Hutterite colonies and get acquainted, because he felt right at home among us due to our German origins. He praised the expertise, efficiency and wholesomeness of what he'd seen. Something that saddened him deeply, however, was the fact that he saw absolutely no evidence that these spiritual, economic and human resources were being shared with others. Christians should be known for sharing, he concluded.

When Ed responded to the Church's call to serve in Palmgrove I was ready also, deeply grateful for the chance to devote a few months to sharing and expressing God's love with these brothers and sisters. Despite anxiety over how I would handle the heat, I wanted to be there,

helping as much as possible, and it has been a truly rewarding experience. Inno Idiong, one of the Nigerian founders of Palmgrove who first made contact with the Hutterian Brethren Church, spent many weeks in our home in 1988 and we came to love him as family. He still has a very strong vision for his community and his tireless zeal brings to mind the indefatigability of our forefather, Jacob Hutter.

Our diet is simple: beans, yam, rice and garri at noon and supper; bread and peanut butter, no jam or honey, as well as a banana or orange for breakfast. Our garden needs to produce more vegetables in addition to the pumpkin and water leaves grown now. Some of my most enjoyable times include watering the garden.

Would you believe the People's Republic of China donated four old-time sewing machines? We repair a lot of clothes because it's expensive to pay a tailor in town for such jobs.



Judith Kleinsasser with friends

Another chore we spend hours and hours at is processing palm fruit. The flesh is removed from the seed, cooked and pressed for the saleable, edible oil. Most of our efforts, especially Ed's and Inno's, are to make Palmgrove self-sufficient. Building the chicken barn brings this dream closer to reality, since eggs and chickens are a food source as well as sale product.

You know, Dora, I never realized how much there is to appreciate in our organized work system where we sisters work together and tasks are divided fairly, including all the different departments we pair off in, such as

cooking and baking. I took so much for granted all my life, especially what I now see as a proven organized work-sharing method where all learn the practical things involved in community living, such as kitchen, gardening, cleaning, sewing, and housework.

I often wish you were here with us and I hope some day you can come. I know you will feel torn as I do between teaching the children in school and working with the women in the different departments. I look forward to telling you all about this experience in greater detail; at the same time I want to stay because the need here is so much greater, and we are leaving many unfinished tasks.

Warm greetings and much love,
Judith

Dora Maendel lives at Fairholme Colony where she teaches German and English at Fairholme School. More recently her high-school English classes via teleconferencing have included students in other colonies.

Judith Kleinsasser lives at Crystal Spring Colony, St. Agathe, MB, where her husband, Ed, is assistant minister. Together they teach German School and supervise the Essenschul (children's dining room). They have five boys and two girls, aged 8 to 21.

Affirmed in Ministry: An Interview

Less than a year ago I walked down the aisle of our church in my wedding dress. The wedding was quite typical: beautiful flowers, a handsome bridal party and pleasant music. However, one aspect of the wedding surprised most of the guests: the sermon was preached by the groom's mother! At the reception a curious guest asked my new mother-in-law: "So, since when have women been accepted as pastors in Holland?" He was a little shocked when she replied: "1911."

I interviewed my mother-in-law, Christine Duhoux-Rueb, about the history of women and the Mennonite church here in the Netherlands.

Joanne Duhoux-DeFehr: Why were women accepted as pastors in the Netherlands so much earlier than in most of the western world?

Christine Duhoux-Rueb: While in North America women struggling to be accepted as pastors are usually connected in some way with the feminist movement, feminism did not even exist at the time the first woman became pastor in a Mennonite church. The movement here did not have the same characteristics of modern day feminism. It is better described as an emancipation movement. At the turn of the century, middle- and upper-class women who were a part of a movement called "suffragette," demanded the right to vote and brought women's rights to the attention of the public. They fought for better working conditions for women and addressed the issue of poverty. It was at this time that women entered the universities and became actively involved in politics, medicine and theology.

Dr. Annie Mankes Zernike was the first woman to become a pastor in the Netherlands, and the first church to allow this was the Mennonite church. What makes her entrance into the church interesting is not that the church said, "Yes, we will make an exception and accept you." It is interesting because no one objected.

Since then many women have become Mennonite pastors in the Netherlands. About half of the Mennonite pastoral roles are shared by women.

JDD: Were there any problems with acceptance within the Mennonite church?

CDR: No! In fact, female pastors within the Mennonite church are also accepted in other churches. For example, the Christian Reformed and Dutch Reformed churches have invited me to preach. Even churches that don't accept female pastors within their own church accept female pastors from the Mennonite church. I once preached at a Roman Catholic church and took communion together with the priest at the front of the church.

JDD: Were there hindrances in the past for female pastors?

CDR: Double standards. At the turn of the century women wanted to go

to university, but couldn't for the simple reason that they had restroom facilities only for the men. Once they fought that battle and won they were faced with the conflict between their new professional role and their 'natural' role as mother and wife. Educated women with jobs were expected to leave their careers when they started a family.

I did not encounter any of those difficulties. My generation was different. Family roles are not as set today as they were when women first entered the ministry. However, the assumption that 'pastoring is a male profession' is one of my biggest hindrances, especially outside of the Netherlands. When I tell some people that I am a pastor, for example in Africa or in the United States, they



Christine Duhoux-Rueb

with Christine Duhoux Rueb

by Joanne Duhoux-DeFehr

automatically assume that my husband is also a pastor. He is an engineer.

JDD: Did acceptance of women pastors require the congregations to study the Scriptures pertaining to women?

CDR: No. In my experience, Paul's letters have often been used to 'put women in their place.' Within the Mennonite church here there seems to be general agreement and understanding of the letters. They are viewed as personal letters addressing certain questions and problems in an individual church. We do not even know the questions or problems Paul is addressing. Paul has many good things to say and gave instruction, but many of his instructions are not universal. Besides, there are many other passages in the Bible that liberate women. The fact that Jesus was a man has never been used against women in the ministry.

JDD: How has feminism affected the Mennonite church in the Netherlands?

CDR: Actually, there is not a strong feminist group among Mennonite pastors. Because women have been accepted into the traditional theological setting, the need for women's theology did not seem as pressing. In fact, many other more conservative churches in the Netherlands have much stronger feminist groups.

Feminist theology is becoming more accepted, but as it grows stronger so does the conservative opposition. Feminism is viewed by some as a threat. A good example of this is the reaction of my professor to my thesis. I wrote my thesis on a feminist theme. My professor's reaction to the thesis was positive, with the exception that he felt a little left out.

JDD: What led you to become a pastor?

CDR: I never set out to be a pastor. I have taught Sunday school ever since I was fifteen, but haven't always liked the material. I started to write my own Sunday school material and soon it became so popular that many other Sunday school groups asked for it. At that point I decided I needed formal theological education. I was thirty years old when I entered the Nederlands Bijbel Institute, a four-year part-time program. After I completed this I worked as one of the pastors in a Mennonite congregation while attending the Mennonite Seminary in Amsterdam. Since then I

have been pastor in several churches.

I am also involved in the Council of Churches in the department of education and with an organization called Women, Church and Society. Within the Mennonite church I am part of the Feminist Theology group and am active in promoting youth activities. One of these activities is the International Youth Conference held every year in Croningen.

JDD: In what way did you personally experience the affirmation and calling of the church as you moved into pastoral ministry?

CDR: My experience as a pastor and everything leading up to this position in the church is a result of constant affirmation. I never set out to be a pastor. The church kept giving me more responsibility and opportunities to be involved, so that the step to become a pastor was totally natural. It was only once I had become a pastor that I realized that this is how I can use my talents best. I found my past training tremendously useful as a pastor. Everything from drawing classes and my studies to be a translator to my experience as a mother. I am also very thankful for my experience as an MCC trainee in Elkhart, Indiana, working at a mental hospital. I have an interest in people and I love working with youth and children. It just feels right!

It is interesting to look back to my wedding day and recall some of the guests' reactions to the ceremony. I remember one reaction in particular: "If women preach this well, I would not mind having a female pastor in my church." Not all of the guests shared this view but what most of them did share was the experience of hearing a feminist message for the first time.

Joanne Duhoux-DeFehr lives with her husband in Delft, the Netherlands, and studies theology at the Netherlands Bijbel Institute in Utrecht. Joanne has also studied two years at Goshen College and one year at Capernwray Bible School in Sweden. She is originally from Winnipeg where she attended the Eastview Community Church.

Women's Network Conference: A Dialogue that Leads to Transformation

by Carmen Pauls

A birthing has begun, a celebration of unity is unfolding. Silence is being replaced with naming, forgiving, healing. We are no longer slaves but whole people, neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female—a radical process of transformation.

On February 17-18, 1995, the MB Women's Network hosted its first conference, entitled "Healing and Discipleship: A Conference for Women and Men." Its roots stem back nearly two years, to the General Conference of MB Churches in July 1993, when the proposed recommendation to allow individual churches to decide whether to have women in senior pastoral ministry was defeated. The defeat led to a gathering at Fort Garry MB Church in October 1993, in which the assembled persons decided to establish an ad hoc committee and to organize a conference. I was there, as a nineteen-year-old college student, hearing the passionate, angry, resigned, thoughtful, excited voices of women and men. There was a recognition of the need for education for everyone, and an assertion that the issue was one of power, in which men and women struggle together.

And thus in February 1995 a conference was hosted, having been shaped by these desires—to integrate the hurt and frustration aroused by this one conference decision into a more inclusive and future-oriented vision of women's and men's experiences in the church. The conference gathered more than one hundred people to celebrate this vision through

worship, workshops, conversation and the words of Dr. Lydia Harder, one of Canada's only recognized female Mennonite theologians.

Dr. Harder took on the conference theme of healing and discipleship in conjunction with her own journey with the stories in the Gospel of Mark. She, like many women, had begun in the middle of the story, with the disciples. She believed that her position was to serve, to bow to the needs of others, to follow the way of the cross. Yet what needed to be captured first was the beginning of Mark's Gospel, where Jesus empowered those who came to him. Women often forget that self-denial comes after acceptance and wholeness. After that we are empowered to speak, even to challenge standards and norms, as the Syrophenician woman did in challenging Jesus to heal her daughter, and as the bleeding woman did in ignoring the crowd and daring to touch Jesus in order to be healed. Dr. Harder challenged us to name ourselves, as disciples, as healed persons seeking encounters with others and with Jesus.

I have recently learned that the root of "discipleship" is to be a student. It is to recognize that we are changing and learning even while we are following. What this conference gave is not a static view of right versus wrong, good versus evil, but a starting point, an occasion for dialogue that educates us all. The workshops and worship presented the

stories of men and women, from the Bible, from church history and from among our co-learners in the present. They examined our naming of God, our struggle for reconciliation and our views of feminism and the Bible from diverse angles, reflecting the evolving nature of our experience. They engaged us in dialogue, and so we learned. We as Christians do have a common ground, and that is our commitment to following the way of Christ. As Dr. Harder stated, "We walk together, and it is on that journey that we can have dialogue."

It is in that dialogue, in hearing one another's voices, perhaps for the first time, that transformation can take place. As a song from the new MB hymnal expresses it, we will find the gracious power of God that "tumbles walls of fear," and opens us to the "persistent truth that opens fisted minds and eases from their anxious clutch the prejudice that binds." And to that I say, Amen.

Carmen Pauls graduated this spring from Concord College and the University of Winnipeg, where she studied theology/biblical studies and education. Her home is in Regina.

GET A LIFE!

A Report on the 29th Annual Manitoba MB Women's Conference

by Ruth Klippenstein



Irma Epp



MB Women's Conference

Approximately 400 women filled Winnipeg's Westwood Community church on Saturday, April 8, for the 29th annual MB Women's conference. They came to worship God, meet friends and learn new things under the theme "Get a Life! Living Faithfully as Women."

Beautiful singing, both by the congregation — led by the Westwood worship team — and by a women's octet from Concord College, set the tone for worship. Following a report by Women for MCC chair, Grace Krahn, an offering of \$3200 was gathered for an MCC soybean cooking project in Bangladesh, and for Simonhousse Bible Camp.

The highlight of the morning was Irma Epp's moving story of her life. She spoke of God's leading in her courtship and marriage, in her service as teacher and houseparent to 54 missionary children in Zaire, and after the accidental deaths of her husband and father, a tragedy which left her to raise two young sons alone. She told of studying at Tabor College, her second marriage, more service in Zaire, teaching at MBCI and her present role as assistant pastor at McIvor Avenue MB Church.

Her life has affirmed her belief that "with God's sustaining grace and help, we can dare to live in whatever situations we find ourselves." She encouraged women to be faithful in using the gifts and opportunities God has given them.

After a delicious brunch, prepared by Westwood members, women could choose from nine different workshops, on topics such as: how to make retirement count for something without overloading oneself; how to reduce, repair, reuse, reject and relax in order to "Live More with Less"; the danger and opportunity inherent in conflict; lives of Mennonite women martyrs of the 16th century. Other workshops focused on humour, friendship, finances and service.

A communion service, led by Irma Epp and Clara Toews, with lovely singing by Cynthia Ens, concluded the full day. We left the conference strengthened and encouraged to live faithfully, as the Lord requires.

Ruth Klippenstein, Portage Avenue MB, Winnipeg, teaches English as a second language.

The Bottom Line

by Jake Sudermann

When I graduated in 1954 with a degree in social work, every professor in that department was a woman and social work was a so-called women's profession or business. Don't think for a moment that my male friends didn't remind me of that many times, particularly in the fifties.

After graduation I never once worked under a male supervisor and only once was the head of the agency I worked for, a man. After a few years I became an executive director and ended my "work for pay" life responsible for at least \$75,000,000 worth of assets, an annual operating budget of \$8.5 million and a staff of 125 people representing 5 different professions.

Although the facility I managed was non-profit, I always considered it to be a business enterprise, a view not necessarily shared even by my male friends.

When I hired my managerial staff, I almost always hired women. Why did I hire women? Very simply, I hired the best from all the résumés on my desk. For the accountant's position I also hired the best; this invariably turned out to be a man.

In my rich experience with women in business, the question I have often asked is "What's your bottom line?" It's a familiar question in the business world. But I'm not referring to the financial bottom line.

God challenges us in Luke 9:25 to look at our bottom line, the final accounting of how we have spent our lives: "What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?"

In the story of the talents, the master distributed five talents, two talents and one talent. Faithfulness in managing and using the talents was all he looked for.

Jake Suderman, former Executive Director of the Lions Club of Winnipeg Housing Centres and of the National Advisory Council on Aging, is retired but busy.

GLEANINGS

☛ The theme for this year's World Day of Prayer service, March 5, was "The earth is a house for all people." At the service in the North Kildonan MB Church, Winnipeg, speaker **Dora Dueck**, raised the questions: "What is home for the refugee?" and "What is journey for the one who has a home?" This year's program was written by women in Ghana.

☛ **Jean Janzen**, a Fresno, California, poet, received a National Endowment for the Arts grant in January, 1995. Her new collection, *Snake in the Parsonage*, will be released by Good Books this spring.

☛ Three of the artists featured in the fall issue of *Sophia* have had spring exhibitions of their work. Paintings by **Wanda Koop** were included in "Fractured Spaces," an exhibition of work by seventeen Manitoba artists on display at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. **Helene Dyck's** art installation, "The Medicine Chest Project" was also exhibited in the Winnipeg Art Gallery. **Heidi Koop's** paintings and pen and pencil drawings are on exhibit at the Heritage Centre (600 Shaftesbury) until July 15. The paintings are part of a project about Mennonite pioneers for which Heidi has interviewed 50 early residents of North Kildonan. She would welcome the opportunity to interview others (204 338-1879).

☛ **Dale Taylor** has been named Associate Executive Director for MCC Canada, beginning July 1995. Her duties will include coordinating MCC Canada's communication, development education, fundraising and Canadian programs activities. Taylor has been assistant professor of theology and director of student development at Concord College since 1991.

☛ After ten years as western regional editor for *The Mennonite Reporter*, *Sophia* board member **Wilma Derksen** is moving on, in July 1995, to work in real estate with Coldwell Banker Premiere Realty.

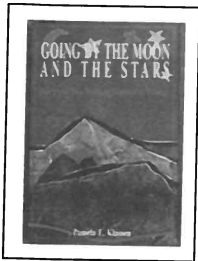
☛ At 89, **Katharina (Dyck) Ediger**, Kitchener, Ontario, completed *Under His Wings: Events in the Lives of Alexander Ediger and His Family*. This self-published book was translated into English by Mark Bachman, who is also helping to promote the book.

☛ **Gloria Neufeld Redekop** is still looking for: *Letters, Diaries and Stories for a History of Russian Mennonite Women's Experience in War, Famine and Immigration (1914-1930)*. Her address is:

5 Beddoe Lane
Gloucester, Ontario
K1B 3X9.

***Going by the Moon and the Stars:
Stories of Two Russian Mennonite Women,*
by Pamela E. Klassen. Wilfred University Press, 1994.**

Reviewed by Linda Matties



In *Going by the Moon and the Stars*, Pamela Klassen tells an important story. Following the lives of two women, Katja and Agatha, it is also a compound of Mennonite stories—the Canadian Mennonite church community and the Ukrainian Mennonites displaced by World War II. It is a story of women forced by circumstances to

be different, yet who long to fit in with what they think of as their religious and cultural heritage. The book is much more than just a story. It is also Klassen's analysis using the historical and feminist techniques of her profession.

The historical basis for the book is the experience of two Mennonite women who fled the Ukraine during World War II and came to Canada as refugees. People of German background who had lived in other countries for generations found themselves caught between loyalty to the land of their birth and their German heritage. Those who had already experienced the terror of Communism saw the German occupation as liberation. Blinded by propaganda, they were

unable, immediately, to recognize the evils of Naziism. Once the war ended, their greatest fear was being sent back to Russian territory. Pamela Klassen captures these confused sentiments and the fear and terror well.

Although Katja and Agatha are pseudonyms for the women Klassen actually interviewed, Mennonite readers of similar backgrounds will have no difficulty identifying the Agathas and Katjas of their acquaintance. They may even have heard their stories. Revisiting those stories with the help of Klassen's analytic technique will help them understand the horror, pain, fear and longing. They will also be forced to ask the hard questions about how the Canadian churches received these women and heard their stories.

The book is somewhat difficult to read because it moves from telling Katja's and Agatha's stories to Pamela's analysis and back again. This makes it more difficult to piece together the stories and remember the details. There is also a fair amount of repetition of facts and themes.

Klassen keeps coming back to the two women's reception in the Canadian church and their subsequent participation in it. She also refers repeatedly to the fact that the women in the Ukraine did not reopen the churches on their own because there were no men to give leadership. In these instances her personal feminist agenda conflicts with her desire to tell the women's stories as they experienced and interpreted them. It is as though by repeated visitation of the issue Klassen wants to provoke some kind of response from the women, perhaps even the church.

By combining the retelling of historical events with feminist ethnographic techniques, Klassen gives the Mennonite world a unique and important look at itself. The book deserves a place on the shelves of Mennonite schools and historical libraries. It should become required reading in classes on Mennonite history. It also deserves to be circulated among Mennonite women. They can learn from it how to tell and analyse their own stories. Those Mennonite churches who received post World War II refugees should use this book as a basis for self-examination of their own attitudes towards the stories of those women at that time as well as their acceptance of women today.

Linda Matties is a librarian in the public school system in British Columbia.

GLEANINGS

- **The Quiet in the Land?** was the name of a recent conference on "Women of Anabaptist Traditions in Historical Perspective," held June 8-11 in Millersville, Pennsylvania. See report in next issue of *Sophia*.
- The **MCC B.C. Board** recently withdrew its funding for an inter-Mennonite and Church of the Brethren conference for women entitled "Unity and Uniqueness in Christ." Support was withdrawn after local pastors threatened to withdraw financial support for MCC. The controversy focused on a liturgy written by one of the main speakers, **Dr. Elizabeth Tapia**, an ordained United Methodist minister who works in the Philippines. Conference planners say this is a case of inadequate information and cultural misunderstanding. The conference was held at Columbia Bible College on May 26 - 28.
- Congratulations and best wishes to *Sophia* designer **Lorie (Koop) Mayer** on her recent marriage to **Ralph Mayer**.

*A strong woman
who can find?*



*Strength and dignity
are her clothing,
and she laughs at the
time to come.*

*Proverbs 31:10a, 25
(NRSV, adapted)*