

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian



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No. 2 2014

MARTIN KLAASSEN (1820-1881) A Biography - by Walter Klaassen

Writing a biography is a perilous enterprise, perilous to the biographer and perilous to the subject.

The biographer intends to enter another time, and tries to shed light on another hidden Self. That Self is no longer able to reply to the biographer. The danger to both is that the biography will reveal more about the biographer than about his subject.

How is it possible to capture in writing a whole human life gone by? Only fragments of that life have survived. No personal diaries, no testimony of acquaintances reveal the totality of the paths taken, of the encounters with others, of the intentions, emotions, the successes and failures of that past Self. They cannot disclose the inner contradictions of a private Self. It is the biographer's obligation to enter imaginatively into the time and life of the subject. A biography by its very nature is always more than the sum of the sources used to reconstruct a life. The biographer himself must be a vigilant sentinel to insure that the "more" is not prejudice or favouritism. The readers will decide whether this biographer has followed his own rules.

[continue on page 4]



Martin Klaassen family circa 1870



Double-mint Issue:

Teaser: Start of the
Martin Klaassen Book

2 Book Reviews

2 Profiles

2 Tractor Inventors

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Editor: Ruth Marlene Friesen

Advisory Committee: Esther Patkau, Jake
Buhler, Verner Friesen, Jim Friesen, Elmer
Neufeld

Proof-readers: Verner Friesen, Jack Driedger,
Susan Braun, Linda Unger and Esther Patkau.

Distribution: Erna & Elmer Neufeld

Mailing List: Hilda Voth

Printer: ProPrint

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stories, articles, photographs, church
histories, etc., to MHSS at the e-mail or street
address below. For material related to a
particular topic or column page, please
contact the respective editors; see above for
contact information.

MHSS Office and Archives:

110 La Ronge Road, Room 900
Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8

Email: mhss@sasktel.net

Archive Hours:

Monday, 1:30 - 4 p.m.

Wednesday, 1:30 - 4 p.m. 7-9 p.m.

The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

My first issue of the
Historian, (in May) had a
steep learning curve for me.

This one is easier, but it
kept me very alert, concen-
trating intently as I worked
at laying each article out,
and then did some juggling
to make them all fit.



Perhaps you know that any booklet printed at
a professional printing company must be done in
a number of pages that can be divided by 4. So
we can have 24 pages in an issue, but not 25 or
26. (Unless we pay for blank pages).

At the beginning of this issue, it looked like I'd
have only 8 articles and columns to work with.
Then some more came in so I inserted a few
blank pages to get ready for them. All at once I
realized I had 26 pages. Oh no! Then I have to
beg for three more pages of material!

So I shorted the Announcements to make
them fit into a partially empty column, adjusted
some others, and lo, we're back to 24 pages.

What? You don't want to be an editor then?

Oh, there's the fun side too! I get to work with
the photos that are sent in, and decide where
they look the best - this one across the top, that
one centered in the middle, that one tucked in on
the left, - and reduced to just THAT size.

Sometimes I get to design new graphics too.

When I think back to how I used to prepare
crafts for my Pioneer Girls Club, and for VBS, and
how I'd get all full of paint - I marvel at the new
ways I can be creative today - not even getting
my fingers dirty!

This is a Doublemint issue; we have two book
reviews by Jake Buhler, two Profiles by Esther
Patikau, and two Mennonite Inventor stories by
Dick Braun. That's besides the first six pages of
Martin Klaassen Biography by Walter Klaassen.

I trust you'll find something special for you!

MHSS Board of Directors, 2014

Jake Buhler, President

836 Main Street, Saskatoon, SK. S7H 0K3
306-244-1392 jakelouisebuhler@sasktel.net

Dick Braun, Vice President

Box 184, Osler, SK. S0K 3A0
306-239-4765 dkbraun4@yahoo.com

Vera Falk, Secretary /MC Sask Archivist

Box 251, Dundurn, SK. S0K 1K0
306-492-4731 Fax: 306-492-4731

Elmer Regier, Treasurer

142 Haight Street
Saskatoon, SK. S7H 4V9
306-373-0606 earegier@sasktel.net

Kathy Boldt, Volunteer Coordinator

Box 152, R.R. #4
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 3J7
306-239-4742 keboldt@sasktel.net

Susan Braun

Box 281, Osler, SK. S0K 3A0
306-239-4201 susan.braun@hotmail.ca

Leonard Doell

Box 364, Aberdeen, SK. S0K 0A0
306-253-4419 ldoell@mccs.org

Elizabeth Guenther

635 - 120 LaRonge Rd, Saskatoon, SK.
S7K 7Z9
306-979-0605 candeguenther@shaw.ca

Erna Neufeld

222 - 305 Pinehouse Drive, Saskatoon, SK.
S7K 7Z4
306-975-0554 ewn.esn@sasktel.net

James Friesen

Box 381, Rosthern, SK. S0K 3R0
306-232-4977 jamesfriesen@sasktel.net

Other Positions

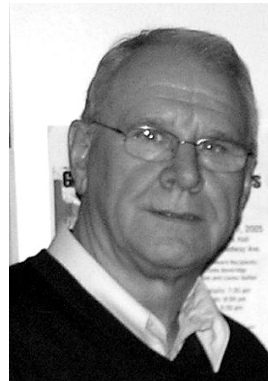
Archives Committee: Kathy Boldt, Vera Falk, Helen Fast, Elizabeth Guenther, Hida Voth

Cemeteries Project: Helen Fast, coordinator
306-242-5448 rhfastlane@shaw.ca
All Mierau, webmaster almierau@shaw.ca

MHSS.sk.ca webmaster: Ruth Marlene Friesen
306-956-7785 Ask-Ruth@mhss.sk.

MHSS President's Corner

by Jake Buhler



Almost every day we hear stories about the Great War (1914-1918). It was a brutal war that accounted for about 16 million deaths and 20 million injured. Of the 600,000 Canadians who served, 60,000 died. That is a 10% death rate. Our population was only 8 million at that time. The grue-

some battles were more than many soldiers could take. Man-to-man fighting with bayonets and rifles was commonplace. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was unknown at that time. A crude name that meant the same was called Shell-Shock. Soldiers who did not fight were executed by firing squad. Twenty three Canadians were executed.

Some politicians say that the Great War made Canada into a nation; others say that happened when it began to send peacemakers to many parts of the world. It was also a time when Germans were distrusted or hated. Two thousand German immigrants near Waterloo-Kitchener were interned. Indeed the city of Berlin was changed to Kitchener in 1916. Can some of you guess which Saskatchewan towns had their names changed? Are you aware that in the 1920s the Department of Education gave war names to several school districts including Embury and Passchendaele? Mr. R. J. Davidson from the Department of Education told me it was to ridicule the Mennonites.

The huge number of unnecessary deaths among British and Canadian soldiers is now criticized. But putting blame on the generals of the day is not helpful. We can learn from the Great War if we learn about ourselves, how we respond to violence and how our governments respond to conflict. The Great War brought about very much suffering in the soldiers' families, and in the families of innocent civilians.

Between now and 2018 we want to talk a little bit about the Great War. If you have stories about Mennonites who were affected by the First World War, let us know.



[Martin Klaassen - continued from page 1]

(These reflections based on Johannes Fried, "Ein Leben Erzählen," *Die Zeit*, 2 Jan., 2014, 15).

This biography of Martin Klaassen (1820-1881) is based on his own partial diary (1852-1870, 1880-1881), on his book *Geschichte der wehrlosen taufgesinnten Gemeinden* (*History of the Defenceless Anabaptists Churches*, translation published 2013), *Klaassen Genealogical Record*, as well as on the autobiography of his son Michael, the reminiscences of his son Jacob, and finally on Martin Klaassen's painting of the village of Tiegenhagen.

Martin Klaassen was born to his parents Jacob and Helena (Hamm) Klaassen on April 27, 1820. He had one older and one younger sister and two younger brothers. In the year of his birth his parents purchased an estate of 90-100 acres at Schönsee, a small village in the delta and just east of the Vistula (Wista) River in what is now north central Poland. The first ten years of young Martin's life were financially precarious for the family and they began to consider seriously emigration to the Molotschna Mennonite Colony in Russia. At that point they received an offer to exchange their estate at Schönsee for a much smaller one at Tiegenhagen, about 15 km to the northeast. The move was made in 1832 and it solved their financial

Martin Klaassen's painting of their village of Tiegenhagen, Prussia.

problems. Tiegenhagen lay below sea level and was protected by dykes from the waters of the Frisches Haff, a bay of the Baltic Sea. The whole lowland area had been turned into rich farmland by Mennonites who had come from the Netherlands in the 16th century. The new Klaassen estate was very near the Catholic church.

In 1852 Martin did a painting of the village. The attention of the observer is drawn to the village in the middle distance across fields on which hay is being harvested, cattle are grazing, and men are standing in conversation. There are storks in the field and a long alley of trees ending at a farmstead in the village. The fields are bordered by canals and several sailboats are visible. To the left is a large windmill, and from the centre to the left beyond the fields the red-tiled houses and barns. Among them stands the Catholic church and a farmstead nearby to the right of the church, which could be the Klaassen estate. The painting conveys peace and prosperity. A measure of that prosperity was that they had a steam-powered watermill built, which was much more reliable for drainage than a windmill. About this Martin asked the question whether technological advancement which benefits humanity is inspired by God.

We know very little of Martin Klaassen's life until he began his diary in 1852. Everything he

recorded about his parents later suggests a loving home. His father, according to Martin's son Jacob, was an entertaining story teller.

It appears that because the family was relatively well-to-do once they had established themselves in Tiegenhagen, Martin received a good education. He learned to write well and to read widely. The great variety of his interests in later life suggest that as a child and youth he must have been much aware of his surroundings, and especially sensitive to the natural world of animals, birds, and plants. He also developed scientific interests in geography and astronomy. Somehow, perhaps in an apprenticeship, he learned the art of surveying and along with that a facility in mathematics. His interest in history likely began under the tutelage of his father who began the family genealogy which Martin later continued. But of all of this there is not a single verbal hint in his writings.

Finally, his religious interests and commitments also certainly had their origin in childhood and youth. His father Jacob was a minister in the Mennonite church in Tiegenhagen. The curriculum in the village schools at that time would have included religious instruction, and since Mennonites did not have their own schools in Prussia, there would have been special classes at the church for instruction in their own faith. The child Martin would certainly also have noticed that there were Catholic and Lutheran churches in his own village and in the villages round about. At some point he received specific instruction for baptism and was then baptised. The deep and active piety of his later years presupposes a religious sensitivity nourished, no doubt, by family worship that was common in Mennonite homes. Even as a child, he tells us later, he had a longing for God and was convinced that God had a vocation for him in Russia.

Apart from his painting of Tiegenhagen, Martin Klaassen left no record of his life up to age 30 except a poem in his 29th year. It

expresses a certain world-weariness, perhaps because he was dissatisfied with his life.

Presumably, since he was the eldest son, he had stayed at home to look after the farm as his father was occupied with the church and was nearing his 60th year. It was during these years that Martin acquired all the skills required for rural village life.

In 1850, at the age of 30, Martin travelled to the Molotschna Colony with his uncle Claas Epp and the minister Johann Wall. These two were deputized to study prospects for the emigration then beginning again among Prussian Mennonites. He stayed there for two years and worked as a secretary in the office of a distant relative. He arrived back home on November 19, 1852. Immediately upon his return he began a detailed diary in which he recorded his daily activities, his reflections on personal, family, community and church affairs, and the weather. During the weeks following his return he visited numerous acquaintances, reporting on his visit to the Molotschna and no doubt on the discussions about emigration.

He was convinced that a new emigration was necessary. In 1848 the German National Assembly had agreed that military service should apply to all alike and that religious confession was now not in any way allowed to limit the performance of civic duties. It seemed to Martin Klaassen and other Mennonites that their traditional exemption would be abolished. Besides, he wrote in mid-1853, only the wealthy Mennonites had any chance of purchasing more land for a growing community. By August, 1854, deputies had been sent to investigate settlement possibilities in the Volga River region. Martin himself, and several others with him, left his home to return to the Molotschna on August 24, 1853. The departure was difficult. His mother was afraid that she would never see him again, and Martin himself found it very difficult to leave his home. He also left behind a girl named Renate with whom he was passionately in love, and he expressed the fear that he would not see her again. There

could also have been some impediment to their relationship because marriage was never mentioned, and she soon faded out of his life. References in the diary to her and their relationship are all in code.

Travel then was a major undertaking. The distance between Tiegenghagen and Halbstadt in the southern Ukraine was about 1,600 km. Horses and wagons had to be carefully chosen. Feed had to be purchased and carried for the horses, and the trip planned so that there would be water available daily. Martin wrote detailed descriptions of the country through which they passed, and the human habitations where they stopped for the night. He never neglected to comment on anything unusual or of special interest. The travellers arrived at their destination on August 12. They'd been on the road for 50 days.

As a result of many discussions with friends there, Martin gradually gained clarity about his own vocation. To his diary he confided that he did not want to spend his life at some aimless, routine activity anyone else could do. He felt called to something higher. By the beginning of 1854, he had become certain that he was called to be a teacher. In a prayer, he implored God to give him the required gifts of the Spirit to teach children and win them for God's kingdom.

At the same time he struggled over whether he should exercise his vocation in the Molotschna community or in the newly formed colony near Saratov on the Volga. On January 27, 1854 he wrote his uncle Claas Epp that he would be coming to the Volga to be a teacher.

He did not regard his vocational choice to be a private matter. He viewed it in the context of the welfare and destiny of the Mennonite people. He was concerned that they seemed not always to be aware of what was happening to them. He knew that the aim of the imperial government's settlement policy was not to help the Mennonites realize their

goals in Russia, but rather that these expert farmers were to be a model for other settlers and so help the government achieve its own agricultural policy. It is to be expected, he wrote, that any special privileges extended to Mennonites now would gradually be restricted and eventually suspended altogether, and the Mennonite vocation as he saw it would be in jeopardy. Perhaps his acquaintance with Johann Cornies and his estate at Juschanlee with its extensive agricultural experimentation prompted these reflections. The Prussian Mennonites migrating to the Volga region were given only 20 years exemption from military service.

On June 5, 1854, Martin set out for the Volga settlement with several travelling companions. They arrived on August 22 at an already forming community, then still living in temporary shelters. It was, he wrote, the end of his journeys. Here he would work; here he would die and be buried.

He settled in the village of Hahnsau where he was immediately put to work helping with the building of permanent barns and houses. He worked as a carpenter, making sure, he said, that the measurements were accurate. He also began to survey building lots and the cemetery, and then also the whole area designated for the settlement that came to be known as Am Trakt, an abbreviation for Am Salz Trakt, near a salt mining area.

On October 12, the time had finally come to plan for his teaching vocation and the building of a school. By year-end, that was done, and on January 1, 1855, he began teaching with 25 children.



Martin and his bride, Marie Hamm

Soon after his arrival he began courting Marie Hamm, his cousin. On October 10 he wrote cryptically that he had spoken to Marie's father about a matter concerning himself, evidently asking for her hand. He received permission to marry her on February 26. Only then did he ask her to be his wife. The engagement, which was understood to be a public commitment, was celebrated on March 19. The wedding took place on October 6. Martin was 35, Marie 26. To his great joy, his parents had arrived at Am Trakt from Prussia in late September with another group of immigrants.

For the next four or five years he spent much of his time laying out the plans for the expanding settlement as a professional surveyor, ordering his surveying equipment from Germany. He also prepared construction plans for houses and barns and later also for the church at Köppental.

On August 3, 1859, Martin and Marie moved from Hahnsau to Köppental to take charge of the school there. His time as teacher in Hahnsau had not been entirely happy due in part to sporadic attendance and also because some parents complained about his teaching. The move was also from a house in which they were often cold and which contributed to Martin's frequent respiratory illness, to a better house with more room. The curriculum he developed was rich for a primary school. Basic to all was learning to read and write their German language. Next came introduction to the Bible through its many stories, and the singing of religious and folk songs. There was natural

history with detailed attention to animals, birds and plants. He taught geography and "written and memorised" mathematics. He acquainted the children with stars, planets, comets and constellations. The older children were taught Mennonite and world history. He also taught elementary Russian. In order to master this curriculum he wrote textbooks on history, religion and science. He constructed a globe, a model of the planetary system, and prepared a star map and maps of the world. He collected botanical specimens. He reports that he had begun to compose a Russian grammar.

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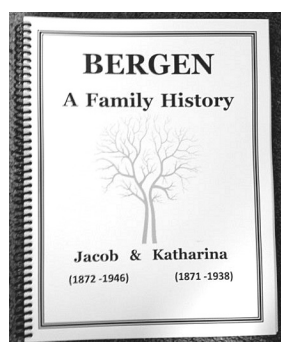
*NOTE: this is the first 6 pages of this 20 page biography, to be published by MHSS as an Occasional Paper. You may place advance orders for \$2.00 copy, by writing the Archives,*

**110 LaRonge Road, Room 900**

**Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8** or use the website order form: <http://mhss.sk.ca/books/bks/book-orders.php>



*Note: Names of Martin and Marie Klaassen's family on the cover photo: daughter, Maria, wife Marie, sons, Jacob and Michael, and Martin Klaassen.*



## Book Review:

### **Bergen - a Family History Jacob (1872-1946) & Katharina (1872-1938)**

***Reviewed by Jake Buhler***

Martha Martens. *Bergen Family History: Jacob and Katharina*. (Winkler, Manitoba: Martha's Musings Production. 2013) 196 pages. 8 ½ x 11 inch spiral-assembled soft cover book. Printed by Eagleye, Morden, Manitoba. \$25.00

If your family tree contains names like Bergen, Klassen, Giesbrecht, or Wiens, you might want to have a look at *Bergen Family History*. Author Martha Martens calls her book a history, but it is also an outstanding genealogy of Jacob Bergen (1872 - 1946) and Katharina Klassen Bergen (1871 - 1938). With well over 500 photographs, charts and documents, going through the book is a pleasure.

The author is Martha (nee Dyck) Martens of Winkler (GM# 742197), whose husband is Ernie Martens, the son of Anna Bergen Martens, and, the grandson of Jacob (GM# 180300) and Katharina (GM# 182288) Bergen. Martha is the well-known and most knowledgeable researcher of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church, formerly known as the Rudnerweide Mennonite Church.

Martens begins her book with a short readable history of the Mennonites who originated in the Netherlands, fled to Prussia, moved to Russian-occupied Ukraine, then migrated to Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Her maps help the reader to follow the many migrations. She then traces the genealogy of the earliest known ancestor of this Bergen family who was Heinrich von Bergen - born in West

Prussia in 1745, and who died in 1812 in South Russia following migration there in 1804. The author traces three successive descendants (Isaak, Isaak, and Franz) before dwelling on Jacob Bergen born 1872 in Neuendorf, Russia, who, as a

3 year old, emigrated with his parents to Manitoba. He married Katharina Klassen in 1892 and several years later moved to the Hague-Osler Reserve. Both Jacob and Katharina died in the village of Gruenfeldt, Saskatchewan.

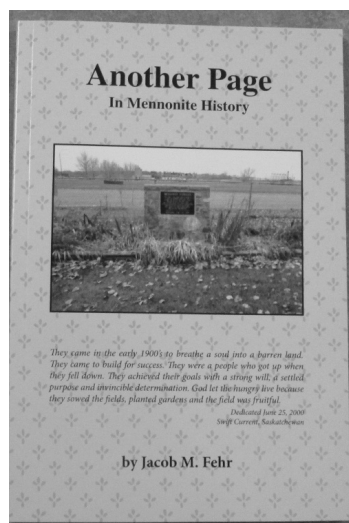
It is here where author Martens does all her hard work: - to trace the history of Jacob and Katharina's 12 children, their children and their grandchildren. This was an enormous task as a number of those children had more than a dozen children. One had 17 children!

Martens uses a clever writing convention by using the personal recollections of older members of the family to tell the stories of their parents and grandparents. These are then edited into the manuscript with accompanying photographs.

Martens does not shy away from referencing divorces or negative events that once were left out of family histories. Her stories are those of pain and of rejoicing. There are reproductions of funeral and wedding notices. There are group photos, individual photos, maps and family charts. She is unashamedly spiritual in her historical overview. She writes (edited): "History is worth recalling and passing on. Our forefathers endured hardships but they had confidence God was leading them. God has been good so let us be grateful to him."

This outstanding history of the Bergens is a bargain at \$25 plus shipping, and can be ordered from MHSS. You may order via the book order form on website;

**[mhss.sk.ca/books/bks/book-orders.php](http://mhss.sk.ca/books/bks/book-orders.php)**



Jacob M. Fehr. *Another Page in Mennonite History*: (Swift Current: Self Published, 2014) 82 pages. 6 x 9 inch bound paperback.

If you have a free afternoon, and you want to look back a hundred years ago to Mennonite life and culture in southern Saskatchewan, *Another Page* is exactly what you are looking for. *Another Page* is an attractive self-published paperback that brings together 81 photographs, stories and poems (in English and Plautdietsch), recipes, and a bit of history.

Jacob M. Fehr is an unabashed evangelical with a deep passion for Plautdietsch and Mennonite history. But a prude Fehr is not: Observe a line from his first poem on page one:

*Just any old nag, looking tired and glum,  
He spruced them right up with a shot of rum!*

In *A Mennonite Journey* Fehr reminded me of Sarah Binks, the fictitious southern writer:

*They lived here in peace for many years,  
When there were rumblings,*

*threats, and fears.*

*Mennonites have always*

*been known to roam,*

*And Canada was to be their*

*next new home.*

## Book Review:

### Another Page in Mennonite History by Mennonite Humorist, Jacob M. Fehr.

Reviewed by Jake Buhler

Fehr describes the Mennonite Heritage Village in Swift Current and then proceeds to show vivid photographs of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church that was moved in from Gouldtown, the house-barn combination from Reinland, and a hundred

artifacts from a hundred years ago. His 1922 photo of Old Colony Mennonites boarding a train at Wymark for Mexico is a classic, as is the photo of the SS Peruvian which brought hundreds of Mennonites to Quebec City enroute to Manitoba after 1874.

Fehr devotes 19 pages to recipes that originate from his wife Agnes's kitchen. They include breads and rolls, cookies, pies and pastry, soups and moos, pickles, beverages (choke cherry wine), and main Mennonite dishes.

Fehr's rarest story is of a Manure Press (photo included) that was invented in the dirty 1930s when there was no money to buy coal. Fehr is old enough to describe how the Banman Manure Press produced fuel from cow chips.

Finally, Fehr writes a 4 page summary of the history of the Mennonites. He writes it as though he were speaking to you - having total ownership of the story.

At \$10.00 plus \$2.50 for shipping, this small book is a bargain. Available from MHSS.

The previous issue of the Historian had a book review of a book we do **not** have for sale;

**Path of Thorns** is available from Mennonite Heritage Society (Centre) (Attn: Connie Wiebe)  
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4



"Will you pray, that if it be the Lord's will, He might thrust you forth into the mission field?" That was one of the questions on an examination paper for the Swift Current Bible Institute students.

Anna's immediate answer on paper was, "Yes." Yet in her own heart she was thinking, how could the Lord use anyone with as little talent as she had? She began to pray about it.

Then, at a youth retreat, she was handed a note asking, "Why don't you go to a foreign field as a nurse? All you need is four years of study. Any difficulties can easily be overcome." The Lord won the struggle in her heart, and she promised to go abroad to share the gospel.

An interest in missions had already sparked in Anna when, at age twelve, she had heard Metta Moyer, a missionary from India, speak and show pictures of the poverty in that country. Several years later, when her father passed away suddenly of a stroke, she felt the Lord speaking to her. She knew she was a Christian, but what had she done to show her appreciation for what the Lord Jesus had done for her? Now, at the young peoples' retreat her decision was made. Preparations would have to begin.

Anna Dyck, daughter of Henry Abram and Susanna (nee Klassen) Dyck, was born in South Russia and came with her parents to Canada in 1923. They found a new home on a farm in the Guernsey district in Saskatchewan, where Anna received her early education. At

## Anna Dyck's Three Congregations

by Esther Patkau

home she learned self-discipline and responsibility through hard work and assigned tasks.

Low German was the language at home, high German in church, and English in school.

In Sunday School she was challenged to commit Scripture to memory – a gift that laid a good foundation for future tasks.

At age eighteen she committed her life to the Lord and received baptism at the North Star Mennonite Church in Drake.

In the fall of 1945 she attended Swift Current Bible Institute (SCBI) and returned the following year to graduate. There she had opportunity to share her faith with others. There she made the promise to the Lord to share the Gospel.



Anna was accepted into the School of Nursing at Saskatoon's City Hospital. Even though the students had received strict orders not to speak to patients on spiritual matters, she found opportunity to

witness for the Lord during training sessions. Graduation followed in 1952.

For the next six months she stayed on staff at Saskatoon City Hospital as an assistant supervisor on one of the wards – gaining experiences that were helpful in the work in later years.

In reflection later, she commented, "I believe the Lord speaks to us, and is even leading long before we are able to understand."

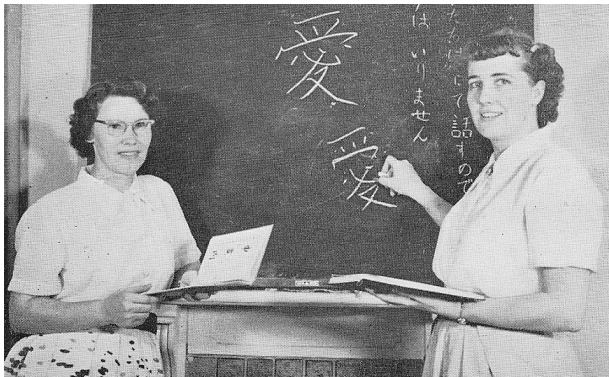
Anna enrolled as a student at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in Winnipeg, but also worked the afternoon shift at Misericordia Hospital to pay expenses.

She began correspondence with the Commis-

sion on Overseas Mission (COM) of the General Conference Mennonite Church. They promptly sent application forms. A nurse was needed to take care of the mission family in Japan, a work that had begun in 1951. Medical conditions in Japan were poor after the end of World War Two.

Another inner struggle ensued. She questioned whether she was capable of taking on such responsibility, but the Lord gave confidence through Scripture. "My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9. Joy returned with obedience. She believed that the Lord never assigns a task, but where He goes before.

Anna was ordained to ministry in Drake, September 6, 1953. Martha Giesbrecht from Waldheim was ordained two weeks later. Together they set sail on September 22, 1953, on a freighter from Seattle for Japan, crossing the Pacific Ocean and arriving at Moji. An overnight train ride brought them to Kobe city, where they were immediately enrolled in the language school.



*Anna and Martha in language study*

The one and only assignment for the first two years was Japanese language study! Martha's comment was: "What? Study only one subject? What shall we do the rest of the time?" But they quickly discovered that language study took all their time, along with adjusting to a new culture, different customs and a different life style. The two years in Kobe were a good introduction to Japan.

In 1955 Anna and Martha moved to the

southern part of Kyushu, to the city of Miyakonojo in Miyazaki prefecture. They thought the two years in Kobe had been good orientation to Japan but discovered new adjustments had to be made. The language learned in classes was the standard taught in all schools, but the language on the streets of this city was a local dialect.

Verney and Belva Unruh had already begun a church in their home, and were due to return to the States the following year for a time of furlough. Anna and Martha were to take over that work..

Anna began a Bible class with some of the student nurses in a hospital, which also lead to contact with patients. Though Anna was a trained nurse, she did not do nursing in hospitals; she would have been required to write exams in Japanese to attain certification in Japan.

Before the Unruhs left in 1957, they had organized a ten-day series of tent evangelistic meetings in the city. As a result of those meetings several individuals indicated they wanted to learn more about Christianity; these individuals were contacted. A Sunday School was begun. Women came for a Bible study class that became a Friendship Circle.

A Mothers' Bible class was begun in the home of one of the women who had placed her trust in the Lord during the evangelistic meetings. The younger Christians were enlisted to help. Church attendance increased. The seed of the gospel was sown and though growth was slow, the seed sprouted here and there.

Then it was time for a visit home to Canada – furlough June, 1958, to October, 1959.

Furloughs supposedly have a three-fold purpose: to rest and get reacquainted with family and friends, to inform the constituency of mission developments, and the spiritual refreshing of the workers. Anna spent time with family and visited many congregations; she also spent several months in study at CMBC. Then came an extra special blessing from sharing in the congregations.

Several young people from Miyakonojo were



studying at Tokyo Christian College and returned home to help in the evangelistic services in 1957. One of them, Miyatani San, was prompted to exhort the church to become self-supporting. In the discussion and prayer that followed, the small group gave a small offering to begin a fund to build their own house of worship. When Anna shared this in the small village of Rhineland in southern Saskatchewan, the pastor shared it on his radio broadcast, and a substantial fund was contributed to help the congregation in Miyakonojo build their church.



*Dedication of the Namiki Church in Miyakonojo*

After Anna's return to Miyakonojo, the church was built with contributed volunteer labour and local funds, and dedicated March 26, 1961. Namiki Church in Miyakonojo was the first congregation to erect their own building.

Anna was back in Japan in October 1959. There had been many changes during her absence. One of the hospital patients, Takarabe San, had been discharged from the hospital. He felt the Lord was inviting him to work in the church, and enrolled in Tokyo Bible College. In 1963 he married a Christian girl and together they settled in Nobeoka where he became the pastor of that church.

Anna returned to Canada for a second furlough March 1964 and was back in Japan April 1965. She was assigned to live in Takajo, a 30 minute drive from Miyakonojo.

Where does one begin in a new area? To make some initial contacts in the community, Anna started English classes for elementary and high school students. May 2, 1965 she held the first Sunday worship service in her house.



*Dedication of the Takajo Christian Church*

Though the group was small, work was begun on building a chapel next door, and the believers were determined to pay for half the cost. The chapel was completed and dedicated on July 18, 1965. Two Christians, members of the Miyakonojo congregation, were already living in Takajo. They transferred their membership, so formally the group became Takajo Christian Church. The English classes boosted the attendance at Sunday School, but also connected her with the parents and the community.

One Sunday, a little girl came clutching a 50 yen coin in her hand. "I brought you an offering this morning." When Anna asked why, she responded, "Because I heard about Jesus here, and this means, 'Thank you.' Use it so others can hear about Him, too."

Without prompting, Sunday School offerings were brought, and used to place a Christian periodical, *Gospel for the Millions*, each month into the school library.

The monthly magazine *Gospel for the Millions*, (about 100 copies) was distributed in barber shops and hair salons. A man from back in the mountains found the church address in this magazine and came to worship. At Christ-

mas some of the mothers of her English students came to the Christmas program. For gifts Anna gave out miniature "kami-shibai" - a set of 20 cards depicting the Christmas story; about 20 sets were distributed.

These cards also brought fruit. One of the recipients later became a student at Kagoshima University. When a group of university students wanted to organize a special Christmas celebration for their neighbourhood children, this student recalled receiving that picture card set and shared it; the celebration was a success.

The "English channel to Church" became a real challenge. [The "English channel" was a phrase used by mission workers to indicate that contacts through English classes often lead to Sunday School or church attendance]. The youngsters enjoyed the hymn-sing with each English class. Class sessions increased to ten a week, with an enrolment of about seventy. Through Sunday School the children came to a better understanding of who Christ is. The community accepted Anna in their midst. With the help of one of the women, Mrs. Goto, Anna began home visitations, as time allowed, and it was a fruitful ministry. The first year in Takajo was a time of foundation building.

Children and high school students grew older; they scattered to different parts of the country to attend university, or find employment. Some started to hold Bible studies in their own homes. Individuals grew spiritually, but also increased in numbers in the town of Takajo.

In the summer of 1970, 44 children from Takajo attended the Christian summer camp at the nearby Aoidake camp grounds; some

fathers were willing to take them there.

There was a growing influence felt in the community. When it was time for Anna's furlough in 1971, the church petitioned that she return to Takajo again. The believers would take over church duties while she was gone. The ministry in the years 1965-1971 had established the church in Takajo.

Anna was back in Canada from June, 1971, to August, 1972. She was involved in visiting many congregations across Canada, and especially enjoyed visits in Saskatchewan. She also found time to attend conferences. She took a refresher course in nursing, and received a certificate to indicate that she was a "nurse in good standing."

Then it was back to Japan from August, 1972, to June, 1976, again to Takajo.

In the summer of 1974 Anna had responsibility at the Christian summer camp at Aiodake where a number of children from her town attended.

Then she took a short break to attend a Congress on Evangelism in Kyoto and was richly encouraged by the messages heard. She purchased the sermon tapes, spoken in English with interpretation into Japanese, but when she played the first one to her congregation, it was not well received. So she worked through the messages and gave them in simpler language in Japanese herself - a blessing for herself and for

her church members.

1975 marked the tenth anniversary Anna had worked in Takajo, and planning began for a celebration with the Every Household Crusade (EHC) movement across the country. The Japanese evangelist, Mr. Ariga, was invited to hold a series of meetings, scheduled for July 28-31. A group of six church members, all volunteers, set out to distribute tracts and invitations



*Anna at church council meeting (2nd from right)*

to the 3,675 homes in ten weeks time. It seemed an impossible task, but every Sunday afternoon the church met to pray and the project became exciting. Others joined to help. Two weeks before the meetings started they had distributed the literature to every household! A wonderful sense of achievement and relief!

Another surprise. Not only was the evangelist Mr. Ariga coming, but he was bringing a crew of nine people, including the well-known Radio Pastor Hatori and his family. The congregation sensed the Lord was directing and leading in their midst.

A large tent was set up and the meetings began. In the afternoon under the tent there were student and children's meetings; in the evenings the main evangelistic messages were for adults.

The results? It blessed the church members. It taught them to work and pray together. It gave new courage for personal evangelism – to personally invite and speak to friends and neighbours. More than 50 people left their names indicating a desire to know more about the Lord. Church members took responsibility to follow up on those people.

Anna returned for a brief visit to Canada June, 1976, to November, 1976, then returned to Takajo.

Mr. Matoba, whom the church had supported with a monthly financial gift during his four year study at Tokoyo Christian College, returned to Takajo in March, 1976, and the church called him to be their pastor and evangelist. For a few months Mr. Matoba and Anna worked together. Anna returned home to Canada

for five months – from December, 1978, to April, 1979.

It was time for a change. Where to?

The Takajo church was not ready to let Anna

leave, but they had a pastor. Then at one of the women's meetings, one woman prayed: "Lord, it is difficult to let Dyck Sensei go, but if others will be saved by hearing the gospel through her as we have, then we pray that Your will be done."

Anna felt released. Another town, Sadowara, with its 27,000 population had no church. The search for a

place of residence in that town was begun.

Anna moved to Sadowara August 7, 1979. A house on a hill at the edge of a cliff was rented. Two rooms would be used for services. The first service was in September, with attendance of 35, mostly Christians visiting from other churches from surrounding areas. Sunday School began with eight children.

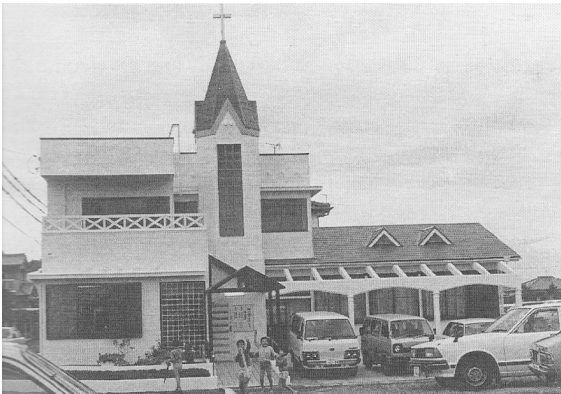
The Sadowara Church was organized in January, 1980, with five members. To become acquainted with the area, Anna distributed Christian literature from door to door. She invited families in for meals. She started English classes. She was introduced to students and hospital patients. Contacts increased.

In the fall of 1981, the Mennonite mission workers celebrated 30 years of presence in Japan. For the Christmas celebration that year, Anna and Virginia Classen, who had come to join Anna in Sadowara, invited the church members to bring their children, extended family members and their friends. Each family was to bring an item to present at the program; music, song or poem. It was a meaningful Christmas celebration in a family setting.



*Sadowara Christian Church congregation; Anna in the centre, Virginia Classen left of her.*

The big project for 1982 was to buy land



*The new Sadowara Church building*

and build a house of worship in Sadowara. The two rooms in Anna's home were too crowded. It would be easier for new people to come to a public place than to a private residence.

Financially, it was evident that the Lord's hand was working in their midst. While Anna spent five short months in Canada in 1983, Virginia and the church people worked faithfully and hard. They found and purchased a corner lot on which to build a church. Land for housing was at a premium and scarce. This plot, situated in a housing area, was expensive, but the local believers were willing to pay.

Construction was to begin, so a formal ground-breaking service was planned. An interesting suggestion was made: why not plant a cross where the pulpit would be? The idea was accepted and the whole congregation gathered on Sunday, May 13, 1984, and planted a bamboo cross. The dedication of the completed church was held in November. The Sunday School children participated with singing in the service, but they were dismissed after their participation, because of the many guests that came. There was no room for them.

There were many activities that took time and energy. Mr. Kurogi, one of the younger church members, had enrolled in Bible School in Hokkaido, and later, in 1987, returned to be the pastor of the Beppu church, begun by the

ministry of Peter and Mary Derksen in that city.

An unexpected turn of events happened. A family requested a Christian funeral for one of the men who had earlier opposed his son's faith in the Lord. That brought the believers together in prayer support. Anna had visited this man several times, and on his death bed he found faith.

The annual Mennonite Women's Conference (begun in 1982) was an exciting and meaningful event for the women of Sadowara. New Year's Day of 1985 was celebrated with a baptism and communion at six o'clock in the morning, followed by a fellowship breakfast. And so the years went by quickly - with Sunday services, Sunday School, and church activities. New people came to the services, and others transferred to other parts of Japan because of studies or employment.

Then it was time for another break for Anna. Mission rules require personnel to retire when they reach seniors age, but Anna was given opportunity to serve an extra year because the Japan Mennonite Conference and the Sadowara Church requested she continue her ministry.

She was home in Canada July 1987 to August 1988. On her return she noticed many changes that had taken place. She saw the spiritual growth in individuals, heard the joy of answered prayers, noticed the thrill of understanding that grew out of Bible study and witnessed the joy of a baptismal candidate. Members showed concern for the spiritual welfare of their families. The group was small in numbers but their faith had deepened.

1990 was the tenth anniversary of organization for the Sadowara Church. The anniversary project was to distribute Christian literature to 9,400 households, and it was accomplished. 45 copies of the monthly periodical *Gospel for the Millions* were distributed every month. Lay members participated in Sunday worship services. Though numbers were few, those who came were faithful. The building loan on the church was paid off. The congregation was debt

free.

The date of Anna's departure from Japan came July 20, 1991. Final goodbyes are difficult. After 38 years, now what?

The Lord goes ahead and opens opportunity doors. Anna's work in Japan had ended, but she didn't feel ready for retirement. The Tada family, whom Anna knew from former days in Japan, had emigrated to Canada in 1982, and were residing in Surrey, B.C. They met her at the airport and invited her to spend a few days in their home.

During that brief stay in Surrey, a house close to the Tadas came up for sale. Anna purchased it.

After visiting some churches in Saskatchewan, she returned to Surrey in December, 1991 to begin another "house church" for Japanese-speaking people. She promised to stay for five years. The first service was January 5, 1992. The group has had its ups and downs but continues to meet. In August, 1998 Mr. and Mrs. Yoshiyuki arrived from Japan to become the pastor couple for the group.

In March, 1998, Anna sold her house in Surrey, and returned to retire in Drake, Saskatchewan.

In March 2013, due to declining strength and health, she transferred to Pineview Manor at Rosthern Nursing Home where she resides at present. Her lifelong motto has been; "Where Jesus leads, I will follow."

Obedience, commitment, reliance on the Lord, prayer, faithfulness in proclaiming the truth by word of mouth, right attitudes and kindness are components of a servant in ministry for the Lord. Anna has been used by the Lord to help establish three congregations in a foreign culture where women in leadership were few. May the Lord reward her.



July 21, 2014. The Historical Commission of the U.S. and Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches announces three funded initiatives for 2014-2015.

The first is a **PROJECT GRANT** of up to \$2,000 in support of a historical and/or theological project of interest to Mennonite Brethren around the world. This grant is new this year and the application deadline is November 17, 2014.

The second is a **SUMMER ARCHIVAL INTERNSHIP**, designed to give a college or graduate student practical archival experience at each of the four Mennonite Brethren archival institutions in North America. Spanning five weeks during May and June, 2015 (exact dates to be determined), the intern will spend a week at each of the MB archives (Winnipeg, Hillsboro, Fresno, and Abbotsford). Airfare and accommodations are included along with a \$2,000 stipend.

The third is a **RESEARCH GRANT** of \$2,000 in support of research and publication relating to the history and contribution of Mennonite Brethren women. The grant is made possible by generous support from the Katie Funk Wiebe Fund.

Criteria and application details for these funded initiatives are available at [www.mbhhistory.org](http://www.mbhhistory.org)

—Jon Isaak, executive secretary

**Do you have a special Christmas story to tell?** We are planning a special Christmas collection for the December 2015 issue. But this will depend on your submissions of Mennonite Christmases past. Start writing!

## In Ministry for the Lord - Justine and Susie Neudorf

by Esther Patkau

These two sisters have spent their lives together in service for others. The Lord has blessed their ministries.

Justine and Susie were both born in Neuendorf on the steppes of Ukraine and came with their parents, Henry P. and Margaret (nee Hildebrandt) Neudorf, across the Atlantic Ocean on the S. S. Empress of France to Canada in 1923. They had cousins in Aberdeen and Rosthern.

At first their father worked for relatives to earn cash so he could pay the transportation debt (Reiseschuld) from Ukraine, fare owed to the Canadian Pacific Railway who had allowed the immigrants to come to Canada on a promise that the fare would be repaid in Canada.

A few years later the family moved to a farm at Aberdeen near the South Saskatchewan River. The girls remember fishing for 'goldeyes' when they were in season. They recall their berry picking days and other excursions in the beautiful ravine that ran through their property.

The girls attended a typical rural elementary school - a one-classroom building, with about 60 students taught by one teacher - all students of English as a second language. At home they spoke Low-German, in church High-German, in school they learned English.

Since help was needed on the farm, they had to occasionally miss school to help at home. But they were also much in demand to help neighbours with weeding, harvesting, cleaning and other domestic help in the community.

When economic conditions improved, they found work in Saskatoon in winter, traveling by train from Aberdeen to the city. Often they left



farm field work and caught the 2:00 pm train to the city. Justine found employment at City Hospital, and Susie did day-work at boarding houses and in the residence of interns.

Eventually they moved from the farm to live on 5th Avenue North, renting from Mrs. Smith, for whom they also did babysitting. To financially help an acquaintance they purchased a rental property on 5th Avenue, which, after a survey was done by the city, was purchased by the city. The girls then bought the house

on 1st Street where they have continued to live for 67 years.

Susie began work in the kitchen of the School for the Deaf, a residential institution near the University; and before long Justine was invited to join her. Susie worked there for 32 years, and Justine 30 years.

In the early years they attended Aberdeen Mennonite Church, took catechism classes, and were baptized on the confession of their faith in the Lord, with Rev. J. J. Thiessen officiating. After their move to Saskatoon, they joined other girls who were working in the city, for Thursday evenings at the Girls' Home, for Bible studies led by Rev. J. J. It was a time of spiritual enrichment and fellowship with others. Since their schedule often required that they work Sunday mornings, they attended the evening services at First Mennonite.

They have been actively involved in church activities. At home in Aberdeen their father taught them many songs. During free times they took the German Gospel Songs book (Evangeliumslieder) along into the ravine, and sang song after song to their hearts' content.

In Saskatoon they became members of two choirs - a German choir (which disbanded in 1990), and the mixed choir in which Susie

continued until 2012. Whenever there was a social event in church, they were asked to make the coffee, and they knew best how to operate the dish washer in the kitchen.

Their large garden provided live flowers for the church sanctuary every Sunday all summer long; and after the service the flowers were given away. The ample vegetable produce of their garden was also generously given away and found its way even to the Bethany Manor kitchen.

During the 1960s for eight years they led the weekly Girls club activities at First Mennonite – singing, leading devotionals, teaching the girls a variety of crafts.

Justine and Susie were members of two women's groups at First Mennonite. Susie was treasurer for Senior Ladies Aid for more than 35 years. Justine served on the executive for many years. When the Girls' Home closed in 1956, they were among the founding members of the Friendly Hour women's group, serving in executive positions, until it disbanded December 2012.

When Bethany Manor opened in January 1986, food services were provided for the residents who wanted them – first five dinners a week, with a food tray made available on weekends. Volunteers were needed to serve the tables. From the beginning Justine and Susie volunteered to come from their home to help serve every Monday evening meal. Their pay was a free meal after setting up, serving the meal and then clean up! For the next 24 years they continued this volunteer service. What commitment! What faithfulness!

Quilting has always been important, a skill they learned from their mother's friend. At home they have stitched quilts for others, cut and sewed together quilt squares, sewed blanket tops and finished blankets. At church they have joined with others weekly during fall and winter months to make blankets for MCC relief – finishing several hundred each winter. Under the MCC child support program

they have financially supported children through the years. For the MCC relief sale in June they have provided large portions of baked goods. In the fall they picked Saskatoon berries, prepared pie filling, froze it and in June baked about 50 pies for the sale.

Justine and Susie's lives have been anchored in their faith in the Lord and expressed in generosity to others – always ready to lend a helping hand, always cheerful in giving aid. They have demonstrated service of love for the Lord.

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”* Col. 3:24.

After nine decades of doing service together, Susie was called into the eternal home on January 10, 2014. Justine has since then moved to a care home.

## Announcements

MCC Saskatchewan continues its monthly celebrations of Faith in Action over the past 50 years. You are welcome to attend any or all of these soon-coming events.

**September 13** at 2:30 p.m. **The Governance Celebration** is at the MCCS Centre, 600 - 45th Street West, Saskatoon. Come and meet former staff members, board chairs and board members. Learn about MCCS programs that have been discontinued and/or graduated to stand on their own. Come for story telling and refreshments.

**October 3** @ 7:00 pm, **Peace and Justice Anniversary** celebration/coffee house at the MCC Centre, Saskatoon.

Also: **October 31** @ 7:30 pm, a **Musical Gala Anniversary** celebration at Knox United Church, Saskatoon. It will draw into one program multi-ethnic styles of Mennonite music.

**November 1 - Encounter & Annual General Meeting** at Cornerstone Church.

**November 19** – declared by the Saskatchewan government an official **MCC Day**. *Let's meet at the Leg! (lejjj)* (Legislature Building).



# *De Plautdietsche Akj*

## Meisst Febiestat

*fonn Jack Driedger*

Eene Winta, auss Foda onn ekj 'ne blitzniee Kabüss jebüt hauden, freid ekj mie, daut ekj dee easchta wea doamet too foaren. Ekj kräagd meare Nobasch Jungess met mie met too komen, Frind dee onnjefäa fea Miel auf wonden too beseakjen. Auss wie dan soorajcht em Spatsearen wearen, funk daut met ee'mol gaunss onnferhoffs aun too stiemen. Wie wearen onns uck fuats eenijch, daut wie onns feksj opp'm Wajch nohüss loossilagen sullen.

Auss wie feksj aun-spaunden, wearen dee Pead aul ssiemlich fuchtijch, auss wan see wisten, daut doa boolt wudd een grootet Onnwada sennen. Wiel ekj wull tüss sennen ea daut too sea stiemd, porrd ekj Taum onn Sandie aun too drebblen. Oba ekj wort fuats enn, daut daut een Fäla wea. Enn 'n Poa Minüeten feluaren dee Schruggen dee Schlädbon.

Na waut dan nü? Omm 'n Stootskje besonn wie onns, waut wie nü doonen mussten. Een poa Jungess wudden 'rüt gonen, dee Schlädbon säkjen. Wie beräden daut, daut see schrieen wudden, onn dan horjchen wan wie trigj schrieen, soo daut see nijch febiestad-en. Toom Jlekj haud wie dee Pead dan uck boolt trigj opp'e Bon. Wie wisten daut dee Bon boolt wudd gaunss festiimt sennen. Nü musst ekj mie doaropp feloten, daut Taum onn Sandie dän Wajch nohüss finjen wudden.

Doa wea blooss Eenatlei too doonen. Ekj bunk dee Lienen toop onn leet dee Pead gonen soo'ss see wullen, enn'e Hopninj daut see onns wudden jlekljich nohüss fiaren. Nü musst wie daut toostonen, daut onns Toostaunt nijch sea sejcha wea. Onns funk aul een bät schis too

woaren. Omm proowen bäta too feelen, fetalld wie Jeschijchten onn sungen. Toom Jlekj haud wie jenüach Brenninj, dee Kabüss woamtoohoolen.

Met ee'mol hilden Taum onn Sandie stell! Na, waut dan nü? Wie müaken dee Däa sachelkjess op. Daut stiemd soo grülijch, daut wie nuscht seenen kunnen. Met ee'mol kunn wie jenüach seenen, daut wie wisten, daut dee Schruggen onns werkljich nohüss jefiat hauden. Oba wea wie froo!

Wan daut e'mol soorajcht een poa Däag stiemd, wearen aule Schlädbonen festiimt. Opp Städen wea dee Bon unja deepe, hoade Schneedenen. Dee nodste Staut Ossla wea sass Miel auf. Onns wudd boolt dee Post, Ätwa, Ssocka, Koffe, Mäl, onn Kolen fälen. Wäa wudd dan nü dee Easchta sennen, no Staut too foaren?

Dee Darpa hauden gooden Rot doafäa. Wan dee bestemda Dach doa wea, spaund jieda Ennwona 'n

poa Pead aum Dobbelt-schläden. Dan fuaren see aul opp'e Gauss, reed toom enn'e Räj loossfoaren. Soo boolt auss see aul reed wearen, jinkj't looss. Jeweenlijch wearen doa onnjefäa tian Foatia.

Daut diad nijch lang, bat daut fäaschte Spaunsel üt'e Püst wea. Ea dee fäaschte Pead too meed worden, fua dee Fuamaun met sien Jespaun toosied, soo daut dee aundre am aula febiefoaren kunnen. Nü hauden siene Pead daut een Deel leijchta, wiels tian Foatia fer an dee Bon opjefoaren hauden. Soo deed jieda Fuamaun daut omm sejcha too seenen, daut aule Pead jlikjen sea schaufen mussten, dee Schlädbon optoomäaken. Wan see dan eascht entlijch tüss wearen fonn'e Staut, wea doa 'ne goode, hoade Bon, wiel dee twintijch 'mol äwajefoaren wea.



*Onnse Kabüss*



## Use Your Archives

Your Archives is constantly expanding over at Bethany Manor. We want to help you discover how many wonderful resources are there for your research as you try to solve your family history riddles and genealogy.

Speaking of genealogy, let's put aside the many books for future columns, and show you today how you can do some amazing genealogical research on a computer.

If you are nervous about computers, relax. The volunteers at the archives can show you how to open a program on the computer there.

The program is called Brother's Keeper. It is loaded with a database of over a million Mennonite names and families that go back several centuries.

This is a patchwork of many family genealogies, but there are keen people constantly checking for where there are overlaps and interconnections. Every second or third year they come out with a new, improved, updated database called GRANDMA. The letters stand for **G**enealogical **R**egistry **A**nd **D**atabase of **M**ennonite **A**ncestry.

If you are trying to trace your own family tree as far back as possible, come to the Archives armed with as much basic data as you can find on your own; your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents' names and birth dates, death dates, marriage dates, etc. You will likely have gaps here and there, but the more of this you already know the more clues for your GRANDMA research.

Sit down at the computer, and enter some of these names with the FIND feature (F3). If that is a common Mennonite name, like Jacob

Fehr or David Friesen, a long list of possible candidates will show up. Use the down arrow key to check each one over for some other matching clues to your data, such as the right birth date, the right spouse's name, the right parents' names, and so on.

When you come to one that appears to be the right match, you click on "Select" and then see whatever family is tied to that person.

If you see a father's or mother's name, click on the left button and see an earlier generation. If there is another parent, click again, and go back another generation. Keep going until you get to the last person in that ancestor chain.

Want to see the descendants that one ancestor had? Click on Reports on the menus up at the top, and then go down the menu to try any of half a dozen or more options. There are three or four styles of descendant charts and they can give you many pages of names/dates.

Or, if you had your own name at the top, when you clicked on Reports, you can ask for your ancestor chart to be printed in three ways, box chart, collapsed (condensed), and as a fan design.

You can ask the GRANDMA database to show you how many ways you are related to someone - and find out you are cousins several ways! This has happened to me a number of times. Such fun.

GRANDMA is only as good as the data fed into it. If someone had their facts wrong, you may be the one to discover an error that you can prove. If so, let the ones working on GRANDMA know, so that the next version will have that corrected.

We'll come back to GRANDMA in another issue some time. For now, make up your mind to try it; you will be tickled with your discoveries.

You can purchase the Brothers' Keeper and GRANDMA database on a CD from their site; <http://calmenno.org/grandma/index.htm> Or you can subscribe to the online GRANDMA at \$20 for 2 years. But that doesn't include the names of living persons. Either way, you can then spend all the hours you want doing this research at home.

-- Ruth Marlene Friesen

## Mennonite Inventions and Designs - Part 2

by Dick Braun, Osler, SK.



### Carl Wolff's Tractor Story

Carl Wolff started building a tractor in 1988 but it took until 1992 to finish it. This is the way a project goes when you use pieces that are available and need to be fit together but the main reason for the time was this other project he was working on - it involved a young lady and a life-long commitment!

The idea came somewhat from what his dad had started. His father Peter Wolff had begun to collect things to build a small tractor but then was elected to be an Old Colony minister in the Hague/ Osler area and then later as the Aeltester, so the time for a project like this was out of the question.

Carl, a young man with ideas and little resources, started, and it went along. They were living in the village of Neuanlage and his friends were also into this kind of thing. At that time the local people had more odds and ends lying around than today and so it was possible to find the necessary parts.

The engine and the first transmission - a 5 speed manual was out of a 1978 Chevette car. The second transmission, a three speed was from an old Dodge, maybe late forties. The transmissions were set up in tandem so you would have more selection of speeds. The

drive shaft was a Chevy part.

The differential came out of a 1960s Ford ½ ton truck; it needed to be cut down and the axles cut and welded. The axle work was done by Henry Banman of HB Welding in Osler. To slow the differential down some more, Carl used a set of sprockets and a double #60 chain.

He used two master cylinders so that he could have individual rear brakes. The steering box is a manual steering system.

The rear wheels are a 5 bolt wheel from a 1948-1952 Ford ½ ton truck, and the front wheels are a 12" Chevette rim. The hydraulic pump is engaged with an electric clutch.

You can see when he built the tractor he took great pride in doing the finishing touches. There are hub caps on the wheels, and the bright blue paint job looks professional and makes the tractor stand out.

Carl seems to have been able to envision the size and the end result because proportionately it looks very well thought out.

He also built a 5 ft snow blade for it and he used it a lot to push snow.

With Chev, Ford and Dodge parts in it the tractor could have had all three emblems on it, and the color could have been, like Henry Ford once said "you can have any color you want as long as it is black."



## Mennonite Inventions & Designs - Part 3

by Dick Braun, Osler, SK.

### Jake Fehr - Builder of the “Garden King” a 4-Wheel Drive Garden Tractor and other equipment

Jake was born in the village of Reinland south of Swift Current and close to Wymark in Saskatchewan. His parents farmed and had a general store in the village. In those days much of the produce like apples and oranges came in wooden boxes which gave him the resources to build many projects like houses, barns and other toy farm buildings.

Growing up in the village and close to school he would be in school most every day, but Jake states that he was not an academic. In the same school there were children (Wall children, lineage of our now Premier Brad Wall) who would miss many days because of weather and other reasons and still made high marks in the exams. Jake's grandfather, Mr. Frank Banman, was a creative person, building and whittling birds out of wood. He also designed an air motor. With this lineage and example of designing and building all sorts of things, it is no wonder Jake worked out some of his own ideas.

Jake, and his brother Henry, built their first garden tractor in 1967. It had a 12 horsepower engine. When the opportunity came to sell the 12HP tractor, they sold it.

The idea of building a 4 wheel drive garden tractor had been filling his innovative mind before the sale of the little tractor but now it needed to come to fruition. By now the farm shop and yard had accumulated many



odd pieces of steel and other parts. In the winter of 1969-70, they went to work.

The engine they used was a V4-25HP Wisconsin, the transmission a 4 speed out of a two ton truck and the differentials were out of 98 Oldsmobile cars.

To connect the transmission and differentials together Jake designed a transfer case which also allowed for further gear reduction.

The whole tractor was 48 inches wide so that it would fit onto a ½ ton truck if it needed to be taken somewhere.

The neighbour had a lathe and so cut the differentials down to the size they wanted and also did other machine work that needed to happen.

The steering was two hydraulic rams to make it articulating, which made for a challenge because, if the distance from the pivot point to the rear wheel and front wheels was not exactly the same, the rear wheels would not follow in the tracks of the front wheels.

The hood and fenders were formed out of 18 gauge metal. The 10 gallon fuel tank which was set between the rear fenders for added traction was made of 12 gauge metal.

As Jake was a little drawn to John Deere, the tractor was painted green and named “**Garden King**” 4WD 70 (telling us that it is 4 wheel drive and built in 1970). This little/big garden

tractor proved to be handy for the farm and also on the yard.

Being interested in what other people were building, Jake had been subscribing to *Mechanics Illustrated*. The magazine had a contest for items of best design. First prize was a Golden 14 oz Hammer with a certificate of Merit. Jake submitted the Garden King 4WD -70 to the magazine and received second place and got a certificate and a Golden Tie clip in the shape of a hammer. The magazine would publish pictures and the story about the prize winners but only include mention of second place winners. So in a certain month in 1970 in the *Mechanics Illustrated* magazine they made

mention of Jake Fehr and his Garden King tractor!

There was more building to do; at the same time they were building cabs for tractors. There was a John

Deere dealer for whom they built cabs for new and used tractors. The cabs had a unique design with the roof overhang and lots of air flow. The father was farming a fair amount of land and so they would work the fields with two John Deere discers and two tractors.

In Jake's mind this process could be simplified. He went to work and designed a tandem system where he took the front wheel off of the rear discer and hooked them together with a ball and socket. Now this all sounds very simple but there needs to be some degree of accuracy to this mounting otherwise it would not follow right.

This must have been a good design as a few years later John Deere came out with this

design.

Jake does not remember being consulted on the use of this idea but he consoles himself with the words, "maybe they were working on the same idea."

When Jake would come in for dinner, he had a habit of not only digesting his food while he ate, but also the work that he was doing. His parents would remind him that it was good to talk to each other.

Jake being a little older by now got married to Sara Fehr from the Hague/Osler area. Together they moved to a farm close to Mennon, SK, where he continued to farm, build and design.

Combining canola was a challenge at the best of times. He soon added a manual reverser to the header so he did not need to pull the lumps out by hand. Soon he came up with an even better way of reversing the header.

He took a simple 4 speed transmission but kept only 4th gear and reverse in it. Setting the transmission into the shaft that turns the main header auger, he then connected a hydraulic ram to the shifter lever which allowed him to reverse the auger from inside the cab.

There are some farmers in the world who have no idea what it's like to work rocky fields, but some of us know all too well what that's like! At his new place, Jake had lots of rocks.

In his farm yard he had also accumulated all kinds of scrap including a grader. He had brought a big Noble Blade with him from down south, but there was no use for it here. From the grader he used the wheels with its very heavy cast iron hubs and from the Noble Blade he took the big beams and

from this he built himself a big rock hook which was necessary for the land he was farming now. All the rest of the parts needed to complete this project were scrap that were in and around his shop. till working with many ideas.



*The Rock Hook*

# Honour List

This list recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions toward preserving Mennonite history, heritage, or faith within our province. To submit a name for the Honour List, nominate that person in writing, and forward to the MHSS Board.

The date in brackets is the year of death. The profiles of some of the honorees are on our website. <http://mhss.sk.ca/tributes/> (If you can provide the ones that are missing, the editor would be glad to hear from you).

**Helen Bahnmann**

**Abram J. Buhler** (†1982)

**Helen Dyck** (†2007)

**Dick H. Epp** (†2009)

**Jacob H. Epp** (†1993)

**Margaret Epp** (†2008)

**Peter K. Epp** (†1985)

**George K. Fehr** (†2000)

**Jake Fehr**

**Jacob E. Friesen** (†2007)

**John D. Friesen** (†2004)

**Jacob G. Guenter** (†2013)

**Gerhard J. Hiebert** (†1959)

**Katherine Hooge** (†2001)

**Abram G. Janzen**

**John J. Janzen** (†2004)

**George Krahn** (†1999)

**Ingrid Janzen-Lamp**

**Abram M. Neudorf** (†1966)

**J. J. Neudorf** (†1988)

**J. C. Neufeld** (†1994)

**John P. Nickel**

**David Paetkau** (†1972)

**Esther Patkau**

**John D. Reddekopp** (†2011)

**Ted Regehr**

**John G. Rempel** (†1963)

**Ed Roth** (†2008)

**Wilmer Roth** (†1982)

**Arnold Schroeder** (†2000)

**Jacob Schroeder** (†1993)

**Katherine Thiessen** (†1984)

**J. J. Thiessen** (†1977)

**David Toews** (†1947)

**Toby Unruh** (†1997)

**Albert Wiens** (†2002)

**George Zacharias** (†2000)

## Web Sites

**MHSS:** [mhss.sk.ca](http://mhss.sk.ca)

## Cemeteries:

[freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~skmhss/](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~skmhss/)

## Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: (GAMEO)

[gameo.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online](http://gameo.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online)

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Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8

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