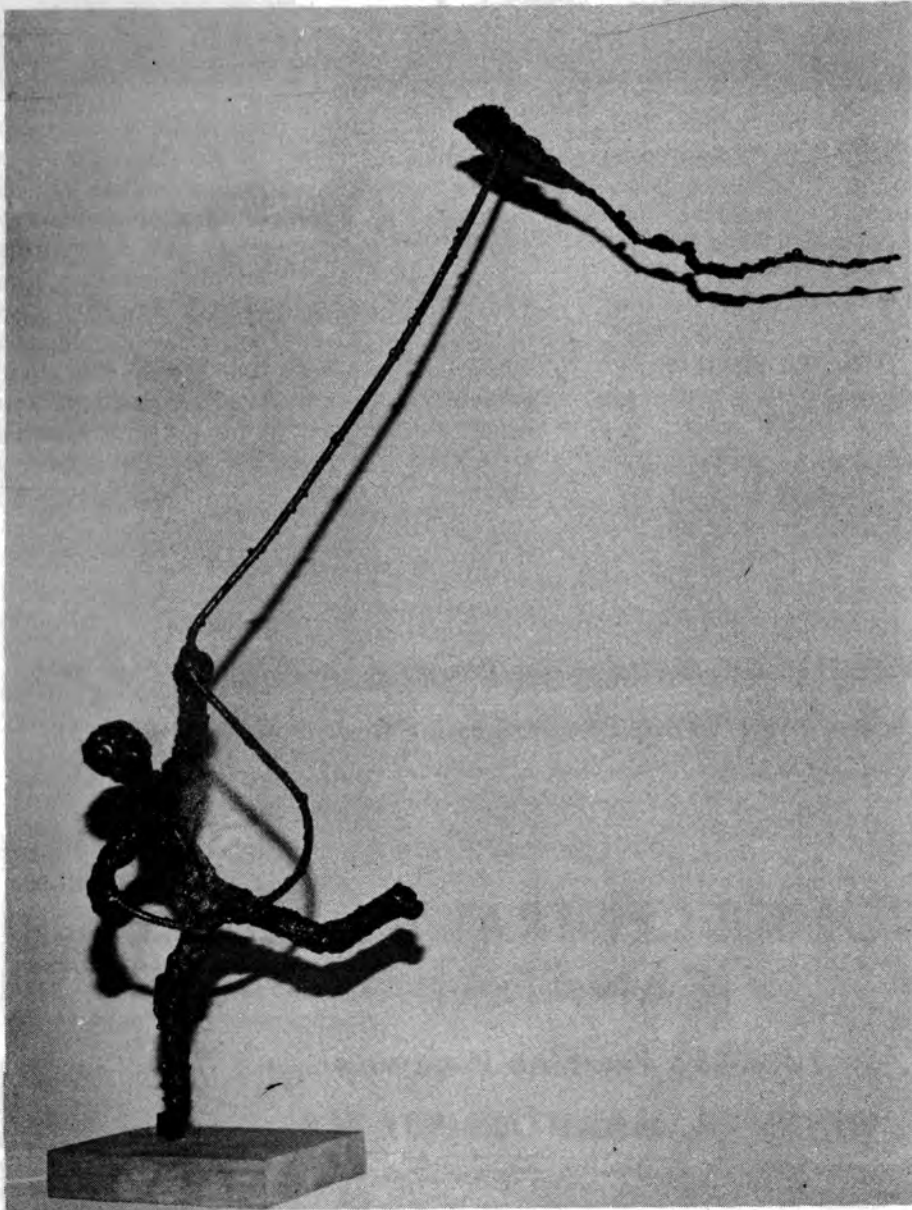


Miss H. Giesbrecht,  
Box 604,  
WINKLER, Man. ROG 2X0

# mennonite mirror

volume two / number seven / march 1973 / 35¢





Alexander Place is a learning centre for emotionally disturbed children jointly sponsored by MCC and the Winnipeg School Division. MCC provides the building, the staff, and a working budget while the city of Winnipeg pays the salaries of one teacher and two teacher aides and furnishes the project with the necessary supplies. Our stated purpose is to reintegrate our students into the regular school system.

It has been in operation since January 3, 1972. They have dealt with a total of eighteen children ranging in age from 9 to 15, of whom eight are on the rolls at present.

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## About this issue

The Mennonite Mirror has received more letters in the past month concerning its publication of the short fiction story, *Old Eva's Cure*, in addition to those published in February. A further sampling is found on page four of this issue.

A number of letters, both pro and con, could not be published because they were sent in anonymously. The policy of the Mirror is, and always has been, to print only letters that have been sent in with signatures. Names of writers, will however, be withheld on request. A few lengthy letters were shortened; in each case no words were changed and we tried not to alter the thrust of the writer's arguments.

The letters in this issue show that our readers have strong and diverse opinions about *Old Eva's Cure*. Our own position was indicated in the February editorial. We would like to assure our readers that we take their responses seriously. We are not, however, impressed with the economic pressure that was implied in some letters. A moral or literary argument is not strengthened, in our opinion, by a threat to cancel or withhold a subscription. We want criticism and encouragement for the things that we publish, but we emphasize that we will listen most to those who offer neither bribes nor threats.

One inadequate sign of any publication's growth is the amount of editorial material it has to choose from each issue. The Mirror is receiving articles and poems from writers in the Mennonite community. We appreciate this and at the same time beg you to be patient if we can't get everything into one issue — space is always limited and the choice as to what to use and what leave out is painful. Nonetheless, the Mirror is grateful that it is finding increasing acceptance — *Old Eva's Cure* notwithstanding — with writers, readers and advertisers. More than 130 new paid-up subscribers were added in January alone.

## Inside you will find

<i>Reflections from our Readers</i> . . . . .	4
<i>An April Festival of arts</i> . . . . .	5
<i>The Arrest — Uncle Frank is taken</i> . . . . .	7
<i>Reviews</i> . . . . .	9
<i>Grandmas are forever</i> . . . . .	11
<i>Wrought with greatest care</i> . . . . .	15
<i>Weep not, we aren't Birches</i> . . . . .	17
<i>Poetry</i> . . . . .	18
<i>An early Mennonite pioneer — Heinrich Wiebe</i> . . . . .	19
<i>Into new horizons</i> . . . . .	23
<i>Mirror mix-up</i> . . . . .	24
<i>Noch laewt Plautdietsch — Wann uck mau affens</i> . . . . .	25
<i>Der Mennonitische Maennerchor</i> . . . . .	26
<i>Erinnerungen von David Toews</i> . . . . .	27
<i>Manitoba News</i> . . . . .	30

**THE COVER:** The figure of the youth flying the kite was done by Gerald Loewen, Winnipeg artist and art teacher. His work was displayed at the 1972 Mennonite art festival.

# mennonite mirror

volume two / number seven / march 1973 / 35¢

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**Business committee:** John Schroeder, Rudy Friesen, David Unruh and J. Thiessen

The executive group (as listed above) of Brock Publishers Ltd., serve as members of both the editorial and business committees of the Mennonite Mirror.

# reflections from our readers

Dear Editor:

Just a note to let you know, how very, very disappointed our whole family (including our young married children) were with the story of Old Eva.

Surely with a talent such as Mr. Reimer possesses, he doesn't have to resort to Skid Row sensationalism to be effective!

If he wrote the article to get a reaction — he reached his goal. We have heard many negative reactions, but not many will be bothered to write about it!

Your paper has had too many good articles to spoil it with a thing like this!

Being realistic about some things doesn't mean bringing out the seamy side, as there are many wonderful endings to life of people married many years, whole devotion in sickness and health has proved inspiring — but not degrading!

Sincerely,  
Mrs. E. Dyck,  
1290 Woseley Avenue  
Winnipeg

Dear Sir:

Old Eva's Cure certainly does not deserve the kind of criticism that it has been receiving from Mennonite Mirror readers. It is not a dirty story; it is not sexual; it is not vulgar.

Those critics who call it dirty, sexy, and vulgar, should re-read the story, keeping the following in mind:

First, it is personality which makes each one of us unique. Eva's husband Aaron was losing his, by virtue of his aging process. He was losing that which made him Aaron. Eva recognizing this realized that if Aaron lost his personality she would lose a husband — the man she loved. Therefore, she did all in her power to make him remember details of their life together. Eva may have recognized that she might have to live with a personality-less man; but she also realized, I think, that such a man would never be a husband.

This brings me to my second point: we are too ready to deny the fundamental importance of sex in marriage. Sex is a fundamental building block in such a marriage, much more so than we are prepared to admit.

Eva recognized this fact and she hoped that through her desperate action — her cure — she could "bring back" Aaron.

When Aaron did not respond, we are told she discovered that he was lifeless was he physically dead or did his personality depart leaving behind a living body?

With these considerations in mind the story makes sense and is a beautiful picture. I must, however, ask you not to publish any more stories such as Old Eva's Cure until such a time is reached when Mennonite Mirror readers become generally more mature in their attitudes concerning what things can and cannot be discussed concerning the husband-wife relationship.

name withheld by request

Dear Sirs:

Our entire family really enjoys this magazine! Keep up the good work!

M. Rogalsky,  
843 Jefferson Ave., Wpg.

Dear Sir:

I want to express my appreciation to you for A. Reimer's short story "Old Eva's Cure" in the January issue and also the sensitive article by Mr. Peter Paetkau on the ministry of my father and mother. I cannot be objective in the evaluation of the latter but I think you have caught something of the essence of what his life means to many of us in the family and outside. Your paper will always serve an important role in the quest for Mennonite identity when it puts together stories like Reimer's, diaries of the pioneers and an insight into the life of one of our contemporaries.

With best wishes,  
William Klassen.

An den Editor:

Bemerkungen betreffs des Artikels: Old Eva's Cure, von Al Reimer. Kurz gefasst moechte ich einige Eindruecke zu diesem Artikel wiedergeben.

In sprachlicher und literarischer Hinsicht kann ich nicht anders als Lob und Anerkennung zu einer wohl gelungenen Kurzgeschichte aussprechen.

Was den Inhalt des Artikels anbelangt, so bin ich auesserst empoeert, dergleichen im "Mennonite Mirror" zu finden. Ich mag von vielen wahrscheinlich altmodisch und naiv gestempelt werden. Ich weiss aber auch, dass ich bei der Beurteilung und Verurteilung des obigen Artikels nicht alleine stehe und manch ein Leser genauso oder aehnlich denkt.

Das Ehebett ist, meiner Ansicht nach, eine "heilige Staette", die nur Mann und Frau gehoert und nie in den Dreck der Strasse geschleppt werden sollte.

Da in dem erwaehten Artikel ein durchaus reicher, reiner und annehmbarer Wortschatz gebraucht wird, kann ich den Schreiber nicht schmutziger Rede beschuldigen.

Was mich so empoeert, ist die Art des Verfassers, die intimsten Gefuehle und Erfahrungen einer, wenn auch nur ersonnenen Ehe, ins offene Blickfeld einer grosseren Lesegemeinschaft zu stellen.

Alwin Braun  
Winnipeg

Dear Sir:

I had not been aware of the Mennonite Mirror, and thus it was with considerable interest that I read your September 1972 issue when a relative passed it along to me.

For your information, I am sending you under separate cover a copy of Beginning Drama, a booklet I am currently distributing. Perhaps this booklet may be of interest to John Dyck, about whom your wife wrote in the September issue. Or perhaps there is someone else among your associates to whom the booklet may be of some use.

Along with the booklet I am enclosing a "Progress Report" describing some of the responses to the Beginning Drama project. You will not that substantial interest has been shown in the work on the part of Manitoba schools. This has, of course, been most gratifying.

Also, I must say personally, I found it most interesting to be reconnected in some degree with the community of my own heritage. Good luck with your publication, and thank you.

Best wishes,  
Barry Friesen,  
Associate Editor  
Getting Together  
Oliver, B.C.

Dear Sirs:

We are glad of a paper such as yours and wish it the very best.

My husband and I especially enjoyed the contributions by Charlotte Kennedy and Elmer Reimer in your latest issue.

Thanks again. We are only too happy to subscribe.

Sincerely,  
J. Reimer  
105 Trail Ave., Wpg.

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for the *Mennonite Mirror*. The whole family enjoys it!

Our 12 year old, after reading about Karin Redekop, (Fall, 1972) could hardly wait to hear her play at the Concert Hall. Keep up the good work!

Mrs. I. Warkentin

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by Lore Lubosch

With April fast approaching, the worst of winter comes to an end. Even though the return of blizzards and cold is not yet an empty threat, there is a breath of promise in the air. Perhaps it is wistful thinking, yet the perceptive nature feels even the most subtle hint of spring.

The approaching change of season kindles renewed interest in activities neglected: the dust of endless winter months is shaken from many a dormant hobby.

The possibility of a Mennonite Art and Music Festival was first explored by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Mennonite Education Society at a meeting in February 1972, when Mrs. Anna Penner touched upon the idea. Despite its general appeal, the proposal met with some misgivings: are there enough artists of Mennonite origin in Manitoba to make an exhibit a worthwhile undertaking? How does one begin to find them? Where can such a happening take place?

The members of the Ladies' Auxiliary enjoy a reputation for resourcefulness and energy, and the Committee of the Arts and Music Festival was no exception. They set to work enthusiastically, and to their surprise, stumbled upon the discovery that Manitoba Mennonite communities were ready and eager for the opportunity to display crafts and art. Churches and organizations co-operated and encouraged wherever they could. Artists readily contributed their paintings and craftsmen their handiwork. Choirs from Winnipeg and the rural areas promised a most enjoyable dimension to the event. It seemed as though stumbling blocks melted away as they approached and everything went smoothly in a very successful celebra-

tion of the arts.

The festival of April 1972 was appreciated by all who participated. One highlight among the exhibits were the paintings by Mr. Cornelius Epp, of British Columbia. At the time he was suffering with a terminal illness and he was deeply moved when invited to display his works for the first time. He called it an "act of God", and it may have been: Cornelius Epp is now deceased.

There is evidence of public appreciation as well; some 4,500 people, young and old, came to see the displays. They saw, admired, visited with friends and relatives, and went away satisfied. Many expressed the wish that this event might be repeated the following year, and their wish will soon be granted.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Mennonite Education Society is again sponsoring a Mennonite Art and Music Festival to which all Mennonites are invited. It is scheduled for Sunday, April 8, 1973, between the hours of 12 noon and 6 p.m. at the Polo Park Mall.

Over 100 exhibitors are expected to exhibit oil paintings, sketches, needlecrafts, ceramics, decoupage, macrame, leather craft, wood-carving, photography, Salish weaving and Batik. A student from Regina will exhibit Salish weaving and Batik. The paintings of Cornelius Epp are again being collected by his brother George Epp. An author's corner is to be set up to feature personalities such as Paul Hiebert, Frank Epp, William Klassen, Gerhard Lorenz, and others. Mrs. Karl Fast has again volunteered to demonstrate the spinning wheel, which captured the fancy of so many spectators last year, and Mr. W. B. Easterbrook from the Uni-

## An April festival of Arts



versity of Manitoba, department of Chemistry, has agreed to return for another virtuoso performance in glass blowing.

Various refreshment oases distributed throughout the Mall promise to be an important feature of the Festival. Mennonite Ladies' groups from all parts of Manitoba have been urged to offer their baked goods and other concessions to hungry spectators. There will be a "Vesper" of mouth-watering "Tweeback", "Minische Worscht", "Fleesch Perischky", "Aupel Plautz" and other delicacies to tickle the Mennonite palate. Proceeds from all food sales go to each contributing group for

## Why?

by Gerhard Lohrenz

On November 14th, 1927, in a home on William Avenue in the city of Winnipeg a 32 year old man passed by his own will from here into eternity. The man's name was Heinrich Letkemann.

He was an exceptional man. Born in Southern Russia of Mennonite parents he showed from childhood on an extraordinary desire to know, to understand and an extraordinary ability in all areas of knowledge, especially in linguistics. It is reported that he knew 35 languages. He had written primers in twelve languages; he wrote a comparative grammar between the Babylonian and the Syrian languages; he spoke Hebrew fluently and won here in Canada the first prize in a Chinese language competition.

From childhood on he was shy with people but once engaged in conversation he was very interesting. Exceptionally well informed in the various areas of knowledge his co-students referred to him as "The Lexicon". His best friends were his books. The libraries of the various cities seemed to him to be the most interesting places.

He came to Canada a few years before his death. Here he was employed as a professor in the St. Boniface College at what at that time to us seemed to be a very high salary of 250 dollars per month. For some time Letkemann lived with Eskimoes and for some time on an Indian reserve.

Very sensitive to the needs of fellow beings he rendered help where possible and gave part of his earnings to needy students. Those who knew him respected him as a noble person.

In the night from the 13 to the 14th of November, Letkemann turned on the gas in his room. A note on the table informed those that found him in the morning that he was tired of life. mm

its own purposes.

It should perhaps be mentioned that the actual sale of articles during the Art and Music Festival is not permitted by law. However, a donation table will be set up to which exhibitors are requested to donate one or more items. These are to be exchanged for donations to Westgate Collegiate, which will also receive proceeds from admission fees. However, artists may not do any on the spot selling of their work. Instead, they will accept orders for later sales.

In addition to visual arts, the Mennonite Art and Music Festival features choral music, and Yamaha of Canada

has agreed to donate sound equipment. Last year performances were marred by poor acoustics, which was particularly disappointing as some choirs came from out of town. No such problems are anticipated this year, however, and the public may look forward to hearing the Westgate Choir, two M.B. C.I. choirs, the Treble Teens (from Steinbach), the Alumni Group, Sargent Children's Choir, and Springfield Heights Children's Choir.

The Mennonite Art and Music Festival is a combination of art, crafts, music, food and socializing . . . all within easy reach. mm

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## The arrest: Uncle Frank is taken

### Preface:

Those Mennonites who stayed in Russia during the 1930's, through World War II, lived through some of the most difficult experiences that one can imagine. One such person was Wilhelm Janzen, a carpenter and printer living in Winnipeg. Mr. Janzen is preparing a book on his experiences, with the help of Mr. Tony Doerksen who is himself the author of a book, *The Saga of Turtle Mountain Coal*. Readers who would be interested in knowing more about Mr. Janzen's book are asked to write him at 271 McKay, Winnipeg (Tel: 334-4840). In this and the next issue we publish brief installments from this book with Mr. Janzen's permission.

### The Arrest

It was autumn, 1940. The sun had set on a typical day in our peaceful little Mennonite village of Osterwick, nestled prettily on the flats of the Dneper River, about 300 miles north of the Black Sea in Communist Russia.

Having completed the required daily work on the Kolkholz (government farm) we had continued to work hard during our free time to finish the task of gathering in the harvest from the half acre plot of land we could call our own.

Our father had declared fierovent (quitting time) a little earlier than usual that evening and the whole family

had received the news with gladness. Uncle Frank (not his real name) and his three children were staying with us at the time and they joined my parents, my two sisters, my brother and me at uncast (supper).

The lively conversation that preceded grace as we shared the day's experiences reflected the warm and contented atmosphere of our home. As we eagerly looked forward to hearing Uncle Frank read about David in the *Biblische Jischicht* (Bible story book) we casually shrugged off mother's terse comment that she had heard the ominous honk of a car horn in the village late that afternoon (which meant that someone must go to prison).

Then suddenly and without any warning sound of approaching footsteps, four hard knocks in rapid succession shook the heavy door. Quickly my father jumped to his feet and opened it. Before he could ask any questions, two tall light-brown uniformed officers strode briskly into the room accompanied by a civilian. One officer had a rifle slung over his shoulder, the other had a pistol tucked in his holster. The shorter one, an N.K.V.D. officer from Zaporoszhje, about 35 miles southeast of us, barked out a request in Russian for the man of the house to identify himself. My father's immediate response was rudely interrupted as the impatient officer in military roll call fashion sternly an-

nounced my uncle's name and demanded to know if he were present. When Uncle Frank calmly revealed his presence he was immediately commanded to rise and take a separate chair. Terrified, none of us dared to eat another morsel or even to move.

"Do you have any authority to arrest me?" Uncle Frank asked fearlessly as he remained seated.

"Yes I have," the officer countered as he showed my uncle the necessary "papers" which spelled out the "reason" for his arrest. Amongst many other things, the warrant accused Uncle Frank of being a kulak (a well-to-do farmer, who gained his riches during the opening part of the Communist regime), a pope (a preacher) and that he had thrown a stone into a government combine. Of course, my uncle knew that this evidence was fabricated to cover up the real reason: He had talked with the German ambassador in Moscow some months previous regarding the migration of practically all Mennonites living in Russia (numbering about 40,000).

After reading the "warrant", my uncle asked, in a steady voice, if he could finish his supper. He was permitted to do so, and, as he quietly resumed eating, we all joined him. When we were all finished, Uncle Frank took a separate chair as he was commanded.

Presently one of the officers began searching the house while the other

officer — the taller one who was from Chortiza — paced the floor with his gun held firmly in position over his shoulder. My mother gathered enough courage to step forward in an attempt to conceal a box full of confidential letters that could be used as evidence against us to arrest my father. But she was intercepted and rebuffed by the searcher.

"Put that box down," he snapped. Trembling, my mother obeyed.

"I'll look at it later," he firmly announced eyeing her with suspicion.

He began to look through some school books and became so absorbed in his search that he piled book after book on top of the box. My mother's heart grew lighter with each book and when she saw that the box was practically covered she breathed a sigh of relief.

The officer turned his attention to other areas of the house. He searched under the bed, in the drawers, in every room. My mother's persistent watchfulness paid off when the officer permitted her, however grudgingly, to accompany him to the attic (used for storing grain and other necessities) so that it would be impossible for him to create incriminating evidence against us by "finding" a weapon.

Meanwhile, my cousins had all fallen asleep on the bench around the table. Apparently satisfied after three hours of searching that the house contained no offensive weaponry or other "questionable" material, the officer abruptly ended his search and said to my uncle, "Get up and walk out."

"How can I go," my uncle bravely protested. "I have to stay with my family. No one else will care for them."

Infuriated, the officer bellowed, "Get up!"

"Let me at least say goodbye to my children," my uncle pleaded.

"Well, if you insist," mumbled the officer as he glanced over the table. "But make it snappy."

Mother gently awakened my cousins and told us all to go quickly and say goodbye. The tearful scene that followed made a deep impression on my tender heart. My cousins lingered an extra moment in their father's arms as he hesitated to move. At this the officer drew his pistol and shouted with an air of finality, "Get up and walk out!"

As all three marched briskly into that dark, dark night, I wondered along with the others whether we would ever see Uncle Frank again.

Mother ordered us all to bed as she mechanically began to clear the dishes from the table.

We slept somewhat fitfully for the remainder of the night. We eventually got word that Uncle

Frank was languishing in prison at Zaporozhje 20 miles to the southeast. At the same time we found that mother's brothers who had been arrested earlier for some reason were there too. Surprisingly, mother was permitted to visit her brothers three times in that prison.

Although politically things remained quiet around our village after my uncle's arrest, we were occasionally served with a grim reminder through isolated incidents that Communist pressure and agitation was something we had to live with. One such incident involved my father.

One dark cold snowy night while we were sleeping, mother anxiously awaited father's return from the mill. When he arrived home late that night, Mother noticed immediately by the look on his face that something was wrong.

"What happened," she quickly asked.

"Well, I was called to the office and they asked me to buy obligatsia (lottery tickets). The mayor bought 1,000 rubles worth and he asked me to volunteer for 500, but I told him I could not do it."

"Did you sign for 500 rubles worth?" asked mother with a tremor in her voice. "Remember, that is your wages for half a year and you know that you have not enough to feed the children now."

"What could I do?" father pleaded. "Either sign for 500 rubles worth or go to Siberia. What would you prefer?"

"I'd prefer that you stay," she murmured thoughtfully.

#### Signs of Hope

I fervently threw myself into my school work and at the end of the term was awarded a picture of Lenin and Stalin as a trophy for being the best learner in my class. But how could I cherish a picture of the men who were responsible for imprisoning my uncles? Could I forgive them like Jesus forgave his enemies?

One day a prisoner was released from Zaporozhje prison where my uncles and a number of other local people were imprisoned and came to our village. He brought the following urgent message from the prisoners for their relatives: if there was no hope of deliverance from the German army, send each prisoner one onion; if there was some hope, send each two onions; but if the chances of being set free were quite good then send three onions per prisoner.

One day not long after this message came, a group of wives whose husbands were imprisoned there went to the city of Zaporozhje to buy some gifts for

them. My mother accompanied them to buy a gift for her brother. It happened that a woman was selling onions in groups of three at the Bazaar. It seemed to be a suitable gift so everybody bought three onions each and sent them as individual gifts. As soon as they had sent them, they remembered the message the man had given them. They said amongst themselves, "What have we done? We have sent them each three onions, and yet there is no sign of deliverance!" However, almost a year after Uncle Frank's arrest German planes began dropping notes on our village and other surrounding German communities. I found one of these one day when I was walking in the meadow with my friend. It had on it a picture of a Russian soldier who had been taken captive by the German army and was now calling his friends on the Russian side to come over because it was so nice on the German side. We took it home to our parents and the message on it was that we were not to be afraid, the liberators would come in and they would treat us well. Furthermore, the women were to don white "Tuecher" (kerchiefs) during the evacuation so the German pilots would be able to recognize them as refugees. This realistic and extremely practical advice on the type of head gear to be worn for that specific time completed the message of hope.

Meanwhile, Russian soldiers, who patrolled the area in increasingly large numbers constantly boasted that the Germans would be defeated. Their boasting was suddenly changed to alarm, however.

Some German planes were challenging the Russians in dog-fights over our village. So, while our government was warning us to evacuate to the east, we were jubilantly (though secretly) anticipating evacuation to the west — "home" territory — under escort of a victorious German army. We began to prepare for the move under cover of darkness.

A profound reassessment of values occurred as we carefully selected necessities for the journey. Mother looked longingly at the vintage clock hanging on the wall. Brought there from Prussia by her forefathers over 150 years ago, it had become her most cherished heirloom and to part with it was to part with the past.

As we crammed supplies and belongings into a horse-drawn wagon, which we shared with four other families were made painfully aware of the fact that the time had come for us to honour our pilgrim heritage.

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## Reviews

by Lloyd Siemens

Oscar Wilde wrote that "All art aspires to the condition of music." Wilde believed that in music alone the elements of form and thematic content are inseparable, that artistic "manner" and "matter" are fused as in no other art form. There are moments in J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion when this divine fusion becomes a reality: in the many chorales based on the familiar sacred motif ("O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," for example), and in the several numbers in which the words "spoken" in recitative or sung in aria become at best superfluous or at worst a distraction from the harmonies that convey, more movingly than any words, the passion of Christ's suffering on the cross.

Since the St. Matthew Passion is generally regarded as the finest expression of this "passion," the listener might expect to find here that fusion of which Wilde wrote. The performance of March 2 by the combined choirs of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (Mr. Henry Engbrecht, conductor), and the Mennonite Brethren College (Mr. William Baerg, conductor), was professionally executed for the most part, but it lacked the evenness and total integration that one might have hoped for.

There was much here for which the conductor, choir, soloists and orchestra should be lauded. Mr. Baerg, conductor of the combined choirs, was thoroughly in command; his cues to both

choir and orchestra were precise and authoritative, and his sense of the rhythmic movement between orchestral interlude, recitative, solo and chorus admirable. With some exceptions, in previous performances of this kind the conductor has concerned himself primarily with containing or "controlling" the choir alone, without displaying a competency in providing cues to the orchestra and without integrating orchestral accompaniment and recitative.

The large choir of nearly 300 voices responded well to Mr. Baerg's direction. The group was obviously well rehearsed; their sense of ensemble, with the possible exception of several stuttering entries early in Part I, was disciplined and exact. I did not think, however, that the choirs captured the bittersweet poignancy of which they sang, and the potential for which is especially prominent in the very first chorus and again the Chorale Fantasia that ends Part I. The tension between sorrow and joy ("The griefs that he for us endureth/How bitter, yet how sweet are they"), was lacking or was too easily resolved. This tension can be conveyed partly, at least, through a variation in dynamics (within individual chorales, for example), but this variation was missing in the performance. For all his energetic coaxing, Mr. Baerg could seldom muster more than a fortissimo from his mass choir. The choral singing, I felt, was overly re-

spectful and subdued.

The drama that was missing in the chorale singing was provided in abundance by the two principal soloists — William Thiessen as Jesus, and Arthur Janzen as the Evangelist. Mr. Thiessen's singing was both technically professional and dramatically exciting. He displayed a keen sense of dramatic timing and of musical dialogue. In No. 17, particularly, he exploited the "operatic" moment. He was very much Jesus Christ as Superstar.

Arthur Janzen also projected the sense of dramatic occasion. His pure tenor voice was sharply focused and his longer musical lines were well thought out and lyrically phrased. It was my impression that in the extended recitative passages, especially in Part I, his singing tended to be metronomic, as though he were racing to get all the syllables jammed precisely into the allotted time span. In Part II he allowed himself more liberties with time signature, with the result that his singing conveyed a greater sense of spontaneity.

As a group, the other four soloists were disappointing. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a listener to erase completely any especially memorable previous performance of a work as magnificent as the St. Matthew Passion; it is inevitable that the memory should intrude on his listening and "interfere" with his judgment. All this apart, the four assisting soloists had to be measured, if not against some abstract norm on a fine recording, then against the professionalism of the two chief soloists and the orchestra.

Sylvia McDonald has a small voice; her singing was gentle and placid — well suited to the singing of English airs or to the lighter patter of operetta. Peter Koslowsky, tenor, was adequate, but Adelina Willems, alto, showed signs of real strain. The great moment for the alto in this oratorio is the beautiful "Have mercy, Lord, on me" (No. 47), perhaps the most moving of all sacred arias, and this aria was deleted from the program. This deletion might well have been a fortunate one, were it not that the audience had been led to expect a "professionally" staged performance at the Centennial Concert Hall with top ticket prices at \$5.00. Leonard Mayoh, bass, sang earnestly

and with a sense of devotion; unhappily the libretto demanded of him that he sing the lines, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (No. 30). These lines also describe the soloists.

The orchestra, led by concertmaster Eugene Kowalsky, did some of the finest playing that I can associate with Mennonite oratorio performances. Frequently in the past the collective efforts of conductor, choir and soloists have been undone by amateur tone-deaf continuo on the cello, and centrally placed arias have been left off the program. Altogether for lack of competent soloists and instrumental accompaniment. The steadiness of Irmgard Baerg's harpsichord continuo, and the sensitive oboe work of Douglas Bairstow and Peter Wiens, did much to unify the program.

This performance marked one of the highlights of the annual Mennonite "music calender." A great deal of hard work and dedication was required to

make it possible, and these qualities contributed to an enjoyable evening of sacred music. However, the performance (and the choirs should not be implicated here, since their competence is well known to most music lovers), again raised a matter of policy that has haunted ambitious Mennonite artistic productions for decades. Will our colleges aim for a consistent standard of professionalism in their performances — and, in so doing, integrate non-Mennonite professionals into their performances with some ruthlessness — or will they patch and mend as best they can, drawing mainly on their own musical resources? The concert of March 2 was a compromise, with the result that some of the soloists were unable to match the quality of the rest of the performance. The ultimate decision on "artistic policy", when and if it is made, will have to take into account both hard economic considerations and a strong ethnic pride. **mm**

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## Grandmas are forever

Sketches of a Steinbach Past  
by Al Reimer

When I was a boy I used to envy those of my friends who were lucky enough to possess real live grandfathers. Both of my grandfathers had died years before I arrived on the scene, and it remains one of the great regrets of my life that I was not privileged to know them. Both, I've been told were remarkable men in their own way, although they were as different from each other as my grandmothers were. I can reconstruct their personalities only from family hearsay, but they have long been living presences in my imagination even though I lack the vivid memories of them that I have of my grandmothers.

My paternal grandfather, Johann R. Reimer, was a young married man of 26 when he settled down in Steinbach in 1874. (In my first sketch I inadvertently referred to him as single at this time.) His homestead was on the site now occupied by Loewen's Garage. After his first wife died and left him with four small daughters, Grandfather Reimer married Aganetha Barkman, a young girl of 19 who subsequently became my grandmother. Grandpa Reimer was a quiet, dignified-looking man whose shoulders were permanently stooped from the hard work he had done all his life. His keen, dry wit is illustrated by a remark he made just a few days before his death when he weighed himself for the last time. His

lengthy illness had reduced his once sturdy body to a pitiful 101 lbs. As he stepped off the scales he is reported to have said: "Na, joh, nu waut hundat enn eint bould ut senne."

My maternal grandfather, Jacob K. Kehler, was known far and wide as "Berliner" Kehler. How he came to acquire this odd nickname was entirely in keeping with the character of the man. Apparently, the neighbors began calling him "Struck" Kehler because of the abundant scrub bush on his farm. Realizing that in a tight-knit little community where there were only a few family names a nickname could not be avoided, Grandpa Kehler shrewdly began to refer to himself as "Berliner." The name caught on and the original nickname was forgotten. After all, like the rest of the 1870's immigrants, Grandfather had passed through Berlin on his way to Canada, which in his eyes gave him at least some claim to the place. Besides, he talked like a man who had not only been to Berlin but to most of the other important places in the world. As a teller of tall tales and master of the "put-on" he was, by common report, unmatched throughout the length and breadth of the Reserve.

Grandfather Kehler farmed at Ebenfeld (just north of Mitchell), a few miles from Steinbach. For many years he was the district weed inspector, a

job that no doubt gave him many opportunities to exercise his talents as a wit and raconteur. He spoke fluent Yiddish and for years the many Jewish pedlars who came out from Winnipeg would stay at his home overnight. In fact, family tradition has it that Grandfather Kehler could get by in seven different languages. His lively personality and linguistic ability, combined with the fact that he was one of the first men in the district to drive a car, made him an invaluable canvasser and campaign organizer for various political candidates. When "Berliner" Kehler died in 1923 after a long bout with cancer, he left behind him eight sons and two daughters, most of whom were almost as effervescent and talkative as he had been. By all accounts Grandfather Kehler was a fascinating man, and I have met older people in the Steinbach area who recalled him with headshakes and chuckling nostalgia.

My two grandmothers, whom I got to know so well as a boy, I took completely for granted, of course. For one thing, they looked and acted the way grandmothers were supposed to look and act — Mennonite grandmothers anyway. To me they looked old and wrinkled, but they still had the willingness and energy to cater to the whims and demands of a small grandson, and that's all that mattered to me then.

In appearance they were not in the least like the smart, youngish-looking ladies who pass for grandmothers these days. My grandmothers wore long, dark, shapeless dresses, as well as assorted underskirts and the inevitable aprons; they also wore the black lace caps or heavy, dark babushkas that were still traditional with elderly Mennonite matrons of their generation. Above all, they were ceaselessly at work, always doing something with their hands — except when they sat in chiselled repose in church on Sunday mornings, or when they indulged in the luxury of a leisurely "Faspa" with company. They were grandmothers one could rely on to be there when needed — quiet and efficient and endlessly helpful. I cherish their memories from a full and grateful heart, boyish nuisance that I must have been to them much of the time.

Grandmother Reimer (Mrs. Johann R. Reimer) lived on the family farm a mile east of town with my two maiden aunts and my uncle, the late K. J. B. Reimer, and his family. Grandmother was the most self-reliant person I have ever known. A widow since her mid-fifties, she continued to run her farm as efficiently as it had been run when her husband was alive. In fact, this remarkable woman did a man's work around the farm until she was close to 70. She then retired to a small house in Steinbach, where she continued to keep physically active by "bucking" and splitting firewood and milking the cow she had brought from the farm. She remained healthy and active until the day she died at 74, and when the end came, it came like a clean, swift stroke of the axe she loved to use. She split a cord of firewood in the afternoon, ate a good dinner and died peacefully that night.

I remember Grandma Reimer best when she was still on the farm, before I started school. I loved to follow her

around as she went about her chores in and around the barn (the field work she left mostly to my uncle by that time). She spoke very little but there was a strength and serenity about her that even a child could sense. She was one of those people whom one loves to watch at close range; within her immediate orbit one could believe in the inevitable rightness of things. In her peasant kerchief, man's jacket and long skirts she was as securely the mistress of her stable as any fine lady is of her tea table. Her element was her farm and her faith was to be — to be as simply and unaffectedly as the wind and rain and sun. I never saw her excited or angry or even flustered. To look at her face was to look at features carved in granite but illuminated from within by a Christian faith as uncomplicated as it was enduring. She had the strength of character that results from a proper tension between great pride and great humility. Her simple dignity and compassionate nature were as real and visible as the mansized calluses on her work-forged hands.

For all her masculine strength and work habits, Grandmother Reimer had retained her femininity and domestic skills as well. In my dog-like attachment to her being, I took her outdoor skills for granted, but her culinary skills always surprised me a little. Sometimes, when she had finished her morning

chores on the stroke of noon (she didn't need a watch or clock to tell her the time) she would stride back to the house, express her intentions about lunch to my aunts and then proceed to whip up a batch of paper-thin pancakes or crips waffles. She would do her cooking with the same quiet dispatch and economy of movement with which she pitched hay or shovelled manure.

The most amazing side of Grandma Reimer's life, however, was one that I wasn't even aware of as a boy. For many years she was the only professional midwife in the Steinbach area, and her own records show that she delivered 600 babies during her career. Not long after her marriage the church had sent her to Minnesota for a course in midwifery. After that, she would go out in all weathers, at any time, to deliver babies, including the babies of many non-Mennonites in the area. Often she would venture out at night with rough-looking strangers who required her services for their wives. Next day, or several days later in many cases, she would return, serene as always, and resume her work at home. Often, she would make one or more follow-up calls, taking with her noodle-soup and other provisions for the new mother. For all this professional and personal attention she charged the grand fee of a \$1.50 — regardless of time, distance or trouble. In all her years as a midwife

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she lost only one mother. I literally owe my life to her, for she delivered me as well as two of my three sisters and my brother. She had 10 children herself, all spaced between two and three years apart, and it probably never occurred to her to wonder which came first — her home or her career. Her midwifery was her Christian mission and her farm and family were her life, and that, I truly believe, was how simple and profound things were for my Grandmother Reimer.

My maternal grandmother Mrs. Elizabeth Kehler was in many respects the opposite of Grandmother Reimer. Grandmother Kehler had also been a widow for many years and she lived in our home throughout my boyhood (my mother was her younger daughter). Grandma was a tiny lady who usually wore a black cap, a black dress and the soft felt slippers (Schlorre) she needed for the pain in her bad legs. How well I remember not only the look but the feel of her small, lined face with the delicately etched skin drawn tightly over her high cheekbones.

In our household Grandma was the cook and baby-watcher while my mother did the cleaning, sewing and preserving. At the table, the infants in our family were always fed by Grandma, once they were old enough to tackle solids. Cradling us comfortably in her lap, she would follow the ancient peasant custom of pre-masticating morsels of food which she would then pop deftly into our straining mouths. Baby foods? She had never heard of them and would probably have regarded them as unnatural and unhealthy if

she had.

Grandma Kehler was a quiet, uncomplaining lady who seemed to be happiest when she was bustling about our large, old-fashioned wood kitchen stove or when tending our huge vegetable garden in warm weather. Her life on the family farm near Mitchell had been no bed of roses and she was used to hard work. Like my other grandmother, she had 10 children — eight sons and two daughters. All her children lived within a 10-mile radius of Steinbach and there was hardly a day that one or more of them didn't drop by to say hello, for they were all deeply devoted to her.

One of the things that impressed me most about Grandma Kehler was her stoical capacity to bear the pain and physical discomfort that constantly plagued her days. Her bad case of varicose veins had never received proper medical attention, with the result that she had to keep her legs tightly wrapped to the knees in strips of cotton that looked like a soldier's puttees. When she unwrapped her dressings, the purple blotches and suppurating sores on her lower legs shocked my boyish senses. Yet she never complained and remained on her feet for a full working day. When the pain got to be unbearable she would retreat briefly to her little room (really just a curtained-off corner of our living room) where she would open her large, wooden chest and take out her bottle of Alpenkraeuter. Sometimes she would also give me a tiny sip and I would share her misery in silent sympathy.

Her coolness in a crisis was dramatically and painfully illustrated during a

thunderstorm one summer night. When the storm broke Grandma got up to close the window in our dining room. Groping in the dark, she brought the window down so sharply that the pane shattered and a sharp dagger of glass pierced the artery in her leg. When I entered the room moments later the first thing I saw was an ugly, spattered trail of bloodstains running across the floor and up the wall right to the ceiling. While my father frantically tried to phone the doctor amidst the blinding sheets of lightning and claps of thunder, Grandma sat calmly and uncomplainingly in a chair with her finger tightly clamped over the hole in her leg.

But life for Grandma Kehler was not all pain and suffering; it also offered her its pleasant moments of relaxed enjoyment. She dearly loved to entertain an old friend or two at "Fas-

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pa" — especially on a weekday afternoon when the house was quiet and relatively free of pesky grandchildren. The intimate little Faspas she prepared for her close friends never varied in format: they consisted of slices of brown bread (Bulkje) — preferably still warm from the oven so that the pats of home-made butter would soak into its fragrant texture — and freshly-baked, delicately crusted Zwieback served with slices of mild local cheddar cheese and home-made jam. For dessert there were the small, store-bought ginger-snaps which she kept hidden in her chest to protect them from marauding grandchildren. All these delicacies were, of course, served with cup after cup of strong, unsweetened coffee.

Of her many "Faspa" friends the one I remember best was old Mr. Funk — probably because he presented the most unusual appearance to my childish eyes. I was fascinated by his face and voice. His face was very large and his lower lip was thick and pendulous. Across that lip rumbled a bass voice of massive size and sonority. But Mr. Funk's most arresting physical feature was his hair, for the old gentleman had discovered a way of defeating baldness by letting his hair grow out in the back and combing it forward across his shiny dome. His bangs in front were much like my own, I decided, except that his were more straggly and uneven. When

Mr. Funk was a guest, I always felt very protective towards my grandmother, as though she were being threatened by a force quite beyond her strength to resist.

In contrast to Grandma's quiet little Faspas, there were gatherings of the Kehler clan at our house that for sheer noise and size and just plain turbulent chaos surpassed anything I have ever experienced since. Some of these family social events were planned in advance — like the Christmas gatherings or Grandma's birthday parties. Others just sort of happened — usually on Sunday afternoons — when one or more of my Kehler uncles and their families descended upon us from their farms around Steinbach. With the exception of the oldest two brothers — Jacob and George — who were rather sedate and less vocal than the rest, the Kehler boys were the most animated, conversationalists, the most boisterous laughers and kibitzers it has ever been my good fortune to encounter. Our small house trembled and shook with their loud bellows, their heaving waves of mirth and cries of simulated astonishment as they told each other ever more whopping lies and outrageous anecdotes.

Being at one of these gatherings of the Kehler clan was like being caught on the top floor of the Tower of Babel, except that here everyone spoke the same language and everyone spoke at once. My uncles needed no artificial stimulants like wine or other alcoholic beverages. Whenever any two or more of them got together they immediately went into vocal highgear, as though on cue from an invisible stage director. In fact, somehow the spirit of the inimitable "Berliner" Kehler always seemed to hover over this social bedlam. He would have been proud of his sons in full cry, eyes rolling, neck veins bulging as they leaned forward for another merry sally, threshing sunflower seeds in a steady stream and cracking nuts with their strong fingers as their wives and children surged and streamed around them in one happy, excited mass of humanity.

In the eye of this social hurricane sat Grandma Kehler, the guest of honor, usually looking a little lost and apprehensive amidst the din, probably wondering whether the women folk in the kitchen were keeping the stove properly stoked or whether they had put the proper spices into the noodle soup. Dressed in her Sunday finery, she was expected to sit still for once and let younger members of the family complete the food preparations. Had she been given a choice she would probably have preferred to bustle around the stove herself while the Kehler women, most of whom were as talkative as their husbands, regaled

each other with their own feminine brand of gossip and playful banter. Meanwhile, the numerous grandchildren — most of the Kehlers had large families — spread through every room of the house, twittering and poking, laughing and talking in easy imitation of their elders.

And then, finally, they would all be gone and the walls and ceilings of the house stopped reverberating and came to rest again. And the silence would be deafening as you crunched your way through the solid carpet of sunflower and peanut shells that covered the living room floor and flowed out beyond to the kitchen, dining room and hallway. Granny Kehler, still looking a little stunned, would sigh and reach for the broom while my mother deplored the look of the place and my father sat reflecting and trying to sort out in his mind some of the jokes, affectionate insults and tall tales to which he had been subjected during the day. mm

(NEXT MONTH — PART 3: "FROZEN TOES AND RUBBERBAND GUNS")

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# Wrought with Greatest Care



by Hilda Matsuo

As the Industrial Revolution advanced, old ills were oft removed while new ones germinated. Written large among these ills is the knowledge that the average man lost the opportunity of taking personal pride in his handiwork. Daily, the next "guy's" machine fashions as efficiently and swiftly, as his, equally impersonal objects. Where, in the shuffle, is the skilled artisan of yesterday, who 'wrought with greatest care, each unseen part'?

He was born in South Russia 75 years ago. After spending most of his working life bent to the arduous task of shaping, finishing and refinishing fine furniture, Mr. Nicholas Dirks is busy still. Today his creative hands may execute in oils, a favorite mountain scene, a woodland glade. One sees in a delicate water color of his earlier days, an interior of a Russian peasant home, that innate artistry which seeks constantly for a form of expression.

It has been said that many Mennonites are ready enough to recognize painting and music as true expressions of art while failing to recognize the skilled craftsmanship of the artisan. Whether or not this failure of that cross-section of Mennonites to recognize the skilled craftsman is connected with the peculiarities of the development of furniture styles, or whether it pertains to the transcendence of the existence of many Mennonites in the past, is open to question. Whatever the case, Mr. Dirks' customers for the most part were non-Mennonites.

Mr. Dirks himself has seemed to favor the beauty of styles like that of Duncan Phyfe, who fashioned his furniture after the period of Sheraton and



Mr. Dirks and his handcrafted cabinet

other English cabinetmakers like Hephlewhite and Chippendale, latter 18th century craftsmen renowned for their creative energy in the field of furniture making and interior decoration. Perhaps, in a way, he was surrounding himself with the beauty he found about him in the palatial homes of that beloved South Russia of earlier days.

Apart from his inspiration, what makes a craftsman? For Mr. Dirks it was an inherited bent plus early opportunity to exercise an inventive mind and a quick eye for design in his father's factory for the manufacture of seed cleaners. Perhaps his sure eye was particularly sensitive too, to detail, by means of compensating for a distinct hearing loss, the aftermath, of a bout with scarlet fever in early childhood.

However, "Man proposes, God disposes," or more aptly in German, "Der Mensch denkt, Gott lenkt," Young Nicholas Dirks proposed to enter some profession after completion of high school in Kiev, as did his elder brothers, later to be banished to imprisonment in Siberia. Happily Nicholas chose a path which led to freedom and quiet comfort for himself, his charming wife and six children.

Fleeing the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, he arrived in Manitoba during the fall of 1925. As did so many immigrants, he turned his hands to whatever task he could perform. After an abortive attempt at farming (no threshing in the fall of 1926) he made his way to Winnipeg, eventually finding employment at Quentin McKay's which specialized in the refinishing of fine antiques. After Quentin McKay closed shop some 15 years later, Mr. Dirks continued to work with furniture, fashioning 'one of a kind' 'period' pieces for customers and members of

his growing family.

To enable him to shape the gleaming oval mahogany mirror frames, beautifully inlaid with burl walnut, he designed a machine with a special swinging action. To aid the bending and shaping of woods and for gluing veneers, he designed another device.

From here on in, one must almost speak the language of the artisan to understand the intricacies of workmanship and painstaking toil which develop wood into a piece of art. There is talk of solid mahogany woods, crotch veneer mahogany, the careful matching of veneers, Italian provincial legs, channeled legs, carving and polishes. There are several recipes for French polish alone: white French polish, export French polish, finest French polish. French polishes are a thing of the past. Not only is the work involved too time consuming, special shellacs are no longer available. Why? People are unwilling to pay for the tender loving care and time-consuming labor that goes into the product.

How can you raise a family by ply-

ing such a trade? You can't really, maintains Mr. Dirks. To augment his income he applied himself to courses in building and over the years, turned his hand to regular building projects, often specializing in such tasks as the construction of stairways in apartment dwellings and fine homes.

He could and did, however, always return to his first love, the making of fine furniture. No doubt he cherished that glow of quiet satisfaction which arises in a man's heart over a job well done. mm

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# Weep not, we aren't Birches

by Nettie Dyck

Several months ago we moved into hilly country where everyone skis. Up in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Due to three anxious children we decided to take up the sport as a family affair.

Buying the ski equipment takes fittings and money. We decided to go for broke. Some weeks ago the equipment needed to conquer the slopes arrived. The delivery man just dumped it all in the front hall; there I was all alone in the house, hubby at work, kids in school. Wouldn't hurt to try on the boots, would it? They felt anything but comfortable, you have to bend your knees or your legs feel like they are being removed. Undaunted by trivial pains, the skis were attached to the boots. The hallway is not where one emerges with five-foot skis was the conclusion I came to as I opened the door, realizing a six-step descent was

the order for the moment. Numerous attempts later found this homemaker in knots and near tears. Frustration followed by a successful attempt at hiding the skis, all except the childrens'.

Four o'clock came, joyous voices and much activity prevailed as the three children put on their boots and dragging their skis behind them tried out the backyard.

Our backyard has three miniature hills in it, each about six feet high. Perhaps the entire slope is thirty feet, regardless the six year old made it down followed by the older two. They repeated the runs with vim and vigor. Meanwhile, back in the house, their mother was peering through the drapes, amazed at the ease with which the yard was being mastered. Deciding to try again, boots on, skis over the shoulder (saw that on TV once) I e-

merged as a pro. The children cheered "Hey, look at mom!" Little did they know how one feels like Frankenstein in the clod-hoppered feet, especially while the knees are knocking. Smiling I climbed up our backyard and was helped with the skis on the top. "Go, mom, go!" they shrieked, as with bent knees, I started down. Half a second later the weeping birch engulfed me and there we were, the birch and I - weeping.

Much strength was needed by the three onlookers to drag the wreck from the tree. This was ridiculous, must try again. Rick said "Try going down sideways". Eyeing the six foot slope and thinking as Michael sailed past "It's got to be easy!" Taking position, I went down sideways and landed that way also. It felt like the shoulder blades were criss crossing as one lay on the dried up Petunia patch. Up again, Debbie said, "Don't start from the VERY top, try the bottom slope, mom." Eyeing the last, gentle slope, decided here after all was my match. Two minutes later, I found out that there were three steps and the garage door at the end of the run. That did it, back into the house, back to peering through the window, watching our offspring with envy.

Not being satisfied at the aches and pains, we decided to try again later. This time, all I was going to do was ignore the smart alecs and make an attempt at walking up the slope. Instructions were as follows: Stand with your side to the slope, move first ski up, then the other. I did it! Cheers went up and also my "Ahhhhh--" landing once more in the snow colored petunias. You see, one has to forget one's accomplishment. Once on top, one has to concentrate, because skis know only one thing up there - go down. Skis are very anxious to slide, has something to do with their waxed surface, I'm told.

At the present time, the children and their father are pretty good at the sport, and secretly I'm taking lessons starting this week. Lessons are up at Little Red River where there is a tiny lodge set among the prettiest pine treed hills you ever saw. I know I'll make it, the pines are whispering "Weep not, we aren't Birches". (And so ends another saga in the world of the "Over 30s keeping up with the now generation".)

mm

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Tinged with turquoise, scarlet and  
gold,  
It spreads itself like a giant spool  
Of varigated threads, a pattern woven  
to perfection.  
The shuttle speeds its path across the  
western sky,  
Gone, too fast, the fine fibers,  
Fading out of life.  
Gone, too fast, with riotous rapidity,  
The colourful contrast.  
Seams show unravelled reality;  
Scenes unrivalled return.  
Life and sky —  
Nature reads Fate's fable.  
Come, capture the course;  
That splendour  
Is slow to return.

-- by Betty Froese

## RAIN — WIND

As I sit by my window and dreamily  
gaze  
Across the greening fields; it seems a  
haze  
Is gath'ring midst the trees  
In the grove — far side of the leas.  
More shadowy still they seem to grow  
as the rain wind begins to blow.  
He puffs my papers to the floor,  
Rattles the windows and slams the  
door.  
He moans and groans around the  
house,  
Shrieks and screams like a raging  
spouse.  
He compels the willows to bend their  
knees  
then — suddenly drops to a fitful  
breeze  
Slowly, gently he dies in the leaves  
As the first raindrops sound-out the  
eaves.  
The rain is come — the wind has gone  
I gather my papers and stifle a yawn!

by Frances Friesen

## Wer Bin Ich?

Wer bin ich?

Ich bin ein kleines Etwas.  
Ich koste nichts.  
Ich bin mehr wert wie Gold.  
Je oefter du mich brauchts,  
mehr hast du.

Ich oeffne Tueren und Herzen,  
Ich vertreibe Voreingenommenheit-  
en.  
Ich mach Freunde.  
Ich flosse Respekt und  
Bewunderung an.  
Ich bin immer will-  
kommen.

Ich langweile niemanden.  
Ich breche keine Gesetze.  
Niemand verbannt mich.  
Ich bin jedem angenehm  
Ich bin unentbehrlich.  
Wer bin ich?  
Ich bin die Hoeflichkeit.

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A portion of a letter written by Heinrich Wiebe to John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, in 1886 describing an aspect of his work at Edenburg near Gretna.

Sie überredete ich die meiste der Kinder von  
Jacob Hamm. Sie so gut und ich bin müde  
davon, um die Zeit zu sein, die Zeit ist Geld, und  
meinem bequiem. Ich bin die beste Arbeit, Geld  
zu geben, Sie in meinem Dorf nach dem Namen  
Hamm. Ich Jacob Hamm ganz wichtig. Ich  
Hamm das Geld nicht aufgeben die Arbeit zu  
sein. Ich bin die beste Arbeit zu sein.  
Heinrich Wiebe wohnt in Edenburg

by Lawrence Klippenstein

## An early Mennonite pioneer

Heinrich Wiebe 1839 1897

Recently Manitoba's Premier Ed Schreyer visited the Soviet Union to conclude a business deal with his own government in the province. Rev. Gerhard Lorenz a well-known Mennonite teacher and minister, accompanied the premier as adviser and interpreter along the way. The affair was well-timed, if inadvertently, to recall for Manitoba Mennonites a rather unique relationship between that country and their own, a contact now almost exactly one hundred years old.

During the 1870's, an era of reforms, the Russian people found themselves caught up in a course of dramatic change. The 50,000 or more Mennonite residents in that country could not, despite their relative isolation, altogether escape the impact of the new forces let loose around them. The proposed new military law, calling for universal conscription, seemed the most threatening aspect of what was projected for the years ahead.

By 1870 Cornelius Janzen, a Mennonite grain-buyer and former Prussian consul of Berdyansk, had heard about the conscription plans. Almost immediately he began to investigate emigration possibilities. The whole matter became common knowledge during the next year, and the failure of Mennonite delegations to gain a clear hearing for their protests, quickly made emigration an attractive option for large numbers of colonists who feared

### Forward

One hundred years ago a small Mennonite delegation was sent from Russia to North America to explore the possibility of a Mennonite migration. This laid the basis for the 1874 migration to Manitoba, whose 100th anniversary will be observed next year. In preparation for this the *Mennonite Mirror* plans to publish several historical articles this year and next, casting more light on the persons who

helped in that important movement. One such person was Heinrich Wiebe, whose life is described here by Lawrence Klippenstein of the Elim Christian Center. Mr. Klippenstein is a graduate in history. He will be writing several articles for the *Mirror* on the subject of the 1874 migration and on persons who have participated. We invite readers to submit original articles and documents on this subject which we may publish in future issues.

the outcome of the law.

That Heinrich Wiebe, of the Bergthal Colony, should become a leading figure in the emigration would have occurred to few, least of all to himself. His home community, Bergthal village, and those of Schoenwiese, Schoenthal, Heuboden and Friedensthal, all begun after 1836, had by this time become a settlement of nearly 250 families residing in the area for two decades or more. Many remembered the moments of their first arrival from the Old Colony, Chortitza and, though there were hardships, there was hardly a thought for most that soon they might want to move on.

Born to Gerhard and Agatha Wiebe on September 28, 1893, the year that Heuboden was begun Heinrich entered the world at the time of fresh beginnings for the Mennonite settlers of this region. Temporary crude shelters provided the first homes. Most farming operations were done by hand. The efforts of Johann Cornies to initiate agricultural and educational improvements apparently touched the new Colony little if at all.

Thus Wiebe no doubt attended the simple school of his time. Using stone slates the children sat on benches too high for their short legs. The teacher was untrained, though concerned to train the children, if nothing else teach them discipline at least. The Bible, the *Lesefibel* and the catechism or hymnbook were the main texts for the few years that most students spent there together. This was no education in the professional sense of the word, but, as has been said, this school working alongside many dedicated illiterate parents "perpetuated the inheritance of the fathers, a frugality of living and a strangely folksy wisdom and philoso-



Mennonite Delegation in front of Dominion Lands Office, Winnipeg, June 18, 1873. Courtesy, Manitoba Archives.

phy of life" that has lived on.

In 1859, as a young man of 20, Heinrich married Margaretha Falk of Schoenthal, the neighboring village not far from the Berda River. Able to buy some land, Wiebe became one of the favored members of his group, since only slightly more than half of the heads of families were privileged to possess and cultivate a plot of their own.

Five years later, in 1864, he was ordained as deacon in the local congregation, and a year later became a minister there. In the plain, probably unpainted meeting house at Bergthal, the only church building in the settlement, he regularly joined the *Vorsaenger*, and the other ministers, frequently including his brother, Gerhard Wiebe, the elder of the colony. He would take his turn reading the sermon (so-called *Vermahnung*), with its prayers, and sang with the others from the *Gesangbuch* "vom ollen Behl."

Though little is known about his activities at the time, there is evidence that Wiebe did emerge as a genuine leader. When the talk of immigration

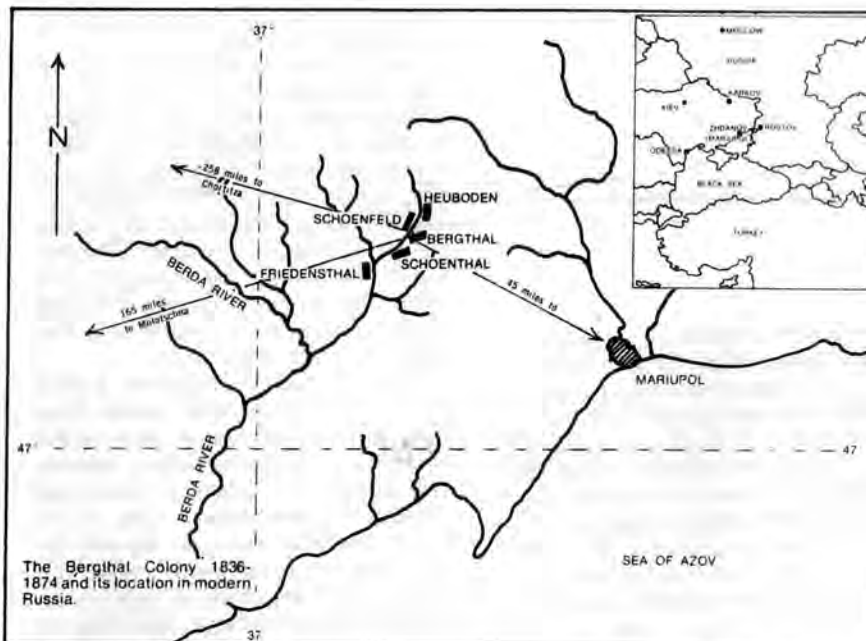
began to mount, and the Bergthal people themselves became involved in the discussions Wiebe found himself in the thick of it all.

In 1872 he was asked, along with several others to meet with William Hespeler, an Canadian immigration agent, then visiting the country, to discuss the possibilities of travelling to Canada to look for land. From this meeting came the decision to send a Mennonite delegation to North America, as it were "to spy out the land". Chosen to represent the Bergthaler in this group were the *Obserschultze* Jacob Peters and *Prediger* Heinrich Wiebe. Joined by a third person, Cornelius Buhr, the three left the settlement in February of the year, 1873, a trip which would have far-reaching consequences for themselves personally and their people as well.

What Heinrich Wiebe and Jacob Peters, with their travelling companion, Cornelius Buhr, would find on their journey, no one could quite guess. But the Bergthal congregation of South Russia bid them farewell on February 26, 1873, and eagerly awaited their return.

Setting out from the little Russian station of Jelonovka, the men proceeded to Berlin and Hamburg, Germany, and finally to Liverpool in England where they boarded an ocean liner for Canada. They spent 11 days on the Atlantic, and after docking in Halifax, made their way to Montreal. Serving as guide and interpreter for the trip was Jacob E. Kotz, an immigration agent of the Canadian government.

In Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario, the group met other Mennonites, including a well-to-do businessman, Jacob Y. Shantz, who had already given much time and energy to help the government negotiate Mennonite migration to Canada. That very year Shantz had submitted a report on his travels in Manitoba, published as *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba* by the government. Shantz may well have recommended the stop at Elkhart, Indiana, when the deputation moved on southward into U.S. territory, before



going west.

In the 1873 May issue of Herald of Truth, John F. Funk, editor, reported "Three of the brethren from Russia . . . arrived here in Elkhart on the 23rd of April, and spent with us two days."<sup>2</sup> Wiebe had the chance here to speak at the Mennonite meetinghouse before leaving for Chicago.

Across the Atlantic, at this time, four other Russian Mennonite delegates were just leaving on an ocean liner on the Elbe to go via the North Sea and the English Channel to America. It was their plan to meet the others in the 12-man delegation being sent from Russia, so that in the U.S. and Canada they could continue a major investigation together.

One of their number, Paul Tschetter, of the Hutterian Brethren recorded their experiences in detail.<sup>3</sup> On Monday, May 7, they disembarked at New York, and left that night for Elkhart, Indiana, where they also called at the home of John Funk. Funk's earlier correspondence with the Russian Mennonites made him a valuable contact man in the New World.

Funk, also a minister of the Old Mennonite Church, invited his guests to church, Tschetter, noting many new features of practice and belief, could not help commenting on what he saw. "The style of dress among the men is conservative. Their coats are somewhat short with buttons on the trousers and vests. The young men are well-dressed, wearing breast shirts with green or blue neckties. They part their hair in the middle like we do and some part their hair on the side. Most of the men wear beards. The women are dressed in a variety of styles and colors. Some wear white knitted caps with lace in front. Others wear hats of various colors.

Girls wear straw hats with long ribbons. Some are dressed in white, others in blue, black, red, etc. The small children are also taken to church services, some sitting on their mother's lap while others walk around . . . The Old Mennonites address each other as 'brethren' and 'sisters'. The ministers are elected just as we do and are finally chosen by lot . . . They spoke mostly the English for that is the language they study in school. They can speak only a broken German, even one of the ministers was unable to speak in German."

On May 24 the Bergthal delegates, Wiebe and Peters, met up with Tschetter and his companions — his uncle Lohrenz, also of the Brethren, and Cornelius Toews with David Klassen from the *Kleingemeinde* in south Russia. In St. Paul the remaining delegates — Leonard Sudermann, Jacob Buller, William Ewert, Andreas Schrag and Tobias Unruh — teamed up with

them as well, as did the Elkhart Mennonite minister, John F. Funk, to make the trip north to Manitoba.

Apparently Wiebe and Tschetter soon found they had things in common. In the morning of May 26, as they made plans to leave St. Paul, they found themselves walking side by side, "Wiebe helping me carry my baggage" in Tschetter's words. The latter went on, "On the way we talked about non-resistance and how he liked the country here. He said the country did not appeal much to him, and after all the question of military service is the most important. He thought that it would not be possible to secure total exemption from military service in the United States, but that the English government would be more liberal and grant a Charter guaranteeing exemption from military service which was better than what this country could offer."

Tschetter was moved by these remarks. "He spoke very sensibly so that I immediately learned to love him. He said that one should not only consider the language question but also not forget the matter of freedom, for that is the reason why they came to this country and are making this long

journey.

Five days later they arrived in Fargo, North Dakota, and on June 1, wrote Tschetter, "we began our journey on the ship . . . at two o'clock in the afternoon we departed from Moorehead down the Red River to Manitoba, 12 of us brethren from Russia." By five the next morning they were opposite Upper Fort Garry, stepped off the ship, and "walked to the city which was one-half mile from the river . . . Winnipeg."

Here, in a growing prairie city of 3,000, the "twelve brethren from Russia" spent their first night at the Davis Hotel, before meeting government officials the following day. Among the first to reach them was the Canadian land agent, William Hespeler, who then introduced the men to Lieutenant-Governor Green at Government House. From there they walked over to the Provincial Treasury to meet other dignitaries: Premier H. J. Clark, T. Howard, J. Norquay, minister of agriculture, A. G. N. Bannatyne, Sheriff Armstrong and two reporters from the *Manitoba Gazette* and the *Manitoba*, Brokowski and Lynn.

No hosts could have been more

### on The Lighter Side ...

... We should all ponder the communication abilities of Col. Saunders of fried chicken fame: "I'm not so good at interviews," he said recently, "because I was a sixth grade dropout and my vocabulary isn't that big and since I stopped cursing, it was cut in half again."

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cordial — the 12 ate and drank well, and heard glowing reports of the potential of the province to which they had come. After another brief tour through the city, they prepared to survey the surrounding prairie, the real objective of their coming.

With a dozen escorts of one kind or another, the delegates first had their wagon caravan head out toward the southeast. Heavy rain hit them in the afternoon — by which time they had made only a dozen miles or so. They lost their way, and spent hours walking in mud, till at sundown, they reached an Immigration House near the present site of St. Anne. At first rebuffed in seeking hospitality, they found shelter finally in a Hudson Bay Company store nearby.<sup>5</sup> Sudermann, another diarist, declared the warm supper, and the beds offered them, "very good".

Travelling on next morning, and the following day, they found the soil types and water supplies that would be needed for settlement in the region. But the nights were hot and humid, and the mosquitoes beyond words. John Funk, writing to his wife, complained bitterly about these discomforts, confirming his cherished opinion that the U.S. was by far the more desirable. He with five others resolved that night to leave Manitoba immedi-

ately and return to the U.S., which they did as soon as they could get away.

The others, however, decided to take another look. Back in Winnipeg they now turned to the west, going as far as the Riding Mountains and shifting back then to Lake Manitoba, an area with which they were indeed well pleased. On this stage of the trip a brush with a hostile Metis group brought some publicity and considerable discomfiture which they would have gladly avoided. There was talk that someone might be killed, and Hespeler promised that night to guard his guests himself. A message was quickly sent to bring in a battalion to settle the dispute. With Riel in deep trouble, and the Indian-Metis settlers of the area fearing loss of their lands, nerves were taut and the presence of strangers was alone sufficient to bring on a fight.

Still, the delegates, four of them at least — Wiebe and Peters of Bergthal, and Klassen, as well as Toews — had made up their minds that Manitoba would be their place. In July, that summer, J. H. Pope, federal minister of agriculture, received official notice of this decision. A letter came saying, among other things, "We beg to say that we have found the said Province

(of Manitoba) to answer for our future homes and, if it is the wish of God, we will, joined by our Colonists, go to Manitoba and make it our future home . . . We hope by next spring (1874) to begin with the first immigration; and in the probable number of two hundred families . . ." It was signed: Respectfully, your obedient Servants, David Klassen, delegate of Heuboden Colony, Jacob Peters, delegate of Bergthal Colony, Heinrich Wiebe, delegate of Bergthal Colony and Cornelius Toews, delegate of Griefeld(sic) Colony. All in southern Russia.<sup>6</sup>

Ottawa was undoubtedly well pleased. The answering letter was dated within the same week, July 26, '73; and included a 15-point statement of privileges which would be offered to the newcomers; entire exemption from military service by law, reserved land on both sides of the Red River giving every male person 21 years old and over 160 acres of free land, right to buy up to ¾ of a section more for \$1 an acre, right to live in villages or individual farms, the "fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles . . . without restriction", with payment of passage to Fort Garry, from Hamburg, Germany, thrown in.<sup>7</sup>

It seemed like everything they could hope for, and perhaps more. By late August the news swept the Bergthal Colony: Our delegates have returned! Excitement ran high. Eagerly the colonists crowded the homes of Peters and Wiebe to hear about their findings. A meeting called at the church brought a packed house as a thousand or more persons gathered to hear the public reports of the journey. Final decisions were postponed, but the sense of the meeting was clear; the Bergthal people would migrate as a colony to relocate themselves in a Canadian home. mm

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>The life of the Bergthal colony has been described by H. J. Gerbrandt in *Adventure in Faith* (1970), pp. 24ff.

<sup>2</sup>John J. Funk, "The Russian Deputation," *Herald of Truth* (May, 1873), p. 389.

<sup>3</sup>J. M. Hofer, "The Diary of Paul Tschetter," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* V (April, 1931), pp. 112ff, and (July, 1931), pp. 198ff.

<sup>4</sup>Gerbrandt, *op. cit.* pp. 48ff.

<sup>5</sup>The Hudson Bay Company post still standing at St. Anne is presumed to be the location, if not the very structure in which the delegates stayed.

<sup>6</sup>The original German text of the letter is reprinted in excerpts in Ernst Correll, "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Documents and Sources, 1873-1874," *MQR* XXII (Jan., 1948), p. 50

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49



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# Into new Horizons

by Wilmer Penner

*Tommy Turtle is a Mennonite  
He is alive, and well, and teaching  
Physics at the University of Winnipeg.*

David Dueck once used this pseudonym for his column in the local Star extolling the recreational resources of the Turtle Mountain region. It is another sign of the versatile talent of this earnest young educator with the warm sense of humor who is the president of one of Manitoba's few film companies, Dueck Productions.

A slide-show-cum-music mounted while he was at the Winkler Bible School began his lifelong interest in this medium. "It is of absorbing interest once you see its possibilities," he says, "and it attracts the total attention of your viewer." This total audience involvement makes film the ideal form for focusing on his message, for Dave takes seriously the commandment to carry the Christian message to the ends of the earth. This commitment is seen in work such as the TV spot made for the Mennonite Churches called "Isn't it Beautiful?", which combines thanksgiving for the glory of Creation with a very timely anti-pollution appeal: "Let's keep it that way!"

His first full-length movie recorded the excitement of our Centennial year. "The Spirit of '70" has all the big events: the birthday cake, the snowmobile championships, the royal tour, Trudeaumania in Steinbach. But more important, Dave's warm eye has captured the spirit of the people as they work, play, and celebrate. Here the Royal Family is seen, not as symbols of state decked in a remote grandeur, but as a family attending church on a Sunday morning, with father reading the morning scripture. Everywhere

there are delighted children, loosing gay balloons, greeting queens and prime ministers and premiers, storing in the candleglow of childhood-memory the hundredth birthday of the province which is truly "theirs". His delight in the cultural diversity of our people is in the warm gaiety of La Festival du Voyageur that defies our February; in the dancers who proudly proclaim themselves Ukrainian in the Dauphin celebrations, and in the gentle lilt of the young voices of the Mennonite Children's Choir which provides much of the background music for the film. The film ends in the Peace Garden, which has affected his imagination deeply as a symbol of that special part of our Mennonite heritage which we most need to share with our tragically divided world. The effect is notably heightened by flashes of the grim facade of the Berlin Wall, where are focused the most deadly conflicts produced by man's hatred.

His latest feature, "St. Laurent Speaks", records the success of a rural development program jointly planned by the Manitoba Government and that Lake Manitoba community. Like many prairie towns, St. Laurent faced decay as its young people drifted to the greater opportunity they saw in the larger cities; unlike most towns, they determined to do something about it. This film, too, concentrates on the human beings involved. It shows how Metis, French, and Mennonite learned to cooperate for a common goal. It shows the personal quality of small town life as youngsters play ball and the oldsters square-dance and young people have weddings. It shows the close family ties that result from 'together' work and play on the farms. And it shows



*Dave Dueck, at camera, with assistant Waldo Neufeld*

how when this way of life was threatened, the community brought industries to town that would give young people the opportunity to stay at home, to maintain this special way of life. The film starts with a young chap walking out of town strumming the song "I Guess I'm Leavin'," but it concludes with the return of a family to its hometown.

The song was composed and sung by a talented local youth, Guy Dumont. It is in the encouragement given to local talent that Dave sees a special place for the Manitoba-based film company, making it deserving of government support. Dueck Productions hopes to provide a powerful voice for Mennonite aspirations. "Mennonites in Manitoba have been highly successful in the performing arts," says Dave, "but there has been an unfortunate lack of art and literature mirroring and moulding the living culture of our people in this province." He expects that dynamic creativity will result from the 1974 Centennial celebrations of the Mennonite immigration, as we become aware of ourself as a distinctive people on the broad historical canvas. He looks forward to producing a feature film on Mennonite themes, and invites ideas and scripts from interested writers.

Meanwhile, he will be busy with a film record of the highlights of 1974 Centennial events, both in Winnipeg and in the Mennonite Reserves. For David is a man of action, and before he cranks his last reel we can expect a proud contribution from this creative personality. mm

**And Finally . . .**

Communication people at Westinghouse Electric in Philadelphia were happy to receive a letter from an employee who commented on a new plant publication: "Congratulations on your new weekly bulletin; it should help to fill a long-needed vacuum."

**Mirror mix-up**

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A **C A P I T A L** IDEA

The Mirror Mix-Up is back.

After an absence of one month, Mennonite Mirror readers are again invited to puzzle over our popular word game.

The mixed up letters are to be re-arranged into real words, with one letter to be entered into each box. The letters in the boxes with circles in them are to be arranged into an "answer" and entered into the row at the bottom. The cartoon provides a clue to the final answer.

A winner, who will be awarded an appropriate prize, will be selected by means of a draw from among all the correct entries.

Entries should be sent to Mennonite Mirror, 131 Wordsworth Way, R3K 0J6 before April 10.

-----

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# Noch Laewt Plautdietsch - Wann Uck Mau Affens

von Reuben Epp

Wann eena betracht woo 'et met onse scheene plautdietsche Muttasproak en Kanada weinja woat, es mie daut schod. Oba daut's doch vestaendlich, wann wie en Kanada bliewe wua wie 'et soo goot habe enn wua meist aules opp Englisch behandelt woat, daut wie nich emma dietsch raede en bliewe woare. Oba, schod es mie daut doch. Sea schod.

Wann ekj doaraun denkj woo ekj em latzte Joah veschiedne von onse Lied ut aundre Laenda jetroffe hab, enn daut wie ons opp Plautdietsch aus oole Frind unjahoole kunne, es mie dee Muttasproak noch noda jeworde. Denkt mol woo sich daut feehlt wann eena en Leningrad oda Alma Ata oda Bielefeld oda aundatwaeajens sich met soone Lied dolsatte kaun enn sich met daen aus oole bekaunde Frind too unjahoole. Waut es soont doch weat?

Soo jingj mie daut en Russlaund, en Dietschlaund uck en Kanada. Wann wie opp Plautdietsch aunftunge, wea een frindliche Bund jeschlote, enn wie vestunde ons. Oba, wann ekj aun onse Kjinja denkj, dee brinije daut aul nich foadig? Enn daut's mie schod. Sea schod.

Oba, aum schodste es wann onse Lied dee Muttasproak soogoa met Fliet veachte. Doa woat soogoa jesajit daut Plautdietsch too prosst enn too jerinj es. Sull mie dee Muttasproak too prosst woare? Dann musst ekj 'ne sea prosste Haeakunft habe. Nae, met ons Volkj en onse Haeakunft schaem ekj mie nich.

Enn dann send uck soone dee denkje daut wie bloos no'm Huagdietsche hantrachte sulle. Wann onse Lied Huagdietsch leahre welle, es je daut sea scheen. Je mea Sproake eena leaht, je leewa. Oba, huagdietsch send wie nich, plautdietsch send wie.

Wann wie nich plautdietsch weare musste onse Lied nich soo messingsch Huagdietsch raede aus wie doone. Wann een Mennist Huagdietsch raedt, kjannt je ahm irjend een Dommajohn.

Oba, daut's uck nuscht toom Schaeme. Ekj selwst raed Huagdietsch noch vedreihda aus dee measchte, enn ekj moak aul vael Aunstaulte mie baeta entooewe. Doch, Plautdietsch hab ekj jeorwe, daut kjemmt von selwst.

Wann onse Lied Huagdietsch leahre welle, dann mau toq. Daut's aule sea goot. Oba doch nich 'et Oawgoot rutschmiete.

Oba wann Plautdietsch en Kanada langsam utoat, frei ekj mie woo daut en Dietschlaund oppmuntat. Doa woat Plautdietsch noch nich fuats utstoawe, doafaea woat jesorjt.

Too eene Tiet word doa opp 'em plautdietsche velaengd dee Naes jekjikt. Oba nu brinje see doa mea en Beakje enn opp Schaulplote aus je verhaea, enn see finje ut waut fer 'ne scheene Sproak see soo lang veacht habe. Enn dee Beakja enn Schaulplote send noch emma soo kjoanig enn vollstaendig plautdietsch aus een Mol. Natialich send dee Dialekte nich aul kraekt onse, oba plautdietsch send see doawaeajen doch.

Jie Laesa woare Ju' vieleicht interessiere waut en dee Beakja vom Plautdietsche jesajit woat. Ekj hab hia enn poa interessaunte Straemels utjelaese toom Ju' vaeastalle.

Dee easchte Schnett kjemmt ut daut Buak "Plattdeutsch Laewt" von Karl Fissen, 1963:

"Wenn um die Mitte des 19 Jahrhunderts gewisse gebildete Kriese unserer "alten, ehrlichen" Plattdeutschen Sprache als "Hemmnis der Bildung" auch ein baldiges Ende wuenschten, so sollte sie schon kurz darauf neue, dauernde Lebenskraft erhalten, durch die sie, wenn auch nicht mehr ueberall anerkannt, heute noch auf dem Lande und in den Kreisen des taetigen Volkes ihr Heimatrecht erhalten hat."

"Die zeitweise bestehende Auffassung, im dienstlichen Verkehr das Plattdeutsch als respektwidrig anzusehen, muss als ueberholt betrachtet werden."

"Im Hamburger und Bremer Rat-

haus wird von vielen Senatoren die plattdeutsche Sprache bevorzugt."

"Koennten wir wirklich, vielleicht aus Unwissenheit, Gleichgueltigkeit oder gar aus Ueberheblichkeit die Sprache unserer Vorjahen als nicht mehr zeitgemaess, als minderwertig, als "nicht vornehm genug" ablehnen? Wir wuerden zugleich ein wertvolles Stueck unseres neiderdeutschen Wesens missachten und preisgeben."

"Und doch ist sie nachweisbar eben so wie die hochdeutsche eine Sprache fuer sich mit eigenen Gestzen und, sprachgeschichtlich betrachtet, die aeltere Schwester der hochdeutschen. Ihr mit einem Vorurteil zu begegnen, heisst, diese alten deutschen Sprachform, die zur Hansezeit sozusagen als Welt- und Diplomatensprache in Hamburg, Luebeck, Visby so gut wie in Bruegge, Bergen, London und Nowgorod gesprochen wurde, ein schweres Unrecht zufuegen."

"Wenn man heute glaubt, Hochdeutsch sei feiner und vornehmer und der plattdeutsch Sprechende erscheine ungebildet und rueckstaendig, dann ist diese Auffassung unbewusste Verleugnung von Herkunft und Heimat, von Art und eigenen Wesen."

Heinz Holzberg Verlag, Oldenburg, Enn soo saijt Gustav Friedrich Meyer en "Lo'nboerger Doenzen" 1922:

"Holt fast an de plattduetsch Sprak. Se es jues so old un wertvull es er hochduetsch Swester. See hett mal to segg'n hatt in Kark un Gerichtsaal, in Koenigsloss un op de stolzen Hanse-schaep, de den duetschen Namen wied oewer Water dragen hebbt."

"Ja, got is se, uns' plattduetsch Modersprak, riek un von vullen Klang. In er lett sik allens utdruecken, wat doer Kopp un Hart geht in gode un boese Stunden. Se is kort un bestimmt, un lich is se ok; de Kinner snackt er got un richdig."

"Daruem; snackt plattdeutsch allerwegens, wo't man geht. Awer snackt

ni blots plattduetsch, koept un lest ok plattduetsch Boeker. Ji ehrt damit uns' plattdeutschen Dichters, de er best Kraft foer de ol Modersprak insett hebbt, ji ehrt damit ju Sprak un Art, voer all'n awer ok ju suelm."

Verlag von H. Luehr & Dircks in Garding.

Enn dann laes wie noch von Walther Ziessmer en "Die Ostpreussischen Mundarten" 1970:

"Ueber den Wert der Mundarten fuer die Wissenschaft besteht heute kein Zweifel mehr. Es herrscht aber in weiten Kreisen, auch in denen der Gebildeten, noch immer die Meinung, die vom Volke gesprochene Mundart habe einen niederen Rang, sie sei nur die herabgesunkene Sprache der "gewoehnlichen" Leute, von der man sich fernhalten muesse. Dies Vorurteil muss beseitigt werden. Die Mundart ist fuer viele Hunderttausende die Sprache der Mutter und der Heimat, die Sprache in der sie denken und fuehlen und in der ihre Vorfahren seit Jahrhunderten gedacht und gefuehlt haben."

Hausdruckerei Dr. Martin Saendig oHG, Weisbaden.

Enn wann ekj soone Jedanke laes, enn seeh woo dee Dietschlaenda soone scheene plautdietsche Schreffstreckja enn Schaulplote toom Vaeaschien brinje, es mie daut om onse Mutta-spraak aul nich gaunz soo schod. Daut freit mie. mm



### Der Mennonitische Maennerchor

Der Mennonitische Maennerchor, der unter der Leitung von Heinz Cornies fuenf sehr erfolgreiche Jahre erlebte und durch seine Liederabende und Schallplatten in weiten Kreisen der Mennonitischen Bruderschaft bekannt ist, hat nach zwei Jahren der Ruhe wieder die Sangeslust aufgenommen. Der Chor wird in diesem Jahr von John Albrecht geleitet. Schon nach der ersten uebstunde wurde es klar, dass der alte, beliebte Chor nichts an Lebensfreude und Feuer verloren hat. Der Chor singt in diesem Jahr mit 68 Saengern, darunter eine gute Anzahl junger Mennoniten. Es gelang auch wieder eine hervorragende Klavierbegleitung zu finden. Henriette Cornies war bei dem Chor genau so beliebt wie ihr Vater, der den Chor leitete, aber sie studiert zur Zeit in Deutschland. Erna Wiebe, die nun einwilligte mit 68 Maennern fertig zu werden, wurde durch ihr Einfuehlungsvermoegen beim Dirigenten, wie bei den Saengern, sehr rasch genau so populaer. Sie wird nicht wenig zum Erfolg des Chores beitragen.

Am 31. Maerz bringt der Chor seinen Liederabend in dem Auditorium der MBCI, in Winnipeg. Und was soll ich zu den Liedern sagen? — Vor allem: Sie werden nicht enttaeuscht werden, wenn sie den Chor hoeren. Nachdem der Chor bereits 60 Lieder auf Schallplatten gebraucht hat, wir die Auswahl schwerer, aber der deutsche Liederschatz — der reichste in der

Welt — hat noch viel zu bieten. Der Chor bringt uns wieder herrliche Lieder, darunter 14 deutsche, 2 englische, ein russisches und ein ukrainisches Lied, sowie einige ueberraschungen als Zugaben. Es sollte ein bereicherndes Erlebnis fuer Sie werden. Bringen Sie ruhig englische Freunde mit — lieder versteht jedermann. Als ich die beiden College Choere am 2. Maerz 1973 hoerte, sagte ich zu Freunden; An solchen Abenden regt sich so etwas wie mennonitischer Stolz in mir (keine Sorgen, ich meine nicht Einbildung, ich meine Freude an guter Leistung, die durchaus berechtigt ist). Sagt nicht Paulus: "... was ehrbar, was gerecht, was keusch, was lieblich, was wohllautet ... dem d e n k e t n a c h". Die Pflege des guten Gesanges, der Musik, des Schriftstellertums, der Kunst im allgemeinen, ist dem Christentum niemals hinderlich gewesen, im Gegenteil, diese Gaben haben die christliche Gemeinde gestaerkt. Wo sie vernachlaessigt wurden, da ging die Gemeinde unter, die Geschichte zeigt das sehr klar.

Also verpassen Sie nicht den Mennonitischen Maennerchor, wenn Sie am 31. Maerz 1973 in Winnipeg sein koennen. Wenn Sie es aber nicht manchen koennen, dann bestellen Sie sich spaeter die Schallplatte "Liederschatz VI", die der Mennonitische Sprachverein sehr bald herstellen wird.

mm

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# Erinnerungen von David Toews



Tagebuecher des David Toews

(fortgesetzt von Februar)

## Hindernisse zur Einwanderung

Der Delegat A. A. Friesen war im Fruehling d. Jahres 1921 wieder nach Herbert, Sask. gekommen. Was die Veranlassung war, weiss ich nicht. Immerhin hatte er auf seinen Reisen die Ueberzeugung gewonnen, dass wenn unser Volk aus Russland herausgeholt werden sollte, sie nach Canada gebracht werden sollten – wenn die Erlaubnis dazu erlangt werden koennte. Er war mit H. A. Neufeld schon frueher bekannt geworden und dessen Neffe Herman H. Neufeld, jetziger (1934) Editor der Menn. Rundschau sein frueherer Schueler und Freund weilte damals in Herbert. Von Herbert aus korrespondierte er wohl mit s. Freunde Gerhard Ens hier in Rosthern und dieser trat eines Tages mit dem Wunsch an mich heran, Friesen nach Rosthern einzuladen. Ich war nicht dafuer, weil ich keinen Zweck darin sah. Die Prediger unserer Gemeinde glaubten so wie ich.

Im Fruehling 1921 wurde die Frage mehr akut. Ob wir etwas tun koennten, fuer unsere heimgesuchten Brueder in Russland, um ihnen zu helfen eine neue

Heimat zu finden. Wie die Berichte von drueben damals waren, konnte unser Volk drueben in den furchtbaren Truebsalen nicht bleiben. Hier aber bestand seit 1919 eine Kabinettsorder (Order in Council), welche die Einreise von Mennoniten nach Kanada verbot.

Solange dieses Order in Council zu Recht bestand war an keine Einwanderung nach Kanada zu denken, Man wurde durch diesen Umstand vor die Frage gestellt, was zu tun sei, damit dieses Verbot aufgehoben werde. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern auf wessen Veranlassung eine Sitzung einberufen wurde, glaube aber, dass A. A. Friesen die Anregung dazu gegeben. Ich reiste nach Herbert, habe aber vergessen wer mit mir war. Die Sitzung fand in der Kirche in Herbert statt etwa im Mai oder Juni, 1921. Ich sprach mich dahin aus dass ein Versuch gemacht werden sollte, dass das Einwanderungsverbot aufgehoben werde, glaubte aber, dass es zwecklos sei, den Versuch schon gleich zu machen, da eine Wahl zum Parlament bevorstand und die Parteien sich im heissen Wahlkampf gegenueber-

standen. Die Wahlen sollten im Herbst stattfinden. Ausserdem sollte im Juli unsere Konferenz in Herbert tagen, die Konferenz der Br. Gem. in Winkler, Manitoba um dieselbe Zeit. Da waere es kein Zeitverlust, wenn wir diese Frage vor die Konferenz brachten. Dieser Vorschlag fand allgemein Anklang. Die Beratungen waren harmonisch verlaufen. Immerhin war damals schon zu merken, dass damals in unsern mennonitischen Kreisen Befuerchtungen herrschten, wenn es sich um die Einwanderung unserer Brueder aus Russland handelte. Diese Befuerchtungen kamen auch zum Ausdruck als an eine Delegation nach Ottawa gedacht wurde.

Als unsere Konferenz zusammentrat, wurde ich wieder als Vorsitzender gewaehlt, was ich schon seit 1914 immer wieder geworden war. Ich war entschieden fuer Entsendung einer Delegation. Als die Sache zur Besprechung kam, wurden alle einschlaegigen Fragen behandelt, Ich draengte absichtlich nicht zur Eile da ich die Angelegenheit fuer sehr wichtig ansah und es sollte nachher nicht gesagt werden, dass der

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Beschluss in Uebereilung gefasst worden sei. Es wurde ein halber Tag in Anspruch genommen, diese Frage zu besprechen. Ein Br. Thiessen sprach seine Verwunderung darueber aus, dass ein halber Tag mit Besprechung verwandt worden sei. Es wurde schliesslich zur Abstimmung geschritten u. aus ueber sechzig Stimmen wurden zwei gegen Entsendung einer Delegation abgegeben die andern waren dafuer.

Die Abstimmung in Winkler erfolgte auch. Wie mir berichtet wurde, waren dort vierzehn Stimmen dafuer u. zwei dagegen. Die Delegaten von Waldheimer Kreis hatten sich das Recht vorbehalten in ihrem Kreis eine Versammlung anzuberaumen und mir das Resultat nach Herbert telegraphisch zu melden. Vor unserer Abstimmung traf denn auch von Waldheim folgendes Telegramm ein: "Joint meeting July 5th Rosthern district decided not to support decision of Manitoba conference in any of the following questions: Advance of money guarantee morally and financially for emigrants from Constantinopel nor delegation to Ottawa" (David Dyck, Chairman).

Es wurde nun auf unserer Konferenz zur Wahl eines Delegaten geschritten. Ich wurde vorgeschlagen, lehnte aber entschieden ab wegen der vielen sonstigen Arbeit, die in der Gemeinde auf mir lag. Br. H. Ewert war

damals gerade im Osten, wo er die Gemeinden der sogenannten Altmennoniten besuchte. Ich schlug vor, dass er nach Ottawa abdelegiert werde. Dieser Vorschlag wurde angenommen. Dieses bedeutete eine ziemlich Ersparnis an Geld und Br. Ewert wurde allgemein auch als die geeignete Person fuer diese Aufgabe angesehen. Es wurde aber auch als selbstverstaendlich angesehen, dass Br. Friesen die Delegation begleiten sollte. Handelte es sich doch um unserer Brueder in Russland. Wer war da besser informiert als gerade er. Aber wo das Geld hernehmen? Ich garantierte Br. C. K. Unruh, Kassierer im Hilfswerk dass aus unserer Gemeinde wenigstens \$100.00 in die Hilfskasse fliessen wuerde, wenn er aus dieser Kasse Friesen diese Summe einhaendigen wuerde. Er willigte daraufhin ein.

Die Br. Gem. bei Herbert waren auch ganz bei der Sache. Sie hielten Versammlung in ihrem Bethause ab u. beschlossen H. A. Neufeld als ihren Delegaten mitzusenden. Ich versprach meine volle Unterstuetzung. Von Ontario wurde diese Delegation wohl noch von S. F. Coffman von Vineland begleitet.

Das Resultat war, wie es nicht anders erwartet werden konnte. Man hatte Sir George Fasler, den stellvertretenden Premier gesehen der sie eingehend befragt hatte. Dann hatten die Delegaten auch Mr. Wm. Lyon Mackenzie King den Leiter der liberalen Partei getroffen und dieser hatte ihnen das Versprechen gegeben, dass wenn die liberale Partei ans Ruder kaeme, dann wuerde er dafuer sorgen dass das Einwanderungsverbot gegen Mennoniten aufgehoben wuerde. Er kenne die Mennoniten und wisse dass sie zu den besten Buergern des Landes zaehnten.

Br. Friesen ging von Ottawa zurueck nach Bluffton, die anderen Delegaten kehrten heim u. gaben Bericht, Es war also klar, dass nichts getan werden koenne bis die politische Lage sich durch eine Wahl geklaert haben wuerde. Ich muss hier nun ueber meine personliche Lage etwas berichten. Als ich im Jahre 1918 als Aeltester der Rosenorter Gemeinde gewaehlt worden war, hielt ich noch einige Jahre Schule in unserer Fortbildungsschule in Rosthern. Es war aber nicht allein die Schularbeit, die von mir verlangt wurde, sondern ich sollte auch das Geld herbeischaffen fuer die Schule u. dann auch noch laengere Zeit Schriftfuehrer u. Kassierer sein. Die Gemeindearbeit sollte aber auch getan werden. Ich sah ein, dass das so nicht weiter ging, wenn nicht die Schule sowohl wie die Gemeinde darunter schwer leiden sollte. Ich muss uebrigens auch sagen dass ich durchaus nicht ein guter Finanzist bin. Ich konnte vielleicht ebenso gut wie ein anderer Versprechungen erhalten u. glaubte dann in meinem Optimis-

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mus dass die Zahlungen auch erfolgen wuerden. Dieses geschah aber in vielen Faellen nicht. In der Buchfuehrung war ich unerfahren und nicht sorgfaeltig genug. Viele zahlten ihre versprochenen Gelder nicht, manch Schueler, denen es knapp ging, zahlten nicht. Mit dem Geld, das schliesslich einkam, musste ich die andern Lehrer befriedigen. Ich bekam schliesslich, was uebrig blieb. Die Schule geriet in Schulden und auch ich hatte schwere Sorgen wegen meines Fortkommens. Ich sah ein, dass das so nicht ging. Ich machte mich dann vor der Schule frei und wollte mich ganz der Gemeindarbeit widmen, hatte dabei im Stillen die Hoffnung, dass die Gemeinde mich unterstuetzen wuerde. Darin tauschte ich mich. Dann glaubte ich, wenn ich billig Land kaufte u. dann teurer verkaufte, dass ich dadurch so viel verdienen koennte, dass wir leben koennten und ich koennte doch fast meine ganze Zeit der Gemeindarbeit widmen. Aber auch hier wurde ich durch meinem Optimismus getaeuscht. In der Auswahl von Land war ich nicht sorgfaeltig genug. Landagenten hatten leichtes Spiel bei mir. Ich geriet tiefer in Schulden. Die Lage wurde schliesslich fast hoffnungslos. Ueberall hatte ich Schulden und hatte nicht mehr die Hoffnung, die

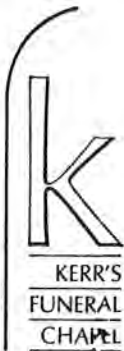
Schulden je bezahlen zu koennen. Der Kredit wurde auch dann noch nicht verweigert, man glaubte mir, man hielt mich fuer aufrichtig, aber um so schwerer wurde mir die Lage. In dieser trostlosen Lage sollte ich Gemeindearbeiten tun fuer die Schule sorgen, finanziell und auch sonst. Hatte dann auch noch die Oberaufsicht fuer die Innere Missionsarbeit. Viel Sorge, Kummer, Herzeleid. In jener Zeit unterschrieb Isaak P. Friesen eine Note fuer mich. Da ich die Note dann nicht bezahlen konnte und der Glaebiger draengte u. drohte gerichtlich vorzugehen, bezahlte Isaak Friesen die Note und ich wurde ihm das Geld schuldig. Friesen war ein wohlhabender Mann, hatte sich auf Geschaefte besser verstanden als ich. Brachte eine Reihe von Jahren jeden Winter in California zu und ich glaubte, dass er mich tragen koennte und wohl auch wuerde. Ich muss nun sagen dass ich mich nicht genuegend um die Schuld bemuehte,

hatte so viele Verpflichtungen anderwaerts. Als dann aber scharfe Meinungsverschiedenheiten auftauchten besonders wegen der Immigration wurde unser Verhaeltnis zu einander gespannt und er erinnerte mich wiederholt an meine Schulden. Er schrieb mir dann Briefe. In einem heisst er, er sehe dass ich nicht zahlen wolle. Ich schrieb ihm, dass das er gluecklichste Tag meines Lebens sein wuerde, wenn ich ihm wuerde die Schuld bezahlen koenne.

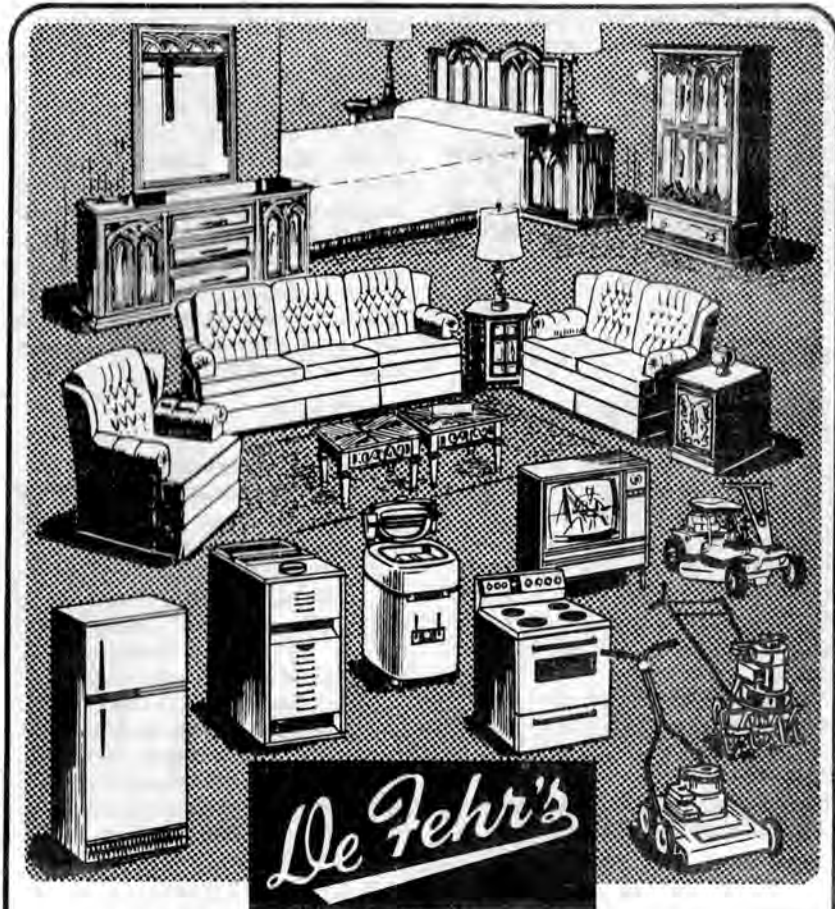
Doch nun wieder zurueck zu dem Hauptzweck dieser Erinnerungen. Die Parlamentswahlen hatten im Herbst 1921 stattgefunden. Die Liberalen hatten gesiegt. William Lyon McKenzie King wurde Premierminister. Jetzt war die Zeit gekommen dass etwas erreicht werden konnte in Verbindung mit dem Einwanderungsverbot gegen Mennoniten.

(Fortsetzung folgt: "Die Kredit Frage.")

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# Manitoba News

## COMING EVENTS

- April 8:** Mennonite Festival of Art and Music at Polo Park Mall.  
Time - 12 - 6 p.m.  
Admission: Adults - \$1.00, Children 18 and under - 50¢.
- May 1:** Westgate Spring Banquet at First Mennonite Church.
- May 26:** Sportsday and Garage Sale at C.M.B.C. Organized by the Ladies Auxilliary of Westgate Collegiate.

## CONFERENCE

The 26th annual conference of Mennonites in Manitoba was held February 23-24 with all sessions in the Altona Bergthaler Mennonite church, where strong emphasis was on the theme: "The Caring and Sharing Church."

Present were about 350 delegates and a good number of visitors, to represent the 46 congregations of the conference which has a membership just under 9,000.

## MERIT AWARD

Walter Kroeker formerly of Winkler and now of Winnipeg, was honored at the annual meeting of Canadian Horticultural Council held in Ottawa Sunday to Wednesday last week.

Mr. Kroeker, a past president and still chairman of the council's trade and tariff committee, was presented with a special plaque in recognition of long-term service to the horticultural industry.

A director on the council for 20 years, Mr. Kroeker received an Award of Merit at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa Tuesday, Feb. 27.

Mr. Kroeker also edited a history of the council's first 50 years in 1972.

## RESEARCH FUNDS

Winnipeg Foundation, an organization related to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, has approved the first two grants from its recently established research fund. The two projects will receive a total of \$4,000. One will go toward research on a film project and the other is a study of Christian education methods.

## Lynne Derksen Oxygenator Fund

In October 1969 the students and staff at Canadian Mennonite Bible College established the Lynne Derksen Oxygenator Fund as a tribute to Miss Derksen, who died of injuries received in a hayride accident; and as an expression of gratitude to all those who worked so valiantly to preserve her life.

When the fund was officially closed, \$17,245.96 were turned over to The Winnipeg General Hospital for the purchase of an oxygenator similar to the prototype flown in from San Francisco for the treatment of Miss Derksen.

While the oxygenator in question had proven itself in a number of instances the hospital was advised that it would be well to wait until the machine was more operational before making the purchase.

In a letter dated January 17, 1973, Peter E. Swerhone, president of the Health Sciences Centre states that there is "some optimism that a breakthrough will be made in the next twelve to eighteen months", and that the purchase of an oxygenator should be further delayed. The monies in the fund are presently invested in Canada Savings Bonds and have a current value of \$20,360.00.

## RETIREMENT

Ben Horch, producer at CBC Winnipeg was honored at a retirement party in December. Mr. Horch joined CBC Winnipeg as a music producer in 1959. He had been a voice teacher; choir director; director of music at the Mennonite Brethren College; music teacher of Winkler Collegiate High School; and director of music and programs at station KWSO California and CFAM, Altona. His production contributions to CBC Winnipeg and the network included: Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra; Organists in Recital; Music-scope; Let the Peoples Sing; and Distinguished Artists.

## OVERHEARD AT STEINBACH VILLAGE MUSEUM:

"Daddy, why do they have an airport next to the museum?"

"Well son, when the Mennonites arrived here in 1874 they had to have some place to land!"

Mr. BOB REICHERT of Plum Coulee recently retired after serving for 30 years as postmaster in that community. His father had served as postmaster for 35 years, so the Reichert family had served in that position for a total of 65 years. Mr. F. Loewen, Zone Postmaster at Winkler, presented a certificate of appreciation to Mr. Reichert, acknowledging his many years of service.

Fire Chief PERCY ENNS, and JOHN DOELL of Winkler, were recently presented with gold engraved watches in recognition for their 25 years of faithful service in the Winkler Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Mr. ELMER HILDEBRAND, manager of Radio Station CFAM/CHSM, was recognized for his contributions in a different capacity when the Altona Maroons held an "Elmer Hildebrand Nite" in the Sunflower Gardens. He has been with the Maroons Hockey Club since 1954, serving in such capacities as statistician, equipment manager, purchasing agent, and has been on the executive and manager since 1957. He was also the regular goaltender for three years.

The Gretna Credit Union opened a new office building in February. The new office, almost double the size of the former building, will serve a membership of 1,250. The Credit Union is now in its 30th year, and has accumulated assets of \$1.9 million.

Mr. HARRY FRIESEN has been nominated as Liberal candidate for Rhineland in the next provincial election.

Mr. WES GIESBRECHT, 24, an administrative studies student at the University of Winnipeg, has announced his intentions to seek the Liberal nomination in Winnipeg Centre Constituency for the next election.

Loewen Millwork of Steinbach will begin an expansion program in April this year. The project will be assisted by the federal government, and will create thirty new jobs.

A new water tower, with a storage capacity of 500,000 gallons, will be built in Steinbach this summer. The all-steel tower will provide the community's growing water requirements with a large reservoir to meet peak demands.

The ABE A. DIRKS family of Steinbach, who have won many awards for egg production in 1972, were presented with a trophy and gift from Babcock Poultry Farm, Inc., the company from whom they obtain their poultry.

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