

Every great move
forward in your life
begins with a leap of
faith, a step into the
unknown

Brian Tracy



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LIFE WITH US

At Niagara United Mennonite Church



~New Beginnings~

It's only the beginning now,
A pathway yet unknown;
At times the sound of other
steps ...
Sometimes we walk alone.
The best beginnings of our
lives
May sometimes end in sorrow;
But even on our darkest days
...
The sun will shine tomorrow.
So we must do our very best
Whatever life may bring,
And look beyond the winter
chill ...
To smell the breath of spring.

Into each life will always come
A time to start anew;
A new beginning for each
heart ...
As fresh as morning dew.
Although the cares of life are
great
And heads are bowed so low,
The storms of life will leave
behind ...
The wonder of a rainbow.
The years will never take
away
Our chance to start anew;
It's only the beginning now
So Dreams can still come true.

Happy New Year!

Every end is the beginning of something new. Three years ago, two brothers – Mohamad and Muhktar – stepped onto a plane and left behind their temporary refuge in Lebanon to start a new life in Canada.

Welcomed in Toronto by members of NUMC's Resettlement Committee – Kathe Wiens has since become “Oma” and the boys dear to our hearts. St. Catharines became “home” and the boys quickly immersed themselves in the community – learning English and working, establishing friendships, helping

newcomers with translations, and welcoming extended family that arrived later – the Raads, Al Nazals, and others.

So it was only natural that last January, when acquaintances had a stopover in Toronto on their way to resettlement in Saskatchewan, Mohamad and his aunt Iman went to welcome them. There was a joyful reunion with the family – father, mother, 3 brothers, a *daughter* – and it was love at first sight. For Mohamad, who lost his immediate family and the normal flow of his formative years to war and displacement, his heart's desire has been to establish a solid family of his own. Now that goal was in sight. However,



cultural norms dictate that he prove himself by providing an agreed upon amount of money for the couple to live on and so he worked incredibly hard, building decks (remember the scorching heat this past summer!?) to meet the agreed upon terms – including moving to Saskatoon at the end of the year for a *January* wedding.

best wishes



Yes, you read that correctly – Mohamad is moving to Saskatchewan in the dead of winter. Talk about trial by fire and ice! With that level of commitment – the young couple can't go wrong! So it was with bittersweet emotions that we gathered, just before Christmas, to celebrate this milestone in Mohamad's life and wish him farewell! On Christmas day – the season of love, peace, and joy – he boarded the plane and once again left behind the old and familiar to step out in faith and start something new.



Mohamad, as your friends and church family, we wish you and your bride the very best as you start your life together, and a Happy New Year, now and always!

~ Esther Tiedtke



Every great dream
begins with
a dreamer.
Harriet Tubman



Newcomer Entrepreneurs Moving Forward

Three years after their arrival in Canada, the Raad family from Syria are branching out into business, and what better place to do it than in our booming village of Virgil. Christmas vacation gave Iman, the matriarch, time to plan and prepare for an event that would showcase her cooking and baking with an eye to developing a local market for Middle Eastern foods.

Entrepreneurship is a trait to be admired, so she found willing supporters among friends from Niagara United Mennonite Church. Once a venue, a date and a time were established, this writer hastily printed up invitations to share at the January 3rd ladies' breakfast, while Iman herself spread the word in her newcomer circle. RSVPs indicated a satisfactory level of interest for this first-time "showcase and sampling of Syrian foods" scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday, January 5th.

The expectation was for a modest turn-out, given the short notice, but to everyone's amazement we had a full house with more than 50 visitors from diverse groups who enjoyed sampling, chatting, and even purchasing food for take-out (in some cases at the behest of others who wished they could be there). Raad family members were kept busy serving and explaining, as well as refilling the colourful platters of wholesome, home-cooked fare.

Sinking tiredly into a chair when all the excitement was over, Iman nevertheless expressed the desire to "do this again", perhaps once a month, although not necessarily in the same format or location. Therefore, if you missed this opportunity, or feel left out because you hadn't heard, don't worry! Besides, Iman has printed a menu and you can already order a wide variety of dishes by contacting her in person.

I thought I would end this article with a mention of my "favourite", but with a deadline looming, it's just impossible! Many thanks to everyone who participated in creating and experiencing the fantastic atmosphere of this event! Please tell all your friends about it so that they can join in when the next such occasion comes up.

~ Greta Wiens



“a God thing” ~ submitted by Will Friesen aka Dr. William L. Friesen

When I think of important moves in my life, it’s hard to think of just one. There was my move to Hillsboro, Kansas, to attend Tabor College when I was 18. This was a life-changing move in that it was my first real exposure living in community with people who had different backgrounds and came from all over the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world. It was in that move that I learned that my rather myopic view of the world wasn’t quite accurate.

At the age of 22, I made the move 2000 km east to Buffalo, New York, to begin my tenure as a graduate student at the university there, and eventually the weekly trek over the river to spend four years with my Niagara UM family. As you might expect, the transition from a Mennonite Brethren college in Kansas to a 35,000-student research university in New York, caused my view of whom I could include in my list of people to be friends with had to expand to include new categories of people – people with non-Mennonite-sounding names, people who shared different political beliefs, people who worshipped other gods or no god at all, and the list goes on. I concluded that having such a list (as unofficial as it was) was a stupid idea, which is a decision I can gratefully attribute to my experiences in Buffalo and Niagara.

On the first day of May 2016 I was preparing to defend my dissertation in a few days, which signaled the end of five years working to earn my PhD. This was an exciting time, but it was also a nerve-wracking time as I did not have an employer lined up. After writing individualized applications to 76 different positions in 18 states and two provinces, I still had no one willing to hire me. On that morning, which was a Sunday, I was sitting in John and Kathy Rempel’s living room in a rotten mood and feeling quite sorry for myself, when, at Kathy’s suggestion, I decided that I would apply for a teaching position at a community college in southwest Kansas, just an hour’s drive from where I grew up. This was a job for which I had determined *not* to apply since I first saw it posted two months previous. The last thing I wanted for my life was to go back to the high plains of Kansas, where the wind blows constantly, it’s either always very hot or very cold, and the rain seldom falls... and back into that very isolated community type of mindset I grew up with.

I clicked “submit application” that morning for the Garden City Community College position and had an email response back later that day (a Sunday, no less!) welcoming me to a skype interview three days later. That interview went well, as did the face-to-face interview two weeks later, immediately after which I was offered an employment contract. At the time, I had to really work to convince myself to be happy and grateful for the opportunity. As much as I hate to use the cliché saying “**it’s a God thing**,” that was a moment that I truly feel that indeed was one. Within two months, I was unloading a moving van at my new apartment in Garden City, Kansas, on a very hot and very windy July day.



I enjoyed my two-year tenure at Garden City Community College. My colleagues were my best friends, I was within an hour drive of my parents and all my living grandparents, and I lived in the biggest city in that half of the state (27,000 people!) that had a rich and diverse immigrant population.



Garden City Colleagues

Despite this, I missed having opportunities to perform music, I missed going to concerts, I missed attending church with people my age, I missed the diversity of city life, and I missed being part of a Mennonite congregation – in short, I was homesick for what I had in Buffalo and Niagara. Perhaps most of all, I missed having time to have a life, as my teaching load had gradually expanded to include night classes and summer classes on top of my already full schedule.



One of Will’s Quiz Bowl Teams at GC competing in National’s in Chicago



HESSTON COLLEGE
RT HERE, GO EVERYWHERE



Chapel shared with Hesston Mennonite Church

A trip to the sheet music store in Wichita, 320 km from home, changed that all. I was browsing organ music and ran into my friend DeAnn Diller who worked there. After visiting a bit, she mentioned that she'd heard that there was a chemistry professor opening at Hesston College and that I should consider applying. I debated whether or not to, especially since I had just bought a house less than a year prior, but decided that I had nothing to lose. Though the application and interview process took months and multiple trips to the college, I was eventually offered the job in March 2018. I happily accepted and began preparing to move to central Kansas. Once again, this process seemed to earn the label a "God thing."

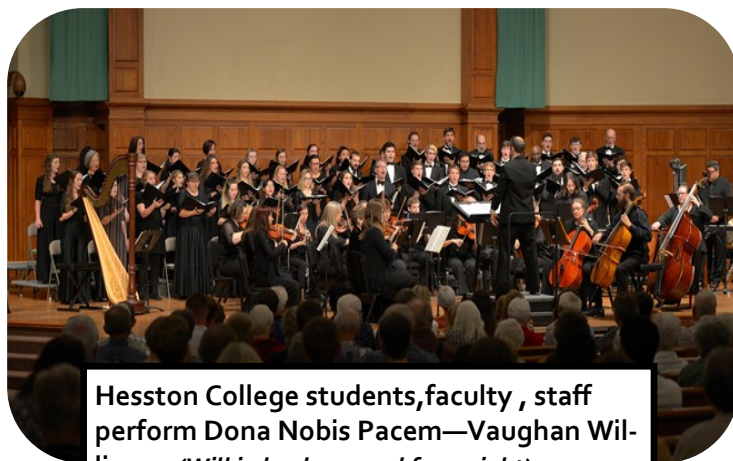


New home in North Newton

The sale of my house in Garden City went smoothly and quickly, and I was able to purchase a home in North Newton, just a few blocks from Bethel College and only 30 minutes from where I went to college in Hillsboro. Hesston College, where I now work, is a short 10-minute drive away. Both colleges are operated by Mennonite Church USA (Bethel is former General Conference and Hesston former "Old" Mennonite Church) and are able to work collaboratively in many ways. My teaching load at Hesston College is about half of what it had been at Garden City, so I am happy to have time to enjoy my hobbies like cooking, gardening, practicing music, and tending to my flock of chickens. I appreciate that Hesston College makes an intentional effort to encourage diversity; with a student body of fewer than 400, over 30 nationalities are represented.

I have found a new church home at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, where I am involved playing piano and organ and serve as a substitute organist/pianist for several local Mennonite congregations. I am "on call" to play organ when needed at my alma mater, Tabor College, which is 30 minutes away, and am looking forward to singing with the 300-member Kansas Mennonite Men's Chorus this spring. In addition to that, I serve on the steering committees for the Hesston-Bethel Performing Arts series and the Hesston College Concert Organ series. If what I wanted previously was to be involved with music, I have been blessed abundantly!

Kansas Mennonite Men's Chorus



Hesston College students, faculty, staff perform Dona Nobis Pacem—Vaughan Williams. (Will in back row 3rd from right)

While reflecting as I wrote this, I realized how cyclical the moves in my life have been, but what a different experience it has been each time! Each place has impacted and changed me deeply, I wouldn't trade any of those experiences.

If any of you NUM people find yourselves in Newton, Kansas, do let me know! I have a guest room waiting for you.

**IMMIGRANT GIRLS:
TRUDY AND LAURA FUNK**
(daughters of Hans & Lore Funk)



Our family left Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 19, 1966 and arrived via Miami, Florida, U.S. on March 20, 1966 at Pearson International Airport, Toronto,

Canada. Picking us up at the airport were Hans Janzen and Peter Dick from Virgil, complete strangers to us girls. After an hour drive, we arrived at Hans and Susie Janzen's house where we stayed for a number of days.

Tante Susie and her husband were very welcoming and fed us well with delicious Mennonite meals and the most delicious baked goodies. We also recall the nice scent from the Palmolive green soap to wash the dishes. The second morning in Canada it was snowing lightly and we ran outside to feel the cold and the snowflakes. Coming from Buenos Aires we had never experienced such cold and snow. It was pretty and nice but BRRRRR too cold! We girls shared a bedroom and a full-size bed. The mattress was such that although we started sleeping on our respective sides, during the night we would wake up together in a hollow in the middle of the bed. As teenagers this was rather unpleasant and we pushed each other, while grumbling, to our respective sides. But the mattress always had different ideas. Oh dear, those nights usually turned out to find one of us falling out of bed. Neither one of us would admit that we had something to do with the other falling over the edge to the ground.

Mom and Dad were busy finding a house to rent, among many other things that an immigrant family must do. Within a few weeks they were able to rent a pretty little white house on Niven Rd in Niagara-on-the Lake from Rev. Peter Klassen and his wife. We moved in and we girls each got our own bedroom on the second floor. This was much better ... so we thought.

Trudy was just 16 years old and Laura 15. Low and behold, at night if we turned on the lights in the bedroom, there were these scurrying silver bugs shooting/running/crawling to hide wherever they could and two girls screaming their heads off. Mom came running up to see what was the matter and we told her. Now we did not want to sleep in those bedrooms and went downstairs to sleep on sofas in the same room. Eventually Rev. Klassen had the house fumigated to get rid of the silver fish and we girls went back to the bedrooms, but always first checking to see if any critters had survived.

We girls found it very difficult to adjust to Canada. We did not want to come to Canada and had to leave our friends behind. We did not speak English, had no friends or family, and no transportation. It was a different culture and we could not relate to other kids because we had nothing in common. It was a foreign school and the contrast of coming from a big city to basically a village and lots of farmland was strange to us. We found ourselves lost and confused, with parents busy getting jobs and also raising a young son. We cried every day for about 3 months and in our unhappiness made life difficult for our parents.

We were enrolled for school at Niagara District Secondary School in Grade 11 from about March 20, 1966 to the end of

June. At that time there was no such thing as support services in schools for immigrant children including English as a second language classes. For us it was sink or swim and we sure did both. We were not impressed, but it was lucky that we had each other. Teachers overall were not adjusting to our needs and then there was this test that we were given in English. We had no idea what it was but much later found out it was an IQ test. With little English comprehension, we made a game out of the test and answered the questions by guessing, closing our eyes and seeing where our pen would land — that point became the answer, picking a favourite number and using it as an answer. As you can imagine, our score was indicative, very indicative of low academic material and future. This result then was used to place us in a stream of studies that did not lead to University. We did not realize this until we graduated from Grade 12 over a year later. Nobody had told us. Although happy to graduate, we felt cheated.



In Grade 11 there were students in our class that could either speak "Plattddeutsch" or High German but would not speak with us in either language to help us. They felt embarrassed and we could not understand why they would not want to communicate with us. We felt shunned. The girls, as typical teenagers, in the class were more interested in their clothes, comparing them with others, being friends with the "popular" girls and boys, impressing boys on ball teams, joining sorority teams and were busy with their own lives. We did not fit in and it made us sad. Then it got worse. As we learned more English and consequently our marks starting going up and up, our fellow students thought we were competition and for sure would not help us. Jealousy does awful things to people of all ages.

During the spring/summer of 1966, Rev. Klassen began to take us immigrant girls under his wing. We figured that he must have heard about the unhappy girls' attitudes and behaviours. Trudy had her beginners and dad allowed her to have the car. Guess where Trudy and Laura went? Yes, to Toronto for the day and had fun in the big city. We did this every weekend! To this day we cannot believe that our parents let us go, but we think they were just very happy to be rid of us for the day.

Back to Rev. Klassen. At first, we only listened and checked him out. We would meet with him at his house next door to ours for English lessons. Soon we learned to trust him and were able to speak about our problems in Canada from our perspective and experiences. Rev. Klassen gave us moral support, advice and the tools to adjust to life in Canada. This made a big difference in our confidence to carry on at school and be successful in our studies. He was our champion! We met 2 to 3 times a week.

During the summers of 1966, 1967 and 1968 we worked at the surrounding farms picking strawberries, peaches and various cherries. There were the Rempel's, Andres' and Loewen's farms and although the first summer we considered it slave labour we actually really liked the farms and the farmers. The farmers were welcoming, friendly, good teachers, patient, funny and embraced us. It felt like family. This motivated us immigrant girls to work hard and do the best job we could do for our employers.

Church at Niagara United Mennonite Church also became more meaningful. We joined the choir, taught Sunday School and German School, participated in Youth group activities and met youth from other sister churches. The highlight was our eventual baptism with other Youth group members. It was beautiful and fulfilling.

We both graduated from High School one and a half years after arriving in Canada. Trudy started a secretarial job at Harder Insurance Agency in St. Catharines, and after 2 years went on to Brock University for work and her University Education. She is married to Gordon Lockyer, and has 2 children and 5 grandchildren.

Laura started work at Niagara College and not long after went to Vancouver, BC to be in the wedding party of her best friend from Buenos Aires, now living in Vancouver with her family. Laura decided to stay in Vancouver for the summer, and to do so she got a job at the University of British Columbia in the Library and rented a room in a house with other girls from Niagara and NUMC. There she met Alan Brechin that summer, and the rest is history. She never moved back to Niagara; however, they got married at NUMC and drove back to BC in their MG B Sports Car.

Both Trudy and Laura are now happily retired!

Memorable Moves

by Hedy Kopeschny

When my husband and I got married, we rented a house from Mr. Andres on the Andres farm. Many immigrants had lived there before us. After one year we bought a lot on Henry St. and built our home there. Our son Fred was 5 months old, when we moved into our new house. A year and a half later our daughter Christine was born. That made our family complete and we were very happy.

As time went on, many changes took place. My mother who lived with us passed away. The children got married and moved out. But the house was still our home where we all got together, especially when the grandchildren arrived. The children and grandchildren all liked to come home.



I lived in that house on 43 Henry St. for 54 years. In the meantime my David had passed away. I had no intention to move out of my house and go anywhere else. A year after David's passing, my family suggested for me to make a move into a smaller and newer house. At first I was completely against it. But after I had been alone in the house for almost 2 years I began thinking about a move. With the help of friends and especially my family, we found the perfect place for me.

**The Lord has led me amazingly.
I will never forget this move.**



Jake Tissen's Most Memorable Move

In 1973, the Tissen family was allowed to come to Canada! We moved from the city of Novosibirsk, about 2,800 km east of Moscow, in mid Siberia. I was 13 years old and we lived in a 5-storey apartment. My favourite memories were at Christmas time when Mom would bake honey cookies and Zwieback. The whole living room floor was covered in paper and the cookies. One year I got a homemade hockey stick on my plate and an orange! "Best Christmas ever!" The things I liked to do were hockey, soccer and playing in the snow, and skating with skates four times my size.

We moved from USSR because our parents wanted us to have a better life, and my Mom didn't want her three boys to go into the army. Mom and Dad spent a lot of rubles with Russian immigration, but they kept saying "no". Then one day Mom found out they were denied because they wanted us boys for the army. Mom had a friend who was a doctor. This doctor

signed the health application filling out that the boys all had flat feet and so they wouldn't pass the physical for going to the army. That year, 1973 on July 10, we were able to leave Russia. It was hard to leave our friends behind, but we were told not to tell anybody or say good bye. It took us two days to go to Moscow by train and we spent two days there to get all immigration papers together. We were only allowed to have 100 rubles with us, so Mom sent the rest of her money to her sister in Kazakhstan. The next day we flew from Moscow, flying all night through Paris to Montreal. We all got sick on the plane.

In Montreal, my brother and I were in separate immigration lines and mistakes were made with our paperwork and so our last names became different. I was Jake Tissen and my brother was John Thiessen. Later that day, July 12, 1973, we left Montreal for Toronto and then on to St. Catharines, where we settled.

My first impression of Canada was cherry picking on Line 1, where you could eat all the cherries you wanted! The next day, in the evening, we went into the A&P grocery store. Wow! I couldn't believe all the fruit and oranges! Then Jake Boldt, my uncle, took us for soft ice cream. It was yummy!

I found St. Catharines a very nice place to live until we went to school at Scottlea. Then the fighting started all over again. In Russia we were call "Faschist", and in Canada we were called a stupid Russian. I was defending myself again.

When I look back on my life, God has always protected me and given me a wonderful family, my wife Sylvia, three kids and six grandchildren and one on the way. If I had stayed in Russia, I probably wouldn't have survived. Many men died in the army. I am so thankful to God for the move to Canada, where I have had many blessings and continue to live in freedom.



Jake's family with Jake in back row, second from right.



Ladies' Christmas Tea



**Rachael Peters' Installation as
Worship Coordinator**

Most Memorable Move

~ submitted by Anneliese Pankratz

My mother, Marie Epp was the youngest of ten children; in 1926/1927 eight of the siblings emigrated from Europe to Canada. My parents were not allowed to come along because my father was born with his left arm only a stump. Canada wanted capable farm workers & he was a high school teacher. So in 1930 a group of 30-35 families emigrated to Brazil and that is where I was born.



-as Nanny with one of my young friends

I had a beautiful, happy life but it was very hard for my parents, who were missing their siblings. My father, David Enns died when I was 5 years old, and my mother died 6 years later. It made it tough for my brother, 12 years older than I, who wanted to go to Canada. He did not get his Visa and we lived together until he got married and did not need my help on the farm. I was 15 years old and was looking for a job and a place to live. My friend in São Paulo wrote "Come here, the really rich Brazilians like German speaking nannies for their children".

With so many young girls in the big city, MCC had a home for us where we found



Houseparents Mr. & Mrs. David Quapps

fellowship, church services and support on our days off. The home parents, Mr. & Mrs. David Quapps, a couple from Yarrow, BC; wonderful volunteers, had visited Brazil in 1931 and had stayed with my parents. They took a special interest in this orphan. Mama & Papa, as they were known, helped me get sponsored by my aunt and uncle in Manitoba.

In the meantime, Uncle Hans and Tante Mariechen moved to Ontario and took over. Suddenly letters to me were coming from Jordan Station, not from Boisevain, Manitoba. As my papers were getting finalized, Papa flew with me to Curitiba to get my brother's signature. It was my chance to say goodbye to my friends. I did not like goodbyes then and I still don't. We started the trip back to São Paulo by train and it took 36 hours!



- off to visit with the young people

There, Mama made me a few new dresses, I bought a new suit and tam for travelling. But after a few trips to the consulate, I was told "Oh no! You are not allowed to leave the country until you are 18 years old". Zina Janzen was also getting ready to come to Canada to marry her fiancé, Gerald Enns, which was wonderful. We were looking forward to travelling together, but oh no, she was not allowed to travel in the US and my destination was Buffalo.

Then it so happened, by God's leading, that Corny Dyck, brother of Peter Dyck (MCC) was coming through São Paulo, on his way back to Pennsylvania for debriefing, following a mission service he'd been on in South America. Corny was a great travel companion. We experienced a thunder storm during our flight which was very exciting, but arrived safe and sound in New York City in May, 1951. We had to, however take a long, dark walk at 3 a.m. from one airport to another to board the next flight for Buffalo. What an adventure through that city at night! Corny Dyck introduced me to corn flakes, my first meal in North America. After that, we parted ways and I was on my own in a foreign land with a foreign language for the last leg of my trip.

My uncle, aunt and 3 cousins met me at the Buffalo airport. I had my first view of Niagara Falls ... I still love it. My uncle asked "do you speak English yet?" When I answered "no", he said it will take you a few years to learn. That was discouraging to me and made my first 6 months in Canada difficult and lonely. All I wanted at that time, was to earn enough money to return to Brazil. But that all changed in November when I got a job with a wonderful Jewish family who had a 9 year old daughter who wanted to be a teacher. She loved teaching me English, and within 6 months I could speak as well as I do now. By that time I had made friends at church and Boese's canning factory where I was working. That was the start of my new life in Canada.

I feel very blessed to have lived most of my life in this country, and am proud to call myself a Canadian.

Why did I come to Canada, and how was it when I first arrived here?

This is what I was asked to write about for “*Life with Us*” at Niagara United Mennonite Church.

~ by Hans-Juergen (John) Wiens

I was born in Rothof, in the district of Marienwerder, not far from Danzig in West Prussia, Germany (*now Gdansk in Poland*). My birthdate is October 7, 1934.

On January 22, 1945 my mother, my older brother Hartmut, and I had to leave our home because of the war. We fled to western Germany to escape the approaching Russian army. After nine weeks of hard travel, we arrived in a small village near the city of Bremen. Eventually the rest of our family joined us, and we lived there for several years.

However, there were too many refugees trying to make a living in the area, and it became clear that some would have to look for new opportunities elsewhere. Our family included nine persons: my father and mother, my mother's mother, and us six siblings. I was the second oldest. Because of the job shortage, my parents decided to send my older brother, Hartmut, to Canada. When this happened, I was 17 years old. Even though I was very close to my mother, I asked my parents to let me go to Canada with my brother. (Yes, I would be homesick sometimes.)

So, in March 1952, when I was 17 ½ years old and officially weighed 75 German pounds (83 by the imperial measure used in Canada), my brother and I boarded the *Beaverbrae* for Canada.

This is the approximate background for why I came here at all.

And now: What happened after the *Beaverbrae* indeed managed to bring us ashore in Saint John, New Brunswick?

After a few immigration formalities, we got on a train to Toronto and from there on another train to St. Catharines. My father, who knew the Isaac family, had made arrangements for Mr. Isaac to pick us up at the station. Isaacs lived where Pillitteri Estates Winery is now, just 500 metres from our church. Isaacs had two sons still living at home. Ernie was exactly my age and we became friends in the short time we lived there. Albert, a little younger, was also very nice to us.

The Isaacs had made arrangements that my brother Hartmut would get work at P.G. Enns Farms. I got work at the farm of Martin and Frieda Wiens (*no relation*) on Niagara Stone Rd.

Okay, we had arrived!

What are some of the more vivid memories of the first days and month?

The very first impression, believe it or not, had to do with the weather in this part of Canada.

We arrived in March. That month has more sunshine than even April. In northern Germany, near the North Sea, it is always grey and dark. I could not believe how blue the sky could be here. It continued that first summer: blue sky, warm temperatures already in the morning, amazing!

Hartmut and I were both immediately involved in plenty of social life. Other immigrants from Prussia all knew our parents and invited us into their homes, for lunch or for Sunday afternoon coffee or for supper. I also have high praise for what Martin and Frieda Wiens did for me. Remember that I stated my weight at the beginning. Although I came to Canada thinking of myself as an adult, with lots of ambition, the Wienses saw me for what I really was at the time – practically still a child. In a very positive way, they treated me that way. On Sundays or evenings, when I wasn't committed elsewhere, they would take me along to visit all their relatives and friends. As a result, I came to know a lot of the prominent local Mennonite families. This stood me in good stead later in life when I established a family and a business of my own.



**Hartmut & Hans leaving Germany for Canada
in March 1952**



**Hartmut & Hans J in their own building on
Niagara Stone Rd. in Oct. 1952**

Now we come to my church experience. Remember, I was a teenager!

(H.J. Wiens cont'd)

I arrived in Canada with the certainty that I was a Christian. That is how I had grown up. My father was a lay minister in the Mennonite church, so there was no question. In terms of upbringing, I was a Mennonite, too. After the war, my family lived in a village with a large Lutheran church and a small group of Baptists. No Mennonites besides us. The Lutheran church was very formal, but I attended their catechism classes. The Baptists met in our neighbours' house on Sunday afternoons. Together, this provided a very satisfying Christian experience and education for me.

The Martin Wiens family were members of the Virgil Mennonite Brethren Church. It only made sense to go to church with them. Since I had experienced Baptist church services back in Germany, I found the general atmosphere similar and in agreement with my religious understanding. However, in spite of my Christian upbringing and convictions, I had the feeling that I didn't measure up or fit in. Then, because my brother's host family was taking him to the Niagara United Mennonite Church, it happened that I was able to join him there on a particular Sunday morning. To this day I can hardly believe that it was immediately clear that this is where I belonged. It felt like home. Not once since then have I ever thought that I might have to look for another church.

Hello Church Family,

Happy New Year

We finally arrived at our new house on December 20th! My Birthday too!

Everything was finished to our satisfaction and we **LOVE** our new home. Our schedule has been very hectic, but it keeps us young 😊 I think!

We closed our deal for our new house, our appliances were delivered and Joyce was enrolled in her new High School called Tagwi. The next day school was cancelled due to the threat of freezing rain. Joyce didn't mind at all. Our furniture arrived on the 21st(all in one piece too) and our appliances were hooked up! We could finally do laundry and look forward to a Christmas turkey too!

We celebrated Christmas Eve in a local church our builder belongs to in Cornwall. It was a traditional program with lots of carols and the Christmas Story. Then back home to our warm house to ring in Christmas morning. Slept in till 10:00, no more early mornings 😊 We all enjoyed our delicious Christmas dinner Anita had prepared with all the fixings. There was snow on the ground to give it a Christmas feel.

We enjoyed the start of a Christmas tradition with a stroll at Upper Canada Village with the entire town decorated in Christmas lights. It was breathtaking, but cold with the wind off the St Lawrence River.

Today the 30th we started our Church search with a service at The First Baptist Church in Cornwall. The service was very similar to ours and it may be a possibility.

We miss all of you very much and hope to see you in the near future. We wish all of you a Happy New Year with many blessings from our Lord!

Blessings,
The Friesen Family



The Early Years of the Peach Pickers, 1952-1954
~ Dedicated in Memory of John Harder (1933-2017) ~

Of course the story of the Peach Pickers is now one of a by-gone era and could be filed under the letter “H” for History. My good friend and partner in song, John Harder has left us to sing and play in a better land and in a better band than the Peach Pickers could ever have hoped to be— a definite promotion. I miss John. I miss our mutual greeting of “Howdy neighbour”. I had no better man to sing, work and play with than John and one day we will sing together again. I dedicate this writing in his memory.

They were the early days of our youth and John and I had energy to burn and the ambition to go with it that is usually reserved for the young. We were two Mennonite country boys with guitar lessons behind us and a love for country music, as it used to be. These were the early 1950s and there were worlds to conquer! Knowing all about peaches from our farm experience, we already had a name— the “Lincoln County Peach Pickers”, of course.

John and I, looking for a challenge, were quite aware of the ancestral parameters regarding “what a young Mennonite boy should do”, however we could not resist the opportunity to plough new ground in a new field. We



began our broadcasting experience over Niagara Falls radio CHVC, located in studios under the Rainbow Bridge. After getting our “live radio broadcasting feet wet” so to speak— there were things to learn— we ventured, with increasing confidence, to greener pastures. Here we discovered that it would cost us some money to move elsewhere. We had been playing on a non-union station and for us to move onward and upward meant joining the musicians union, part of the American Federation of Labor. Well, we paid a levied fine reluctantly and counted it as a painful learning experience. Sadly our fine did not even stay in Canada but went on to union headquarters in Chicago. We were now free to move forward.



The song “Niagara Moon” had been recorded by the Peach Pickers in a Buffalo, New York recording studio. We did this 78 rpm recording on a Sunday morning when we should have really been in church. I must ask, were we bad boys or do we get a pass? However, it appears that the recorded song and later a good audition performance, landed us a spot on radio CHML Hamilton. Here we became members of the then popular “Main Street Jamboree”. The show was heard across Canada on CBC affiliate stations weekly from venues across Ontario. Well, needless to say, for John and me this was an exciting and exhilarating time.

This was the day of “live” radio when, after supper, the family would gather around the radio instead of the TV set. Radio broadcasting in the 1950s drew a large listening audience. For John and me it was an exciting time for us to read the weekly mail response from our listeners. Also enjoyable was doing the 7-Up singing advertising commercial for the people who paid the bill. It was a matter of play for pay or pay for play. The jingle in 3-way harmony went like this: “Fresh up with 7-Up —Big folks, small folks, all folks do —Fresh up with 7-Up, you like it and it likes you”, etc., etc. Well, these are fond memories.

John and I worked with various musicians throughout the years. A mainstay of the group was my first cousin Johnny Goertzen, now also deceased, who provided great tension release with his wonderful sense of humour. “Cousin” was a gifted entertainer in many ways and a decided asset to the Peach Pickers. The fellowship and camaraderie of the group extended well beyond a professional relationship. To put it more simply, we sang in harmony and were in harmony. Failure in this principle spells trouble. In retrospect, I believe the Peach Picker experience was a secular life experience that could only be evaluated or appreciated by actually “doing it”.



Ultimately John and I each went our separate ways and God blessed our families and our vocations. But sometimes on the farm in the hot and humid summer months and with volumes of very real peaches to pick, my mind would wander back to another time, another day— filled with music and song and guitars and mandolins and friends and concerts and faraway places— and I was quite ready to trade my basket of peaches for a time that used to be, a time now gone but not forgotten.



P.S. For a more extensive overview of the Peach Pickers including the 2002-2007 years, I refer you to the song book in our church library entitled "He Gave Me A Song" written and published by Eric Goerz.

In reflection, may it suffice to say that God had other plans for the Peach Pickers, better plans— to find our completion in living a full abundant life with our families in dedication to Him.

Praise be to God!

~ Submitted by Eric Goerz

January Birthdays

Eric Goerz: 86 (1/1/85)
 Else Ballau: 92 (1/2/27)
 Victor Braun: 91 (1/7/28)
 Rudy Wiens: 93 (1/7/26)
 Frieda Neufeld: 85 (1/12/34)
 Elvin Penner: 83 (1/15/36)
 Hermann Gau: 85 (1/17/34)
 Frank Siemens: 85 (1/19/34)
 Jake Epp: 85 (1/21/34)
 Anne Rahn: 81 (1/25/38)
 Margarete Pauls: 88 (1/28/31)



February Birthdays

Lieselotte Schmidt: 82 (2/2/37)
 Hertha Neumann: 87 (2/5/32)
 Hannelore Enss: 85 (2/9/34)
 Lena Van Bergen: 86 (2/9/33)
 Hans Ulrich Fieguth: 84 (2/11/35)
 Hilda Regier: 80 (2/16/39)
 Lucy Harder: 82 (2/27/)

25th Wedding Anniversary

Gustav & Janice Nickel
 2/5/94

50th Wedding Anniversary

Waldemar & Valentine Bartel
 2/15/69

66th Wedding Anniversary

Victor & Elfrieda Braun
 2/14/53

Update on NUMC's Refugee family from 2013

Some of you have been asking about the whereabouts of our refugee family from Iraq/Syria which arrived in our midst in 2013, so I thought I would give a brief update. The original family consisted of Muhanad, Mazin, Zaina, & Yousif. Muhanad, the single cousin, found himself a job in Niagara Falls at a hotel, and moved there on his own. He has since married a woman from NF, and appears to be doing well. We visited him several times at the beginning, but have lost contact with him because he has changed his phone number. We assume he is doing well.

Mazin, father of Yousif & husband of Zaina, went through more than a year of cancer treatments until that was taken care of, but he remained physically weak, and was unable to work at a fulltime job. During these early years, Zaina took good care of Mazin, but found it increasingly difficult to live with him. While Zaina had accepted the Canadian way of life, Mazin remained deeply rooted in the culture of his upbringing in Iraq. Zaina developed more and more into a young Canadian woman with her own personal choices of dress, activity, education, general outlook, while Mazin opposed most of her choices. Since the marriage of Zaina to Mazin had been arranged by the family, and Mazin was 10 years her senior, she felt no emotional attachment to him. Her son, Yousif, on the other hand was the centre of her life. After much thought and consultation with others around her, Zaina finally made the decision to leave Mazin and go to live on her own with her son. Zaina continued to try to keep a relationship going between Yousif and his father, but Mazin showed little interest in spending meaningful time with his son, and Yousif told his mom that he did not want to visit his dad anymore. And so this father-son relationship died out. Zaina & Mazin have subsequently become officially divorced.

Zaina in the meantime had successfully completed her English classes, and wanted to continue her education. She signed up for Personal Support Worker course at Lifetime Learning Centre in September 2014, and graduated at the top of her class in June, 2015, as well as having completed her High School equivalency tests. Zaina was passionate about her job as PSW and loved interacting with the residents under her care. She was hired by Tabor Manor right after her graduation, and was so thankful for this development. Unfortunately, after only about three weeks into her job, Zaina suffered a back injury while attending to a resident's care. She was referred to a specialist with regards to her back injury, and was informed that she would not be able to continue her work as a PSW because of a weakness in her joints. This news was devastating to Zaina, and she became quite disheartened and depressed. But she kept in touch with some close friends from school and in her apartment building, and they encouraged her to develop more of a social life.

During this time, Zaina met a young man who showed some interest in her. She found it difficult to accept his very positive attention and admiration, because she had never experienced this before in her life. It was a big learning curve for Zaina to develop trust in anyone, but especially in men. Garret continued to shower her with attention, compliments and gifts, while still respecting her need for personal space and time. And so he won his way into her heart!

After much soul-searching and friend-consultations, Zaina decided to marry Garret. In the mean-time, Yousif had become quite comfortable with Garret, and looked forward to joining him in his house with the 2 big dogs. Now, almost two years later, Garret and Zaina and Yousif have welcomed little brother Ryker into their family. He is a beautiful & happy baby. Garret's family has embraced Zaina wholeheartedly into their family, and so she now has a real Canadian family surrounding her. Zaina is a very happy woman, who is grateful to NUMC for all the help she received as a new refugee. And she is also grateful to God for the protection and guidance He has provided for her during the past.

Zaina, we wish you and Yousif & Garrett & Ryker much happiness in the years to come. May God richly bless you!

~ Kathy Rempel



Bulletin Bytes ~ by Harold Neufeld

A call to prayer from January 3, 1982: “OUR CHURCH CONCERNS: The first week of the new year is designated as a week of prayer for Christians around the world. Let us take time for prayer. “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known.” Jer. 33:3”

And here, also in the same January 1982 bulletin... I wonder what the back story is with this: “Mr. David Martens, brother of Maria & Margarethe Martens, recently emigrated from the Soviet Union. He has requested baptism in our church before he returns to Europe. The ministers and deacons and the church council have considered his request and recommend his baptism. He will give his testimony on Wed. Jan. 8 at the Prayer Service. The baptism of Mr Martens will be held during the German service on Jan. 10.”

And again, same January 1982 bulletin: “You have heard the announcements and seen the posters! We want you to participate in thinking, praying, and learning together with others in our Mennonite Church family. Common Sunday morning themes, workshops, and our special day of celebration on Jan. 31st will help us focus on Spiritual renewal in our congregations.

WEEK OF JANUARY 3 - CHOSEN OF GOD Jan. 8 at GRACE - Youth Night with Don Penner, the Interim Director at Silver Lake. Then on Jan. 9, also at GRACE - Young Couples evening.

WEEK OF JANUARY 10 - SAVED BY GOD Jan. 15-17 at LINWELL - Workshop on “*The Devotional Life*” with Jacob Klasen, Winkler Manitoba.

WEEK OF JANUARY 17 - SENT BY GOD

WEEK OF JANUARY 24 - UNITED BY GOD Churches hold their annual meetings

WEEK OF JANUARY 31 - DISCIPLED BY GOD Jan. 29-31 at LINWELL – ‘Youth Music Fest’ with Dennis Friesen-Carper of Texas. Then on Jan. 31, a “*Celebration of God*” at LINWELL. Communion Service.”

Book Corner

~ by Debbie Fast

Only by Death

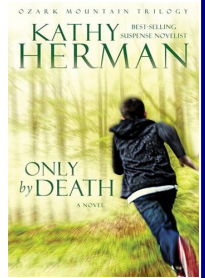
Ozark Mountain Trilogy Book 2

by Kathy Herman

“After much agonizing, Liam Berne takes his mother, who suffers from Alzheimer’s to the Sure Foot River, where he coaxes her into the water & drowns her. A mercy killing, he tells himself, to spare her years in a nursing home. And getting his inheritance early isn’t a bad thing either.

Dixie Berne’s body is recovered, & the coroner can’t find any signs of foul play, though others aren’t convinced. When Liam discovers a child witnessed the drowning, what he’s willing to do shocks even him.

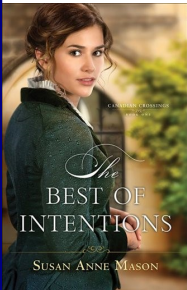
But unbeknownst to Liam, someone else suspects him – someone who intends to make him pay.”



The Best of Intentions

Canadian Crossings Book 1

by Susan Anne Mason



“In the aftermath of WW1, Grace Abernathy is determined to reunite her family, crossing an ocean to convince her widowed sister to return home to England. Yet, in Toronto she discovers more tragedy – her nephew Christian in the custody of his paternal relatives, the formidable Easton family, who rejected Grace’s sister because of her low social status.

Unconvinced the Eastons can be fitting caretakers, Grace uses an assumed name to secure the position of Christian’s nanny & moves into the Easton estate. There she can observe the family up close, while ensuring Christian’s well-being. In the course of her new role, she is shocked to find herself falling in love with Andrew Easton, the boy’s guardian. Unfortunately, Andrew is promised to a spoiled socialite who is sure to make a terrible stepmother for Christian. Will Grace be able to protect her nephew ... and her heart?”

A Song Unheard

Shadows over England Book 2

by Roseanna M White

“Willa Forsythe is both a violin prodigy & top-notch thief, which makes her the perfect choice for a critical task at the outset of WW1 – to secure a critical cypher key from a famous violinist currently in Wales.

Lukas De Wilde has enjoyed the life of fame he’s won – until now, when being recognized nearly gets him killed. Everyone wants the key to his father’s work as a cryptologist. And Lukas fears that his mother & sister, who have vanished in the wake of the German invasion of Belgium, will pay the price. The only distraction he finds from his worry is in meeting the intriguing & talented Willa Forsythe.

But danger presses in from every side, & Willa knows what Lukas doesn’t – that she must betray him & find that key, or her own family could pay the same price his surely has.”



Study Shows Singing Is Canada's National Pastime

By **Michael Vincent** on October 2, 2017

Choral Canada has released data on a recent national survey that **suggests choral music, not hockey, is** Canada's national pastime.

The report, designed by Hill Strategies Research, took a poll of 2000 random Canadians and asked them how many people in their immediate family had sung in a choir, chorus, or singing group within the last 12 months.

The results were stunning. The survey showed that 3.5 M people (or 10% of the population) have sung in a choir at some point during the last year. To put that in perspective, that number would surpass Toronto's population (2.7 M) by 800,000 people.

Of those surveyed, 1.6 M singers were children, and 1.8 M singers were adults.

To compare those statistics with hockey, roughly half a million kids play ice hockey in Canada, making choral music three times as popular. For adults, the statistics were even more striking. There are about 50% more adult choral singers in Canada than adult Hockey players.

Hill Strategies Research counted about 28,000 Choirs in Canada, with church choirs being the most prevalent at 17,500. Interestingly, only 10 choirs were considered professional. The rest were from schools, churches, and amateur level organisations.

Source: Choral Canada Survey of 861 Choral Organizations – Hill Strategies Research —2017



LIFE WITH US NEWSLETTER

If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact any of the Newsletter Team of Editors:

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