



March, April 2020

Life With Us

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

Wehrlos und Verlassen

Wehrlos und verlassen sehnt sich
oft mein Herz nach stiller Ruh;
Doch Du deckest mit dem Fittich
Deiner Liebe sanft mich zu.

Drückt mich Kummer, Müh und Sorgen,
Meine Zuflucht bist nur Du,
Rettest mich aus allen Ängsten,
Tröstest mich und deckst mich zu.

Sicher bin ich und geborgen,
Denn bei Dir ist süsse Ruh;
Mag es auch im Leben stürmen,
Herr, Dein Fittich deckt mich zu.

Kommt dann meine letzte Stunde,
Geh ich ein zur ew'gen Ruh;
Und Du deckst mit Deinen Flügeln
Ewiglich dein Kindlein zu.

Refrain:
Unter Deinem sanften Fittich
find ich Frieden, Trost und Ruh;
Denn Du schirmest mich so freundlich,
schüttest mich und deckst mich zu.

~ Carl Rohl, &
W. Warren Bentley

(this was one of the favourites hymns sung by Mennonite Refugees)

When I'm Lonely

When I'm lonely and defenseless
My heart longs for rest and peace.
Then you spread your wings of caring,
With your love you cover me.

When I'm pressed by grief and trouble,
You alone can rescue me.
Refuge from all fears and worries,
You my Comfort, cover me.

Confident and gently hidden,
I find sweetest rest in you.
Through the storms of life you hold me;
Lord, your feathers cover me.

When I'm in life's final moments,
I will not be left alone,
For your loving wings will guard me,
I, your child, will be at home.

Refrain:
Under your soft wings of mercy
My soul rests and is renewed,
For you shelter me with kindness,
Keep me covered, close to you.

~ Trans. Jean Wiebe Janzen

OUR MCC CHAIR

By Renate Dau Klaassen

When Randy & I were newly married, and he was starting out in ministry as assistant pastor at the Berghaler Mennonite Church in Altona, MB, we strove to furnish our little apartment as frugally as possible, and were frequent shoppers at the local MCC Thrift Store. Then we bought a humble, very out-of-style sofa and chair set at the MCC Relief Sale in Morris, MB. By draping various afghans & throws over them, and plopping on a couple of pretty pillows, I managed to make them look presentable enough, to offer our guests a seat, and inviting enough to just park & relax for a while.

The chair especially became a favourite spot. Though not imposing in size, it offered plenty of room to slouch. And best of all, it had arm rests that were wide and flat, very handy for putting down a book, a mug of coffee, and a small plate of something yummy. I spent many a blissful hour sitting in that chair reading, journaling, and doing needle work. When the children came along, we found that chair to be ideal for story time, with just the right amount of space for an adult reader in the middle, and a child perched on the arm rests on either side. Frequent visits of grandparents from Ontario and BC called for the sofa to be replaced by a couch that folded out into a bed. The old sofa was relegated to the basement for the kids to bounce around on, but the chair remained in its place in the living room.

After we had served in Altona for 14 years, God called us on to new adventures, and the day came when we needed to pack all our worldly possessions into a U-haul truck. My treasured piano had first priority, and got carefully maneuvered in, right behind the cab. Other items followed. We deemed the lowly old sofa to be readily replaceable and took it to the MCC store, together with clothes & toys the kids had outgrown, and so much non-essential "stuff" that had accumulated over the years. But the chair,...we just couldn't part with that chair! — into the truck it went! And a few days later, at our new home here in Virgil, it found pride of place again in our living room.

The years flew by, the children grew. One evening after finishing the supper dishes, I came into the living room to find my son sitting in the chair. Gently, kindly I asked if I could sit in it to rest. "Why don't you just *tell* me to get out?", he replied, "You're the alpha female!" Apparently the chair had become mine!

When we renovated and painted the room a new colour, I bought some coordinating fabric, and fashioned a cover for the beloved chair. Not that long ago, after the kids had grown & moved out, and that sofa bed started showing too much wear, we purchased new furniture, and the old chair got relegated to the guest room at the end of the hallway. Every now & then, I go into that back room and sit in the chair, with a book & a coffee on the arm rests, and think back on the years that God has led us, provided for all our needs, and blessed us so richly.

More recent treasures that I have found at the MCC Christian Benefit Shop in St. Catharines include a lovely china cabinet, and a few cups & saucers in the same pattern as the tableware I chose when we got married. But I still love that old chair the most. Looking back, I realize that the chair has shared our family's journey with us, unfolding moments of both tears and laughter, times of togetherness, times of solitude. It has held crumbs, toys & coins between its cushion & back, and sustained wine spills, pen marks, and baby spit-up — no matter; it's just an old chair! Wasn't it just yesterday that I savoured a particularly sweet moment in it, cradling my infant grandson in my arms, until he was calm enough to settle into his travel crib in the spare room? Now he's 2, going on 20!

I pick up my book & mug, and get up to return to the busier part of the house; from my mind's excursion through the past, to the present comings & goings of daily life. I switch off the light to the back room, and proceed down the hall. Thanks for the memories, dear MCC chair!





MCC Great Winter Warm Up Quilt Tying Bee Day

You know when you don't feel like cooking but the leftovers are sparse and so you take a bit of this and some of that and heat them up and put it all on the table and light the candles? And it becomes the BEST put together meal ever??? Well, that is what my feelings were coming away from the January 18th MCC Great Winter Warm Up Quilt Tying Bee day! Here were a bunch of ladies, men and youth together in one place, our church gym, sitting together with a bunch of other people we may know well, may know a little, or, may not know at all with one purpose: to finish as many blankets in one day as we could to send out to MCC for people all over the world who needed warmth because they are not as fortunate as we are. I mentioned 'leftovers' at the beginning because, really, that's what we outsiders were! The ladies in our church take so much time collecting and cutting material, buying batting, matching and sewing umpteen squares together, setting up the quilting boards and tacking the quilts on them, measuring and dotting where the ties will go and then planning a day where we could come and help them tie. Tying is threading a needle, finding the dot, sticking the needle through one time, coming up and going down another time. When you come up with the needle the second time you have to cut the thread, make a knot and make a double knot so it is tight and secure. Cut the thread shorter and you are ready to find the next dot. Coming together with 6 +/- people all at one quilt is beauti-

ful. You talk. You get to know a few new 'bits' about someone you always see but really know nothing about. Or, you sit across from someone who may not have felt comfortable with before and now you are okay! There were mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, friends, and community people who came hoping they would recognize someone and did! It was so neat listening to the buzz around the room as we all worked, laughed and listened. The coffee and goodies were, as expected, delicious! Like the best 'put-together' meal ever with great guests at the table!

We started at 8:30 and ended at noon. We finished tying 24 blankets (which now someone has to stitch all the way around all of them to really finish them off).

Thank you to the ladies of Niagara United Mennonite for letting us share in a most delightful morning with you and experience something of the work you have been doing for more than 44 years! These ladies are at church every Tuesday morning and I know they would love for many more hands to help them with this very needed and appreciated task. I am hoping that many of us are able to free up time in the future to do this.

Submitted by Linda Pankratz



I can do this!

I first became aware of the quilt tying at the Benefit Shop. They were planning a quilt tying event there on a Saturday with the various churches contributing. It caught my interest. Then I read in our church bulletin of the event in our church and I thought, "I can do this." Of course Anne was very encouraging. After a couple of lessons from Lani Gade I started on a quilt with Rita Boldt, Lani and my wife Anne. I had a great time and would do it again. At no time did I prick my finger but at this point I have no plans to join the Verein.

~ John Thiessen





When Ellery first mentioned a "Quilt Tying" event happening at the church, I had no idea what she was talking about. I pictured rolling up quilts and tying them into bundles. Then she showed me our beautiful quilt that her Grandma Harder made for us and explained that we had to tie the knots

that are holding the quilts together. I still didn't really know what to expect. After bundling Elliott into her car seat and heading to the church as a family to tie some knots, I have to admit, I was impressed! The gym was full of quilts, all tied to their respective tables. Each had chairs around all 4 sides and everyone sat and just tied knots. I shouldn't say "just", as my fingers bled at times, and I could still feel the prick of the needles the next day. As we tied the knots, I found myself getting really focused and enjoying it so much. Ellery was sitting next to me tying her own knots while Grandma Harder wandered around with Elliott. It was so cool to see such a large, intergeneration group of people all focused on a single task. I thought I was getting pretty good and pretty quick at it until Grandma sat down next to me. I think she did 4 for every 1 knot I was able to do, and some of that quilt material is tough! I was so impressed, and it made me smile the next morning to see so many quilts hanging all over the sanctuary.

~ submitted by Mark Rauwerda



Some of you may remember back to the 70's when the fabric "crimplene" was in style. It was a wash and wear fabric, sewed up easily into anything and came

mostly in very pretty colours : all light pastels in a variety of shades. Then when that went out of style the clothes found their way to the benefit or good will stores. As was common a generation of quilters, also at our church, were overloaded with the fabric. They made good use of them, from the cut up clothes and even the scraps. It was during this time that I became aware of the art of the quilt. I don't remember where I saw a magnificent piece of art but found out who had produced it. Just to be sure I was not totally wrong I went to speak to

one of the crafters. My Tante Justa (Justina Bartel) and her friend Mrs. Emilie Pauls had put together a stitched quilt out of the scraps of the colourful crimplene fabric. They cut, sewed, then quilted the scraps into an entire quilt of tulips! The colourful scraps lent themselves into a variety of tulip colours. There was enough green fabric for the leaves and stems, the background was a pale yellow so the tulips just frolicked on top. It was a masterpiece. It was not just a quilt but a creative, loving way of "reduce, reuse, re-cycle". It was also a wonderful way of fostering friendship.

Since then I have seen many quilts - each one colourful and lovingly fashioned. Quilting in its own way has become an art. Now many groups do the "tie" method of making and sharing these "scraps" not only for art but most definitely with a warm purpose. The tie method is faster than the stitched way and much easier for novices like me to join in. Yes I did participate, minimally, joined about 40 people on Jan. 18, in the Great Winter Warmup at my church. It was a pretty fine, well organized, chatty morning, complete with the ever present "refreshments". Kudos to MCC, and to all those who participated worldwide.

Thanks to all.

~ submitted by Ingrid Regier



Great Winter Warmup

On a cold and snowy Saturday, January 18, when it would be easy to stay warm under our feather comforters, we instead responded to the invitation from our very own NUMC Women in Service to venture out of our “comfort zone” to a quilt tying bee. We were joining with people across Canada in various locations with the goal of creating 6500 comforters for MCC to deliver to people affected by conflict and disaster around the world.

Many thanks to our dedicated and hard working NUMC Women in Service for organizing the event, setting up quilting frames, cutting fabric, stitching pieces together and matching threads, etc. to prepare for participants with varying sewing abilities. The job looked easy when done by competent and experienced quilters, but, for a novice like me, it was a challenge to “get it right”. I learned that many skills are required to achieve success. If the thread is too long, it can become easily tangled. If it's too short, it must be replaced more frequently. Good reading glasses and a thin rectangular strip of paper folded in half eases the task of threading the needle. A sharp needle of an ideal length is coveted, and must be returned if borrowed, as it's hard to replace. Making a double knot close to the fabric ensures long lasting strength.



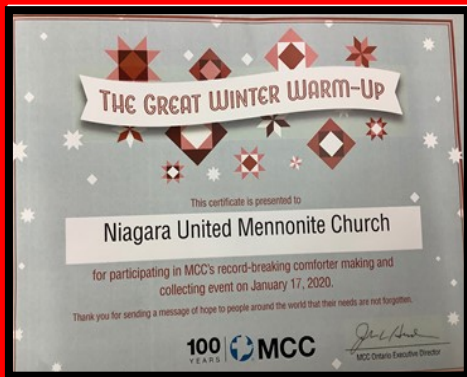
Supportive encouragement from our church mothers and sisters was greatly appreciated. Special thanks to Adine for being my first quilt tying teacher. She told me the story about a beloved teacher and her spider plant named Veronica. Whenever a student achieved mastery of all the lessons taught, they received a “baby Veronica” spider plant. No matter how little or how much time was needed, each student was eventually rewarded for their perseverance and achievement. She understood that the struggle was real. How could this “simple” task be so difficult? After all, my grandmother sewed expertly on our treadle sewing machine, and we even donated a quilting frame to the church. I guess it's just like our faith journey. Looking to those who surround us or have gone before us is a good starting point, but it's up to each one of us to take a personal step of faith and act upon it with commitment. Thanks, also, to Linda Friesen who is a master teacher able to observe and analyze subskills and then demonstrate simple techniques while communicating with clarity and kind patience. What a cherished friend!! Then there's Hedy who gently showed the way and Elizabeth Neufeld who worked alongside me. She told me about working at Canadian Cannery in the late 1950's with her mother and many ladies from our church who were new to Canadian culture. She told me about my mom, Anne Dyck, who was their forelady and how her organizational skills, respect and understanding helped provide the support these women needed at a time when they likely felt vulnerable. Just like MCC helped my family escape Russia in the 1920's during times of famine after the Revolution, so now they were able to help waves of MCC sponsored Mennonites that followed in the 1940's, 1950's and beyond. Long strands of thread fastening patchwork quilts of assorted hues and patterns is a vibrant illustration of the many groups of people connected and woven together through MCC.



The song, “Wehrlos und Verlassen”, or “Rifted Rock” (*see cover of newsletter*) found on page 93 “Sing the Journey” Worship Hymnal is a song I remember singing in church choirs with John and Kathy Rempel. The imagery of being sheltered and covered under soft wings of mercy is beautiful. Imagine a lonely and defenseless heart snuggling under a comforter created with caring kindness. I am humbled to have had the opportunity to work alongside many beautiful, gracious and courageous women whose care and compassion demonstrates their appreciation for the care provided to them and their families from MCC over the past 100 years. While it is easy to “get and forget”, let us remember to “give and forgive”. Thanks be to God “who comforts us in all our troubles so we can comfort those in trouble with comfort we receive from God”. 2 Corinthians 1:4

Many stories shared by fellow quilters made the morning whiz by. My shoulders were tight and my fingers were sore, but reflecting on the experience warmed my heart and renewed my spirit.

~ Alice Bradnam



The quilting event definitely seemed to be a big success! Here's what I would suggest as my quote:

"I enjoyed sewing alongside my mom and it was great to see all the hard work that is put in by the ladies of the church in making these quilts that provide such comfort to many around the world."

Thanks, Dorita Pentesco



Enjoyed this activity celebrating 100 years of MCC! But I have a confession to make -- I was shown, quite capably, how to "double stitch" by Adine Enns but for awhile I was only tying with 1 stitch (why, I don't know -- not paying attention?). Please forgive me! The quilts were all beautiful, despite my blunder!

~ submitted by Laurene Nickel

"I remember my Oma having a quilting frame set up in her basement when I was young. I know she was involved in the Frauenverein quilting at our church too. Eventually, that quilting frame was donated to our church. When I saw the quilt-tying event advertised in our bulletin, I knew right away that I wanted to attend. I thought of bringing all 3 of my granddaughters (aged 3, 4 and 5) to show them another way to help others, but then Grandma couldn't give them individual attention as she learned too. I decided one at a time would be best. Our 4 year old granddaughter, Isabella, was happy to come along. She even helped Grandma tie some knots, and seemed to enjoy it.

(Thank you for taking us under your wing, Lucy!)

Who knows, maybe I was sitting at my Oma's old quilting frame with Issie? Wouldn't that be special?"



~ submitted by Jocelyn Thwaites

Three Generations Emily, Dorothea & Annemarie Enns

On Saturday, January 18, I accepted the invitation to participate in the MCC quilting day, “The Great Winter Warm-up” in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of MCC. What a fantastic morning of fellowship and accomplishment we shared!

My parents taught me about money management and the importance of saving at a young age. On the subject of charity, one sentence summed it up “we have the MCC!”. This was said with pride in the efficiency of the MCC organization and its excellent reputation even well beyond our Mennonite communities.

Most readers of this newsletter will have their own MCC story, some going back as far as its inception in 1920. My family’s involvement didn’t start until after WWII, when my mother was a refugee in Western Germany. As a leader in the refugee community, she was responsible for distributing the care packages that MCC sent. My sister Linda recalls going with my mother and seeing the recipients’ gratitude for those precious parcels.

Linda received a book, “Paddle to the Sea”. She could not read the words, but enjoyed the pictures. Little did she know then, that she would end up in Canada one day, and paddle a canoe just like in the story!

MCC invited my father on a speaking tour to Canada and the US, where he reported on the effectiveness of the MCC programs in Europe. As a result of that trip, he chose the Niagara area as the perfect place for his family to immigrate to.

Rudy’s grandparents also received MCC assistance in immigration to Niagara with their families. Our mothers, Elisabeth Wiens and Annemarie Enns joined the “Frauen Verein” where quilting and tying comforters were one of the key activities. The dedication of our ladies over the decades is truly remarkable.

Out of the many worthwhile causes to support, MCC is still my favourite. I believe that education is the key to poverty reduction so for many years I have purchased school supplies and assembled thousands of schoolkits. With its wide range of programs from material aid, refugee support and social justice initiatives, there is lots of opportunity for all of us to participate by supporting the cause that speaks to our heart. Thank you, MCC. We look forward to the success of the next 100 years



~ submitted by Dorothea Enns

NUMC Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner Feb. 25



God's Ways Are Wonderful

In our last newsletter, we read stories on how MCC helped our church members in their difficult times, and I had a great desire to share a little bit about our story.

I want to start by first thanking our Lord for allowing us to move to Canada from Russia in 1991, and to learn about Him. We also want to thank our dear aunts and uncles:

Erna & George Enns
Emilie & Henry Pauls
Mary & Henry Epp
Meta & Nick Schmidt

They were not afraid to take on the great responsibility of sponsoring three families that they knew very little about. They were, and still are a great blessing in our lives and our spiritual growth.

During a particularly difficult time for our family, I remember my aunt Mary Epp sharing a bible verse with us. The bible verse came from Romans 8:28:

"...We know that ALL things work together for good to those who love God"

And now, when I look back, it is so true! In this difficult time, our family grew even closer to God and we started praying together as a family in the evenings before bed. Our aunts and uncles have done so much for us and words cannot express our sincere gratitude.

We are also thankful to our church members who helped us in various ways including: offering jobs, money, food, driving lessons, and even teaching us English! We thank you so much for everything you have done for us.

When we moved to Canada, we began attending church every Sunday. In Russia, we knew that God existed and even though we considered ourselves to be "Christian", we only prayed a simple child's prayer, and only when we were alone. We did not know much about Him, but we had the desire to learn.

When we moved, our dear aunts made sure we had a Bible in Russian. When I began reading the Bible, it was very confusing trying to understand all the different names (i.e. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David etc.) and places and how they related to the whole story. I decided to make myself a family tree starting with Adam and Eve and through to Jesus. Even though this family tree helped a lot, still many verses in the Bible were not clear to us, and we often discussed them with my brothers Victor Vall & Ivan Wall, sister-in-law, Maria & Olga, and friends, Jake & Irene Peters on Saturday evening get-togethers. Often to our amazement, we would receive an explanation of those very verses by the preacher the very next day at Sunday service. We were so surprised and we thought "how did the preacher know?!" But now we understand that the Lord spoke to us through these preachers. God's providential hand was helping to guide and teach us as we grew.

For a long time, the verse Genesis 1:7-8 did not make sense to me:

"Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven."

My question was, "what water was above the sky?" As I was re-reading the Bible one day, I again came across this verse. Shortly after, I became sick and forced to stay home and rest. During this time, I started reading a Russian book that was given to us by our aunt Emilie, called "The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of this World" by N. I. Saloff-Astakhoff. I do not know from whom she received this book. I had tried reading it when we first moved here, but my knowledge of the Bible was still very new and I did not understand very much. The book remained on my shelf untouched for years. However, this time, I was very excited to read it as it helped to explain this verse and many others. I could not wait until Alex came home to share what I read. I was so grateful to the Lord! I realized then that if we have the desire to understand His word, He will always help!

In Canada, we experienced many miracles and blessings from our Lord. A few stories come to mind.

1st Story:

One evening, our eldest daughter, Natalie, suddenly got very sick with a high fever (over 40°C). When she spoke she did not make any sense, and we were very worried. She was ten years old at the time. We called the ambulance, and my husband, Alex followed them to the hospital. I stayed home with our youngest daughter, Rita. She was six years old. We knelt and prayed. A few hours later, they came back and everything was fine! Natalie smiled and showed us the cute teddy bear she got at the hospital. Praise God! What was also unexpected was the Russian Christian book that we found lying in our door the same morning. To this day, we still do not know who gave us this gift on this very difficult night for our family.

2nd Story:

Our second home in Canada was an apartment on Creek Road, right across from the old Virgil Public School. Behind the apartment is a creek and the kids often liked to play near there. One day, Alex was outside with the kids, and accidentally dropped his keys in the creek! He tried so hard to get them, but nothing worked. I was inside the apartment, and suddenly Rita ran in with tears in her eyes, knelt, and started to pray. She was very upset that the keys were lost. A short time after that, Alex had a great idea to use a rake, and he successfully was able to pull the keys out! At that time, we learned from our children to believe in Him sincerely without any questions.



HOFMAN, Alexandre & Olga

3rd Story:

During a Saturday get-together, Alex and I, with my brothers, Victor & Ivan, and sister-in-law, Maria and Olga, were talking about the people we left in our village in Russia. We felt so sorry for them, and we had such a desire to tell them about our Lord Jesus Christ. After this conversation, maybe one month later, a man came from Germany and preached at the Russian Baptist Church in Niagara Falls. After service, he asked people from this church if they knew of anyone with a German background who moved here from Russia. The church members brought this man to my brother, Ivan. He asked Ivan from which part of Russia he emigrated. He was surprised to hear that Ivan lived in a village in Russia that was only 7 km from the city in which they were planning to build a church in a few months with a group of men from Germany! He invited us to go with them, and we did! What an amazing God we have!

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts”
Isaiah 55:8-9

We have experienced many more of the Lord's blessings here in Canada than these stories we have shared. I know being a Christian is not easy. We all encounter countless temptations, but thank God we have His word, which contains everything for our salvation.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”
Pslams 139:23-24

Note: The book mentioned earlier, “The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of this World” by N.I. Saloff-Astakhoff, I purchased on Amazon in English version. If anyone is interested in reading, please let me know and you can borrow it.

~ submitted by Olga Hofmann

Five Parcels and the Music Lessons – by Lori Dyck

In 1945 my family and I were living in a beautiful village in southern Germany. My Mother, two brothers and I had been moved there by the American soldiers as a result of the U.S. occupation of Germany.

Around this time we heard about the MCC. Our Mother would travel into the city by bus to inquire about emigrating to Canada or as we said, “America”. Mom made numerous such trips and tried to gather as much information as she could. As a result of her regular inquiries, our name “Goossen” was familiar within the circle of Mennonite churches in both Canada and the U.S.

The MCC was supportive of our family and sometimes we would receive a care parcel through their network of aid contacts. It was always a big help for us when such a package arrived. The food stamps we received from the German government were hardly enough to feed 4 people. Often we had to accept substitutes as the item promised by the food stamp was out of stock. Usually what we ended up with was a large chunk of some “unidentifiable” fish.

The aid parcels generally contained rice, raisins, chocolate, sugar, COFFEE beans, and other food items that I cannot remember, as well as some clothes. We didn't always like the clothes that were sent but were very thankful for whatever would fit us. The dress I am wearing in the attached picture was lime green with embroidered black sequence. It looked to me like big ugly spiders!! But the dress fit me, so I had an outfit for school.

The food items in the parcels were, of course, very much appreciated. The coffee beans were GOLD. My brothers and I had never seen or tasted real coffee. But we did not keep the coffee beans. They were great for Mom to barter with. She would try to get us more bread, eggs, milk or other food staples. Whatever she could get in exchange for the beans was so helpful.

In the village, there lived a fine, elegant lady. She had moved to the village to get away from the city and all the bombing during the war. She offered to teach me how to play the piano in exchange for coffee beans. I loved it! She taught me how to play “Fuchs du hast die Gans gestohlen, gib sie wieder her, sonst wird dich der Jaeger hohlen mit dem Schiesgewaer”. I felt very special.

Then one day the postmaster informed us that we had received five (5) parcels. We could hardly believe our eyes!! Were we ever thankful !! Now Mom had 5 pounds of coffee beans to barter with. I was delighted as my piano lessons continued.

Well, it wasn't too long before we were advised that our request to emigrate to Canada had been approved. What wonderful news. Thus ended my great music career.



"Winging it": Doing church with "probable" widows, refugees, unchurched orphans and decommissioned soldiers.

Neuland Paraguay, 1948

They were in uncharted waters when the Neuland (Colony) Mennonite Church in Paraguay was organized on November 12, 1947 under the innovative leadership of Hans Rempel (1908-2001) Rempel was ordained during German occupation of Ukraine, when "simple, untrained men and women called the believers together, read the Word, sang, and prayed"

And for the others? In resettlement camps in Warthegau (annexed Poland) Rempel was encouraged by Heinrich Winter, the "last elder of Chortitza to *"make a new beginning ... like a farmer breaking up hard unplowed ground"* (Jeremiah 4:3)

After the refugees arrived in Paraguay in 1947, the church issues were many and the need for innovation was urgent.

First, what should be the **role of women in church** leadership? The tradition was very restrictive. The men, however were largely missing and many of the women had experience of leadership in the re-establishment of church services during the German occupation of Russia. Innovation in this regard was however minimal.

Second, in Russia, church **wedding ceremonies** had been restricted to members of the congregation, which in effect was the entire adult community. In Neuland, however, up to 40% of individuals sixteen years and older were **unbaptized** in 1950

The younger immigrants had spent their entire youth under an atheistic regime, suffered the disintegration of Mennonite church life under Stalin, were heavily exposed to the ideology of National-Socialism, and had experienced so much loss and grief that the absence of God was in many ways more real than God's presence. Not all of the refugees who were ready to marry were at the same time ready to count themselves amongst the baptized.

However, some concerns were more trivial and easier to handle; for example:

Third In the refugee camps and on board the refugee ships, there were many who participated in open prayer meetings, often encouraged by the Mennonite Central Committee representatives. But **prayer meetings outside of worship were seen as an innovation** by some of the older members, who in pre-World War I Russia had been taught to pray in secret (Matthew 6:5-6).

Fourth In order to build-up the scattered community, the Neuland ministerial established a regular **pot-luck lunch** after worship on the first Sunday of the month. This too was challenged by some who could not connect this innovation to their memory of church.

The fifth and most difficult issue was the problem of **re-marriage**.

"Women with their children had to piece together a new existence alone, build their houses, drive their oxen and horses, and clear the brush. And then there were the men whose families had been sent back to Russia. They were without women to help them with household work. Many were trapped in these almost unsolvable problems, and they entered into new marriage-like relationships without having dissolved their marriages with the separated partner"

Initially the congregation excommunicated such individuals; but on July 17, 1949 a regulation was unanimously passed by the Conference of Mennonites in South America that allowed remarriage under specific conditions: If marriage partners have been separated from each other for seven years and have had no communication during this time; or if the spouse living in the Soviet Union or its controlled territories has remarried or is in a common-law marriage. Persons who are already living common-law but whose seven years waiting period has not yet been completed, may only be

legally married after the seven-year period has expired for both individuals. In these cases individuals were allowed to be baptized in good faith and have their new marriages blessed by the community of faith.

Opportunity was also given for individuals to confess any guilt and to be granted forgiveness by the congregation. However, congregational members were forbidden to enter into new marriage relationships if they knowingly had a spouse living overseas who had not remarried.

Some twenty-eight members who could not accept these changes around remarriage left to form their own church, the short-lived Chortitzer Mennonite Church.

Sixth, Denominations: On April 4, 1948, Neuland held its first baptismal service at a farmstead with a larger than average barn in the village of Lichtenau, Neuland.

A large number of the people singing the hymns have personally experienced the faith and testing about which they sing. Many of them have come through the fires of persecution and have been tested by the agonies of famine, warfare, revolution, terror, imprisonment, flight, separation from loved ones ... Hymns such as these have helped to sustain them and have given them courage through long seasons of suffering .

Soon after baptisms began, the old divide between Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches reared its head again, connected too to aid dollars. B. B. Janz, the inspirational leader of the 1920s emigration from the USSR, was present in Paraguay when the first refugees arrived in 1947 and insisted that all MB churches adhere strictly to immersion baptism, and that all persons baptized by another mode be re-baptized. This caused unnecessary bitter feelings and harmed mutual respect and cooperation. Refugees had all but forgotten this division in their common suffering (or never knew of it to begin with). Moreover, in the resettlement camps in Warthegau (annexed Poland) in 1944, Benjamin Unruh (baptized MB) was absolutely clear with all new leaders (all were under his tutelage) that that old division must not be reintroduced. But here the opportunity for birthing something new was thwarted.

Seventh: What about the decommissioned soldiers? Initially this was not a problem. All of the Mennonite men Rempel's age or younger had been German soldiers. But with time, it was important for Rempel to recover this part of the tradition with a major publication for a next generation:



Hans Rempel wurde am 29. Juni 1908 in Einlage, bei Chortitza, am Dnjepr geboren. Da der Vater, Johann Rempel,



Die Kirche der Mennonitengemeinde in Neu-Halbstadt wird gebaut

"I was heavily wounded and taken behind the lines. I did not have to shoot anyone; this was God's gracious provision to me. That being said ... the peace witness of our Mennonite people was indeed heavily assaulted. In the storm and stress of this terrible time it was also widely forgotten. But it was not eradicated; our people recall it Because they are asking, especially in our student circles, I have gratefully undertaken this compilation [on Russian Mennonite alternative service]".

Rempel's account is free of all judgement on those many young men who were plucked from their families and villages and thrown into the war. But it is also a *confession* that the church was under heavy attack, and in the confusion lost its direction. In the 1970s, Rempel was confident that the church would recover its historic peace witness.

During this time in Paraguay, Rempel was pastor to my uncle Walter Bräul--a German soldier at age 16--who grew up under Stalin and had no experience of church. Years later Walter recalled gratefully that unlike some other faith leaders in the colonies, Rempel had an open mind. And that won him over.

~ submitted by Kathy Rempel

With the 100th anniversary of Mennonite Central Committee

~by Will Friesen

Kathy Rempel asked if I would contribute a piece about some notable MCC workers hailing from here in Kansas. In brainstorming possible people to include, and I thought of **Robert and Myrtle Goering Unruh**, and **John Z. Friesen**, who may be of special interest to some people at Niagara UM Church.

Those of you with connections to Paraguay may have encountered Robert and Myrtle Unruh during your time there. Robert was raised in Montana, his wife grew up on a farm near Moundridge, Kansas, and they met at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, which is just down the street from my house. While Bethel students, both were exposed to information about the General Conference Mennonite involvement with MCC worldwide and together decided that their skillset and fluency in the Low German language could be of use to MCC efforts. They were assigned to the Chaco in Paraguay to aid in resettling the scores of Mennonite refugees coming Ukraine.

From 1951 to 1983, Robert headed the agricultural experimental station near Filiadelfia, Fernheim Colony, where he worked in collaboration with others to find varieties of crops and livestock fodder that could survive in the difficult Chaco climate, one not too dissimilar from the high plains of Kansas. His work was paramount to equipping the Mennonites of Paraguay to survive in a strange land and eventually prosper. Meanwhile, Myrtle worked as a home economist, teaching women to prepare and preserve native plants, such as bananas and mangoes, in a way that would provide proper nutrition, even in the dry, cropless months. She also provided instruction in the English language, preparing many people for their emigrations to Canada.

The Unruhs returned to North Newton in the mid 1980's due to health complications, but they were honored in the Fernheim Colony in 1997. A Paloblanco tree was planted in Myrtle's memory on the yard of the Colegio Filadelfia where she had taught.

Another influential Kansan is my great uncle, John Z. Friesen. John grew up in Meade, Kansas, which is where I spent the first 20 years of my life. While a student at Tabor College during the second World War, John was called to perform his alternative

service to avoid serving in the armed forces. It was during these years that he developed a number of connections that lead to him volunteering for a term with MCC. He was sent to Chinkiang, China, to lead an MCC Relief Unit tasked with providing bread for, at times, over 5,000 refugees and hungry people displaced by the growing threat of communism in China. They were able to continue this enormous task for 15 months until the Chinese government forced them to stop under great duress.

During this time, uncle John also helped many Mennonites reach Canada as they fled Stalinist Russia. In a letter he wrote home in May 1949, he wrote a thrilling tale of facilitating the movement of 14 Russian Mennonites from China to Canada. They had spent a great deal of time and money preparing documentation and securing ship boarding tickets to allow these Mennonites to enter Canada, and while en route to the sea port to meet their ship, they stopped to pick up a couple who needed a ride. While their vehicle was stopped, a thief stole the briefcase containing all of the documents necessary for these people to make it to their new homes – passports, boarding tickets, health certificates, and visas. They were devastated, as it had taken a great deal of time and over \$6000 to secure all of the documents and required signatures. John was a determined, persistent man, and worked tirelessly to replace the documentation, and, against all odds, he succeeded! A high official of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said of it, "I have never heard of it in the history of the office... or in the history of China!" In preparation for their departure, John requested of his family in Meade to send English Bibles so that the refugees could read the Bible and begin to learn English as they travelled to Canada.

John returned to the United States after serving three years abroad and married Mildred Garber, with whom he parented four children. He died after only seven years of marriage in a tragic car accident near their home. John's stories of his time in China live on, though, in a book his wife self-published in the 1990's. I've often wondered if my great uncle John was involved with the arrival of anyone in the Niagara community.



MDS Trip to Saipan (cont'd)



(Do you remember this guy going up for coconuts to supply Erv & the MDS crew with nice coconut milk? We left him hanging until we had room to continue the saga of the MDS trip to Saipan.)

These guys could spend all day on the roof. Due to the heat, they would show up in sleeveless shirts on the job site. They even tried no shirts or bare back as we call it. Then their biggest issue became sunburn. One afternoon, Ben got sunburned on the underside of his arms. It seems the intense sun reflecting off of the metal

roof burned his underarms. So, they slathered sunscreen on all over the place. Our PD, Don Horst, mentioned to them, that we don't follow all the MDS rules in Saipan, but one rule we have, is no short shorts, and no sleeveless shirts, never mind bare back. Then Harold piped up that they would be better off wearing long sleeve shirts, like many of the locals, as this, in the end is cooler.

This piece of advice did not go unnoticed, as Ben showed up the next morning for work in a nice blue long sleeve shirt, with a nice blue matching TIE. He kept the outfit on all day long.

Both of them have been sky diving, but according to Ben nothing is scarier than their new favorite sport Bull Hockey. You have to google this to understand it. It is typically run at rodeos, and involves trying to score a goal, with a real live bull complete with horns. The bull is the PUCK. Unbelievable!



Arnold and the owner Nan, in the living room, working on window trim.

Don had estimated 2 weeks for the house. By the end of week 1, it was really shaping up, and with 2 more guys arriving in the 2nd week, we felt we were ahead of schedule. That Thursday, before Harold left for home, the 3 of us went to look at our next house. The owners had mostly moved into an army tent erected right beside it, where they slept.

However the washroom, kitchen and one sleeping cot were still in use, in spite of no roofs. They did have sort of a plastic blue tarp roof, that after a year was torn and leaking everywhere. There were household items packed into any semi dry corner of the house. Since the house at this point was condemned, it had no electricity. The owners ran a small generator with extension cords whenever they needed power for cooking or laundry or watching TV.

FEMA had brought 3 other agencies to look at the house. No one wanted to touch it, as they all felt it was too far gone. Not only did all the roofs have to be replaced, the internal supporting walls were also damaged to the point that they need to be replaced as well. When Don and Harold looked at the job, they felt sorry for the family and decided that the exterior walls were more or less sound, and we could replace the interior walls. As you can imagine, after 3 rejections, the family was thrilled. They would get their house back.

We decided we would empty out ½ of the house, build a support wall, then the roof. Once that was done, move all their stuff into the finished rooms and then tackle the rest of the house.

Nice time to talk about Don Horst. He holds a pilot licence for any fixed wing aircraft flying up to 25,000ft ie unpressurised. Don and his wife Rachel owned and operated a charter airline business. In their heyday they operated 3 planes, the largest a 17 passenger, flying oil and other executives around the southern USA. His business happened to be located near a warehouse for air craft parts, so he was also on call, taking middle of the night phone calls, carrying parts to stranded passengers all over North America. Lots of interesting stories to tell. But wait it gets worse? Or better? Depending on your perspective. In the early 90s (I think), the bottom fell out of the charter air craft business in the time span of 3 months. So he closed shop and with MCC backing joined Flying Mission based out of Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. From Gaborone, the Flying Mission pilots ferried doctors and mission folks all over Southern Africa, as well as bringing sick patients back to the capital for treatment. As you can imagine the stories got even more interesting, either saving or losing patients on their trips back and forth to the hospitals.

The weekend was upon us, the MDS volunteers get the weekend off, and Arnold and I had decided to tour the north, scenic end of the island on bicycle. As we were tired, and it was hot, and the area we were touring was hilly, we rented ebikes, which turned out to be a great idea. The ebikes worked well and really helped on the hills. With the ebikes we also had guides, who gave us a good history of the area. One guide was on an ebike with us, the other in an equipment van that followed us. The scenery was awesome.



Part of the tour included snorkeling in a famous grotto in the area.



While we were bicycling around, it was not unusual to come across Chinese tourists parked in the middle of the road, with the boyfriend snapping a picture of his girl draped over the hood of their rented PINK Mustang convertible with a scenic view in the background. In town there were many car rental places with no end of pink, powder blue or canary yellow muscle cars, either Mustangs, or Camaros.



Of course, when we asked our buddies Ben and Harlan what they had done on the weekend, they had rented a 500hp Baby Blue, Mustang Gull Wing, sports car. The maximum speed on the whole island is 40mph on 1 road, everywhere else it's 30mph.

With the weekend behind us, we went back to Nan's house, for a day, and then, by Tuesday, we were split into 2 groups. The young guys and Arnold, stayed at Nan's house as they were now tackling the high roof, and I took Big Mike and John (I've not mentioned them yet), and went to the new house.

So this is Nan's house with a nice new (180mph wind proof) roof and windows and doors, ready for them to move back in.



On Tuesday, at house 2, we were introduced to the owners Tess, and Eric and their children, and their nephew James. Eric took time off of work, to get us going. When we got there someone was sleeping on this cot. The pails are to catch rain water dripping through the tarp roof.



Below are James, their nephew, and Tess's son. In the background is the FEMA tent also for sleeping. The white boxes are hurricane rations.



Tess, Eric and their son, who is in college. They are Filipino citizens and in Saipan to work, but since their son is born in Saipan, he's an American citizen. Their goal is to move their whole family to mainland USA. It seems a bit far off at the moment.



In the background is a small outdoor corner of the house that had 2 open sides, but a concrete roof. It was here that the family huddled for 8 hours as the typhoon raged over them, tearing away all the roofs in the area. When the winds died down there was nothing but debris over the whole island. The family had been used to having small air conditioners in their bedrooms for sleeping. Now they had nothing, just tarps. Slowly the people dragged all the debris into big piles so that they could at least drive on the streets, if they had a working car. This created nesting grounds for mosquitoes, and now they lived with no roof, no air conditioning and mosquitoes all night long. It took them 3 months to get used to sleeping at night in these conditions. For their part they were thankful, that they all survived.

On our 1st day at site Eric brought locally made chicken kabobs for lunch.



The fellow at the back beside myself is Eric the owner. On the left are MDSers, Big Mike and John. They are prison guards from Pennsylvania. They had no end of interesting prison life stories, as John ran a maintenance crew of prison inmates, and Mike runs an early release program (although he calls it a chain gang). Mike prior to having his knee rebuilt, would moon light as a Pro Wrestler, and even made it on TV once or twice. Since those days, he's lost 50lbs, and now stands at 350lbs. Both of these guys had trouble on ladders and roofs, which is why they came with me to the new house, where the roof was lower, and we could find them ground work. I was impressed that they both took 2 weeks of vacation time to come help out.



This is not photo shopped. We actually got Big Mike the Ex Pro Wrestler through that narrow space and up on the roof. One can see that every 2X4 has a steel hurricane strap, to hold it to the next one. Mike is using an air driven palm nailer to nail the hurricane straps (each strap has about 12 nails) to the 2X4s.



This is Ben Wall from Vancouver, born in Paraguay, speaks Plat. More or less retired builder. He arrived on week 2, and would be there for 4 weeks. Shown below was day one. After 2 hours on the roof in the sun, he overheated and was getting woozy. I helped him down, doused him with water, and put him in the shade. He did not go back up on the roof again that day.

A view of Tess and Eric's house from our apartment showing some of the new roof on. To the left is a house with some of the roof gone, and in the background another tarp roof. Some of these houses were not lived in as often people moved in with extended family.



If you can make it out, there is a small piece of metal roofing on a kind of lean too (outdoor kitchen). As I mentioned, I was working with a good framer from Vancouver, Ben Wall. We were building out this new roof, or lean to, from an existing wall/roof and wanted it, of course to be square. Normally, I'd take the largest square I have available, and lay it out, and build it.

Well Ben told me that his young guys who went to school to learn framing, calculated it. Of course, Pythagoreans Theorem, which we've all used, but I've never used it in construction. On reflection its use is obvious.

Using our tape measures, we could go a good 15ft or more out and get a really accurate square corner for the wall/roof lines. With my phone I quickly calculated $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. With our measurements, we located the corner post where we wanted it. Did I say quickly?

Everything looked fine, and square, until we laid our 1st sheet of metal on the newly constructed frame of the roof. Over the 12ft metal sheet, it was off by 2-3". I went back to my phone and figured out I had made a typo, and given Ben the wrong measurements. Moral of the story. Have someone else check your calculations.

Once the steel sheeting was up, it felt much safer and the big boys felt ok to be up there.



As week 2 drew to a close, Ben, Harlan and Juan decided to stay for a 3rd week. We found out later that week 3 was a washout. A 2019 typhoon came by, and for 3 days, the island was shut down, with no power (the hotel had backup diesel generators). Luckily, they caught only a glancing blow and all of our construction sites were not damaged, even those with only partial roofs up.

When Arnold and I left, we had completed one house, and were about half done on 2 more.

Our week 2 crew. The guy in the hat is Denis, whom I met and wrote about during our Lafayette trip. Don, our Project Director is kneeling.



Arnold and I left Saipan early on a Saturday morning and ½ hour later were in Guam where we spent the day relaxing around the hotel pool. 6:00am Sunday morning we left Guam and arrived in Toronto at 4:00 in the afternoon, the same day, after 24 hours of travelling. (did I mention we crossed the International Date Line).

Since then FEMA has decided to keep the projects going until at least April of 2020. Anyone interested in going? Give me a call.

~ submitted by Erv Willms

Sunday School in the 1940s

It was Martha (Dyck) Wiens' 80th birthday and her Sunday School companions from the 1940s decided to help her celebrate. So with balloons and flowers and a special cake baked by one of her friends, the group descended upon Tabor Manor on the 8th day of January and spent an afternoon of fun and fellowship.

Who was this group of friends who came to celebrate? We are a group of 12 ladies who all attended NUM Sunday School in the 1940s. Martha Dyck Wiens, Louise Andres Rogolski, Gertrude Willms Andrews, Rita Boldt, Susan Willms Fast, Eleanor Wiens Penner, Mildred Willms Polgrabia, Katie Penner Burke, Mary Becker Draper, Hedy Wiens Ali, Deanna Harder Harris, Margie Andres Enns. It all took place in the little white church that once stood on this property but has since been moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake. We all remember Tante Masha, the Kindergarten teacher, Frank Klassen, Erna Dirks, Peter Dirks and many others who have gone on before us. Classes were held in the basement of the little white church. The friendships that were forged there in the 40s are still strong today.



Many of us can still remember the Bible pictures that the teachers used to reinforce the stories. Those same pictures are today stored in one of our Sunday School rooms and I would strongly encourage our teachers to use them when sharing the Bible stories in their classrooms.

As we got older, we all went to Young Peoples, Choir Practice, attended Baptism Classes and eventually got married, many right here in the red brick church. Even though in later years our paths went in different directions, we never forgot the friendships that were made in the little white church on the Niagara Stone Road. At least once a year the group gets together for a picnic, a dinner, a wiener roast or some kind of outing. Some in the group get together more often during the year. Some have moved away to other provinces but do join us when in town. Deanna Harder Harris lives in British Columbia and only joins the group when in the area.



Now that the first member of our group has reached the ripe old age of 80, we have decided to celebrate each one as they approach that magical age. Yes, these friendships started right here in Sunday School. Who would have thought that seventy-five years later we would still be getting together reminiscing about the time spent here at NUM Church.



May this be an encouragement to our current Sunday School children. You never know what the future may hold and maybe years from now you too may still have friendships with people you first met here at the red brick church.

~ Margie Enns



How Painting Became Part of Me – by Lori Dyck

When I was about 11 years old, my family and I lived in a refugee camp – a convent - in South Germany. A kind lady who lived in the convent with us would gather the children together and teach us Sunday School. One day she gave us each a piece of a pencil so we could write down some answers to questions she asked us. Then she let us keep the pencils. O, what joy! My own pencil!!

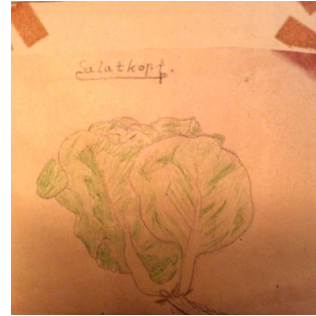
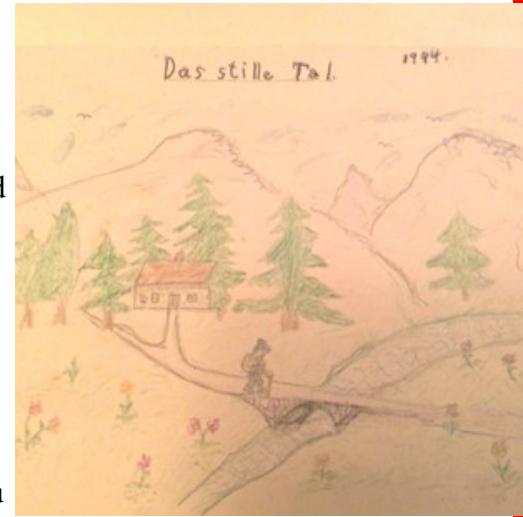
I started to draw whatever I thought was pretty. There was no paper anywhere to buy so I was always on the look out for a piece of paper or cardboard – anything I could draw on.

FIRST DRAWING 1944 - DAS STILLE TAL

Soon after arriving in South Germany, we moved from the convent to Braunsbach, a beautiful little village surrounded by mountains. We lived in this village for about two and a half years. This was the best time I had in Europe. It was peaceful and so pretty. We were able to attend regular school everyday. I started in grade 6 even though I had missed grades 4 and 5 during the war. We made friends and had a happy, normal life. I loved school and every subject. Once a week our teacher (there were only two in the entire school) gave us a lesson in drawing. I loved those lessons. On one occasion Herr Knauss told us to draw a **head of lettuce**. I had never seen one but tried hard to make a green, round-looking object. Some kids grew lettuce in their gardens, so their drawings looked more like vegetables. I was not happy with my drawing.

The next week the teacher had a surprise for us. He brought in a real beautiful head of lettuce to school and put it at the front on his desk. “Now”, he said, “you can look at it. See how you will sketch another lettuce”. I was so excited and happy and went to work right away. That day I learned why most artists have models to look at. The teacher taught us that artists look at something when they draw or paint. Later he brought in some **tools** for us to sketch and occasionally he would take us outside for our art lessons, to draw the nature around us.

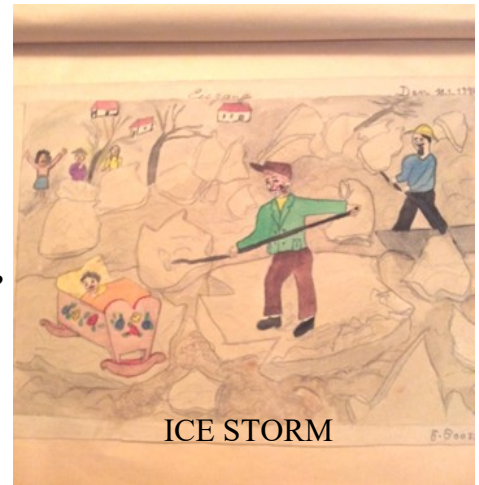
From then on, I drew everything that looked pretty to me.



BOY WITH MUSIC HORN

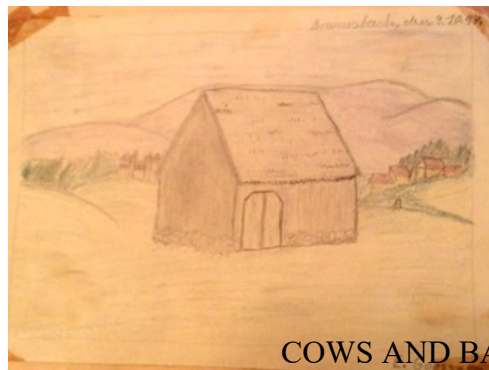
One winter something unusual happened. It was exceptionally cold and the river that flowed through the middle of the village froze solid. When it started to break up, huge chunks of ice pushed each other along. The ice piled up by the bridge..... then suddenly it cracked and roared, the river taking our bridge along right to the next village. Young and old exclaimed, “*O, schreck unsere Bruecke ist weg!*” Everyone was upset –

such an interesting thing had never happened in Braunsbach before. Our young teacher was very clever. He used this incident to keep us busy for several weeks. We had to write a report, an essay, a letter, a story, a poem and draw a picture.



ICE STORM

When I was 15 years old, we came to Canada. There was so much to learn. I had to work full-time right away and went to school two evenings a week after work to learn English. There was only time on Sunday for drawing. I particularly loved the Christmas cards we received and drew a lot from them.



COWS AND BARN



One Christmas after we had been in Canada for a while, my brother Alfred gave me a box of oil paints. I still have the box as a remembrance of him. The little tubes of paint are long gone but the memories of my joy at receiving this gift are still fresh.

This is my first oil painting:



PICTURE OF CHURCH AND THE ALPS

Our family moved several times during those early years in Canada. I was married, had children, it was a busy time. But I always had a canvas on my easel and painted as I had time. When we were in our 50's, my husband and I became deacons. My husband was still working so I did much of the visiting alone. I loved the deacon work. It took a lot of my time, so painting took a back seat. My husband died in 2007 and I had to make many changes in my life. I had not painted for 23 years at that point. Two years after Jake died, my son-in-law took our family to Hawaii for 3 weeks. We did a lot of island hopping. Hawaii is very beautiful, and I was so inspired. As soon as we came home, I started painting again.

Now that I am almost 87, I still always have a canvas on my easel. I have more time now but less strength and energy. I never wanted to accomplish important or great things with my painting. I have never taken any formal lessons with an art teacher or attended art school – just did what my eye saw. This is my hobby and I have had much fun with it.

(To view more of Lori's beautiful Artwork, please visit our Art Gallery downstairs by the choir room.)

Book Corner ~ Debbie Fast

In the Shadow of Denali The Heart of Alaska, Book 1

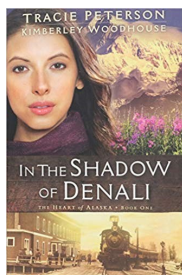
Tracie Peterson & Kimberley Woodhouse

"Cassidy Ivanoff & her father, John, work at the new & prestigious Curry Hotel near the foot of Mount McKinley – Denali as it's still called by the natives. John is the wilderness & exploration guide for the wealthy tourist while Cassidy works in the kitchen as Cook's assistant. The entire staff buzzes with excitement during the busy days preparing for the President's imminent visit. His historic trip to dedicate the new national park on his way to driving in the golden spike to officially complete the Alaska Railway will be the beginning of a new era for all of them & place The Curry at the heart of Alaska.

Allan Brennan travels to the Curry Hotel to be an apprentice to the seasoned Alaska mountain guide, with hopes of discovering the truth about his father's death on the mountain years earlier. His father business partner blames the guide for Henry Brennan's untimely death, but Allan cannot be at peace until he knows for sure. He finds an unlikely ally in Cassidy, & as the two begin to look into the mystery, they suddenly find that things are much less clear & much more dangerous, than either could ever imagine."

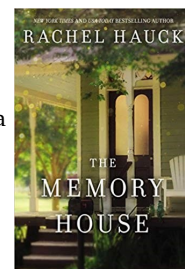
The Memory House ~ Rachel Hauck

"When Beck Holiday lost her father in the North Tower on 9/11, she also lost her memories of him. Eighteen years later, she's a tough New York City cop burdened with a damaging secret, suspended for misconduct & struggling to get her life in order. Meanwhile a mysterious letter arrives informing her she's inherited a house along Florida's northern coast & what she discovers there will change her life forever. Matters of the heart only become more complicated when she reconnects with handsome



Bruno Endicott, a driven sports agent who fondly recalls the connection they shared as teenagers. But Beck doesn't remember that either.

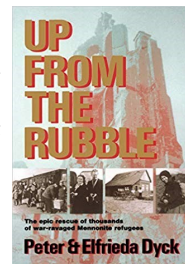
Decades earlier, widow Everleigh Applegate lives a steady, uneventful life with her widowed mother after a tornado ripped through Waco, Texas & destroyed her dreams for the future. When she runs into old high school friend Don Callahan, she begins to yearn for change. Yet no matter how much she longs to love again, she is hindered by a secret she can never share. Fifty years separate the women but through the power of love & the miracle of faith, they each find healing in a beautiful Victorian known affectionately as The Memory House."



Up From The Rubble ~ Peter & Elfrieda Dyck

"In this century no story out of the Mennonite experience has captured the hearts & minds of all Mennonites & Amish groups as has the story of the Berlin Exodus in 1947. The departure from Berlin in the early morning hours of January 30 of 1200 Mennonite refugees from Russia is part of a larger epic of the movement of 12000 uprooted Mennonites to new homes in Paraguay, Uruguay & North America. It brings to memory the biblical narrative of the might works of God in that first Exodus" Robert Kreider

"Read how these sufferers from World War 11, crushed & bruised, weeping & bleeding, came up from the rubble with fresh determination, with God's aid, to start over, even in the bleak Chaco of Paraguay. Join with the Dycks in a faith-building experience that fosters worldwide Mennonite peoplehood. Affirm with them & Jonah that "deliverance belongs to the Lord." **God can!"**



“They will break us. They know how.” (cont’d)

From last time: An unexpected telephone call last spring from Ron Funk of Vineland, resulted in the comment that Ron’s father, Walter, had never received a copy of my Grandfather’s book. As Walter Funk was a long-time friend of my father, Jacob Neufeld, I could only happily oblige with a copy of the book. In December 2019, my daughter Ali and I met with Walter. What follows next is an interpretation of a true story as told by Walter Funk.

In the spring of 1940, in the village of Gnadenfeld, South Ukraine, Jacob Abramovitch Neufeld sat at his desk early one morning in his small accounting office of the recently formed “Karl Marx Collective Farm. Jacob’s quiet reflection was broken when Franz Funk bounded through the front door: “*Goode Morje!*” The Funk family had relocated to Gnadenfeld from a Mennonite settlement further east and Jacob and Franz had now become fast friends. Franz’s responsibilities included overseeing the Collective Farm’s Machine Shop. Jacob reminded Franz of a previously arranged meeting that both of them had to attend. An official letter from the People’s Commissariat for Agriculture (Department Of Agriculture) in Moscow had previously arrived in the mail. It detailed the impending visit from Moscow, of a senior Agriculture Department official, currently on tour of the area’s collective farms. The visiting delegation would also include a member of the local Agricultural Board and lastly, an individual representing the local workers union. Those in attendance from the Collective would include four managers (including Funk and Neufeld).

From this time: Although the arrival of the out-of town guests was quite imminent, Franz, being less than enthused about the entire proceeding, excused himself. Quickly exiting from the door from which he had entered minutes before. He seemed pleased with himself to delay the whole thing for at least for a few moments. Franz muttered something to Jacob about checking the progress of the ongoing repair on the collective’s one and only tractor. Jacob quickly got in the last word though: “Please don’t forget... in 15 minutes you’re back here!” From there out to the machine shop Franz went, really only less than a minute’s walk away. He gave a quick, happy morning greeting to his Ukrainian co-worker, Volodja and then checked the morning’s work thus far. Franz always marvelled at mechanical abilities Volodja possessed. But not his linguistic abilities: trying to explain in mostly his native Ukrainian, a bit of Russian and an almost totally unrecognizable, thickly accented but whole-hearted attempt at *Plaut-deutsch*, Volodja stammered to describe a broken fuel pump on the tractor. All that piled onto a generous helping of wild hand motions, made the scene almost comic to Franz, but in this way, Volodja had easily endeared himself to his fellow co-workers.

In the meantime, the thought of making some Chai (tea) occurred to Jacob. Though nearly totally incapable of any kind of normal walking movement, mobility for Jacob was managed with two canes and a series of awkward, almost flailing-like motions, which in this case, found Jacob at a samovar which was sitting on a nearby counter next to the window. Within a few moments, Jacob, peering out the window, noticed the first arrival for today’s meeting.

With a careful dismount of his horse, then afterwards a cautious turn-around glance at his new surroundings the visitor slowly made his way to the front door of the collective farm office. With a quick knock the man then entered without invitation and curtly greeted Jacob in Russian: “*Dobre dyeng*” and introduced himself as Lev Kamenev, from the local Farm Workers Union based out of nearby Tokmok. Jacob immediately noted the Jewish surname. Jacob’s offer of tea was refused.

Within minutes, the rest of the governmental delegation had arrived. Their black car had pulled up to the front of the small farm office. Two men, nicely dressed and very “official” looking emerged, from the government vehicle. From the nearby machine shop, Volodja called out to Franz that it was time for his meeting. Franz quickly wiped his hands clean and made his way to the office, and the three of them entered the office together. Shortly thereafter Stefan Hiebert and Martin Helmelt, both land managers of the Collective joined in. Once settled, tea was offered, then poured and introductions were made: from Moscow, Dmitri Golov, a senior Agriculture Department official, Evgeny Mayko, a member of the local Agricultural Board, Lev Kamenev, from the Farm Workers Union. From the Collective Farm side: Franz Funk, Jacob Neufeld, Stefan Hiebert and Martin Helmelt.

After some fairly stilted small talk, the meeting started. Golov dutifully and confidently proclaimed the progress of the revolution in the area of agriculture and how pleased he was to be at the Karl Marx Collective Farm. He explained that in the last ten days of his tour of collective farms in the Southern Ukraine, he had personally witnessed the resurgence of the agricultural sector. Stalin, himself, Golov said, had even remarked about the great strides made: “We expect the harvest of 1940 will be good and 1941 will be even better,” It seemed a well-used introduction, but always expected.

Present situations were discussed, those within the immediate area and those within the Collective itself. Jacob made notes regarding anticipated plantings, where and when particular crops to be planted, harvest arrangements, quotas and storage facilities (which was to be in the now unused church).

About one hour into very much one-sided meeting, it seemed everything was said that should have been said, and an awkward silence prevailed from Funk, Helmelt, Hiebert and Neufeld.

Kamenev was barely able to hide his contempt for the Mennonites, or German colonists as he called them. As far as labour for the September harvest was concerned, Kamenev commented that manual labour was nearly the only option. The one combine that was shared by the neighbouring collectives would be in great demand and likely unavailable for this particular harvest. A second combine would be available for the 1941 harvest he explained.

Again, an awkward silence followed. Hiebert and Funk then quietly discussed, in their native *Plaut-deutsch*, the implications and procedures of these seemingly impossible harvest tasks. Kamenev stood up, staring scornfully at Franz and exclaimed that these off-the-record discussions were not appreciated, nor was the use of a foreign language, especially German. “Russian,” Kamenev stated, “was the language of the Party”.

A breaking point had been reached and Franz, growing increasingly frustrated at the pace and direction of the meeting, immediately stood up to address the situation of the local labour force first asking Jacob to translate into Russian what was to be said: “The local labour force is mostly women and children.” he said, “your plan will never work. It was only 18 months ago that our Mennonite villages were repeatedly raided and many many of us were arrested for whatever reason, and imprisoned for the sake of your “revolution”. My brother-in-law and father were arrested as well, probably killed by now. Who knows what happened to them? Answer that!! There’s your workforce!!.”

Franz's voice intensified. Jacob, concerned for a visibly upset Franz, stopped translating at this point. Yet Franz continued on: "And this business about what to plant and where to plant it... let us plan that out for ourselves. We know how. You... you with your quotas, and impossible talk. Then there's the church! To store grain! You are Godless!" Franz's rant quickly seemed to lose steam. He sat down, agitated and stressed. "LEAVE US ALONE".

After a moment of seemingly endless silence, the meeting ended with the delegation staring at each other in some bewilderment. The delegation was ushered out of the office, and once the visitors were out of sight, Hiebert and Helmelt left as well. Within 10 minutes the room was empty and eerily quiet again. Franz stayed sitting in his chair, shoulders slumped, staring at nothing in particular. Jacob sat down across from him. A long silence ensued. Their eyes met. Franz finally broke the silence and in a desperate voice pleaded: "Can't you see Jacob? All this is impossible! None of this will ever work!" Jacob nodded slowly in silent agreement. Their friendship was now welded together through this experience.

Jacob finally spoke up: "They will break us. They know how." And in his mind's-eye, Jacob fretted and recalled his own many experiences in the Soviet Prison System that had ended only a year before. "They will break us. They know how."

~ submitted by Harold Neufeld

My Memory of MCC from 1946 - 1949

When I think back to the time when I was a young boy and teenager, my memory leads to a time after the end of World War II.

Life was very much different from the time before and during the war years. Back then we lived in a period of relative peace and contentment. But things changed dramatically for us right after the war ended.

A few months into 1946, after my mother had died, I lived with an elderly couple, the Thiessens, in a small village in Westprussia (by now already Poland), very close to my birthplace.

On August 30, 1946 Mr. Thiessen wrote the following letter addressed to one of his former neighbours, and I quote: *"Today we received a couple of Care Parcels via Copenhagen, Denmark. However, we assume the actual senders on the return address on the parcels are shown as G. A. Harder, R. R. # 1, Whitewater, Kansas. We are really overjoyed about all the wonderful items in the parcels, all of which we had not seen for a long time. At this time we are unsure whom to send our heartfelt thanks for the precious gifts."* End of quote.

In doing some research regarding Mennonite Churches in the Whitewater area, I discovered that several existed back in the forties, as well as now. My conclusion is that these churches were affiliated to MCC, and Mr. G. A. Harder was a member of one of these churches. Hence, this event of receiving totally unexpected gift parcels was our first experience with MCC. The fact that we received these parcels in Poland in 1946 made it that much more amazing. These items could have easily been intercepted by the local authorities since the Polish population too were in dire need of help. Mr. Thiessen concludes his letter as follows: *"It is good to know that there still are people in this world who are thinking of us. We have one consolation: our God still lives."*

Now to 1949. I lived with our family in West Germany, not far from the city of Hamburg. Our closest, and only Mennonite Church was located in that city, not that far from where we lived. Since our financial situation was very precarious we could rarely afford to travel from our small town by train to Hamburg. However, on a couple of separate occasions we were notified by the church office that Care Parcels from MCC had arrived and we could come and pick them up. It was Christmas time. Needless to say, it was a joyous event when we could take home the packages which contained many items that we were in great need of. I remember items such as warm underwear, canned meat, tooth powder and brushes, a linen bag I used to carry my school books in, and assorted other very useful and welcome items. And to my surprise I received a New Testament in German, the first one I ever owned. I took the book to school for religious studies as well as to catechism classes later on. There is a quote on the front page which reads as follows: *"A Good Will Christmas Gift from Your Friends in America. In the name of Christ."*

I like to close with a verse from Thessalonians 5, verse 18 which reads: *"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you"*.

~Submitted by Wilhelm Harder.



CENTENNIAL

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MCC

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CELEBRATION

May 31, 2020 @ 3:00
St. Catharines UM Church

MUSIC – Kernlieder – Beloved Hymns – Choral Music
STORIES of Interesting Events & Notable Personalities
Volunteer Choir Practices – May 5, 12, 19, 26 @ 7:30



Ten Thousand Villages in NOTL will be closing its store on March 31, 2020! The online store will also close shortly after that. In the meantime, they will offer many items at 35% off! We will miss them a lot!

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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