

## Southern Manitoba Choral Society (1957-2007)

by Ted E. Friesen

Southern Manitoba Choral Society had its beginning in the fall of 1957, as the Altona Community Choir, under the direction of noted musician and conductor, Ben Horch, who had just been hired as Head of the Music Department at the newly established local radio station, CFAM in Altona.

The choir began rehearsing in November, 1957 and performed Handel's *Messiah* in April, 1958, together with members of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. When Ben Horch left Altona in 1960 the choir had performed the *Messiah* three times and the Haydn's *Creation* twice. This left the choir without a conductor, but the community, singers and particularly some determined individuals were not willing to let it just die and so for the next few years they continued by acquiring conductors from other areas, mainly Winnipeg. Some of these conductors were John Pauls, George Wiebe and Henry Engbrecht. In 1970, Henry R. Peters was hired at W.C. Miller Collegiate as the music instructor. He accepted the invitation to conduct the Southern Manitoba Choral Society in 1970 and has devoted his time and expertise to the choir for close to 35 years, with a few sabbatical breaks. Some conductors who have filled-in during Henry's sabbaticals have been: Peter Goertzen, Rudy Krahn, Ben Pauls and Ray Giesbrecht.

The choir has also had some professional and highly qualified accompanists throughout the years. Some of them are Ruth Henderson Watson (now living in Toronto), Marilyn Houser Hamm, Cathleen Lehn Warkentin and since 1984 our present accompanist, Loren Hiebert, a local piano instructor and highly accomplished accompanist.

Some major works performed by the choir throughout the 50 years, a good number of them more than once and as in the case of Handel's *Messiah* up to 10 or more times, are Handel's *DDQT Dominus*; Haydn's *Creation*, *The Seasons* and several of his masses; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*; Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and *St. Paul*; Mozart's *Coronation Mass*; Vivaldi's *Gloria* just to name a few.

The choir has had the privilege of working with many of Canada's finest professional musicians, choirs, orchestras and soloists. Here are several: Winnipeg

(cont'd on p. 2)

# Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



From a scrapbook catalogue of greeting cards with order numbers and prices probably used during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Mennonite Heritage Centre Vol. 4870: 12.

## A School Christmas Program

by Mariorie Hildebrand

One of the biggest highlights of the school year was the Christmas program. By mid-October the teacher was already handing out parts to memorize for the Christmas plays. A couple of weeks later the practicing began. This was one way of getting out of school work. As the time drew near for the actual performance the school was decorated, the children helping with this. Designs perforated on heavy paper were used to decorate the top of the blackboards. One had to lay the paper flat on the board and with a chalk eraser full of chalk dust, gently pat the design. When it was removed, lo and behold, there was the design on the board. To enhance the picture it was filled in with colored chalk. On the day before the program red and green streamers were strung up all over the room. The big tree was brought in and decorated by the teachers and trustees after the children

were gone. When they came for the program in the evening, the children marveled at the transformation.

Mother and Esther saw to it that I had a new dress for the Christmas program. Every other girl had one so it was very important that I have one, too. I remember only one and that mainly because at the time I did not like it very much. When I think of it now, it must have been lovely. The bodice part was a dark green velvet and the skirt a green matching plaid.

The program started at 7:00 p.m. Since most of the time we had to go with horse and sleigh, this meant doing chores early to be ready in time. The excitement for the children was almost too much. Names had been exchanged and the gift for that person as well as for the teacher had to be carefully handled on the sleigh. Father drove the horses and the rest of us sat on a

(cont'd on p. 2)

## School Christmas Program

(cont'd from p. 1)

bench with horse-hide blankets piled on us. The bells on the horses harness plus the sound of the sleigh runners on the snow almost made me fall asleep. All thought of sleep left as soon as Father turned the sleigh onto the schoolyard. The building was bright with lights and alive with people. The lights were mantle lamps until Burwalde got electricity in 1946.

For the school children the items on the program were wonderful. Either you were part of the number, or else watched when your friends were taking part. For the parents and friends who came, it must have been an endurance test. Some years it would be 10:00 o'clock before we would be on the way home again. This time I did fall asleep. Once in the house I had to look one more time at the gifts I had received. One teacher gave me a little pouch with a mirror, comb and manicure set, just the thing to thrill a little girl's heart.

Excerpted from Marjorie Wiebe Hildebrand's *Reflections of a Prairie Community: A Collection of Stoires and Memories of Burwalde S.D. # 529*. Winkler, MB, 2004.

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**Linie Friesen, Altona, Manitoba, long-time member of the Southern Manitoba Choral Association.**

## Choral Society

(cont'd from p. 1)

Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Chamber Choir, Camerata Choir from North Dakota, Jon Washburn, Tony Brown, John Martens, Henriette Schellenberg, Esther Klassen, Victor Engbrecht, Barry Anderson and many, many more.

The Society's music library consists of about 200 selections amounting to more than 8000 individual pieces of sheet music and books. It has become a lending library. It also owns a 7'4" Yamaha grand piano and a David Jensen double manual Flemish harpsichord.

The Choral Society was registered in 1977 as a non-profit organization. It has a Board of Directors elected at the Annual General Meeting. The choir conducts weekly 2-hour rehearsals from September to March/April, with Christmas concerts in December plus two Spring concerts in March/April. The Conductor, accompanist and treasurer are appointed by the Board.

Rehearsals are held at W.C. Miller Collegiate Choral Rehearsal Room in Altona.

Funding for choral events comes from fundraising, membership fees and the generous donations of Southern Manitoba businesses and individuals. Over the years SMCS has also been supported by The Foundation of Choral Music in Manitoba, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism and Manitoba Arts Council.

The organization has many dedicated and faithful volunteers who spend many hours making the choir what it is today, without whom the organization could not have survived.

## Reflections of a Choral Society singer

by Linie Friesen

I grew up in a home where we did a lot of singing. The first time I sang in a choir was when I attended the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Manitoba. After I was married to Ted I sang in a church choir. But a whole new world opened for me when I joined the Altona Community Choir (Southern Manitoba Choral Society) in 1957. We were planning to sing an Oratorio—Handel's *Messiah*. We struggled with some of the intricate runs but Ben Horch was a very patient and inspiring conductor. We performed *The Messiah* twice the next year. It was wonderful. Another piece that we performed numerous times was Hayden's *Creation*, sung in German.

One very special performance was of *The Messiah* in the old Winnipeg arena. We were part of a chorus of over 1000 singers conducted by Boris Brott. It was a thrilling experience.

We also had variety in our programs and in the Fall of 1989 we presented three evenings of Christmas Feast Madrigal dinners. To prepare for this ambitious adventure, we spent a weekend at Camp Koinonia preparing for the unique presentation. The evenings were such a hit that we repeated the performances again the next year. We were very ambitious.

Another highlight and deviation from the regular pattern of rehearsals and concerts was a trip to Richardton, North Dakota to visit the Benedictine Order at Assumption Abbey. The choir was warmly welcomed by the monks. They presented a short talk on monastic history. This was followed by a delicious dinner after which we then presented a Christmas Candlelight service in their beautiful cathedral.

For me singing in the choir has always been a privilege and a blessing. It has enriched my life immeasurably—acquainting me with famous composers and giving me an appreciation of a great variety of music.

I am deeply gratified to have been part of a choir that has carried on the tradition of performing great music, a legacy that has strengthened our faith and enriched our lives. I trust we can pass on that enthusiasm to the next generation.

(Excerpted from an address at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet of the Southern Manitoba Choral Society on October 28, 2007.)

# Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

## Queries

**Driedger** - Looking for the descendants of Anna Hildebrandt (1862-1936) and David J. Driedger (1858-1918). Anna and David Driedger were married July 14, 1880 and lived in Schoenhorst, West Reserve, Manitoba. They had 17 children, some of whom were born in Gruenthal. Please forward any information to Pauline Hildebrandt, email: [pjayh@earthlink.net](mailto:pjayh@earthlink.net) or phone: 703/960-0510.

## Recent Family Histories

F[ran]cis Dyck. *Genealogy of Johann Neufeld 1848-1930 and Maria Neufeld 1880-1931: A work in progress* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, Sept. 2007) 95 pp.

This compilation contains the list of descendants of Johann and Maria Neufeld who emigrated from Russia in the 1890s. Very little is known of Johann's ancestry and hence the very appropriate sub-title – "a work in progress". His wife Maria on the other hand was the daughter of Abram Neufeld (1820) and Elisabeth Siemens (1813-

1857) was born on the Insel Chortitz, Chortitz Colony. Johann and Maria Neufeld both died in Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. Contact: F. Dyck, 10-200 Ronald St., Winnipeg, MB R3J 3J3 or P: 1-204-897-1031.

Thiessen, Jan & Grant. *The Thiessens of Kronsweide* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2007) 21 pp.

This small publication was prepared for "The Thiessen Family Reunion" held on May 6, 2007 in Lowe Farm, Manitoba. The writers/editors drew together photos and information about the family's general background including sections on their origins and the migrations of Mennonites to Prussia and Russia, Chortitz Colony, Bergthal Colony, Crimean War, leaving Bergthal, the journey to Manitoba and life in Kronsweide. The compilation ends with a series of family group sheets starting with Aron A. Thiessen (1875-1925) and his wife Aganetha Wiebe (1878-1965) and their ancestors. Contact: Jan & Grant Thiessen, 75 Tamarac Bay, Winnipeg MB R2J 2Y9.

Don Fehr. *Fehr Reunion 2007*. [CD ROM]

This compilation distributed in electronic format (i.e. CD ROM) was prepared for a family reunion which took place on August 4-5, 2007 in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. It contains the family history of Heinrich Fehr (1846-1911) and his wife Sarah Neufeld (1847-1922) who came to Canada in 1876, lived in Manitoba until 1905 when they relocated to Saskatchewan. The CD contains family narratives as well as genealogical data. Contact: Don Fehr, 782 Wright Ave., Port Coquitlam, BC V3B 5M7

Linda and Marilyn Klippenstein. *"A Time for Everything": Descendants of Isbrandt and Catrina Klippenstein* (Saskatchewan, 2006) 407 pp.

This book is mainly about the family history of three Klippenstein brothers – sons of Isbrandt Klippenstein (1855-1920). They are Bernhard Klippenstein (1882-1959) born in Blumengart, Chortitz, Russia who immigrated to Canada in 1925 and lived at Dummer, Saskatchewan, Johann E. Klippenstein (1886-1955) who came to Main Centre, Saskatchewan from Russia in 1924, where his second wife, widow Helena Kasper (nee Redekopp) had relatives, and finally, Dietrich Klippenstein (1891-1960) who also immigrated to Canada in 1924 and lived in the Herbert and Main Centre areas of Saskatchewan. Contact: Marilyn Klippenstein, Box 23, Trossachs, SK S0C 2N0.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or e-mail: [aredekopp@menmonitechurch.ca](mailto:aredekopp@menmonitechurch.ca)

## HILDEBRANDT REUNION 08.08.08

The descendants of Heinrich Hildebrandt (1834-1910) and his wife Helena (Martens) (1838-1896) are invited to join in a family reunion on

**August 8-9, 2008**

at the Mennonite Heritage Village,  
Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada.

For details and registration information,  
please see the web site:

[www.hildebrandts.net](http://www.hildebrandts.net) or contact Con  
Hildebrandt, 1-306-374-3141 or e-mail:  
[hreunion2008@earthlink.net](mailto:hreunion2008@earthlink.net).



A group of detained Mennonite immigrants in Lechfeld, Germany, 1925. Are any of the people on this photo part of your family? Jakob Aron Rempel is seated 4<sup>th</sup> from the left. Helena (Penner) Quiring is in the middle row, 4<sup>th</sup> from the left. Contact: Elfriede Schroeder (nee Quiring) at [eorlsch@mts.net](mailto:eorlsch@mts.net). Photo credit: Courtesy of Amalie Enns and Elfriede Schroeder. Also published in *Hope is our Deliverance*, p. 64.



On September 26, Hanna Rempel (left photo) delivered a bank draft in the amount of \$40,879.41 representing the total sum of the funds of Mennonite Genealogy Inc. marking the end of operations for MGI, the transfer of the activity and assets to Mennonite Church Canada Heritage Centre. The funds will be used to create the “A.A. Vogt Legacy Fund” as an on-going source of funding for the Archives for at least the next decade. On October 5, a tree was planted as a gift to the Mennonite Heritage Centre from Mennonite Genealogy Inc. in recognition of the contributions of Abram Andreas Vogt (1887-1968) to the preservation of Mennonite heritage. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz (left); Dan Dyck (above)



Susan Huebert, researcher and writer, has been working at the Centre, preparing biographical entries for the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online Project based on articles published in the *Preservings* magazine. This project is funded through a grant that the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada received from the Delbert F. Plett Historical Research Foundation. This is phase 2 of the *Preservings* GAMEO project and Susan will be with us till January 2008.



Katie Kehler of Abbotsford, BC is a senior citizen who spent two months, October 1 – November 30, in Winnipeg as a volunteer. Canadian Mennonite University provided room and board and a daily agenda for her which included working in the CMU library, bookstore, development office and at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Here she is seen preparing the labels for the archival boxes. Katie spent many hours sorting through the biographical newspaper clippings from the Mennonite Genealogy Inc. collection the Centre received this year. Photo credit: Alf Redekopp

### New and Used Mennonite Books For Sale

Check out details at: [www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/booksale.htm](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/booksale.htm)

Order selected new books on-line at:

[www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/76](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/76)



Crowd of over 100 at CMBS for Horch book launch, November 19, 2007. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

## Ben Horch Biography Book Launched

Over 100 people were packed into the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Winnipeg) on October 19, 2007 for the launch of *The Ben Horch Story* written by Peter Letkemann. Some of Horch's extended family from Winnipeg, Kitchener, and Colorado attended the occasion. As Peter noted, the date of the launch was set years ago as it was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of this gifted and charismatic conductor.

Horch was one of the most influential Mennonite musicians in Canada. He taught at Winkler Bible Institute and Mennonite Brethren Bible College. He was instrumental in the establishment of radio CFAM's musical tone (now part of Golden West Broadcasting) and had a 13 year stint as producer with CBC radio. A popular conductor he was invited to

lead church choirs, musical workshops, and community choirs across Canada. He was heavily involved in the production of the Mennonite Brethren *Gesangbuch* (hymnal) and in commissioning the *Mennonite Piano Concerto* by Victor Davies.

The launch of *The Ben Horch Story* is the culmination of 20 years of research. Letkemann undertook numerous interviews with Horch and his associates. He relied heavily on Horch's own files as arranged by Horch's wife Esther. These files (over 15 boxes) now reside at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg.

A central part of the launch was the premier showing of the DVD *The Ben Horch Story*, also produced Letkemann. This production included rare footage of



CENTRE FOR  
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1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

## New Centre Staff

Tamara Dyck has come on staff at the Centre for MB Studies in a part-time capacity. Tamara is a librarian technician who also works part-time in the Canadian Mennonite University library. In addition to cataloging books, she is learning the fundamentals of archival arrangement and description. She will be in the Centre on Thursdays and Fridays—permitting Centre staff to travel outside of office into various communities a bit more. Tamara is a mother of three young people who keep her very busy.



Tamara Dyck. Photo credit: Jeannette Thiessen

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Horch conducting the first performance of the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra as well as interviews with both Horch and members of the family. The DVD is amply sprinkled with the sounds of his choirs and orchestras.

There was an excited buzz in the room as friends caught up with each other and former singers and pianists of Horch's met members of the family. Book sales were brisk. Further book launches were planned for Altona, Abbotsford, BC and Kitchener, ON.

The *Ben Horch Story* retails for \$25 from the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Shipping costs in Canada are approximately \$7.00 per book. Proceeds of book sales proceeds cover the production of the book and the maintenance of Horch's musical legacy.

The DVD is not for sale. However, it can be loaned from the Centre for shipping costs.

CDS



Author Peter Letkemann and Esther Fast, granddaughter of Ben Horch with the book. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

## When Will Freedom Come? And How?

by Twilla Welch

Perhaps one of the strongest traits of the Mennonite consciousness is the recognition of the need to be free – whether it be material, spiritual or political freedom. It seems, even to outsiders, that there is a collective memory that is continually aware that although Mennonites in Canada are now free from ethnic, political and religious persecution, and live in safety and prosperity, there are still other peoples, some Christian, many not, who face the daily threats of oppression and fear from which less than two generations ago were the Mennonites' fate. It is this well-spring of common humanity and sincere concern for social justice that led to two young women of Karen ethnicity from Burma to find new lives in Canada.

In December 2002 my husband and I were volunteer teachers in a fledgling Liberal Arts BA course in the Mae La refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. At the time we were living in Australia and had gone to the camp, which was almost twenty years old and consisted of 50,000 people in 10 square kilometres, because we had been attending a socially-conscious Baptist church which was sponsoring post-high school education in the camp. We were responding to a vision of a liberating program of education even in the most unpromising of conditions. We wanted to connect with those who were also advocating a non-violent, justice-oriented response to physical and political violence, and who were seeking peace rather than confrontation but who did not confuse military might with moral strength.

In the course of an intense and concentrated 10-day period of teaching, which incorporated such diverse voices in the call for freedom as Martin Luther King, Toni Morrison and George Orwell, at least four lives changed: mine and my husband's, and the two young women who we have come to call our god-daughters, Hsar Ka Nyaw Htoo Simon and her younger sister, Thaw Thaw Mu Htoo Simon.

The four of us formed such a bond, which was both intellectual and emotional that as we left we promised two things. First, that we would not forget and would return (and we did, going back to the



**Taken during the arrival celebration and welcome tea at First Mennonite Church (Edmonton) (l-r): Hsar Ka Nyaw Simon, Mark Welch, Twilla Welch, Thaw Thaw Simon.** Photo courtesy of Twilla Welch

camp to teach again in December 2003, this time for a month).

Secondly, we promised that we would do what we could, even in a small way to tell the story of the people we had come to know. And this has finally been realized with the publication of *Creative in Struggle*, the book I wrote that tells the story of our first time in the camp and how we learned that while we in the West may have material freedom, the Karen had taught us about spiritual freedom, and that both our freedom and theirs were inextricably linked.

Our third promise, made a year later, was that if Ka Nyaw and Thaw Thaw ever felt they wanted to come to the West, we would do what we could to enable that. But in all honesty, living in Australia with its increasingly harsh and uncompromising policy on immigration and refugees we had no idea how that would happen. However, circumstances changed and nine months later we found ourselves sitting in the congregation of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton and somehow going to the microphone during the joys and concerns segment of the service. At that microphone, for the first time in my life, I asked others to pray for my, or rather our, circumstance. My husband and I had that week sent letters to the two young women with an invitation to live with us in Edmonton. I requested the congregation to remember us in their prayers asking for the best outcome for all involved.

Within moments of the service ending at least five members of the congregation, most of who we did not know from Adam, approached us and told us that the church had sponsored refugees before and maybe it was about time it did it again. Within weeks a unanimous decision had been made at a congregational meeting to fully sponsor Ka Nyaw and Thaw Thaw to come to Canada. The sole point of dissent was one man, a deacon, who stood up and asked why the church could not do

more. We felt as if we belonged. We felt as if we'd found a new home. We wept.

Eighteen months after that meeting, Ka Nyaw and Thaw Thaw arrived at the Edmonton airport. It was snowing, but it was December and it was Edmonton, but it was the first breath of freedom they had experienced in sixteen years. Now, they continue to live with us and are pursuing their education, working towards their goals of careers in peace-studies and nursing respectively.

To many Mennonites this may not seem an usual story at all. "It is what we do", they will say, "nothing more". But I have to remind them that to someone not brought up in the ethos of a Mennonite concern of social justice, the response, so sincere, so immediate and so unconscious and so selfless, brought into the sharpest relief the true meaning of one of the most simple, but most profound Biblical verses: "I was a stranger and you took me in".

*Twilla Welch and her husband Mark currently live in Penticton, BC.*

## Man Made Mountains

by Katherine Martens

The story of a self-made man who learned to trust his own strength and to stand up to his oppressors is the dominant impression this reviewer had of a DVD produced by William L. Stewart, of Vancouver BC and narrated by Dominik Dlouhy. The story begins in Russia with Pete Friesen's father Dietrich J. Friesen and his first wife Aganeta Heinrichs who lived in Neu Chortiza, Schlachtin South Russia where Aganeta was killed in 1919 during the Machnov raids that ravaged so many homes. Dietrich later married Anna P. Unger who was Pete's mother and they emigrated to Canada in 1923. They lived in Provost AB, Glenbush, Saskatchewan and eventually in Yarrow BC.

The poignant scene of the little boy marching off to school across miles of prairie, not knowing a word of English, to face a hostile one room school filled with children who picked on him as a foreigner, lingers in my memory. Then to see the boy grow up using his powers of observation and "thinking things through" to accomplish some of the greatest engineering feats in moving large buildings all over North America is truly

*(cont'd on p. 7)*

## Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

**P**eter Sawatzky, from *Servant to Master: An Autobiography*, translated by Jacob Sawatzky. White Rock, BC: by the translator, 2007. Pb, 156 pages, \$18. The author, born in Felsenbach, Borosenko, USSR in 1923, survived the Soviet gulag. On a visit to his brother in Canada in 1989 (from Backnang, Germany), he wrote his recollections in a 4-week period. Arrested by German, Polish, and Soviet and sentenced to death twice, Sawatzky writes without rancor, though at times he openly identifies his Mennonite accusers. The speed with which this memoir was written leads to occasional unpremeditated flashbacks, disrupting the narrative flow. At the same time they produce an intensity appropriate to the sometimes horrendous experiences the author describes.

Reina C. Neufeldt, *Barn Razing: Change and Continuity in Identity During Conflict*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 2007. Pb, 347 pages. This doctoral dissertation in international relations (2005) at the American University in Washington D.C. looks at three specific conflicts involving Mennonite communities: Russia 1914-1924, western Canada 1934-1944, and the Laird, SK, area 1977-1987. While lay readers may find the "symbolic interactionist and sociological constructivist" analysis too technical, they will find the very readable, concise descriptions of the three conflict stories very helpful. The third conflict, between Mennonite farmers who obtained land on an unused (possibly surrendered) Chipeewayan reserve, is particularly well written.

O.W. Beznosova, compiler and editor, *Evangelical movement in the Russian Empire (1850-1917): the province of Ekaterinoslav* (Documents and Sources). Dnepropetrovsk & Steinhagen: Samen-korn, 2006. Hdc, 319 pages. Old press materials and archival documents of various archives of Russia and Ukraine are included. The language barrier (the book is entirely in Russian) will make it inaccessible to most *Historian* readers. However, those researching particular regions (including Zaporozhye) may find new information worth engaging a translator for selected sections.

Twilla R. Welch, *Creative in Struggle* Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2007. Paperback, 232 pages. \$18.95 US (whatever that



A quilt mural depicting the faces of the six lead pastors the Winkler EMMC congregation was unveiled at the homecoming weekend on September 15-16, celebrating their 70-year history. The faces depicts Isaac P.F. Friesen, Ben D. Wiebe, Harry Bergman, Ron Adrian, John Driedger, and the present pastor, Dale Dueck -- all present except Isaac P.F. Friesen who passed away in 1986. This wall hanging was designed by Myra Harder and quilted by her mother Betty Klassen. The event also included the release of the congregational history book *Winds of Change* by Jerry Hildebrand and the presentation of a two-hour drama entitled "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" written and directed by Ellie Reimer. Photo courtesy of Marjorie Hildebrand.

means nowadays). This moving account by the Canadian author of her short-term volunteer teaching experience in a refugee camp on the Thai/Burma border has particular relevance today when new refugees and casualties are again being "generated" by the Myanmar/Burmese regime at a pace to make our daily news. Welch's perspective combines training as a psychiatric nurse and Christian faith. Interspersed in her account of the experience are essays her students wrote as part of the B.A. program in which she taught. Later, as Welch and her husband attended First Mennonite Church in Edmonton, the congregation sponsored two of her refugee students.

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### Man made Mountains

(cont'd from p. 6)

inspiring. Among the buildings he moved were historic treasures and lighthouses threatened by erosion.

For more information on the approximately 90 minute film and to order a copy see: [www.mankindfilms.com](http://www.mankindfilms.com)

*Katherine Martens lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

## Call for Papers

The Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg will be hosting a conference

October 11 & 12, 2008

entitled

"Mennonites and Money: Wealth and Poverty in the Past and Present".

It invites papers that are historical in nature, but also historically-oriented papers within such disciplines such as economics, sociology, anthropology, politics, theology, and literary analysis. More details at:

[www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies/events/money.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies/events/money.html).

Contact: [r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca)

Sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada/ Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites (DVCN) Sub-Committee with major financial support from Mennonite Central Committee Canada

## Book Reviews

Janzen, Waldemar, *Growing up in Turbulent Times* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2007) 279 pp, maps.

*Reviewed by Hans Werner*

The generation of men that were young enough to remember the Second World War, but not old enough to be drafted into its armies is now retiring and reflecting on their experiences. They are a unique in the sense that so many of their older brothers were lost to the war, or if they were fortunate to come to Canada were forced to abandon thoughts of education to support families with their physical work. Their young brothers, on the other hand were born in Canada, or were too young to have memories of the war. Waldemar Janzen's memoirs are the most recent addition to the memoir literature of this unique cohort. Janzen was born in 1932 in Ohrloff to Mennonite parents. Like so many families of that era, his father was arrested when he was three and his growing up years were in the context of a family with only a mother. With the support and sacrifice of his mother Janzen was able to pursue his education. In his adult life in Canada, Janzen was a Professor of Old Testament and German at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now CMU) for over forty years.

There are some unique qualities about this book. Janzen's is a memoir about childhood during the turbulent times of the 1930s in Stalinist Russia, adolescence in postwar Germany and early adulthood while adjusting to a new life in Canada. Janzen's story ends when he takes up a position at CMBC at age twenty-four, and a brief postscript fills in the unavoidable questions that are left. The memoir is sensitive to nuances and pitfalls of childhood memory and the author often notes for his readers that some things are embedded in the memory and can be recalled, but significant context and meaning is missing. When Hitler died, for instance, Janzen notes, "strangely, I don't recall my emotions when getting that news" (p 88). He would have been thirteen years old.

Like other memoirs of this generation the role of Janzen's mother figures prominently in his story. She must have been a remarkable woman. Fascinating in this account is Janzen's exploration of what a missing father represented for a

child. Some of the most poignant sections of the book are the descriptions of his father's letters and Janzen's reflections on what they meant to him. While physically separated from his father—neither he nor his mother saw him again after Janzen was three years old; he is both emotionally distant and intimately connected to the growing boy. Janzen is, however forced to conclude that "father was a distant saint—as mother portrayed him for me—in a distant land, and a not part of my everyday world" (p 33).

Not surprisingly perhaps, given that the author became an academic, is the emphasis in the memoir of what went on in his head. To some extent this is also an intellectual biography, although to his credit, Janzen maintains a highly readable style. The reader is invited into the struggles of the young scholar as he is forced to come to terms with his own interests in education and books, while the young people whose acceptance he craves are interested in cars and sports. He is preoccupied with his lack of musical ability, a talent that opened doors to a vibrant social life for young people of that generation. Interesting also is his path to faith, which even surprises him. He recalls "no special religious experience, nor any conscious influence on me from others" that could account for what he recalls was a rather sudden desire to be a Christian. The impulse came upon him in the early months after being evacuated to West Prussia when he was about twelve years old.

Janzen anticipates the questions that one might ask about his story. To the reader unfamiliar with the tumultuous times he is writing about the account portrays a life somewhat more sanguine than it surely must have been. Janzen's memoir generally avoids providing a lot of historical context for his experience. To appreciate more fully the remarkable feat of growing up to be a responsible parent and contributing member of church and society in such circumstances, the reader will need to read other accounts. But, as Janzen notes, it was not his intent to write a well-researched history, but rather an "experienced story" (p xi). Certainly in that he has achieved his purpose.

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## Mennonite Great Trek Along the Silk Road

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