



Mennonite Historical Society of BC

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The MHS of BC Newsletter is produced quarterly to inform and to promote the work of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC. It is issued to those who contribute \$25 or more per year to the work of the society.

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**WHAT WE HAVE
HEARD AND
KNOWN, WE WILL
TELL THE NEXT
GENERATION.**

PSALM 78

The way we were: A brief history of Yarrow

by David Giesbrecht

The Vision Is Born:

Pioneer beginnings are not for the faint of heart. Early in the twentieth century two Mennonite settlements were attempted in B.C., one in Renata and the other in Vanderhoof. Both efforts were short-lived.

The start in Yarrow was also very fragile. This story begins in Nobleford, Alberta, a small farming community, where a certain John Bargaen, who spoke no English and worked for a farmer who spoke no German, was curious to see B.C. In the fall of 1927 Bargaen set out by horse and buggy to explore the Kootenays because he had heard of a small group of Mennonites who lived in Renata. He was to be disappointed. Sensing no future for himself in this small fruit growing valley, he returned to Alberta.

But he was no sooner back home in Nobleford when he noticed an advertisement in the Mennonitische Rundschau in which a Mr. Chauncey Eckert was looking for settlers in the beautiful Fraser Valley. That was all the incentive Bargaen and his wife Mary needed. On seeing this advertisement, he noted, "we made our decision right then that we would move to B.C."

The Bargaens arrived in Agassiz on November 11th, 1927, not surprisingly to a mild but very wet fall day and immediately made contact with the Eckerts. About three weeks later, they were joined by Isaak Sawatsky who was also looking to improve his lot in life. Mr. Eckert, who was to become a principal benefactor of the first generation of Mennonites in B.C., did not waste much time in exciting Bargaen and Sawatsky for the vast development potential on some 1400 acres that he had newly acquired in what is now Greendale and Yarrow. (cont'd pg 3)

MHSBC Annual Fundraising Banquet

Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein - Canadian Responses to WWI

Saturday, October 19, 2002 6:00 p.m.

Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church

2051 Windsor Street, Abbotsford, B.C.

Tickets \$15.00 available at the MHS of BC office or Board Members

All reserved tickets must be pre-paid

Mennonite Historical Society of BC #211 - 2825 Clearbrook Rd., Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 6S3
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We have two rich resources available to us that help us understand our past: our hymn books, and text books. Both give a clear insight into the world of our ancestors.

In times of persecution, poverty and disease, hymns reflect the sorrow of life, and the longing for a heavenly home, one where streets are paved with gold. The 1901 hymn book, *Gesangbuch mit Noten*, for example, contains 59 songs about death, dying, and our heavenly home. In contrast, the 1992 *Hymnal: a worship book*, contains only 17 songs on these topics. It seems that as we become healthier, more prosperous and politically secure, our need for songs of comfort decreases. In fact, we do not want to talk about death at all, preferring various euphemisms.



Engraving depicting "Das Totenfest"

Not so in the past. Until recently, many Mennonite churches celebrated 'Totensonntag' or Ewigkeitssonntag. (A few still do so.) On the first Sunday in November, the congregation would remember those who had died in the previous year. In Europe, Totensonntag involved a visit to the graveyard. In one of the textbooks used by Mennonite schools in Russia, *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen in Rußland* (1919), Arno Fuchs describes how families in Europe celebrate *Totenfest*, the Day of the Dead.

-LBP

Das Totenfest

When autumn enters the land, and golden leaves fall from bushes and trees, when the flowers bow their heads and sink dying to the ground, then the people also think of their dead. In many places it is customary to decorate the graves of loved ones now resting in the cool earth with fresh evergreen branches and the last of the red and white asters.

Totensonntag is the Festival of the Dead. Even the natural world is melancholy on this day, for already it feels the oncoming chilly breath of winter. Fog and mist weigh heavily on the earth, and the sun's rays are pale and tired.

On this day, a somber group of people fills the graveyard. No singing, no loud conversation disturbs the rest of the Dead. In each countenance you see sorrow and sadness. A mother, dressed in black, leads her children to the grave of their father, while other children search the cemetery for the resting place of their parents. At one grave marker, parents mourn the early passing of their child, and at a freshly heaped mound, sorrowing men remember the recent death of a good friend.

How many hearts today reproach themselves; how many of the sorrowing regret not to have grasped in warm friendship the hands that now are cold! For them, the time of regret has come too late.

Soon the day is over, and dusk settles onto the land. The people take their leave of the graveyard, the gate to the cemetery closes behind them, and the graveyard, dressed in its new finery of boughs and flowers, slumbers on alone.

- translated by Louise Bergen Price

December 26th, 1927 marked a historic day for BC Mennonites. Anxious to see the promised land, Bargen and Sawatsky travelled by bus to Chilliwack and from there by B.C. Electric rail to Yarrow. As they neared Yarrow, Bargen recounts, "We were so excited about the open land along the Vedder Mountains that we agreed immediately to settle there as the first [Mennonite] pioneers. With bowed heads we prayed, 'Our Father in heaven, give us your help and blessing to make this place a Mennonite settlement.'"

For the first permanent arrivals, those early weeks were trying indeed. In February 1928, eight families consisting of 50 people arrived by BC Rail and quite unceremoniously detrained at the Yarrow railway siding with no resettlement committee to welcome them. After that the floodgates opened. As Bargen put it, his overly enthusiastic report to the Rundschau "caused an explosion among our ... friends in the Prairies." J. C. Krause in his brief memoirs of those early beginnings tells of a frustrated border guard at Sumas. One day an old Ford filled with yet another large Mennonite family arrived at his post. The driver asked for directions to where the Mennonites lived. "You'll have no problem" the somewhat cynical guard responded, "As soon as you leave here take any road leading east. You can't miss them. At least a million are already there."

And so the dream called Yarrow was born, quickly followed by a succession of firsts. With the arrival of the first contingent of settlers in February 1928, worship services were at once organized. Significantly, until 1930, General Conference and Mennonite Brethren met for common worship services. On February 3, 1929 ninety six members met to officially organize the Yarrow MB church, with Rev. Peter Dyck as the first leader. The Yarrow United Mennonite Church began meeting in 1930 with Elder Nickolai W. Bahnman and Johann Braun as leaders. This congregation was able to complete its first house of worship by 1938, and on October 25, 1938, officially organized as a church with 31 members.

It did not take long for this community to develop some social structure. In 1929 the young people of Yarrow formed a literary society, with Waldo Bahnman as the first president. This society organized evening programs including debates, orchestral music, group ensembles and solos.

The Vision Takes Root: Economic Beginnings:

If the spiritual life of this small community coalesced quite quickly, making a livelihood was a different kind of a challenge. Precisely at the time Mennonite pioneers were attempting to build a sustainable economy in Yarrow, the Great Depression bringing the North American economy to its knees. Such inherent obstacles only seemed to increase Mennonite determination to build a viable economic infrastructure, especially so with the inducements offered by Chancey Eckert who sold land in ten acre parcels at \$150.00 an acre, and then on very generous credit terms. He would further help secure building materials and other necessities of life.



The first MB Church 1930

Other business people were also very helpful. Jacob Krause reflects that a "noble spirit extended to us from the Chilliwack business men." When he himself stopped at Spencer's Hardware Store to purchase his first set of basic appliances, the manager looked him over and said: "Looks like you have an honest face. Take whatever you want." (Of course, everything on credit.) Lumber proprietor J. Wilson would deliver number three boards to the Yarrow train station from where horses were hitched to sling lots, which were then dragged to building sites.

George Baerg writes that because people worked co-operatively "in a little while their homes came up like mushrooms."

It was not only the men who worked hard. Krause notes another source of strength among the first generation of Mennonite settlers. "We have to praise our practical, and enduring housewives, who managed to look after the youngsters, prepare meals, mend the clothes, and besides that, assist in the hoeing of sugar beets, beans, spinach, cabbage, and later the rhubarb and berries."



George Epp's 1928 crop of oats in Yarrow.

While Mennonites were reputed to have farming in their blood, they had no idea which crops would flourish in a wet, west coast climate, and even less understanding of how to market what they could produce. And so they experimented with a half dozen or more crops. In addition, many of them became involved with curing tobacco and picking hops --- at least as long as their consciences permitted. However, once they hit upon strawberries and raspberries, their fortunes began to change quickly.



People picking hops - taken in 1934 at the Holbert Hop Yard in Sardis, B.C. 1-r Rev. Jacob Epp & Elizabeth Epp with daughter Tina between them and the Gerhard Derksens on the right.

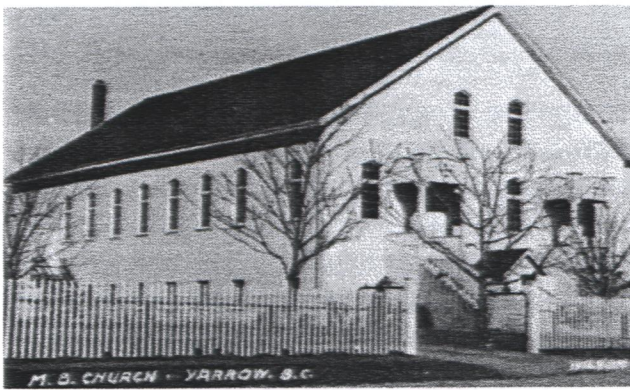
By the early 1940's Yarrow was a transformed community. A village council had been organized, much along the lines of local government that these people had known in Russia. By 1944 this structure became the Yarrow Waterworks Board - but continued to be concerned with much more than the provision of running water for the community.

Local organization included a Health Society with a special concern for poor people. Since the regular family plan cost \$1200.00 a year, the church bought several plans which would then be held by the deacons to assist families who could not afford the dues.

Encouraged by the success of growing raspberries but troubled by the difficulties of marketing their crops, Yarrow farmers organized a small consumer's association in 1935, which soon became the Yarrow Growers Cooperative Association. By 1944 this Association operated a general store, a feed and grain buying business as well as a berry packing plant. Winnifred Fretz writing in the January 1944 Mennonite Quarterly Review notes, "So successful is the cooperative endeavor in Yarrow that future plans are under way for the formation of a credit union, a feed mill, an egg-grading and marketing plant, a creamery, a cheese factory and a jam factory." Apart from the cooperative, the settlers established some thirty businesses in the first three decades of their sojourn in Yarrow.

The Vision Consolidates:

The 1940's represented a Golden Era for these pioneers during which their vision for community building was consolidated. Having secured what seemed like a flourishing economic base, the settlers also continued to pay attention to their social and spiritual moorings. For the MBs, these were the years when Pastor John A. Harder presided over a rapidly growing church, which in 1948 reached an all time high of 970 baptized members. This was a time when vibrant congregational music was flourishing under the skillful baton of George Reimer, and H. P. Neufeldt was conducting a youth choir and an orchestra. Who can forget Peter D. Loewen's constant encouragement for a quality Sunday School program, or the enormous influence of Alexander Voth and Aaron Rempel on the young men of Yarrow?

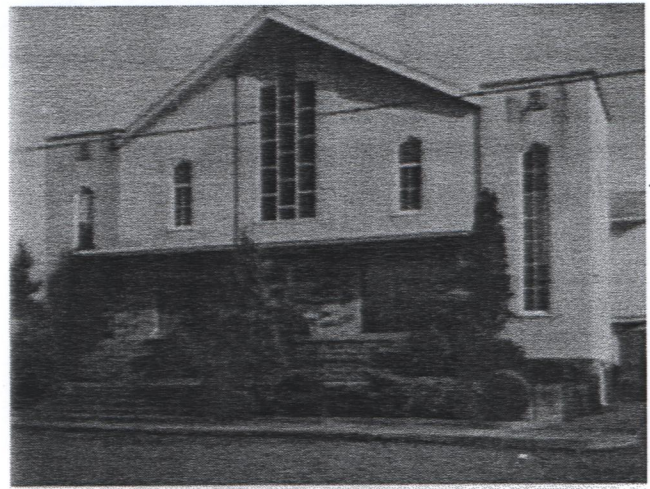


Yarrow MB Church 1938

During the 1930s and 40s the Elim Bible School continued to grow. The teaching program which began with a short evening curriculum in the early 1930's, continued to expand to a five-year course of studies. Under the principalship of C. C. Peters, Elim reached a record enrollment of 152 students in the winter of 1941-42. Other prominent instructors included Abram Nachtigal, G. H. Sukkau and Herman Lenzman.

At the same time that the Bible School was in its heyday, the Church elected a School Committee, chaired by J.A. Harder, to begin planning for a high school. However, securing approval for a high school was not to be taken for-granted, certainly not if the Chilliwack School District had its way. Finally, on condition that Sharon Mennonite Collegiate Institute pay its teachers on the Chilliwack salary scale and that the provincial curriculum be taught, approval was given. On September 24, 1945, SMCI began operations with six full-time teachers and 150 eager students in a new but far from complete school building.

The United Mennonites also moved deliberately to consolidate a spiritual vision. In 1940 they elected William Schellenberg as their first Sunday School superintendent. A women's society was organized under the capable leadership of Mathilda Lehn Hildebrandt. Owing in large measure to the influx of post-WW II Mennonite refugees, this church experienced rapid growth in membership during the 1940s. The original sanctuary soon proved to be inadequate. By 1958 an enlarged church building was dedicated, with Peter Dyck as pastor.



United Mennonite 1959

The Vision Is Tested:

But the dream of these hardy pioneers was to be severely tested. Negative public attitudes and in quick succession, a number of crises during the 1940s, overwhelmed the coping capacity of Yarrow. The fact is that for many local citizens, Mennonites represented a quite unwelcome intrusion. During the first few decades of its existence Yarrow could count on very little government help, especially at a local or civic level. Moreover, the media could be cruel. George Baerg lamented that Mennonites were often the objects of media scorn and even blackmail. A headline in the March 20, 1934 Vancouver Sun reads, "Mennonites protested as Valley Evil." The article goes on to quote one Gordon Towers of the Fraser Valley Board of Trade, "If it took a Pearl Harbor to get the Japanese out of the coast areas, it will take a similar disaster to influence Ottawa to remove the Mennonites."

And then in 1948 the bottom fell out of the raspberry market. That spring the great Fraser River flood covered most of Greendale and Matsqui, adding another hit to the economy of Yarrow. With the collapse of the berry industry, the Yarrow Cooperative Association, could only pay out 28 cents on the dollar to its shareholders, resulting in its sudden closure.

The results were devastating for the community. Unable to maintain the costs of operating the high school, the church faced a crisis. Even though the East Chilliwack and



The present Yarrow Elementary School on Wilson Road was built as the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate. Photo taken by Esther Epp Harder April 2002.

Sardis MB churches were part of the support base for SMCI, the church had no option but to sell the building to the Chilliwack School District. The loss of the high school was followed by dwindling enrollment at the Bible school, until it too was forced to close in 1955, with Henry Warkentin as the last and only teacher. Alongside these trials, the unyielding trend towards urbanization was gathering momentum. With the exodus of its young people, Yarrow was quickly losing its status as the premier Mennonite community in B.C.

However, for many Yarrow Mennonites, the loss of their first high school did not diminish the desire to own and operate a high school. So in 1952 the community once again gathered its resources and began operating Sharon Mennonite Collegiate (SMC). By 1955, a new facility had been built on Stewart Road, with a gymnasium and an expansive field. While the initial start seemed promising and represented sacrificial giving, the financial as well as the student base was simply too limited to sustain this institution. In 1969 Yarrow lost its second high school.

In subsequent years the community witnessed profound changes. As the Mennonite presence continued to diminish, other waves of immigrants took their place, including Dutch, Hungarian and Indo-Canadians. While the two Mennonite churches continue to operate in Yarrow, they have been joined by flourishing Alliance and Christian Reformed congregations. The facilities which once housed the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate is the home of the John Calvin School. Moreover, the recent proposal to build a Buddhist temple on Majuba Hill symbolizes the extent of the transformation for this once predominately Mennonite Eden.

-David Giesbrecht

Yarrow Research Committee News Release

The publication of local histories with new information is always a cause for celebration. The Yarrow Research Committee is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of two volumes under the shared subtitle *Yarrow, British Columbia: Mennonite Promise* that explore a historic Fraser Valley community in a way not done before.

Early in 1928, a fragmented group of war-ravaged European immigrants began arriving in Yarrow, B.C. to build a new home for themselves and their families. Now, almost seventy-five years later, a number of former Yarrow residents and associates have written two books that explore both the pre-Mennonite history of Yarrow and, after 1928, the fascinating and at times painful story of the founding and development of this immigrant settlement. The initiative for starting this study came from anthropologist Dr. J. A. Loewen, who in 1998-99 invited a number of scholars to join in a project of research and writing. Perhaps like Pacific salmon that spend years crossing in an open ocean but eventually feel compelled to return to their spawning channels, these former Yarrow residents found such an invitation irresistible.

After several years of work, the Yarrow Research Committee (YRC) can report that a distinguished publisher, Heritage House of Victoria, B.C., has agreed to publish our study of Yarrow, covering the years 1928-1958. The projected release date is early December 2002. We expect to offer this set of 6" x 9" volumes, titled *Before We Were the Land's* and *Village of Unsettled Yearnings* respectively, in a slip case. The text will be complemented by 120 pictures and a number of maps. This will be the first such study of a Mennonite community ever released by a publishing house in B.C.

While carefully researched and documented, these two volumes are written for the general reader. Volume I provides a historical survey of pre-Mennonite and early Mennonite settlement and, in its last two parts, features excerpts from personal memoirs and journals of 30 Mennonite settlers, ten of them women. Volume II offers numerous essays designed to serve collectively as a cultural mural of Yarrow from 1928 to the end of the 1950s.

Anyone placing advance orders for the two-volume set will receive 25% discount. Subsidies have reduced the retail price of these volumes, and we are pleased to offer the discount. This offer, at \$32.00 per two-volume set (which includes GST), applies only to the complete set, and only to advance prepaid orders before November 1, 2002. Shipping costs will be added to your order unless the books are picked up in person.

Persons interested in placing advanced prepaid orders should contact either **David Giesbrecht at 604-853-0382** dg@paralynx.com or **Lora Sawatsky at 604-795-5197** rsawatsk@dowco.com

This Newsletter owes its existence to Ed Hildebrand. In 1995, Ed was concerned about low attendance of 20 -30 people at MHSBC events. People needed to know about our activities and he started a 1 - 2 page newsletter summarizing MHSBC events and announcing future activities. Almost immediately attendance at MHSBC events quadrupled.

Since then the Newsletter has been expanded, but one of its functions continues to be Ed's vision of keeping MHSBC members informed. Attendance at our events is now usually over 300.

Ed was born in Dundurn, Saskatchewan, the oldest of three children of Dietrich and Mary (Hooge) Hildebrand. Life in Saskatchewan was difficult in the 1930's and in 1934 the Hildebrands moved to Greendale. They stayed only a year and then moved to Vancouver. Ed has lived in Vancouver continuously since then. "There were very few of us here at that time," he said.

Ed attended school in Vancouver and then began a 40-year career in the lumber industry. This included work in a lumber company, a partnership in a door manufacturing business, managing a multi-plant wood products company, and as Executive Vice President of International Forest Products.

Ed and Agnes Dyck (of Abbotsford) were married in Abbotsford in 1950. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Since retiring from regular work in 1989, Ed has built a summer retirement home at Birch Bay,

Washington where he and Agnes spend most weekends. Ed researched and wrote a Hildebrand family history, available in MHSBC archives. This led to an interest in Mennonite history and membership on the MHSBC board in 1994.

Ed was MHSBC Director treasurer from 1996-2001 and kept a close tabs on the financial situation. He is currently serving as MHSBC secretary. MHSBC President John Konrad says "Ed has made a significant contribution in this area; he is a leading supporter of MHSBC."

"Between looking after two homes, a small family company, and my work at MHSBC, which at times has been quite extensive, I'm as busy as I want to be," said Ed. He finds time for "reading, games, a little gardening, and a little mediocre golf." He recently read Blood and Iron, the history of the von Moltke family and Die Russlaender, by Sandra Birdsell.

Ed sees the MHSBC as a bridge between the Mennonite ethnic and religious communities. MHSBC connects these two groups since some may be part of one and not the other community. "I have met visitors at the archives who tell us their parents, or sometimes grandparents were Mennonites. The visitors, however, were not raised as Mennonites since their forebears had left the community. Now they want to learn. They want to know their roots, and we can help them," said Ed.

-HN

Our annual fundraising banquet this year will feature **Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein** the former director of the **Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg**. Lawrence completed his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. His doctoral dissertation was entitled "**Mennonite pacifism and state service in Russia: a case study in church-state relations, 1789-1936.**" The chosen topic for the banquet "Canadian responses to World War II" promises to be interesting and will have a very personal meaning to many of our members.

The banquet is our major fundraiser for the year. All donations of \$25.00 or more at the banquet ensure your continued membership and receipt of this newsletter through 2003. For those unable to attend but would still like to continue their membership, we are enclosing an addressed donation envelope.

*** All donations to the Mennonite Historical Society of BC are tax deductible. ***

Book Review: Alternative Service for Peace... by Helen Rose Pauls

*Alternative Service for Peace Edited by A.J.Klassen
Compiled by A.J.Klassen, Jacob K. Schroeder, Peter
A. Unger, Copyright 1998 by MCC B.C. Seniors for
Peace*

Of the 9,000 conscientious objectors in Canada during World War I I, 63% were Mennonite, mostly from Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Just what these men did is described in eighty personal interviews, which make up most of the book. Each story is told in the first person and each one is unique and interesting.

Many of the men were sent to C.O. camps and into the forests to plant trees. Related jobs were forest fire fighting, tree nursery work, road building and bridging in logging areas, and wood fuel production. Pay was fifty cents a day. They held Sunday worship services and Wednesday night Bible studies led by those who had attended Bible school or by various visiting ministers. Apparently no division was made between the Mennonite Brethren and General Conference of Mennonites at these camps, and hearty acapella singing united them all.

Others, who worked in agriculture, essential industries, logging, food processing, hospitals or mines were not sent to camps but could usually live with their wives and families close to their place of work. Although their lives seemed

more normal, a good portion of their pay went to support the Red Cross. Fourteen received jail sentences.

Fascinating vignettes called "case studies" tell about Mennonite involvement in building Pyke's ice ship. Another tells of the difficulties of a Mennonite teacher losing his teaching license because of his peace stance.

An extensive black and white picture gallery makes the stories come alive. I found more than one familiar face, as well as my father's name among the list of alternative service workers.

Towards the end of the book, four current leaders evaluate the CO experience and challenge the next generations regarding working for peace. "We need to grow in our understanding that peace is an integral part of the gospel of Jesus Christ," states David Schroeder.

By writing down the stories of our fathers who chose peace, Klassen, Unger and Schroeder have done us a great service and in a timely fashion too, as many of these men have passed on since the book was compiled.

-HRP

This book is available for purchase at the B.C. Mennonite Historical Society office.

Aufwiedersehen by Selma Hooge

When Jasch Kornelsen was released from an American prisoner-of-war camp in 1945 after the end of the Second World War, his first thought was to find his family who had left Marienthal in 1943 with the retreating German forces, and had been resettled in Poland. A search of Red Cross records in West Germany helped him find his sister Mary and twenty-one other missing relatives, but there was no listing for his wife and children. No one had seen or heard of them since January 1945, when they, and thousands of others, fled Poland to try to escape the approaching Russian army. There was also no listing of Mary's husband, Hans Goossen.

Jasch wasted no time. On a borrowed bicycle, he roamed the bombed out cities and villages, searching for his family. Once the trains were running again, he travelled by train, searching, asking questions at numerous refugee centres. Finally, through an escapee from the Russian zone, he learned that his wife and children had been sent back to Russia. His wife, he learned, had died shortly thereafter. The youngest of their four children was only 10 years old.

Should he return to Russia to look for his children? After struggling with this dilemma, Jasch decided not to go. If he were to go back, he would likely be imprisoned or executed. He could be of no help to his children. He prayed

that at least his children would be allowed to stay together.

In 1947, the question of emigration to Paraguay or Canada brought another dilemma. Emigration would mean that he'd be even further from his children. Nevertheless, he decided to leave, and on December 28, 1948, he joined the rest of his relatives who had all found sponsors in Yarrow, British Columbia.

In 1951 Jasch bought a farm and since he knew that his wife had died, he remarried. All the while he continued to search for information about his children and his brother-in-law Hans through lists the MCC, Red Cross and other organizations had compiled. However, Stalin was in power in the Soviet Union, and letters to the outside world were not permitted. His inquiries brought no further news until after Stalin's death when news from the Soviet Union started trickling into the West. One day in 1956, a neighbour brought Jasch a slip of paper. On it was an address from Kazakhstan, the names of his four children, and the words, 'Searching for Jasch Kornelsen from Marienthal.'

"Where did you get this?" Jasch stared at the paper, his hands shaking.

"My sister in Virgil, Ontario. A woman at her sewing circle showed her a letter from Kazakhstan, and my sister remembered that I knew someone looking for his children."

"God be praised!" Quickly Jasch wrote a letter, telling his children that all the relatives except brother-in-law Hans were in Canada. The long awaited reply came while Jasch's sister Mary was visiting him. Together they read the letter that Jasch's daughter Susie had sent, sharing the joy and excitement after twelve years of praying, working and wondering. Susie wrote: "*On Sunday we will go immediately to tell Onkel Hans that his family is alive and well. He will be overjoyed!*"

Jasch and Mary re-read the sentence. It was true. Hans was alive! Now all the relatives were accounted for. Jasch and Mary shared their excitement with their relatives, walking to each house since no one owned a telephone.

Although letter exchange was now allowed, there was still no hope of seeing loved ones again. Finally, in the 1960's, the Soviet government began to allow visits in and out of the country, and Jasch and Mary started to make visa applications.

In 1968, twenty-two years after saying 'Aufwiedersehen' to her husband in Poland, Mary was able to meet him again in Canada. Mary and Hans had several good years together.

Jasch had to wait thirty-six years before seeing any of his children. In 1980, his son Petja came to Canada from Karaganda for a visit. During Petja's visit, Jasch got a phone call from his daughter Sara. She and her family were now in Germany, among the first *Umsiedler* to settle there. Eventually, all of his children and grandchildren resettled in Germany. Before Jasch died in 1988, he had seen all of them, except for his youngest son who had not arrived in Germany by this time.

In spite of the long absence and separation, Jasch and Mary were among the fortunate ones. Many families never found their missing relatives.

Selma Hooge is Jasch Kornelsen's niece. She was able to visit her long lost cousins in Kazakhstan and later in Germany. She lives in Greendale, B.C.

4th Annual Genealogical Workshop

Dr. Glenn Penner & Dr. Tim Janzen will be co-presenting invaluable information for the Mennonite genealogist on November 9th, 2002 at the

Garden Park Tower, #211 – 2825 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, B.C.

Registration begins at 8:00 am and the seminar runs through to 4:00 pm. This includes some practical application time on the computers in the archives.

A light lunch will also be served. Pre-registration is recommended.

Cost \$50.00 per person. Call the office to register. Visa & Master Card accepted.

(These are excerpts of Helga Goetzke talking to her father, Otto Ernst Goetzke, about the family's first years in Canada. Her mother, Marianne, comments on occasions as well. They obligingly spoke in English, which made typing up the transcript much easier.)

Helga: When did you apply for emigration from Germany?

Otto: Well, I came and visited the hospital, Marianne was already there and the baby was born (December 2, 1951) Says Marianne to me, "Will we call the little girl Ute Elisabeth?"

"Yes," I say.

"Good. And now will you apply for the emigration to Canada in earnest?"

"Yes," I say.

"Okay."

They wouldn't take any children under three months, so I went to the coal mine office and got my eight days holidays. Went back home, was with our son Reimar, and packed all those things as good as I could. And managed those days until Marianne came home.

Then, beginning of March, we were ordered to go to Gronau, that was an emigration camp for Mennonites, and there we were in the camp for three or four days, and went through doctor visits and all kinds of necessary paperwork. Came back to Oberhausen-Osterfeld and worked again until we got a schedule that our ship would leave April 8th and we would have to be in Bremerhafen. And so we sold the things we didn't need and couldn't take along, and the other things we put in boxes and nailed them together. Not well enough, so that the boxes later broke...

I made everything ready, and you see the picture from boarding the Beaverbrae--there I am going, and Mutti going with Reimar and pushing Ute. Behind us are the Heideke's, who were with us. She (Mrs. Heideke) looked after the children when Mutti was sick and in the ship's hospital.

We disembarked in Quebec City. From there we went with the train to Montreal, then to Winnipeg and farther west. What was this? So much dust in the field—they are threshing! In April! What kind of country is here? We do it all in the fall when the grain is ready. Here the grain was snowed under and they couldn't do anything. Leave it and wait till spring and thresh it then, they say. Astonishing things.

On the train, some could sleep on benches. Others just had to sit. And there were benches all around. In the middle it was free—there was baggage heaped there. The windows were not very tight and coal dust came down from that old coal locomotive.

So we went to Mission City where we would be unloaded. And Mr. Dietrich Braun was there already, waiting with his truck to pick us up. Our baggage would come on a different day. So Mutti, Reimar, Ute and I went on the truck and drove to Braun's place on 56th avenue and 246th Street. He had about 15 acres of land, and 4 or 5 acres in strawberries. And I was to work the strawberries for him, keep them clean. So he with his 64 years would have it a little lighter.

Because it was Sunday, I went with Mr. Braun to Missionsfest at Bethel, that little church. Tuesday we went to get our boxes and things from Mission City. The boxes were badly damaged, but all our possessions were intact. On the auction in Abbotsford we bought a crib for Ute for fifty cents.

Pretty soon started the work in the strawberries: hoeing, weeding, cleaning. Well, it was a whole new job for me, which I hadn't done in my life yet. But I was willing, and it went.

There was another incident. Ute became sick. A daughter of Braun, living on the same yard, said they had to go to the doctor, so Mutti and Ute would be taken there. And the doctor put Ute in the hospital. Later, we received a bill for \$80 for four nights in the hospital, and \$50 for the doctor fee. And I wondered how we would pay. I was supposed to get 60¢ an hour and Mr. Braun told me I would have to wait till the end of July until the strawberry crop was in and he would get the money and then he would pay me. *[The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization paid for some of the fee, and the rest Otto and Marianne paid. This bill was on top of the \$560 Reiseschuld that they had to repay in two years]*

Well, how would we live 'til then? Mutti and I had each received \$20 on the train, and this \$40 we stretched as long as we could. And Mr. Braun said, 'You go to the store and buy whatever you need and put it in my name. So once in a while he bought us some groceries. He bought us some flour and things so we could live.

When we arrived here in Aldergrove, we lived in a little cabin, all cement floor, and Mutti said, "Oh, I can't stand that cement. I have so much rheumatism. This is not good for me, or my children."

So Dietrich Braun said, "Well, if that is not too good, you can go in the brooder house." So, ja, *Brüderhaus*. Now I was talking German, and he was talking German, too. And Brüder in German is brethren or brothers in English. Now I thought, well, I wonder what kind of Brother-house that would be? And the Mennonites, they have all kinds of things, they might have extra houses for brothers. So I went to inspect the brooder house. And there were big chunks of manure all over the place. I told Mutti, no, I wouldn't move into such a brooder house.

And so Dietrich gave us some wood, and we made a floor in the bedroom where we were sleeping, and the kids running around.

Now came the end of July and the work with the strawberries was over. Mr. Braun said, "I have no work for you. You go to the city and find out if you can work there." Well, I found some people in the church, and they told me I could come along with them and work in the fish cannery.

So I went along. And lo and behold, in the first week I made about a hundred dollars. "Ah," I say, "If I can work till Christmas, I can make quite a bit of money." But the next week there was no work...

And those who had worked the fish cannery, they all went to Ashcroft to pick tomatoes. But not me. I had hitchhiked round and a Mr. Baff, a sawmill owner in

Westwold (outside of Kamloops) had picked me up. He said, "If you have no work, you write me a letter and you can come to me and work in the sawmill." OK. I went home and wrote a letter right away.

But no answer came. Aaron Janzen told me to go to Vancouver Island, to Black Creek. There lives this N.N. Friesen and usually there is lots of work in the logging camp. So I went. And the next day they took me in the big truck to the logging camp, and there they said there is no work for you here.

So what should I do? I hitchhiked back to Black Creek and went to Courtney to the employment office and they gave me work on the airport in Comox. Helping pour cement and working with other stuff there. While I was there, I got a letter that Mr. Baff would hire me as a sawmill worker in Westwold. This would have been in September.

Oh, I was glad. Now I can go back. There is no water between me and my family. So I quit the work, got my money and went home to Aldergrove. A day or two later, I boarded a bus to Kamloops. In Kamloops, I phoned the mill. And boss said they couldn't come get me but I could come the next day. All right. I went out to the city along the railroad tracks and bivouacked there with my few blankets. The next morning, I got up and hitchhiked to Westwold and got hired the same day, piling lumber and working on the green chain. In October, a truck went down to the Fraser Valley. I could go along, and we packed up all of Mutti's things from where we lived, and we moved to our place. That was about the middle of October, 1952.

Helga: The people in the mill—did they talk to you in English or in German?

Otto: Mr. Baff, he was Swiss German, he talked German. His sons and daughter talked German too, but they rather talked English. And I had to learn it anyway.

So then we started living there in the house about two miles away from the mill. We were pretty happy living together as a family. At least I was. I'm not sure if Mutti was. Maybe she was a little lonely without much company. I was always at work and could talk with people. Mutti was by herself. Usually on the weekends she took the bus to Kamloops for shopping. Sometimes she had a chance to go with German speaking neighbours to town in a car.

Marianne: The cabin overlooked Monte Lake. It was a beautiful view and we were happy to have the place to ourselves.

Helga: How did you heat your home?

Otto: There was lots of firewood in the mill. We had a big truck there, and brought home all the firewood cuttings. We had a heating stove and a cooking stove. Sometimes it was pretty cold. We had to watch that the children didn't freeze their fingers and toes. And if you heated it very much, then those gophers which were hibernating under the house awoke and started peeping

Helga: Did you have an outhouse?

Otto: Oh, yes. I can't remember if it was a two sitter or not.

Helga: Did you have electricity or running water?

Otto: No. There was a little well, and when you got five pails of water, then it was empty. Then you had to wait until more water came.

Helga: Was there a pump?

Otto: No we just opened the lid...

Marianne: Auf 'em Bauch hab ich mich hin gelegt und mit 'em Eimer hab ich raus geholt.

Helga: So Mutti lay on her tummy and pulled water out by the bucket!

Otto: Ja. So she flattened Bodo all the time! (Bodo was born May, 1953, in Kamloops.)

I thought we should raise our own pig, so I went with my bicycle to a farmer there in Westwold, bought a pig and put it on my bicycle and pushed it home. There I had already made a box, put that little piglet in there, and went for supper. And when I came back the piglet was gone already. It had jumped out of the box and was running around the countryside. Finally we got it in a place where we could grab it – then we really boxed it up.

Later, one December afternoon, I butchered it, putting the pig on the ladder, tying the front legs and back legs higher up. Then stunned the pig and slit it's throat, put it on it's belly on straw and burned off all the hair. That was not so easy but I had done it in France when I was a prisoner-of-war. Here I was alone, and not a professional and the pig was heavy, about 350 pounds. To pull it up high to clean it was difficult, but up it came. By the time I had cut it open, it was dark already, and Mutti had to stand with the petroleum lamp so I could see...

Helga: How did you keep it?

Marianne: Wir haben die ganze Woche Wurst gemacht. (We made sausage for a whole week.)

Otto: Ja. Liverwurst. Bloodwurst. And Mettwurst. A lot of it. Liverwurst Mutti made in glasses. It all went into those sealers. Na, ja, well it was nice and tasty. And she put lots on my lunch bread. One day I got liverwurst, the other day Blutwurst. And I didn't know how to swallow all that Wurst day after day! The children were small—they ate no liverwurst. And Mutti had no appetite for Wurst. I didn't know my way out—just close the eyes and eat. The bacon and ham we smoked. Later on, in the spring of 1954, we moved to Aldergrove and took our sausage along. Most of the liverwurst was gone all right. And then we got all kinds of guests, and they had to eat Mettwurst.

We were in Westwold for one and a half years. By that time, Reimar was ready to go to school. Marianne was not very happy that he would have to walk through the bush and wait for the bus, because she had encountered bears there. One day the children picked berries on one side and on the other a bear was picking his berries. It was not very comforting to think of a little kid walking for a half hour by himself through the bush, so we decided to return to the Fraser Valley.

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OMA WAITING

She never knocked, she just appeared. Light steps belying two hundred pounds squeezed into a navy polyester dress. White lace, *Spitzen*, snug at her neck; no waistline beneath the long darts that originated and disappeared somewhere below her armpits. Without directive, she sat at her daughter Greta's kitchen table, the handle of her black vinyl purse wrapped around her left wrist. Inside was her German *Bibel*, a clean *Taschentuch*, a roll of Butterrum Lifesavers, and, at the bottom, a plastic *Geldbeutel* that opened like a mouth when she squeezed it together from underneath to release her widow's mite—dimes and nickels she'd relinquish during the *Opfer* taken at the close of the service as the congregation sang a four-part harmonized slow, slow rendition of the hymn, "*Deee-ee Zeit ist kurz, o Men-sch sei wei-se...*".

Oma's right fingers drummed on the table top, then stopped abruptly to pick at a fleck of apricot jam on the clear plastic tablecloth. She swept a few stray crumbs onto the floor, pushed them under the table with the toe of her shoe. She looked at her wristwatch. Wound it. Put it to her ear. Resumed drumming.

"*Ist das Oma?*" Greta whispered to Susan, her youngest. "Tell her I'm almost ready."

The clocks in the kitchen and bedroom ticked loudly. Oma clicked her tongue; in the bedroom Greta did the same; Susan watched and listened.

Greta rummaged in Yasch's underwear drawer for a clean handkerchief he'd but always forgot without her reminder. Yasch stood in the kitchen, calmly dousing his face with Old Spice, then stuffing his pocket with Scotch mints from the bag next to his shaving gear, all the while humming "*Drum voran!*", a hymn about perseverance. Which he did.

Oma's brown paper bag rustled as she folded and unfolded it down to the spines of the three German romance novels inside. She could hardly wait to get to the library to exchange them; she'd heard there were new books. She drummed faster. Would there be time to return her books and sign out others? The tiny library was probably crowded by now; it was hard enough to turn around in there when she was alone, never mind if Frau Dyck had added new books to the German section in the corner. The widows Taunte Penner and Taunte Derksen were probably there already, and most surely, Tina Unrau; she who lived right across from Clearbrook Foodcenter. Imagine that! Never having to ask someone to take you shopping for flour, sugar, or Pfeffermint Oel. But then, Tina Unrau didn't live on her daughter's yard, as Oma did. Still, she always arrived early!

Oma sighed, unaware of how loudly. In all likelihood, Taunte Solomon Bergen had arrived first. She who lived next door to the church, and, as church custodian, had keys to every room, even the library!

Greta entered the kitchen.

"*Na, sind wir spaet?*" Oma asked. Are we late?

"*Na oba, Ma!* There's lots of time!"

What annoyed Oma most besides this perpetual waiting was this dependency. Sometimes it was just too much. Always having to ask, to hope someone had time to taxi her from station to station: the dime-store, the bank, the Post office, her friends'.... Asking; waiting; asking; again waiting...she didn't think she asked too often, did she? Her daughter's tight lips indicated otherwise. She sighed again.

Well, finally! With a push of her hands, Oma launched off the chair, her thick legs in those brown *Struempfe* interrupting the family's otherwise quiet procession with a loud *swish swish* all the way down the porch and outside steps to the end of the sidewalk where she and the others waited for Yasch to back the car out of the carport and pull alongside.

As always, Oma assumed the seat behind Greta's, the window to her right, three grandchildren to her left. She gripped the door handle, her face swivelling from side to front, left to right, back and forth between daughter, son-in-law, fidgety children, barnyards, acres of pastures and plowed fields, raspberries, and the road; everything slipping away as she imagined the books on the shelves, waiting for her.

Elsie K. Neufeld is a poet and non-fiction writer. Her passion is Life Stories, and helping others record theirs. She teaches writing courses at UCFV, Elder College, and other continuing education programs throughout the Fraser Valley. She also facilitates workshops for organizations such as Hospice, genealogical groups, and the Fort Langley Museum. Some of her work has been published in "Breaking the Surface," a poetry anthology featuring new Canadian poets (Sono Nis Press, 2000); Rhubarb, the Mennonite literary magazine; and "Inside Poetry," a high school textbook (Harcourt Canada, Fall 2002). Her book, "The Past Inside the Present: a family story" is on loan through the Mennonite Historical Society of BC. For further information about services or workshops, you may contact Elsie at eskn@uniserve.com.