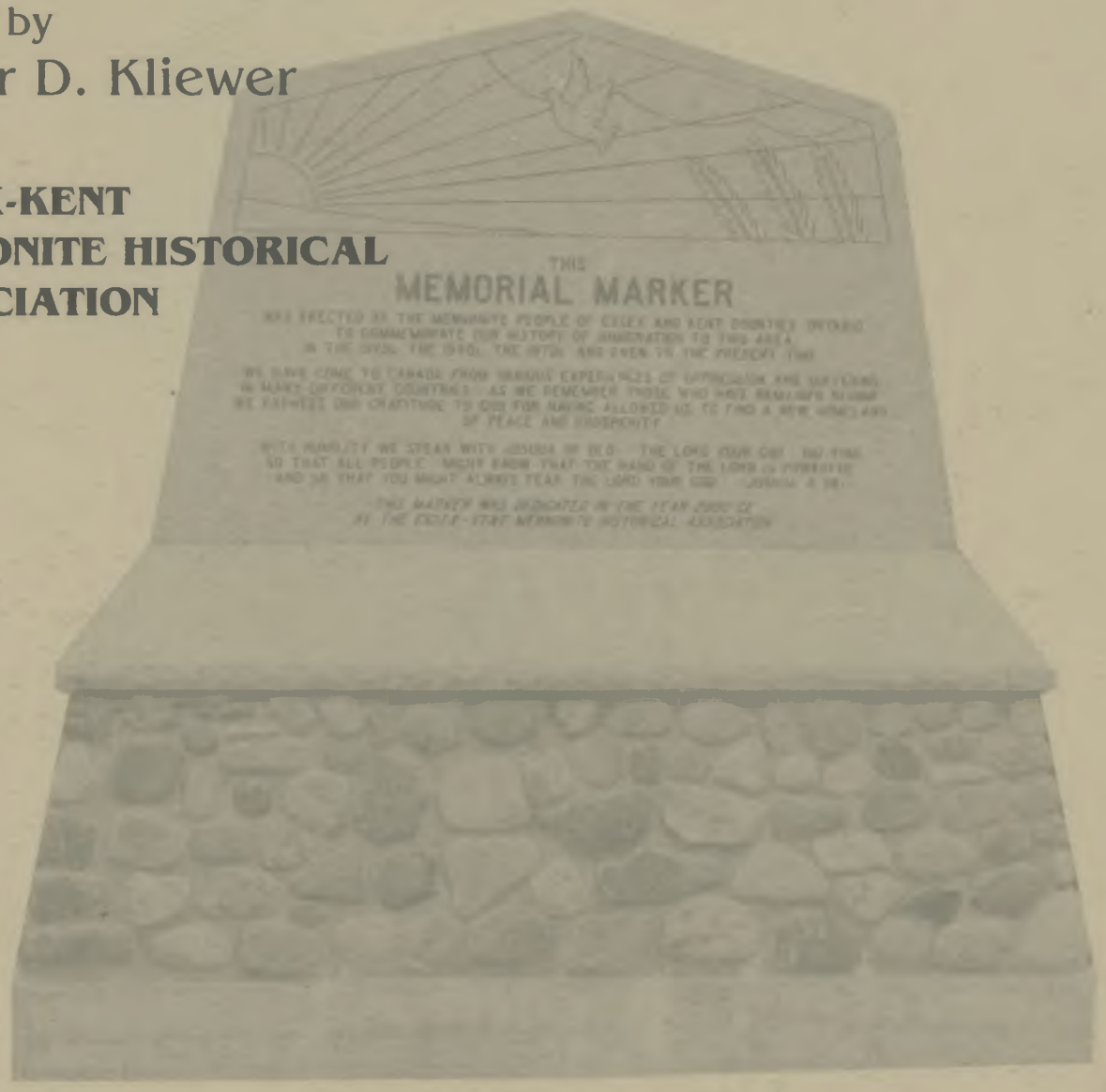
MENNONITE Peace Perspectives

from Essex & Kent

Edited by
Victor D. Kliewer



**ESSEX-KENT
MENNONITE HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION**

Mennonite Peace Perspectives from Essex and Kent

Edited by Victor D. Kliewer

VOLUME THREE
ESSEX-KENT MENNONITE HISTORICAL SERIES

The Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association
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Outside cover: The Mennonite memorial marker in Garrison Park, Leamington, dedicated November 5, 2000. (Courtesy George Schartner)
Inside front cover: "Singing for Peace" on Parliament Hill, May 13, 1999. (Courtesy Victor Kliewer)
Inside back cover: Members of the Windsor Mennonite Fellowship relax after a shift at the meat canner in Leamington. (Courtesy Marlene Schmidtgall)

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Abbreviations

CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CO	Conscientious Objector
CPT	Christian Peacemaker Team
CPTO	Christian Peacemaker Team Ontario
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
EMMC	Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church
FMC	Faith Mennonite Church
HMC	Harrow Mennonite Church
KG	Kleine Gemeinde Church
LUMC	Leamington United Mennonite Church
MADD	Mothers Against Drunk Driving
MB	Mennonite Brethren Church
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MDS	Mennonite Disaster Service
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLUMC	North Leamington United Mennonite Church
NRMC	New Reinland Mennonite Church
OCCA	Old Colony Christian Academy
OCMC	Old Colony Mennonite Church
POW	Prisoner of War
TB	Tuberculosis
UMEI	United Mennonite Educational Institute
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

Preface

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

The immediate origins of this book can be found in the conflict, which came to be known under the catchword "Kosovo" in the spring of 1999. In that horrific situation the attention of the world was focused abruptly on this hitherto almost unknown province of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia--with the accompanying murders, destruction, and streams of refugees. As the weeks went by, the conflict appeared to be endless, indeed, continued to grow. Other neighbouring countries of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) looked for appropriate political and military ways to bring an end to the massacre, eventually leading to the massive NATO bombing campaign against the Serbian army, as well as an international outpouring of refugee relief aid for the thousands of refugees.

That chapter of modern European history may never be fully understood and is, even at present, not completely resolved. However, among many other consequences, it also had the effect of forcing the Mennonite people in North America to re-evaluate their traditional stance as a "historic peace church." As a result, besides a major refugee relief program organized by the Mennonite Central Committee, there was a large outpouring of concerns about the war and what Christians' responses could and should be: articles and letters were sent to Mennonite papers, conferences were held, sermons preached, petitions sent to the Canadian and American governments, and unique expressions of concern such as the "Sing for Peace" gathering in front of the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa were organized.

The Mennonites in Essex and Kent, while not necessarily in the forefront of these larger peace actions, also had opportunity to rethink their historical peace position in a way that had not been done quite this intensively for some time. One result of this re-evaluation and rethinking is the following book.

The collection is not all-inclusive, but attempts to provide a variety of expressions of peacemaking efforts by the different Mennonites of these counties. **Parts One** and **Two** of the book deal with foundational materials, highlighting what the different Mennonite groups have traditionally taught on the subject of peace and peacemaking. The emphases of the confessional materials, these most basic statements describing the Mennonite's beliefs, are almost identical for all Mennonite groups, even though they may be phrased somewhat differently. The sermons, the basic teachings in the churches, indicate that peace is an important subject in all groups, even though the approach varies considerably. **Part Three** deals with experiences by Mennonites during different times in their settlement history; in the case of the Mennonites in Essex and Kent, meaning the time from the mid-1920s to the present. During the compiling of these stories it became conspicuous how significant the Second World War had been and continues to be for the

Mennonites; clearly it was a major watershed experience! **Part Four** includes letters of petition to the Canadian government. **Part Five** includes a variety of experiences that are representative of positive peacemaking efforts in various parts of the world. **Part Six**, finally, contains a miscellaneous collection of items that did not neatly fit into any of the other categories but were related to the overall subject matter-and that also raise some of the troubling aspects that make the topic of war and peace such a difficult one. The book ends with some general conclusions and suggestions of additional resources for those who may be interested and, indeed, there is much excellent resource material!

The topics of conflict and peacemaking are broad and complex, with many different components: often the theory and practical reality do not harmonize with each other; often the interpretations and convictions vary; major conflicts bring out "the best and the worst" in people, including those who want to follow in the way of Jesus Christ. So it is quite representative that the viewpoints expressed in the following anecdotes are not all consistent with one another. In addition, some may have "happy endings" or present hopeful possibilities, while others will not, and yet others remain open ended; all are reminders of the complexity of the issues and the need for deep humility in reflecting on the experiences of faith and life!

This book is the third volume in the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Series. The Series was started in 1997 to provide a framework for the publication of materials about and of interest to the Mennonites of Essex and Kent Counties in Southwestern Ontario. Two earlier publications in the Series are ***The Mennonites in Essex and Kent. An Introduction*** (1998) and ***The Mennonite Settlement on Pelee Island, Ontario*** (1999).

In the production of this volume the excellent work of the Publications Committee of the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, as well as the larger Advisory Committee needs to be acknowledged. Also, the participation of many committed individuals who enthusiastically contributed stories from their lives needs to be mentioned with appreciation; surely there are many others who could have made contributions! Finally, the Committee acknowledges with deep appreciation the generous publication grant provided by the Peace and Justice Committee of the Mennonite Church!

Leamington, 2000

Victor Kliewer,
on behalf of the Publications Committee

Part One

Confessional Material

Confessional Material

Many of the local Mennonite churches have a definite "peace stance" as part of their Constitution or included in their teaching material. The following excerpts are some samples of the homogeneous nature of their stands on the issue.

Faith Mennonite Church,
Leamington, Ontario, constitution, as amended in January, 1996

2) That the Christian should be a peaceful and loyal citizen, clearly recognizing the importance of the state, but remembering that his highest loyalty belongs to God. The Christian should give first loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Church, so that association with any other organization, secret or otherwise, will not usurp the priority he is to give to Christ and His Church.
3) That war is utterly contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ. Difficulties between nations as well as individuals should be settled by peaceful and non-violent methods. The Christian should practice love and goodwill even toward enemies, voluntarily between nations, races, classes, and individuals, and opposing all forms of hatred, injustice and evil. The Christian should practice love, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness and self-control. (Galatians 5: 19-20)

Leamington United Mennonite Church,
Leamington, Ontario, A Vision for LUMC

e) Our relationship to others: The Scriputures seem to highlight responsibility toward widows, widowers, orphans, the lonely, destitute, the hungry and dispossessed. Jesus ministered to those who had need of "physician". God loves people. Jesus died for people. Hence their immeasurable worth. For that reason they deserve bread not bombs. For that reason militarism, armaments and violence are diabolical. We stand for making "bread", which is also symbolic of all that is good and productive. We are sad when lives are devastated by "bombs", symbolic of all that is loveless. Our concern for peace also touches on those arenas of conflict that inflict us now and then- family and congregational life.

LUMC position, from *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

22) We believe that **peace** is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.

Leamington Mennonite Brethren Church.

Exerpts from the Minutes of the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Regarding Nonresistance

A. Minutes of Nov. 3 and 4, 1934

1. We believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ call us to work for peace.
2. We see our shortcomings as a Christian Church in not sufficiently recognizing, realizing and teaching this truth.
3. We cannot take part in armed warfare and shedding of blood, because our conscience forbids it. However, we are ready to do any service, which contributes to the maintenance of life and to the improvement of our country.

B. Minutes of Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 1936

The Declaration, which was submitted by the Committee on Nonresistance and unanimously accepted by the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Canada at Waldheim, Sask. on July 8, 1936, is read, thoroughly studied and discussed. Our Conference agrees fully with the statements of this Declaration and holds the same views in every detail. Unanimously it is agreed as follows: The Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario takes the same stand as the Conference of M.B. Churches of Canada, as it is stated in Article 1 of the declaration:

"……..as regards the obligation toward the state we shall act according to the Word of Scripture, which states, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Ceasar's, and unto God the things which are God's'. Notwithstanding, our declaration of firm belief in the principal of nonresistance, that is, not to shed blood, the Conference recognizes our definite duty toward the state.

As citizens of our country we have our duty not only in respect to taxes, but also in respect to personal services, as long as these services are not contrary to our consciences. The Word of Jesus, Mark 3:4 and Luke 6:9 'is it lawful to save life, or destroy it?' is our guiding light in deciding about the acceptability of a certain service. We should not refuse to do any service, which contributes to the principal of life, whether it is connected with danger to our own lives or not. Cowardice, must not interfere, nor influence our conscience in any way. As followers of Jesus, therefore, we may not for example, be opposed to field ambulance service. If here the objection is raised, that this service is connected with war, we point out that in caring for the wounded we are serving the principal of life. When those wounded men, who recover, are returned to battle and even death again, we shall not have to answer for that. Doing nothing for our country is not our stand. The Conference considers the matter of a substitute service and recommends ambulance service in the first place.

North Leamington United Mennonite Church

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (attached to Constitution).

6) Human beings have been made for relationship with God to live in **peace** with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation.

22) We believe that **peace** is the will of God. God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace, and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing nonresistance, even in the face of violence and warfare.

New Reinland Mennonite Church,

Wheatley, Ontario (from Confession of Faith).

15) That as God's people we should love our enemies and should not seek revenge on them. "Vengeance is Mine saith the Lord." Romans. 12: 19

Harrow Mennonite Church,

Harrow, Ontario. Teaching of Peace.

The Constitution (April 30, 1987) states that a peace group may be organized for spiritual growth, service and fellowship at any time.

In teaching peace in the Faith classes different materials have been used over the years like: *This We Believe* by James H. Waltner. This book has a very good chapter on "Being a Christian Citizen" – dealing with Anabaptists, Government, Pacifism and Nonresistance.

Guide to Faith by Helmut Harder—this book has a good chapter on Peace.

Comments by Sue Goerzen: At the present time pastor Greg Yantzi started the Faith class with the films "The Radicals", and "When they shall ask". Then he is using several resources to teach different topics, which will include peace.

Part Two

Sermons

A Sermon from 1941

Rev. Jacob N. Driedger was a lay minister in the Essex County United Mennonite Church where he worked together with his brother, Rev. N. N. Driedger, the Ältester of the church. Jacob Driedger was also the local representative for the "historical peace churches" of Ontario during the war and kept records of the young Mennonite men who were away from home in either alternative or military service.

The following sermon was delivered in 1941, during the time of World War 2. The original was, of course, in German and fully written out in a very fine "Gothic" handwriting on small sheets of paper (about 8.5 x 13 cm), with about 30 lines per page. Like all the others of Jacob Driedger's sermons, this one does not have a specific date or title. Also like almost all of his other sermons, it does list "hymn," "prayer," the Scripture text, and an invocational verse, in this case: "Gnade sei mit uns und Friede von Gott dem Vater und unserem Herrn Jesum Christum" ("Grace be with us and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ").

It is noteworthy–and different from most other Mennonite sermons of the time–that the sermon contains references to the war, oblique as they may be. Nevertheless, the overall emphasis of the sermon is on the spiritual nature of the conflict, rather than on the physical, social, or political aspects of the war; and, typically, the emphasis lies, finally, on the faith of the individual.

The following sermon was translated and edited by Victor Kliewer. The original notes are in possession of J. N. Driedger's son John J. Driedger.

Text:

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12, RSV)

In this verse our Lord Jesus is speaking of the light and of discipleship and of walking in the darkness. Now, "walking in the darkness" is a difficult and sometimes a desperate matter. Who is there among us who has not been in such a situation, feeling for the way, not knowing in which direction to go, and unsure of what to do next? It is definitely not an enjoyable or enviable experience! Not only does it feel uncomfortable, it may also be quite dangerous, indeed, life threatening!

A German pastor tells of an experience he had while living in Poland. Together with his two children he was taking a walk along a riverbank in a rather unfamiliar part of the country, when they suddenly were engulfed by dense fog, as frequently happened in that area. It was not especially dangerous, since they were in a populated area, but they still experienced the oppressive feeling of not knowing how far they were from the river or which way they should continue since all paths looked similar. How relieved they were when they met some people who could show them the right way!

This illustration reminds us what it means to "walk in the darkness." Oh, how many people are living in darkness today! Indeed, all people in our time are finding themselves in a very difficult situation from which there does not appear to be any escape. They are aware of something that is coming and are afraid because they don't know what it is or how they might prepare for it.

Furthermore, the people are not only fighting against each other, not only against flesh and blood, as the apostle Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians, but against principalities and powers, against the forces of darkness, against the evil spirits under heaven.

This is a walking–and a battle–in the darkness! Trying to go this way is a desperate affair–without any real guideposts and without any hope of getting out! What is needed is the divine light from above: only with that light would there be hope for the world!

That's how it is with the big problems of the world. But also in our smaller circles there are problems, e.g., in our society or in our congregation. There are issues that are so difficult to resolve! Here, once again, it is like feeling our way through the darkness. Again, light from above would help to show us the way!

But this is impossible, as long as we personally do not receive the light in our hearts. This is where it all has to begin–then all the other problems will take care of themselves as well. Yet, regretfully, this is where the need is greatest! . . . And so, as one might say, a thick darkness appears to have settled upon many people.

The situation would be hopeless–if Jesus had not come to bring his light into this darkness. But this is just the reason why he came into the world: to bring light into the darkness! Light can only come where Jesus is the light of the world, as he says of himself.

And he is not only the *light* but also, at the same time, the *way*. He not only lights the path but also helps lost souls to find the right way. Everyone who follows Jesus has experienced this. Jesus shows the way by going on ahead, and all we need to do is to follow, as the text reminds us. When we follow him obediently, we will soon notice how the darkness begins to disappear and the light increases around us . . . May our desire also be to be faithful to him, so that his light can be the light of our lives! Amen.

A Peace Sunday Sermon

J. C. Neufeld, who was Ältester of the Leamington United Mennonite Church from 1955-74, preached this sermon on Peace Sunday, November 17, 1968, at the "North Church" (later named the North Leamington United Mennonite Church) in connection with a peace conference that was being held. It came in the midst of the turbulent years of protest movements in the United States–President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated a few years earlier, Martin Luther King had been killed by a sniper's bullet in the same year, and the Vietnam War was causing much consternation; and in the not-too-distant background loomed the constant threat of a nuclear world war. All of these political realities had significant ripple effects in Canada and southwestern Ontario as well, forming the context for the following sermon. The sermon was given without a specific title.

Texts:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5: 9).

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"(1 Peter 2: 21 and 23).

Although we live in a time of war, strife, riots, and racial upheavals, the word "peace" is on the lips of more people today than in peacetime. Probably this is so because we are beginning to realize that we do not have the real peace. And this condition becomes more intolerable and threatening. The moral problems of our age are not made different by the introduction of the nuclear weapons, but this makes the solution to the problem all the more urgent. Peace becomes synonymous to life.

When my wife and I were in Palestine, we noticed that the form of greeting was "Peace"– "Shalom." There seemed to be some sarcasm in the traditional greeting, since on every hand you could see the result of the war, the destruction of buildings and the lives that had been taken. In this land of trouble the condition of peace is greatly cherished. When we asked our guide, who was a Jordanian, and our driver, a Jew, about their opinions on the war, they said, "We do not want war–but we are a play-ball of the super-nations."

> ***"We do not want war—but we are a play ball of the super-nations"***

And after all attempts of war to end all wars and of peace conferences, it is not at all presumptuous to state that true peace can only come in this world by the Prince of Peace.

This has been the conviction of our forefathers since the 16th century. This conviction is based on Scripture and especially on the life and teaching of Christ. But it is presumptuous to believe that all those who have been raised in Mennonite homes are necessarily convinced of this doctrine of Christ. Therefore it is good that we have conferences on the peace teaching

> ***It is presumptuous to believe that all who have been raised in Mennonite homes are necessarily convinced of this peace doctrine of Christ.***

1. Terms we use in conjunction with our peace conviction

To describe this stand, we have taken terms from Scripture: for example, ***pacifism***. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The Latin Bible uses the Word *pacifici* for Peacemakers, and from this we derive the term *pacifism*. Now there is more than one kind of pacifism. There are people, who do not condone war because of human efforts. Humanitarian pacifism does not reckon with the sinful man, and human hearts need not be transformed. It is a sort of Gandhian pacifism. But most of the pacifists are Christians. Christian pacifism has the love, life, and teaching of Christ as a basis. We are Christian pacifists. We take this stand because Christ did so.

Another term used frequently is ***nonresistance***. The term is derived from the words of Christ in Matthew 5:39, "Resist not him that is evil." From both terms it seems as though they are negative, instead of positive–it seems to describe a state of inactivity toward evil. But this is not what is meant. What is meant is that we resist evil in a different manner than the world, with the armor of God, with the weapons of love. It is because of this false connotation that the more frequently used term is ***peace witness***.

2. What does Christ teach on this subject?

It is not so important which term we use to describe our stand and conviction, but whether Christ really taught this in word and life. What did Christ teach about retaliation and resistance? To find this out, it is not a matter of taking a verse here and there out of context. Rather, the statements of Christ and the Scripture should be tested with exegetical honesty against Christ's own example in actual life.

Did he mean that Christians should not resist the evildoers? That we should offer the other cheek when smitten? That he was actually sending out his disciples as harmless and defenseless lambs among the wolves?

Was Paul truly reflecting the spirit of his Lord, when he admonished the Christians that, although they walked in the flesh, they should not war according to the flesh? Or that they were not to render evil for evil?

Was Peter truly reflecting the example of the Lord, when he wrote: "Who, when he

was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not." Was Peter right in asserting that Christians are called to a ministry of suffering? As the Lord Jesus suffered in the flesh, the Christian ought to arm himself with the same readiness to suffer meekly?

Look at the life of Christ! All this and more is unquestionably substantiated by his life. Yes, the Bible teaches that war is sin! It is true that Israel waged war as the Old Testament people of God. And thus the question is justified: Are there, then, in the Bible two standards of conduct–the Old Testament standard given by Moses and the New Testament standard as given by Christ Jesus?

To this I want to say that this is not a contradiction of standards, but what we see here is a progression of revelation. The revelation of the will of God in the Old Testament was partial and incomplete. God, as the Lord of history and the educator of his people led them from a partial to a full revelation of the will of God. Although there are indications of the perfect will of God in the Old Testament, we have the complete revelation in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is the supreme authority for all matters pertaining to faith and life.

Look at slavery in the Old Testament! The people of God practiced slavery, and there were regulations given in the treatment of the same, but the New Testament stands against slavery.

Look at the Old Testament legalism–for example, the command to tithe. In the New Testament we are totally in possession of Christ and are only stewards of his gifts.

Look at war in the Old Testament! Despite the fact that God promised to drive out the enemies of Israel with hornets and other plagues, Israel wanted war, and God had patience with his delinquent children, then as now, gradually leading them to realize that war is sin and evil.

3. <u>The first church was nonresistant</u>

The question may well be asked: If the doctrine is not a denominational one, not only a Mennonite doctrine, but a Christian doctrine, why has the Christian church from the beginning not lived it? The fact of the matter is, that the first church has lived the Christian peace witness. This is sufficiently proven by the history of the first church. And the first Christians did not deny war, because soldiers were accepted into the army in the mercenary system or they refused to become soldiers because of Emperor worship.

In the 2nd century **Justin Martyr** wrote: "We have exchanged our weapons for tools of peace–the swords for plowshares and the spears for agricultural tools." In 174 A.D. **Tertullian** wrote the first statement in defense of the peace stand in view of the fact that there were Christians who enlisted in the army. In this connection he used the words of Christ: "He who uses the sword shall perish by the sword." He admonished soldiers who had become converted while being in the army to leave it and to be prepared to die for the Lord. **Origenes**, the great Church Father, was of the same persuasion. **Cyprian** died a

martyr in 258 and defended the church's original stand on war. Even **Basil the Great**, stated in 374 that a Christian who had participated in war was not to partake of communion for three years, thus upholding the original stand of the church. But after **Constantin the Great** was converted in 312 A.D. the church's position on the subject of peace changed very rapidly. In 300 years the church had lost its peace stand.

4. The doctrine of peace in the Reformation

The 16th century was a time of great spiritual unrest in the church. There was a great dissatisfaction with the legalism of the Catholic Church. And thus reformers like **Luther**, **Calvin**, and **Zwingli**, who all had the intention of revitalizing the Catholic Church, were excommunicated and eventually started a movement which abolished much of the "dead wood" of the traditional church. The translation of the Bible by Luther gave more strength to the spirit of the Reformation.

But students of Zwingli felt that the reformer of Zurich did not go far enough. **Conrad Grebel** and others like him, urged Zwingli to take the first church as example–to introduce adult baptism and to take the Christian pacifist stand. Because of adult baptism they were called the **Anabaptists**. Soon Zwingli and the Reformed church persecuted them. Conrad Grebel, the spokesman of the young church, wrote: "Christians are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves. They are as sheep among the wolves. And indeed, in the 16th century alone, about 5,000 of our forefathers have died the martyr's death. So it had been the persuasion of our church, according to the Scripture, that it is better to suffer than to inflict evil. Christ is the norm for our faith, as well as for our life. And this is really the message for every Christian.

5. To what then are we called?

If the peace witness is according to the life and teaching of Christ–and we are persuaded that it is–what then is our calling? Surely we need to live according to the conviction we have arrived at! How do you start to live this conviction? Do you start by protesting evils of today? This is a language that is popular and well understood today!

If we ask this question first, it seems that we are putting the cart before the horse. True pacifism is a matter of priority–what comes first?

Firstly, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of our mission in the world. As Christ came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many from sin, similarly we share his responsibility, insofar as you and I are agents of redemption. Christ came to render a loving, devoted service to God and man. He came to help and to heal the woes of mankind. Christ did not come to administer justice, to hold court in disputes between brothers, he did not come to punish evildoers. He came to call man to repentance and to call man to enter into his kingdom by faith and live according to its first law, the law of love. And we are always to serve his spirit. Of this we must never lose sight!

Of course, we do not live in the time of Christ or under a dictatorship. Ours is a democracy. And in view of the fact that there are Christians in responsible places in government today, this would influence our attitude toward government. If we have a government by the people, and there are Christians in the government, it is our responsibility as citizens of the state to let our voice be heard and tell fellow Christians what we have found to be right. I think it behooves the church to let its voice be heard in ethical and moral matters by submitting a respectful petition to government. I cannot condone the protest marches in general. With J. C. Wenger I agree that the protest march colours our witness–it already is much closer to exerting a strong political pressure that is not fitting for a Christian. There are exceptions. J. C. Wenger tells of an example: The ministers of two churches in a city in northern Indiana, a Negro and a white man, agreed that in appreciation of each other's race they would worship together–first in one church and then in the other. They quietly marched from one church to the other. People realized that this was an effective witness, that they regarded each other as brothers in Christ.

But it is basic to have a clear picture as to what we are called, and also in which spirit. If our heart is filled with the love of Christ and we are sure of our conviction, we will witness in a becoming way to the evils of war and to social injustices. Let us be careful that demonstrations are in the spirit of Christ! Then we will not be indifferent to what happens, to the injustices of the time. But neither will this behavior demonstrate a continual and arrogant review of the work of the government, constantly looking, as it were, over the shoulder of the government executive and making critical comments on every move he makes. I believe our stand should be somewhere between the two extremes. Certainly we ought to prayerfully remember those in responsible places first of all!

But when the government asks of us to obey in matters which are contrary to our obedience to God, then we answer with Peter and John: "We must obey God more than man." This pertains also to the participation in war! For war is a denial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has shown us the better way:
A way to show love.
A way to live a life of love,
A way to overcome evil with good.
A way to give ourselves to the welfare of others.
A way to love even those who do us wrong.

We, the church, are called to be the church of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Sermon Notes From The 1970s

In Rev. Peter H. Janzen's (Faith Mennonite Church) comments to Luise Taves, he says, among other things, that, " In reviewing my sermon notes (prepared in longhand, over a period of nine years at FMC), something became (more) evident, the concept of peace and reconciliation is an integral part of my sermons. Peace and reconciliation is not an add-on, but is a vital part of the Gospel of God in Christ Jesus. The sermon notes reflect my theology".

Following are just a few examples of many sermons with this peace theme that Rev. Janzen preached in those years.

1. <u>The Sanctity of Life</u> September 22, 1974

Texts:

Genesis 1: 26-31 & Exodus 20: 13

Life is a gift from God, all are created in the image of God. The opposite of life is termination of life by:

- wars
- extermination (e.g. holocaust)
- present trends of abortion
- accidents
- other forms of termination

Led by the spirit of God, we witness against all forms of violence, and promote the glorious hope of the peaceable kingdom of God.

2. <u>Seek Peace</u> November 10, 1974

Text:

People say "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6: 14)

- my experience with declaration of WWII
- in 3500 years of human history only 220 years without war
- 1945-1970 over 200 peace agreements signed, yet have not experienced real peace
- quoted Arafat from *Time Magazine* PP. 17-18

Need to hear Scripture, "Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:13)

3. What Brings Peace? November 23, 1980

Texts:

Luke 19: 41-44 & John 14: 23-27

- Jesus proclaims the way of peace
- possibilities: to build or to destroy
- basic: our love for God is the root of peace
- fruit of the Spirit includes peace
- need for implicit faith in resolving conflict

What brings peace?

- loving God includes mutual love for persons
- fruit of the Spirit of God: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (Galatians 5: 22-24)
- to employ the better (best) methods of resolving differences

Wars begin in the minds of people.

4. Peace on Earth November 30, 1980

Texts:

Luke 2:8-15 & Col. 3:14-17

- peace on earth an annual theme at this time of year
- atomic scientists have moved "Doomsday Clock" to "seven Minutes to midnight" it is now possible to annihilate the human race in seven minutes with nuclear arsenals
- problem of disparity – what we spend on war and what we spend on peace
- the arms race – "a dollar spent on war is a dollar taken from peace"
- a new call for peacemaking

A Sunday Morning Message

Rev. Cornelius Quiring began his ministry in the Wheatley Old Colony Mennonite Church in 1969. When, in the early 1980s, the New Reinland Mennonite Church on Road Six of Mersea Township was established, he became their first pastor. Rev. Quiring retired in 1998 because of failing health. The following sermon was preached by Rev. Quiring on August 23, 1987.

English translation: Rev. Willie Thiessen, present pastor of NRMC.

Dearly Beloved—the introduction to the message today—to strive for victory. (2 Timothy 2:5) Striving lawfully means achieving victory. The Christian life is striving against evil, against Satan, who is a master at striving against God's people. Remember to strive lawfully, not only to get through this world, but to receive eternal glory. Striving in our own strength does not give victory Jesus says, "Without Me you can do nothing".

Paul fought a good fight and received victory, a crown of glory. Without fight, no victory; without victory, no fight. (2 Timothy 4: 7,8) "Put aside all things that hinder us in this fight to obtain victory." Jesus has given us the strength that we can overcome evil with good. The question was asked of Jesus, "Are there few that will be saved?" Jesus answered, "Strive ye that ye may enter in."

It is sad that many today are not concerned about their future, about eternity. Many do not strive but live only for today, as though there is no future. Many strive, but will be deceived because of not striving right. God has made it possible; but many follow Satan, and lose their eternal reward. They want to serve the flesh and not God. They look to other people and do as they do. This is not striving; God will allow no evil into heaven. (Revelation 22:11)

We have only one person to work with: our self. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and no one else. Others want to enter into heaven by living a good life; they have never been born again. They seek comfort in their own good works. Others listen to the enemy who says there is much time; some other time. Because many are lost and few are saved, let us take heed that we take our life seriously. Let us pray with King David. "Search me O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139: 23&24) We have to let God, through His Holy Spirit, guide us. We have to take God seriously. Come apart. "Therefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6: 17&18)

God's concern is that people strive right, to be cleansed from all sin. The time is coming that we will depart from this world; and how will it be then—will we be ready or not ready. We can have victory in Jesus and in His power, so let us put off all unrighteousness and live in holiness. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14). Without sanctification, God will be our judge. Let us live so that Jesus will be our Saviour and not our judge. Let us examine ourselves.

By ourselves we will not have victory. In scripture God is not as concerned with our words but with our faith. To live a life that is pleasing to God and that by faith. God is not pleased if we live in sin, according to the flesh. We need a relationship with God. What must I do, make a second promise in order to receive a second work of grace? No. Once the commitment is made, God will not go back on His Word. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) When all else fails, God's grace is sufficient. God has promised to save me through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed me, on whom I believe with all my heart. God sent His Son to be a Saviour and He wants us to accept Him as our Saviour and Redeemer. Not to judge and condemn but to redeem. God has given us the freedom to choose; He has finished the work of salvation so that we can choose to be saved.

God sent his son not to judge and condemn, but to redeem.

In Jesus Christ we will not be condemned. (Romans 8:1) That we build not on a false belief: salvation is only for those who live not after the flesh. Let us examine ourselves. There is coming a day that we will depart from this world. For whom have we lived? We have been redeemed fully, not in part. Jesus' sacrifice was complete, not in part. This promise is only for those who are in Christ Jesus. As Noah had to go into the ark to be saved, so must we be in Jesus, to be saved. Salvation is only in Jesus.

What the law required from us, is fulfilled in us through faith in Jesus Christ. Walking after the flesh is death; but walking according to the Spirit is life and joy. Peace with God comes by faith and obedience to God and His Word. He who has not the Spirit of God is not one of His. If we do not have the Spirit of God, to whom do we belong? If we live in sin we are the servants of sin. In Christ we have victory. If we have not Christ we are lost forever. Today if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts. We do not know how much time we have. "Who will condemn, Christ is He that justifies." (Romans 8: 33-39) Our only protection is Jesus. In the power of Christ we can overcome the world, sin and Satan.

A Sermon:
"The Path to Peace"

This sermon was given at the Leamington United Mennonite Church on Remembrance Day, November 10, 1991, by Menno H. Epp who was the pastor of the church at the time. As he added in an accompanying note, it was also a time when he was still working at coming to peace in grieving the loss of his spouse, Irma, who had died in the previous year.

Text:
"Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children" (Matthew 5:9, Luke 1:79, Good News Bible)

This Remembrance Day, on which we are called to remember persons who died "to defend our freedoms," as they say, is the first since the Gulf War. You will recall that our country participated in that war. Many were disappointed in that decision.

While we did not suffer any consequences directly, we do have to shoulder some of the responsibility for what is now happening. It is estimated that 40,000 children alone have died in Iraq since the war. According to the *CBC Journal* (October 25, 1991), 300 children a day died as a result of malnutrition and disease in that country. To that we must add many other costs.

It is estimated that 40,000 children alone have died in Iraq since the war.

On this Remembrance Day, as it is appropriate every day, we do well to remember that violence and war breed violence and war. We, and our governments, reap what we sow. War is hell. It destroys people, families, children, homes, marriages, and hopes. It destroys property, land, buildings, vegetation, and crops. It destroys the future of a people. It destroys families and vocational aspirations. Hate and war bring much misery upon humankind. It brings untold grief. It is terrible!

While world governments attempt to achieve peace through war, the result is usually pain, dislocation, and destruction; new refugees are created, disease and death abound. Somehow society knows that, yet we try again, always once more, to prove to a world and the current generation that peace is possible through wickedness.

A bright spot on the world scene is the recent initiative of the USA and the USSR to convene an Arab/Israeli peace conference in Madrid. We can agree with President Bush in his opening address that "too much hatred and too little love" have characterized the relationships between these two peoples for many years. This is an opportunity for

Christians to be supportive through prayer. Daily we are encouraged to pray for the "Peace of Jerusalem." On this Remembrance Day we remind ourselves that it is our duty to pray for our leaders to lead their countries in the path of peace.

The occasion of these two peoples coming together reminds us how easy hatred is, and how difficult peace is. When there is hatred it is difficult to sit at the same table. When there is dissension it is difficult to look into each other's eyes. When we have difficulty forgiving we also have difficulty being kind. When we are angry we do not seek another person's good.

The coming together of Jews and Arabs, Palestinian Arabs included, is actually a miracle. We can thank the USA and the USSR leadership for bringing enemies together. We know only too well that the USSR and USA could also not, until recently, sit at the same table. Perhaps already the coming together of enemies can be considered a miracle. But if these enemies can begin to accept each other, forgive each other, and live together with each other, then an even greater miracle is taking place. I wish for that to happen! When reconciliation happens between nations and between individuals, a miracle has happened.

When reconciliation happens between nations and between individuals, a miracle has happened.

That God wants this to happen is clear. Jesus wanted this to happen. That's why he came to live among us. That is why he came to that particular part of the world. He knew how badly that region needed peace and how badly it would need grace to have peace. That is why he also said to his disciples, "Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children."

Nowhere is there a word from Jesus so clear about relating happiness and peace. Nowhere did Jesus say, "Blessed (or happy) are those who hate and kill, for they shall have peace in their hearts."

Our text today is clear. Very clear! Today, on this Remembrance Day, we remind ourselves of these fundamental principles: Peace is the will of God. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. The starting point for all peace theology is Jesus/God. The gospel we preach is the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). We are children of God when we work for peace. Our hearts feel good when our life and relationships are peaceful. God must feel good too! The MCC button reminds us *"To remember is to work for peace."*

This peace is not only a spiritual peace–that is, a peace between ourselves and God. While that may be basic, Paul very clearly points out that the peace which Christ brings also breaks down barriers between peoples–Jews and non-Jews (Ephesians 2:14). Thus our appeal about peace stretches beyond our concern for peace among the nations. If we want to be a peace church we will want to work at our relationships within the church.

If we want to be a peace church, families of the church will be families of peace. Clearly, this is a challenge, since our generation has suffered much brokenness. Turmoil in the family also touches on the mushrooming problem of abuse–physical, sexual, and emotional. This evening at the Faith Mennonite Church, Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) is presenting this concern in a program entitled "Shattering the Darkness." Many women in our society have experienced violence and violation. Until recently women and perhaps some men have suffered these indignities silently. They are beginning to speak out. They are looking for someone to hear and acknowledge their pain. This too is a ministry of peace

If we want to be a peace church we will want to work at our relationships within the church.

The gospel of peace would also call us to an awareness of all those pockets of our life that now and then face turmoil. For all our pockets of disruption we hear the word of Jesus, ***"Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children."***

A Sermon:
"Called to be Peacemakers"

The following sermon was delivered at North Leamington United Mennonite Church in the Sunday morning worship service on May 2, 1999 by Victor Kliewer, the pastor of the church. It came at a time when the conflict in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been on the increase for several years, notably when the Serbian President's policy of "ethnic cleansing" in the province of Kosovo had led to a bombing campaign by the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which began in March of the year and was still continuing at the time of the sermon. The printed sermon is a somewhat shortened and edited version of the original.

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, known as the "Beatitudes"–the "blessings"–has been called the "ordination address for his disciples." In a few short sentences, Jesus pulls together the main thoughts that he was trying to teach his followers. All the Beatitudes belong together: they are not unrelated attitudes or characteristics but intersect and overlap with one another; they complement each other; they are connected with each other–like different pearls on the string of a beautiful necklace.

Even though the different blessings are all related, in this sermon I would like to focus on the words that deal with the peacemakers in particular: ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God"*** *(Mat.5: 9).*

1. <u>The Conflict in Yugoslavia</u>

During this past month, much of our attention has focussed on the conflict in Yugoslavia, especially in and around the little province called **Kosovo**, which until two months ago nearly no one had ever heard of.

During this last month we have had tremendous–and terrible–learning opportunities! For example: two months ago I would not have known where to find Kosovo on a map; two months ago I knew very little about the history or the politics of that area or how Muslims and Christians related to each other; two months ago I knew only vaguely that there were some Mennonite missionaries in that general area, but I really had no idea what they were doing there. Two months ago I was also not paying much attention to the activities of NATO and the power this organization continues to hold; and I had no understanding of how the government ruled in Yugoslavia or what could be meant by "ethnic cleansing"–a concept that is now deeply etched into my mind, linked with horrible scenes of suffering and death and destruction.

The experiences of the past few weeks have also forced me, like many others, to rethink my values and basic beliefs. How, for example, do I deal with the question of the continued NATO bombings (now for over a month!), the related destruction of countless roads, bridges, factories, and government buildings? How do I deal with the killed and injured people in Belgrade and Novi Sar and other areas–the so-called "collateral damage" that was not planned but always just seems to happen when bombs are dropped? How do I deal with the disruption of social life and relationships that will last for generations to come? Surely, this cannot be the right way to deal with a problem!

Well, then, what about the conflict between the Serbians and the Albanian Kosovars–or is it between the Christians and the Muslims–or is it simply between one group that wants power and another that also wants power? (Who, actually, really understands what we are talking about?!) Certainly, I cannot accept the wholesale murder called "ethnic cleansing" as justifiable! And just to withdraw and decide that, "it's someone else's problem", cannot be good enough! And if mediation is not possible, is there no alternative except military force?

Finally, what about the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers . . ."? What can these words mean in such a situation? Can the words of Jesus be applied to governments and international policy making, or are they only intended for each of us personally when we deal with conflict in our lives?

What is meant by Jesus' words to "turn the other cheek"? I know I'm not always very good at doing this in my own personal dealings with others–but can this basic approach be expected to be government policy? If the answer to this question is "yes," then we will have to think very carefully about what this means in practical terms! If the answer is "no," then we have to ask ourselves how we as Christians can say anything at all to the governments of our time.

So, is all of this starting to sound quite complicated? Probably it is! In fact, the whole matter can become rather overwhelming! Indeed, the forces of evil always confuse and tend to overwhelm us!

2. <u>What can we do?</u>

The long and the short of the matter is this: *is there anything at all that we can do to contribute in a positive way–if we don't want to simply resign in despair and do nothing at all?!* After all, we still have the words of Jesus ringing in our ears: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . Blessed are the merciful . . . Blessed are the pure in heart . . . Blessed are the peacemakers . . .."

In fact, there are many things we can do–and we have actually already begun to do some. ***(a) Pray for Kosovo.*** If we truly believe that prayer can make a difference–even in the darkest and most complicated conflicts – then the first thing we can do is to pray. One way in which we have tried to plan for this is by scheduling our lunch hour prayer times

here at the church. Usually we have met with about ten to twelve people for a time of sharing information and praying together; normally we have ended with the Lord's Prayer. Whether we are in this church or elsewhere, alone or in groups, we can pray for peace!

(b) Assist refugees. As we become aware of the desperate situation of the refugees–by yesterday the media reported 630,000!–we can try to help them meet their basic needs. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is sending food and supplies in refugee kits. As a congregation we have already been generous: we have donated nearly $11,000, and this week several of our members delivered about 120 kits to the MCC warehouse in Kitchener.

But our challenge is not yet completed–in fact, it may just really be getting started! This weekend we received word from MCC that refugees from Kosovo will be coming to Canada. MCC is being asked to find sponsors for five hundred refugees. The costs will be covered by the government, but there is need for families and groups to help and befriend the newcomers! I'm sure we will be hearing further from our Missions and Service Committee!

(c) Address our politicians. Our politicians need–in fact, they want–to hear from us! This means that we need to do careful homework, to think through what it is we are saying or writing. But it is not the time to remain silent!

Our church members sent a letter to our Member of Parliament, Jerry Pickard, about two weeks ago; thirty-four members had signed it. Copies were also sent to Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy. Just two days ago we received an appreciative response from Mr. Pickard. I have a special word of appreciation for the students of the United Mennonite Educational Institute and the way in which they have been getting involved in this whole issue!

Another way of making a public statement is mentioned in our church bulletin today: a gathering on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, called "Sing for Peace," is being planned for May 13th . MCC is coordinating this event; our Ontario Mennonite schools are participating, and others are also invited. You are invited to bring a *Hymnal* and call the UMEI to make arrangements!

3. Conclusion

Surely there are other ways to get involved–these are simply a few practical examples! May God grant us much wisdom and courage and generous hearts as we try to be peacemakers in at least a small way in this very difficult situation! Amen.

Part Three A

Stories

Experiences During World War II

On "Bearing Fruit" as a CO

World War II was a major watershed experience for the Mennonite people of Canada. including South-Western Ontario. In particular, it was of extraordinary significance for the draft age Mennonite men who were faced with the decision about enlisting in the military or choosing alternative service in some form. The traditional teaching of non-resistance had been quite clear in the larger Mennonite church, even if it was not always loudly articulated. In everyday life in the church or community, however, this conviction was not nearly as clear-cut as might have been expected. Even the leaders of the older generation were not entirely all of one mind, having already had a diversity of experiences in Russia before migrating to Canada. For the young draft-age men, who were dealing with many different influences from both within and outside the Mennonite church community, the peace conviction was even less decisively held.

In the following article Cornelius (Cornie) Driedger, a Conscientious Objector during the War and a later pastor of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church, reflects on his experiences.

According to chapter 15 from the Gospel of John, "bearing fruit" is possible only if we as Christians stay in close union with our Lord, for by ourselves we can achieve nothing. Sometimes we may not be aware that our lives are bearing fruit for God's Kingdom, and we may feel pretty useless; on the other hand, some fruit might still be present, even if it is not immediately evident. During the late 1930s and early 40s, my friends and I had to deal with the question of "bearing fruit" in the area of peacemaking or peacekeeping during the Second World War.

When the war broke out, those of us who were of draft age were asked by the leaders of our church, the Essex County United Mennonite Church, to take the position of Conscientious Objectors (COs). This might mean going to a work camp for COs or, if we stayed at home, to work on a farm and donate $25.00 to the Red Cross every month. This was not an easy decision! We felt guilty when our neighbours thought we should have gone to fight for our country instead of seeking to live out our faith. They thought we were "yellow"–cowards–and we could not really answer them. Sometimes it also takes courage to stand up for one's faith!

I remember my uncle, Rev. Jacob N. Driedger, one of our ministers who was the historic peace church representative for our area. He was challenged because of his belief in the biblical statement, *Thou shalt not return evil for evil but turn the other cheek*, and was asked, "Do you mean to say

"I'm Human, and I don't know how I would react, I simply trust my Lord to help me do his will."

that you would look the other way if your wife was being abused and do nothing?" My uncle replied, "I'm human, and I don't know how I would react. I simply trust my Lord to help me do His will." It was a statement that has stayed with me throughout the years!

I think if we would have had the option of joining the *Sanitätsdienst*–the medical corps–as our fathers did in Russia, we might have felt that we were more "fruitful." However, this was apparently not possible in Canada, at least our historic peace churches could not reach any agreement on such a plan. It just seemed to us that all our government wanted was to get us to a camp where we would not be too visible to the general public.

So we went to the Montreal River CO Camp. It was located on the north shore of Lake Superior, about 100 miles west of Sault Ste. Marie. Here we tried to be the best campers we could be, did what we were told, and caused no major problems. We were not aware that this experience could also be included in "fruit bearing" and that we needed to be rooted in our Lord to do even this work. Somehow Christ gave us the strength to do what we were asked to do. We stayed at that camp from January 2, 1943 until early summer, when our government decided to close the camp and send us to farms where help was needed and we could be more useful.

Montreal River CO Camp at Sault St. Marie, 1943
(Courtesy John H. Dick)

It was at our closing meeting that we became aware that our stay at the camp had had a positive effect. I remember our camp director, C. E. Tench, confessing to us in his

farewell address that he had not been happy to come to this CO camp to look after us. (We already knew very well that he had not been impressed with us, and our CO stance.) He would have liked to have gone somewhere else. But, he continued–and I believe he meant it–after having been with us he had come to change his mind. In fact, he paid us a pretty good compliment: somehow, he said, we had caught his attention in our daily routines, and he had started to appreciate us for whom we were and what we sought to do. Without our being aware of it, our Lord had allowed some fruit bearing to happen–and we suddenly felt a lot better about our CO stance. .

To God be the glory!

From the Conference Minutes of Mennonite Brethren in Ontario,
held in Leamington on Nov. 1&2, 1941.

Rev. H. Janzen reports on the relief program in England. He states that the representatives Koffman and Dick are engaged in very dedicated service and it is requested that help with clothes and money will continue.

Further it is noted that conference youths in the camps have a good reputation and do their work well. We in Ontario, he declares, are blessed because government officials have been sympathetic to the conscientious objector status requested by our young men. In other provinces this has not been the same.

In connection with the alternative service of our young men a charge of 35¢ per member per year is requested. It is to be paid to the peace committee of the conference. This money will be used for travel and speaking expenses for peace delegates.

Alternative Service on Farms

Farm deferment became an alternative service option for the Conscientious Objectors after the first year or so. Farm work was something that most of them knew and understood well; it also enabled many of the young men to be closer to home and their loved ones. Even so, their experiences were quite varied!

John H. Dick gives an overview of the experience.

After spending the winter months at the Montreal River Camp, we boys wondered what would come next. Rumours were that the camp might soon close. One topic that often came up was how long it would take us to pack up and leave. Having lived in close quarters, I knew it would not take me long!

Young men from Leamington at Montreal River CO Camp
Back L. to R: Henry Koop, John P. Driedger, Cornelius Driedger, John H. Dick, Henry Wiebe, Jacob Mathies, Henry Dueckman.
Front L. to R: Henry Schmidt, Richard Taves, Nick Schmidt, Nick Driedger.
(Courtesy John H. Dick)

One morning the news quickly spread that the camp would be closed. Most able-bodied men were in the armed forces, and as a result, there was an acute shortage of labour on the farms. We would be sent to southern Ontario, possibly to the Chatham area, to work in the sugar beets. And, indeed, on May 16, after a complimentary goodbye speech by Mr. Tench, our camp director, we found ourselves on a train heading for Chatham. While the train made a stop in Toronto some of us made contact with our families, so by the time we pulled into Chatham there was quite a crowd of family members and friends waiting to welcome us as on that Sunday, May 17.

We were allowed to go home for that Sunday afternoon but were told to report back on Monday morning at a bunkhouse just south of Chatham. Here the farmers came to pick us up. I was soon chosen by a Mr. Nash and taken to his farm near MacKay's Corners. Now we were placed on individual farms; after we had lived and worked together in large groups all winter, this felt pretty isolated!

The spring of 1943 was very wet, with no work in the fields. Being alone, I was really bored. On one such cloudy, rainy day Mr. Nash suggested that I go up in the barn and sweep off the cobwebs. I stood looking out of a little peep-hole and asked myself: "*What am I doing here?!*"

Eventually the rain stopped, we were able to get onto the land, and the time went much faster. In the meantime, the farmer next door was looking for help too. I persuaded him to ask for my buddy John Driedger to work for him: that would be one way for us to get together in the evenings and even to go home together occasionally.

The other boys were placed all over the area, and we had little contact with each other. Most of them were on "cash crop" farms, which meant that after the harvest and fall work was done, they were able to obtain their release and go home for the winter. I, however, was placed on the dairy farm of Harold Smyth, east of Chatham. Mr. Smyth had a herd of eighty Jersey cattle. I stayed here for another year. It was hard work with long hours, much of it done by hand–like filling the silo or loosening hay or straw with a pitchfork. The owner worked right along with me, and I was treated very well. He was very particular, and the milking machine had to be started by 5:45 every morning and again in the evening. I lived with the Smyths as part of the family, occasionally even attending church with them. We developed a good friendship, and I learned a lot while working there. A year later I was able to obtain my release, and we have kept in touch all the years since then.

The dairy farm chores had to be done twice a day, but Mr. Smyth allowed me to go home every two weeks or so, as long as I would be back in time for the milking on Monday morning. I managed to acquire an old *Model A* Ford for $100 and was quite proud of that car. But I must tell you of a story I will never forget!

My *Model A* had very smooth, bald tires. This was wartime, and new tires were not available! So I had a "brain wave." For very little money I purchased used tires that

had breaks on the sides but whose tread had not worn away. All week, after working on the farm during the day, I worked on my car. I let all the air out of the tires, then managed to pry the extra casing over the tops of the tires: it wasn't easy, but finally I was quite happy with my results. With my double tires I could hardly wait till Saturday afternoon when I would have the weekend off. I hurried through the work that morning, then jumped into my *Model A*, and took off for home! I was driving along, so proud of myself, when *Bang!*–I heard a big explosion. I stopped and checked: my poor tires were so hot I couldn't even put a hand on them! So I found out that putting one tire over another doesn't work! I put the spare tire back on and drove along slowly, stopping every few miles to pour water from the ditch over the tires in an attempt to cool them. I made it home, but what a disappointment the experience was!

While I was working on the farm, part of my wages went to the Red Cross. As far as I remember, the farmer paid $45 a month, of which $25 was forwarded to the Red Cross and the rest was mine to keep.

After obtaining my release in the fall of 1944, I had no money, but I was happy to be home and thankful for the opportunity to serve my country and to do my duty in a positive way.

After the morning worship service a membership meeting was convened with regard to the non-resistance issue in the Mennonite community. Elder J.H. Janzen had submitted the following resolution, which was presented in a abbreviated form and then adopted.

"We adhere to the biblically-based attitude of our forebears formulated in Article XV of our Confession of Faith, approved here in Canada; namely, that we refrain from any conflict with our fellow man and that we reject the killing of others in battle situations. As followers of Jesus we reject the ways of the flesh but support the mighty ways of God.

In service to others and in the spirit of sacrifice we will not do less than any other law-abiding citizen of Canada; moreover, we are willing to sacrifice our lives in any alternative service endeavour that does not compromise our consciences by requiring us to bear arms, resulting in the death of others."

The preceding resolution should declare our position at the conference in Winkler, Manitoba.

Present at the membership meeting were approximately one hundred men and a number of women. Translated from the German by Henry N. and Jacob N. Driedger. The original document, dated April 30, 1940, is with Henry N. Driedger.

A Letter from Camp

John H. Dick wrote the following letter to Rev. N. N. Driedger from Montreal River Camp in 1943. It was in response to a "food parcel" that was sent to the CO boys with left- over raisin bread and other "goodies" from Rev. and Mrs. Driedger's 25th anniversary celebration in Leamington . It was also meant to inform the church family at home of the experience of the boys at Montreal River Camp.

The original letter was in German; it was translated and edited by V. Kliewer.

March 9, 1943
A.S.C. Sault Ste. Marie
Montreal River, Ont.
Box 204

Dear Rev. and Mrs. Driedger:–

Last week we received the package that you sent us from your silver wedding anniversary. In the name of all of the Leamington boys I want to express our thanks. We were very happy to receive the package, not only because we enjoyed the food but also because we were happy to know that we are not being forgotten. So, on behalf of all of the boys, I say thank you very much! Thanks also to all those people who wrapped the items and mailed the package here.

We are all healthy (thank God) and wish the same for you. We are being treated fairly well here, but I don't think there is a single person who would want to remain behind when we get the news that we can return home again.

As you know, there is no regular minister here; once in a while we have a visiting minister whom we appreciate very much. At other times some of our better educated young men lead the worship services. Sunday school is held every Sunday morning. These tend to be very interesting. At present we have a sort of visiting minister here, whose name is Rev. Stevanus and who comes from north of Kitchener. He had two very interesting sermons on Sunday and will probably have a few more during the week before returning home at the beginning of the following week.

Working conditions here are very good, and we have almost all been gaining weight. So you can see that we have enough to eat.

Goodbye for now. Please give our greetings and thanks to the whole congregation. In God's grace we remain your brothers in the faith in Montreal River.– Greetings from the Leamington boys,

John H. Dick

A Letter from the Conference of Historic Peace Churches

The "Conference of Historic Peace Churches" was organized in Waterloo, Ontario on July 22, 1940 in anticipation of the imminent introduction of compulsory military service by the government of Canada. The churches included the Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Old Order Mennonite, Amish Mennonite, Society of Friends (Quakers), Brethren, Old Order Dunkard, Mennonite Brethren, and General Conference Mennonite. During World War 2, the Conference was largely responsible for the relationships to the government, especially regarding the issue of military service and possible alternative service options. The following letter is a sample of much other material; the original is in the files of Rev. N. N. Driedger, Leamington.

CONFERENCE OF HISTORIC PEACE CHURCHES
CANADA

Committee on Military Problems
Secretary's Office

Elmira, Ont. June 4, 1941.

Dear Brother:

Instructions from the Divisional Registrars of Administrative Divisions "A" and "B" require that all young men of our groups who have attained the age of twenty-one since July 1st, 1940, comply with the following at once:

1. Get their medical examination if they have not previously done so.

2. Furnish the undersigned with their church membership certificate if such certificate has not already been forwarded to the Registrar.

The above instructions are of the utmost importance to the young men and should be given immediate attention. Applications for postponement will not be required as their *[sic]* will be no exemption from this training period.

It is expected that these instructions will be announced in our churches on Sunday, June 8th.

Yours truly,

N. M. BEARINGER

An Extraordinary Baptism

An unusual baptism was held on Sunday, December 6, 1942, at the Essex County United Mennonite Church. A photograph of the event shows Rev. N. N. Driedger, the leading minister (the "Ältester") of the church standing in front of the old church building, together with eighteen serious young men--and no women.

A noteworthy story, as told by some of those involved, lies behind the photograph!

When Canada first entered the Second World War in 1939, the age of conscription for young men was 21 years. However, as the war progressed, with no immediate end in sight, the government lowered the age of conscription to 18 years in 1942.

In the Essex County United Mennonite Church--later the Leamington United Mennonite Church – the age of baptism and church membership for young men and women had traditionally been about 18 or 19, with the baptismal service held on Pentecost Sunday, sometime in the spring. As long as the age of conscription was 21, most of the young men were already church members and had some legitimacy for applying for status as Conscientious Objectors; however when the age of conscription was abruptly lowered by three years, this left many still un-baptized and not members of the church--and hence with less justification to apply for CO status. To resolve this dilemma, the ministerial approved a shortened catechetical instruction period and a unique baptismal service during the Advent season.

Who were these young men--all unmarried at the time--whose lives would quite possibly be changed in dramatic ways in the near future? Let us consider them individually--briefly stating as much information as was readily available!

We start at the left end of the back row:
***Henry Dick:** b 1924; son of John and Maria. Worked as a CO at the Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Mill in Kapuskasing, in northern Ontario; received farm postponement.*
***George Founk:** b 1924 d 1996; son of Jacob and Helen. Worked in the British Columbia Forestry Service Camp for eight months; received farm postponement.*
***Henry Koop:** b 1923; son of Jacob J. and Maria. Worked as a CO at Montreal River Camp in northern Ontario; received farm postponement.*
***Edgar Dyck:** b 1923 d 1973; son of Jacob G. and Katharina. Worked at Montreal River Camp as a CO; enlisted in the navy; later became an attorney in Leamington.*
***Ernie Baerg:** b 1923 d 1961; son of Abram and Lena. Worked as a CO at Montreal River Camp; received farm postponement; enlisted in the army.*
***Rudy Papke:** b 1922; son of Gerhard and Marie. Received farm postponement and worked on a local farm.*
***John Braun:** b 1924; son of John J. and Maria. Worked at Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Mill for two months; received farm postponement.*
***Jake Neufeld:** b 1925; son of Henry and Agnes. Received farm postponement; worked on the home farm and elsewhere.*
***Jack Schellenberg:** b 1923; son of George and Sarah. Worked at Montreal River Camp as a CO; enlisted in the armed forces; went into the trucking business.*

And in the front row, again going from left to right, there were:
***Jake Janzen:** b 1924 d 1959; son of Rev. Jacob and Liese. Worked in the British Columbia Forestry Camp as a CO; received farm postponement.*
***John J. Driedger:** b 1923; son of Rev. Jacob J. and Maria. Worked as a CO at the Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Mill for two months; received farm postponement.*
***Jake Mathies:** b 1923; son of Jacob and Elizabeth. Worked as a CO at Montreal River Camp; received farm postponement.*
***Nick Neufeld:** b 1922; son of George and Agnes. Worked in Montreal River as a CO, then in the British Columbia Forestry Service Camp until the war ended, then farmed.*
***Ältester N.N. Driedger**: b 1893 d 1988.*
***Henry N. Driedger**: b 1924; son of Ältester Nicholai N. and Katharina. Worked for two months at Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Company; received farm postponement.*
***David Cornies:** b 1924 d 1999; son of David and Sara. Worked for two months at Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Company; received farm postponement.*
***Jake Rempel:** b 1918 d 1961; son of Jacob and Susanna. Received farm postponement and farmed at home.*
***Nick Rempel:** b 1924; son of Rev. Abram and Margaretha. Received farm postponement and farmed on home farm.*
***Henry Tiessen:** b 1920; son of John and Margaret. Enlisted in the 17th Light Ambulance Corps of the army, later became a Lake Erie fisherman.*

Much more could, of course, be added to these very brief biographical notes! But even these suggest the diverse directions that the further lives of these young men took, even as most of them returned to their home community for at least a time when their terms of service had ended. As so often is the case, the photograph invites further exploration!

Aug. 9, 1943

NATIONAL SELECTIVE SERVICE

A MESSAGE TO MEN WHO WORK ON FARMS

and

to Those Who Work in the Woods as well as on Farms

Men who work on farms, or who work in the woods as well as on farms, are in exactly the same position as all other citizens: those in the military age classes who desire postponement of their military training must obtain such postponement from their Mobilization Board.

HOW TO OBTAIN POSTPONEMENT

When an order for medical examination is received, it must be obeyed and the medical examination taken as directed.

If the medical examination shows the man to be fit for military service, and no request for postponement has been made, an order will then be sent requiring him to report for military training.

If the man who is ordered for medical examination is needed on the farm, he should at once, and *not later than 14 days from the date on the order to report for medical examination*, make a written request for postponement to the Registrar of the Mobilization Division who issued the order.

He will be granted a postponement unless it is proven that he is not needed in agriculture.

Any man who fails to comply with any instructions received from the Registrar of his Mobilization Division is breaking the law.

REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT TO REGISTRAR

Assistance in making an application for postponement may be obtained from the district representatives of the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Local Farm Production Committees, officials of the local Employment and Selective Service Offices, and the Registrar of the Mobilization Division.

The written request for postponement must give full details

Number of acres in different crops, wood lot and pasture;

Number and kind of farm animals;

Names, ages, sexes and fitness for farm work of all those working on the farm;

Names, addresses and occupations of those members

The original copy of this partial document is with Henry N. Driedger

Pacifism - My Experience as a Medic

In September of 1939 WW II began. I heard this on the way to school. It produced some anxiety—war, and killing people? Of course being a number of years from conscription age, I felt I would not be involved. Also we had been taught somewhat about being conscientious objectors. When the first person from our church was called, it was a real wakeup call. Several boys were called and went to Montreal River and other camps.

Dad had shown us pictures and told stories of how he had served in the Red Cross corps of the Russian army as medic (Sanitäter). This idea grew on me and I felt it was a good way to do alternative service, helping the wounded people. As I was getting closer to conscription age, we heard that Bishop Jacob Janzen from Waterloo with other leaders, were discussing the possibility of alternative service in the medical corps. Apparently some conscientious objectors, non-Mennonites, had served as fire fighters during the blitz in London, England. I told my parents that if the call came I would enlist and maybe rather reluctantly they agreed.

1943 came, and like the summer before I went to Southern Ontario, to work and make some extra money. This year I worked on Bright's Farms in Niagara, when I got the call. In order to be considered conscientious objector we had to go to court and have a minister or preacher vouch for us. The Reverend Kroeker from Virgil did this for me. In September I was ordered to go to a camp in Banff, Alberta.

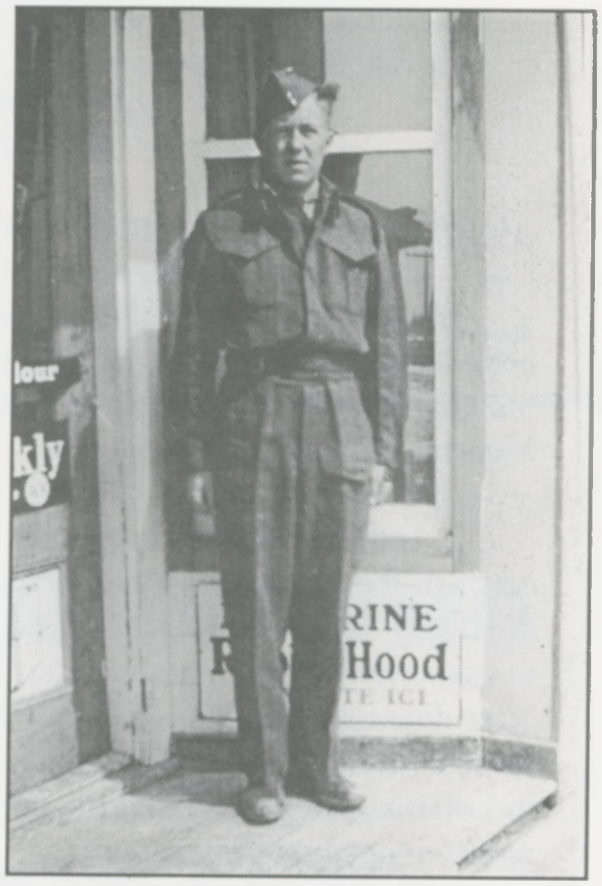
I was in Banff a few weeks, enjoying the experience to some extent, when news came that the government had approved alternative service in the medical corps. We would be in the army, but with the difference that we would not have rifles or ammunition. We would not get rifle training and no Allied officer or commander could order us to use rifles or participate in bombing. The next night I could not sleep much and I prayed. I must confess that during that night I had one of the biggest struggles in my life. Talking over our options, several camp companions said we were foolish to go into such service. Why put our lives in danger? They were here in camp because it was way less risky. I could not judge them, but it made the struggle for me harder.

Henry Penner and I, both from Reesor, Ontario, enlisted on November 18, 1943 in Calgary, Alberta. The recruiting officer, when asked, assured us that we would not be ordered to take up arms. There were quite a number of us non-combatants in the army. Beside us Mennonites, there were Plymouth Brethren, Brethren in Christ, Seventh Day Adventists, Quakers and even some from the United Church.

I have spoken to quite a few, and no one was forced to take up arms. However, they did try to persuade especially the German speaking men to join the regular army.

They offered us a part in the Intelligence Corps, making it sound tempting and also wanted us in the Air Force. I do not know of anyone who transferred.

We trained in Calgary, Peterborough, Camp Borden and Listowel. At the beginning of June we boarded the ship, New Amsterdam, belonging to Holland, and were set to sail on June 5th or 6th. This did not happen and we wondered why. We left on June 8th and were told the delay was because of D Day. The crew spoke Dutch and if they spoke slowly I could follow. In June the ocean is often calm, as it was for our crossing, so only a few people became sea sick. We had to change course every seven minutes, because, as we were told, it took that long for a U boat to take aim at its target. Our course was quite a ways south and then north, close to Ireland. The sleeping quarters of the ship were below sea level and each section would automatically close if a bomb hit that area, which meant that the people in that part of the ship would drown. We spent most of our time up on deck. One day the alarm sounded and we were all ordered to our quarters. As soon as we were down, we heard the guns go off and we were scared. Many silent prayers were said. Afterwards we were told that a German U Boat had been spotted.



Rudy Wiens in Medical Corp Uniform in front of store he worked at in Reesor. Owner L.P. Trudel, 1941. (Courtesy Rudy Wiens)

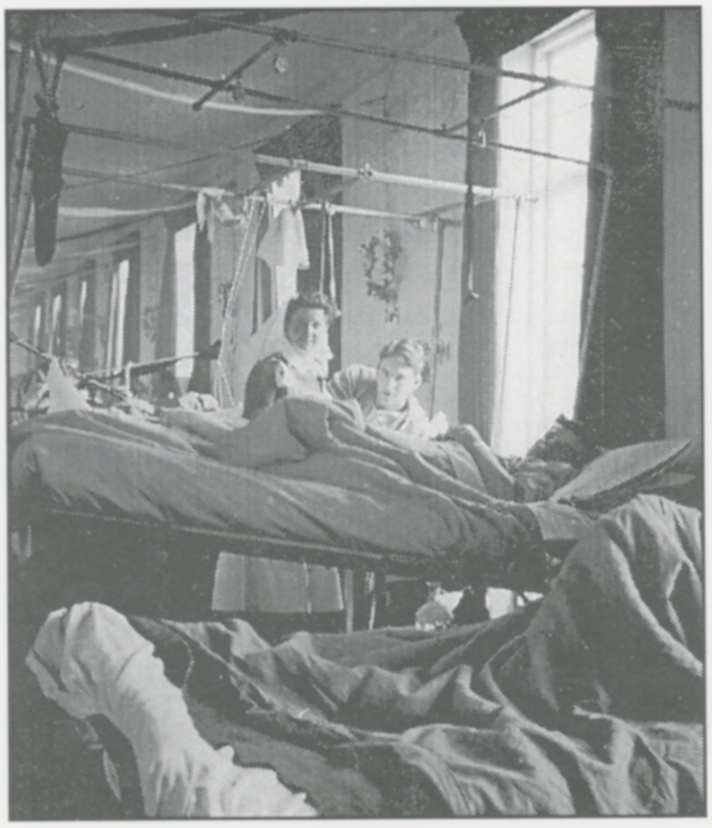
After six days we landed in Scotland, near Greenock on the river, Clyde. It was a clear late afternoon and the sunrays were slanting onto a very green hillside. It was one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever seen.

We were shipped to camps in northern England and some close to London. The camp near London had a round steel roof and walls. The sky was filled with umbrellas and balloons to prevent VIs (missiles sent by remote control) to come down and hit the camp. During the time in England I only experienced one big air raid over London, but several scary moments with VIs and V2s.

While we were waiting in camps in Canada and England we were able to take courses, mostly independent studies and some lectures to improve our nursing orderly skills. I was able to obtain the highest certificate for a private and it included a little extra pay. Registered nurses had the rank of commissioned officer.

Late in the summer of 1944 we were moved to our hospital, the 24th Canadian hospital. It was near Crawly, south of London, on the London-Brighton line. At first, most of the wounded Canadian soldiers who came had already been given first aid, but that changed very quickly, and they came in right from the front, brought by planes and

helicopters. The extra training I had was very useful. Although it scared me, I also felt honoured when later I was assigned to the officer's ward.



Hospital Ward #9, where Rudy worked. Sister McKeegan with patients. (Courtesy Rudy Wiens)

What was it like to help and treat these boys? I experienced many different feelings. I will not say much about these, but I lost 25 lbs. in the first month. I still don't know if we witnessed correctly. Many of the wounded soldiers soon knew that we were non-combatants. The odd one was very critical. Some were eager to convert the soldiers. Most of these efforts did not go well. I tried to show my beliefs with love, care, and service. Many knew that I was a non-combatant and wanted to be a Christian.

In the summer of 1945 my father and sister in Canada were diagnosed with Tuberculosis and hospitalized. They took X-rays and tested me in England. I did have a shadow on one lung and was hospitalized. I returned to Canada on the hospital ship, the *Lady Nelson*, and then on to Winnipeg in November of 1945. On the ship I met Henry Epp from Harrow, who was on board as a nursing orderly. Later I met him again when we moved to Leamington. They never did find that I had TB.

I had seen many wounded people with missing hands and other parts, but the most devastating scene was one I saw on disembarking the train in Winnipeg. There in a meat basket set on the station platform I saw bedding and a blanket and in it a young man without arms or legs. I cried.

Did I ever regret my medical corps experience? Definitely not, I was young and I made many mistakes and did foolish things, but this experience taught me a lesson I would not otherwise have learned. *War is destruction and it especially destroys people.* Unfortunately wars come and go. Should we ignore those involved or turn away from them and their hurt, or can we be a witness there as well?

Rudy Wiens, Leamington United Mennonite Church.

Jacob N. Driedger

"Addressen unserer jungen Freunde in den Camps"

1. Jacob Janzen (Wheatley), B.C.G.F. Camp, Shawinigan Lake, BC
2. George Founk, B.C.G.F. Camp, Shawinigan Lake, BC
3. Pte. Peter Langemann, Wolseley Barracks, London, ON
4. Victor Dyck, RCAF Station, Yarmouth, NS
5. Edgar Dyck, c/o Capt. Penner, Amherstburg, ON
6. Jacob W. Dick, B.C. Forest Service, New Westminster, later Duncan, BC
7. Jacob Schellenberg, c/o Mr. Verne Muckle, (Chatham), Mull, ON
8. Pte. G. Klassen, RCAMC Hospital, Camp Borden
9. Pte. G. D. Brown, Essex Scottish Regiment, C.A.O., England
10. Peter Hamm, RCAF, Dunnville, ON
11. Nick Neufeld, B.C.F.S. Camp, Dolaston, BC
12. Abe Neufeld (Kingsville), D.F.R., Seebe, AB
13. Peter Wiens, Camp 34, Gold Stream, Vancouver, BC
14. Henry Epp (Mil. Med.), Peterborough, ON
15. Peter Schmidt (Mil. Med.), Victoria, BC
16. Peter Toews _ *[Meaning uncertain, likely address unknown]*
17. Pte. Jacke *[sic]* Klassen, RCASC, Port Barracks,Owen Sound, ON
18. Alf. Klassen, RCASC, Wolseley Barracks, London, ON
19. Pte. John Klassen, Essex Scottish Regiment, C.A.O., England
20. Walter Hamm _
21. Arthur Derksen _

[Following several blank pages, the following entry is found, written in "Gothic" German script and dated May 21, 1945:]

Von 107 Personen, die im Krieg 1939-1945 einberufen wurden, verteilen sich dieselben wie folgt in Leamington *[unclear letters: "area"?]*

CO auf Farmen mit Zahlungen ans Rote Kreuz		73 Mann
Med. Corps	5 Mann	
Militär Camp	13 "	
Navy	6 "	
Mil.-pflichtig aber zuhause auf	10 "	
Farmen als solche die nicht zahlten	34	34
		107 Mann

[A few pages further the following entry is found:]

Zahlungen ans rote Kreuz gemacht für unsere Jungens bis zum 1 Juni 1945 = $952.90. Einkleidung für Campdienst nicht gerechnet.

Jacob N. Driedger

"Addresses of our young friends in the Camps"

[Rev. Jacob N. Driedger was a lay minister in the United Mennonite Church in Leamington and the Church's area representative to the Conference of Historic Peace Churches in Ontario. The following information was entered by hand into a small pocket address book. There are more details in the book, such as exact military addresses, other CO statistics, and other related notes. This is clearly an incomplete list, as there are others who were in CO camps, on farms, or in some military capacity; the reason for the limited list is not indicated.]

[The following is a translation of the information of the parallel left column]

Of 107 persons from the area of Leamington who were called to military service in the war of 1939-1945, these divide as follows:

CO on farms with payments to the Red Cross		73 men
Med. Corps	5 men	
Military Camps	13 "	
Navy	6 "	
Qualified for military but at home on farms without payment	10 "	34
		107 men

Payments made to the Red Cross for our boys to 1 June, 1945 = $952.90. Clothing for camp service not included.

Transcribed by Victor Kliewer, Jan. 2000

High School Rifle Practice

The Second World War led to many different experiences and emotions among Mennonite youth as well as the adults. One particular aspect had to do with life in the public school system–where the pressure was greatly felt for young Canadians to take part in the country's national cause.

In the following article Peter Bartel, Mennonite Brethren Church, remembers his experiences as a student in the Leamington District Secondary School.

The War started in 1939, and I remember standing at the main intersection of Leamington, the "four corners," and seeing a "sound car" pass by, loudly and visibly proclaiming that Canada had declared war on Germany and the Axis powers.

In school, cadet training was begun immediately. This consisted of drills in marching in formation and bearing arms. I enjoyed the marching and was told that I could become a drill sergeant.

Another experience related to our training in weaponry. I remember having to prostrate myself behind my rifle on the floor of the school gymnasium, aiming it at the instructor who was also lying prostrate in front of my gun to check my position. I accidentally pressed the trigger, and the sharp click was audible to both me, and the instructor, for he turned all red in the face. For me this experience was disturbing and unforgettable. After further consultation with my dad, I decided I had to get out of the arms training program. I asked for a meeting with Mr. J. Hume who was a formidable principal, to claim CO status, and was subsequently released from pre-military training. I felt that this decision would cast long shadows on my life for years to come, since I had my eyes set on a career in aviation.

After my high school graduation Dad and I met with a Mr. Wigle, the manpower administrator in our area. It was arranged that I would work for Mr. Stafford Morse on his farm, paying $30 per month to the Red Cross. As I reached conscription age, I received a call to prepare for service in a CO camp. However, since the War was nearing its close, I did not have to go to the camp but was allowed to continue working for Mr. Morse.

On Active Service

Correspondence between Mary Faust and Rev. N.N. Driedger

*Mary *Faust Moule, daughter of Peter and Helene Thiessen, was born in Crimea and came to Kitchener, Ontario with her siblings and widowed mother in the 1920s. Mary enlisted in the Canadian Womens Army Corps (CWAC) in November of 1942, and was first stationed in Orillia, then at the Officers Training Centre in Long Branch, and lastly in Camp Borden, all in Ontario. Mary served as secretary to the Commanding Officer. She received her discharge with the rank of Sergeant in April of 1946. She appears to have been the only Mennonite woman from the Leamington area who voluntarily enlisted.*

In her teenage years, Mary spent much time with her oldest sibling Tena and her husband Henry Dyck, who with their sons Walter and Peter lived near Ruthven. She has fond memories of the Rev. N.N. Driedger family who lived next door to the Dick family. Today, in 2000, Mary lives in Markham, Ontario; her husband (Captain) Guy Moule died several years ago.

**a Low German spelling of Fast used in various regions of Canada and the USA.*

Mary Faust (Moule) in uniform, with her friends Helen Cornies (Unger) L, and Anne Bergen (Segedin)

CANADIAN
MIND SPIRIT BODY
Y·M·C·A

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

March 12, 1943.

Dear Mr. Driedger:—

I imagine you will be very much surprised to hear from me, but there is something I would like to write you about.

Quite a while ago, I received the information from someone that I had been discontinued as a member of your Church. I would very much like to know if this is true.

You have probably been told that I have joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps. At present I am in the hospital, having undergone an operation.

My sister, Mrs. Henry Dick wrote me that you had celebrated your Silver Wedding. Please accept my sincerest congratulations.

I would appreciate hearing from you as regarding my memberships to the Church as soon as possible. I do not know where I will be sent and it has worried me for quite some time.

Please give my regards to Mrs. Driedger and your family.

Yours respectfully

Mary Faust.

My address:

Private Faust, M. H.
H 20826 - C. W. A. C.
Westminster Hospital
London. Ontario

N. N. Driedger,
Leamington, Ont.

March 12, 1943 [sic]

Miss Mary Faust,
London, Ontario

Dear Mary: -

I received your letter today. Replying to the question concerning your membership I may inform you that you still are a member of our Church. We do not hear often from our outward residing members as we would like to, but we are not discontinuing their membership for that reason.

I did not know about your joining the C.W.A.C. until your letter came. Hope you will do well and bear a good testimony for our christian faith.

Mrs. Driedger + I have celebrated our Silver Wedding Anniversary and received many greetings and gifts on that occasion. It was a big day for us. We thank you very much for the congratulation extended to us in your letter. -

Wishing you ~~xpaty~~ recovery and God's blessings,
I am Yours N. N. D.

H 20826. CWAC
Westminster Hospital
London. March 18, 1943.

Dear Mr. Driedger: —

This is an acknowledgement of your letter which I recived yesterday.

I am very glad to know that I have not been dismissed from your Church although I admit that you had ample reason to do so on several occasions.

I am a stenographer in the Army and find it very interesting. I only hope my illness will not cause me to recieve a discharge.

Thank you for your best wishes sir, I do appreciate them. I have not forgotten your teachings and have found God a comfort and refuge many times. I will be coming to Leamington, when I get my "sick-leave", to see my sister and her family and hope I will be fortunate enough to see you at that time.

Thank you again for your letter and please convey my best regards to Mrs. Driedger and your family.

Yours respectfully,

Mary Faust

The Problem of Buying Stamps

How would the wartime experience have affected the Mennonite children? Lydia (Bergen) Warkentin tells how she and some of her friends recall their experiences in elementary school in Leamington.

Recently, some of my friends and I were discussing how World War Two had affected our lives as children. Many of us remembered gathering milkweed pods, which were delivered to our local schools. None of us were certain what they were used for or how they helped the War Effort.

The white "parachutes" in milkweed pods were used experimentally as filler in life jackets. The experiment was not successful and was abandoned.

Another very vivid memory for many of us was the practice of buying war savings stamps. This was carried on in many elementary schools across Canada. One stamp was worth 25 cents, and each time you bought a stamp you pasted it into a stamp folder. When they were filled, some of the folders were worth five dollars and the larger ones even ten dollars! A lot of money was raised in this way and was used by the government to further the war effort; the folders were redeemable when the war was over.

The buying of these stamps and the support of the War Effort posed a real problem for many of us Mennonite children. Our parents tried to explain to us that they were not in favour of war and therefore we were not allowed to participate in such practices. – At Ridge School, where I was a student, this buying of war stamps was carried out every Friday morning. Not being allowed to participate soon made me, along with my other Mennonite classmates, feel very much like an outsider. And our patriotic fellow students didn't withhold their unkind comments and name calling during recess times! Even the teachers made us feel that we were letting our country down. Needless to say, Fridays were not our favourite days!

Our one consolation was that we were allowed to participate in the Red Cross knitting projects. Many a bundle of wool was brought home to our mothers who diligently knit socks, scarves, sweaters, and afghans for the Red Cross–and we proudly returned these to the school when they were finished!

Time has erased the harsh comments and unkind names we heard, but the lessons we learned about tolerance and forgiveness and helping others in peaceful ways have remained.

Victory Bonds

School children were not the only ones under pressure to financially support the war effort. Their parents had the same problem with Victory Bond salesmen.

INVEST TO INSURE YOUR FREEDOM

The Minister of Finance of the Dominion of Canada offers for public subscription

$600,000,000

SECOND

VICTORY LOAN

Dated and bearing interest from 1st March 1942, and offered in three maturities, as follows:

For Cash or Conversion

Twelve-year

3% BONDS DUE 1st MARCH 1954

PAYABLE AT MATURITY AT 101%

Callable at 101 in or after 1952
Interest payable 1st March and September
Denominations,
$100, $500, $1,000, $5,000, $25,000

ISSUE PRICE: 100%,
yielding 3.07% to maturity

For Cash or Conversion

Six-year

2¼% BONDS DUE 1st MARCH 1948

PAYABLE AT MATURITY AT 100%

Non-callable to maturity
Interest payable 1st March and September
Denominations,
$1,000, $5,000, $25,000

ISSUE PRICE: 100%,
yielding 2.25% to maturity

For Conversion only

Two and one-half year

1½% BONDS DUE 1st SEPTEMBER 1944

PAYABLE AT MATURITY AT 100%

Non-callable to maturity
Interest payable 1st March and September
Denominations,
$1,000, $100,000

ISSUE PRICE: 100%,
yielding 1.50% to maturity

Principal and interest payable in lawful money of Canada; the principal at any agency of the Bank of Canada and the interest semi-annually, without charge, at any branch in Canada of any Chartered Bank.

Bonds may be registered as to principal or as to principal and interest, as hereinafter provided, through any agency of the Bank of Canada.

CASH SUBSCRIPTIONS

Cash subscriptions will be received *only for the 3% and/or the 2¼% bonds* and may be paid in full at the time of subscription at the issue price in each case *without* accrued interest. Bearer bonds with coupons will be available for prompt delivery. Cash subscriptions may also be made payable by instalments, plus accrued interest, as follows—

10% on application; 15% on 15th April 1942; 15% on 15th May 1942;
20% on 15th June 1942; 20% on 15th July 1942;
20.82% on the 3% bonds OR 20.62% on the 2¼% bonds, on 15th August 1942.

The last payment on 15th August 1942, covers the final payment of principal, plus .82 of 1% in the case of the 3% bonds .62 of 1% in the case of the 2¼% bonds representing accrued interest from 1st March 1942, to the due dates of the active instalments.

CONVERSION SUBSCRIPTIONS

Holders of Dominion of Canada 1½% Bonds due 15th May 1942, and Dominion of Canada 2% Bonds due 1st June 1942, may, for the period during which the subscription lists are open, tender their bonds *with final coupon attached*, in lieu of cash, on subscriptions for a like or greater par value of bonds of *one or more* maturities of this loan at the issue price in each case *without* accrued interest. The surrender value of the 1½% Bonds will be 100.59% of their par value, and of the 2% Bonds will be 100.80% of their par value, inclusive of accrued interest in each case; the resulting adjustment to be paid in cash.

The Minister of Finance reserves the right to accept or to allot the whole or any part of the amount of this loan subscribed for cash for either or both of the available maturities if total subscriptions are in excess of $600,000,000.

The cash proceeds of this loan will be used by the Government to finance expenditures for war purposes.

The lists will open on 16th February 1942, and will close on or about 7th March 1942, with or without notice, at the discretion of the Minister of Finance.

SAFETY • INCOME • SALEABILITY

The original document is with Henry N. Driedger. The Mennonites were willing to buy Victory Bonds, provided a sticker was attached that these should go for the Red Cross only. It was a compromise, due to the big pressure to buy Bonds

Victor Kliewer, December 1999.

Memories of my Youth

In 1944, Frank F. Klassen had just arrived as a refugee in Germany, when as an eighteen year old he faced the draft ordering him into the German army. Unlike his Canadian counterparts he had no choice but to obey this command.

In 1930, when I was four years old, the Communist Party in Russia decided to turn all private property into communes, or collective farms, called, *Kolchos.* The churches were closed and all religion forbidden. Religious instruction depended on our parents, who taught us in secret. At the same time most ministers and teachers were sent to Siberia. In 1933, when Stalin instigated the famine in Ukraine, and six million people died, fifty-six of the five hundred persons in our village, *Neu Halbstadt*, starved to death.

That ended all hope for us as Mennonites; all working people had to report to the *Kolchos*, and were given specific jobs. Because of the famine, there was a lot of stealing. My father was given a job as night watchman, protecting the stored grain and produce. He was told to use a gun for protection. He refused; he had a good watchdog. He told the authorities he would never use a gun against people, but thieves would use their guns against him if he had one. The Lord protected him and he could stand by his Mennonite and Christian beliefs. My father died on July 1, 1935, of TB (tuberculosis). Without a breadwinner times were hard. My older brothers and sisters married and started families of their own. Mother had only seasonal work in the *Kolchos*, harvesting vegetables and picking fruit. I was able to help by working in the summer holidays. After seven years of school, I began working fulltime in the *Kolchos* as an assistant tractor operator. Because of the shortage of machines, we worked day and night, so I was able to earn almost as much as an adult.

In June of 1941, the war started between Germany and Russia, and on August 27 of that year the German army arrived in our village. The land was again divided into individual farms, and by the spring of 1943, we had our own horses and wagons. We had religious freedom, and during one of the prayer meetings I accepted the Lord Jesus as my personal Saviour, and have followed him as well as I could until now. It was the best decision I ever made. There was a large group of believers who kept us in their prayers, and helped us in our beginnings. When the German armies began their retreat in October 1943, refugees from the east side of the Dnjeper River passed through our villages, but we were hoping we could stay. We were the most westerly of the Mennonite villages, but by November 1, we too left.

There was no food for our horses on the rough roads we traveled, as thousands had gone this way before us. With many breakdowns and much time spent searching for food, we came to a complete standstill forty-two days later in Hoyvoran. Snow and rain made the roads impassible, and the horses were worn out. We managed to get on a

freight train to Seleny, near the Polish border; from there our families went on to Poland six weeks later, while ten of us boys stayed behind to watch over sixty horses which had been left by the refugees. Suddenly the Russian army caught up with us; we were surrounded but the Germans broke through with tanks and our train was able to proceed three weeks across Poland. Whenever the military needed the tracks we were pushed onto a siding. I found my family in Rakwitz on a large farm, where I also worked for three months.

On July 1, 1944, I received the order to report for service in the German army. We had been liberated from the Communist regime, and now we had to help protect our new homeland. After three months of rigorous training, we were ready for the front lines. To delay this move, my friend John Wiens and I decided to volunteer as paratroopers; all others were sent to the front. Then we were told that paratroopers were no longer needed, instead we would be trained as snipers. That was a bit of a shock! We were sent to Czechoslovakia and trained to shoot at targets with a telescopic lens. At first both John and I did very well at hitting our targets. Then we decided to miss our targets, as this was going against our conscience. Our officer told us that he knew what we were up to, and that we would pass the test regardless. It was Christmas, and we were given two weeks furlough, which we celebrated with our families at Rakwitz. It was a wonderful time together, the last time I saw my mother. We went back strengthened in our faith, knowing that there was a group praying for our safety. Back at camp on Sunday, four of us friends walked through the snow to the woods, to read a bible passage and pray to God for guidance. With peace in our hearts we parted.

On January 19, 1945 near Vesprem, Hungary, assigned to our regiment, we were ordered to attack the Russians just over the hill. Although they couldn't see us, they shot with mortars, and one grenade landed and exploded in our trench. Everyone was wounded. I had been unconscious and when I awoke I was alone; they had left me for dead. I managed to crawl to a field station, which was set up in a barn, where a doctor operated that night to remove the shrapnel from my right leg. One splinter had lodged in the New Testament, which I carried in my back pocket. I thanked God that I was wounded on my first day at the front, without having to fire one shot. On January 23 I was transferred to a cloister in Voeklabruck, Austria. After a bath they cut the bandage from my leg and put me on a stretcher. The doctor said, "Second story, room 22." Two men grabbed my stretcher, took me up the stairs and set me down; then in Russian began asking each other where they should leave me. Finally I said in Russian, "Room 22". Shocked, they looked at each other, until I asked where they were from. They lived just sixty km from the German colonies in the Ukraine; they were Russian soldiers who had been captured by the Germans. Later I was moved to another hospital in Bad Aussee where I recuperated for six months.

The war ended on May 5, 1945, and I was released from the hospital on July 28. As a prisoner-of-war, I was transported along with eight others in the back of an open American army truck through the beautiful Alps, guarded by soldiers and followed by a jeep carrying more soldiers, with a machine gun ready to fire! The large POW (prisoner of war) camp at Ebensee housed twenty-six thousand persons. The officer in charge told

me that I could go to the foreign camp. I asked about the advantages, to which he replied, "You will get better food and soon be able to return home." I declined and he said, "As you wish". I had found out that my family had been sent to slave labour camps in Siberia, and I had no desire to join them.

I was interested to know if any of my friends were in the neighbouring foreign camp. It was separated by a barbed wire fence, and there were extra guards but the gate was open. I walked over to where the Russian flag was flying and asked in Low German, "Are there any Mennonites here?" "Yes" came the answer. "From Neu Halbstadt?" Yes". I met Heinrich Wiens, a school friend of mine, and we visited for a few days. Then one day the gate was closed, all the men were gone. The next time I met Heinrich was in Tuttlingen, close to Lake Constance in Germany. He had spent twenty years in Siberia as a prisoner, working in a uranium mine under very primitive conditions.

At Ebensee, the food was very scarce; at 11 a.m. we were given one hundred grams of bread and a little soup. I knew that without more nourishment I wouldn't last long, so I found a job that nobody wanted – pumping out the latrines at camp. For this work I received two sets of clothes, a separate room to wash and change, and extra food. When the watchman saw us coming with the tanker truck filled, he opened the gate and walked a long way against the wind. After we had spread the waste on a field, the farmer would usually give us some potatoes or flour.

In November six thousand men were moved to Mittenwald, a picturesque town in the Bavarian Alps. Here I volunteered to cut wood to heat our barracks. For this I received more bread, and on my twentieth birthday I was given an extra spoonful of porridge, which tasted better than the finest dessert does today. In the evenings I joined others in the craft room to make potato graters and cookie cutters from used tin cans, and paint brushes from hair, which the barber saved for me. These items were in great demand and sold in town.

Just as we were beginning to get better food and enjoy camp life, we were sent to Sedan, France, on the Belgian border. The American army took us by train to Tuttlingen, where French civilians with guns took over and confiscated whatever appealed to them, including our meager baggage, which we never saw again. One of our jobs here was to carry cordwood out of a ravine. Because we were weak due to lack of food, we prisoners agreed to take one piece at a time and wait until we were forced to go again. One clever watchman, whose profession was smuggling tobacco from Belgium and shooting game out of season, made us an offer. If two men could carry up one cord of wood each day, they could have the rest of the day to pick and eat blueberries or whatever else they could find, providing they would return after he had fired three shots as a signal. Some days we were done by noon and had all afternoon to pick berries and mushrooms, even wandering into no-man's land. One day the shots rang out early. A border police had spotted a prisoner and brought him to our workplace. The watchman explained, "These are my other thirty-nine, and he's my fortieth. They were working over there and not one has escaped."

There was a substantial reward for anyone who captured an escaped prisoner of war. All of us carried compasses hidden in our clothing. We made them from razor blades, and with the help of a pin could easily orient ourselves if we should have the chance to escape. Some had made it and were living at home with their families. I was in a strange country with nowhere to go, and hadn't heard from my family for more than a year. But I was not alone; the Lord was always with me. A Lutheran pastor gave me a New Testament which I still have, with a stamp reading: "From the YMCA for prisoners of war, Paris, France", and a card with the verse from Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God". This verse remains our motto to this day.

The Lord had different ways of providing food for us. One day as we were walking through the bush, I saw a wild boar and pointed in that direction. The guard shot it. Forty prisoners saw it. Could we keep this secret? Two men and a guard butchered the pig and cut it up. Each man hid a piece in his clothing, and brought it into the camp kitchen. No one ever found out about it! Another time I found two hundred franc notes behind a dance club. We weren't allowed to carry money. Whom could I trust? I gave one note to a Moslem guard from Morocco and asked him to buy some oatmeal for me. He brought me the oatmeal and counted the change into my hand without holding back even one franc. Three of us, Kurt Hoffman, Kurt Holtz and I shared any food that we could find.

In 1946 I was assigned to help clear the minefields along the Maginot Line in France. A crew of three worked with a Geiger, which would beep at any piece of metal. We found horseshoes, nails and parts of grenades. We poked with our rods just to make sure if it was large enough to be a mine. The danger was in not knowing where the mines were. If we hadn't found one for a few days, we tended to get careless. Once, a prisoner went into some tall weeds, which hadn't been cleared, and felt something springy under his foot. He looked down and saw three steel prongs sticking out of the ground. This spot had been flooded in the spring so he was lucky it didn't detonate. We cleared a pathway with a minesweeper and found thirty-six mines. The grass was cleared away and a plug was inserted between the shaft

Bomb & mine defusing crew
Frank Klassen front right
(Courtesy Frank Klassen)

and the mine so it wouldn't explode. They were transferred to a vacant area and destroyed.

Later we were sent to towns and villages where people had witnessed bombs dropped by planes of the American air force, and which for some reason hadn't exploded. They were from three to nine feet deep and weighed up to two thousand pounds. The area where we were digging was evacuated, and people were warned to stay away. One landowner told me that he could not sell his field because a plane had dropped two bombs, one on either side of his wagon pulled by two cows, as he was loading hay. While we were removing these, he was so thankful that he brought us food every day.

One of the bombs I will never forget was quite deep and almost straight down, the detonator stuck in the rock. We had to make room around the detonator so that they could put on the machine to defuse it. The boss with the machine and three other men were in a ravine several hundred meters away. It was my turn to sit in the hole with hammer and chisel to chop away the stone around the detonator. It was lonely in that hole, and quiet; just the Lord and I and two thousand pounds of dynamite. We didn't have to worry about a painful death, but at age twenty-one, it wasn't my turn yet.

After eighteen months most of the minefields were cleaned up, so I found work with a wholesale wine dealer, cleaning barrels and helping with deliveries. Since I was thinking what I could do in the future, I asked my employer if he knew of any Anabaptist Mennonite farmers in the area of Alsace-Lorraine, who might have some work for me. He introduced me to Gustav Hertzler of Gisingerhof, who was happy to get a willing worker. My P.O.W. release came three months after he picked me up, and I stayed with the family, almost like a son, for seven years, the last few as farm manager. Our friendship has spanned many years, with visits and letters.

While in France I kept searching for my family, and through the immigration lists in Holland traced my father's brother, Uncle Henry Klassen, to Reesor, Ontario. They had moved and my letter was forwarded to Ancaster. Meanwhile, my sister in Tomsk, Siberia, had found the Reesor address, and her letter was also forwarded to Ancaster. They sent her letter on to me and once more I had a family connection.

Frank immigrated to Canada in 1957 and lived with Henry and Anna Klassen in Ancaster, Ontario until the fall of 1958, when he came to Leamington.

He married Anna Dick in 1959 and worked at carpentry and then farmed until retirement in 1991. They raised five children; Anita, Barbara, Norman, Elizabeth and Susan.

Frank and Anna were active in refugee sponsorship and also served as deacons at the North Leamington United Mennonite Church from 1976 until 1998.

TWO REFUGEE STORIES

"Lest we forget" is the official Remembrance Day slogan for fallen veterans of the two World Wars, but this slogan might also cover the following two stories of refugees who came to Canada after W.W. II. Unless the peace stance of our church is promoted and becomes a world–wide stance, the misery depicted in these stories will continue. War and violence involves not only soldiers, but primarily women and children.

My Journey to Freedom

Helene Klassen

This story was translated by daughter-in-law, Martha Klassen, a member of the North Leamington United Mennonite church.

On November 28, 1931 my husband Jacob and I were married in the Osterwick Mennonite Church, just after my father was released from prison. My husband worked in a hardware store in Osterwick and life was relatively good. A year later we had a daughter, Helene, who at the age of two contracted polio. She was not expected to live, but God works miracles and with a lot of good nutrition, fresh air and love she regained her strength and her health flourished, but left her back deformed.

When Helene was still very young the secret police came and ransacked our home, taking all our money and gold. On another occasion we were visited by two Russian soldiers, who were apparently drunk. They came to shoot my father. My father calmly requested some time for a last cigarette and offered each of them one also. They accepted and by the time they had finished smoking and visiting they seemed to have forgotten their mission, and left our house and family intact. Smoking in this case, was good for our health.

In 1940 our son Helmut Jacob was born and a year later the secret service entered our town and took my father to Zaparozhye, where he was shot. My sister and her husband were imprisoned and perished. Altogether 17 members of our family were in exile.

Two weeks after my father's death, the German army entered our town and rescued us from the oppression of the Russian government and for two years we had peace.

Then on October 19, 1943, we left Russia and headed for Germany with whatever food and belongings we could carry. With me were my husband, my daughter Helene,

my son Jake, my mother and my aunt. Eleven days later we entered the town of Bergstadt in Upper Silesia, where we lived in an abandoned convent for two years. There were approximately one hundred refugees, divided two families per room. We were well treated and were served meals in a large central dining room, prepared for us by four cooks. Helene was able to attend a special home for crippled children.

In October of 1944 my husband was conscripted into the German army and died of a gunshot wound to his leg six months later.

In January of 1945 we fled once more. I picked up Helene from the home for crippled children and we left on foot with a few belongings. The old people and children were put on wagons and the rest of us walked. We were to take a train from Friedland and head west, however the train did not arrive, so we went ahead on foot. A kind farmer offered me a sled for Jake, because I could no longer carry him. Toward evening a German soldier took us to Ottmachen, where we joined many of our relatives. We stayed there for one day and then moved on by train, with the aid of the Red Cross, to Bad Graefenburg, a beautiful town, where we stayed for two weeks in a spa. Here we were well fed and enjoyed good hospitality. From there we continued to the German Czechoslovakian border. Meanwhile I had finally received a letter from my brother Wilhelm, with the news that he and my mother were in Saxony.

I had more problems to encounter. When I arrived at the train station with Helene, Jake and Aunt Marie the train was full, but I was able to get my family aboard. However when I stepped onto the train steps it started to move and I almost fell, but I held on tight. The German soldiers on the train told me there was no more room, but I would not let go, until one officer took my arm and pulled me up. I then joined my family. By March we realized that the war was coming to an end, and then in May of 1945 the Americans came--and so did the Russians. So there we were between the two great powers! It was terrifying! We asked the Americans for help and told them that we were Mennonites and wanted to go to America where we had relatives. The officer was acquainted with Mennonites and agreed to help us across the German-Czech border, if we could obtain a truck that could hold all of us. And so 120 of us crossed the border led by the American general in his jeep, amidst the taunting screams of the Czechoslovakian people.

We finally reached Bavaria! Most of the people went to work on the farms around Vilseck, but being a single woman with four dependents, I had to stay in town. We finally found lodging--a small room with two beds for five of us. I lived and worked there for three years and three months for room and board--no pay.

In the summer of 1946 I met C. F. Klassen. His chauffeur picked us up and we gave him a list of 100 people who wanted to immigrate to Canada. In 1948 we finally received permission to come to Canada. There was finally an end to our long journey, which had lasted from October of 1943 until September of 1948. As we sailed to Halifax on the S.S. General Stewart we were free at last.

A poem given to me by a Bavarian nun helped to sustain me throughout my journey.

Du darfst nicht muede werden,	You must not tire,
Es sehn auf dich so viel,	So many are looking to you,
Schwer ist der Weg auf Erden	Hard is the path on earth
Und ferne ist das Ziel.	And distant the goal.
Und doch: lass dich nicht nieder,	Still, do not let go,
Schreit ruestig Schritt um Schritt	Walk lively step by step
Sing tapfer deine Lieder,	Bravely sing your songs,
Die andern singen mit!	Others will sing along!
Froh sind sie, wenn du heiter,	Happy they are, when you are cheerful,
Straff sind sie wenn du stehst	Erect, when they see you stand
Und ruestig ziehn sie weiter	And they will continue walking
Weil du noch immer gehst	Because they see you going on.
Du darfst nicht muede werden,	You must not tire,
Weil du unfehlbar scheinst.	Because you appear to be unfailing.
Verschweige die Beschwerden,	Keep your hardships quiet,
Nur Gott sieht dass du weinst!	Only God shall see you weep!

Helene Klassen joined the Leamington United Mennonite Church, and in 1955 took on the position of housemother/cook/custodian at the United Mennonite Educational Institute [UMEI], a position she held until 1974. For nearly twenty years she was the substitute mother to numerous resident students, while also looking after the school and surrounding grounds. She died on March 20, 2000.

A Refugee's Journey from Russia to Canada

Hermine Deleske Fennema, daughter of Anna Deleske, was a post WW2 immigrant to Canada, and is a member of the Harrow United Mennonite Church. She was interviewed by Sue Goerzen, a member of the advisory committee.

Hermine was eight years old in 1939. She and her family lived in Gnadental, a Mennonite village near Halbstadt in Ukraine. On the 15th of March 1939, in the middle of the night, the Communists came and took her father away and put him in jail. Her mother went to see him several times, but he never came home again. He and the other German men were sent to Siberia into hard labour. They really do not know why he was sent away. However, they think it was because the Communists thought that since they were German, and Russia was ready to declare war against Germany, these men might form an uprising against Russia.

It was not until the war was over, and Hermine and her mother were already in Canada, that they heard through the Red Cross, that Hermine's father had died in 1941. They assumed that after these men could no longer work, because of starvation and ill health, they were ordered to dig a deep ditch. They were lined up in front of it and shot, then buried in the ditch. From reports of survivors from Siberia, this was the procedure used by the Communists.

At the time their father was sent away, Hermine, her mother and older sister, Isolde, were forced to leave their home in Gnadental and move to Halbstadt. Her mother found a job in the hospital in Muntau. It was shift work, so when she was not at the hospital she worked in a factory as a Red Cross nurse. Isolde was attending nursing school and lived there. Hermine attended a Russian school during the day and on evenings when her mother was working she was home alone.

Some time later the Communists came to the hospital and gathered all the women to dig big trenches to prevent German tanks from coming through. Hermine, now 11 years old, had to go along with her mother because this was far from home. Someone cooked for them and they had to sleep out in the open on straw. They worked for several weeks, digging trenches all along the steppes. Then they were taken back home to Halbstadt. A few days later the Russian soldiers came back and loaded them onto trucks again. They could take only what they could carry of food, clothing and bedding, then taken to the train station to be sent to Siberia.

During the five days they waited at the train station, they were out in the open. They slept on the ground, and the only food they had to eat was what they had brought

with them. Soldiers guarded them day and night, and no one was allowed to leave. Bombing and shooting was going on above them as German and Russian fighter planes attacked each other. One day a bomb fell beside the railway track but did not explode. God was with them; no one was hurt.

While they were waiting, several trains of empty boxcars came along. The stationmaster, who felt sorry for the women, sent the trains along to Tokmak, a larger station, to pick up military supplies, instead of loading them onto it.

When they awoke on the morning of October 5th, 1940, the soldiers were gone with their horses, tents, cannons and supplies. So they picked up their few belongings and walked back home to Halbstadt. They met German tanks coming down the streets, shooting at whatever moved or passed across their way. They ran through a Ukrainian home and out into the back yard and into a trench, which had been dug there for that purpose. They stayed there until the shooting stopped, and then went home.

There were many German soldiers around and some came to their house for food. Hermine's mother, along with the other women, cooked great quantities of Borscht. The soldiers would also find chickens and bring them to be cooked. Hermine's mother went back to work in the hospital and Hermine went back to school, which was held in German now because the Germans temporarily occupied the region.

The Germans had already advanced as far as the Caucasian Mountains, but when the Allied forces joined Russia against the Germans, they managed to push them back. As a result, in the fall of 1941 the people of Halbstadt were notified that a freight train was leaving for Germany and anyone who was German, or married to one, could leave.

Hermine and her mother gathered all the bedding, clothes and food they could carry and got on the train. Her sister's whereabouts was unknown to them. It took 4 years before they arrived in Germany. That is a story in itself, to be told another time.

When they arrived in Germany they were unloaded on the wrong side of Berlin. Just before the war ended it became part of the Russian zone. The Russian soldiers caught up with them and were to guard

L to R;Hermine, mother Anna Deleske, sister Isolde (Deleske) Schneider and nephew Helmut Schneider- July 1956
(Courtesy Hermine Fennema)

them. They were very cruel and molested many of the women. Hermine and her mother, however, were spared. They thanked God that they had survived this year.

Early in 1946 they were told to get their belongings and gather in the town square. Their belongings were loaded onto a horse drawn wagon while they had to walk behind it to the train station, six kilometres away. A terrible snowstorm was raging and several people fell during this walk, and never got up again. They were ordered into a freight train again, not knowing where they were going. When the doors were opened, they found they were in Stettin, Germany. They were taken to a large building, probably a schoolhouse. It was warm, which was a big relief for them, after having endured all the snow and cold. They slept on straw and were given hot vegetable soup to eat.

Soon they were moving by train again, this time to Hamburg, which was in the British zone. Here they were lodged in a barrack and again slept on straw and were given fish soup. Several weeks later they were billeted into private homes. Local residents, who had a spare room, were forced to take in refugees.. They were given food stamps, which they could exchange for small rations of essential food items. The problem was that very little food was available. Hermine, because she was under the age of 18, was entitled to ¾ of a litre of partly skimmed milk a week. No meat was available.

Hermine, because she was under the age of 18, was entitled to ¾ of a litre of partly skimmed milk a week. No meat was available.

One Sunday morning they went looking for a church. They found a Lutheran Evangelical church with its high steeple, still standing amid the rubble of bombed out Hamburg. The church was so full of people that they had to stand in the back, but it was good to be in a church again. At the end of the service the pastor stood at the door to greet people as they left. He shook hands with Hermine and her mother, welcomed them, and asked who they were, knowing that they were not members of his church. They were afraid to give too much information, since former Russian citizens were still being transported back to Russia by agreement with the Allied Forces in Germany. However, from what they said, he became interested, and told them that every month he received a German paper from Canada," *Der Bote",* and in it people could publish information on relatives they were looking for. If they would give him their address and information he would send it in. Hermine's mother said she would think about it. A month later they went back and gave the pastor their information.

Every month he received "Der Bote" from Canada. In it people could publish information on relatives they were looking for.

In due time they received a letter from their mother's cousin, Jacob Goerzen from Harrow, Ontario. He wrote that he and his wife Mary would like to sponsor them to Canada.

During this time a shipload of refugees was leaving for Paraguay and they were permitted to go too. Since they didn't know anyone in that country, they decided to

go to Canada instead. While their papers were being processed, they located the older sister Isolde with the help of the Red Cross, and she encouraged them to go to Canada, assuring them that she would follow, which she later did.

They arrived in Windsor, and then Harrow, Ontario on December 22, 1947. They lived with the Goerzens for several months and then moved into a little house in Harrow, and fulfilled the condition of their immigration permit that they work on a farm for one year.

They were so thankful to God for bringing them to a free country, loving people and church. They felt it was a miracle.

Part Three B

Stories

Experiences Since World War II

The Coffee House

How were we to know that 1968 would be such a memorable year in history? But in that year Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights leader was assassinated.

Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

The Vietnam War entered what was known as the Tet offensive which was a costly one. Thousands of soldiers died and arrived home in body bags. The My Lai massacre of Vietnamese civilians by American troops occurred in March although it would not be uncovered until the next year.

Two hundred thousand Soviet soldiers invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the emerging freedom

In Paris students and workers gathered in protest of Charles de Gaulle. They threw cobble stones. He retired.

In Canada Pierre Elliot Trudeau became Prime Minister.

Summer and coffee. They just belonged together in the summer of 1968. An unprecedented number of young people from within the Mennonite congregation had left the community to attend, predominantly, the new Conrad Grebel College and University of Waterloo. Many returned to work on family farms or local jobs for the summer.

So much was happening in the world around us. The opposition to war, the Vietnam War, folk songs, songs of protest at a grass roots level, draft dodgers coming to Canada.

We had catapulted into a discovery of debate and discussion and hanging out.

From among the returning students a movement arose to start a coffee house for the summer.

The air was ripe for change and movements began on the wind, took shape and mushroomed over night.

The old Gore Hill School stood empty. It was a one-room school directly across from the newly completed modern school of the same name. It was still possible to

access water and hydro for they had not yet been disconnected. Marlene (Dick) Neufeld was able to directly contact the necessary authorities.

Hydro spools, old chairs, a donated Hi-Fi appeared in no time. Candles on the tables. Fishnet hung from the ceiling. Artist sketches appeared on the walls and a panic button was wired in should the need arise. Although it appeared strongly Mennonite in its attendance it was open to all, and word of mouth brought in young people from throughout the community.

Itinerant folk singers, local folk singers, speakers and films were on the summer program. Names such as Archie Froese, Jazz Janzen, Andy and Neil Fotheringham, Ed Hildebrand and Edgar Warkentin held the stage and others I can no longer recall.

Barefoot, long hair, bell-bottoms and cigarettes. This was freedom.

"Leavin' on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again...."

"Four strong winds that blow lonely...."

"Human Be-in"

Father Ken Jaggs, a priest working with Windsor street youth.

War Games. A film on the explosion of an atom bomb complete with actual footage of how fast, how far, how we melt in its wake.

The church leadership was surprised and alarmed to see youth gathering on their own, without supervision!

Three members of the founding group, Harry Driedger, Willy Taves and Ron Tiessen met with Rev. J.C.Neufeld and were asked why this could not take place in the church basement, under the authority of the church leadership.

But.....

But anti-authority was what it was all about. Freedom of discussion, freedom of dress, and freedom to run our own coffee house.

We completed the summer.

On one evening the *Queensmen* motorcycle group dropped in just to check the place out. "Peace man." Peace and brotherhood, as we said it at that time.

When summer ended and students had to return to their studies, the tables and candles and chairs were stored in a local barn, perhaps in expectation of a return the next

summer.

The old school house was mandated to be demolished within a year of its purchase.

And although a small group attempted to set up a coffee house the following summer the momentum had disappeared.

Our summer became a memory of
no drugs
no alcohol
Just coffee (and lots of pop)
songs
talk and
peace.

Luise Taves, Faith Mennonite Church.

Green Ribbons for Peace

Kathy Rempel, Leamington United Mennonite Church

It is difficult to remember what my thoughts and feelings were, concerning the "Gulf War" which ended nine years ago. It was an uncomfortable feeling watching a war take place on the television screen, and knowing that it was real. Even though I knew there was little I could do, I wanted to do something. Every little bit helps, even if it only helps our own attitudes.

At the time, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was taking hold, red ribbons were being tied to people's vehicle antennas, which was a visible statement of what their purpose was. I thought that a similar effort might be of value to support a peace emphasis.

I hesitated to copy the symbol and name of the "Greenpeace" organization, but I felt that green stood for new life and hope, so this would be an appropriate colour to use. I hade a sign made for the front yard of the church to advertise this effort, and supplied a box of green ribbons for people to pick up in the foyer of the church.

I wanted people to get on board voluntarily, so it was announced in the church and people were encouraged take a green ribbon to tie to the antenna of their vehicle. An announcement in the church bulletin encouraged people to pray for peace, and to contact their member of parliament in support of a peaceful solution to the "Gulf War".

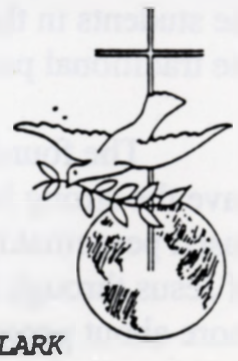
This "Green Ribbon" campaign was not overly successful in terms of people tying green ribbons to their antennas, although many may have contacted their member of parliament, which I would not have been aware of. However, we did do something, which I'm sure made some of us feel that in some small way, we made a contribution to the cause of peace, and maybe it caused us to look at how we really feel about non-violence and global conflict and where we stand as members of the Mennonite faith.

A section of the LUMC bulletin for January 13, 1991 is reprinted below.

GREEN RIBBONS FOR PEACE

JANUARY 15 WILL BE CRUCIAL FOR WORLD PEACE!

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROMOTE PEACE?



+ *TIE A SYMBOLIC GREEN RIBBON TO YOUR CAR*
+ *TELEPHONE YOUR LOCAL M.P., JERRY PICKARD (Essex-Kent)*
  - *in Leamington 326-5781 or*
  - *in Ottawa 1-613-992-2612*
+ *TELEPHONE THE CANADIAN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, HON. JOE CLARK at 1-613-995-1851 to give support for the Canadian and United Nations diplomatic peace efforts.*
+ *PRAY FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO BE FOUND*

Peace Education at UMEI

Linda Dueck, UMEI teacher, Leamington United Mennonite Church member describes her peace convictions

The United Mennonite Educational Institute is a Mennonite high school in Leamington which was born after World War II. One of the reasons it came into being was because the parents and leaders of the community grew concerned with the nationalism promoted in public schools at this time. Many of the young men in this community were conscientious objectors during World War II and they felt a lot of pressure and alienation in the community during the time of war. While the school at first served as a shield to outside pressures in the early years, fifty years later the school now includes many non-ethnic Mennonites and it has become a place where young people can interact, probe and study the issues at hand from a Christian perspective.

Because it is a Mennonite school, a peace curriculum has been taught in the various religious education classes, even though students often see peace as dull, passive, or as merely the absence of war, this changed in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War. During this war there was much talk about the smart bombs and precision-guided weapons the U.S. was using. Often the idea that no one was being killed or that casualties were "light" or "insignificant" pervaded the evening news as we saw replays of the "fireworks".

Students often see peace as dull, passive, or as merely the absence of war, this changed in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War.

During the months that the war raged, some youth felt it was a justified war while others thought it was a senseless slaughter. Peace was no longer an abstract idea or an irrelevant concern. It was impossible to remain neutral or apathetic about the happenings. All were drawn into the heated discussions and debates about the issues of the war. Indifference was no longer possible. The importance of the school's peace education became more evident as only about *one-third* of the students in the class believed and supported the traditional pacifist Mennonite stance on war.

Only one-third of the students supported pacifism.

The foundation of a Mennonite pacifist ethic is Jesus Christ. As Mennonites, we have the strong heritage of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, which has consistently based peacemaking in the example of Jesus Christ. The radical movements from the time of Jesus through the Anabaptist story and the Russian Mennonite story have taught us more about persecution and non-resistance. As students reflect on the life of Jesus and the history of the church, they must take the next step and respond personally to the issues of peace and war and killing. In the classroom each student was given a chance to apply for Conscientious Objector status (CO status), by filling out a form and appearing

in a "mock court". While this helped students deal with the intellectual process needed to come to convictions about peace, it still needed to be rooted in a more experiential, emotional level for the young person to "own" this conviction.

So a second part of the peace education is to investigate the causes of the absence of peace. Usually, the absence of peace is a result of injustice. Groups and individuals often respond with violence when all other possibilities to change the situations have been exhausted. In this community, the young people are sheltered and isolated from injustices experienced by people in the cities of the world. Most young people feel no urge to work at change, which will bring more peaceful conditions because they have no firsthand experience with people who live in pain and despair on a personal or global scale. In order for youth to become more sensitized to the concerns of others they must see with their own eyes and observe life through the eyes of the oppressed. For this reason students are sent out twice a year to different social service agencies like the food banks, soup kitchens and senior citizens homes in our county. The senior students are encouraged to participate in

In this community, the young people are sheltered and isolated from injustices experienced by people in the cities of the world.

Students are encouraged to participate in service opportunities where they can meet victimized people face-to-face and listen to their stories.

a March Break service opportunity by volunteering in Toronto, Montreal, Waterloo, Hamilton, (House of Friendship, New Life Centre, Warden Wood Community Centre) where they can meet victimized people face-to-face and listen to their stories. As they listen to the stories of the inner-city people, they realize that many opportunities they personally enjoy are not available to these people. It is the memory of these faces they meet which will help them to put a face to poverty and injustice as they process their intellectual convictions on peace in the future.

When youth become sensitive to other people's plight in life and their compassion is evoked, they can make a difference in the world as they become peacemakers here at home and abroad.

"Prayer Time for Kosovo"

The conflict in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which reached its peak in the spring of 1999, caused an extraordinary reaction among the Canadian people, including the Mennonites of southwestern Ontario. In the North Leamington United Mennonite Church, for example, a candle for peace in Kosovo was regularly lit in the Sunday worship services, noon-hour prayer meetings were scheduled over a period of several weeks, and refugee kits were prepared.

The following article was first written for the June 1999 edition of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church newsletter, ***Northern Echoes.*** *While coming toward the end of the church's experience, it still conveys the immediacy of the crisis and the response.*

For over two months a semi-official war has been going on in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. With a long and complex history, the most recent--and the most urgent--conflict has focused on Kosovo--that small southern Yugoslavian province that most of us had never even heard of until two or three months ago.

Tensions between conflicting groups–in particular, between the ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbians in Kosovo–have already occurred frequently in the past. However, by this past March the conflict made headlines when it was reported that reconciliation efforts had failed and a campaign of persecution and "ethnic cleansing" by the Serbian military against the Kosovar Albanians was underway. Furthermore, the leaders of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries had agreed to support the Kosovar Albanians by starting a massive bombing campaign against Serbia. When the NATO campaign began on March 24th, there appeared to be widespread support for it. However, many concerns were also voiced. Many Christian individuals and groups expressed grave reservations about the policy of massive air attacks–reservations that have increased with time and the continued bombing.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." - Jesus

In the Mennonite church, a "historic peace church," the clear conviction has been expressed that this military action is wrong. Letters of concern have been written to our government by our leaders of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, the Mennonite Central Committee, as well as other groups and individuals. The war is wrong because Jesus taught us to reject violence in dealing with conflicts; it is also wrong because it is

not effective and will leave terrible scars and hatred for decades to come. At the same time, there are clearly no simple answers to the problems associated with this war, so that we need to admit our own limitations in deep humility.

In our own congregation, there has also been concern about this war that appears to be getting worse and more convoluted with the passing of time. As one limited response, we decided to plan a regular noon-hour ***"Prayer time for Kosovo".*** Starting on Monday, April 5th, meetings were daily at first; then, from April 20th, they continued biweekly, on Tuesdays and Thursdays; since May 11th, they have been held on Tuesdays.

The format of the prayer times has been similar throughout. We have met in our church sanctuary at 12:30 p.m.; we lit a candle for peace; we discussed developments–both the military and political, as well as the humanitarian actions of churches and other groups; and we took time to pray for God's Spirit to be with all involved, to support the refugees, and to guide all toward a resolution of the war; sometimes we sang together; we usually ended by 1:00 p.m. with the Lord's Prayer or the Prayer of St. Francis ("*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace . . .* "). The news-sheet ***"Kosovo Update"*** became a regular feature of the meetings--and has, in the meantime, become a collection of over thirty pages. We also discussed other related activities, such as making "refugee kits," writing letters to our politicians, folding paper cranes, and our participation in the "Sing for Peace" rally in Ottawa. About 10-15 people have been meeting regularly, including four or five students from the United Mennonite Educational Institute, our Mennonite high school located just across the street from the church. While we don't know what impact our meetings may have on the bigger world (and who can fully understand the meaning and the power of prayer?!), they have certainly already had a significant impact on the people who have been involved!

"Pray without ceasing." - Paul

Surely the questions of war and peace will not end with Kosovo! There will be other conflicts and hurt people who will need help. We will need to continue to wrestle with the issues of being Christian peacemakers in a sinful world. May God grant us the desperately needed compassion and wisdom, humility and courage!

Victor Kliewer, North Leamington United Mennonite Church

"The Paper Crane Project"

In the spring of 1999 the conflict in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, coupled with the NATO bombing campaign, deeply affected many people of South-Western Ontario. This included a group of students at the United Mennonite Educational Institute (usually shortened to UMEI) in Leamington. They gave expression to their concern in a variety of ways, including the "Paper Crane Project," as two of the young women–students in grade ten–describe below.

This past year, in response to the war/crisis in Kosovo, prayer meetings were held at the North Leamington United Mennonite Church. We heard about these meetings during our chapel service at the UMEI and decided to attend them. During these meetings we received updated information on the situation in Kosovo and the relief work of the Mennonite Central Committee. We ended each meeting with a prayer for peace.

At one of these meetings we learned that a school in Kingston was making paper cranes to represent their desire for peace. The background to this project was that following World War II a Japanese girl named Sadako was dying of leukemia, caused by the atomic bombs. In her culture there was a legend which said that if you were able to fold 1000 paper cranes, you would be granted a wish. Sadako was going to wish for peace and good health, but she died before she could reach her goal. Now, because of Sadako, people around the world see paper cranes as a symbol of peace. Like Sadako, the students in Kingston had decided to make paper cranes as a symbol of their wish for peace. They sent boxes of these cranes to Ottawa, filling the offices of the government officials. They asked other schools to show their support in the same way.

People around the world see paper cranes as a symbol of peace.

At UMEI, we too thought this would be a good way of showing our hope for peace and decided to plan a chapel service in which we would fold these paper cranes for sending to Ottawa. We also encouraged our fellow students to sign a letter voicing our belief in peaceful conflict resolution. We sent copies of this letter to some members of parliament, including Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy. A few weeks later we received a reply from Mr. Chretien, thanking us for our concern.

The crisis in Kosovo was a horrible event, yet in the midst of this conflict we saw how people came together to help others who were suffering and in need.

Sandra Dyck and Stephanie Stocco, UMEI Grade 10 students

Sing for Peace

In the spring of 1999 the conflict in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia led to an unusual amount of concern among many people in Canada, including the Mennonites in the context of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. In an effort to give expression to the traditional Mennonite peace position, a rally of Mennonite youth as well as older church members was organized in front of the Canadian parliament building in Ottawa. It was to be a non-violent, non-antagonistic meeting, but one at which a Mennonite voice should also be heard among all the others. As plans were discussed, the suggestion was made to have a "Sing for peace" rally—using a form of communication that Mennonites have been deeply immersed in for generations. So announcements went out to Mennonite churches and schools across Eastern Canada, especially in Ontario, to bring copies of the ***Hymna****l and gather on the front steps in front of the House of Commons on the afternoon of May 13th; some 4-500 persons came, including about 90 people—two busloads—from Leamington.*

The following article was adapted from the report first written for the June 1999 edition of ***Northern Echoes****, the newsletter of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church.*

May 13th started early for a committed group of people in Essex County; we were to meet at the United Mennonite Educational Institute shortly before 5:00 a.m., drive for nine hours, and arrive in Ottawa at 2:00 p.m. We would then spend 1 ½ hours in Ottawa, get back on our buses, drive another nine hours, and arrive back in Leamington at 1:00 a.m.—what was the occasion?

We were about ninety people of all ages who had heard the invitation to "sing for peace" in front of the Parliament Building in Ottawa and felt this was a worthy project in which to participate. This was not to be a "demonstration" in the usual sense of the word; it did not feel right to bring placards or to get into something noisy, rowdy, or angry; it should speak to Mennonite people of all ages if possible; and of course it should still make a statement to the public and/or government. So, after a good deal of discussion, the idea of gathering to sing for peace emerged, and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario agreed to help with the planning. As it turned out, when May 13th arrived, we joined about 400 other Mennonite people from all over Ontario with our *Hymnals* under our arms, ready to sing in a setting that most of us had not experienced before!

Before the trip began, and also on the bus, some of us wondered just what we were trying to accomplish. Some suggested that the bus fare--$55/person, $45/student—could have been better spent on buying additional emergency kits for refugees from Kosovo—which cost about $50 each. Others questioned the rightness of a "peace stance" altogether. Some wondered if the whole experience would be an exercise in futility and really achieve nothing at all. Speaking personally, I will admit that all of these

Some of us wondered just what we were trying to accomplish.

considerations ran through my mind as well. Added to that was the question whether this might not be an activity for our college or high school students—but why for other adults or me? So, with some hesitation but finally deciding that I had no real choice, I decided to participate.

It turned out to be a wonderful experience! The trip itself went by quickly; the singing—on a beautiful sunny afternoon—was unique and most enjoyable; the message of concern about the war and the Canadian government was clearly, although not obnoxiously stated in hymns, a written statement to the government, and prayer. Our parliamentarians—about five or six of them—came to listen, to express appreciation for our coming, and to talk further about our concerns. Our government employees and bystanders stopped to listen and to ask about the nature of the meeting. Among the most noted aspects were the peaceful nature of the witness, the large number of youth present, and the unique format of such singing on the steps in front of the House of Commons. The media covered the event to some extent, although it was rather limited.

Among the most noted aspects of the meeting were the four-part harmony singing and the amazingly quiet nature of the witness, including several minutes of silent prayer—and this with such a large number of youth present!

Among the most noted aspects of the meeting were the four-part harmony singing and the amazingly quiet nature of the witness, including several minutes of silent prayer—and this with such a large number of youth present!

Singing for Peace
(Courtesy Victor Kliewer)

The most significant aspect may well have been that we undertook the witness at all, that we took our convictions—shallow or deep as they may have been—into the public arena and stood up for what we believed was good and right. Was it as dramatic or effective as other rallies or demonstrations have been in other settings? Quite possibly not—but who

We took our convictions—shallow or deep as they may have been—into the public arena .

is to evaluate this! Was it as risky as standing up for our Christian faith may have been in other times and other settings? Probably not—but we needed to be faithful to our time and our situation. Did we have ready answers to solve the complex problems of the conflict in Kosovo? Certainly not—but in all humility we tried to express a basic commitment of faith. Who is to say what the lasting impact of our spoken and sung prayers will have been? It may well have been the impact on our own lives—but even that is something that we may in quiet confidence leave up to our Lord to determine!

Victor Kliewer, North Leamington United Mennonite Church

Remembrance Day Services

Remembrance Day, the annual recognition of the heroic efforts of military veterans, has been a dilemma for persons in the nonresistant tradition. On the one hand, the significance of the event for veterans, their families, and often for the entire community cannot be taken lightly. At the same time it celebrates a conviction that—deserving respect, as it does—has traditionally not been shared by the Mennonite church. Furthermore, the understanding of Remembrance Day has been changing, at least for many people who have not personally experienced war, shifting the emphasis from remembering the heroes from past wars to the promotion of peace.

How do Christians in the Mennonite tradition respond to Remembrance Day activities? Greg Yantzi, a new pastor at the Harrow Mennonite Church in 1999, reflects on his experiences!

Remembrance Day has, in the past, usually been a non-event for me. I have never attended community services because I have chosen not to participate in the glorification of military personnel and events. As a Mennonite pastor in a new setting I did not anticipate anything different this past fall. But I was wrong! As a member of the local ecumenical ministerial, I found myself not only attending our town's Remembrance Day service but also participating in it! I was surprised to find out that every year the ministerial is asked to plan and lead the service by the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. I agreed to participate partly because of my desire to be a part of the ministerial but also because my predecessor, Jim Brown, had participated in years past. However, I did not feel completely comfortable being involved, since doing so seemed to go against all that my pacifist heart and mind stood for. I felt like a foreigner in a strange land--not because I was new to the town, but because I felt that I did not belong in that setting.

I remember cringing as I watched young cadets—still children—march through their drills and fire their guns in salute to fallen soldiers. I dislike being a part of any event that encourages the training of young lives for war. As I prepared in advance for my opening words and welcome, I struggled with what would be considered "appropriate"—and then realized that I had an opportunity, along with other clergy, to represent peace in our community. I was conscious that the MCC—Mennonite Central Committee—Peace Button I was wearing was already making a statement among the traditional poppies. And as I look back, I'm beginning to see the value of the faith community's presence in Remembrance Day events. Not only to speak the words of peace and to encourage peacemaking in the community but also to symbolically represent our commitment to peacemaking amidst the violence in our world. I hope Menno Simons would not be disappointed, but maybe there is a place for Mennonites at Remembrance Day services! Likely I will be there again next year, although I anticipate a similar amount of discomfort. I guess that is what peacemaking is all about: going beyond our comfort zones to share the gospel of peace.

Part Four

Statements to Governments

Statements to Governments

In spite of having been known as "The quiet in the land", Mennonites have a long history of negotiating with, and petitioning governments. For example, when preparing to emigrate to another country—Russia, Canada and Mexico come to mind—there was considerable contact with the governments involved. Rights, privileges and terms of entry were negotiated by a committee representing the greater Mennonite community.

There seems to be a movement today for Mennonites to speak for justice and equality for other people, not just for themselves. In addition to official organizations, like MCC, speaking to government, local groups and individuals may even petition members of government directly, on behalf of the disenfranchised in other countries or closer to home. The following petitions, sent to the Government of Canada during the Kosovo crisis, are examples of this trend.

North Leamington United Mennonite Church
625 Mersea Road East, R.R. 5, Leamington ON N8H 3V8
Tel.: 1-519-326-8216 Fax: 1-519-326-8939

April 18, 1999

Mr. Jerry Pickard, Kent-Essex MP
15 Princess Street
Leamington On
N8H 2X8
Fax: 1-519-322-1202

Re: Crisis in Kosovo/Serbia

Dear Mr. Pickard,

As members of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church, we are deeply concerned about the continuing traumatic conflict in Yugoslavia, including the refugee situation, the continued NATO bombings, and the current parliamentary discussion about the role of Canada in this affair.

Emergency relief: Through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) we have started to send aid shipments to the refugees in the neighbouring countries of Kosovo. These have consisted of several container shipments of food supplies, as well as numerous "refugee kits" which are primarily hygienic and medical supplies. In our local congregation we have raised about $4,000 for "refugee kits"and anticipate that more will be donated in the coming weeks. (MCC has announced plans to send at least 5,000 such "kits.")

Prayer meetings: Since Easter, daily noon hour prayers for Kosovo have been held in our church. Groups of church members and friends have met for news updates, discussion, and prayer.

Support/Concern for leaders/policies: We have been impressed by recent Canadian initiatives in international peacemaking and want to express our encouragement for such creative proposals. In the case of Serbia/Kosovo, we believe that the military intervention has not been the best way to deal with a complex conflict; certainly the military and economic powers of the NATO countries could have been used more effectively in other peacekeeping and mediation efforts. Based on our understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ, we also cannot accept the philosophy of using violence to end violence as an option.

Like so many other Canadians, we have as Mennonite people experienced oppression and suffering, and we want to try to provide healing and hope for others who are in desperate need. We want to commit ourselves to continued refugee aid, as well as to pray for and keep in conversation with you and other leaders who are responsible for making difficult decisions in this extremely complex, yet urgent situation.

Sincerely,

Church members and friends of NLUMC ***(Signatures attached)***

Copies: Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien (Prime Minister), Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Dave Worth (MCC Ontario), Chris Buhler (Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada)

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OTTAWA, CANADA

Room 574
Confederation Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
613-992-2612
Fax 613-992-1852
Email: PickaJ@parl.gc.ca
Web: pickard.ca

Jerry Pickard, M.P.

Chatham – Kent Essex

April 27, 1999

Church Members and Friends
North Leamington United Mennonite Church
625 Mersea Road East
RR 5
Leamington, Ont. N8H 3V8

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your April 18 letter, regarding the situation in Kosovo.

I appreciate your taking the time to make your views known to me, and I share your deep concern about the present conflict in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

First and foremost, I want you to know that a diplomatic solution to the Kosovo conflict has always been the course preferred by Canada and its allies. Regrettably, efforts to resolve this crisis by diplomatic means have proven unsuccessful, and NATO had no choice but to take military action.

Our country's overriding concern is humanitarian. As a responsible world citizen that has always put the safety of people first, and as a member of NATO, Canada could not stand idly by and watch this gross humanitarian disaster. As you know, Operation Allied Force is an air operation, in which Canada has been participating. NATO's military actions are aimed at diminishing the capabilities of the Yugoslav army and the special police forces, and every effort is being made to minimize civilian casualties. You will also be aware that Canadian Forces have as well assisted in flying humanitarian aid to the Kosovar refugees.

The men and women of the Canadian Forces who are presently engaged in the region are extremely well-trained, equipped, highly motivated, courageous and dedicated. They deserve our recognition and support for the important task they have taken up on behalf of all Canadians.

Canada remains committed to promoting international peace and stability, and our strong preference continues to be a negotiated settlement to the Kosovo crisis.

Thank you, once again, for your input, and permit me to convey my support and gratitude to all of you for the tremendous relief work you are doing to assist the refugees in the neighbouring countries of Kosovo.

Yours very truly,

Jerry Pickard

Jerry Pickard, M.P.
Chatham – Kent Essex

Constituency Offices

336 King Street West Chatham, Ontario N7M 1G1 519-380-6715 Fax: 519-380-6720
15 Princess Street Leamington, Ontario N8H 2X8 519-326-5781 Fax 519-322-1202

From: Concerned students of the United Mennonite Educational Institute
614 Mersea Rd. 6, Leamington, Ontario N8H 3V8
Tel.: 1-519-326-7448 Fax: 1-519-326-0278

Date: April 13, 1999

To: (Address of Prime Minister, etc.)

Re.: Crisis in Serbia/Kosovo

Dear Sir,

We are writing to express deep concern about the conflict in the area of the former Yugoslavia, especially as it has escalated in the past three weeks with the onset of the NATO bombings.

We write in the awareness that this is a long-standing and very complex issue, and that in some ways we do not known enough about the issue to speak of it at all. At the same time, we are concerned that the military solution to these problems is, first, not a morally right one, nor, second, a helpful one.

While we do not in any way agree with the violence and cruelty committed by the Serbian forces, we do not believe that they can justify adding even more violence. In this regard, we believe we are following the teachings of Christ about not returning violence with greater violence or evil with more evil.

We also believe that the long-standing ethnic tensions need a very different approach if they are to be in any sense permanent. It is our understanding that over the years there have been significant efforts within the countries/provinces of Yugoslavia at peaceful and constructive relationships among the various ethnic groups, and that these have not been helped by the present NATO policy. The increased hostility between the various ethnic groups will last for years and possibly generations before being resolved and rebuilt, not to mention the very real possibility of escalating tensions on an international scale.

We have noted with appreciation other efforts at building constructive international relationships that our government has initiated in the recent past. Let us add our encouragement to continue such initiatives! Certainly they appear to hold more potential for good than the present NATO approach in Yugoslavia.

We do not want to underestimate the complexity of the situation and we are aware of our own limited understanding of the factors at work in this case. However, we have as Mennonite people experienced our share of sufferings and have been deeply involved in the plight of others in this and similar situations through the Mennonite Central Committee and similar organisations.

We pray for much wisdom for you and other leaders responsible for making difficult decisions at this crucial time in our history, and would welcome further information in the future.

Sincerely,

(Signatures attached)

Part Five

Positive Peace Making Efforts

"The Sea-Going Cowboys": A Peaceable Adventure

In the year1945, following the end of World War II, much of Europe was devastated and millions of people were dead or injured. While monumental efforts were undertaken to feed, clothe, and shelter the destitute, the members of the United Nations were also concerned about the long-term restoration and rebuilding of prime industries. One of these was, of course, agriculture. The Church of the Brethren, one of the historic peace churches, was one of the first Non-Governmental Organizations to become involved when it began a program of shipping calves to Poland as early as 1945. However, much more was needed–for instance, horses and mules were required as draft animals to till the land with the primitive equipment that had survived the war. Recognizing this need, the United Nations developed an agency with the acronym UNRRA–the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

One of the major tasks of this new agency was to round up hundreds of horses and mules across Canada and the U.S.A. for shipment to Europe. Since the Church of the Brethren was already familiar with the shipment of animals overseas–which included the recruitment of people as caretakers of the animals–UNRRA requested it to take on the task of finding "sea-going cowboys." As the frequency of shiploads increased, each with 700-1000 horses and/or mules and 30-40 cowboys (the "Mt. Whitney" was able to accommodate 1500 animals and required 50-60 men), it became increasingly difficult to find the needed personnel. Consequently, the Mennonite Central Committee was asked for assistance, which it gladly gave.

In the following stories Alfred Willms, then a young Mennonite man in Leamington, and Harry Riediger from Harrow, describe their experiences.

The year was 1945. World War II, especially in the European theatre, was gradually winding down. In anticipation of being called up under the Military Conscription Act, which was in effect at the time, I had registered as a conscientious objector. (At that time, young men were being drafted when they reached the age of 18 ½ years.) I began to dream of going to northern Ontario to help in road construction or to British Columbia in forestry service or perhaps some other unknown assignment. Although I had pretty strong convictions against being involved in any part of the military machine, I must admit that it was the spirit of adventure more than service for peace that was the principal driving force in my life at the time.

In April I turned eighteen, and in May the war ended–and with it the draft. I was glad the war was over but also disappointed because I had been looking forward to that service adventure. In less than two years I would experience my adventure in ways that I hadn't even dreamed of!

About this time the Mennonite Central Committee began to make appeals for livestock caretakers in the Canadian Mennonite publications *Der Bote* and *Die Mennonitische Rundschau.* I wasn't long in sending in my application–and the next two months tried my patience! At the end of October 1946, a telegram finally arrived, summoning me to appear at Pier X, Newport News, Virginia, on a certain date and please bring Henry Schmidt with you. The latter was already in British Columbia for the winter, so I persuaded Dave Janzen, who had also applied, to substitute. Looking back, this seemed rather risky, but fortunately everything worked out.

The Mennonite Central Committee advertisement, as it appeared in the August 28, 1946 issue of ***Der Bote*** *(with translation added below):*

Begleiter der Viehtransporte nach Europa gewünscht

Das "Brethren Service Committee" in den Vereinigten Staaten, in Ko-operation mit UNRRA hat seit Juli 1945 nahe an 85,000 Kühe und Pferde nach Europa geschickt. Viele mennonitischen Jünglinge haben die Gelegenheit, Europa zu sehen, wahrgenommen und reisten als Viehbegleiter.

Das Komitee hat uns bekanntgegeben, daß es im kommenden Herbst und Winter Mannschaft braucht. Wer "Farm experience" hat, im Alter von 18 bis 50 Jahren ist und sich für eine Fahrt nach Europa, die von 6 bis 8 Wochen dauert, interessiert, möchte sich an uns wenden. Lohn für eine Fahrt ist $150.00 U.S. Die Fahrt bis zur Hafenstadt und zurück muß selber bezahlt werden.

C. J. Rempel, Mennonite Central Committee 223 King Street East, Kitchener, Ontario

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Attendants for shipping livestock to Europe required

The Brethren Service Committee, an aid organization operated by the Church of the Brethren in the U.S.A., together with UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), has since July of 1945 shipped nearly 85,000 cows and horses to Europe. Many young Mennonite men have taken advantage of this opportunity to see Europe by volunteering as livestock caretakers.

The Committee has informed us that it will need further volunteers for the coming fall and winter. Anyone who has had farm experience, is between 18 and 50 years old, and is interested in a trip to Europe that lasts from 6 to 8 weeks, should apply to our office. The pay for each trip is $150.00 U.S. Travelling costs to the shipping port and return home are the responsibility of the volunteer.

C. J. Rempel, Mennonite Central Committee, 223 King Street E., Kitchener, Ontario

This adventure was an experience with many "firsts": my first time crossing the ocean; the thrill of seeing Gibraltar; the moonlit Mediterranean with brightly lit Algiers on the starboard side; Sicily's Mt. Etna spewing lava; and the rubble of the many bombed-out buildings both in Italy and Greece. In Greece we had the time to travel to Athens to see the Parthenon and many other relics of that country's glorious past; another new experience occurred when a number of us went mountain climbing south of Patras, our port of call..

I learned that one had to get to know one's horses and mules; there were friendly ones and some less friendly. I developed some lifelong friendships with other volunteers as well. I will never forget the Christmas concert and worship time we celebrated on the aft deck in balmy sunshine on the middle of the Atlantic. Conversely, we also experienced the Atlantic in all its fury as gale force winds drove waves across the deck on our second trip, about 500 miles off New York harbour.

All of the "cowboys", Supervisors, and veterinarians assembled on the deck of the "Woodstock Victory" at the end of the second journey, New York harbour, February 9, 1947. (Alfred Willms, the author, is standing in the back row, 6th from the right.) (Courtesy Alfred Willms)

So it was that I became a "sea-going cowboy" in the name of Christ, helping to transport over 700 horses to Trieste, Italy, with final destination in the former Yugoslavia. And then, immediately after that first trip, I returned for a second, assisting with the shipment of 900 mules to Patras, Greece. My yearning for a service adventure had been fulfilled, and in the process I had contributed ever so slightly to the peace and reconciliation process that brought healing after the tragic events of the war.

A Trip to Poland

In the fall of 1946 there was great excitement among the young Mennonite men. The United Nations Relief Association had asked MCC to provide the management and manpower to transport many boatloads of horses and cattle to the war-ravaged and hungry people of Europe.

By mid November Henry *(Peanuts)* Dyck, Rudy Lepp and I were on a 36-hour bus ride to Newport News, Virginia, and in a few short days we were assigned to help tend the 750 wild horses on the SS Beloit Victory.

The ship set sail at night after we had gone to sleep. I awoke to the sound and smell of much retching, and before long I had joined the rest of them in the washroom. After two or three days most of us got over our seasickness and started eating again and working.

After seven or eight days we sighted land and were told it was the Orkney Islands north of Scotland. In the North Sea we stopped one day and loaded fresh fish for our meals. When we got into the Skagerrak between Denmark and Norway we had to start dodging between half sunken wrecks of battleships and we could see mines floating about in the sea. We never hit any! There were wrecks everywhere right through to the Baltic Sea.

At Danzig *(now Gdansk)* there was a scuttled battleship at one entrance to the harbour but the other entrance was still open. When we saw the city of Danzig it was total destruction – just huge piles of bricks with starving people stumbling around. They were bloated from malnutrition with waxy looking skin.

Bomb damaged buildings on a street in Danzig, December 1946.
(Courtesy Harry Riediger)

We had brought soap and other necessities to give to the people but as soon as the stevedores came on board to offload the horses they offered cameras, binoculars and such for soap or food. We couldn't resist, but we did go into the city to give supplies to the destitute people.

One day an MCC person--perhaps Mr. Peter Dyck--came and took those who wanted to go, on a tour of the city. One of the few standing buildings was the Marienkirche built in the 1200's. Another day we found out there was a battlefield just south of the harbour so we went and found many skeletons in uniform still lying there amongst live ammunition. There was a first aid bunker dug into the ground like a fruit cellar, with skeletons still in the bunks. We were probably very fortunate that we weren't blown to bits by land mines! Blown up tanks were everywhere with corpses still sitting in them.

We made day trips to Gdynia by bus, which was actually just an army truck. This trip took us through Sopot *(Zoppot),* which was a university town at one time. This town was still pretty much intact – just the odd cannonball hole through the big buildings. The road to Gdynia was beautifully tree-lined with a boulevard in the middle, similar to the Queen Elizabeth Highway of that day. At night when we were walking around town we could hear shots all over; the Russian marines were maintaining law and order.

On the fifth day we left the ship real early for Gdynia and had a great day touring the shops and eating horsemeat for dinner. When we arrived back at the harbour it was dark, and where our ship should have been was empty space. What a feeling! A harbour patrol officer must have been expecting us; he could speak German and told us we would have to go to the nearby Mariners' home for night. We received a bowl of soup and a big piece of *Braunbrot* for five cents.

There were five of us, three boys from Ohio and one from Indiana besides me. There was some serious praying done that night and the following morning we went right back to Gdynia and tried to get passage on the Mount Whitney, a huge converted aircraft carrier. For five days we hung around the shipping offices and finally they gave us permission to board the ship. Once aboard, we stayed there for a day before it set sail for home. By this time the north Atlantic was a raging, frothing mass of mountainous waves. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were the worst I ever spent in my life! The ship's engines died and the waves were suddenly coming from the side, almost capsizing our huge ship!

When we finally got to Newport News I was a ward of the captain since my passport and all my papers were on the other ship. Somehow the MCC worked out something to let me go free. Before leaving the empty ship, I went through all the lockers and managed to gather up a large box of shoes and clothes, which I delivered to the MCC office.

After a long bus ride home I was very happy to be back in Harrow and I didn't sign up for any more ocean trips.

Harry Riediger, Harrow Mennonite Church.

PAX:
New Homes for Refugees

After the Second World War many of Europe's cities lay destroyed, even as countless refugees wandered around the countryside, looking for new homes and means of survival. In North America the "historic peace churches"–the Quakers, the Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonites–sought ways through which help could be brought in the midst of the chaos and devastation.

One program that was developed by the Mennonite Central Committee in this context was called "Pax"–the Latin word for "peace." In this voluntary service program several hundred young men came to (West) Germany to build houses for the poverty-stricken Mennonite refugees from Eastern Europe. Financing could be arranged through a government supported mortgage program. In this program homes were constructed in a number of locations: 140 homes in 44 buildings in Enkenbach, 110 homes in Backnang, 48 homes in 12 buildings in Wedel (a suburb of Hamburg), as well as small settlements in Bechterdissen (near Bielefeld) and in Neuwied-Torney.

Besides the physical construction work, the "Pax-boys" organized religious and social activities, and many long-lasting friendships were established as well.

There were at least three "Pax-boys." from Essex County; Ernie Toews , Arthur Driedger and John Driedger. Ernie Toews remembers his time in Germany in the following piece.

My Experiences as a PAX boy

I first heard about the PAX program because of the work being done for European refugees. Later I found out that there were also PAX boys in Nepal (hospital building and well digging), northern Greece (agriculture), Bolivia (agriculture among the Mennonites), Paraguay (road building in the Chaco), and Europe, especially Germany.

Since I too would have chosen alternative service if I had to choose, I decided to apply for a two year term in PAX. I was accepted.

In the fall of 1959 my term began with a week of orientation in Akron, Pennsylvania. From there three of us left for Europe by ship. One fellow went to Nepal and two of us to Europe.

My work began in Enkenbach, from mid-October until February. I was assigned to a unit of ten PAX boys who were building duplex homes for refugees. The job included digging footings by hand. The ground was hard and full of rocks. Some of the homes were built on the side of a hill.

Ernie Toews and others, digging footings in the rocky soil. (Courtesy Ernie Toews)

In 1978 my wife Alice and I drove around Enkenbach and found these homes that I helped build. They looked very nice.

MCC offered a three-week tour, at cost, for PAX boys and mission workers in Europe. The tour included Greece, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. I went – it was an experience of a lifetime!

In February 1960, I was sent to the Bienenberg in Switzerland to continue my term of work. They sent me because I was Canadian and therefore a volunteer, not an American doing alternative service. The position in Bienenberg did not qualify as alternative service.

Bienenberg is the name of the European Mennonite Bible School. It is located on a small hill with a beautiful view in every direction. The classes are held October to May, in French and German. The students come from Germany, Holland, Switzerland and France. From May until fall the Bienenberg becomes a resort or retreat facility.

Ernie washing shutters. (Courtesy Ernie Toews)

My job here was primarily maintenance at first. There were two of us PAX boys. The other, George Fast from Manitoba, presently from Kitchener, Ontario, put the German language radio program "Worte des Lebens" (Words of Life) together. This program was beamed to East Germany.

Later my job also included taking tour groups to various locations as well as picking up

restaurant supplies each morning from the village below.

My time at the Bienenberg was interesting, varied, and never boring. I painted walls, worked in the laundry, machine scrubbed the dining area floors early every morning. I had to eat leftover cakes as a reward for helping some of the others in the evening. I made friends whose friendships have lasted forty years. I still get two long letters every Christmas from former Bienenbergers. Our family visited these friends in 1987. In recent years we've gone camping with a former PAX boy and his wife. We cherish these friends.

Our daughter Helen took part in the Intermenno Trainee Program in 1992-93. She also served in Switzerland for six months. While she was there she met my friends again, in their home, and spent some very pleasant hours with them.

Spending two years as a PAX boy changed my life and my outlook. What more can I say!

My Peace Witness Through Service

Arthur Driedger, now living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, relates how he came to be a "PAX boy".

I was only 6-12 years old during World War II, but I remember the COs from our church leaving for service "up north". I especially remember my father's youngest brother, John P. Driedger, serving as a CO. I was always very proud of my Uncle John.

At school when playing "war", we Mennonite children were always the Germans and the enemy, and always on the losing side and were therefore the object of all kinds of mistreatment. I remember the other children bringing money to school on Fridays to buy war stamps or victory stamps for the Red Cross. Our parents being against war and violence never gave us money for this purpose. One day I managed to get a quarter somehow. I took it to school on a Friday and bought my first stamp intending to fill a Victory Stamp Book. That however, was the only stamp I ever purchased. It became obvious that the Mennonite children reacted differently to the war than the others did.

When the war ended things slowly got better for us. At school we were again treated as equals. At home things also got better. Prices for our farm products improved. In 1943 my parents bought their first farm. In 1946 they helped build the United Mennonite Bible School, later renamed the United Mennonite Educational Institute. My grade nine class was the first class to attend all four years at the new school on the Sixth Concession.

During the late 40's and early 50's we didn't hear about war, but we did hear about service through the Mennonite Central Committee. Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, MCC workers in Europe, came to Leamington and reported on the miraculous rescue of Mennonite refugees from behind the iron curtain, via the Berlin Corridor. Later Peter and Helen Epp from the Leamington United Mennonite Church, volunteered to serve with MCC in Paraguay. This left a deep impression on me.

Another event that had a strong influence on my life, aside from our school and church, was the annual "Conference of Historic Peace Churches of Ontario", and its leader, Bishop E.J. Swalm. He had been imprisoned for his stance as a conscientious objector during World War I. As chairman of the Historic Peace Churches, he was a strong advocate for active Christian service during times of peace, and therefore a strong promoter for voluntary service through Mennonite Central Committee.

Finally in the mid-fifties, after several years on the family farm and also helping in the church as Sunday school teacher, I was again confronted with a challenge as Frank H. Epp spoke at the Ontario Youth Retreat at Chesley Lake. I remember the speaker saying, "God needs 500 young people in Voluntary Christian Service." I felt God speaking to me directly.

Arthur, front left, with Hungarian refugees at an MCC Camp near Vienna.

In the summer of 1956 I wrote to MCC, asking for information on service opportunities. MCC responded promptly and before long, I was faced with the invitation to enter a two-year term of service as a PAX (Latin word for peace) worker in Europe. The

decision to say yes to this call was not easy, but with the earlier inner call and the clear conviction that God was calling, I was at peace with accepting the invitation. Thus began two of the most interesting and rewarding years of my life. I became a PAX worker with many other Mennonite men who were doing PAX service in lieu of military service. I had the opportunity to identify with a large group of non-resistant conscientious objectors to war. All of us were involved in a humanitarian service because of our position against war and violence and our stand for peace.

My work was with refugees and displaced people. My first assignment was in Austria, assisting Hungarian refugees after the revolution in Budapest. My second assignment was in West Berlin, caring for internal refugees fleeing from East to West Germany via Berlin. Both assignments offered many opportunities to witness for peace and reconciliation, "In the name of Christ". This was my witness for peace. To God be the glory.

Arthur went on to spend most of his working life with MCC.

1963-1969, Country Director in Bolivia.
1969-1970, Interim Latin American director at MCC headquarters in Akron, Pa.
1970-1977, MCC Manitoba Director.
1977-1984, MCC Canada Overseas Staff in Winnipeg.
1991-1999, Short term MCC assignments in Mexico, Bolivia, Southern Manitoba and Southern Ontario with ministries to the Old Colony Mennonite Community.

Although officially retired, he continues to serve on several MCC committees.
Arthur and his wife Kathleen are members of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Refugee Sponsorship at Faith Church

The end of the Vietnam War in the mid 1970's resulted in vast numbers of refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (Campuchea). Mennonite Central Committee was looking for church communities to sponsor and help new immigrants adjust to life in Canada.

In the late 70's and early 80's a number of families, primarily from Laos were sponsored by Leamington Mennonite congregations or family groups. Conflict in Central America brought the Guzman family in 1986.

As Joan Enns writes in her account of Faith Church involvement, it was a way of repaying the kindness of people who had helped our parents or grandparents when they came to Canada as immigrants.

On May 1, 1980, our first sponsored refugee family arrived in Leamington, Ontario, Canada. The Rattanavanh's - Soun, Boun, Seng Chang, Khamsene and children Chaleunh, Kamphou and Deng.

We had waited two years for this day to arrive. Initially we were led to believe that this Laotian family would arrive soon. A committee of 5 - 10 people was formed and a house was rented on Elliot Street. We, excitedly, gathered household items, furniture and clothing. Many volunteers scrubbed, painted and decorated. We waited for their arrival to their new home in a new country.

Disappointment followed because of health problems, Soun, the Grandfather and head of the family was denied entry into Canada. His family decided to stay behind and wait for his recovery.

Reluctantly we gave up rental of the house, but enthusiasm and anticipation of their arrival stayed high.

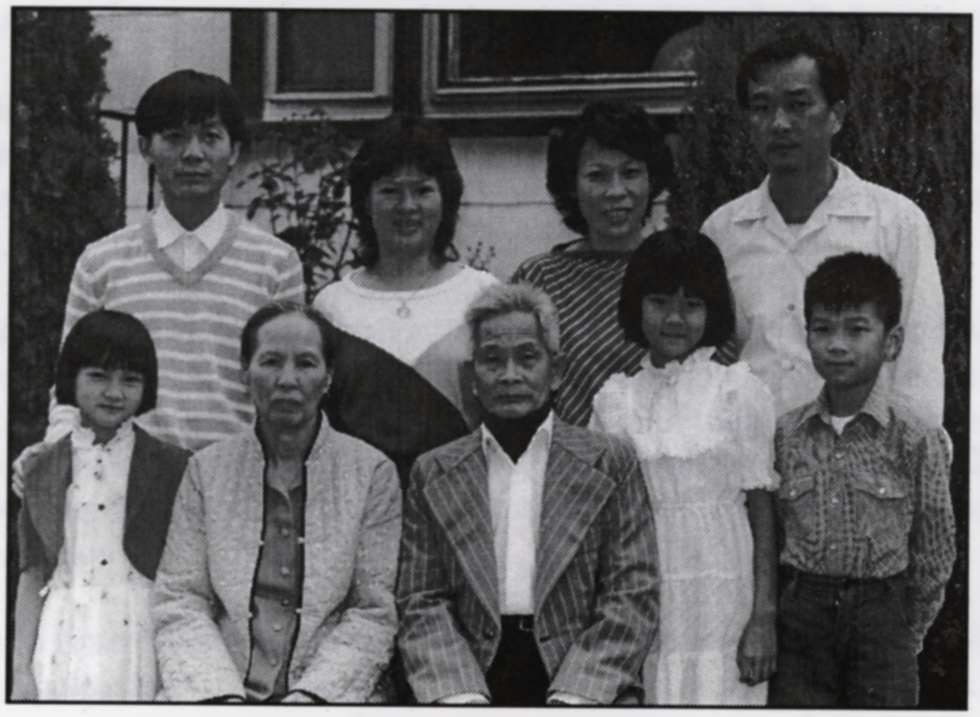
After several months, MCC informed us that they would be coming soon. In the meantime we continued to receive much information from MCC educating us on the cultural differences we, and they would experience, plus a detailed list of our responsibilities for one year. One of our committee members worked as a liaison between MCC, Faith Church and the Immigration Department.

Once again we prepared a home. News of their arrival was sudden. A delegation of volunteers travelled to Windsor Airport to greet the Rattanavanh family. Their journey from Refugee camp to Montreal and finally to Leamington had been exhausting.

After several days of rest, they met our committee members and their integration into Canadian lifestyle began. To avoid much confusion, only one or two committee members would be present at any one time. Many volunteered to help shop for groceries, enrol adults in ESL classes and enrol children in school. Private English lessons for the children were provided in their home and adults often joined as well.

We were always welcomed into their home with smiles and cups of chrysanthemum tea. Their home, a two-bedroom apartment was often crowded with many new friends.

Because we were responsible for all expenses for one year, we had a large yard sale and fun fair on the church grounds. Within one year the younger adults found employment and the family became fully independent.



The Rattanavanh family
(Courtesy Joan Enns)

We have fond memories of children's birthday parties, outings to Windsor and Point Pelee. We exchanged stories and learned to appreciate each other's differences.

Faith Church has been privileged to be involved in three sponsorships. In some way, this was a way of saying Thank You to the many people who helped our parents and grandparents when they came to Canada in the 1920's. Whenever these families wanted to repay our kindness we always said, "Go and help someone else who needs it".

Joan Enns, Faith Mennonite Church.

Laotian Ministry in the MB Church

The Laotian refugees began arriving in May of 1980 and continued for some time. The Mennonite Central Committee had approached the church about the possibility of support but because of insufficient interest, individuals began sponsoring about 60 units on a financial basis, and soon a small group of 13 refugees began worshiping in our church. Then their leader learned to read his Bible and became a Christian, and different ones were baptized in our church.

They lived primarily in our town, Leamington, and as they became familiar with our culture they found jobs in places like Newland's Flowers and other greenhouses. They soon acquired their own houses and became established. A total of $21,000 was donated to this project of refugee assistance.

They continue to worship today although not without some difficulties and challenges. They were sometimes taken advantage of in social and financial situations. They sincerely express their appreciation for the fellowship and help they receive from us.

Phil Hamm with the assistance of an interpreter is ministering to them once a month.

Peter Bartel, Leamington Mennonite Brethren Church.

North Leamington United Mennonite Church Welcomes the Guzmans

El Salvador, a country slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts, is a beautiful region with volcanoes in the north, meadows and pastures in the lowlands, and the dense and lush rainforest on the beautiful Pacific coast. It is bordered on the north and east by Honduras and on the west by Guatemala. Today 181,000 tourists visit this beautiful country annually to enjoy its warm tropical climate, to view its natural wonders, and to enjoy the hospitality of its friendly people.

But this country of great beauty has an ugly past. From 1979 to 1992, civil war raged and severely disrupted all facets of life there. For decades before that, unrest between the government with its military forces warring against guerrillas backed by the local people, made life for the civilian population very dangerous.

Domingo and Consuelo *(nee Molino)* Guzman grew up in this environment of hatred and turmoil. Consuelo remembers her father being harassed by hostile members of the army. The late 1960s found them making a life of their own in the capital city of San Salvador with their two children, Walter, then in high school, and Carol, a younger daughter. Domingo made a living for the family by working in a theatre and as such, belonged to a union.

It was a time of political unrest with a corrupt government supported by its military. The politicians lived the good life—wealth, power, and advantage was theirs. It was a system in which family and friends easily rose to positions of power through their connections. High inflation, no raises, poverty, and poor health and education services enraged the general population. Unions raised their voices in protest. People in positions of responsibility, leaders in the communities, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and engineers were targeted. Student groups rose up to join the struggle for justice. These were the people the government sought out to destroy.

Vandalism, terrorism, violence and fear gripped the country.

People began disappearing. Bodies in plastic bags were found dumped outside the city boundaries. If members of the local community complained about injustices, they were punished—death being an easy way for the military to silence people. Often Catholic priests allied themselves with the fight for change thus putting themselves in danger as well. Soldiers were everywhere. The sound of machine guns was part of daily life. Vandalism, terrorism, violence, and fear gripped the country. At the end of the

struggle it would be made known to a shocked global community that ***at least 70,000 people had died in the struggle.***

Domingo and Consuelo began to fear for their son. Soldiers had broken into the local high school looking for information—they wanted the addresses and names of teachers and students. The vocal protests of both these groups were a threat to their security. Within the school, students belonged to both groups, some being the children of government officials, and it was difficult to know who might be listening to conversations or complaints.

One day, as Domingo was making his way through the city, a huge downpour erupted. He and several others took shelter under an awning to keep out of the rain. Suddenly 15 to 20 soldiers in full riot gear appeared and asked the group to move on. After years of protests, any small gathering of people appeared to be a threat in their eyes. It continued to storm. Some of the group began to break up, but with the heavy rainfall, others wanted to stay until the weather cleared and refused to follow the orders of the military police. This enraged the soldiers and they began to attack. One of the soldiers took the butt of his machine gun and smashed it into Domingo's back. The attack was vicious and Domingo required surgery to repair the damage. Even after many years, this injury continues to be a problem for him.

"So many people died for nothing"

With the constant fear for Walter and the attack Domingo had survived, he and Consuelo decided to leave for Mexico and hopefully, to a safer life with their children. They settled in Tapachula and made this their home for four years. While Walter attended a business college, Carol went to school, and Consuelo started a sewing business. Although life was quieter and less violent, the Guzmans did not live without fear. Walter was attending college legally, but the rest of the family were illegal immigrants. With this came the fear that around each corner lurked an immigration officer who would send them back.. Many people in the community helped them. Carol was allowed to attend school only because native people in the community claimed that she was their "niece" and was staying awhile.

After moving to Mexico city, Consuelo quietly sewed for members of a local Quaker community, who also shared her secret. Others helped Walter to continue attending college.

Life in Mexico was better, but two things bothered the Guzmans. They would never be able to have a decent job, and they were always hiding from immigration officials. They did not want to continue living that way. When Walter finished college, school officials told him that he had to leave the country and he was able to emigrate to Canada.

In 1986, the Guzmans began seeking out possibilities for emigration. At one point they were told that they would be accepted in Australia, but they felt that it was too

far away and chose to decline the offer. When they applied to the Canadian consulate, they were told that they were too old. The future did not look hopeful, and yet the Guzmans persevered. With the help of their Quaker friends and contacts in Canada, the Guzman's problem was shared with Adolpho and Betty Puricelli from the Toronto Mennonite community. The North Leamington United Mennonite church was notified that there was an El Salvadoran family living in Mexico hoping to emigrate to Canada. The church decided to accept responsibility for the family and with that decision; arrangements could be made with the Canadian government for them to finally leave Mexico.

Walter, Carol, Consuelo and Domingo Guzman
(Courtesy Helga Enns)

Today the Guzmans have been living in the Leamington community for fourteen years and have been active members of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church. Domingo and Consuela are caretakers of the church, Walter lives with his wife and two children in Toronto, and Carol has returned to El Salvador to study to become a doctor.

When asked whether they will ever return to El Salvador to live, the Guzmans both reply that they are Canadians now and are happy with that decision. In recounting the story of their past, both Domingo and Consuelo became very animated and emotional. They felt sad for their country and for the atrocities so many people had to suffer during the civil war. Domingo reiterated many times, "So many people died for nothing."

Helga Enns, North Leamington United Mennonite Church

МОЯ ЗЛЕКТРИЧКА

My Elecktrichka

Tara Forshaw, of Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, completed a one year SALT (Serving and Learning Together) assignment in 1996-97. She worked at a mission in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia (near Chechnya) and the fighting in Grozny was 100 kilometers to the east. She taught ESL (English as a second language) to young adults, and also helped distribute humanitarian aid to refugees from the war. By the end of her one-year term she was speaking relatively fluent Russian, and was doing work as a translator as well. Her story reflects a look at one day of her experience there.

I wake at 6:28 am, half an hour before my alarm. I switch on my radio hoping to get the BBC so I can hear the news. But all I hear is static. As I move the dial ever so slightly to the left and right, all I hear are French, German, Russian, and other, less intelligible languages to me instead of English with a British accent. So I turn the radio off and lie there listening to the sounds of the morning. A rooster crows, dogs bark, cars drive by. But these sounds are few and far between and soon I am dozing off.

The next sound I hear is the "*beep, beep*" of my watch as it tells me the time for sleep is over. I turn it off before it has run its course and get out of my bed to start a new day. I have plenty of time to get ready, especially since my Russian family has gone to live somewhere else for the week and I have the house to myself. I go to the kitchen/bathroom building and wash and eat leisurely. There's no need to hurry. I go back to my room, try unsuccessfully to find the BBC again, and dress. I check to see if our dogs have food. Yes, the soup and bread I put out for them last night is still there.

I look at my watch. It's 8:04. Time to leave so I have time to catch the **электрича**, (pronounced *e-lek-TREECH-ka)* or commuter train. I lock the kitchen, then my room, and then the yard door as I leave. I fall in line behind three Ossetian men, but they are walking too slowly for my comfort, so I pass them. At my quick pace, the two and a half blocks to the train stop are quickly accomplished and I am soon standing among other potential passengers, collecting the falling snow on my body. A group of middle-aged men have gathered under the shelter and are speaking very loudly in Ossetian. I understand little more than the *oh* of 'yes' and the *mya-uh* of 'no'. It's very unusual for people to be speaking so disruptively and I watch this anomaly with interest. Some of the louder ones are unable to stand still and have difficulty with their balance. Based on this, I conclude that they have had more than their usual intake of vodka for breakfast. I'm surprised that most other people seem to take no notice of this loud interaction. But, I have also been told by my friends in Moscow that Southerners are generally louder than Muscovites.

My contemplation is interrupted by the approach of **Станислав Павлович** *(STAN-ee-slav PAV-lo-vich).* He greets me with his usual **Доброе утро** *(DO-bray-ye-OO-tra)* and his constant inquiries about my health and whether I was afraid or not the night before. Satisfied with my answers we wait in silence for the **электрича.**

We see her[1] coming and move closer to the edge of the platform to wait the last minute there. **Станислав Павлович** directs me to where he wants to wait. She stops and the doors open. Few disembark and we all crowd around the waiting doors. **Станислав Павлович** chooses the wagon and insists that I climb in first and I add to the crowd already assembled in the wagon. An impossible number of people enter after us and we are squished into an impossibly small space. Most of the commuters in my immediate area are male and the air is thick with the stench of vodka and cigarettes. A couple of boys make a game of throwing sunflower seeds at a woman until she notices.

The first stop comes. No one gets off but more crowd themselves into the already overfull wagon. Somehow we make room for the newcomers and are soon on our way again.

The next stop is ours and I begin my questioning **"Вы сейчас выходите?"** Or "Are you getting off now?" Thus begins that ever so long journey of one meter to the door through multitudes of people. I squeeze out from between my fellow passengers and land safely on the platform. I turn around to see **Станислав Павлович** maneuvering his short, pudgy body out of the congestion of people. Much to my chagrin he doesn't seem to have as much trouble as I did. Maybe it's because of his height, or rather, lack of it.

With that leg of our journey finished, we start off down the path to **Николаева** (*Nee-ko-LIE-yeh-va*), the street on which the mission is located. We meet up with fellow workers **Павел Иванович** *(Pav-vil ee- VON-on-vich)* and Оля *(OHL-ya).* **Станислав Павлович** prefers the company of **Павел Иванович** to mine and leaves me to walk with Оля. She is a very agreeable companion and I, therefore, don't mind my abandonment. Thus all contented, we finish our morning travel in that fashion.

The morning seems to go by quickly as I prepare for the afternoon's class and sort through the mission's email as well as my own. Reading English is so relaxing compared to trying to sound out the Cyrillic letters of Russian. A container sent by MCC is being held by customs while we are waiting for papers that will clear it. A person from Dorcas Aid in Holland will be arriving today to visit us. My parents write to me and tell me news of home. All this and more I read with varying interest as I translate their meanings to Peter, the director of the mission. He dictates and I translate into English and type the replies. When I have a moment to myself I pore over my personal emails and read and re-read them until I have them nearly memorized.

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[1] *In Russian, each noun is designated as either feminine, masculine, or neuter. Therefore, when using a pronoun in place of a noun, one uses "he" or "she" or "it" instead of only "it" as in English.*

Lunch is a chore as I try to convince the cook, **Тётя Валя** (TYO-tya VAL-ya), that, no, I don't want a second helping and that, no, I will not get sick if I don't eat more. I remember one day, about a month later, shortly before my parents came to visit, when **Тётя Валя** and I were going through this feeding ritual and she told me that I would surely be sick when my parents came. Exasperated, I told her in a relatively loud voice that I would not be sick, I would be an elephant! The lunchroom exploded into laughter and I won the right to only eat one helping at lunch and, much to my delight, the ritual was ended.

Lunch is finished and I return to my desk to finalize my lesson plans for class that day. My mother had sent me some comics which included word searches and I think that they would provide a good opportunity for my students to learn some new words. As they arrive I hand out photocopies of one of the word searches and my students start to work on them. I try to enforce my "no Russian" rule during class, but find myself slipping into Russian as I try to make myself understood. Many of my students are also attending university and as they tell me about their classes and assignments, I find myself remembering CMBC and feeling a little homesick.

Tara, third from left, and some of her ESL students (Courtesy Tara Forshaw)

After class I am asked to send an email for the Dorcas Aid person who is here. Connecting to the server is not always instant and I spend quite a long time trying to connect. I work late to accomplish this task and miss the 5:00 **электрича** home. I don't mind too much since that one is usually as full as the one in the morning. So, I wait until 7:21 pm before I leave the mission to walk back to the platform. It's early, but since it isn't exceptionally cold, I set out. The sky is cloud-covered and my way is lit by neither star nor moon. Streetlights, where they exist, rarely work on this street, so I make my way through the darkness to the path that I traversed in the morning. Once there, I'm happy to notice that it is lit by the yard light of a nearby house. The light is set above the buildings and sheds just enough light to keep me out of the puddles of wet mud. When I am about 15 or 20 metres from the platform I

hear a whistle and see a headlight in the distance and I'm glad of my early departure. I quicken my step and soon I'm on the platform awaiting the coming train.

She approaches and, after the blinding beam of the engine has passed, I see that it is not my **электрича**, but a **поезд** *(POIZD)* or train. The strong wind caused by his passing blows wet, stinging snow into my hair and onto the back of my head, the only unprotected parts of my body, as I turn my face away. He passes and I wait with the few others who have gathered there as he takes his cargo to unknown destinations.

A quiet settles over us, interrupted only by the barking of a dog or the horn of a car in the distance. Then a sound, which could have been a gunshot or a car back firing, shatters the peace. My thoughts immediately return to the shooting I witnessed from this very platform the night of my birthday. I am still lost in this memory as more commuters arrive. A group of young people is talking cheerfully, oblivious, like their morning predecessors, of the unwritten law of silence at the **электрича** stop. I watch them, remembering home, friends, family, and coffee shops. A twinge of homesickness stings my heart.

Tara and Steve, a missionary from Alberta, with Ingushetian Muslim refugees. (Courtesy Tara Forshaw)

Another ray of lights appears in the distance. Is it my **электрича** to take me home, or another **поезд** to blow snow at me until I'm a human glacier? The headlight, and the resulting blindness it causes, passes and she slows down. I choose my own wagon this time. I climb in and sit down on one of the many empty benches. The vacancy is in sharp contrast to the filled-to-capacity-ness of the morning. Tired and cold, I close my eyes and wait for my stop.

My **электрича** slows down, stops, and, after a minute or so, takes off again. When she slows down again, I get up and go to the doors and wait for her to stop. The doors open and I leave my wagon; my **электрича**. She departs and I make my way home again through the dark and muddy streets.

The MCC Meat Canner - Leamington

It can't be done. That is what pioneers of the portable canner in the United States after World War II, were faced with. A portable canner that would travel from community to community had never been heard of. The project was started with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in response to the many hungry people in Germany after World War ll. The project was in the right hands.

In 1948, the first year there was a canning connection here in Leamington, six cows were slaughtered in the area and then transported to Boese Canning in Niagara where they were canned and shipped overseas. From the 1960s to the 1980s there was interest in trying to get the portable meat canner running in Canada, but the government had a long list of conditions that needed to be met.

There was a need to help others who did not have enough to eat. Some of the same determination from the pioneers of the portable canner was still contagious after half a century. The canner was altered to meet government requirements. Another condition was that a federally registered meat-processing establishment had to agree to let the portable canner become an addition to their establishment. The Leamington community is fortunate that Heinz is a federally registered establishment and has agreed to help support the project. Each year Heinz formally asks the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for this addition to be allowed again. April 1999 was the first year this canner came to Leamington and the third year in Guelph.

Licensed operators from MCC travel with the meat canner from community to community starting in the US in fall and then crossing the border to Leamington and Guelph in April. The operators, who come from Germany, work on the canner instead of the mandatory military service. The choice of being a conscientious objector makes an important difference

Marlene Hoch , Val Kliewer (foreground) and others labeling cans.
(Courtesy Marlene Schmidtgall)

in lives of people who do not have enough to eat.

The Meat Canner-Leamington project is sponsored through MCC and is funded through donations from local churches and groups. The local committee is made up of individuals from various churches (not only Mennonite) in the Leamington area.

Gene Forshaw and Domingo Guzman packing the finished product. (Courtesy Marlene Schmidtgall)

For many individuals in this community, this is a very personal project; they have received the goods after World War ll. Having felt the effects of war first hand and knowing what it is like to be hungry, puts a definite perspective on a situation and the kind of involvement they want to have. Another reason volunteers help out is that the next generation is also grateful for the aid their parents received after the war. You will see *Oma* washing cans next to her granddaughter while Mom is packing cans into the finished goods trailer. The project is also drawing interest from different non-Mennonite churches in the community.

A total of 6,191 cans of beef (each weighing 795 g) from the 1999 canning were supposed to go to Kosovo, but by the time the cans were out of incubation the refugees had already gone home. There were so many agencies wanting to help in that area, that MCC decided to ship the cans somewhere, where no one else was sending this type of aid. Three shipments of beef with clothing, shoes and soap (some of which was made of the tallow from the canning) went on a 40-foot container to Aquila, Russia, Donyest Christian University, Ukraine and Orenburg, Russia. Leamingto and Guelph cans of beef were mixed together. The beef is distributed through local churches and institutions. There is no word on where the 12,650 cans from April 2000 will be sent.

Beef is canned because it is a high source of protein and most countries will eat beef. April 1999, 15,000 pounds of beef produced 6,191 cans and was shipped to Ukraine and Russia. April 2000, 30,000 pounds of beef produced 12,650 cans.

This is the year 2000. Why put all the manual effort of hundreds of volunteers into something like this? We have machines that will take care of it in a lot less time. The answer is we do not want to be anonymous. We want the people who receive the cans to know that individuals have dedicated their time and money to show that they care.

Together We Can!

Marlene Schmidtgall, Leamington United Mennonite Church.

---------- Forwarded by Kiersten L Hoffman/MCC on 04/14/99 07:44 AM ----------

Dr Greg Pierce <DRBIBLE@clds.net> on 04/12/99 06:56:27 AM

Please respond to DRBIBLE@clds.net

To: mailbox@MCC
cc:

Subject: Food for Relief

Just thought I would let you know,

About once or twice a year I go to the backside of the Kazakhstan desert. This is a very remote part of the world. In 1992 I was one of the first American Christians to be allowed to go into the city of Semipalatinsk and preach. This requires that I fly to Almata and then travel for 23 hours by train...that is if the train doesn't break down.

To my delight I found the Christians in Semipalatinsk literally survived the winter by eating your canned corned beef. In my many mission trips to Semipalatinsk since 1992, both of my sons married the daughters of the Baptist pastor in Semey. Your relief supplied the only meat source this family had for the past several years.

In the surrounding collective farm villages people have oftened starved to death in the winters because of lack of food.

I just thought you would like to know that your relief has kept families alive, and I am an eye witness to this fact.

Hebrews 6:10
Greg Pierce

Reflections on Meat Canning

A very successful meat-canning project was held in Leamington on April 20 and 21, 1999. Area Mennonite churches, Leamington United Mennonite Church, North Leamington United Mennonite Church, Faith Mennonite Church, Windsor Mennonite Fellowship, Harrow Mennonite Church, Leamington Mennonite Brethren Church (MB), New Reinland Mennonite Church, and a number of Old Colony Mennonite churches hosted the event, and were joined by members of the Catholic Church to can 15,000 pounds of meat for refugees.

The operation was divided into four-hour shifts. The MBs, being the last shift, were able to complete their quota, plus two hours of work that some of the other shifts had not been able to finish.

High hopes are being expressed that the amount canned and the participation can be doubled for next year.

This leads me to an historic item that is of special interest to our family.

Our family, Franz and Elizabeth (Enns) Bartel, participated in a Meat Canning Project in the late 1940's. Dad donated a cow, slaughtered it and canned the meat pieces in glass jars, placed them in a laundry boiler and cooked them in the oven for several hours. This process was called "steaming". The finished jars were then identified with an "In the Name of Christ" MCC label on one side and my parents address on the other. With much prayer and high hopes, the jars were sent to Europe through MCC, for the refugees of WW II.

The finished jars were then identified with an "In the Name of Christ" MCC label on one side and my parents address on the other.

Dad's sister, Aunt Tina and her daughters Annie and Tina, who had just escaped from Russia to Germany, became some of many beneficiaries of this project, and correspondence began.

One day my parents received a letter from Aunt Tina, asking, "Franz, bist du mein Bruder?" *(Frank, are you my brother?)*

Canada was not accepting immigrants at the time unless they were sponsored *(guaranteed not to be a burden to the government)*, and this process took time. The danger of being "repatriated" to Russia by the Russian army was also very real, so Aunt Tina and the girls joined the immigrants on the ship "Vollendam", to sail to Paraguay, South America. Meanwhile, his brother, Uncle Peter of Saskatchewan, joined Dad and sister Aunt Anna Janzen of Alberta and soon arrangements were made to sponsor Aunt Tina and her two daughters to come to Canada. They arrived at the Buffalo train station

where Dad met them, and Brother Rudy described it as an emotional reunion. Erna and I had just been married a few years and I remember greeting them on their arrival at the parents' place.

Dad had prepared a separate dwelling place for them on the farm and Aunt Tina and the girls moved in. Soon they found jobs on the neighbouring farms and after a number of years they were able to buy their own home in Leamington.

They never forgot to express their gratitude for God's protection and guidance out of a land of tyranny, to a land of promise.

Peter Bartel, Leamington Mennonite Brethren Church.

Mennonite Disaster Service

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), a program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), is a network through which volunteers respond to the people affected by disasters. In October 1989, Hurricane Hugo bombarded the eastern coast of the United States, focusing its' greatest force in South Carolina. In March 1990, Harry and Louise Block and a couple of friends answered the call for help from MDS to aid in clean-up, repair and rebuilding of homes in an area north of Charleston, S.C. The devastation was so extensive, that even after six months many areas looked as though the storm had been very recent. We couldn't help asking questions about why there was so much garbage lying around beside the roads--broken pianos, refrigerators, furniture, window frames hanging from tree branches, etc. etc. The land fills and garbage dumps were overflowing and there was no room for it.

The land fills and garbage dumps were overflowing.

MDS, often referred to as "Make Do Somehow", lived up to that description. An abandoned Coca Cola factory had been renovated to house the office, kitchen, pantry, dining room, sleeping area, bathrooms and storage.

A typical day in the life of MDSers begins early, especially for the cooks. Breakfast had to be prepared for X number of people who were going out on different assignments for the day. Since many of these jobs were out of town, lunches had to be packed – five people going to one project, eight to another, and so on. The organizational preparation done before volunteers could go out to work was phenomenal. The location, materials needed, number of people required as well as experienced leaders for each group, had to be planned ahead so that the work could be done efficiently. MDS steps in to help people, who are least able to help themselves, such as the elderly, disabled, widowed and uninsured.

Frank Butterfield from Michigan prepares a roof for new shingles (Courtesy Harry & Louise Block)

One day a crew of seven went to repair the roof for an elderly couple. The old shingles had to be removed. This was quite a challenge in humid temperatures over 85 degrees F. All debris was carefully placed in garbage disposals, so that the bushes and flowers were not mutilated. By five p.m. the whole roof was freshly shingled and a thankful and happy couple did not know how to show their appreciation. They asked over and over – "Did you come all the way from Canada to help us? How did you know we needed help? Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus!"

One of the volunteers working on the roof was a man who had lost one arm in an accident. This disability did not stop him. He attached the hammer to his prosthesis and challenged anyone to work faster than he. He never needed to worry about a misplaced hammer! Women as well as men worked at these projects, however a group of women were busy back at headquarters, preparing meals for everyone. Here too, the saying "Make Do Somehow" was applied. Most of the food was donated, and so the menu was planned around it. The pantry shelves were stocked with canned foods like gallons of sweet potatoes, soups, vegetables, pastas, etc. It took great ingenuity to make tasty, well-balanced meals using available ingredients combined with limited fresh meat and vegetables.

The experience of working with other volunteers from different parts of Canada and U.S.A. was challenging and rewarding. We had many opportunities to touch lives and help people regain their dignity and faith in themselves and others. The needs in this world are overwhelming, but the contribution each volunteer makes helps someone.

To quote Mother Teresa: ***"Whatever love you give, however small, they wouldn't have had it if you hadn't come or given it. Each volunteer who will come after you will give them a little more."***

Louise & Harry Block, Harrow Mennonite Church.

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)

CPT is a violence reduction initiative of Mennonite and Church of Brethren congregations, and Friends Meetings in Canada and the USA

In the summer of 1984, Ron J. Sider presented a speech at the Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg France. He challenged his listeners with these questions:

"Do we have the courage to move from the back lines of isolationist pacifism to the front lines of nonviolent peacemaking?"

"Do we have the courage to summon the entire church to forsake the way of violence?"

"Do we have the courage to warn the governments of the world that the ever upward spiral of violence will lead to annihilation?"

"Do we have the courage to follow in Jesus' steps when it comes to active and vigorous peacemaking?"

And, finally, he asked: "What would happen if we, in the Christian church, developed a new nonviolent peacekeeping force of 100,000 persons, ready to move into violent conflicts and stand peacefully between warring parties in the strife stricken countries of the world? Frequently we would be killed by the thousands. But everyone assumes that for the sake of peace, it is moral and just for soldiers to be killed by the hundreds of thousands, even millions. Do we not have as much courage and faith as soldiers?"

This call to active peacemaking sparked study groups in Anabaptist churches all over North America, and ultimately gave rise to the formation of Christian Peacemaker Teams, or CPT.

The summer of 2000 marks twelve years since work by CPT staff began. In 1993, following the military coup against then President Aristide, CPT began work in Haiti. Its' first urban violence reduction project was begun in Washington, DC (1994-96), and a new urban peacemaking project was then opened in Richmond, VA (1997-99). In November 2000, CPT undertook another urban initiative in Cleveland, Ohio. The Peace and Justice Ministry of the Lee Heights Community Church (a Mennonite church) requested assistance in forming a regional group in order to respond more effectively as a team, to violence within their own city.

The next overseas project was begun in Hebron, West Bank, in June 1995, at the invitation of the Palestinian mayor of the city. Even more recently, CPT has organized

Christian Peacemaker Team at Burnt Church, New Brunswick, spring 2000.
L to R: Chris Buller, Barb Martens, Doug Pritchard (Canadian Co-Ordinator for CP Teams), and Jane Write
(Courtesy Barb Martens)

and initiated the "Campaign For Secure Dwellings". This is a program in which CPT enlists North American churches to partner with individual Palestinian families whose homes have been demolished by order of Israeli officials, and who are displaced from their homes, or to partner with those whose homes are slated for demolition. These "partners" can be supported and encouraged in many ways, including prayer support, and being a voice on their behalf to the governments involved, which have the ability to right the wrong.

In November 2000, a team was established in Bethlehem. Local Palestinian Christians urged CPT to be a presence in the Bethlehem district to address the constant shelling and economic strangulation of the district by the Israeli military.

CPT also has a presence in Chiapas, Mexico. This project opened in May of 1998 and continues at the invitation of *Las Abejas* (the Bees), a group of pacifist Mayan Christians who were displaced from their homes and fields by paramilitary forces.

The CPT work in Bosnia (eight months), Chechnya (one month), Vieques (four delegations so far), Columbia (a new three month project starting in January, 2001, should also be mentioned.

In the fall of 1997, CPT's steering committee began to be concerned over violence directed against Aboriginal peoples here in Ontario. Some of the issues which gave rise to the violence were: native fishing rights, land treaties, respect for native burial grounds, environmental concerns, and racist abuse of Aboriginal people by the public. It was thought that one potential solution would be to form a CPT-Ontario Corps, comprised of trained local individuals, whose partiality would be towards reducing violence by promoting justice and fair treatment of First Nation People, and a peaceful resolution to the ongoing issues involved. The hope was to train at least ten reservists from this province. This training took place in May 1998 and gave birth to CPT Ontario. A second training in August 2000 added another ten Ontario people to the CPT Corps.

Other provinces and near-by U.S. states also have reserve corps members.

As of December 2000, CPT has 17 full time workers, including 5 Canadians, and 79 reservists, of whom 28 are Canadian.

These numbers may seem insignificant when compared to Ron Sider's challenge for a force of 100,000 non-violent peacekeepers, but did Christianity not begin with a meager 12 individuals? And now, 2000 years or so later, Christians of the world number in the millions. CPT's support, however, reaches far beyond the small number of members on paper. Many people, either through their church, or individually, support the work of CPT with their financial offerings and with their prayer support. Therefore, people contributing to the efforts of CPT in any way at all, are important team members.

Gina Lepp, Harrow Mennonite Church.

Gina, as well as Gerry Lepp, Harrow Mennonite Church; Peggy Tiessen, Leamington United Mennonite Church; and Barb Martens, North Leamington United Mennonite Church, have been on CPT assignments at Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church) New Brunswick

Make Peace, & Make it Personal

When I first felt led by God to work for peace, I thought perhaps He had mistakenly given me someone else's calling. But, of course, God makes no mistakes. By nature, I tend to be judgmental, physically aggressive, and have a violent temper. Peace did not come easily to me. However, I have learned that this is exactly the reason why this call to work for peace is, in fact, mine. There is no better way for God to create in me a humble, peaceful spirit whose love of people and desire for peace could have a positive impact, and be reflected to others.

However, it needs to be personal. For years it has been too easy for me to dismiss situations of injustice, racism, or violence *(such as Burnt Church, New Brunswick)* as something distant, which does not affect me. Logistically, it is distant. However, when issues such as these are not addressed and challenged, it seems as though the incidents are deemed acceptable. I believe this to be wrong.

I feel that Jesus has empowered me with the same passion for peace and justice that He has, about which we read in the Bible. To deny that He has called me to work, in His name, toward peace and justice for *all* of His children, would also be very wrong.

As a reservist in Christian Peacemaker Teams-Ontario *(CPTO),* I have been available and willing to serve in the capacity for which I was trained since spring of 1998. When the incidents of destruction in Burnt Church *(Esgenoopetij),* New Brunswick turned hope into despair for that Aboriginal fishing community in fall of 1999, CPTO was invited to become involved, and I accepted the opportunity to make a difference.

Due to a CPTO issued press release, the eastern coast of New Brunswick was expecting us to be there, but did not really know what to expect from us. Nor did I know what to expect from the situation. One thing that impacted me early, though, was the sense that I was seen as different in the eyes of the Non-aboriginal communities, just because I sported the bright red "CPT" hat. We were the visual centre of attention in the grocery store, gas station, post office, restaurant, etc. It even caused me to wonder, on only the second day there, whether or not the cook at a local fast food establishment had spit on my hamburger in the process of preparing it. Only then did it occur to me that perhaps this was a very small taste of the prejudice and resentment that racial minorities commonly experience. After reflecting on this, I came to appreciate that small taste, because I could now identify with the oppressed in some small way. So, on only my second day, it was becoming real. It was becoming personal even though we were not really a part of the communities affected by the situation, and therefore, cannot completely understand the depth of the feelings and the hurts, the anger and the hopelessness.

What I can identify with to a certain degree, however, is how one Aboriginal mother may be feeling having had to separate from her young children. For I know how it feels to be far from my wife and children for several weeks at a time. This mother's story is told by her sister, who remains in the Aboriginal community in Burnt Church, and begins with the hope for fishing rights as a result of the "Marshall decision" of September '99. The mother was advanced four welfare cheques, upon request, in order to purchase lobster traps and other equipment necessary to sustain her family through fishing. She was given a small old boat, by a friend who supported her initiative. Having received some helpful encouragement and instruction, she proceeded to set the traps. Sadly, the violent, invasive incident of trap destruction occurred after she had set the traps on her second day of fishing. Not only were all of her traps and equipment destroyed or lost, but she now found herself without a means of sustenance for herself and her young children, and in debt for the four advanced welfare cheques as well. In the end, the mother had little choice but to travel farther south, into the US, where she found employment, leaving her children behind to be cared for by her extended family.

Two Native women in their fishing boat
(Courtesy Barb Martens)

What has this to do with peace? I know that the hurts and resentment people feel after an experience such as this can overwhelm them to the point where those feelings turn into anger and hatred. And these feelings were not the seeds of peace, but rather, the seeds of violence. In order for peace to grow, the "Peacemaker" must sow seeds of love and understanding. Over time they need to be nurtured with care and compassion, so that a relationship of trust has a chance to flourish. When a solid base of trust exists, we who are not the victims will be able to encourage healing, and perhaps eventually, forgiveness. Yes, this story is, among other issues, about peace.

In Burnt Church, New Brunswick, there are many stories from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, reflecting feelings which could breed hatred and violence.

However, there is also the awareness that this potential exists, and so many in that community are beginning to work at promoting peace.

News media personnel, and Doug Pritchard, upper left, watch native fishermen prepare to set lobster traps, on the day of the first big DFO raid. At center is James Ward, one of the native spokespersons.
(Courtesy Barb Martens)

This situation in which the CPTO is involved is very personal to me, because I have been there and have built bonds of love and friendship and trust with people that even distance cannot weaken. Yet I believe that even these strengths are not all that is needed for the peace the Creator intended for Burnt Church. Pray for peace to happen. Please, make it personal.

"He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." *(Ephesians 2:17&18)*

Gerald Lepp, (June 2000) Harrow Mennonite Church.

Three Agencies for Peace and Justice

The members of area Mennonite congregations have the opportunity to promote the issues of peace and justice within easy distance of home. Two retail outlets depend entirely on voluntary help to function.

The *Et Cetera Shoppe*, a thrift shop, established on Erie Street North in Leamington in 1982, is run by approximately 135 volunteers and a volunteer board of management. The mission statement, displayed near the front entrance reads, "The Mennonite Central Committee Ontario Thrift Shops are a non-profit marketing program of Mennonite Central Committee. We commit ourselves to living our faith in action by: raising funds for MCC Ontario by selling quality donated items at reasonable prices; practicing and promoting faithful stewardship and care for God's creation through the sharing of our gifts and the responsible use and reuse of resources; offering a friendly caring presence in the community, showing value and respect to all; strengthening interpersonal and interchurch relationships with people of all ages; fostering awareness of the mission of MCC locally and globally. By 1999, the Etcetera Shoppe had managed to raise $1,100,000 for MCC Ontario.

The *Ten Thousand Villages* shop was initially part of the thrift shop. In 1997 it moved into a separate location. By the spring of 2000 the board was able to purchase a building on the southeast corner of the main intersection of Leamington. Its motto is to provide vital, fair income to third world people by selling their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America. Ten Thousand Villages works with artisans who would otherwise be unemployed or underemployed. This income pays for food, education, healthcare and housing. Ten Thousand Villages is a non-profit program of MCC, the relief and development agency of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America. While most of the volunteers are members of Mennonite churches, several come from other denominations. The weekend staff also includes a number of high school students.

The third agency is *Shalom Counselling Services*. As the Hebrew meaning of its name implies, it aims to promote peace and wholeness for individuals, families and groups. Counselling is made available to families and individuals who cannot afford the full cost of the service. Shalom was established in 1992 in response to local needs as perceived by several Mennonite pastors. It is located in the South Essex Community Centre on Talbot Street East, Leamington. The Director/Counsellor, Marion Wiens, is responsible to a Regional Committee, which in turn is overseen by an Ontario board. The volunteer Committee is made up largely of members of Mennonite congregations. The agency receives financial support from Mennonite, as well as some other area churches, and United Way.

Gisela Schartner, Leamington United Mennonite Church.

Part Six

Other Anecdotes and Reflections

The CO and the Veteran on Peace Sunday

Two Christian men of good intent
Were ambling on their way
Their purpose was to offer thanks
For it was Peace Sunday.

The one had opted not to serve
Had stayed at home in fact
He sowed and later harvested
His limbs and mind intact.

The other chose the uniform
And all that with it goes
His life was spared but traumatized
While fighting far-off foes.

The two arrived at church that day
Their minds in grateful frame
They sat together in the pews
Their hymnbook was the same.

As soon as they were settled down
Each in his thoughts alone
Soon these became quite audible
A clear, distinctive tone.

The one who stayed at home began
"Dear Lord, with all my heart
I thank you for a peaceful land
Of which I am a part.

I thank you that the others served
And risked their lives for me
I stayed at home for conscience' sake
The others kept us free."

The soldier equally sincere
"Dear God of truth and light
Thank you that I was singled out
To come home from the fight."

They both loved peace, the difference was
But not at any price
The soldier felt that freedom's way
Called for a sacrifice.

Together they stood up and sang
"Peace in our time, O Lord"
The cleavage nonetheless remained
The ploughshare and the sword.

Jacob N. Driedger, Leamington United Mennonite Church

Mennonites and Informers in Soviet Russia

One aspect of the 1937-38 political purges in Russia seldom talked or written about in Mennonite circles, was the use of *"informers"* by authorities. Perhaps this was because it is so difficult to understand and painful to remember, and perhaps also because it is not at all flattering or uplifting. But the fact that it existed, and that Mennonites were a part of it, cannot be denied.

It is a dark chapter--some would argue best forgotten--but we would do a disservice to our people if we ignore this very real part of our history, because of the effect it had on the Mennonite community. Mennonites were considered to be a close knit, clannish, self sufficient group with a history of supporting and caring for one another, and this use of informers had the same effect on them as it did on the rest of the nation. It sowed fear, mistrust and suspicion. In the Mennonite community it destroyed, to a large extent, the cohesiveness, the sense of community and the sense of belonging that had been a strong bond among them.

We might well ask, how had it come to this? In a span of twenty years the Mennonites had experienced war, revolution, anarchy, famine, epidemics, and collectivization of private property. Added to this was the fact that now churches were closed and ministers had been arrested, or forbidden to conduct worship services. This wrenching transition, caused by the measures taken by the government, left the Mennonite community leaderless, both in secular and spiritual areas.

In earlier years this leadership had often overlapped, and because of this, it carried even greater weight in regard to standards and values. A direct result of these changes forced upon them by the government was that the standards and values had changed drastically, in a slow process of erosion. The Mennonite community was left leaderless and demoralized. There were by this time many *"fellow travelers"* who co-operated willingly with the regime just to make life a little easier for themselves. It meant a better job, better housing, and a better chance of an education for their children.

What made the practice so demoralizing, was the fact that it could be one's Mennonite neighbour, co-worker, friend, or even one's own relative who informed.

An informer might--in a very few cases--be a convinced communist; it could be someone seeking revenge for some real or imagined slight or insult, or it could be someone wishing to save himself by implicating another. What made the practice of using informers so insidious and demoralizing, was the fact that it could be, and often was, one's Mennonite neighbour, one's Mennonite co-worker, one's Mennonite friend, or even one's own relative who informed. Since the informer, in most cases, did not need to face the victim in a court of law, one could only guess who that

informer might be. In some cases, no doubt, the wrong person would be suspected. A person in our village, an overt communist who was considered the village drunk, was often suspected. Shortly after my father's arrest, this man came secretly to my mother and told her that he was not responsible--for some reason it was important to him and my mother believed him.

It was not unheard of for someone to threaten someone else in the heat of an argument with denunciation. Some time after my father's arrest, my mother had a confrontation with another Mennonite woman who told her at one point "If you don't watch yourself you will end up where your husband is." This thinly veiled threat quickly ended the argument--and this from a woman my mother had known for many years.

This story was told to us by some of our relatives while we were on a visit to Germany. The story is familiar; the father, one son and one son-in-law arrested and never heard from again, another son and son-in-law survived. For whatever reason, the family had always suspected a certain person--also a Mennonite--of being responsible for their father's arrest. In the fall of 1941 the Germans occupied our area of Ukraine. At the time, pointing out a suspected informer would have had dire consequences for that person. The temptation was great for the son and son-in-law to do just that, but it was their mother who counseled against it. The fortunes of war turned against the Germans and in 1943 the time came for the family to leave their homeland. For the men, it meant service in the German army; for the remaining family members, a very difficult time until the family was reunited in West Germany in 1947.

After some time in refugee camps life became more normal and the son-in-law was approached about becoming a minister to the Mennonites in this area. At first he flatly refused, without giving a reason. It was because both he and his wife still felt an intense dislike, bordering on hatred, for the person they suspected of denouncing their father. This man had survived the war as well, and they knew where he lived. After being asked again to take a leadership position in the church, they decided to resolve this issue and they drove to the city where this man lived. Unannounced they came to the house and knocked on the door. The door opened and they recognized each other instantly. The first words from this man's lips were: *"Mary, we had to!"* and he began to cry. After all these years, not *"Hello"*, not *"Come in"*, just *"We had to"*. He tried to explain how it had come about and begged their forgiveness. After a long, painful and difficult discussion they were able to forgive. They accepted the position in the church and were blessed in their work.

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How could they forgive? We could suggest that it was their Christian upbringing, or perhaps a result of Mennonite *"peace teaching"*, and it may well be so. Forgiveness is possible as this story illustrates. In an odd sort of way it may be easier for those people who were familiar with the conditions that existed at that time. The unjustly accused were not the only victims of this tragedy, the families that were left behind and in some perverse way, the informers themselves, were also victims.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this *"conspiracy of silence"*, this reluctance to talk or write about it, is that many who were not affected--but also those directly affected--had some understanding, or at least were aware of the pressures that could be exerted on those who would let themselves be used. Could it be that many people were not sure how they themselves would have reacted to these pressures and threats? We all like to think that we would be strong, that we would resist any threat, but I for one have always been grateful that I never had to make the choices some of these people faced. Those of us who have never experienced the difficulties of those years should be careful not to judge too harshly because we know too little about it.

The question comes to mind—would it have been beneficial if we had talked openly about this earlier?

Given the current interest in the Mennonite community in peacemaking, in victim-offender reconciliation and in promoting *"healing"*, the question comes to mind--would it have been beneficial if we had talked openly about this earlier? Could it have brought peace of mind, to some at least? Could there have been healing or some form of closure?

Other questions come to mind as well: why is it that few, if any, of the families informed against, ever sought revenge, or even an apology from the informer? Why did none of the informers ever ask forgiveness?

If this subject had been openly discussed, could we have gained some insight or understanding into how people can come to this point? Is it too late? Is it best forgotten? Would we not do an injustice to those who suffered and died innocently, if we ignored this subject completely? Would this alone be reason enough not to cover it up?

Ernie Neufeld, Leamington United Mennonite Church

A Detroit Teaching Experience

In the 1960's I taught in a number of Detroit high schools. In 1968 I was teaching at Southeastern High School and taught Family Living to a grade 12 class, mainly black, with an equal number of boys and girls.

The morning Martin Luther Jr. was assassinated, some of the black students in the school were so angry that they walked out of their classes, formed a mob and started a riot. One could hear them coming down the hall. The principal had already announced on the P.A. system that the school would be closed for the day and that everyone should go home. My class sat quietly. No one moved. I was at the front of the class – praying to myself.

When the mob came to my room, they looked through the small window in the door and saw a white teacher; they burst in! Twelve of my male students jumped up, formed a protective circle around me and drew the switchblades they always carried. They dared the mob to try and get me. That was quite a scene! The mob backed off and left, moving down the hall to find another white teacher.

My students left and a number of the boys walked me to my car so I could go home. Then they went back into the school and told the principal what had happened and that I had gone home.

That morning three white teachers were killed and five injured.

The school was closed for three days. When classes resumed, we talked about what had happened. We discussed what was or was not accomplished by a mob action and its violence. I asked the students, "Why did you protecte me?"

They answered, "You are our friend and you show that you care about us, that's why."

They answered, "You are our friend and you show that you care about us, that's why."

Sue Goerzen, Harrow Mennonite Church

Teaching at Wheatley OCCA

OCCA stands for Old Colony Christian Academy. The Old Colony Church congregations have schools in Wheatley, Kingsville, Dresden, Aylmer as well as in other places. The aim of the schools is to give the children of the Old Colony churches a Christian and academic education. The teachers of these schools are members of the Old Colony churches. In 1998-99, the Wheatley OCCA started with 199 students from Kindergarten to grade 12, with 15 students all in one classroom in grades 9 to 12.

Mary Buhler, the teacher of the high school students, and I work together to help these students with their mathematics. The school runs on a 6-day cycle, and I spend about one and one half hours, 5 school days out of 6, at the OCCA. For each subject in each grade, a year's work consists of completing a set of ten workbooks entitled "Light Units". They are purchased from Christian Light Publications Inc.in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

How did I get into this voluntary work? I retired in June 1990 after 40 years of

1999-2000 Wheatley OCCA Staff
Back l to r: Mr. Isaac Enns (principal), Miss Susie Harms, Mrs. Tina Schmitt, Miss Eva Loewen, Miss Susie Klassen, Miss Susie Thiessen
Front l to r: Miss Nancy Hiebert, Miss Anna Dyck, Mrs. Anna Dyck, Mrs. Helen Friesen, Mrs. Justina Groening, Mr. Peter C. Sawatzky
(Courtesy Peter Sawatzky)

teaching. That September I met Henry Dueck who was teaching at the Dresden OCCA at the time. He told me that the Wheatley OCCA needed a teacher to help their high school students with mathematics. I had thought of doing voluntary work in my retirement. For me teaching is a joy, so I joined the staff of the OCCA as a part-time member, and have been there for 9 years so far.

In the early days one of the Old Colony Church members asked why I, a stranger and not their church member, would help their children. My answer was that we were all Mennonites and brothers and, in fact, his ancestors and mine had been born and lived in the Chortitza ("Old") Colony in Ukraine so we had this connection, although I would have taught without any connection, for I believe that the talents we have should be used to help others and I am happy to use my teaching talents to help the OCCA students. A hope I have for all the students I have taught is that they in turn, will use their talents when the time comes to help others,

It is human nature to be suspicious and distrustful of people we do not know, and this lack of trust results in a lack of peace between us.

It is human nature to be suspicious and distrustful of strangers, people we do not know, and this lack of trust results in a lack of peace between us. Since I have taught there, I have learned to know many of the parents of students, as well as other members of the Old Colony Mennonite Church. I feel humble that they have entrusted their children to me. And I hope that my being there will help, in a small way, to further the cause of peace between our churches.

Peter C. Sawatzky, North Leamington United Mennonite Church

"The Gift of the Cross"

When I was completing a previous pastoral assignment, the congregation gave me a small wooden cross as a farewell gift. It was a simple cross, about 20 cm high and made of dark brown olive wood from Israel. I cherished the cross as a reminder of the love of the members of the congregation and as a reminder of my calling as a Christian and as a pastor, and it had a special place on the wall of my office.

Twelve years later, in 1998, when I had been pastor of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church for some time, the annual meeting of the Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) was held in Leamington. Among the visitors were two men from Uganda—Dave Klassen, the Ugandan country director for the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Rt. Rev. Macleod Baker Ochola, the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Kitgum in northern Uganda. In the Sunday morning worship service at NLUMC these visitors told of their difficult lives in war-torn Uganda, as well as the faith and hope of Christians in the area. It was a deeply moving experience for the congregation to hear the stories of persecution and suffering, and it reminded us of the privileges of freedom and security that we so often take for granted in Canada.

At the end of the worship service it seemed right to give the two men a token of the unity of the Spirit that we had experienced that morning. I thought about a symbolical item that could be taken along on their further journey without becoming a burden, and the cross came to mind. Quickly I got it from my study and presented it to Bishop Ochola as a reminder of the time we had been privileged to share together. It was one of those special "holy moments" in our lives and in the life of our congregation when we embraced, not knowing if our paths would ever cross again.

Bishop Ochola

Several months later I received a package from Uganda. It was a beautiful, yet sobering book, sent by David Klassen, consisting of drawings by Ugandan children about their life in their war-torn country: scenes of soldiers and bombings, burning houses, destroyed villages, and life in refugee camps; but also visions of living in peace and happiness. Dave had sent the book as a token of appreciation for their earlier reception in Leamington and a reminder of the continuing desperate needs in Uganda. It was a book that

subsequently found its special place in our church library!

Again some months went by, when I received an e-mail message from Bishop Ochola. The cross we had given him had continued to be a symbol of our kinship. It had now been donated to the All Saints Cathedral in Kitgum, where it remained—as Bishop Ochola wrote—a monument of our love for the people of God in the diocese of Kitgum.

The story may well not yet be finished! But a significant link of friendship and shared faith in the reconciling work of Jesus Christ was established on that Sunday in November 1998 that cut across the boundaries of time and space!

Victor Kliewer, North Leamington United Mennonite Church

Conclusion

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The Mennonite church groups of Essex and Kent Counties are a similar, yet diverse gathering of Christians! (For a more complete review of the different churches see the first volume in the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Series, ***The Mennonites in Essex and Kent. An Introduction.***) In this book the editorial committee attempted to include representative thoughts or experiences of all of the churches, regretfully without complete success! As a result, most items came from the traditional "United Mennonite" churches: the Leamington United Mennonite Church, the North Leamington United Mennonite Church, the Faith Mennonite Church, and the Harrow Mennonite Church. Fewer pieces were contributed from the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Old Colony Mennonite Church, and the New Reinland Mennonite Church. To some extent this apparently unbalanced representation may be explained by the differences in size and age of the congregations, to some extent also doubtlessly by differing theological emphases.

Of course, the present selective collection is not nearly exhaustive! It was the much more modest intention of the editorial committee to provide samples from the different Mennonite groups with the purposes of, hopefully revealing similarities or differences of convictions in both teaching and practice; pointing to developments over the time of the Mennonite presence in these counties; finally, stimulating further thought and discussion about the issues involved!

A few trends did, indeed, begin to appear in the process of collecting the information:

1. It quickly became evident–and not surprisingly!–that the basic teachings of all Mennonite groups are consistent in opposing participation in military service and promoting the cause of peace in all walks of life (as found, for example, in the catechism books).

2. It came as somewhat of a surprise that the peace conviction, which was so clearly set forth in the basic documents, was only weakly reflected in the preaching. In looking for peace sermons–especially in the political and/or military sense–before and even during the Second World War it became conspicuous that there were very few that even mentioned warfare or conscientious objection; more sermons emphasized the "inner peace" or "peace with God." Even in the early decades after the War, there were few sermons in any of the Mennonite churches that related to political peace or the stance of the Christian toward government on this issue. There were some exceptions, one of the earliest probably being the sermons of pastor Peter Janzen of Faith Mennonite Church. In the United Mennonite tradition "Peace Sunday" has more recently been celebrated at the beginning of November each year, and this has usually given rise to a related sermon. (Several of these sermons have been included in this collection.) Thus, while recently there has been an increasing concern for this "political" perspective, in the large majority of other sermons of all Mennonite groups, when there was an emphasis on peace, it tended to continue the focus on inward, spiritual peace or possibly on peaceful relations with other church members or neighbours.

It also became evident that even though some pastors did not disagree with their church's peace position, they also did not see it as a special priority and spoke on related topics quite rarely.

3. One item that became conspicuous was the tremendous significance of World War Two on the Mennonites. It became a watershed experience that tested the convictions–especially of the draft age young men but also of the entire congregations–about participation in the military services. But it also tested their ethnic loyalties and influenced their emergence out of isolation into the mainstream of the larger society. Of course, this impact was felt only by those who were already in Essex or Kent at the time–that is, the United Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren. In a different, although related manner, the War also affected the Mennonite population in that many new Mennonite refugees arrived in Essex and Kent from Russia and Germany, bringing with them their traumatic experiences and deep convictions.

4. In reviewing the actual experiences of Mennonite people, it became apparent that there was a broad range of convictions. Some young men, for example, went into the Conscientious Objector programs, while others enlisted in the military in non-combatant or in some cases combatant service. Adding to this, the Mennonites who came to Canada after World War Two had often been required to serve in the military services of Russia or Germany, and brought yet another perspective. This range of convictions has probably never been resolved–no matter what the basic doctrinal statements are!

5. For the Mennonites of Essex and Kent, as for so many others in Canada and the United States, it became clear that the peace position had only limited validity when it was a refusal of military service. As a result, many got involved in alternative, positive efforts to contribute to peace in the world, be this in rebuilding after the War, teaching abroad, or other activities. This concern for a positive peace witness has continued to be a strong uniting strand among the Mennonites to the present, often through the channel of the Mennonite Central Committee. Many more stories could be told than the ones that have been included in this collection!

6. It also became clear to the editorial committee that peacemaking may well be easier in distant places and among foreign people than it is close to home, within one's own community or congregation or even one's own family. Thus, while those topics may merit separate publications at a future time, they are at least reminders that the issue of peacemaking can only be addressed in a spirit of great humility, in the awareness that no one is immune to the destructive forces of violence and conflict and all are dependent on the grace of God!

Victor Kliewer, on behalf of the Publications Committee.

Appendices

Further Readings

There is a rich abundance of literature related to the topics of peace and peacemaking. The material includes biblical expositions, ethical studies, historical reviews, and story collections from various times and places.

Organizations that publish literature include Mennonite and other "peace church" related colleges and seminaries (for example, the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Conrad Grebel College, and Canadian Mennonite Bible College–now part of Canadian Mennonite University), conference committees (such as the Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee), and the Mennonite Central Committee with its related groups. In recent years the organization Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) has focussed attention on peacemaking efforts. Literature, as well as audio-visual resources can also be found in several centers (for example, the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Resource Center in Kitchener). Of course, peace concerns are not limited to Mennonite or Anabaptist-related churches, publishers, or organizations!

A sampling of just a few books available follows:

but why don't we go to war? Finding Jesus' Path to Peace, by Susan Mark Landis (Herald Press, Scottdale PA and Waterloo ON, 1993; 239 pages). Six study sessions that can be used inter-generationally; focus on not only refusing participation in war but following Jesus' way of peace.

Joining the Army that Sheds No Blood, by Susan Clemmer Steiner (Herald Press, Kitchener ON and Scottdale PA, 1982; 155 pages). Nine chapters deal with the meaning of pacifism and peacemaking in a lively and practical, yet insightful manner. Part of *The Christian Peace Shelf* series. Includes list of further "serious," "easy," and "children's" readings.

Mennonite Peacemaking. From Quietism to Activism, by Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill (Herald Press, Scottdale PA and Waterloo ON, 1994; 344 pages). Driedger and Kraybill are sociologists who have studies changes in the Mennonite peace position, as it intersected with other forces of society; they observe a dramatic shift from passive non-resistance to active participation in the political order. Very carefully written and documented, many tables.

New Testament Basis of Peacemaking, by Richard McSorley. (3rd revised edition, Herald Press, Scottdale PA and Kitchener ON, 1985). A critical interpretation of the New Testament basis for the Christian peace stance, as well as a review of the Old Testament perspective and also later Christian writers; responses to 16 objections to the Christian pacifist position. Part of *The Christian Peace Shelf.*Peace and Justice Series. This series consists of a dozen or so small volumes on topics related to war,

peacemaking, and justice issues. The following are only a few of the available titles (all at Herald Press, Scottdale PA and Kitchener ON):

The Way God Fights. War and Peace in the Old Testament, by Lois Barrett (1987, vol. 1 of the series; 79 pages). In 15 short chapters, the theme of Holy War in the Bible is examined.

How Christians Made Peace with War. Early Christians Understandings of War, by John Driver (1988, vol. 2 of series; 95 pages). Driver reviews the developments in the thought and practice of the early church as related to the issues of participation in war.

Making War and Making Peace. Why Some Christians Fight and Some Don't, by Dennis Byler (1989, vol. 8 in series; 104 pages). In three sections the book discusses different Christian convictions on the topic of participation in warfare.

War and the Christian Conscience: From Augustine to Martin Luther King, Jr., edited by Albert Marrin (Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1971; 342 pages). A valuable collection of writings on the topic of Christian participation or non-participation in war; excerpts from writings by church leaders and theologians from the first to the 20th centuries.

Weathering the Storm. Christian Pacifist Responses to War. A collection of essays by various authors. (Faith and Life Press, Newton KS, 1991; 167 pages). In this book, which was published in response to the Persian Gulf War, 22 leading Mennonite writers deal with different aspects of the Christian response to war and conflict situations.

Why I Am a Conscientious Objector, by John M. Drescher (Herald Press, Scottdale PA and Waterloo ON, 1982; 80 pages). In this short book, a well-known Mennonite author outlines his personal conviction on non-participation in war and following Christ's way of peace. Part of the series *The Christian Peace Shelf.* Includes "A Peace Bibliography" on pages 65-73.

The Editorial Committee

The Editorial Committee was made up of the members of the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, Publications Committee

Victor Kliewer—Chair and Editor-in-Chief—NLUMC
Mary Thiessen—Secretary—NLUMC
Astrid Koop—NLUMC
Gisela Schartner—LUMC
Harold Thiessen—NLUMC

Victor Kliewer was the energetic motivating force behind this book, and it was well on its way when he accepted the position of Executive Director of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba. After his resignation as editor in June, 2000, the other members of the committee continued the editing process to completion.

The Advisory Committee

Peter Bartel—MB
Marge Friesen—NRMC
Sue Goerzen—HMC
Bill Hiebert—KG
Walter Klassen—EMMC
Nancy Kroeker—OCMC
Bruno Penner—LUMC
Harry Riediger—HMC
Luise Taves—FMC

The members of the advisory committee were actively involved in the early planning, suggesting topics, writing anecdotes, and obtaining written material and photographs from other persons to include in the book. The editorial committee thanks them for their valuable contributions and support. A special thank you to those who contributed stories, and to Henry N. Driedger who went the second mile, searching his files for pertinent information.


To


gether We Can