

# Our Heritage

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2014

Volume 27, Issue 2

## Shirley Showalter Shares “Blush” at July Event

Shirley Showalter read from her memoir, *Blush*, at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center on July 6.

The event was part of a west coast book tour allowing Showalter and her husband, Stuart, to visit bookstores and Mennonite communities from Santa Barbara to Victoria, B.C.

At the reading in Hubbard, Ore., Showalter shared a chapter from her memoir in which she describes her family’s participation in the Fresh Air program, bringing kids from New York City to the countryside.

For several years, a girl named Vicky visited Showalter’s conservative Mennonite family in Lancaster, Penn. Showalter’s memoir tells the story of Vicky’s time in the Lancaster community, as well as the long-lasting relationship developed between Showalter’s family and Vicky’s.

Showalter began the evening by talking about how her memoir came to be.



*Shirley Showalter considers an audience member’s question at the July 6 event, held at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. Showalter was visiting the west coast as part of a book tour that stretched from Southern California to British Columbia. (Photo courtesy of Don Bacher)*

“I’m an English professor,” she said. “And I chose English because I love stories.”

Showalter explained that when she taught her students to tell stories, her own personal stories would emerge, too, and she felt called to write them down.

She entered the first story

she wrote, about her family’s experience hosting Vicky, in a newspaper contest, and won. Subsequent submissions in subsequent years also won first place, planting “a seed” in Showalter’s mind that she should write a memoir.

According to Showalter, too, the theme in that initial es-



Mennonite.

Showalter explained her parents' decision-making about allowing her to attend a public school, which was her desire. Because her commute to the public high school was so far, and because her parents decided they could not necessarily afford a private Mennonite school education, Showalter's father bought her a convertible instead.

"When I look back on it now," she said, "it's just wild that he did that." Because Showalter wore a covering to high school, driving a convertible proved to be somewhat of a challenge, a story she told to big laughs from the audience.

She talked as well about her family, and about how they received her memoir, given that her recall of events might be different than others. This is one of the difficult aspects of writing memoir, she said, noting that

*After Shirley Showalter spoke, she spent some time signing her book, Blush. Here, she talks with Carl Newswanger, who brought his copy of Blush, its own kind of blessing, as the success of Showalter's book tour meant there were fewer books to sell. (Photo courtesy of Don Bacher)*

say opened the way to the theme that would guide her book: the tension between growing up in a conservative Mennonite family and engaging with the outside world.

After reading her essay, Showalter also discussed the process she took to write her project. She wrote much of her memoir while taking care of her grandson in Brooklyn, New York, and joined a writer's group called The Manhattan Memoir Posse.

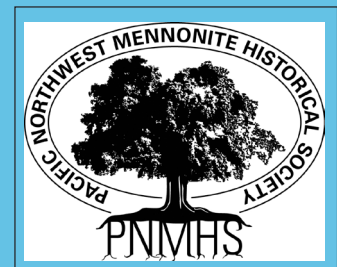
Showalter said she wanted the stories she wrote to connect with people who were Mennonite, but also those who had none of her Mennonite background; being part of the Manhattan writers' group, whose members were primarily Jewish,

provided just the audience to help her do this.

Showalter spent about an hour answering questions from the audience, including those about her experiences living in Lancaster and attending public high school as a conservative

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: Jerry Barkman  
 Vice President: Goldie Heyerly  
 Secretary: Gloria Nussbanum  
 Treasurer: Don Bacher  
 Newsletter Editor: Melanie Springer Mock  
 Archivist: Margaret Shetler  
 Conference Historian: Ray Kauffman



This newsletter is published biannually by the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society. Send general correspondence to Margaret Shetler, 355 Leo Street, Mt. Angel, OR 97362. Newsletter items may be sent to Melanie Springer Mock at [mmock@georgefox.edu](mailto:mmock@georgefox.edu) or 110 SW Spruce, Dundee, OR 97115. Back issues of the newsletter are available for \$3.00 each from PNMHS, 6030 S. Whiskey Hill Road, Hubbard OR 97032-9406.

those who write about their lives must address what “the tone will be in relationship to your past.

“I wanted that tone be loving and truthful, simultaneously,” Showalter said. She also wanted some lightness in her tone, so that it would not be too reverential, too pious.

“I don’t know why that should be such a negative word, but it is,” she added.

Although not all of her experiences growing up Mennonite were not positive, Showalter affirmed her continued dedication to the Mennonite church, explaining why the end of her memoir includes a chapter on “Why I Am (Still) a Mennonite.”

She wanted her readers to know “what I have personally seen to be salvific about being Mennonite,” she said.

When asked whether she would write another book, Showalter answered that she wasn’t sure: she was having too much fun promoting *Blush* at the moment, and was waiting for direction about what to do next.

“I won’t write it unless I feel called to write it,” she said. “This one I feel called to write, so I’m waiting for what the next signal is.”

A book signing followed Showalter’s presentation, though her west coast tour—not even at its midway point—had been more successful than anticipated.

Because she and Stuart were traveling by train, they carried only as many books as their suitcase could hold, and she had only a few books left to sell.

Those who attended the event also enjoyed a reception outside of the heritage center, the temperate July evening inviting people to linger and visit.

At one time an English professor at Goshen College in

Indiana, Showalter ascended to the presidency in 1996, and led the college until 2004. After resigning from Goshen, she worked for the Fetzer Institute. She and her husband now reside in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

The reading and reception were hosted by the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society. ~



*More images from the Showalter reading on July 6. Top: A very full library listens closely to Showalter. Bottom: Ginny Birky talks with Stuart Showalter on during the after-reading reception. (Photos courtesy Don Bacher)*

# Remembering Fifty-Plus Years of Mennonite Camping

Compiled by Melanie Springer Mock, PNMHS newsletter editor

Drift Creek Camp was the guest of honor at the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society semi-annual meeting this March.

A number of former directors and summer hosts shared their experiences working at the camp, and audience members participated in the event as well: singing a well-known camp song and then, at the program's end, sharing the ways Drift Creek Camp shaped and transformed their lives.

Drift Creek Camp, located in the coastal range outside of Lincoln City, was built starting in 1961, and three years later, accepted its first campers.

It has been welcoming campers ever since to its summer youth camps; during the year, other groups use its facilities for retreats and for outdoor school programs.

At the spring meeting, representatives spanning the history of Drift Creek talked about their experience at the camp, from its nascent years to recently.

The result was a fascinating yet personal look at the camp's history, at the ways some things about Drift Creek have changed in its 50-plus years of



existence, and some of the ways the camp—especially in its mission—has remained unchanged.

But first to music. Because singing both spiritual and silly songs has been such an important part of the summer youth camp experience, Don Bacher prefaced the sharing by asking the audience to sing “All God’s Critters Got a Place in the Choir,” a piece that conflates both the spiritual and the silly, reminding us that God’s expansive love allows all kinds of creatures to sing praise, all in their own ways.

Lyn and Jeanne Hershey began the day’s presentation by recalling the very earliest years at Drift Creek, when they served as camp directors and lived with their family, which included

four boys and—while at Drift Creek—the addition of a daughter.

The Hersheys talked about the camp’s nascent years, and Lyn recalled a defining incident in their time at the camp, when Lyn was badly burned by a generator.

Despite this horrific event, the Hersheys established deep roots at Drift Creek, and in later years, many of their children returned to work in the summer camping program as well.

Elvon Kauffman spoke next about his work at Drift Creek as a music director and counselor during the 70s. For Kauffman, time at Drift Creek were some of the best summers of his life, affording him the opportunity to play in the Oregon

coastal range wilderness while also ministering to children.

At least one of the children he ministered was in the audience; even after 40 years, she could remember Kauffman's leadership at the camp, as well as the ways Drift Creek Camp transformed her life.

Kauffman was followed by Glen and Lois Oesch, who served for over a decade as directors of the camp, from 1979-1991. They also counseled at the camp in its early years, invited by the Hersheys to spend several weeks at the place they would one day consider home.

The Oesch's talked about raising their boys at the camp—sharing how Chris and Nick loved to explore the grounds, spending time with other campers and counselors and feeling fully integrated into the Drift



*After her husband Glen Oesch spoke, Lois Oesch talked about working and raising her two sons at Drift Creek Camp. The Oesch's served as directors from 1979-1991, and their children, Nicolas and Christopher, grew up there. (Photo courtesy Don Bacher.)*



*Jeanne and Lyn Hershey shared about the early years at Drift Creek Camp, which included raising their young children and a generator fire that caused significant burns on Lyn's body. (Photo courtesy Don Bacher.)*

Creek experience.

Glen Oesch continues to work for the camp, serving as its food service director, a position he's held since 2008. Given his long involvement with the camp, Oesch has driven the winding road to Drift Creek

countless times, logging intense miles on the curves leading into camp.

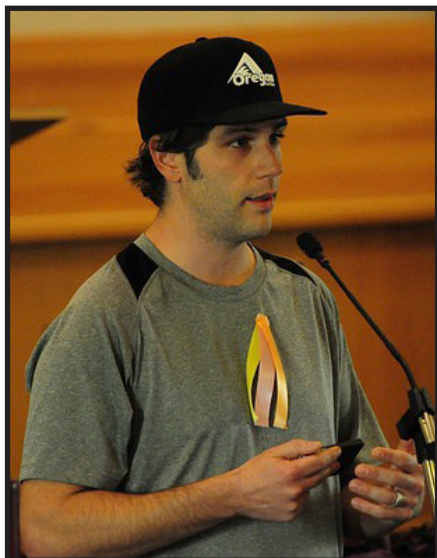
As a young couple, Seth and Brie Ediger served Drift Creek Camp as its caretakers from 2008-2009; Seth had attended Drift

Creek as a child, and was drawn back to the space after his experiences in youth camping.

The couple talked about the challenges of living at the caretaker house year-round, especially in the months when the camp is not active.

The Ediger's experience mirrored that of the many caretakers who have worked at the camp, contending with the vagaries of winter storms that send trees across the road; electricity outages that plummet the camp into darkness; and witnessing the beauty of the camp in every season, a gift few people receive.

Following the Ediger's, Merv Kropf talked about serving as a counselor, a summer camp director, and then as the year-round camp coordinator.



*Merv Kropf went to Drift Creek Camp as a child and, like many, returned as an adult to work at the place he loved. He now helps out each year with Surf Camp, after full- and part-time stints in various director positions. (Photo courtesy Don Bacher.)*

Like many who ultimately work at Drift Creek in some capacity, Kropf had spent time at the camp as a child, and felt called to return to a place he loved.

Though he no longer serves the camp in a full-time capacity, Kropf continues to help with the Surf Camp each year, and during his presentation, Kropf talked about the enormous impact Surf Camp and other Drift Creek programs have had on the children who attend.

Dave Detweiler was the final presenter. Detweiler is the president of the Drift Creek Camp board, and he is also in-

involved with the camp through its fishing retreats, church retreats, and mushroom weekends.

He has served on the board since 2010, and became its chair in 2012. Detweiler reminded the audience of the significant role Drift Creek Camp has played in the spiritual development of Mennonite and other young people in the Pacific Northwest, and talked about the programs the camp hopes to sustain—or develop—in the upcoming years.

After the formal presentation, the remaining time was dedicated to audience members sharing their experiences in the camp.

One woman talked about her children’s attendance at the camp she also loved, and how she was grateful to talk with her Mennonite grandma about her children’s time at Drift Creek shortly before the grandmother’s death.

Clearly, Drift Creek had assumed a large part of the woman’s life, even if she “only” attended camp for a week or so each summer.

During the reception following the meeting, attend-

ees had the opportunity to peruse scrapbooks with pictures of summer camps and specialty retreats dating back to the camp’s earliest years. A relief map of the camp was also available, marking the changes in the camp as buildings have been added or rehabilitated over the years.

Those planning the PNMHS spring program had decided on a theme of “Drift Creek Camp: Thanks for the Memories.”

The presentations, the open sharing, and the photos all reflected a sense of gratitude for an institution that has provided plenty of Mennonites with tremendous memories, as well as the foundation for a rich and deep spiritual life. ~



*At the end of the program, Mary Jane Eby presented a check to Tony and Brenda Kauffman for the ongoing ministry of Drift Creek Camp. The Kauffmans are current co-directors of the camp. (Photo courtesy Don Bacher.)*

# New PNMHS Web Site Worth A Look

If you haven't yet explored the new and improved Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society website, you really should.

Accessed at [www.pnmhs.org](http://www.pnmhs.org), the reconstructed site provides ready information about PNMHS events, but also includes archived PNHMS newsletters, recordings of meetings, and links to our library and archive collections.

John Gingerich, who attends Zion Mennonite, has been hard at work rebuilding the site, and the work-in-progress provides an especially nice portal for those doing Mennonite history and genealogical work, giving virtual access to information stored at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, located in Hubbard, Ore.

On the renovated web site, Gingerich has created links that allow visitors to access descriptions of the archive collections held by PNMHS, including personal, congregational, conference, and institutional collections.

For most all of the collections, Gingerich provides a detailed description of their contents. This kind of information is invaluable to those doing research

that requires access to PNMHS holdings, and can be retrieved without costly travel to Oregon.

Someone wanting to research Albany Mennonite, for example, could click on a link connected to that collection, and will be immediately routed to the Archon site that curates all Mennonite archival material, and which describes in detail what the PNHMS archive has (in this example, 15 different boxes filled with material about Albany Mennonite).

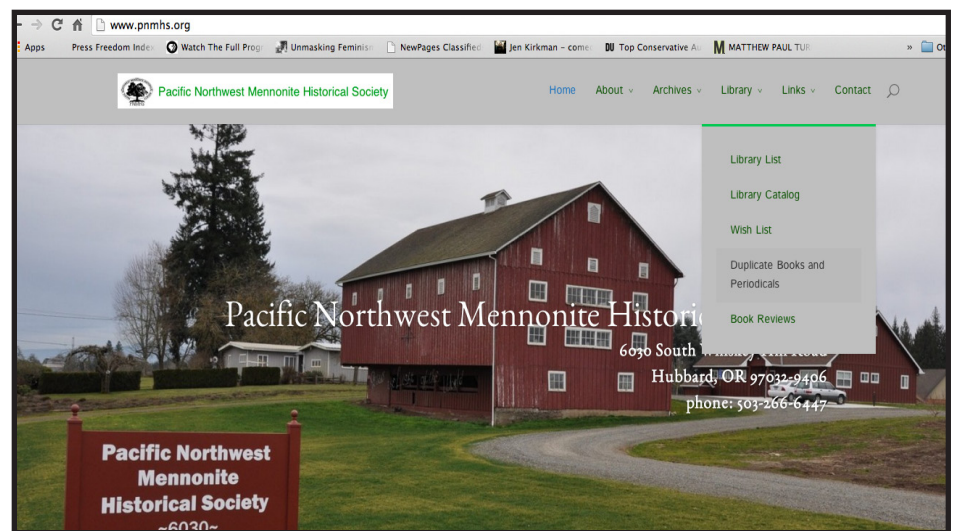
Additionally, the new site includes access to archived PNHMS newsletters reaching back to the publication's first volume, produced in September 1988. Gingerich has also provided a brief description of each newsletter's contents, so that those looking for a particular article can

simply read the description without having to unnecessarily open links.

Because PNHMS semi-annual meetings are an important part of the society's offerings, Gingerich has also provided information about each program, beginning with a 1988 spring meeting at Bethany Mennonite.

For some meetings, audio and/or video recordings are also available.

Finally, Gingerich has added links to other important resources, including other Mennonite historical societies and historical libraries; northwest cemeteries that might be considered "Mennonite"; Anabaptist Mennonite scholars; and a number of genealogical sites that might help those seeking to find their roots, Mennonite or otherwise. ~



## New Novel Follows Mennonite Family Through the 20th Century

The setting and characters of Jessica Penner's novel will undoubtedly feel familiar to many Mennonite readers. *Shaken in the Water* follows the lives of a Mennonite family through three generations spanning the 20th century; set in Kansas, the characters move through a small town that seems, at times, like it could be almost any rural Mennonite community dotting the Midwest.

And yet, many details in Penner's excellent work will seem unfamiliar and perhaps unsettling: A woman is swept into a wintertime tornado and emerges, unscathed save for the removal of her head covering; a tiger moves uncharacteristically through a backyard, hemmed in by a prosaic fence over which children can crawl; voices echo in odd places, sometimes dismaying those who hear.

In other words, *Shaken in the Water* should not be considered just another Mennonite novel, set in a Mennonite town, with Mennonite characters. Instead, Penner uses the conventions of magical realism—in which elements of fantasy are woven into an otherwise realistic narrative—to provide readers a unique story, one that is well worth reading. The use of magical realism in the text opens us up new ways of see-

ing the world; and so, while some readers might find the narrative challenging because of its more magical elements, the challenges are ultimately rewarding, for Penner asks us to consider what is reality and what is not, and whether our faith—in things seen and unseen—is really what we believe it to be.

*Shaken in the Water* begins on the wedding night of Agnes and Peter Harder in 1923, when Peter discovers Agnes's birthmark, etched across her back.

Agnes had been born in 1903 with the mark, called Tiejia Kjoaw—Tiger Scar—in the Mollotschna Colony from which Agnes's ancestors had immigrated. At her birth, the midwife claims the Tiger's Scar can be read as "a mark of possible greatness or the mark of disaster," a prophecy to which the narrative returns often.

What of Agnes's progenitors? Are they marked by greatness—or are their lives wrought by disaster? At times, the line between these two poles seems exceedingly thin.

From this opening, the novel moves back and forth through time. The narrative arc spans from Agnes's birth in 1903 to the uncomfortable return of Agnes's granddaughter, Minerva, from the city to her home in

2007. Chapters trace events in Agnes's childhood and her marriage to Peter; her friendship to Nora, Peter's sister; Agnes's own children, struggling to comprehend their place in a world that seems both stable and unchanging, but also unpredictable. For while life in a small Mennonite farming town appears constant and peaceful, Penner's novel suggests that disquiet thrums beneath the calm.

Though Mennonites have historically been called to set themselves apart from the world and its cares, Penner's novel suggests that, despite their insularity—despite the strict rules that would separate a daughter from her family over a head covering, for example—Mennonites are no different than the world around them: flawed, broken, often unable to clearly hear God's voice, or that of the Other.

*Shaken in the Water* is an excellent debut novel. Because the setting and characters will indeed be familiar to many Mennonite readers, those who have not yet encountered a work of magical realism might find Penner's novel—and its unfamiliar elements—a great place to start. ~

Review by Melanie Springer Mock, reprinted from *Mennonite World Review*.



## Ninety Years Ago (A Poem by Mrs. H.E. Widmer)

*There's been a lot of changes  
In this old world here below,  
It doesn't look just as it did—  
Some ninety years ago.*

*Those were the good old days for sure,  
When life was at it's best.  
The people did not rush about,  
But took time out to rest.*

*Each morning when the sun came up  
We'd go about our chores,  
We'd feed the chickens, milk the cows,  
And split the wood outdoors.*

*We'd hoe the garden, rake the leaves,  
And watch the breezes blow.  
So many things have changed about  
Since ninety years ago.*

*We knew all in our neighborhood,  
And visited in ease,  
We took long strolls out in the woods  
Among the flowers and trees.*

*The lilies and the buttercups,  
And the lady slippers too,  
Were almost numberless in those days  
Beneath the skies of blue.*

*We roamed the meadows, and the hills,  
All nature seemed aglow—  
But many things have changed,  
Since ninety years ago.*

*The houses in those good old days  
From gadgets were all free,  
We used the coal oil lamps instead,  
Had no electricity.*

*But we were happy and content,  
More than mere words could tell—  
The oaken bucket in those days,  
Drew water from the well.*

*We didn't have a wash machine  
With ringers to release.  
We just used grandma's Lysol soap,  
With plenty elbow grease.*

*We raised our meat and caught our  
fish,  
Out of the mountain stream.  
The living in those good old days,  
Was like a Fairy's dream.*

*The fuel we burned to warm the house,  
Was split up with the ax.  
We also had sufficient time  
To read, and—just relax.*

*Our cellars too were bulging full  
With vegetables galore,  
We didn't even take the time  
To lock the cellar door*

*In winter time we loved the snow,  
And played around outside.  
Pa hitched the horses to the sled  
And took us for a ride.*

*When Sunday came, we knew the  
hour,  
The old church bell would ring.  
We went to church, we had the time,  
To rest, and pray, and sing.*

*But many things are different now,  
You very well all know*

*That everything has changed around,  
Since ninety years ago.*

*The people are all busy now,  
No time the Lord to seek,  
They're working almost day and  
night,  
All seven days a week.*

*The highways are all lined with cars,  
At eighty miles an hour—  
No man can check this speeding world,  
'Twill take a higher power.*

*Now, airplanes fly in the skies,  
The jets go streaming by,  
The cars could not go fast enough,  
So men just had to fly.*

*Conditions sure are bad enough,  
Perhaps they could be worse;  
But it will take the Lord Himself,  
To rule this universe.*

*Although the sun still rises  
And the moon beams give their glow  
Just look around—it's different  
Since ninety years ago.*

Note: The original title of this poem was "Forty Years Ago," and each place where "ninety" is appears, the original had "forty." The poem was written by Mrs. Herbert E. Widmer, whose husband was the first minister of Grace Mennonite Church in Dallas, Ore. Hope Lind writes that H.E. Widmer grew up as an Old Mennonite in Albany, Ore. (*Apart & Together*, 150)~

# Obituary for Long-Time PNMHS Supporter Kenneth Berkey

Kenneth Phillip Berkey was born in Hubbard to John and Grace Troyer Berkey on February 25, 1914. His mother was the daughter of Amos P. Troyer, bishop of Zion Mennonite Church.

His family included brothers Willis, Derben, Johnny, Stephen and Richard; and sisters Kathryn Yoder, Gladys Heyerly, Blanche Heyerly, Ruth Hostetler and Helen Reznicek.

Ken attended the Zion Mennonite Church all his life. He remembers having, early in life, a desire to obey and honor and please his parents.

While still in grade school, he ran an early morning paper route and gave all the earnings to his parents. He continued to share his salary with them until he married at age 27.

This practice of meeting the needs when he was aware of them is early evidence of the giving and generosity which characterized his life. Stewardship was ever of importance to him.

Under the authority of the church, he was baptized at age 19. The baptism took place in Rock Creek.

He married Lilly Lais at Zion Mennonite Church on June 20, 1941. They had one son Peter and five daughters: Jeanne Hey-

erly of Indiana, Linda Abraham of Kimberly, Grace Stutzman of Hubbard, Karen Amstutz of Hubbard and Anita Berkey of California.

Attendance and participation at the church was a life-long practice. Ken's involvement included singing in the men's choir, teaching 8th grade Sunday school, counselor at summer camp, church treasurer and elder.

A men's Bible study was meaningful to him for many years. He served as conference delegate to a church-wide Stewardship Council, and gave of his counsel to Drift Creek Camp and Western Mennonite School. Devotions at the breakfast table were also an important part of the life of Ken and his family.

He never finished high school, which was not uncommon then. Early on he worked for

Joel Fisher, for Dan Hostetler at the Needy Tile Co, then at age 19 he took employment at Larsen's Creamery in Oregon City and continued there 12 years.

In 1945 he bought into Needy Brick and Tile Company and continued in partnership there until 2009, retiring at the age of 95. In his latter years he appreciated that his partners allowed him to be involved—early mornings found him starting the machinery, he greeted the employees, and drove the fork lift.

In 1978, he together with partners, purchased Voget Meats, of Hubbard and continued in ownership until 2003.

He lived in the Hubbard area from 1945 until his death on October 24, 2013, attended by his daughters.~

## Save This Date:

On January 31, 2015, the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society will be holding its annual meeting, starting at noon with a catered meal. If you are a member or PNMHS—or wish to be—please plan on attending. We will be discussing important society business, as well as hearing a specially-invited speaker share about Mennonite history.

Invitations will be coming soon!

## Making a Case for War to End: David Swanson's War No More

Is war inevitable?

Wasn't World War II necessary? What about a Hitler?

Are not war and violence part of human nature? Isn't war a last resort to deal with evil in the world?

David Swanson's book, *War No More: The Case for Abolition*, explores these and other questions. Published in 2013, Swanson's text makes a compelling case for peace.

According to Swanson, "Hunger is not inevitable. Everyone knows that people will always starve, the way Everyone knew that man would never fly. At one time in human history, everyone knew that . . .

The world was flat,  
The sun revolved around  
the earth,  
Slavery was an economic  
necessity,  
A four-minute mile was  
impossible,  
Polio and smallpox would  
always be with us,  
And no one would ever set  
foot on the moon.  
Until courageous people  
challenged old beliefs and  
a new idea's time had  
come."

All the forces in the world are not so powerful as an idea whose time has come.

I have always been fascinated with the subject of war and peace. Is nationalism a good thing? Why are war and the military so glorified here and in many other countries?

Can I, should I, with a clear conscience pay taxes that support the war effort? Should the United Nations be strengthened so it could use war to stop wars? In past wars what other options were there?

Swanson stops me in my tracks. He answers these and many other questions I had not thought of. In just over 180 pages of concise, easy-to-read text, Swanson makes some significant claims, such as "There never was a good war or a bad peace."

In a chapter on "How to be against both Hitler and War," Swanson provides a brilliant diagnosis of World War II, one that addresses the argument that the war was inevitable, given the evil of Hitler's reign.

This book is up to date; it even discusses the near bombing of Syria by US President Barack Obama. The Military Industrial

Complex (MIC) is also examined. Swanson provides sub-sections on the "Danger of Obedience," "We Can't End War if They Don't End War," and "War the Crime, not War Crimes."

The book is broken into four units, including 1) War Can be Ended; 2) War Should be Ended; 3) War is Not Going to End on Its Own; and 4) We Have to End War.

Perhaps what impressed and surprised me most was positive, the progress already made toward abolishing war. There are many examples, including the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 (still on the books).

Swanson is an author, activist, and radio host. His writing here is convincing, and this book is a must read, especially for those convicted by the Mennonites' peace testimony.

His other books include *War Is A Lie* (2010); *The Military Industrial Complex at 50* (2011); and *When The World Outlawed War* (2011).~

Ray Kauffman is the historian for the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference, and serves on the PNMHS board. He lives in Albany with his wife, Tina.

## Expressing Gratitude for the Stories We Share

When the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society decided to hold an evening event at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, I wasn't sure what to expect.

Would a handful of people show up? Would the Fourth of July holiday weekend dissuade people from coming? Would there be too many guests? Perhaps most importantly, would we have enough refreshments for everyone?

The event—Shirley Showalter, talking about her new memoir, *Blush*—exceeded expectations in many ways. We had enough cookies, and barely enough room, for the almost fifty guests who squeezed into the Heritage Center library to hear Showalter share.

Showalter read from her excellent book, then left plenty of time for audience questions, resulting in an engaging discussion about Mennonites, the past, writing, and faith.

At the reception afterward, guests lingered in the waning Oregon sunset, visiting with each other and enjoying the warm evening July sometimes provides.

Having a writer like Showalter visit our center was a good reminder, to me, of why an

organization like PNMHS exists.

In her book, Showalter tells her personal story of growing up a conservative Mennonite in Lancaster County, Penn. Her narrative turns on the tension between embracing her Mennonite upbringing and her longing to be part of what she calls a “glittering world.”

*Blush* explores the ways this tension was manifest in Showalter's life, and also the ways she successfully navigated areas of conflict while retaining her Mennonite heritage.

Although Showalter was sharing her personal story, she was also reflecting the collective experience of Mennonites, growing up in a certain place, at a certain time.

Her own story is also a story of a people, and of the ways Mennonites in general faced the challenges of being in the world, but not of it.

This challenge has not dissipated. Indeed, in 2014, Mennonites must continually contend with the questions of what it means to embrace their heritage, and also to live abundantly in a new kind of “glittering world.”

Gratefully, we have stories of other Mennonites like Showalter's to guide us: to ground us in the past, and point us to the

future.

The history of the Mennonites, and of specific Mennonites, can allow us to see how other people lived faithfully, given their historical context.

This history can help us see where people failed to live faithfully, given their historical contexts; and can inspire us to live differently, given the history we are living right now.

The work of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society will continue because we recognize the value of knowing the past as a way of living in the present.

We are grateful that for those who support this work, and who see in our Mennonite history a valuable guide for our future.

We are also grateful for the many who came to the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center on July 6 for a wonderful event, and we look forward to hosting many more such events, cognizant of the ways coming together, and talking about our faith journeys, enriches all our lives.~

*Melanie Springer Mock is a Professor of English at George Fox University, Newberg, Ore. She edits the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter.*