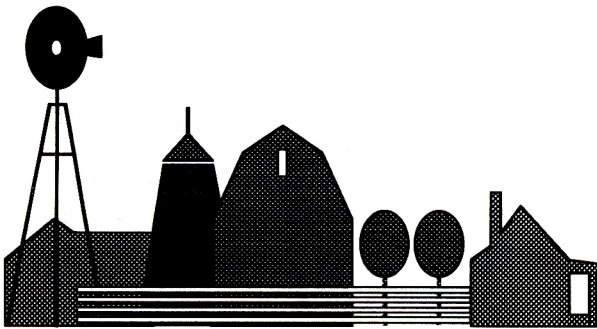




OMHGS Newsletter

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Recollections of the Great Depression

Background: The program consisted of a panel discussion. Moderator was Richard Regier, pastor of Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Oregon. Panel members were Katie Yoder Lind; Roy Kenagy of the Zion Mennonite Church; Wilbert Regier, father of the moderator and a former pastor; and Mary Belle Reeser Reiff. All of the participants had been given a set of questions to help them in their preparation for this discussion.

Q. Where were you living and what were you or your family doing when the stock market crashed in 1929?

Katie Lind (KL): We lived on a farm near Parnell, Iowa, and I think it was soon after that that my father began hauling cream for the York Creamery in Williamsburg. We stayed on our farm; our farm was never lost. We were fortunate.

Roy Kenagy (RK): I think I'll start back just a little farther. In 1928, when I was 21 years old, I was still living with my parents out on the Barlow-Monitor Road which is about two and a half or three miles from the Zion Mennonite Church. I had a girl friend and needed a job so I went out to Woodburn to the cannery. I stood by the door, the entrance to the main building, and waited a little while with some other people milling around there. I didn't wait very long until the door

opened and here came a nice young gentleman out of the door. He was a good looking man and he looked us over. He came over to me and said, "Do you want to work? Do you want a job?" I often wished I could remember how I answered him. I don't know, but I sure let him know that I needed a job. He said, "Well, come with me." He took me in the door, way back to the warehouse which was a block away because the buildings were about two blocks long. He gave me a broom and a dust pan and a sprinkling can and told me to clean up around the little office there. I did and when I was through, he gave me another job.

Richard Regier (RR): How long did you stay there?

RK: That was in '28 and I worked there through the canning season; then I got laid off because I didn't have enough seniority to stay on all winter. In the warehouse where I worked then, they worked the year around, but I didn't have quite enough time that first year so I went back again in the spring and I got right back on and I stayed there until 1938.

RR: How much did you get paid?

RK: I started in at \$.30 an hour and I got up to \$.35. Then as the depression came on, at the lowest part of it which was about '33, if I can remember right, I was getting \$.35 an hour and they came back just before Christmas or New Years and told us that our wages were all cut to \$.20 an hour.

Mary Belle Reiff (MBR): We may have been a few days late learning about the crash because we lived out in the country and the paper wasn't delivered to the front door. This was about three miles southeast of Albany in the Grand Prairie school district. But as far as that goes, I think we always had a depression! We didn't have a radio so we had to rely on the paper. My parents had gone to Canada to Grandpa Schrock's farm after the war [World War I] was over. Dad borrowed money at a high rate of interest to make the move. Then when the war was over and they didn't need our wheat, the bottom fell out so we sold out and had enough for tickets back; from then on we relied on

grandpas on both sides for a short while afterward until we could get on our feet. We hadn't quite recovered yet from that disaster until the Depression hit so maybe in a way it didn't hit us quite so hard. We were on a 10-acre place and had a pig and a few cows and chickens so I guess we were just doing the ordinary things when finally the Democrat Herald came and announced this.

RR: Dad, you left Kansas in '33 to go to Los Angeles. So your image of the Depression is going to look a bit different than the others. We have represented here this afternoon three different parts of the United States with the different reflections that come from those places.

Roy, you have already alluded to your wages being knocked down from \$.35 to \$.20 an hour. **What were some of the other things that affected you personally?**

RK: Just as soon as they opened up in the spring again they raised our wages back up to \$.35 an hour. In 1929 my girl friend and I were married and the next five years we had our family — a girl and two boys.

RR: You might tell us, how did you feed a family of five on \$.35 an hour back then?

RK: When it went down to \$.20, the thought came to me, how am I going to feed and clothe my family, but there were things that helped us. Everything got dirt cheap, it seemed like. You could buy a large loaf of bread for ten cents and a smaller one for eight cents. For clothing, we were to wear striped overalls in the cannery and a white cap. The overalls, which were top grade Lee brand striped overalls were \$.98 down town (in Woodburn) and if we bought it at the cannery, it was \$1.10. Gasoline was six cents a gallon so we could easily drive downtown and buy our clothes and still save a few cents. I think what bothered me the worst when they dropped our wages to \$.20, I had to go tell my wife about it. We never cried about anything but I think my eyes were a little moist when I told her that our wages went down to \$.20, but she said, "Don't worry about it; we'll get along all right," and we did. It was because everything else we needed was cheap. You could fill your car up with ten gallons of gas for \$.60. If you wanted to store a little bit of it, and I did — I had a 50 gallon drum and I got it filled for five and a half cents a gallon. That's the way it went with me.

Wilbert Regier (WR): The depression was complicated for us as a family because about two weeks before harvest we had some promising wheat and oats. One of those Kansas thunder storms came up, the sky was greenish gray, and around six or six-thirty the hail started coming about the size of golf balls and knocked all the windows out of the north side of the house and the crop was knocked to the ground — you couldn't even touch it with a grass mower. So that complicated the Depression for us. I guess it was a little bit like the cartoon that I saw. The snake that stuck her tail in its mouth and said, "Every time I make ends meet, I end up in zero." That's about the situation we found ourselves in. One of the things my father tried to do to conserve heat was to move the whole family into the basement. Our basement had three sections in it so that the southeast corner was quite warm. We took the cookstove down there and slept up in cold rooms.

I know that my father would buy navy beans by the 100 pound sack and I was amazed how my mother had many different recipes that she used and they were always tasty. They would buy sugar by the hundred pound sack as well. Those were some of the things we faced at the time.

Katie Lind (KL): In 1929 when the crash came, I was 16; so therefore I haven't really faced what people did who had young families. We lived on an 80-acre farm. My two brothers are younger than I, 14 and eight at the time. One of the things that made the biggest impression on me was how the banks went down. About our own banker in Wellman, Dad came around and said, "He's gone." Then the message came that he was so discouraged when his bank was folding up that he stepped on the stairway going down to the basement, a shot was heard and then a thud. The banks all went shut. Now, again, I didn't really suffer through that because we were on a farm and up till now we had always kind of made do with what we had. I think maybe all our neighbors did that. We didn't think we were bad off anyway. About the only thing that was really tough for me was that we couldn't have a painted kitchen! We only had calomine on the walls! And every spring we had to put more calomine on those walls. Then one day we did get it all scraped off.

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My mother and I scraped and scraped and scraped. Once it was all off, we sat back — and then heard the message that they had no money for paint! So the calomine went back on the walls.

As for food, we raised it. We had no problem there. We liked vegetables and we had our own cows and our own pigs and chickens, so we had no problem with that. It was to buy things that we had more of a problem. An aunt of mine needed food and we had corn so Dad took a bushel of corn to the mill for us and one for my aunt. We ate corn bread pretty heartily, but we loved it. It wasn't a hardship at all. Actually, my memory of the Depression isn't a sad one. If I would have had small children to feed and dress, it would be a different story. To me it was just living like everybody else did. I wasn't any more poor than all the rest and I wasn't any more rich. We went with holes in our shoes. One Easter I remember we girls standing in the basement of our church with our Easter dresses on and we all had nice cotton print dresses except one whose parents raised turkeys and she had a rayon dress. And she felt kind of silly. She stood in the background a little bit. The rest of us were all in nice new print dresses. I saw a friend of mine standing with the sole of her shoe turned up and there was a big hole in it with a paper on the other side. Well, she lived to be a missionary in China and none of us seemed to think any less of her so actually my memory of the Depression is not that serious.

RR: We've already moved into the next question — **ways that the bank failures, foreclosures and finally the bank holiday in March of 1933 affected you and your family.** Is there anything you would like to add to that and maybe the fourth question, **How did your family survive? What was the source of money?** Dad.

WR: I'd just like to add a word to how we fared during that time. My father had been fattening cattle and raising pigs. As farmers so often experienced, the cattle market dropped, the pigs got cholera, and instead of making money, my father found himself in debt. I have to say that during the time I was on the farm I never saw my father really happy. There were brief periods, but it wasn't related to the farm. Then there was an additional feature that entered into the experience. My grandfather on my mother's side was a man of means. In fact, when he had first come from Germany back in the 1870s, he laid claim to about a section and a half of land, and when my father married

the girl that he loved, he inherited a half section of land with brand new buildings. Then when my grandfather died it was understood that there would be something to help him out. Instead he inherited debts. We can't figure out just what happened but this is what we think happened. He was a minister, an elder in the church, and treasurer of the Foreign Mission Society. My grandfather loved missions. The understanding is that whenever he would write out the checks for the missionaries, they fared well. If funds were short, he made up for it. So I think he did not take care of his own house and as a result, my father inherited additional debt. We had to sell land, can you believe it for \$90.00 an acre. Those were hard times. My sister graduated from high school and started teaching school for \$75.00 a month. Smilingly, she tells me that whenever it came time for the check, Father was there to get it. She got \$12.50 a month of the money and he took the rest for groceries. I worked for my uncle. First year I worked for \$30.00 a month plus room and board; the second summer, \$20.00; so I guess I wasn't worth that much. Anyway, we got that much money and we had the laying hens and the cows. That's what saw us through that particular period.

RK: After I was at the cannery for two or three years, I learned to stack cans. That was piece work. Instead of making \$.35 an hour, we got \$.35 a thousand for stacking cans. You had to know how to stack them so they would go 28 cans high without falling over. I learned to do that and I could earn \$1.05 an hour. They were No. 2 1/2 cans. I would pick up one can and set it on top of the other at the same time and set it on a lath. We started clear down on the cement floor and went 28 cans high. I could stack 3000 cans an hour. That sure helped. I did that for probably five years.

MBR: May I backtrack a little here about foreclosures and so on. We would hear of farmers who had been paying for years and years and 'they' would come and take everything out from under them. We couldn't figure out how that could be done. But that didn't affect us. Our 10-acre farm didn't cost as much as 300 acres or something like that. My father wasn't a farmer at the time but we lived a farmer's existence. I'm sure my father didn't pay cash for the ten acres, but he worked by the hour at various jobs and apparently could make the monthly payments without any trouble. I don't recall his ever having missed a payment. If you had cows and milk and fruit and vegetables and pickles and sauerkraut and all those goodies, then you know your grocery list was awfully small — flour, sugar,

cornmeal, soda, baking powder, salt — simple things like that. So I think the payments got made on time.

How did we survive? That was one way. We could have bought more but we just made do with what was there, and the things we ate, with more emphasis on the grains meant that we were not malnourished by any means. We made our own clothes; we utilized the flour sacks and made slips and underwear and things that were perfectly okay. You had to have a car and my father would keep it up and tinker with it. We didn't pay for every little thing that we do now. We'd do it ourselves. He'd repair things. We didn't go around with holes in our shoes. He had a shoe last and sometimes when he hammered nails into the sole of the shoe, the nails wouldn't go quite straight or something and when walking to school sometimes, suddenly it would feel like you had stepped on a nail. It was just not wasting things; using what you had, and being satisfied. I know there was one winter I wore the same dress, a navy blue shiny-on-the-back wool, for three months. I don't think it was because we couldn't afford the material but rather that my mother didn't have the time to do the sewing and we wouldn't think of buying ready-made clothes.

RR: Now to the next question, **How did this affect the spiritual life of your congregation? Did the congregation help each other?**

MBR: Yes, we helped each other some but not that much because there were a very few families in the congregations that were what you would say moderately comfortable. They worked hard for what they had and were very, very thrifty, but in times of disaster or death or something, they were there. I remember after the death of one of my siblings, someone brought us a two-pound loaf of cheddar cheese. That was a real windfall. We did get a few clothes several times, used clothes from other people. And we got invited out some. Yes, the church people did help each other out.

The Harl Burck family planted strawberries. We older children had been picking strawberries for other people, folks who seemed to have no system whatever or organization as far as berry picking went. We would finish picking soon after noon and my dad wouldn't get off work till 4:00 to pick us up. I'm not sure how it came about, but we ended up in the Burck strawberry field. This was a whole new territory for us; everybody arrived on time, ready and willing to get to work. The Burck children were all out there in force and everybody worked. We learned some good work habits and liked working there.

RR: Roy, on the spiritual side, you were a member at Zion during those years?

RK: Yes. As far as I know, we didn't have any problems at all. Most of the people lived on the farm and that was a great help. I don't know if any of them lost anything.

RR: Did you talk about it? Was it something that was talked about at Zion?

RK: I don't think it bothered us that much. Everybody was kind of in the same boat.

RR: Dad, you have some slightly different memories from that time.

WR: This wasn't the easiest time. As I implied, my father was forced to sell land in order to meet obligations. And it wasn't talked about that much, but the impression I was left under was that the cousins who were so very anxious to have the land were more concerned about getting the cheapest possible price than they were about helping my father. So I have to confess that was a time of a lot of bitterness. I have to think of a friend who said about Mennonites, "We don't kill anyone; we just worry them to death." I'm afraid that was about the situation we experienced at that time. There was a lot of bitterness and it took years to overcome that. I think I'll leave it at that.

KL: In the community I was a part of, my father, I and later, my brother's children all attended school in the same district where my grandmother was born. There were several congregations each of several hundred members within a distance of 10 to 15 miles. We were much interrelated; yet there were also those in our congregations to whom we were not related. However, it seemed like we had carried over from the early settlement days the idea of helping each other. As far as helping the people who were destitute, we did that by mission work. Our sewing circle was begun around 1912 or so to help with the first relief work that was being done. But by the time of the crash we were sending things down to the Kansas City children's home and mission and later to the Hannibal, Missouri mission. What we sent was our surplus, and I can't say this was to our credit. We gave away what we couldn't use, which is not what I consider sacrifice.

But we also did help each other. For instance, when our neighbor's house burned down, the mother was ill in bed, the father had a problem that disabled him and the oldest daughter had heart

problems. The neighbors went in and did for them until they got on their feet again.

The spirituality of our congregation, did it profit by this? I would say yes. We didn't know it, but we did, because never has there been a hardship come that God couldn't use to His credit. And that's what happened for us. We just went on like we did before, revival meetings every summer and our regular Sunday church. I remember that my father was the treasurer. He was sort of sedate but one Sunday when we were making dinner, he suddenly shouted for us and we all went running to see why. He said, "You'd better look at this; it's the last one you'll see for awhile." It was a \$100.00 bill. That was in the bag and because he couldn't go to the bank next day, he asked if I would take it to Williamsburg to the bank. I was so scared and wanted to park close to the bank but couldn't and there were workmen around. I thought to myself that with all this money, perhaps \$125.00 or \$130.00, I'd walk as if nothing special was going on. I have a handy nose, so my nose went up and I walked past the workmen and got to the bank safely. But, my, what a responsibility! Which would say that this was a time when you didn't toss your money around.

RR: Dad, you felt that your congregation didn't help each other that much. The impact on your congregational life was that you moved away in 1933, right?

WR: I look back to — I almost called it the tribulation period — the Depression period and have to say it was one of the richest periods in my life. Some of the most major decisions that I had to make as a young man I made during that particular period. And I do feel that the outer circumstances had a bearing on it. In high school, like so many teenage boys, I lost interest. I was more concerned about Popular Mechanics than I was with algebra and messed around, so with some persuasion I dropped out of school after the first semester of my sophomore year. I tried to make myself happy farming; that was no go for me. I just knew that wasn't what I wanted to do, so finally Father allowed me to go back to high school. I got involved in dramatics and music and it gave me a sense of direction. After I graduated from high school, my father asked my mother one time in German, "What will ever become of Wilbert?" And my mother said, "Nothing, unless you let him go to BI," which was our abbreviation for BIOLA. So he said I could go to BIOLA. He even confirmed that when he gave me the family car, a '26

Chevy touring.

I got four other young people and we went to BIOLA. It took us five days to drive those 1800 miles. We went there without being accepted, but we stayed, and the Lord began working in my life. I just marvel at the way He worked. Some basic principles were laid down. Financially, one of the instructors had a little saying, "Pay as you go, and if you can't pay, don't go." Somehow, that stuck, and later on the Lord laid that upon my heart.

Then as I graduated from BIOLA, I didn't know what direction I wanted to go, but I knew I wanted to go into the pastorate. I won't go into details, but the Lord in his grace took this very, very untrained young man and put him into the responsibility of the pastorate at the Los Angeles Emmanuel Mennonite Church, a church close to the Old Mennonite Church that Glen Whitaker pastored. I knew Glen from BIOLA. I went into the pastorate alone and the Lord in his own time gave me the sweetest girl in all the world. We got married and during the closing period of the Depression, the Lord gave us our firstborn, Richard, so he's a product of the Depression period.

The Lord used that period of my life and I often look back at some of the impressions that were left and at some of the decisions that were made during that particular period and I thank God, even though as a farm people, it was very hard and my folks never prospered. Some years later they left the farm, following a tornado that destroyed the big house.

RR: Were families considered poor managers if they didn't or couldn't make it during the depression?

MBR: I hardly know how to answer that. Many of our relatives and friends and church members were farmers and they seemed to have the feeling that was the profession to have and that anybody who worked by the day where they would be liable to be fired and so on were, well, they weren't that good a manager because it was a gamble, actually, but they were gambling on the farm, too; gambling against the weather, prices, etc. I think my father sometimes felt a bit like a poor manager because part of the time he was unemployed while two of his brothers had gone to southern California and gotten steady jobs there. I wouldn't say he was a poor manager.

RR: Meantime, Roy, you at this point stacked about a half million cans. You worked steady for five years; you must have stacked over a million cans.

RK: I kept track of it and I stacked way over a million cans in one season.

RR: You were working steady and if you really hustled, you were actually making a pretty decent wage, \$1.05 an hour. Were the people who weren't making it at Zion considered poor managers?

RK: I don't know of anybody that was hurt during that time. If they were, I never heard of it. The only ones that I did hear of were young people that got married and bought a lot of furniture on time, then couldn't make it.

I didn't do that, though. We were fortunate; my wife's folks gave each one of their girls a Home Comfort cook stove and that helped a lot. We had a cow and chickens and a good garden. One season I mowed up the front lawn and put potatoes in it and we had potatoes all winter long. But I don't know anybody in the church at least, or anybody, that was really hurt. They just took it as it came. It came so gradual and it left gradual, too. For some people, it took a war to get out of it, too.

RR: Now, Dad, we've heard Mary Belle talk about this, the golden movement towards California, the grapes of wrath, people heading south. You yourself did that, went to Los Angeles in 1933, right in the heart of the Depression. Did it look a lot different in L.A.? Was life different there in terms of availability of money and work?

WR: No. I had to wait before I got work. In fact, that was one of the experiences of real faith that I had. I found myself in debt to the tune of \$30.00 and I didn't know if they were going to ask us to leave. So one of my classmates took me to his room and we had a prayer meeting where we specifically prayed for a job. The next day I got one. So I had my first experience with a woman boss who swore and smoked. That was a new experience for me. (Every Mennonite should have that experience!) We worked for our room and board. The best job I had was in a restaurant. I got \$.22 1/2 an hour and two meals; none on Sunday. Then I worked in the BIOLA bookstore which I enjoyed. Of course, Los Angeles wasn't the city it is now. Tuition at that time was \$10.00 a semester. That was just called registration; it wasn't even called tuition. Room and board? I don't remember.

KL: I'll have to admit that my church was very normal and that it was very much like it is today. So the person who could earn money and had their farms almost paid for before the Depression hit were pretty good off and

people like us were rather mediocre. We didn't even have electricity in our house because Grandma said it hurt her eyes and probably it did because most of us have had cataracts removed so I suspect she had some problems. So, actually, I think, and it's just my opinion, we were very normal and the persons who couldn't make it were poor managers. Of course, why not? They are today; why wouldn't they have been then?

Question from the audience: Lois Kenagy's parents in western Pennsylvania got word from time to time of friends back in Lancaster who committed suicide. She wondered if it was because they had perhaps lost their farm or just why? Were there suicides in other areas — like Kansas?

WR: There were suicides, but I don't think they were related to the Depression.

KL: In our community, from the '20s perhaps to the '30s and '40s, we had a few suicides but not connected with that.

WR: I had the feeling that the majority of us just had the feeling this is the way it is. We just did not think that much that this is depression. It is just the way things are. It is a hard time. It is going to change again. We'll be moving out of it. You were just living.

RR: So the term Depression was just an afterthought; it was something that came after.

KL: We didn't talk about it.

RR: That's a good Mennonite virtue, too. Maybe it would go away. **Did you see a difference between Mennonites and non-Mennonites in terms of how you dealt with this whole issue of making it, being good managers, having money, not having money, working hard?**

MBR: I didn't notice that much difference.

RR: Roy, did you see much difference between the life at Zion and the surrounding community life?

RK: No, really not. For the whole community and for the whole valley it seemed like it came on so slow and when it hit bottom, it left so slowly, too. It took way up into the forties before it got back. During that time everybody just took it as it came because it was so slow. That's my impression of it.

WR: I didn't see any difference. I didn't see any discrimination and never felt it in high school.

KL: I think I would agree with the rest that we didn't see any difference. Our neighbors out one way were Methodists and we were all in there scratching together.

I think the scars that are left are that you never know when something is worn out now.

RR: It's my observation that the people who came through the Depression never fully recovered from it; they know what it is to be frugal. This leads into our next question. **How do you live now because of your experiences during the Depression?** In a way that's sort of a disingenuous question. You are looking at a younger generation. I didn't grow up with the Depression. I certainly heard stories about it and my grandparents and my parents would say, "During the Depression . . ." which usually was a response to something frivolous I was thinking about doing like buying white sidewall tires for my car.

KL: You want me to tell my secrets, huh? I've now decided that I am getting old enough that I need a little help two hours a week in keeping my house. The first day this maid came she saw that there was a real need and when she said what it was and reported it to the powers that be, I nearly hit the ceiling and said, "Whaaat? Why that's all right. It's not falling apart." And then I took another look and decided, yes, it does look pretty cruddy. And I would never have known it. I have a real problem knowing when a dress is worn out. If it hasn't any holes in it, it still goes. I have even been known to hem my cleaning rags so they wouldn't ravel so much. It just bothers me no end to go to the grocery store and buy plastic bags when by saving my plastic bags I don't have to buy more than once a year. I find that I do not buy things that some of my friends buy because I do not see any need. Yes, it affects me yet, but I don't care.

RR: This is not a question that we can deal with now but it would be interesting to talk about how much of those are just genuine Mennonite frugal values. It exists in our communities: you make do; you don't waste; it's not spiritual to be wasteful; and how much of it is a result of the Depression. I'm sure there is no way we can sort that out.

Dad, what kind of lasting effects do you think the Depression had on you?

WR: I think that it caused us to be frugal. There's always been that feeling that you have to be careful. As I said, pay as you go and if you can't pay, don't go. That was pretty much our philosophy and the Lord enabled us to see things through. There were times when we prayed earnestly, "Lord, would you somehow just give us a little more; we just seemingly need a little more." But what was interesting, instead He taught us how to stretch it further. Wasn't that an answer to

prayer? I think so. So those were some of the lessons that I brought out of it. With my experiences at BIOLA, of course, came the experience of depending on God and through the years I have learned and am learning God loves to be depended on. The more we depend on Him, the more He likes it. Those were things that impressed us very, very much. So, having gone through the experience, I am grateful for it. I would not want to go through it again if it wasn't the Lord's plan, but I did not suffer; I benefited from it, I know.

MBR: Katie mentioned plastic bags. About a year ago I dreamed up how to recycle dental floss. Did you ever see a bird nest and see a little string woven through there? Birds love this. Save it all winter, put it out in the spring, hang it in the trees and it will soon disappear.

In the last few years, things have been easier, so money is a temptation. There are times when, depending on my mood, I will throw caution to the wind, then come home and suffer with conscience for a few days, and so on. Maybe that explains this recycling of plastic bags and dental floss and various other fussy little things.

One incident from when my father had a day job where the men took their lunches. There was a new man on the job. They noticed he didn't join the circle but he ate off a little way. One day by mistake one of the other men got his lunch bucket, opened it and was shocked. There was no wrapping around the food that was in there which was a pile about the size of a fistful of boiled potato peels. So they exchanged the lunch buckets. One of the other men gave him a half sandwich and I believe my dad gave him a half a sandwich. The man explained that they had only the potatoes and they boiled and peeled them and he let the children take the potatoes. My dad came home late that afternoon and he and Mom went out to what we called the fruit room. They didn't say what they were doing but after a while they came out with a box. My mother wasn't canning much then, but they shared what they had. That has influenced me so that when I read of some disaster in the paper and donations are welcome, I find it difficult to pass it by because of those experiences in the Depression.

RR: I am going to close with a story I ran across this last year and it applies to what we have been talking about. There's a man in Pennsylvania who supplies parts for toys that were made in the '20s and early '30s before the Depression wiped out most of the toy makers. He carries axles, wheels, tires, windshields, all types of different parts, some old stock, some new stock, reproduction parts, for a wide variety of toys which

are still available in the antique markets. In talking with him one day, I asked him how he got in to the business. He said he couldn't afford this kind of toys when he was a boy and always had an interest in them, so when he was older he started buying them and then found that there were old factories in the Cleveland area. He started buying parts and people started asking him for parts and it became his business. He asked if I had toys like that. I said no, we were Mennonites; we were too frugal for that sort of toys. He said it was very interesting that I mentioned that. There was a man who was his mentor in Lancaster County, a Bishop Brubaker, and he was the chief toy designer for Hubley Toys. Bishop Brubaker taught him a lot about craftsmanship; he had a lot of respect for Mennonites.



The Story of Henry

This story was originally published in The Tie That Binds, the newsletter of the Beth-El Mennonite Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado, in the November 1997 issue. Frank Brunk read it at a worship service at Zion Mennonite Church.

Heinrich Koop was born in 1870 in the Russian Mennonite colony of Molotschna. At 22, he married 18-year-old Elizabeth Janzen from another village in the colony. What did they teach their children about faith and life as a follower of Jesus?

One of Heinrich and Elizabeth's children was Anna, born almost 10 years later, in Cordell, Oklahoma. What happened in those intervening years to make this family emigrate? How did these parents understand God's leading to be such that they would make this monumental change in their lives?

Anna grew up and married and had a daughter, Erma, who was a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Corn, OK. Erma married an Air Force officer named John. Again I wonder what was

taught in those homes, how they understood their heritage, how they adapted to their culture, and how they responded when children chose to leave the faith. Because at least one of their children did — Henry John, Jr.

John and Erma moved around a lot, following John's career. Perhaps it was this rootlessness that fostered in their son, Henry, an almost melancholy love of music and the outdoors. He learned to play guitar at a young age and had a special attachment to nature. For several summers in Henry's late teens, John and Erma sent him from the city back to Erma's home community to work for one of Erma's relatives, a man of German-Russian Mennonite ancestry, Sam Kroeker. Sam did custom harvesting, following the wheat harvest from Texas to South Dakota. Sam liked young Henry, but at times was frustrated with him because Henry wanted to play his guitar instead of working on the machinery. Eventually, Sam told Henry he could bring the guitar along, but it had to stay in the truck, to be played only on breaks or after all the work was done for the day.

Henry left Oklahoma and as time went by, many from his home church community lost touch with him. He returned occasionally for family reunions and favored the family gatherings with songs he had written. His tireless efforts to make a name for himself as a musician and songwriter slowly began to bear fruit. A music group in which he played was invited to give a concert at Goshen College. Some who recall that event remember Henry saying during the concert that he really didn't know much about Mennonites.

I wonder how the folks back home responded to Henry's new lifestyle? Did they show any interest in him apart from his budding popularity? Did he express any interest in the faith they held dear? Why did that faith no longer seem to mean very much to Henry? How was it that Henry could say he really didn't know much about Mennonites?

Most of us know who Henry was. We recognize his music. I have one of his albums. And last month, tragically, at age 52, Henry John Deutchendorf, Jr., was killed in a plane crash. His funeral was held here in Colorado; he was mourned by thousands. You see, Henry was known around the world as John Denver.

Still I wonder what happened along the way as that family passed on the heritage of their faith. How similar or different was it from what's happening in your family and mine as we live out our faith in this

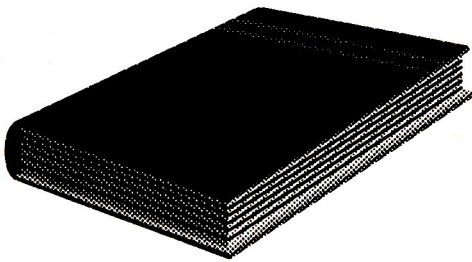
Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in
Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas,
1874-1882

6. Leaders of the Mennonite Kleine
Gemeinde in Russia, 1812 to 1874

Kreider, Robert, Jakob Miller and Eileen Roth:
Joseph and Elizabeth. A sourcebook: The
lives and ancestry of Joseph Shellenberger
Shoemaker (1854-1936) and Elizabeth
Sechrist Brubaker (1856-1931)

Norwalk, Jay: Johan Jost Zimmerman. With related
genealogies of Roth, Yaggy, Schlunegger,
Bratton, Cochlin, Elliott, Campbell, and
McCullough

Shenk, Kenneth: Go ahead on 'er! The life and
times of Kenneth M. Shenk



Continuation of Daniel Kauffman Diary

*This is a continuation of the pages from
Daniel Kauffman's diary. The following items are
elaborations or explanations of entries in the diary.*

June 2: J. Kremer = John Kramer

June 5: Tena was Jonas Dauffman's youngest
sister, therefore an aunt to Daniel, and was
married at that time to John Kramer. Aunt
Elisabeth could have been either Jonas
Kauffman's sister Elisabeth married to
Christian Schottler and living in Nebraska or
Jonas's wife Rachel's sister Elizabeth,
married to Moses T. Yoder, and living
at Berlin, Ohio.

June 9: "Church was here" refers to the meeting of
the Amish Church; "went to church" refers to
the Fir Grove Amish Mennonite Church
on present Highway 211 (the first meeting-

house of the present Zion Mennonite
Church); Joseph Schlegel was an A.M.
bishop from Nebraska who had organized
the Fir Grove congregation in 1893.

June 14: Ritters — the Ritter family lived in the
Needy area.

July 5: K. Myers — he built the house east of the
Zion Mennonite Church just across the
creek in Clackamas County where Tom
Gingerich now lives.

August 9: Perhaps the five men named here are the
same five men referred to in the entry
for August 4.

August 11: Mrs. Levi King = Mary Esch King who
died at age 31 of tuberculosis, leaving
five small children: Ella Mae (Kropf),
Oliver, Sadie, Elmer and Mollie (Hartzler,
Hernley).

P. Rediger = Peter Rediger, a charter
member of the Zion Mennonite Church;
from France, single and somewhat of a
recluse.

August 13: Amanda = daughter (married Daniel
Roth in 1900); Tena (Kramer), sister.

September 11: J. C. Christner, a member of the
Amish Church

September 24, 28, 30: Jonas Kauffman is probably
the writer's brother, Jonas

October 3: Susan is the writer's wife.

October 30: L. Herb is probably the writer's
brother, Jonas

November 1: Becky = Rebecca Deetz, his sister.

November 3: M. Knagys = probably Emanuel
Kenagys. They were members at
Fir Grove; not quite sure why they
would have had church at their
house unless the weather had
something to do with it.

November 10: O City = Oregon City (see October
31 where he wrote it as Oregon C).

November 13: M. Yoder, probably Mose Yoder who
had been a minister at the Sycamore
Grove Church in Cass County,
Missouri, but seems not to have
identified with the Mennonites when
he moved to Oregon.

November 14: L. Erb = Levi Erb

November 17: Meeting house would probably have
been the Fir Grove Meetinghouse,
later Zion A. M. Church

<p>6. Father & I went fishing got 16 fish all went home in the afternoon</p> <p>7. Chum & c 1/2 amos went to Mts.</p> <p>8.</p> <p>9. Church was here went to church to here Schlegel</p> <p>10. Mow vetches</p> <p>11. Went to Canby took 1 Sw Bees to Cox got 1 crate strawberries .22 1/2 6.00</p>	<p>12. Rained & fix cans &c</p> <p>13. rake and hall 1 load hay &c</p> <p>14. Chum 1/2 Went to fix ritters bees got .90 for work 1/2 hall hay rained & haled</p> <p>15. fix cans church &c</p> <p>16. Went to fathers in the afternoon</p> <p>17. Went to Bee ranch Hive 1 sw Bees</p> <p>18. hive 5 sw bees Went home.</p>
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- 13. rake and hall 1 load hay &c
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- 15. fix cans church &c
- 16. Went to fathers in the afternoon
- 17. Went to Bee ranch Hive 1 sw Bees
- 18. hive 5 sw bees Went home.

June	June
19 fix wheel Went to Bee ranch Went fishing got 26 fish	24 Sent 1.00 to H.D. Hoard Co. for American Dairying hive 1 sw Bees got 50c for sec fdn & honey Broke wheel Bees gain 3# since 22
20 hive 2 sw Bees fix Crates & Sec Bs gain 2 1/2 Bs gain 2 1/2	25 Had 6 swarms but all went back but 2 Bs gain 1/2
21 Hive 2 Sw Bs one went off Bees gain 2 1/2 Soald fdn to Mrs. L	26 Put in starter and put on crates took off some honey Went fishing at 4:15 got 15 fish soald 32 starters to Mrs. Lapert? Bees gain 1 3/4#
22 fix Bees & crates and watch Bees Soald 28 sec to F. Baker 2.50 Bs gain 2#	27 Put in starter & put on crates & took off honey Bees gain 2#
23 watch Bees went home in the evening	
24 went to B ranch Sent _____ on to B C Wolcott	

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Went fishing got 26 fish

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25. Had 6 swarms but all went back but 2
Bs gain 1/2

26. Put in starter and put on crates took
off some honey Went fishing at 4:15
got 15 fish soald 32 starters to Mrs.
Lapert? Bees gain 1 3/4#

27. Put in starter & put on crates & took off
honey Bees gain 2#

June	July
28. Nail and clean crates put in starter & put on crates Bs gain 3#	1. then went to B Ranch Hived one swarm Bees Went fishing with Noah after supper
29. Put on crates & c 1/2 Started Home at 1 Oc	2. Start Boys to spray trees Wright letters fix cans and forms?
30. Was at Home rained some near all d	4. fix honey look at the bees started home at 3 o'clock
July	5. look for daisy? and fix up fdn & c a m Went to fix K. Myers Bees got supper at fathers
1. Went to Woodburn to get Wheel fixed 1.50 diner 20c 1.70 Went to Hubbard got denims 45c insect powder belows .15 .60 3.05	6. Wash seperator burs? with _____ & fix wheel Soald 1 _____ 3.00
3. Went to Needy got shugar 1.50 salt .85 and paid for oil .70	

June

- 28. Nail and clean crates put in starter & put on crates Bs gain 3#
- 29. Put on crates & c 1/2 Started Home at 1 Oc
- 30. Was at Home rained some near all d

July

- 1. Went to Woodburn to get Wheel fixed 1.50 diner 20c 1.70
Went to Hubbard got denims 45c
insect powder belows .15 .60
3.05
- 3. Went to Needy got shugar 1.50
salt .85 and paid for oil .70

July

- then went to B Ranch Hived one swarm Bees Went fishing with Noah after supper
- 2. Start Boys to spray trees Wright letters fix cans and forms?
- 4. fix honey look at the bees started home at 3 o'clock
- 5. look for daisy? and fix up fdn & c a m Went to fix K. Myers Bees got supper at fathers
- 6. Wash seperator burs? with _____ & fix wheel Soald 1 _____ 3.00

July	July
7. Went to church at I. S. Millers	12. Look over Bees take of honey & c Bs gain 2 1/4#
8. went to B ranch and back Bs gain 3#	13. Pick 1 1/2 gallon black berries & can them wash uncapping box & c Soald 1.50 sec to Williams Bs gain 1 1/4#
9. Went to Portland paid bus fare .50 Dinner .20 super .25 salt 3.20 4.15	14. Read look for berries Went to Hunters & Bakers Bs gain 1 3/4#
10. fix wheel sleep clean honey & c Went to fathers in the evening	15. Look over bees & extract 8 galons Honey Bs gain 3/4#
11. went to B ranch look over Bees & get som black berries Bs gain 6 since 8th	16. Fix Honey & c Went home at 3 o.c

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8. Went to B ranch and back Bs gain 3#
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13. Pick 1 1/2 gallon blackberries & can them
Wash uncapping box & c. Soald 1.50 sec
to Williams 90c Bs gain 1 1/4#
14. Read look for berries Went to
Hunters & Bakers Bs gain 1 3/4#
15. Look over bees & extract 8 galons
Honey Bs gain 3/4#
16. Fix Honey & c Went home at 3 o.c

July	July
17. Went to Woodburn to have wheel fixed paid to fix wheel 1.50 file 12c dinner .20 shoes 1.80 8 cans 1.00 4.62	22. Wright letters get ready to go to Mts Went to Bee ranch & fix a burst tire on wheel Noah went along Bs gain 6# since 16th
18. Went with father to look at corn test milk hunt horses mow wheat &c	23. Pick & can 2 gal Blackberries & look at bees Bs gain 2 1/4
19. Seperate milk churn & fix fdn	24. take of honey and extract some Bs gain 1/4
20. Fix wheel mend can Roal & trim fdn	25. take of honey and fix it Went to Williamses staid all night
21. Went to church at D. Shrocks	

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paid to fix wheel 1.50 file 12c
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8 cans 1.00 4.62
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24. take of honey and extract some
Bs gain 1/4
25. take of honey and fix it Went to
Williamses staid all night

July	July
<p>26. Went to B ranch pick 1 1/2 galons Blackberries & can them. Williams was along Soald him 1# Sec fdn.</p>	<p>30. Take of Honey & sort it</p>
<p>27. Fix wheel Went to Colton to mail pic 2 pt berries Bs gain 1 1/2#</p>	<p>31. Went with C Hubbard? to pick black berries 1/2 d take of Honey & extract some</p>
<p>28. Read and talk with Glen & Charly Hunter Bs gain 1 1/4#</p> <p>29. clean and take off [f] Honey pick 1 gal blackberries and can them</p>	<p>August</p> <p>1. Fix Honey Noah & I went fishing at 4 o.c. got 3 fish Bs gain 3/4#</p> <p>2. Fix & clean honey Bs gain 3/4#</p> <p>3. Fix & clean wheel & honey house Started home at 2 o.c.</p>

- 26. Went to B ranch pick 1 1/2 galons Blackberries & can them. Williams was along Soald him 1# Sec fdn.
- 27. Fix wheel Went to Colton to mail pic 2 pt berries Bs gain 1 1/2#
- 28. Read and talk with Glen & Charly Hunter Bs gain 1 1/4#
- 29. clean and take off [f] Honey pick 1 gal blackberries and can them

- 30. Take of Honey & sort it
 - 31. Went with C Hubbard? to pick black berries 1/2 d take of Honey & extract some
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- 1. Fix honey Noah & I went fishing at 4 o.c. got 3 fish Bs gain 3/4#
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 - 3. Fix & clean wheel & honey house Started home at 2 o.c.