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A History of the Tangent Mennonite Church

by Paul Zehr

I Samuel 7:12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

The children of Israel had just experienced the blessing and protection of God. A victory had been won. Samuel put up a stone of memorial, something that would serve the people as a reminder, and he called it "Ebenezer," which meant, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." That knowledge and awareness that it was the hand of God that had given the victory was essential to the continued success of the children of Israel. God had given them deliverance because they were obedient. We want to remember that this afternoon. Today we are setting up a stone of remembrance. A milestone has been reached. Victories have been won. Fifty years has passed since the Tangent Church began. But unless we remember God and continue with the principles that have brought us this far, it will be meaningless. History is a time of remembrance. It is a time of thinking back and trying to understand and profit by what took place in the past. There are right and wrong ways to look at history. Sometimes the events of the past are slanted and glamorized. Other things are forgotten or glossed over. Oftentimes the very core issues are lost in the commemorating of the past. I don't want to do that this afternoon. I don't want to attempt to glamorize the history of the Tangent Church. The Tangent Church was and is made up of people, people who made mistakes and carried their human nature with them. I've heard it said that Tangent Church had more than

its share of colorful characters. Things have not always run smoothly. There have been struggles. But I believe for the most part the church was and is made up of people who are spiritually concerned and want to live in obedience to the scripture. There has been concern that the truth would be preserved and passed on to our children and to our children's children. Let us not say as Hezekiah said, "Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" I believe God has heard and blessed those heartfelt desires and I believe we can say today as Samuel said when he set up that memorial stone, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

My parents, Oliver and Mary Zehr, were not charter members but joined several months after the church was organized. I was born two years later. My memories go back to the late 1950s. (The old oil stove, Jay Eveleth, the sewing circles.) There are now 44 families in Tangent. We have a wide diversity of national and church backgrounds that are represented. We have people who have been born in Canada, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Russia, India, Korea, as well as many different states. We also have a wide diversity of ages. There are three members who are 82, the oldest being Richard Culp. There are a total of six members over 80; three members are in their 70s, but we have none in the 60s. There are about 35 children of school age, and around 30 in our youth group. Current membership stands at 106.

BEGINNINGS — The history of Tangent Church had its beginnings in the 1940s. At that time there was no Tangent Church; those who later became the charter members were members of the Fairview Mennonite Church near Albany. There were liberalizing influences that were beginning to make themselves felt in the Fairview Church during this time. Some of the issues that were causing tension during this time were things such as cut hair for the women, wearing of gold, neckties, immodest

dress, and sports involvement. The Bishop at Fairview during this time was Nick Birky, who was concerned about some of these trends, yet was not willing to exercise discipline to enforce a standard. His method was to encourage and admonish. Melvin Schrock, who was ordained a minister at Fairview in 1934, was very concerned about the liberal trends he saw, and tried repeatedly to speak to the issues. This soon created tension not only within the congregation, but also in the ministry. In 1948 the deacon ordination of Verle Nofziger at Fairview brought the issues to the forefront. When the votes were given for those who would be considered for the lot, there were enough votes for Harold Reeder to be considered. However, Bishop Nick Birky did not feel he could allow Harold to be in the lot since in his words, "he was too conservative minded," which he apparently felt would be divisive. It wasn't long after this that Melvin Schrock asked for a release from Fairview congregation and it was granted. At the time Melvin left, he was not at all certain where he was going. Melvin said he made the decision to leave because there was **"no written or stated standard of Faith and Practice"** and **"no Principles and Guidelines to govern the church."** Soon after Melvin was given his release, a group of like-minded people from Fairview began meeting for prayer meetings. After further consideration, the decision was made to withdraw from Fairview and begin another congregation. The Pacific Coast Conference granted this. The first Sunday service was held on New Years Day, 1950 at the home of Marvin Schrock. Prayer meetings were held in other homes. At that first Sunday service there were 11 people in attendance. The Tangent Church was formally recognized as a member congregation of the Pacific Coast Conference and was organized on August 9, 1950 with 25 charter members. The Conference Committee that was chosen to help in the organization was N.A. Lind, Fred Gingerich, Gabriel Shenk, Ernest Garber, and Jonathon Zook. Of the original 25 charter members, three are still members: Marvin and Agnes Schrock and Violet Schrock. [Note: Marvin Schrock has since died, on May 14, 2001.]

LEADERSHIP — For any church, a vital concern is Leadership. Without adequate leadership, a congregation cannot survive. Certainly for the new congregation, Church leadership was an important consideration. A written appeal was made to Conference on February 20, 1950 for help in finding ministerial leadership. In April Melvin Schrock was asked to serve and he accepted. From the time Tangent Church began until now, there have been thirteen men who have served. Of these thirteen, four are no longer living, which are Henry Wolfer, Melvin Schrock, Merle Stutzman, and Harold Reeder. Four are still serving at Tangent, which are Victor Kropf, Wayne Miller, Jason Schrock, and Paul Zehr. Of the remaining five, three are serving as ministers in other congregations of the Western Fellowship; two are no longer serving as ordained men.

Melvin Schrock was the first minister for the group, serving from 1950 until shortly before his death in 1997. In 1951 the group asked Henry Wolfer of Sheridan to serve as Bishop. He accepted this responsibility and moved from Sheridan to Brownsville in 1955. He served as Bishop until 1960. In 1952 Merle Stutzman was ordained minister, and served until 1972. Harold Reeder was ordained Deacon in 1955 and served until 1960. In 1962 Victor Kropf moved to the Tangent area from Iowa. He had been ordained minister in Iowa, and was ordained Bishop in 1963. He filled the office of Bishop until 1995. Wilbert Kropf of Harrisburg served as Bishop from the time Henry Wolfer resigned until the ordination of Victor Kropf. In 1974 Jason Schrock was ordained Deacon, and two years later was ordained minister. By 1981 the church felt ready for another ordination and Paul Zehr was ordained Deacon. In 1990 the church had a double ordination for Minister and Deacon. Clayton Eveleth was ordained Deacon and Henry Hertzler was chosen as Minister. Clayton served until 1992 when he was asked to relocate to Chewelah, Washington, and Henry also served until 1992 at which time his ministry was removed and he moved to Oklahoma. In December of 1992, the church again decided to have a double ordination, for both

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Minister and Deacon. Wayne Miller was chosen for Deacon and Robert Birky for Minister. Two years later Wayne was ordained Bishop. Robert Birky served as Minister until 1995 and in 1996 his ministry was removed and he moved to Montana. In 1995 the Tangent Church, working along with the other congregations of the Western Fellowship, decided to have a joint ordination for Minister and Deacon to supply leadership for the mission church in Belize. Laban Kropf from Tangent was ordained as Deacon and served for a few months until he moved to Belize in the fall of 1995.

An important event in the history of the Tangent Church took place in 1960 when the Tangent Church withdrew from the Pacific Coast Conference. When Henry Wolfer laid down his Bishop responsibility in 1960 Merle Stutzman was asked to take the role of lead pastor, which he accepted and served in this capacity until the ordination of Victor Kropf in 1963. In accepting this responsibility, one of the things Merle gave as a condition of acceptance was that the church would leave the Conference. When the Tangent Church was formed, the majority of the Conference leaders were men who had an appreciation for the conservative position. The written standard of the Conference was appreciated, although it seemed many congregations were not upholding it. As early as 1952, there was concern given by the Tangent Church as to the direction Conference seemed to be taking. By the mid-1950s it became especially noticeable that there was a change in direction on the part of the Conference when younger seminary-trained men were gaining positions of influence. In 1959, there was growing concern in relation to things such as jewelry, including the wedding band, cut hair for women, and the general lack of concern on the part of many Conference leaders. After more efforts and correspondence, the final decision was made in May of 1960 to cut the ties to Conference. The Porter Congregation at Estacada made the same move the same month, although it does not appear the two congregations were working together on this decision.

CHURCH BUILDING — Along with the pressing need for leadership, another concern for the group was the need for a church building. In March of 1950 a committee was chosen to find a suitable building for worship. They investigated Corvallis, Shedd, Peoria, Oakville, Halsey and Tangent. A church building was found in Tangent that was

available and eventually was purchased for \$6,500.00. It was called the "Bethel Chapel," and was owned by the Open Bible Standard Church. The first service was held in this building on June 4, 1950. This building had a steeple and bell, which the group felt was not in keeping with simplicity, so the steeple and bell were removed. Later, the bell was sold for \$25.00. By the late 1960s it was apparent that something needed to be done since the existing building had deteriorated and additional room was needed. The decision was made to build new, and a building committee composed of LeRoy Schrock, Wilmer Steckley, and Marvin Schrock was chosen. The new church was situated to the east of the old building, which was torn down as soon as the new building was completed. The work began in January of 1969 and was completed by the end of April. The church members did nearly all the labor. The expenses for this project came to \$19,000.00. The church continued to grow, and by 1990 there was again the need for additional room. Twelve feet were added to each side of the building for additional classrooms and larger crowds. Elden Birky of Harrisburg and Daniel Hertzler of Tangent were hired to go ahead with the project. The remodeling costs for this addition came to \$75,000.00.

VISION AND CONVICTIONS — One question that can be asked about any church is what do they stand for? What are their convictions, and what kind of teaching program do they embrace? These are legitimate questions. The Tangent Mennonite Church is part of a group of churches known as "The Western Fellowship." When the Tangent Church took the step to leave Conference in 1960, they were not aware the same thing was happening in other parts of the country in congregations with similar concerns who felt the need to withdraw from Conference. The Tangent Church aligned itself with a group of churches in Oregon and also in Canada, and became part of what was called "The Northwest Fellowship." In the early 1970s, due to some difficulties, the Oregon churches found themselves outside of fellowship with the Canadian churches. After this the group of churches Tangent is part of was known as the "Western Fellowship." There are 11 churches in this Fellowship, five of which are in Oregon.

In thinking about the convictions and vision of the Tangent Church, first and foremost I would say we believe and teach the New Birth. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." One of the things a

conservative church has to deal with is the charge that their salvation is in their clothes, or that their religion is a religion of dress or outward form. We want to guard against any idea that plain clothes, or a conservative lifestyle by itself alone, has saving merit. We are saved by coming to Christ in brokenness and repentance for sin and by walking in obedience to the Word.

In a conservative church, we believe in the ordinances. We believe and practice the seven ordinances: Marriage, Baptism, Communion, Feet-washing, the Women's Head Covering, the Holy Kiss, and Anointing With Oil. We believe in nonresistance as opposed to pacifism. We believe in being obedient to the government as long as it does not violate the Word of God. We also believe in the principles of separation and nonconformity. We believe nonconformity is more than the way we dress, although that is included. Nonconformity is included in all aspects of life. We do not believe as a separated people we should participate in the political process, either by way of voting or protest. We have felt we should not serve as jurors. We try to avoid associations that draw us into relationships that would result in an "unequal yoke." We believe in a minimum written standard that all members must adhere to. A sense of separation from the world is a safeguard. History has shown that when principles and appreciation of nonconformity are lost, nonresistance also will soon be lost. As a church we have felt that the radio and television are detrimental to spiritual life, and have chosen not to allow them in our membership. We also try to guard against the sports emphasis. While there is a place for wholesome activity, the professionalism in sports is not conducive to the Christian life. As a child, I attended public schools for my first ten years, as some others did. In more recent years we have not sent our children to public schools, but have sent them to the Lake Creek School, which is operated by the Harrisburg Congregation. We have also discouraged involvement in higher education as well as the professions since it has proven detrimental to spiritual life.

We know Godliness cannot be legislated, and yet history has proven that in order to keep a church pure, discipline must be used. As I have come to understand the Tangent Church, I see a desire to avoid extremes. We have wanted to avoid liberalism on one side and legalism on the other. I have seen a spirit of acceptance at Tangent. We have believed in not laying

a greater burden on people than can be borne; yet at the same time taking seriously the doctrines of the Bible.

Children are not Christian because they are born into a conservative home. They have a sinful nature. We believe a child that is disciplined according to the Scripture will grow to understand right from wrong and accountability to their parents. When they reach the age of accountability to God, it will make it easier for them to respond to Him when He calls. How do we perpetuate the faith? How do we pass it on to our children and our children's children? That is a vital question. One of the questions that was put to the church when the decision was made to leave Conference was what would our young people do for fellowship? At that time, the answer was not forthcoming; it was a step of faith. But God has been faithful. First of all, we need to believe it and be convinced. Our children are able to easily tell how convinced we are. We try to impress on our young people the concept of individual accountability, that they are accountable to God. Sometimes there are young people in a conservative church who grow up with the idea that as long as they can appear good on the outside and keep the preachers happy, that's what matters; that's good enough. We try to teach against that kind of idea. By the way of a teaching program, we expect parents to teach their children when they are walking by the way, when they are sitting down and when they are rising up. We try to guard our children's and young people's associations. We have yearly revival meetings. We have yearly Bible conference meetings. We try to encourage a service mentality. We have organized youth activities and try to stress things that are spiritually wholesome. We try to include our young people in church services such as topics, song leading, etc. We have winter Bible schools our young people go to where they are with other young people of like persuasion. This has proven to be spiritually stabilizing for our youth. We send our children to Christian day schools, and we see the school as an arm of the church and under the control and direction of the church.

I Samuel 2:30 . . . For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly

esteemed. I believe the desire of the Tangent Church has been to honor God. There have been mistakes and spiritual casualties along the way. There have been disappointments. Yet I believe God has heard the cry

and the desire of those who labored here and has blessed the work here at Tangent the last 50 years, and our desire is to go forward and face the future being confident he will continue to lead. And we can claim the promise that **“those that honour me, I will honour.”**

The Melvin Schrock Family

by Jason Schrock

Melvin Schrock was the first ordained brother to serve the Tangent Mennonite Church. His 47 years in the ministry at Tangent gives him the distinction of serving the longest of anyone to date. He was given ministerial oversight of the congregation when it was formed in 1950. He served as a minister continuously until he was no longer able to help due to age. Even after retirement from active duty, he took a keen interest in the church and gave much-appreciated counsel until his death in 1997. Melvin, with his wife Anna, was deeply interested and concerned for the ongoing work of the Tangent congregation, giving direction through his many years of leadership. They were both a faithful example of Christian living and were an encouragement to many throughout their years of relating to the brotherhood of Tangent.

A history committee was chosen to compile and write the history of the first 50 years at Tangent. In preparation for that, they sent out a questionnaire to members and former members of the church. A few responses received show the influence that Melvin and Anna had on the brotherhood. Several quotes: “The impact this one person, with his wife, had on my life is almost incomprehensible.” Another quote: “He had a very great impact on the life and direction of the church. If it weren’t for him, I wonder where the church would be. Melvin was a little like another Grandpa, an authoritative figure with a booming voice that still resounds in my memory, a man who preached with fiery conviction.” Yet another quote: “Melvin was a man of vision and concern whose influence and impact on the Tangent congregation will probably never be fully known. His was a moderating influence that helped bring together those who would have more extreme positions on either the conservative or liberal side, while gently drawing the congregation to a more

scriptural practice.”

Melvin Schrock was born February 16, 1909 to Joseph and Bella (Yordy) Schrock in Shickley, Nebraska. He was number eight in a family of seven boys and three girls. His brothers were David, Joe, William, Elmer, Ray and LeRoy. His sisters were Emma (Mrs. Bill Reeser), Anna (Mrs. Ed Roth) and Fannie.

At the age of eight months he moved, with his family, to Albany, Oregon. Joseph bought a 160-acre farm southeast of Albany on the Seven Mile Lane, where the family grew up. Melvin was taught to work on the farm from boyhood. One of his first regular chores was pumping water for the horses. This became his responsibility at five years of age, even though he needed to stand on a wooden block to be able to reach the pump handle. At 10 years of age he drove horses for a hay baling crew. By the time he was 12 he drove horses and wagon for a threshing crew. By the next year he worked all season in the field pitching bundles onto the wagon.

Melvin went to school at the Oak Creek School 1/4 mile north of the Schrock home. There he completed all eight grades in a one-room school.

As a little boy, sitting in his high chair, Melvin’s father would say, “This is my little Captain Jenks.” Thus a nickname was given to him. For many years he was known to family and friends as “Cap.” In fact, in later years after he was married, his wife Anna only knew him by “Cap.” The name Melvin didn’t sound right to her. After he was ordained to the ministry she felt it wasn’t right to call him Cap, but couldn’t bring herself to call him Melvin. So when Anna needed to talk to him she’d say, “Hey.” Finally he told her, “My name isn’t Hey, it’s Melvin.” And so he became Melvin to his wife and eventually to his friends, even though in later years at a mission meeting the moderator introduced the next speaker as Cap Schrock.

At about 12 years of age he was convicted of sin, but didn’t know what to do and didn’t talk to anyone about it. The feeling left him and a couple years later he was baptized and became a member of the church. He took part in young peoples’ meetings and lived a fairly good life. Others thought he was a Christian, but he himself knew that he was not. He was not really born again until 21 years of age. During a series of revival meetings the Holy Spirit spoke to him as never before. He felt lost, condemned and doomed. When he went home that night he drove his car into the shed. He got out and started for the

house. But he was so under conviction that he fell to the ground on his face and poured out his heart to the Lord. He must have been there a long time because the clock was striking midnight when he entered the house. The Lord heard him and gave him a peace like none he had ever experienced before.

He was serious with the Lord and began to carry his Bible to church, which was unheard of among the young fellows. They made fun of him, asking him if he wanted to be a preacher. That fall he went to Hesston College for one school year. He felt that was a stabilizing experience and helped him to grow in his spiritual life.

Anna Roth was born June 28, 1914, at Wayland, Iowa to Nicholas and Esta (Reschley) Roth. She had two sisters and a brother: Ina (Mrs. Jonas Hershberger), Urban, and Rachel (Mrs. Dan Stutzman.)

When Anna was three years old, her mother died at the age of 32. The children stayed in the homes of relatives and would only get to see their father on weekends. Two years after the death of his wife, Nicholas went to Oregon where he found a bride, Kathrine Maurer. Katie came to Iowa where they were married. As a little five-year-old, Anna experienced the satisfaction of cuddling into the lap of her new mother. They soon packed their belongings for the move to Oregon. Not knowing all the implications of their packing, Anna decided she would hide her favorite book about the three bears on a shelf under the stairway, so that it would be there when they returned. How heartbroken she was when she found out later that she would never see her favorite book again.

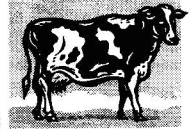
The family traveled by train, arriving in Eugene, Oregon. Katie's brother-in-law, Levi Kropf, met them with his Model T Ford and took them to Grandpa Maurer's in Harrisburg. They needed to cross the Willamette River by ferry at night to get to their house. They stayed with Grandpa Maurers for awhile, after which they moved on to Albany and stayed at C.R. Gerig's, whose wife, Anna, was Nicholas' sister.

Nicholas bought a run-down farm one mile southeast of the Fairview Church, where Don Kings now live on Stutzman Drive. There the family grew up, learning many lessons in hard work. Being from Iowa, Nicholas knew how to raise corn. His fields of corn became the envy of the community. Nicholas would choose the fields with the most Canada thistle to raise his corn. Was that the better soil or was it a weed-control measure?

Anna and her siblings got their education at the Price School about two miles from home. They

were expected to get up in time to milk two cows each morning before walking those two miles to school.

Both Melvin and Anna's fathers immigrated to the United States as young boys. They both came from the Alsace-Lorraine area.



German was the prevailing language in both homes.

Melvin and Anna grew up in the same church, the Fairview Mennonite Church at Albany, Oregon. Melvin noticed Anna, but since she was five years his junior, he purposed to give her time to grow up. Then a threat surfaced that brought him to immediate action. In the early 1930s the Midwest was experiencing drought that resulted in the dust bowl. A number of young men from North Dakota came to Oregon looking for work. It became known that one of these young men had his eye on Anna Roth. Even though being accused of "robbing the cradle," Melvin went into action and began a special friendship with 17-year-old Anna.

They were married on September 3, 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression. The first year of their married life they lived on the Case place about one-half mile south of the Schrock home on Seven Mile Lane. In this first home, they had no electricity or running water. Later they moved further south on the Seven Mile Lane, to a place owned by Anna's father. This is the place where Anna's brother-in-law and sister, Jonas and Ina Hershberger, later lived. Melvins lived there for four years after which they moved to the Roth home place near the Fairview church, where they lived for the next 12 years.

Melvin and Anna raised a family of three boys and five girls born over a period of 19 years. Their children according to age are Paul, Esta, Eunice, Melva Anne, Rhoda, Jason, Julia and John.

Melvin was a farmer, pursuing that occupation until 1964. He followed the pattern of most farmers of his day, raising some ryegrass as well as grain crops to feed his livestock. Melvin usually had a few milk cows, some hogs, laying hens, and sheep. He kept his family busy with work around the farm. The children were expected to help do field work, feed the stock, make and repair fences, help shock hay and haul it loose into the barn, and cut firewood for the winter. At harvest time the crop was swathed with a seven-foot mower. Someone needed to drive the tractor that pulled the combine while another person rode on the combine platform sewing the sacks of seed as the combine went around

the field. Then came the job of picking up the sacks out of the field, hauling them to the local seed warehouse, or into the granary on the farm for the livestock's winter feed.

Melvin liked fruit. It wasn't a meal until he had his fruit. It was his practice to plant an orchard wherever he lived. His fruit trees and grape vines produced abundantly. He became quite proficient at grafting fruit trees, often helping out family or friends with his skills in grafting and pruning.



On August 26, 1934, less than a year after Melvin and Anna's marriage, Melvin was ordained to the ministry at the Fairview Church. Henry Gerig was also ordained the same day. There were four other brethren that shared the lot with Melvin and Henry, namely: Orie Conrad, Lloyd Lind, D. A. Roth, and Roy Roth.

Melvin served as minister at Fairview for the next 15 years. He became increasingly concerned with changes going on within the Fairview Church. After expressing himself a number of times and seeing no change or improvement, he chose to withdraw from Fairview in 1949. There were at least five congregations in the valley that extended an invitation to Melvin and his family to worship with them. They visited other churches but made no move to join any of them. Later in 1949 about eight additional families left Fairview, forming a fellowship of believers that later became the Tangent Mennonite Church. Through the Pacific Coast Conference executive committee, the Tangent group asked Melvin to serve as pastor, to which he consented.

Melvin's father-in-law, Nicholas Roth, believed it best if Melvin's family would move off the home place, further removed from the Fairview church, from which they had withdrawn. Melvins bought a 200-acre farm west of Tangent where they lived for the next 12 years. This farm was situated along the Calapooia River. This farm holds many treasured memories by the children of Melvin and Anna.

On this farm Melvin often grew field corn. He was efficient by allowing his feeder pigs to harvest the corn right in the field. The pigs scattered corn on the ground, attracting wild ducks that were quite plentiful because of John Glaser's duck-hunting club about a mile west across the Calapooia River. This at times made good hunting on the Schrock farm. The ducks knew the shooting hour rules

almost better than the hunters. They would come in by the thousands at dusk, feeding all night and leaving at the first streaks of dawn, heading back to their refuge at Glaser's pond. Melvin used to grumble that the farmer feeds the ducks but can't even shoot them when they come on his property. Late one afternoon Melvin, his son, and his nephew were hunting. The ducks really started coming in and they lost track of time. When it was finally almost too dark to see, three happy hunters approached the barnyard with the ducks they had bagged in hand. The first person to greet them was none other than the game warden. He confiscated the ducks and wrote tickets for shooting after hours. Melvin never did think that was right or fair, but what could a poor farmer do?

In the early 1940s Melvin experienced a nervous breakdown. He was unable to do his own work, was not able to preach or even to properly take note of his newborn daughter. Many days he spent lying around the house, with no energy to work. For a time he was not even able to attend church services. When he would go to church, someone would feel obligated to ask their minister to lead in prayer. That would unnerve him for the next week.

He recovered quite well from his problem, but in the mid-1950's began to feel that a change would be good, lest there be a repeat of his earlier problems. The family spent the 1957-1958 school year in Harrisonburg, Virginia, living in the house of Professor Ernest Gehman. This house sat on a hill overlooking the area near to the EMC campus. Their oldest son, Paul, was married that fall and was in his last year of college. The four oldest daughters — Esta, Eunice, Melva Anne and Rhoda — attended EMC (now Eastern Mennonite University) or EMS (now Eastern Mennonite High School) that school term. During that winter Melvin wanted to visit many churches that he had heard so much about. The family visited over 50 churches in 42 weeks. Many times he was asked to preach. His daughters felt that there were some sermons they could preach from memory! After that year of absence, Melvin's health was much improved and he continued to serve in his ministerial responsibilities until over 80 years of age.

Farming was not overly profitable for Melvin. He was able to make payments on the farm, but found it difficult to keep up with the changes going on in the agricultural segment of the economy. He said that someone told him that if you have a farm and want to make money, sell it. So in 1962 they

made the choice to sell the farm. They bought a 10-acre property on Highway 34 north of Tangent, just east of the railroad. This was home to them for 18 years. During this time Melvin drove school bus for the McFarland School District and worked for his nephew, Vernon Schrock, on his farm a mile east of where Melvins lived. Anna worked part time in the kitchen at the Mennonite Home in Albany.

Melvin decided to work for George Smith at Halsey where his son, Jason, was employed. After Jason became partner in the business, Melvin worked for a number of years for him. Melvin was in charge of receiving seed at harvest time and overseeing the cleaning line, which included hauling away many dusty loads of screenings.

In 1977 Melvin accepted the responsibility of driving the school bus that the Tangent church had purchased to transport her students to the Lake Creek Mennonite School at Halsey. He drove bus for the church for seven years. His age at this time was 68 to 75 years old.

In 1980, after the children were all gone from home, Melvins moved to the town of Shedd, expecting that to be their retirement home. They only lived there four years. Jason offered that they could live in the house next to them that had just recently been vacated by George and Wilma Smith. And so in 1984 they moved to Halsey and resided there until their death.

Melvin had a strong work ethic. Even after he was no longer able to do much physical labor he would tag small poly bags for Smith Seed Services. He was very alert and often noticed a mistake on the tag necessitating correction. He also was independent. I well remember one time that he wanted to borrow my rototiller to till his garden. Instead of asking me to move the tiller from the storage shed to the garden for him, he was determined to be no bother to anyone else. I discovered Pop (as we called him) harnessed to the tiller with a rope. Mom was directed to steer the tiller. They slowly made their way across the yard, he pulling like a workhorse and she dutifully steering the machine.

Even as health failed, they were still interested in what was happening in the community and especially in the church. It was my privilege to give my father a bath every Saturday night. Bath time ended up being a grilling session, asking questions that had been on his mind that week. His

questions covered a range of subjects such as: I noticed the boys working the garden. Is it about ready to plant? I saw a change at the Warehouse, what do you intend to do there? Is so-and-so having difficulty with the church? What was your decision concerning . . . at the last ministers' meeting? etc. It was during these sessions, as well as visiting with him the last number of years that I discovered more fully the vision of the man who I had the privilege of calling Pop. He had a deep concern for his family and for the church. His vision was a church free from sin, free from spot or wrinkle. He worked tirelessly to achieve that goal.

Quoting their daughter Eunice: "Melvin was a minister and farmer, in that order. He possessed a special gift of visiting the lonely, elderly, and widows, and took time to do so. He also left his material pursuits to take in the church conferences, mission meetings, and whatever else came up in church life. If someone, including his children, had spiritual needs, the material plans of the day were put aside, while he helped them meet that more important need. Anna was a minister's wife at the age of 20 years, and was very supportive of her husband and his responsibilities. She was a gracious hostess and took in many visitors for meals and overnight lodging. For quite a few years they took a special interest in having foreign students in their home, seeing it as an opportunity to share the gospel."

The vision of Melvin and Anna Schrock has at least partially been carried on by their children and grandchildren.

Their oldest son, Paul, married June Bontrager from New York. Paul recently retired after 41 years in publishing work. He worked at Herald Press in Scottdale, Pennsylvania, editing several periodicals including Words of Cheer. He was book editor and later director of Herald Press's book program. During three decades of service he helped to edit and publish more than 700 book titles. Paul and June have three children.

As a young lady, Esta went to Amelia, Virginia to teach for one school year. It was during this time she became acquainted with Roy Mast, her future husband. After marriage they lived in Virginia. In 1980 they moved to Mexico to help start a mission church among the Mexican people. They continue to reside there. They have 15 children. Four of their married children also live in Mexico, contributing to the work there.

Eunice married James Mast (brother to Esta's husband, Roy), who served his I-W at the Mennonite Home in Albany. After completing his I-W service they moved to Amelia, Virginia where they have made their home ever since. A number of their 13 children have been active in foreign missions as well as church planting.

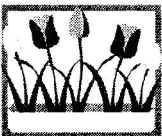
Melva Anne went to Grassy Narrows, Ontario and served as a mission nurse among the native people there. She served under Northern Light Gospel Mission headquartered at Red Lake. She married fellow VS'er Marvin Zook and they have two children. They live at Red Lake.

Rhoda taught school two years at Lake Creek Mennonite School at Halsey. She married Dean Mast, living in his home community at Amelia, Virginia. They were asked to move to Rutherfordton, North Carolina to help establish an outreach congregation there. They have five children, two of which live in Guatemala.

Jason married Marilyn Kropf from the Harrisburg congregation and was the only child to remain at the Tangent Church. After Marilyn's death in 1984, he married Ruth (Culp) Kropf, also from the Harrisburg congregation. They have 11 children and live at Halsey. Jason was ordained deacon in 1974 and minister in 1976. He has served continuously in the ministry at Tangent since 1974.

Julia went to Maryland as a school teacher. She met and married Mark Torkelson. Mark is a deacon in their church at Mt. Airy, Maryland. They, with their family of seven children, have spent several short-term assignments in Guatemala and the Bahamas.

John married Elizabeth McPherson. They have two children. John lives in Halsey, and works as a truck driver for Smith Seed Services. He is known in Halsey as the flower man, because of his colorful display of flowers in his yard that borders Highway 99E.



Melvin and Anna had 59 grandchildren. Two of them are deceased, one as an infant and one, Edwin Mast, son of Esta, was killed in a traffic accident while serving in the mission field in Guatemala. Most of the grandchildren have identified with the Mennonite Church and many are active in the church of their choice. Among the grandchildren, eight are ordained or married to an ordained man; at least eleven have been, are, or plan to be involved in foreign missions (other than Mexico), and seven have moved to new

localities in the interest of helping establish new congregations. Two granddaughters and their husbands served under MCC for a number of years. Four children and 14 grandchildren have been involved in teaching in Christian schools. The descendants of Melvin and Anna live in 14 states, three Canadian provinces, as well as Mexico and Guatemala.

As Melvin and Anna's physical health waned, it was obvious to see that their concern one for another increased. They took care of each other as best they could. But the time came when they needed help in their home. Two single sisters, Evelyn Kropf and Helen Culp, took turns by the week caring for them. During this time the church families took turns bringing in meals and visiting with them. Melvin often used this opportunity to give a lesson on the history of the church with encouragement to faithfulness by all.

As close as Melvin and Anna were to each other, the family often wondered when the time came for one of them to go, which one would be able to get along without the other. They did not need to worry, as God took care of that question. On May 21, 1997, they were involved in a two-car accident. Melvin and Evelyn Kropf were killed instantly. Anna passed on ten days later. And so after 63 years of married life together, they passed from this life together as well. They are both buried at the Alford Cemetery at Harrisburg.

The spiritual legacy left to us of Melvin and Anna Schrock continues to have its impact on the Tangent Congregation as well as numerous places in Canada, the U.S.A. and Central America. Melvin's burden for his family can be summed up in his closing words on a tape he made for them, "My hope and prayer is that all my descendants will come to know the Lord." Also, his concern for his fellow believers was manifest by the verse he so often quoted at the closing of a message; I Cor. 15:58: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*



Fall Meeting Features Yoder Community

The fall meeting will focus on the small community of Yoder, Oregon, formerly known as Yoderville, which lies several miles south of Canby and west of Molalla. The community is named for the Yoder families who settled the area in the late 1880s, coming there from McLean County, Illinois, most of them by way of Dade County, Illinois. Those early Yoders were descendants of Amish Bishop Jonathan Yoder who settled in McLean County, Illinois, moving there from Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. Catherine Lantz, wife of Gideon Lantz, credited to be the first Amishman to settle in the Willamette Valley, was a daughter of bishop Jonathan and thus a sister of the Yoder heads-of-household who settled the Yoder community.

The meeting will be held in the Smyrna Church, now affiliated with the United Church of Christ, but previously having had both Presbyterian and Congregational affiliations. This little church was constructed in 1891 and has always been heavily supported by the Yoder family members, many of whom are presently in the congregation.

Speakers for the afternoon are all Yoder descendants: Joel Daniels of the community; Muriel van Veen of Portland, who grew up at Yoder; and James Grant Yoder, a retired Baptist pastor, who grew up in Canada and now lives at Richmond, near Vancouver, B.C., and has recently become very interested in his Amish Mennonite ancestors.

The meeting will be at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 23, at the Smyrna Church, located just north of Highway 213 on Highway 170. Everyone is welcome.

In Memoriam

Long-time member of OMHGS, Mary (Martin) Conrad, widow of Amos B. Conrad, died June 1, 2001. She is survived by her mother, five children and 12 grandchildren. We will miss her faithful support.

Books for Sale

OMHGS has on hand now a number of copies of Hope Lind's history of Oregon Mennonites, Apart and Together, available for sale. Cost is \$26.95 when purchased from the Archives or one of the Executive Committee. If ordering by mail, please add another \$3 for postage and handling.

Recent Additions to the Library

Recent books that have been added to the library holdings to assist you in your research include the following.

Studer, Gerald: Christopher Dock, c1967, Herald Press.

Pellman, Hubert F.: Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967, c1969, Eastern Mennonite College

Forrester, Beryl, ed.: Solomon and Anna (Lehman) Jantzi, 2000, published privately.

Ratzlaff, Gerhard: The Trans-Chaco Highway, how it came to be. 1998, Ascuncion, Paraguay.

Pilcher, Phyllis, compiler. A notebook containing stories and information on her Steffen forebears: Steffen, Leisy, Krebill and Risser families.

Two issues of the Brethren Christ History and Life: Vol. 23, No. 3, December 2000, which contains an article by Donna F. Wenger, "John and Emma Climenhaga: A study in commitment"; and Vol. 24, No. 1, April 2001, with an article by Harold Sider, "The Life and Times of J. Henry Byer."

Willems, Kevin J.: Who's Who in the Shrock Family, December 2000, published privately. This is a monumental piece of work, over 700 pages, well indexed, many pictures, and takes the Schrock family another generation or two back into Europe.

Beachy, William V., and Betty K. Beachy: The Beachy Family, c1980, published privately. American roots and lineal descendants of Peter and Barbara (Hersherberger) Beachy.

Ross, Marion: Where have all the Roeses gone?
Update 2000, February 2001, published
privately.

Book Review

John S. Oyer, "They Harry the Good People Out of the Land": Essays on the Persecution, Survival and Flourishing of Anabaptists and Mennonites. Goshen IN: Mennonite Historical Society, c2000. 331 pages, \$11.95.

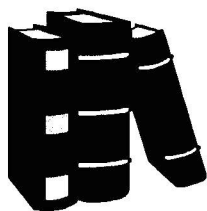
Did you know that over 50 years ago, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was the guest of "C O Girls" at a tea given in her honor at the Hudson River State Hospital in Poughkeepsie, New York? Or that the author of the above book, a Mennonite historian of renown and a former director of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, at one time considered leaving both the Mennonite Church and the United States? And, what do you know about Mennonite theology?

You will find explanations and answers to these and other questions in this recent publication from the Mennonite Historical Society. The book consists of mostly previously unpublished essays and manuscripts by the author and covers a wide range of topics relating to Anabaptist/Mennonite history and includes personal experiences in CPS (Civilian Public Service) and relief work in Europe following World War II as well as his testimony of why he was a Mennonite (he died in 1998). The latter third of the book is a monograph on the Mennonites in Esslingen.

I found the book extremely interesting with new insights and information as well as challenging viewpoints. It is a book that will serve well as resource material and compels reading more than once.

John D. Roth edited the book, which is available from him at the Department of History, Goshen College, Goshen IN 46526, at \$11.95 a copy.

—Margaret Shetler



Review of "My Journey"

Recently, the OMHGS archives acquired two books on the London, Ontario Mennonite Mission and people involved in it. One is "Big Hill," the memoir of the late Roger Smith, who came to the Mission as a young alcoholic and turned his life around, going on to become its executive director. The other was "Golden Grain Grows a Mission," the story of the London Mission itself. I will shortly be donating a third book about the London Mission to the OMHGS — "My Journey," the autographed memoir of Alvin Roth, who was the first director of the mission.

My interest in the London Mission came in a bit of a roundabout way, due to my friendship with an online friend in Toronto, Edith Smith, who was Roger Smith's sister-in-law and who had worked at the mission in the '60s. As a result of my reading "Big Hill" and reviewing it for the Zion church newsletter, Zion News, I had a brief contact with Roger before he died.

Alvin was born into an Amish-Mennonite family and grew up in a neighborhood of Wilmot, west of Kitchener, Ontario, called the Amish Settlement.

Alvin relates many interesting incidents from his early years and says that through them he recognized God's protection and grace in his life.

He attended school until he was into grade eight, and he had a good teacher who was also a friend and who encouraged him to go to high school. His parents, however, insisted that he quit school to work on the farm as was customary, especially as this was during the Great Depression. Alvin took on this greater responsibility but felt a silent resentment, which he expressed through drinking too much, figuring that if he was expected to work like a man he would act like a man.

Alvin had a spiritual turnaround in 1934 when he went to a Sunday evening church meeting in order to ask a young woman to a party but was touched by the message of the speakers, a missionary couple, instead. He had previously had a fear that God didn't love him; now he received the message that God loved all people, including him.

The young lady he had been intending to invite to join him for a party, Madeline Bender, became his wife in 1939.

In 1948, Alvin and Madeline moved to Nairn, Ontario, to farm. Alvin had felt a sense of call at his conversion in 1934, and his desire to share Jesus

Christ had been a major reason for moving to his new community. He found his Scottish Presbyterian neighbors to have a more private Christian faith than he had known. On one occasion, he witnessed bluntly to such a neighbor, only to have them both part in silent embarrassment.

By 1949, 14 families had moved into the area and formed Nairn Mennonite Church. Shortly thereafter, Pastor Wilfred Schlegel launched a mission project in the city of London, Ontario, where he had seen homeless men on the street. Alvin and Madeline were approached and asked to open and operate the mission. The couple sold their farm and moved their possessions to London in the first week of December, 1950. At about that time, the Conference Mission Board assumed sponsorship and financial support of the London Mission.

Madeline cooked for the men who came to the mission while Alvin preached short services before breakfast, lunch and dinner. The men had to attend these before they could eat.

Alvin supplemented their income by selling his blood each month. His duties at the mission included visitation work in hospitals. At the time the mission started, Alvin was giving invitations to accept Christ at every service three times a day, and men who responded were given special privileges at the mission. Often they would go back to drinking and brag to their compatriots about "outsmarting" Alvin. As a result, Alvin put a great deal of thought and prayer into whether that way of doing things needed to be changed. He also found himself being educated and growing greatly through his experiences at the mission.

Alvin visited men in jail, but was unable to enjoy the pastoral privileges of confidentiality and privacy until his ordination to the ministry on February 5, 1955.

As time went on, services were expanded when a house was acquired and renovated and repaired to be used as a Women's Mission, while later another property was acquired to become the Teen Girls' Home.

Alvin's involvement in other areas of mission work was also taking place during this time, with his starting of a children's Sunday school that later became King St. Mennonite Church. The mission rules had changed so that the men could stay at the mission indefinitely, and even with the number of beds expanded, there was extreme overcrowding. Alvin experienced a great deal of

pressure for the mission to be moved out of the neighborhood. A piece of property was acquired, a new building was built, and a dedication ceremony for the new men's London Mission held on September 17, 1961.

Alvin writes about his own inner personal struggles as he served and changes he made in his life, often as a result of deep introspection and pain. One change that he didn't have a lot of difficulty making was abandoning his plain coat.

Alvin retired as Executive Director of the mission in October, 1976, but became active in various service areas and also in continuing to work in some aspects of the London Mission. He was able to pursue his interest and involvement in the concept of house churches. Lastly, he has been dealing with the challenges of aging.

The story of Alvin's growth and development is quite remarkable. His going from a sheltered Amish-Mennonite community to service in a city mission and to a good-sized community in general demonstrates how God works in each of our lives in ways we may never expect. "My Journey" is an enjoyable book that tells the story of one Mennonite man's life in an engrossing and engaging way.

This book, especially in combination with "Big Hill" and "Golden Grain Grows a Mission," tells not only the story of a Mennonite Mission but of the people who were so much a part of its beginnings and success.

—Suzanne Roth