

Our Heritage

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2012

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April dedication of library and archive a success

After years of dreaming and planning, the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center was completed this spring.

The center, located near Zion Mennonite church in Hubbard, Ore., houses a library and archives for Pacific Northwest Mennonites.

A dedication ceremony at Zion Mennonite and a ribbon cutting at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center on April 22 provided an opportunity to celebrate the center's opening, honoring as well the many people who contributed to the center's completion.

The weather also cooperated with plans for a ceremony. Although spring in Oregon can be damp and cold, this year's April 22 provided blue skies and 80-degree temperatures, the nearby blooming trees and fields a perfect backdrop for the ribbon cutting. The only drawback to such glorious weather: a minor traffic



Members of the Kropf family gathered in front of the heritage center that bears the Ivan and Pearl Kropf name. The April 22 dedication of the library and archives celebrated, in part, the contributions made by the Kropf family. Photo courtesy Don Bacher.

jam at nearby tulip fields made a few visitors late to the celebration.

A service of dedication in the Zion Mennonite sanctuary provided an opportunity to acknowledge those who worked hard to complete the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, to revisit the history of the center's development, and to hear a plenary address from Hope Lind,

who had—several decades ago—initiated the vision of a library and archives (her address is reprinted here, beginning on page 4).

The dedication service included congregational singing, led by Don Bacher, and a short presentation by Jerry Barkman, whose term as president of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society started this spring, replacing Bernard Show-



Jerry Barkman, president of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society, shows a visitor the library, part of the new Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. The cherry-top conference table in the foreground was donated by Barkman. Photo courtesy of Don Bacher.

Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center.

Gathering at the center's entrance, the ribbon was cut by Showalter; Richard Kropf, who served as site superintendent and finish carpenter for the center; and a representative of the Kropf family, Claudia Lapp, who is Ivan and Pearl Kropf's daughter.

After the ribbon was cut, heralding the center's official opening, Larry Passmore was recognized for his contribution to the center: an intricately carved wooden sign that will hang permanently on the center's exterior. New visitors to the center also admired the cherry-top conference table, donated by Barkman and completed by Hope Village residents.

A short tour of the archive and library followed, allowing guests to inspect the archive room and its movable shelving, an innovation that increases the

alter; Barkman also served as president from 1996-2000.

During the planning and construction of the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, Barkman operated as the general contractor, and so took some time during the dedication service to thank those who worked to complete the building. He said, "we wish to thank our God for the resources He has given to the Society through His people.

"We also wish to give thanks to those who guided the building process and those who used hammer, nails, wood and glass to build a facility that will enable the Society to continue to carry out its mission," Barkman continued.

"We also want to give thanks to our members, the public, and especially the children

and grandchildren of Pearl and Ivan Kropf for their generous donations towards the building fund," he said.

After a prayer of dedication from Willard Kennel, PNMHS's third president, and congregational singing of "To God be the Glory," the audience was dismissed for the short walk to the

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: Jerry Barkman
 Vice President: Goldie Heyerly
 Secretary: Gloria Nussbanum
 Treasurer: Don Bacher
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capacity for document storage. The tour provided a glimpse of an area that will be closed to visitors, as the archive room will be accessed only by center staff following the open house as a means of preserving the delicate documents housed there. The archives are also climate controlled, creating the perfect temperature for document conservation.

Those who visited the cramped quarters of the library and archives at its former location, Western Mennonite High School, remarked on the expansive space at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center.

The new center has significantly more room for scholars and other visitors to do their work; and the interior design, completed by LeAnn Kropf, cre-



Larry Passmore, a woodworker from Corvallis, Ore., stands beside the sign he carved and donated to the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. Photo courtesy Don Bacher.

ates a much more pleasant environment for study.

After a short tour of the building and also the nearby historical barn, those attending the April 22 dedication returned to the Zion Mennonite fellowship hall for refreshments and conver-

sation.

According to conference historian Ray Kauffman the dedication ceremony provided “a rewarding afternoon of gratitude, blessing, and marking of a milestone in the history of our society.”~

THE PNMHS ARCHIVES ARE CLEANING HOUSE!

As documents have been moved into the new space at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, duplicates of many publications have been uncovered. The PNMHS librarian and archivist hope to find homes for duplicate publications. If you would like to claim some of these duplicates, please contact the center before October 15, 2012. After this time, the duplicate publications will be recycled. (Some issues may be missing from the years listed below.)

<i>Youth's Christian Companion</i>	(1951-59, 1961-63, 1964-65)
<i>Beams of Light</i>	(1952-57)
<i>Story Friends</i>	(1958-59)
<i>Words of Cheer</i>	(1956-64)

BUILDING ON OUR HERITAGE

By Hope Lind

Although I no longer live in Oregon, today I feel like I am still a part of you. This is our heritage, our society, our beautiful new building that is a dream come true. It is surely far beyond what earlier visionaries could ever have dreamed of.

The theme for this entire construction project, carrying through to our program today, is Building on our Heritage. It's an apt theme. We have been building a physical structure, even while we use "building" as a metaphor referring to the intrinsic essence of our heritage.

I wonder how we might draw out that essence. What do we mean by our heritage? Is it the genes we inherit from our parents? Is it the way we talk and walk, the way we do things?

Is it how we learn to think and what we learn to do, from our parents and friends and church communities? Is it the Bibles and books, photo albums and genealogical records, passed on in our families? Is it our particular faith tradition? Is it the values and standards that help define who we are? I suggest that

it is all of that and more.

A heritage can be good, or it can be not so good. There's no perfect heritage, of course, but for us, today, we probably regard ours as mostly good. We often speak of our Godly heritage. Through centuries long past, people have cherished and built on their heritage. From the ancients who wrote petroglyphs on a rock, to storytellers who memorized and recited the history and genealogies of their people; from scribes who wrote history and law on papyrus, to writers who published their opinions on paper with printing presses, humans have passed on their heritage to the next generation.

Our faith ancestors benefited from that new printing technology, which made available the writings of the prolific Menno Simons and other early Anabaptist leaders. It made possible the printing of stories of martyrs, illustrated with an artistic medium that used copper plates.

Some of our ancestors paid precious money to pur-

chase these writings. That printing technology also made it possible, for people who could read and who could spare the money, to have a family Bible in their homes.

From the Bible they could learn for themselves how Jesus lived and what he taught. In the Bibles, they also passed on their family heritage by recording names, dates, and sometimes places, of births, deaths, and sometimes marriages.



Hope Lind provides the dedication address at Zion Mennonite Church, honoring the completion of the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. Photo courtesy Don Bacher.



All four presidents of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society were present at the April 22 dedication of the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. From Left: Hope Lind, Jerry Barkman, Willard Kennel, and Bernard Showalter (not pictured). Photo courtesy of Don Bacher.

Some of our immigrant ancestors made room in their travel trunks or baskets for these carriers of their heritage when they came to North America.

For us here today, the heritage we are building on is the Anabaptist branch of Christian faith, as well as the particular families from which we descend. Fortunately, we are not alone in building on this heritage.

We in the Pacific Northwest are part of a larger family of several Mennonite and related groups in which many other people are working to build on their heritage, as we are. In the United States and Canada, there are at least twenty-five archives and historical libraries.

There are about fifteen

museums or other historical and interpretative centers, some of which also house an archive or historical library. There are at least forty historical societies, committees, or other groups whose purpose is to preserve and build on our faith heritage.

Many conferences in MC-USA and in other Mennonite groups have a conference historian. Connections matter, and we have benefited from many of these facilities and organizations, as some of them have benefited from us.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

So, how did we in the Pacific Northwest come to this place, to this wonderful new building? We have many people to thank

for building a foundation, many of them long gone from among us.

They were visionaries and collectors, organizers and recorders, persons who treasured their faith heritage and family lineage. Untold members of congregations recorded and preserved the minutes of their business meetings and other congregational records. It can be a thankless task. (Next time you see your current church secretary, say “Thank you!”)

Individuals and families kept genealogical records, photos, and letters that family members wrote home. (As for you who are here, schedule a time to review and, if necessary, update your own family history records. And for photos, be sure to identify even the obvious persons! The identities may not be so obvious to your great-grandchildren.)

Ordained men and other congregational and conference leaders filed away minutes of committee meetings, sermon notes, letters they received and, sometimes, copies of letters they wrote. (If you are such a person, make sure your records are filed away for future reference.)

During the 1920 sessions of the Pacific Coast Mennonite Conference, someone brought to the floor the subject of having a [written] history of the confer-

ence.

The resolution which passed authorized S.G. Shetler to collect historical data, which more than a decade later [ca. 1932] were published in the little maroon book, *Church History of the Pacific Coast Mennonite Conference District* [p. 3].

In 1939, if not before, the Pacific Coast Conference first chose a conference historian. In 1944, Urie Kenagy was appointed custodian of “valuable historical literature and records...” We do not know what he collected or where he stored his collection, [Margaret Shetler, “Preserving History for Now and the Future,” a single-page paper used for a fund-raiser in 2007], but it may have been he who saved some of the hundreds of printed programs of special-church events, which we later found tucked away in shoe boxes and other such safe places.

In 1944, the Pacific Coast Conference began publishing a quarterly newsletter which evolved into a magazine titled *Missionary Evangel* [A&T, p. 238]. Its purpose was to promote missionary and evangelistic zeal, but the reports from congregations also illustrated how they were building on their heritage.

In 1960, Paul E. Yoder followed Urie Kenagy as conference historian. He served also

in various other roles, as pastor of several congregations and as a teacher at Western Mennonite School.

During his Oregon years, he amassed a large collection of papers that are an integral part of our archives today. As principal at Western, he also designated one wall of the small vault in the administration building, behind the principal’s office, for conference archives.

That was the first official conference depository for historical literature and probably for Urie Kenagy’s collection. Persons unknown to me reserved space in the Grace Mennonite Church building at Dallas for preserving official records, of that congregation but also of the Pacific District of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

In 1951, H.D. Burkholder wrote and published a small history of the Pacific District Conference of the General Conference Mennonites titled *The Story of Our Conference and Churches*. Members and supporters of Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society (OMHGS), which I am told is still the official name of what is now called the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society, helped build the foundation.

Many who are here today have dreamed, planned, organized, constructed, and donated, to bring us to the physical building we are dedicating, in which we house some of our faith and family heritage.

They and countless other people whom I do not have time to name, or do not remember,



At the dedication of the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, Bernard Showalter (third from left) cuts the ribbon, officially heralding the center’s opening. He is joined by members of the Kropf family. Photo courtesy Don Bacher.

or even know about, also helped lay the foundation for our faith and family heritage here in the Pacific Northwest.

BUILDING MATERIALS

With such a foundation, we of the present generation build on it, even as we continue to widen the foundation.

Each of you has your own stories, your bricks, to add to the building of our heritage. I will tell you a bit of the story of my bricks.

I moved to Oregon in 1960, with my native-born husband Clifford Lind and our baby daughter, Janet. We lived in Eugene and then near Sweet Home before we moved back to Eugene in 1964. A few Mennonites had recently moved there, and we joined them in establishing the Eugene Mennonite Church. During the next several years, I learned that decades earlier, there had been (Amish) Mennonites who lived west of Eugene, near Elmira and Veneta, not very far from where Cliff and I and our children lived. Who were they, I wondered. What happened to them?

I learned that Mose and Nancy Evers were the lone Mennonite family who stayed, until he died in 1955. That was only five years before Cliff and I first lived in Eugene.

Someone, maybe it was

John Lais, loaned me a copy of Shetler's history of Oregon's first Mennonites. I read and re-read the sections that pertained to the Lane County congregation, and even tried to read between the lines.

In the Oak Hill Cemetery, only a few miles from our house, Cliff and I found the broken gravestone of P.D. Mishler, a preacher in the Amish Mennonite congregation at Elmira.

In Albany, I had lunch with and talked with his daughter, Orpha Brenneman, then an elderly woman whose husband had been Mose Brenneman, an early preacher at the Albany Mennonite congregation. She put flesh on the bones of some of those early Lane County folks and at the same time helped form a building brick.

Also in those years, at a Christian Writers' Conference, I met LaVernae Dick. We were both freelance writers, and she was also working on a master's degree in history and writing her thesis about Oregon Mennonites. We became friends, and in the Lane County courthouse annex, I helped her find deeds and maps and other records about Lane County Mennonites. I learned from her that there had also been a congregation of Russian Mennonites who settled in the Elmira area, and they and the Amish Mennonites interacted at

times. I had found another brick.

The little Shetler history book was a valuable resource, but a lot of history had happened since Shetler wrote it. It must have been about 1973 that I kicked up a clod of unformed clay.

As a writer, I was always on the lookout for writing ideas. Was an updated history of Oregon Mennonites something I could or should try? Could LaVernae Dick and I work on it together? Would our Mennonite conferences support the idea enough to authorize it and help us find some research funding?

I thought about it for a while, then one morning while Cliff was shaving, I broached the subject with him. Building such a brick would be more work and take longer than I expected, I told him, and it could affect our family life and schedules as well. Was this something I should consider? If he hesitated to affirm the idea, it was not for long. LaVernae was enthused at the prospect, our conferences approved, and the conference moderators helped as they could.

LaVernae and I worked together on the project for a number of years, until life changing events took her in a different direction and she turned over to me her files and writing drafts.

It was indeed much more work and was taking much more

time to write this history than I had expected. Building that brick was a slow process, but I had a wonderful consulting committee, five persons who spent many hours reading my drafts, and meeting with me. They offered helpful suggestions and support, and without them this history would not be what it is.

But at that time I was also building other bricks. In 1974, I became conference historian. This position interlocked tightly with my researching and writing the history of Oregon Mennonites. Resource people from the various congregations provided records and other information and gave feedback to the histories I drafted about their congregations.

For some of my research, I borrowed old volumes of *Herald of Truth* and *Gospel Herald* from the Albany and Zion church libraries. And I went through the boxes and files that were stored in the small vault/archives at Western Mennonite School.

I don't remember who opened the heavy door for me to work there at night while Cliff was attending one or another board meeting at Western, but I spent hours with that small collection, with a clipboard for a table as I sat on a small chair in the stark light amid all kinds of stationery, official records, sports equipment and brooms,

ARCHIVIST NEEDED

The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society seeks a part-time, volunteer archivist to work out of our beautiful new Heritage Center in Hubbard, OR. If you or someone you know has interest in this position, please contact Jerry Barkman at jbarkman@canby.com by October 15.

which sometimes encroached on the wall designated for a conference archives.

Clearly, we needed a larger room and one dedicated for only historical resources. As conference historian, it seemed my job to address the problem.

During these years, another brick was rising out of the clay. I wondered if Oregon had enough Mennonites and other interested persons to organize a historical society. A few years before, Mennonites in Illinois had so organized, and they were developing an actual heritage center, complete with museum, historical library, and archives. I had no illusions about such an ambitious project for Oregon's far fewer Mennonites, but was there enough interest and commitment to organize for such efforts as would fit their numbers?

As conference historian, I tested the idea with a few other

people and then called a meeting on November 7, 1987. Fourteen persons met at the Albany Mennonite Church. Interest was high, and we decided to organize as the Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society, "to record and preserve our history, including church and family history, for the present and future generations." [*OMHGS Newsletter*, Sept. 1988]

OMHGS would be an inter-Mennonite organization, not affiliated formally with any Mennonite conference, and it would be open also to other-than-Mennonites who supported its mission.

Another brick was a parallel development, the planning for the new chapel/auditorium at Western Mennonite School. The school board and the school administrators were amenable to including a room for archives and a historical library, if it wasn't too large.

The conference delegates approved my proposal, as conference historian, that OMHGS would organize, administer and operate this future archives and historical library and that the Society would be the custodian of the present archival materials stored in the vault in the old building. To maintain accountability and to provide an official tie with the conference, the elected conference historian would be a member of the Society's board [Report printed in Sept. 1989 *OMHGS Newsletter*].

And so we built interlocking walls on the foundation of our heritage. In the early 1990s, about the time *Apart & Together*, the long-awaited Oregon Mennonite history, was published, OMHGS settled into its new room at Western Mennonite School.

Having this space was a joy and an opportunity. Margaret Shetler dedicated herself to learn the fine points of organizing archival materials so they can be safely preserved and also located when called for.

Marj Nofziger for years had collected books about Mennonites and by Mennonite writers, and she donated them to the historical library. Visitors came to use its resources, or called or wrote for help, so they could build on their own faith and family heritage. Western became a

warm and welcoming courtyard around us.

But even before we moved in, we sensed that this was not a longterm solution for our needs. It was clear from the start that our circumstances did not fit a common formula used to decide future archival space needs.

By then, I had acquired a huge collection related to my research for writing the Oregon Mennonite history. Margaret Shetler likewise had large amounts of materials, and other people also had materials stored in their homes to move to the new facility. The shelves were already almost full. Soon we were dreaming new dreams about a larger place, free standing and easily accessible.

When I left Oregon in 1997, we were kicking up clay clods here and there, but none had become bricks. But you Oregon folks kept dreaming and working and planning. You kept building more bricks, and the dream became reality. Almost fifteen years later, I return, to find this new heritage building that we are dedicating today.

A GARDEN FOR OUR HERITAGE

The past has brought us to the present, to this new building which is unique in the Pacific Northwest. It contains resources not available anywhere else in this area, and some can be found

nowhere else in the world.

But we have not arrived at a place of completion. Building on our heritage is a continuing process, and building always involves something additional or something new. Let's transition to a new metaphor, that of a year-round garden with something always green and growing, intended to produce beauty and nourishment and to grow and bring forth seeds for the future.

Our heritage garden is one of beauty and fragrance. We are the perennial plants of love, justice and mercy on which God spreads sacred sunshine and pours down nourishing rain. Our blossoms of human flowers are often bright and well formed -- and sometimes wildly askew, but God loves the varied skills, strengths, and maturities of all of us and makes a beautiful asymmetrical garden.

Our warm, friendly, helpful volunteers are some of the blossoms of beauty in our garden. This place can inspire and brighten the lives of people wanting to know how our faith and families came to be what and who they are today.

Our heritage garden provides nourishment. This facility, with its historical library and archives, is a place of nurture and education, a place where we can come to research Anabaptist beginnings and examine how early

Anabaptists and their Mennonite descendants lived their faith.

In the *Martyrs Mirror* we can read about hundreds of people who died for their faith, some of the stories illustrated by a famous Dutch artist. We can learn about various groups of Mennonites who settled in the Pacific Northwest and think about how we came to be who we are. We can find doctrinal and devotional writing, and fiction and poetry. We can receive inspiration for our mission by looking through newsletters and journals from other historical societies.

Gardens change constantly, and so does our world. This poses challenges for facilities such as ours. In the last two decades, options for research have expanded beyond what many of us could have ever imagined. Today, we can go to the internet and consult countless sources. Genealogy websites abound. It's easy to research a new family listing and discover in that listing a wonderful find. But such listings are only as dependable as their sources; they may also, unintentionally, irreversibly spread errors.

However, one can also access more reliable sources such as census records, ship lists, obituaries, certain old books, and other documents. We may wonder if all of this easy acces-

sibility makes a physical place of less value. I say "no" to that question. Our shelves and file boxes contain resources not available online.

Some of these resources, such as periodicals and books, are duplicated elsewhere, but many are not. Our archives is the only place you can find period letters that Paul E. Yoder received or wrote, letters that shine a light on the Oregon Mennonite world of the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s.

This is the only place you can find a major collection of Mennonite bishop N.A. Lind's diaries. This is the only place you can find a large collection of written histories of Mennonite and related congregations in the Pacific Northwest, many of them with cited documentation.

The internet is not the only challenge facing a physical facility. Often people would like to access our unique resources but they live too far away to visit. However, they can call or write for information, by the postal service if not by electronic mail.

Volunteers at our archives and historical library can find for them whatever relevant information is in our collection, then they can photocopy and send it by mail. Or perhaps they may scan photos or documents and send them electronically. A new Society website, periodically up-

dated with current contact information and a summary of available materials, could also be a valuable resource for users at a distance.

One historic challenge facing facilities such as ours is limited space for expansion. The planners of this building have made allowance for that, and there is space to add a good many more materials. Conference minutes and reports, congregational records, personal collections of diaries and letters and photos, and genealogical collections, all will continue to come to this place for future reference.

And before all shelves are again filled, maybe new technological options will help reduce shelf needs. Now we hear about cloud computing, and the possibility of storing documents out there somewhere in space, to be available at a few clicks of electronic keys.

For our heritage garden to remain healthy, we will test and select appropriate new plants from time to time. Our heritage garden blossoms and brings forth seeds for the future.

Some seeds find their way to fertile soil without assistance from us--people will find us on their own. Other seeds may need us to spread them on receptive soil--we may need to promote our facility and intentionally

invite new users.

From our garden, we reach out welcoming hands to the seekers and the curious alike. A surprising number of people in our larger world are attracted to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and practice. Some of those seekers join us, including a number of past or current Oregon Mennonite pastors.

Our heritage garden can also be a place for the curious, including our neighbors and families who want to know if there is something they can harvest from our garden. Do we have their family genealogy? What do we know about the beginning of their congregation?

We remind people periodically that this is a public garden, not fenced in and secured with a locked gate--though in fact our physical facility must be secured and there may be a nominal admittance fee for non-society members. This place, this garden, is for all seekers and curious folks, not just Mennonites.

We rightfully celebrate this new building, this garden of beauty, nourishment and growth! It is a major accomplishment. It is also a challenge for us to offer ourselves to its mission, to make this a place where nurture can happen and from where the seeds of outreach can spread.

This new space calls more

of us to take a turn at staffing the facility. It calls more of us, younger as well as older folks, to learn how to process books and archival materials to make them available for research. It calls more of us to help the visitors who come and the inquirers who call or write.

This building, this garden, features a ready-made mission for extending our story of God's work among us in our church communities and families. The new building that we are dedicating today is more than its windows and doors, more than its shelves of books and archival materials.

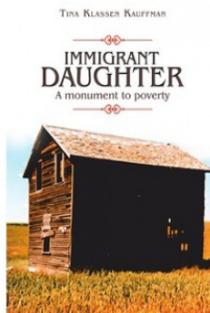
This building will receive its "life" from the people who are here today, and from the persons we draw in and welcome in the coming days, months and years. Let us dedicate ourselves,

along with this place, to be living bricks and sturdy plants, to bring beauty, nourishment and growth to our Godly heritage and to our expanding history.

May it be so.~

*Hope Kauffman Lind, a native of Minnesota, moved to Oregon in 1960 with her husband, Clifford Lind, and their baby daughter Janet. In Oregon, Hope worked as a freelance writer for numerous Mennonite publications; served on congregational, conference and church wide committees; and developed an interest in Oregon Mennonite history which culminated in writing *Apart and Together: Mennonites in Oregon and Neighboring States 1876-1976*, published in 1990. In 1997, she and her husband moved to Harrisonburg, Virginia. They are the parents of four children.*

PNMHS FALL MEETING SEPTEMBER 22, 2012



Tina Klassen Kauffman
shares stories from her newly published
memoir

Immigrant Daughter: A Monument to Poverty

2:30 p.m.

Lebanon Mennonite Church

SHARING STORIES OF GOD'S PRESENCE, NOW AND THEN

As a high school student attending Albany Mennonite Church, I paid little attention to the grown-ups in our congregation.

They were my parents' friends, and sometimes my friends' parents, but beyond that, I didn't know much about their lives or the journeys that had brought them to Albany in the mid-1980s.

And, being a self-absorbed teenager, I didn't spend much time wondering about the folks in the pews next to me. Once in awhile, when I was allowed to sit at the grown-up table and hear the conversation of adults, I learned something new, though I didn't always apply what I'd learn to my own small life.

Tina Klassen Kauffman was one of those adults who I should have listened to more. She and my mom were friends; her daughter, Lynette, was my camp counselor at Drift Creek Camp. Beyond that, I knew nothing about Tina, not even that she worked as a nurse in my own community.

The wisdom of years and hindsight makes me wish I'd asked more about Tina's life and about her childhood. I might have learned a bit about being grateful for what I had, and about how people can endure through poverty and hardship.

I might have discovered ways to trust God more, and to rely on my family and community more than fulfilling my own selfish desires.

Luckily for all of us, Tina has written a new memoir, *Immigrant Daughter: A Testament to Poverty*. Published this summer, the book provides an engaging glimpse into Tina's life as the daughter of Russian Mennonite immigrants, living and struggling to survive in Canada.

In some ways, Tina's family endured an immigrant experience like many others. Because of language barriers and geographical distance from other Mennonites, the Klassens were isolated; because of circumstance and bad luck, they were extraordinarily poor. Still, the family relied on the kindness of other Mennonites and on their own strength to survive (if not thrive) in harsh conditions.

There is a good bit to recommend in *Immigrant Daughter*. Despite the sorrow of poverty and isolation, Tina also writes about her childhood with humor, recognizing the ways a child's perspective alters the reality of an event.

She also describes the many traditions and foods that will be familiar to most ethnic Menno-

nites; while reading, I found myself craving the foods which tie me to my past and to other Mennonites.

Tina's story is one of deep and abiding faith, even in the midst of sorrow and despair. It is indeed a testament to poverty, but also bears witness to the ways the Mennonite faith took root and grew in a new world, for in many ways, her own experience was replicated time and time again by our forebears, the men and women who risked almost everything to start a new life, in a new country, freely practicing an age-old religion.

These are the kinds of stories we need to hear and to honor. And by that, I mean that we need to hear and honor all our stories. Just as Tina's memoir bears witness to her own interactions with God, each of our stories also reflect God at work in our life.

Telling our personal stories allows us to teach each other and to provide instruction for younger generations. In sharing our stories about the past, we also sustain our denominational history into the next generations, proclaiming as well the many ways God dwells within us and through us. ~

Melanie Springer Mock teaches English at George Fox University, and edits the PNHMS newsletter, Our Heritage.