

# The Delaware Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter



Fall/Winter, 2003

Volume 2 No. 2

## Delaware Mennonite Historical Society Hosts Banquet Saturday September 6, 2003

By Vernon Zehr Jr.



The second Annual DMHS Banquet was held at the Greenwood Mennonite School at 6:30

PM. on Monday, September 6, 2003, Christine Trivits with her team, Lisa Chupp, Sid Hamilton, Tony Gehman and Kim Bryfogle served a delicious roast beef meal. There were about 215 people present.

The atmosphere of the meeting was permeated with history. Each of the thirty tables was centered with a photo of people in our past. Pictures from the Bender family, the Schrocks, the Swartzentrubers, the Yoders, the Embletons, and more, gave us pause to consider that the name, "Historical Society" has more than one meaning.

As people from all segments of Delaware life gathered, they

*See DMHS Banquet on page 6*

## Greenwood Mennonite School Celebrates 75 years

By Joseph Miller, Class of 1968

On the weekend of October 4-5, 2003, the Greenwood Mennonite School celebrated its 75th anniversary. We reminisced, worshipped, and shared memories from 1928 to the present time. The celebration began informally, Saturday afternoon as we gathered at GMS. Several rooms and other areas had been attractively arranged with yearbooks, photos, documents, building projects, and fundraising festivals throughout the years.

As we gathered for the banquet, we were given a warm welcome by John Ivan Byler, Principal of GMS, During the banquet, we were treated to music by the school band, directed by Lowell Bechtel, Pastor of Tressler Mennonite Church. We also enjoyed music by an Alumni chorus, conducted by Kevin Yoder, GMS music instructor. Several times during the weekend, we were led in spirited congregational singing by Merle Embleton.

In the evening program that followed the banquet, John Mills, a School Board member, spoke of the contrast, between this celebration, and what

*See GMHS 75 Years on page 7*

## THINGS TO COME

### Web Site Planned

A web site is coming. It is our plan to have a web site operational by next spring.

This will give us opportunity to allow interested readers to read back issues of the newsletter and to view pictures of various buildings and people. The possibilities are unlimited. A complete report will be included in the next issue of the DMHS newsletter.

### Historical Society Executive Board Meets Greenwood Church Leaders

On October 21, the executive board of DMHS met with leaders of the Greenwood Mennonite Church to discuss the possibility of using the Mast House as a center. The main purpose of the meeting was for sharing the vision of the need for guardians of history in the community and and state. There were questions and comments regarding the possibility of using the property and the physical needs of DMHS. The present tenants in the building will stay until their permanent housing is completed. We are looking forward to further exploration and discussion about this possibility for DMHS.

### Letters Encouraged

If you have a response to an item in the newsletter or a comment about something you remember, write us. We would like to have a "Letters column in future issues.

Contact: revzehr@mac.com

## Iva Yoder—Silent Pillar of the Church

By *Vernon Zehr Jr.*

Iva Yoder lives contentedly during her 88th year in the house built by her husband Clyde, 15 years ago. The care she gives to the interior of her house is matched only by the manicured look her son Ronnie and his wife Linda provide to the grounds that surround her

Mrs. Clyde Yoder, is not the oldest member of a Mennonite Church in Sussex County but she runs a close second. She modestly accepts the compliments of her ten children, their spouses, her 21 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

Iva Schrock's mother was Amanda Bender Schrock, daughter of Enoch Bender, Valentine Bender's brother. Her father was Asa Schrock, son of Jonas, who was the brother of Chris Schrock. Chris Schrock was the father of Verna Schrock Zehr, Cora Schrock Mast, Enos, Harvey and Eli who later married Lucy Bender.

Iva Yoder is the branch in the family tree that helps weave the fabric that binds the Yoders, Schrocks, Zehrs, Benders, and Swartzentrubers into one extended family. Like a lone puzzle piece she completes the picture, connecting the various Mennonite relatives in Delaware.

At the impressionable age of 18, Iva came to Greenwood, Delaware seeking better employment

than that offered in the Grantsville, Maryland and Springs, Pa. area. She was quite pleased with the work she found working in the homes of various people in the community. The pay was almost double of that, back home and the companionship proved life-changing. Iva recalls one memorable visit to her first cousin Savilla (Schrock) Yoder, who was married



*Iva Yoder - September 2003*

to Perry Yoder. On her way home she met a young man on a bicycle. It was Clyde, Perry's brother and he stopped along the road to chat. That chance encounter led to the beginning of a life altering courtship several months later. In 1936 when she was 21, they were married. Iva must have been very happy here for a few years later, her younger brother Elvin Schrock joined her in this new community.

Clyde and Iva raised ten children, five boys, and five girls, all born at home. Aunt Lucy was present for nine of these births. Pauline Beachey her sister filled in for one.

Delbert lost his life in a car accident in September of 1982. Ronald, Naomi Carol, and Arnold live in Delaware not far from the home place. Melvin lives in

Kansas, Dorcas in Washington State, Loretta in West Virginia, Rhoda in Ohio, Ruth in New York and Phillip in South Carolina

When asked about "hard times" in those early years, Iva paused and said, "Well I remember the time we had a lot of tomatoes that we sold for ten cents a basket, and then the time that Clyde hurt his neck and his back carrying roofing material up a ladder. He spent some time in the hospital and was laid up for more than a year". Then she smiled and said, But I don't really dwell on those things."

They lived in a series of houses and properties.

There was the John Ashe property which they later sold it to Orville. They spent time in a Luther Lyons tenant house, and Bill Stoneburners house and the Satler place. When Clyde's parents went to Florida for a while they lived at the home place enjoying the fruits of being in the center of the "molasses street" action. Their telephone "ring" was, a long, a short and a long. That was back

## Iva Yoder - Continued

when back when most nearly everyone got the news by listening in on the party line. Their last move was to the present homestead on Route 16. In the early years Clyde did some farming, using horses, mules and the "dinky", the homemade tractor popular in those years. During the early days of the dairy farm, Iva remembers milking cows and cooling the milk with cold water pumped into a large watering trough. She was willing to help wherever she could, whether it was helping with chores, or gardening and canning. That was the way of life for the women in the early days of the community. After Clyde sold the dairy cows he worked for Mervine Poultry. That seemed to be the place where many of the young men in the Mennonite community got their first job. Later he worked in construction.



1949 - From left to right

**Back Row:** Iva, Clyde, Melvin, Delbert; **Middle Row:** Ronald and Arnold; **Front Row:** Naomi Carol, Ruth, Phillip, Dorcas

When her youngest daughter was 9 years old, Iva went to work at the Country Rest Home. She enjoyed her work there for nearly 25 years under the management of both L.L. and Nanna Swartzentruber and later with Mark Yoder. When reminded of

her service, Mark smiled broadly and simply said, "She was good."

In Nanna Swartzentruber's last years when she herself was a "guest" at the Rest Home, Iva would often come to see her. The two women had developed a

*see Iva Yoder on page 5*



Family picture 1975 at Rhoda's Wedding

From Left to Right: Dorcas, Melvin, Loretta, Rhoda, Naomi Carol, Iva, Ruth, Clyde, Phillip, Ronald, Delbert, Arnold

## A Time For Remembering

By *Freda Wert Zehr*

It has been a wonderful weekend; the 75th reunion of the Greenwood Mennonite School.

As we walked through the spacious building, and the new halls leading into many rooms, I could not help but recall the old church building which we used when I attended there in 1951-52. Nor could I forget the tiny coatroom, turned into a classroom, at the back of the church where the eight of us junior students crammed around a table.

Sister Anna Frey and Brother Arthur Smoker were our teachers that year. They alternated in and out of our little space as they taught the other classes housed in the main part of the building. We were often left alone, and as I look back on it, we were indeed a well behaved bunch of students. I can only remember two misdemeanors that year.

One was after the last exam of the year was over. We climbed out the window and headed straight to Uncle Milt Swartzentruber's farm and his freezer where we were treated to ice cream by Milton Jr., who was one of the class members. We made it back into the classroom without any one finding out we were gone.

Greenwood Mennonite School and Church is a beautiful memory for me, and those memories came flooding back this weekend as we looked back through old pictures, heard the old stories and saw faces from the past.

I had come, from my home in Pennsylvania, to the Greenwood community for my junior year of

high school. At the public schools, which I had attended all my life, I was never allowed to take part in any outside school activity, so I often felt alone and isolated. Suddenly here I was, home at last. At least that's how it felt to this plain little Mennonite girl. At the church I had come from, youth



*Freda Wert Zehr - graduation photo 1951-52*

activities were frowned upon. Here, the school was just an extension of the church itself and even though they were very conservative in thought as well as dress, youthful activities and friendships flourished. We enjoyed such things as "singings" at some one's home on Sunday nights after church. And during the week, nights were filled with hay rides on cool autumn evenings, corn huskings, hot dog roasts and song fests around the fire.

And who could forget that wonderful game of Walk-a-Mile on starlight nights, cheating sometimes, – going back three places instead of five as you had been told— because

the third one was the young man who had stolen your heart and you wanted to walk with him. To those of you who may not know the game of Walk-a-Mile, we would line up two by two, boys with girls and start walking, sometimes for more than a mile, with two extra people on the outside of the line. Those two would wander up and down and stop randomly and tell the person to go three ahead or ten back. All the time we would be walking, holding hands with our walking partner. (Maybe those oldsters in my old home church knew something they didn't know in Greenwood!)

There were values I learned then which have stayed with me all my life. Values of hospitality, loving acceptance for the strangers among us. I felt so loved and accepted by everyone. Throughout my life, I have tried to follow the examples I was given in the Greenwood community.

One value which stayed with me is shown in the words, "The essence of a falsehood is the intent to deceive". It was sternly and indelibly planted upon my mind after an occurrence (the other misdemeanor I spoke of) in which we all protected the guilty one by remaining silent. Sister Anna Frey was a calm teacher, who seldom raised her voice, but that was one time I can recall the fire flash from her eyes as she realized that she had been fooled by this usually very pious and well behaved group of eight students.

There I also learned to pray aloud. One would think that being brought up in a devout Mennonite home and church, I would have learned that. However I never had, except for my "Now I lay me down to sleep" prayer

at my mother's knee as a small child, so each morning when Brother Smoker would call on one of us to lead in prayer, I shook in my shoes, hiding behind the person in front of me so he would not call on me.

I did eventually learn, however, thanks to my cousin Millie Bender, who with much patience, practiced with me, so that I would gain confidence. I still remember my first prayer, spoken with much fear and trembling. In fact, I recently found the words I had written out, in an old faded journal I kept in those days.

"Our Heavenly Father we thank you for your love to us." (Millie had told me that it was always good to remember God's love whether praying aloud or silent) "We thank you for this beautiful day. We thank you for all of us here together. Help us to live this day for you. Help us to study to show ourselves approved in your sight." (I thought up that line myself and felt pretty good about it) "Keep us safe from harm." (I must have been thinking of those flying volley balls which could have gone astray.) "Amen."

I am not being sacrilegious here. It was indeed a sacred time for me. A time of growing and maturing in my faith in God, and also a time of affirmation of myself as a person, and a recognition of my talents. One example of that affirmation, I have never forgotten. One day in English class, we were all asked by Sister Anna Frey to write our thoughts about a picture which she put up on the bulletin board. It was a picture of a doctor, sitting outside an operating room with bowed head, his face in his hands, his form a picture of dejection. Some members of the class wrote simply, "The doctor has

finished his operation and is weary", or some other shortened version.

But for me, any writing assignment was a joy, and I practically wrote a novel, about a doctor who lost his patient on the operating table, complete with details of everything that went before, and his feeling of great failure, and his decision to become a missionary doctor. Sister Anna's words will ring forever in my ears, inspiring me, "Freda," she said. "I think we will see your name in church papers someday."

Yes, this past weekend was indeed a time for remembering, for once again feeling the thrill of singing with the old high school choir, of seeing beloved faces with touches of age and grace that time has left upon them. Yet somehow, still seeing them as they were fifty years ago, I must admit that I am teary eyed tonight, grateful tears mingled with sad tears. Grateful tears for memories of those years in my youth, years which have formed and influenced my entire life. Grateful tears for memories of many things: for lasting friendships, for first things, first love, first feelings of acceptance and worthiness, first feelings of God's love rather than just His harsh judgment. Tears of gratitude and thanksgiving for meeting the lasting love of my life, my husband of 47 years.

But there were sad tears too, for it was a time for remembering all those who had so impacted my life in those days and were no longer with us. As I looked about me, it seemed I could feel their presence and hear their voices. I heard Aunt Martha's voice calling out, "Amen" as we sang the words, "He could have called ten thousand angels," I saw Uncle Alvin, Uncle Nevin, and Mark Swartzentruber standing in the

pulpit. I realized how life repeats itself, how the generations go on, and how important it is to pass on to the next generation those values that we learned at the Greenwood Mennonite School.

I am deeply grateful to the committees who put so much effort into planning and implementing this time of remembering. It was a gift to us all. ■

## Iva Yoder

*Continued from page 3*

special bond during the years when Iva worked there. She would come, even on her day off, just to be sure that Nanna was okay. Iva was always willing to go the second mile, to give just a bit more of herself to make someone else happy.

Even when Iva talked about the last years of her husband, Clyde's life with his failing memory and need for constant care, Iva expressed a positive attitude of faith, hope and contentment. When asked, "When was the happiest time of your life?" Iva hesitated momentarily, then said with her characteristic smile,

"I guess you could say, I'm happy most of the time."

This is Iva Yoder, nearing her 89th year, the epitome of "the quiet in the land." Even though she may not talk a lot about it, her life is a living testimony to the love and the Spirit of the Lord. She forgives freely, does not harbor ill will, and is always ready with an encouraging smile. We laud Iva Yoder, loyal wife, faithful mother, proud grandmother, and a silent pillar of the church. ■

## DMHS Banquet

*Continued from page 1*

renewed their relationships with one another, remembering how things were “back then”. The buzz of conversation gave way to solemn silence as Jesse Yoder, led



*Jesse Yoder giving the invocation*

us in our invocation. Jesse serves as a minister in the Central Mennonite Church in Dover.

Kevin Yoder, music teacher at Greenwood Mennonite School, led us in two familiar hymns. Later in



*Kevin Yoder and his music group*

the evening, a group of young people under his direction, inspired us with music that lifted our hearts and prepared us for what was yet to come.

Rachel Schlabach gave the Secretary/Treasurer’s report, and a

report of the activities of DMHS for the past year. She made an appeal for continued support with memberships, and with our evening offering.

Clayton Swartzentruber, introduced our guest speaker, Dr. John Ruth from Franconia, PA. Dr. Ruth is a Mennonite minister, musician, writer, film maker, teacher and tour guide.

John Ruth attended Lancaster Mennonite High School in 1948 in the same class with Paul Bender and Lewis Swartzentruber. John spoke with nostalgia regarding those “care free” days of youth.

Dr. Ruth is a graduate of Eastern Baptist College and received his doctorate at Harvard. He has written books such as Conrad Grebel, Son of Zurich, 1974, Twas Seeding Time: A Mennonite View of the American Revolution 1976, and most recently The Earth is the Lords, a History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference 2001. His



*Clayton Swartzentruber*

films and videos include: The Amish: A People of Preservation and The Hutterites: To Care and Not to Care.

Dr. Ruth took us on an historical journey using pictures from the part of the world where many of us trace our ancestry. The spiritual tour took us back to 1500 and introduced us to Conrad Grebel a founder of our anabaptist roots. Grebel along with Felix Manz and



*Our guest speaker, Dr. John Ruth*

George Blaurock had been influenced by Ulrich Zwingli a follower of Martin Luther. The strength of the conviction of Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, George Blaurock and later Menno Simons led to the birth of the Anabaptists. Many of us can trace our roots to the very places where Dr. Ruth led us that night. This story is told in the first chapter of With Eyes of Faith, A History of the Greenwood Mennonite Church, by Harold Huber.

In conclusion Dr. Ruth gave us a snapshot view of the Mennonite Word Conference in Zimbabwe, Africa. This international current event, gives richer meaning to our history, for we are indeed one in Christ, regardless of who we are or where we come from. It is the purpose of DMHS to help us appreciate our present heritage by taking a close look at our past. ■

## GMHS 75 Years

*Continued from page 1*

he experienced at his class reunions in the public school setting. He expressed appreciation for what we have here at GMS.

Clayton Swartzentruber's "Remembering" came from his two perspectives, both as a student, and as a teacher at GMS. He expressed special gratitude for Uncle Milton Swartzentruber's vision, influence and support of the school. Clayton was glad for the opportunity Uncle Milt gave him to teach at GMS. Those years had a deep influence on his life.

Floyd Mast was the next speaker of the evening. He gave the reasons behind the founding of the school, and included helpful historical information and background of the church in that era. He reminded us that in some areas, the church has been flexible. However, in the matter of pledging allegiance to the flag, when it meant being willing to serve in the armed forces, the church refused to bend.

"There is the need to distinguish between knowing when we can compromise, and when we can not," Floyd said. "We have cause to celebrate and rejoice in what God has done.

Sunday morning's gathering began with a continental style breakfast for those who came early to fellowship before the worship service. This included local churches, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite, and many friends and alumni from far and near.

Richard Swartzentruber, who had served as assistant Pastor of "The Brick Church," was the Moderator. Chad Sterling, and the

worship team from Cannon led us in a meaningful praise and worship service. Merle Embleton again led us in spirited congregational singing.

John Embleton spoke to the children, but also challenged the adults as well. He illustrated the need to have light when walking in literal darkness, and how much more we need the Light of God's Word to find our way in life. This accented the school's motto: "Thy Word is a Lamp to my feet, and a Light to my path" (Psalm 119:105.)

Millard Benner's devotional reminded us that servants can not expect to have any less commitment, sacrifice, and dedication than their Master (Matt 10:24, 25), and challenged us to recognize that as parents we are responsible for the task of discipling our children. We must not leave that to the church or church school. As Millard put it, "To be a disciple of Jesus means to be a pupil or learner who is taught or instructed by Jesus. A disciple is one who accepts the mind of Jesus and thinks like He thinks. It is one who accepts the life of Jesus and lives like He would have us live—one who accepts the views of Jesus, including his world view; and accepts His practices in everyday living. Not only our children, but all of us need to be disciples who continue to learn from Him."

The sermon was given by a student of the school from the mid-80s, Gary Zook, who is now a pastor in the Hagerstown, Maryland area. His message was about "People who care, parents who care, and professors who care." He gave examples of how he was influenced by students who chal-

lenged him to be serious in his walk with God, and by staff who encouraged him to laugh as well as to study. A recurring theme was that "diamonds don't pop out, they must be dug out, education must be sought out, and the devil must be kicked out."

The current principal at GMS, Larry Crossgrove, shared some of the present vision for growth at the school, and for expansion of facilities to meet present needs. Former principal, John Mishler, closed the meeting with prayer.

We were served a delicious noon meal catered by a former student, now owner of Jimmy's Grill, James Tennefoss. What a treat! Chicken, ham, meat loaf, rolls, potato salad, cole slaw, Jell-O salad, and a wonderful dessert selection. Proceeds from this meal benefit the newly established Resource Center. Thanks Jimmy!

I am grateful to have been a part of this celebration. It was good to see friends and fellow students that I had not seen for a long time, some close to 30 years.

In closing, I would encourage all of us, when celebrating and thinking about the school, to remember that it has been possible because of His grace, His faithfulness and His blessing. To God belongs the glory and the praise. ■

**Joseph Miller** is the son of Jacob and Dorcas (Swartzentruber) Miller. He was born and raised in the Greenwood community. He attended Rosedale Bible Institute for three terms and spent two years in VS at Corning, New York. He is married to Joanne Keener and they have three children, Joshua age 20, Jordan age 18 and Janelle age 14. Joseph was pastor of a church in Montour Falls and is now living and self employed in Elmira, New York. The Millers attend a Nazarene Church in Elmira New York.

## Editorial

### *Twins In Our Midst*

This fall the Delaware Mennonite Churches proudly celebrated the birthdays of twins—education and history. Education just turned seventy five and history, in the form of the Delaware Mennonite Historical Society, has turned two. Each of these is pivotal in the life of the Church.

It is a well known fact that without attention to the past it is impossible to plan for the future or maintain a well constructed present. Without the tools provided by education it is impossible to record and remember the past.

Delaware Mennonite Historical Society gladly honors the Greenwood Mennonite School which serves the constituency of four of Delaware's Mennonite churches and other families in the community.

Samuel, Elisha and Elijah gathered the prophets for formal training and education. Mothers and fathers were constantly vigilant about the instruction of their young children as reflected in the Shema: The opening words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, a declaration of the basic principles of Jewish belief.

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all*

*your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children, Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."*

This is education and history at its best, when the institution of home schooling was born.

Jewish families took their children to the Temple for instruction or taught them at home. Jewish children received instruction at the age of six. Jesus' encounter with the PHD's on that famous trip to the temple at the age of twelve is evidence of his interaction with His teachers. Jesus was well educated. He held classes during His ministry, in the temple, on the hillside, in the fields, and in the garden, on a boat or wherever they would listen. Jesus was known as the Master Teacher. Before Jesus became a teacher he needed the discipline of an education, and clearly studied the history of His people. The Holy Word as we know it is the result of the twins we have in our midst, History and Education.

The Delaware churches, like the old fashioned cross cut saw has two handles, education and history, which we must use effectively. We take our positions with the task at hand. Pull and wait, Pull and wait. Education and history, Education and History. Education prepares us for an unknown future. History saves the facts and memories and protects us as we move forward fearlessly. The two most important elements of society work together- God centered education and accurately recorded history.

Not every family is blessed with twins. Not every community is blessed with a committed Christian School. We in Delaware are grateful to past Greenwood Mennonite Church leaders and all the people who organized a school in 1928 and have kept its doors open for 75 continuous years. We are thankful for the people for seeing the need for the Delaware Mennonite Historical Society, so that the history of this community will be recorded and preserved for future generations. As our twins pull together, future generations will be in good hands. ■

- Vernon Zehr Jr.



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