

The Delaware Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter



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Sisters in the Faith

By Vernon Zehr



Rachel Swartzentruber Schlabach

The Delaware Mennonite Historical Society has been diminished by the loss of two loyal supporters, Rachel Swartzentruber Schlabach and Vida Swartzentruber Huber. These two youngest daughters of Laban L. Swartzentruber were just six years apart and both shared the dream of a vital historical organization in the Delaware Mennonite Church Community. They shared the passion of faith and history of their father. It was this passion that became a family project in 1972 when Harold Huber, husband of Vida, accepted the formidable task of writing a comprehensive history of the Greenwood Mennonite

Church Community. This book, *With Eyes of Faith*, was completed in 1973 and becomes more valuable with each passing year.

We are particularly drawn to the last days in the lives of these sisters, daughters of Laban and Nana Swartzentruber. They were close in spirit and shared their life's hopes and dreams.

Rachel the older, put her dreams of a formal education on hold until her children were grown. She was working on a college degree all her adult life and was proud of her pursuits, but humbled at the incredible amount of knowledge she would never learn. Rachel was the motivating force in the land of her father and grandfather carrying on the dream of a formal historical center. She took their dream and made it her own. She unselfishly took a back seat to make it easier for others to feel and become a part of the dream. As she prepared for her leaving she was raising funds and assisting in the leadership of DMHS. She was both secretary and treasurer of DMHS up until the last couple of months of her life.

Her sister Vida became a registered nurse and eventually received her doctorate in the field. Her career led her to jobs at Eastern Mennonite College and James Madison University.

While their philosophies and interpretations of Christian principals varied they both laid aside their differences and embraced the faith of their father and mother. Days before Vida died they spent some time together in fellowship—little knowing that it would be the last before they both moved on to a perfect world in the security of God's eternal kingdom.

Vida, the youngest died November 20, 2005 and Rachel died December 25, 2005. These two daughters of Laban L. and Nana Bender Swartzentruber were not only sisters, but loyal sisters in the



faith, servants of Christ and the church and supporters of DMHS.

Vida Swartzentruber Huber

Solemn Thoughts By My Parents Graves

Freda Zehr
September 9, 1997

I went home this week. My parents have been gone 12 years now, and yet when I rounded that curve past Cocolamus, on Wednesday, and the old white farm house came into view, nestled at the bottom of the majestic Shade Mountain, I felt the tears gather and the overwhelming longing to just once more see my parents smiling faces, welcoming me home.

Yes, I went home again—even though Thomas Wolfe in his famous poem tells us we can't go home again! In some ways, he is right, but in other, far more profound ways, he is so wrong. Strangers now own the house, which was home to me for 50 years, the house my parents moved into when I was six weeks old and sold when I was 50, but still it is mine, in my memory and in my heart.

Nearby is the church where my parents are buried and for the first time in 12 years, I spent time alone by their graves. For some reason, I felt impelled to stop this time. It was a very moving experience. I knew

that it was only what was left of their earthly bodies that lay there, beneath that stone, but for some reason, once again I felt close to them.

As I sat and wept, the silence in the graveyard seemed suddenly filled with voices of other times and other places. I heard those voices, voices filled with love, lifted in laughter, in song, How my father loved to sing—he would gather us all around the piano every time we all came home, for a song fest, his own rich bass voice filling the room.

And yes, I heard the other voices too, the stress filled voices, the sounds of trivial annoyances that were manifested by verbal outbursts—the tear filled voices of impatience and anger—and worry.

I thought how unimportant are those things, which most often cause hurts in our relationships, especially when viewed in the light of this moment in time, in the silence of the evening, by my parents graves.

It was a healing time for me. I remembered the hurts, the pain of my childhood, but then I told them, aloud, that I forgave them for things they probably didn't even know they needed to be forgiven for.

I told them how very much I loved and missed them and how thankful I was for the way they had raised me, for the good virtues they had instilled in me.

As I sat there I vowed to be more loving, to be more aware of my own voice in this world, and to measure the importance of any issue in light of this Holy moment of insight, to leave unsaid the unnecessary criticisms which jump so easily from our lips and to cultivate the tender words of praise and encouragement for those I love.

It was good to touch those old memories and see it all in a new light. It gives perspective and objectivity to all of my life. I am glad I went home again.

From the Journal of Freda Wert Zehr
Freda's writing has appeared a number of times since 2002 with the second issue of the Newsletter. Her material is current, her style is captivating and she has won the hearts of many readers, who enjoy her relevant essays of history and the "now" among Delaware Mennonites. Freda's words will continue as she regularly shares her journal with us.

Obituary of Vida Huber

Vida Jane Swartzentruber Huber, 68, of Harrisonburg, Virginia, died Sunday November 2005, at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville.

Mrs. Huber was born March 27, 1937, in West Liberty, Ohio and was the daughter of the late Laban and Nanna Bender Swartzentruber.

Dr. Huber was associate dean of the College of Integrated Science

and Technology and director of the Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services at James Madison University. She was also a professor of nursing.

Prior to her current responsibilities, she was head of the Nursing Department at James Madison University and the Department of Nursing at Eastern Mennonite University for 17 years.

Dr. Huber was active in many

community agencies and served on the boards of Harrisonburg-Rockingham Free Clinic and the Valley AIDS Network. She served in multiple leadership roles with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Office on Children and Youth, the Blue Ridge Area Health Education Center Board and the Healthy Community Council. She was instrumental in forging numerous camps community partnerships.

She was awarded the James Madison University Citizenship award in 2002. She was a member of Sigma Theta Tau, Pi Delta Kappa, Virginia Society of Professional Nurses, American Nurses Association, Nation League for Nursing and Mennonite Nurses Association as well as other associations. She received an M.A.

and Ed.D from Teachers College, Columbia University, a B.S.N. from Eastern Mennonite College and a diploma from Milford, Delaware, Memorial Hospital School of Nursing.

Survivors include her husband of 35 years, Harold E. Huber, a daughter, Heidi Huber-Schanberger of Baltimore, Md.; a

brother, Clayton Swartzentruber of Landsdale, Pa.; four sisters, Esther Diener of Archbold, Ohio, Dorcas Miller and Rachel Schlabach of Greenwood, Del., and Dorothy Steckley of Carstairs, Alberta Canada. The Rev. John Jantzi conducted the funeral at Weavers Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Obituary of Lelia May Judy

Leila May Fike Judy died at home, December 7, 2005. Lelia was born in Preston City. She was born in Eglon County, West Virginia, June 30, 1899. Lelia lived 106 years, five months and seven days. Her life spanned one full

century and touched two others. Her family lived in the Greenwood, Delaware area, and were members of the Church of the Brethren. They and the Mennonites touched each other's lives in significant ways in the early 1900's. Her story, Lelia May Judy, A Woman of Noble Character was featured in our

spring issue in 2005. Her funeral services were held at the Bethany Church of the Brethren in Farmington, Delaware. Interment was at the St. Johnstown Cemetery near Greenwood.

Obituary of Rachel L. Schlabach

Rachel L. Schlabach of Greenwood died at home Sunday, Dec. 25, 2005. She was 74. Mrs. Schlabach was born July 16, 1931, in West Liberty, Ohio, daughter of the late Laban L. and Nana Bender Swartzentruber.

She lived her life with enthusiasm in service of others. She was involved in church planting, Bible teaching, bookrack evangelism, youth ministries, business ventures, retreat ministries and lay counseling. She loved music, reading, family and nature and is remembered for her leadership abilities, interest in people, innovative ideas and organizational skills.

Mrs. Schlabach was a charter member of Crossroads Community Church in Bridgeville.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two sisters, Marian Hostetler and Vida S. Huber. She is survived by her husband of 55 years, S. Titus Schlabach; five children and their spouses, Delmer T. Schlabach and Angie Ortiz-Diaz of Aibonito, Puerto Rico, Louise S. and William DiGennaro of Lenox, Mo., Walter L. and Kendra (Hartman) Schlabach of Greenwood, Nan S. and Ken Garber of Elizabethtown, Pa. and Charles D. and Amy (Montozzi) Schlabach of Greenwood; 21 grandchildren; a great-grandchild; three sisters, Esther Diener of Archbold, Ohio, Dorcas Miller of Greenwood and Dorothy Steckley of Carstairs, Alberta, Canada; a brother, Clayton L. Swartzentruber of Lansdale, Pa.; and her father's second wife, Fannie Yoder Swartzentruber.

She was interred at Greenwood Mennonite Cemetery, Greenwood.

Thoughts from Titus Schlabach, husband of Rachel

Titus now lives in his house in the Greenwood, DE area. His granddaughter lives in the apartment in the lower level of the house. He will spend his winters in Florida.

When Titus was asked what he misses most by the absence of Rachel, his reply was deliberate and simple. "Companionship-companionship companionship. Rachel was always there. We shared our lives and nothing can ease that loss. It is too much to expect family and friends to replace the companionship that gets built up over the years.

Obituary of Simon H. Sharp

Simon H. Sharp of 2081 Woodyard Road, Harrington, De 19952, Died Sunday, July 24, 2005 in Kent General Hospital, Dover, DE. He was 80. He was born April 28, 1925 near Belleville, Pennsylvania, in the Big Valley, son of the late Joseph E. and Fannie Detweiler Sharp. He was a farmer for more than 50 years and raised chickens on his farm.

Simon "Sim" was a quiet man who enjoyed his church. He also enjoyed deer hunting and farming, especially growing watermelons and raising chickens. He went on annual hunting trips to northern

Maine, missing only one year since 1948. He loved being with his family and friends and going to his annual family, which started in 1950, never missing one.

Mr. Sharp was a member of the Tressler Mennonite Church in Greenwood, DE. In addition to his parents he was preceded in death by his two brothers, Jesse and Christ Sharp, and two grandsons. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Betty Schrock Sharp. Also surviving are his six sons and five daughters-in-law, Simon Leroy and Nancy Sharp of Greenwood, Calvin and Kathy Sharp of Greenwood, Glenn and Diane Sharp of Harrington, Stanly Sharp of Wilmington, Daryl and Lisa Sharp of Folsom,

California, and Stephen and Ellen Sharp of Frankford, one daughter and son-in-law, Audrey and Chuck Craft of Greenwood, twenty grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, one step-great-granddaughter, three brothers and two sisters-in-law, David Sharp of New Holland, Pa and Sadie and Daniel Byler of Mifflintown, Pa, a sister-in-law, Linda Sharp of Belleville, Pennsylvania. and many nieces, nephews and cousins. Services were held at Tressler Mennonite Church in Greenwood, Delaware on July 28, 2005 and burial was in the church cemetery.

Obituary of Daniel Merrill Swartzentruber

Daniel Merrill Swartzentruber of Greenwood, Delaware, died suddenly, February 11 at home of heart failure.

Daniel was born August 14, 1962 in Greenwood, Delaware to Lewis and Evelyn Benner Swartzentruber. His occupations included farming, growing poultry and and a self employed building contractor in Swartzentruber Construction, Inc.

Daniel served his community and his Lord in many ways. He was a member of the Greenwood Mennonite Church, where he served in the music ministry. Daniel also served on many committees serving the Church, the School and the School Board.

Daniel was a loving husband and caregiver for his family. As a family, much time was spent hunting, camping, woodworking, singing and flying. Daniel always

had a deep interest in the JAARS Missionary Program (Jungle Aviation and Radio Services) so gifts in his memory may be made to Wycliffe Bible Translator, PO Box 628200, Orlando, Florida 32862.

Daniel had a passion for serving others, especially the unsaved resulting in his service in prison ministry and involvement with the Gideons, who distribute Bibles throughout the world. His positive outlook on life and his love of God was naturally shared with those with whom he came into contact.

He is survived by his parents and his wife of 31 years, Connie Slagell Swartzentruber; two sons, Carey L. and Matthew L. Swartzentruber, both of Greenwood; two sisters and their husbands, Fern and Maynard Baker of Roanoke, Va. and Ruth Ann and Steve Hays of Mobile, Alabama; one brother and his wife, John David and Carlene Swartzentruber of Bridgeville, Delaware.

Services were held at the Greenwood Mennonite School, February 15, 2006, at Greenwood. Interment was held at the Greenwood Mennonite Church Cemetery at Greenwood.

Listen to the thoughts Connie shared two months after the funeral of her devoted husband, Daniel.

Thoughts from Connie Swartzentruber, wife of Daniel

My heart and soul is overwhelmed with immense grief, While some have said the pain will subside and the burden will be easier as time goes by it seems to get harder. It feels like half of me is gone and it is hard to function at times. I miss his daily loving words of support, his physical touch and his attentive listening ear to the things I ache to say to him waiting for affirming responses that I can only imagine.

I miss Daniel's sharing of our mutual hobbies. Our sons miss his encouragement and sensible and sound advice.

My sons and I are grateful for the support of the church, our family, and friends. It seems that we, my sons and I are in our own lonely

world trying to trudge on by ourselves because everyone else is involved with their own activities and family life.

What counts most is the little portions of sharing that come at unusual and unexpected times and in unusual ways. It will get better

because God will not allow any burden too heavy, or any grief too painful to enter into our experience without the corresponding grace to help us bear it. For that promise I am grateful.

Obituary of Anna D. Yoder

Anna D. Yoder of Clayton, passed away Saturday, December 31, 2005, in her home surrounded by her loving family. She was 89. Mrs. Yoder was born July 1, 1916, in Ohio, daughter of the late Joseph E. and Lizzie D. Hershberger. She will be remembered by many as a nurse at Kent General Hospital for many years and as a private duty nurse until age 80.

Mrs. Yoder enjoyed sewing and quilting and was able to continue until early 2005. Her kindness and friendship touched many lives in many ways. Her concern for people's eternal destiny was

evident by the life she lived until she was called home.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 65 years, David Yoder; a daughter, Lovina Wessell; two sons, Andy and Jonas, seven brothers, Emanuel, Eli, Andrew, Daniel, Menno, Jonas and Henry; a sister, Katie Ann and a great-granddaughter, Cynthia Gehman.

She is survived by three daughters and sons-in-law; Edna and Ivan Yoder of Dover, Susie and Roman Byler of Clayton, with whom she lived for the past five years and Barbara and Dale Epley of Jacksonville, Fla.; two sons and

two daughters-in-law; John and Donetta Yoder of Lone Star, Texas and Paul Mark and Barbara Yoder of Fort Towson, Okla.; two sisters; Lovina Zook of Penna. and Betty Allen of Milford, DE, a brother, Jacob Hershberger of Kentucky, 26 grand children, 75 great grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. Services were held at Central Mennonite Church, at 220 W. Denney's Road, Dover, DE. 19904, Monday, January 2, 2006, with graveside services in the adjoining cemetery.

Mark Yoder— Quiet Pillar of the Church



Mark B. Yoder, Sr.

Mark B. Yoder, Sr. died December 18, 2005 in Peninsula Regional Medical, surrounded by the people he loved. He was 76.

Mr. Yoder was born November 24, 1929, in Greenwood, DE, the son of the late David. S. and Savilla Bender Yoder. He lived his entire life in the Greenwood area.

He graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School in 1948. As a young man, he bought the farm where he had been born, and spent the next twenty years as a farmer. In his mid forties, he returned to school to obtain his nursing home administrator's license and purchased the Country Rest Home, west of Greenwood. This enterprise prospered by his

vision and wisdom and he remained active in the daily operations until his death. Mark was a committed disciple of Jesus Christ, serving faithfully, giving sacrificially, and being an exemplary husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. Over the years, he served the church in many different capacities, serving on the ministerial team of Laws Mennonite Church from 1973 until the present. He loved life and he loved people, and his passing is a loss for us all. He is survived by his beloved wife of 56 years, Alene Wert Yoder of Greenwood, whom he married on October 16, 1949. Also surviving are three sons and three daughters-

in-law; Clinton and Frieda Yoder, of Seaford, DE, Nelson and Rose Yoder, of Morris, PA, and Mark Jr. and Polly Yoder of Greenwood, DE; three daughters and three sons-in-law; Mary Ann and Daniel Yutzy of Milford, DE, Sarah and Bert Slaubaugh and Alma and Jerrel Heatwole, all of Greenwood, DE., twenty seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Also surviving are seven brothers, including a twin brother, Luke of Michigan and three sisters, many nieces, nephews and cousins and a host of friends.

Funeral services were held at the Greenwood Mennonite School with interment at the Greenwood Mennonite Church cemetery.

Thoughts from Mary Ann Yutzy, Daughter of Mark

Mark Yoder's oldest daughter Mary Ann Yutzy writes these words excerpted from a love story of her father and mother: The story is rich in love and adventure from the day they met until the day her father died. While we don't hear about the grief and loss her mother Alene Wert Yoder feels each day, it is evident that the loss to the total family is great. Listen to Mary Ann's words:

"I can hardly believe it, but for a half a century I have been privileged to observe this ordinary, but incredibly beautiful, love story.

The young do not know how deep and rich and intrinsic love can be when it has aged along with us for as long as we can remember.

And now we come to this day that we knew was coming, but hoped would not be yet. How do we say good-bye to this kind of man? He cannot take any of us to Heaven, but he has shown us how to live, and he has shown us how to die. As surely as our loving Heavenly Father has done His part to see us safely home, so our earthly father has done his part to show us the way, and we are blessed.

Pictures and Volunteers Needed For Map Project

By Paul Bender

Exciting plans are underway for the Delaware Mennonite Historical Society and one of these projects is the creation of a huge wall map showing the homes and locations of the founding families of the Mennonite community at Greenwood and the homes of the continuing influx of families who helped create this unique community. In many instances the original houses have been remodeled or replaced, but the location of these could be identified by the houses that replaced them.

In every family there is at least one, and in many families several persons, who diligently preserve

photos and other materials that help keep their family history alive for future generations. We are looking for these persons to locate photos of the original house to which their family came, along with the date of that move and the place from which they came to Greenwood. We are also seeking those who would like to help with ideas and with the task of developing such a map. Part of this project will involve locating all families; those who had a short history here and others we may overlook. Certainly the various e-mail groups: the Yoders, Swartzentrubers, Benders and the Schlabachs and others of whom I am not aware, can help to enlarge that search.

My interest in this project is sparked in a large part by the certainty that several generations down the road our great grandchildren may want to make a pilgrimage to their family Mecca and discover the approximate or exact spot where their family sojourned in this community or who put down deep roots. Many of our children want their offspring to see where they lived, worshipped and played and where their grandparents are buried. If we value our ancestral family and their community, our progeny can be expected to value and drink from the fountain of ancestral history.

If you are interested in working on this project with Paul please send a message to Vernon Zehr at:

revzehr@delawaremennonite.com

Historical Center One Step Closer

The Delaware Mennonite Historical Society Board of Directors is in the final stages of purchasing property for the purpose of building a permanent center. Millard and Laura Benner have agreed to sell DMHS three acres of land, which will extend from Shawnee Road back to the Bender House. This will provide a place to build a center

as a meeting center and state of the art storage, display areas and a reading room for visitors.

This location also will provide the Bender House a secure and permanent location and very nearly duplicates the location of the first one room school house, which many fondly remember.

The commitment to buy property is only one step in this direction. The second step is making this a true community effort. Plans are being made for the design and development of an appropriate and attractive building that will reflect the history of the Mennonites of Delaware. The community that enthusiastically embraces this opportunity literally extends around the world. In coming months those of you who live in the area as well as those who have since gone to other parts of the world but feel a tug of history will be given an opportunity to contribute toward this project.

The Board is working on a three-year commitment plan to pay for the land and the first stage of a building that will give the historical society a place to call home. Details of this plan will be explained in a special correspondence and posted on the DMHS web site.

Editorial

This issue of the DMHS Newsletter is unique and special in several ways. Not all churches or families have the same concern about recording history. As a result not all of those who have died in recent years had the record of their lives nor the time of their death recorded in the national archives of the Mennonite Church. The DMHS Board has agreed to begin recording all the births, marriages and deaths in the Mennonite churches of Delaware. This can only be done with the assistance of the ministers and other interested members of the various churches. Your help is needed. Those of you who have connections with any Mennonite Church in Delaware who have moved

to other areas will also have an important role in this venture. We are vitally interested in recording the same statistics of your families as well. If we find this requires too much space or time we may need to reduce the print size or add a page or two. Yet DMHS serves the total community and we pledge to serve well.

2005 and 2006 have been memorable years. Lelia Judy, Vida Huber, Mark Yoder Rachel Schlabach, Sim Sharp and Anna Yoder, have all died in the last five months of 2005. Daniel Swartzentruber died in early February 2006. Listed below are the names and church association of those whose deaths we have recorded and whose lives we celebrate.

Vida Huber
Lelia Judy
Rachel Schlabach
Sim Sharp
Daniel Swartzentruber
Anna Yoder
Mark Yoder

Weavers Mennonite
Church of the Brethren
Greenwood Mennonite
Tressler Mennonite
Greenwood Mennonite
Central Mennonite
Laws Mennonite

Harrisonburg, VA
Greenwood, DE
Greenwood, DE
Greenwood, DE
Greenwood, DE.
Dover, DE
Greenwood, DE

In six and a half months from July 28, 2005 to Feb. 11, 2006 hundreds of grieving families and church members have made the journey from church to cemetery seven times. The task and the journey were never easy. Some were harder. For each time we disturb the sod to form a grave to respectfully place those who have died we contemplate our own dying. John Donne a minister and poet five hundred years ago said it well:

“No man is an island, entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee.” -- John Donne

Daniel Swartzentruber the youngest of these seven, was 53, Lelia Judy, who was featured in the 2005 Spring Newsletter was 106 just double Daniel’s age. Lelia’s life touched the lives of the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren in the Greenwood, Delaware area.

It is fitting that we dedicate some time and space to those who have gone from our presence into the presence of God. Sim Sharp was a silent servant, Mark Yoder was a spiritual leader. Vida Huber was a gifted teacher and administrator, Rachel was a beloved mother, wife, organizer and community catalyst. Rachel, like her father was the one person most impassioned about the development of a historical

society for Mennonites in Delaware.

John Donne reflected the testimony of the Apostle Paul in these memorable words.

“Death be not proud, some have called thee Mighty and dreadful, but thou art not so.

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt Die!”

New DMHS Address

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We encourage your comments...

Please send any ideas or suggestions for this newsletter or the DMHS website to:

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