

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF MINISTRY OF THE WOODRING CUM GEHMAN FAMILIES IN THE MENNONITE BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

Based on the In-House Publication,
Our Family Album: A Legacy for our Posterity

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Unknown to many in the Bible Fellowship Church, the Woodrings have had family members in the ministry for more than one-hundred consecutive years. Beginning in 1895 when Richard Lewis Woodring received his Quarterly Conference License to preach, until 2003 when his grandson, Richard J. Gehman, retired from the Africa Inland Mission International, R.L. Woodring had five family members serve in the ministry: R.L. Woodring; his son, A.G. Woodring; his son-in-law, R.H. Gehman, married to Dora N. Woodring; and their son, Richard J. Gehman. Added to this mix is my wife, Florence A. (Hilbert) Gehman, the great granddaughter of William Gehman, the founder of the M.B.C. The purpose of this paper is to trace the contributions of the Woodring family, including my dad.

Although we shall focus on their ministry Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church cum Bible Fellowship Church, I have provided in the Appendix the genealogical information which traces the ancestral roots of R.L. Woodring, R.H. Gehman, and Florence A. Hilbert (through her mother, Ruth Hilbert nee Gehman back through William Gehman).

REV. RICHARD LEWIS WOODRING

Birth

Richard Lewis Woodring was born in Washington Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, on December 7, 1873, the son of Lewis E. Wotring and Violetta Kemmerer (born 14th July 1856). She was a young seventeen year old woman on the birth of her firstborn.



Lewis Edward Wotring was twenty-three years old when he sired my grandfather, just weeks before his marriage to Rosa Kemmerer, the sister of Violetta. Soon thereafter they moved away to Indiana to escape the scandal!

Violetta Kemmerer descended from Frederick Kemmerer who emigrated from the Palatinate along the Rhine River and settled in Lower Milford. The early Kemmerers belonged to the Reformed Church.

Some years after the birth of Richard Lewis Woodring, my great grandmother, Violetta, married Elias Zerfass. Richard Woodring grew up in the home of Elias and Violetta Zerfass. They were also members of the Reformed Lutheran Church of Neffs. How active Richard Woodring and the Zerfass family were in the church, we do not know. But the church left lasting impressions. He loved several hymns played on the organ including: *“How*

sweet the name of Jesus sounds in the believers ear; It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his tears.”

Conversion

Unfortunately, the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ was not embraced by Violetta or Elias. Richard Woodring grew as a child and teenager without knowing Christ as his Lord and Savior. As happens frequently, when children are christened and then confirmed, they assume that they are Christians, but they lack all understanding of a personal relationship of faith in Christ. By his own testimony, Richard Woodring grew up in “an unsaved family.” Though he had joined a church, he was “still unsaved.”¹ In the words of my mother, “They [her grandparents] were all confirmed Lutherans in the Lutheran and Reformed Church at Neffs, Pa., above Allentown, where my grandparents are buried. They were confirmed, as well as my father, but did not know



or understand the way of salvation.”²

As a very young man, my grandfather moved to Weissport where he labored as a blacksmith. Sometime later, at the approximate age of nineteen, he married Clara Susan Ziegenfuss (b. 1871; d. 1950).

My grandmother’s parents were John G. Ziegenfuss (b. April 18, 1837; d. March 7, 1897) and Sarah Ann (b. January 17, 1844; d. September 22, 1895). In the words of my



mother, “the Ziegenfuss’ were devout Christians of the Evangelical Church.”³ Through the witness of my grandmother, my grandfather came to know the Lord. This is what he said in his testimony: “One night the Holy Ghost got hold of my wife and would not give me rest until three o’clock in the morning. She won me to become a child of God.”

At the same time an evangelistic effort took place through the Gospel Workers in Lehighton and Weissport. “C.H. Brunner accompanied by his wife and sister Dora B. Rote under the directions of the Presiding Elder held a tabernacle meeting on the corner lot...” on September 5, 1893.⁵ These tabernacle meetings continued until October 13. When the storm blew the tabernacle

down for the second time, they moved five days later to Laurry’s Hall in Weissport which they began to rent. “Sister Dora Rote and Sister Lizzie Christman continued the meetings every night until December 18th.”

Dora Rote continued her evangelistic endeavors in Lehighton and Weissport. She had received her quarterly conference license before her arrival at Lehighton and Weissport, and by December 12, 1894, the Mt. Zion Chapel recommended to the MBC Annual Conference that Dora Rote be granted an Annual Conference License.⁷ Under the ministry of Dora Rote, Richard Woodring made a public confession of faith. So profound was her influence in my grandfather’s life that he named his only daughter after her, Dora Naomi Woodring.

We have many articles by Dora Rote a few years later when the Gospel Banner began publishing the reports of the Gospel Workers. From these articles we find that Dora Rote was a very forceful presence in evangelism with initiative and zeal. The following quotations from Dora Rote reveal the theological accent and fervor of our forebears in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church.

I have had some wonderful experiences since I have received the Holy Ghost – testings of such a nature that I could never have stood at one time; but, oh, the Holy Ghost so sweetly preserves me. For myself I was not ready for the trial, because I didn’t know it was coming; but surely He was there, and His presence and comfort I never realized more. I know He is with me, and all that comes to me, be it good or evil, comes by his permission, and He turns it all into blessing. Praise His dear name! I am resting sweetly.⁸

Since my last writing I have visited different missions in this district, and I am persuaded our dear workers are getting still more in line with the Holy Ghost. He is preparing them for future service. This work is moving right on. There was a general break in meeting in Mt. Carmel last Sunday night, and eleven knelt at the altar of prayer. The Holy Ghost got some strong hearted souls down low at his feet weeping and repenting of their sins.⁹

Oh, it is wonderful! Wonderful! How God is working at this time. What a stir there is. Such a hungering and thirsting among the people! I have never seen it so before. The Christians of all denominations are swinging in line with the truth, and oh, such sweet melting times. The Holy Ghost is preparing a people for Jesus’ coming, which may be soon. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.¹⁰

While the evangelistic meetings were being conducted in Weissport under Dora Rote, my grandfather was converted. According to his obituary, “Brother Woodring was converted in a series of revival meetings held in Weissport by Miss Dora B. Rote and her helpers under the auspices of the Gospel Worker Society and was baptized by Pastor C.H. Brunner. Brother and Sister Woodring were received into the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in 1894 by Pastor H.B. Musselman, who was their pastor at Lehighton and Weissport for three years.”¹¹ Here in full is his personal testimony:

Dear Bro. Hallman and Banner Readers: - By the moving of the Holy Ghost I will write a testimony for Christ, whose blood is sufficient for all. He is indeed altogether lovely to my soul. As I was brought up in an unsaved family, I lived without God dwelling in my heart, and even joined a church not knowing what for, still unsaved. I was led to Weissport, where I got married and settled down. One night the Holy Ghost got hold of my wife and would not give me rest until three o’clock in the morning. She won me to become a child of God. The next night I went to the revival meeting in Weissport, where sister Rhoads and sister Christman were holding forth the Word of God. That night I made the bold step to the altar to seek Christ as my Saviour, and victory was shouted for saving a rebel like me. Some time later in the watch-night meeting the Lord

wonderfully sanctified my soul. Glory to His name! I have made Jesus my choice, and have also found Him as my Doctor. Read (James 5:14, 15). Hallelujah to His name for His precious promises throughout the whole Bible. Instantaneously the Lord healed my body, where all the people expected to see me leave for the hospital. I am healed and have been well ever since. He also healed the rest of my family. To Him we ascribe the honor for what He has done for us. My earnest desire is to follow Christ where He leads. May God bless His work at this place, and His true children the world over, for His name's sake.

“Near the cross I’ll watch and wait, Hoping, trusting ever, Till I reach the golden strand Just beyond the river.”

Your brother, under the blood, Richard L. Woodring, PA¹²

R.L. Woodring was converted at a time and in a place where God was doing a significant work of grace. When H.B. Musselman describes one such baptism around the same time R.L. Woodring was baptized, we may think of Richard Woodring, approximately twenty-one years of age at his baptism, being immersed in the freezing waters of some river, though we do not know exactly the time of his baptism. The following report is quite enlightening.

Dear Bro. Hallman, - *On Sunday afternoon we baptized 6 candidates in the Lehigh River in the presence of a large concourse of people. The weather was extremely cold and “the north wind did blow” but His love set our hearts all aglow. The people were astonished to see each candidate so immersed with power that they shouted and leaped for joy – not a shivering one among them, while the bystanders and onlookers were shivering and some could not endure to wait on account of the extreme cold to witness the scene. “The devil was roaring – but we enjoyed His smiles, and felt as calm as May.” “The Lord has done marvelous things for us, whereof we are glad.” 73 persons have been converted during this conference year; 74 baptized in the stream; and 50 received into church fellowship. We have received the ground for two churches, and built a neat, substantial one – all free of debt.*” (Italics added). H.B. Musselman Jan 29th, 1895, Weissport.

In my grandfather’s testimony, he alludes to his divine physical healing. Apparently, during his work as a blacksmith, he contracted a disease through worms in the horses’ hoofs. Soon after his conversion he was healed because this was included in his testimony of salvation. Jansen E. Hartman remembers hearing this testimony from him. W.G. Gehman used to invite him to testify of his healing on numerous occasions when large congregations assembled, such as camp meetings. Richard Woodring would say, “The Lord healed me from *Bot* disease.”¹³

During 1895, the year following my grandfather’s conversion, he became active in the Weissport church, first as Superintendent of the Sunday School at Weissport.¹⁴ By the third quarterly conference on September 14, 1895, Bro. R.L. Woodring was granted a quarterly conference license for preaching as per his request.¹⁵

Concerned about his mother’s salvation, my grandfather wrote letters to her and spoke to her about the Lord. According to my mother, he was able to lead her to the Lord before her early death which occurred on January 31, 1902, when she was less than fifty years of age.¹⁶

Ministry in Roaring Branch – 1897-1898



Tent Meeting in Roaring Branch, about 1898. R.L. Woodring standing on left. My grandmother seated beside him with boy Allen.

To read of the meteoric speed with which Richard Woodring arose in the ranks of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church is truly astonishing.

A little more than a year after R.L. Woodring’s conversion and baptism, “J. Woodring” was assigned as assistant to H.B. Musselman and to be a “local worker” at Weissport.¹⁷ Since we know of no other Woodring; since R.L. Woodring was converted at Weissport and begins appearing in the MBC Annual Conference minutes in 1898 being recommended by Weissport to the Annual Conference as a candidate for ministry, we conclude that “J. Woodring” is a clerical mistake. This is confirmed by his obituary which reads: “In 1896 Brother Woodring received the Quarterly Conference License and served as

assistant to Pastor H.B. Musselman until March 5, 1898.”¹⁸ Hence, within a little more than a year after his conversion, R.L. Woodring began serving as an assistant to H.B. Musselman.

It would appear that H.B. Musselman did not restrict or curtail the ministry of my grandfather. Instead, he let his assistant loose to begin an evangelistic outreach in Mauch Chunk, Roaring Branch and Trout Run. During 1897 and 1898 R.L. Woodring served in “Tabernacle No. 1” at Roaring Branch where he held tent meetings.^{19 20} In no uncertain terms, he thrived and prospered in this first assignment.

In June 1897 R.L. Woodring reported that, “The tabernacle meetings at this place [Mauck Chunk] are still in progress with deep conviction prevailing over the people. The first convert was gained last week and another followed...The meetings are largely attended. The average attendance is from three to four hundred people.”²¹ W.B. Musselman commented on the tabernacle meetings in Mauch Chunk by saying, “it is remarkable what order is kept and thousands of people come to hear the truth as proclaimed by our noble and devoted brother Woodring...”

The focus of my grandfather’s ministry in 1897 and 1898, however, was in Roaring Branch, a town north of Lehighton, twenty miles above Wilkes Barre. On August 10th, 1897 he wrote:

‘Greeting. May the Holy Ghost gently lead you all. The meetings at this place are indeed grand. The Holy Ghost is doing a work here. A good number got saved, while others are still seeking. Last Sunday (Aug. 8th) twelve were baptized in a mill dam close by. Hundreds were sitting on the banks witnessing the scene. It was indeed one of the grandest and most touching times I ever realized in baptism. As we entered the water heaven’s blessings came down. The people were very orderly. Not a disrespectful word was heard from the hundreds present. It was indeed glorious. The Lord is working. Hallelujah to God! R.L. Woodring Roaring Branch, PA Aug. 10th, 1897.²²

The following month on September 14, 1897, he reported to *The Gospel Banner* that, “Souls are coming forward right along. On a Sunday (Aug 22) fifteen believers were baptized...and yesterday (Sept 5) nine more took the bold step.” Truly, things were percolating. One of the new converts felt constrained to write the following letter to *The Gospel Banner*.

I feel it my duty to testify for Jesus. I experienced a change of heart, on August 25th 1897. It was a great sacrifice for me to give up my idols at the age of 55 years, having lived for worldly things, which apply to the outer man only. I never had any serious thoughts for my soul’s salvation, until Bro. R. L. Woodring of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, came to Roaring Branch, Pa., in July, 1897, and pitched his tabernacle; and the Word took root and brought forth 75 sprouts which are all green and growing in the faith of Jesus Christ who makes intercession for us before our Father in heaven. I pray in secret each day for a continuance of my faith in Jesus Christ. I never heard the word of God taught and explained to my satisfaction until Elder R.L. Woodring preached it at this place. He preached from the Bible not only theory or some professors opinion studied in college. I rise at 4 o’clock and read my Bible, and think it over all day, and try to understand God’s commands, and walk in the light of Jesus, and be an example that others may see that there is joy, love and happiness in serving Jesus. I have not as many years to serve Jesus as I served the devil, this gives me courage and faith to carry the cross the few remaining years I will abide in this sin-cursed world. ...Bro Woodring has organized a mission class of 37 members. The services are well attended; we have a full hall with anxious hearers, all ready for a hearty hand-shake with Elder Woodring, who is very highly respected by the whole community. Yours in Christ,

C.S. King, Roaring Branch, PA²³

In 1898 R.L. Woodring was recommended to the Annual Conference for the ministry. Upon examination he and others were “found satisfactory.” He had already begun to take the reading course and obtained a 96 in his Bible test, the highest of five other candidates. He then became an “Annual Conference Licensed Missionary.”

In many respects, Richard Woodring’s ministry at Roaring Branch was greatly blessed by God. He baptized a total of 62 individuals in 1898 out of a total of 163 baptisms that year in the entire MBC. He preached far and wide. However, by the end of 1898, only 4 church members were registered for Roaring Branch. Furthermore, no lasting presence or permanent church was planted at Roaring Branch. Perhaps the MBC should have left him remain at Roaring Branch a few more years to establish the work. Perhaps the MBC, in its great enthusiasm for itinerant evangelism, scattered the seed too widely and failed to disciple and train the converts. Perhaps R.L. Woodring was too hasty to baptize people who in the heat of emotion made a decision for Christ but were not truly born again – or at least, were not adequately disciplined. These possible insights are gained from hindsight. At that moment in 1898 the MBC did not recognize these problems.

Ministry in Bethlehem – 1899-1901

At the Annual Conference on March 3, 1899, R.L. Woodring was listed as a Probationer. He had taken five additional examinations in the reading course. Having submitted unconditionally to the Conference, along with twenty other men, R.L. Woodring, at the age of 25 and with two years of church experience, was appointed to the Bethlehem and South Bethlehem Circuit. The following year on September 16, 1900, he was ordained to the

ministry at Reading, Pennsylvania.

During his three years in Bethlehem, he served faithfully. After one year the South Bethlehem preaching post was discontinued and the focus was entirely on Bethlehem. He baptized 22 in 1899, another 22 in 1900 and 8 in 1901. By 1900 Bethlehem was the second largest church in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, Pennsylvania Conference, with 91 members (133 members in Allentown).

He reported in April 1899 that several were saved in prayer meetings, and afterwards were baptized. But violent opposition confronted these believers. Not content with the main church, he conducted Tabernacle meetings on the South Side where stones and bricks were thrown at the Tabernacle in great numbers. One brick came through the tabernacle (tent) roof, leaving a hole fifteen inches long. Nevertheless, attendance was good, several came to the altar for salvation and others were ready for baptism.

R.L. Woodring was also active at the conference level. In 1899 he was the Treasurer of "The English and German Sunday School Convention." In 1900 he was the Chairman of the Schuylkill Valley District Sunday School Convention. In 1901 he was a member of the Committee on Worship and the Committee on Communications. Along with C.H. Brunner and H.B. Musselman, he was a member of the Committee on Resolutions. In 1901, C.H. Brunner and H.B. Musselman were elected Presiding Elders while W.G. Gehman and R.L. Woodring were elected Vice Presiding Elders.

In 1902 R.L. Woodring was elected by an open vote for two years to be the Editor of the MBC JOURNAL. He was again elected Vice Presiding Elder and a member of the Committee on Communications and the Committee on Resolutions.

While W.B. Musselman and W.G. Gehman were chosen as delegates from the ministry to the General Conference of the national MBC, R.L. Woodring and J.G. Shireman were elected as alternates. Both E.N. Cassel and R.L. Woodring formed a committee to formulate appeals to the next General Conference.

During the Sunday evening service, R.L. Woodring delivered an address from Colossians 3:3,4, "followed by an altar service after which a number of the brethren were anointed and claimed healing." He then closed the nineteenth annual conference (1902) in prayer.

From all appearances, my grandfather at the youthful age of 28 (nearly 29) was esteemed and recognized for various spiritual gifts of leadership which placed him alongside the luminaries of the MBC like H.B. Musselman, W.G. Gehman, and C.H. Brunner.

More was happening in the family of R.L. Woodring than ministry; his family was growing. On July 10, 1893, one year before my grandfather's conversion, Allen George Woodring was born. On November 22, 1901, my mother, Dora Naomi, was born in Bethlehem.

Ministry in Successive Churches

In 1902, R.L. Woodring was assigned to Mt. Carmel in the anthracite coal regions where he ministered for three years. The practice in those days was to assign pastors for a maximum of three years in any given church. So frequently did they move, that my grandmother did not unpack all of their boxes because she knew that within three years they would move again.

The places of ministry in the MBC for my grandfather included:

Bethlehem	1899-1901
Mt. Carmel	1902-1904
Graterford and Harleysville	1905-1907
Quakertown	1908-1910
Allentown (Salem)	1911-1913
Easton	1914-1917
Coopersburg	1918-1924
Nazareth	1925-June 10, 1934 (death)

We shall not attempt to provide a detailed account for each of the successive churches where R.L. Woodring served, but will give only a few observations.

Mt. Carmel – 1902-1904: Mt. Carmel and the coal regions formed a major focus in the earlier days of evangelistic expansion of the MBC. Through the Gospel Workers the MBC pioneered in church planting in the upstate anthracite coal producing regions of Pennsylvania. After Dora Rote left Weissport and Leighton, she became the "Coal Region District Leader" in the late 1800s and the first part of the twentieth century.

It is quite surprising to read of the strength and vitality which the Mt. Carmel MBC displayed in those earlier

days. When W.G. Gehman completed his ministry at Mt. Carmel in 1901, church membership was 61. Of the 34 churches in the MBC in 1901, only five other churches were larger. A photograph of the men's Bible class around that period shows 25 mature men. What church in the BFC today can muster 25 men in a Bible study?

It would appear to me that my grandfather entered the remaining years of his ministry, 1905-1934, as a faithful, highly respected pastor in the MBC, but with the loss of prominence that was suggested in the earlier period. He continued to play an active role in the Annual Conference, serving on numerous committees, even chairing them. He was appointed Associate Editor of the *Eastern Gospel Banner* and contributed several articles for the *Banner*. My grandfather had a beautiful voice and was invited to lead in the singing at Annual Conference.

But after 1905 he no longer served as the Editor of the MBC Journal; nor was he the Vice Presiding Elder. He gradually receded from a prominent role in the Annual Conference, though he remained an active participant.

Easton – 1914-1917: At the age of 40 in 1914 R.L. Woodring was assigned to Easton MBC, designated as “a mission.” His various reports to the *Eastern Gospel Banner* are upbeat and full of hope. Reporting in his last year of service in Easton, he wrote:

Our people gave us a real surprise several weeks ago by marching in on us and replenishing the larder with all the best kind of eatables. Some brought wearing apparel, others ready cash, etc. Again on Christmas Sunday a very liberal and substantial gift in cash (the largest we ever received from the class) was presented to us. This makes us feel very unworthy, and yet more responsible in ministering to them the Word. Yours for souls and God's glory, R.L. Woodring, Pastor²⁴

But those bountiful provisions of 1918 were not the experience of the Woodrings during their earlier years in Easton. My mother often spoke of their material deprivation in Easton. Most pastors in the MBC suffered from insufficient support which sometimes left indelible marks for years to come. Only a few pastors received less income than my grandfather in Easton. But if my grandfather was anything like my father, I can say that he lived a life of contentment, trust and hope – and in the end, God rewarded them both, even as God always does.



Easton, 1916: L – R: My grandfather, R.L. Woodring; my mother, Dora; Uncle Allen, Aunt Estella, Grandma Woodring

Coopersburg – 1918-1924: In the words of my mother, “Things were somewhat better financially in Coopersburg.” In fact, they were much better. In the first year they received \$951.75. This was the first church assignment where the Woodrings lived and served for more than three years. The Annual Conference had resolved that pastors could stay longer.



Mildred Musselman, a faithful Christian for over 85 years in the Coopersburg Bible Fellowship Church, was a young girl during those years when my grandparents were in Coopersburg. With her keen memory, she shared several reminiscences.²⁵ “I have many fond memories of your grandparents,” Mildred wrote, “since my dad and R.L. became very close friends and we often spent time together in each other's homes.” My mother was Mildred's Sunday School teacher. They would often sit together on the front row of the church sanctuary. Mildred was even known as “Dora's girl” because she sat so often together in church and with my grandmother. “I liked Dora,” Mildred said. My mother would have been 17-23 years old while living in Coopersburg. Mildred and her parents frequently visited R.L. Woodrings house. It was the custom that after Annual Conference and the return of the pastor, the members would

visit the pastor and his family to give items of food.

In the words of Mildred, “R.L. Woodring preached well.” When he preached, he would often become teary eyed. “To me, he was a nice guy.” In a separate conversation, Rev. Jansen E. Hartman said that my grandfather's preaching was “respectable – nothing to be ashamed of.”

People only knew him as “R.L.,” not by Richard. Everyone was “brother” or “sister.” So he was “Brother Woodring.” All preachers were known by their first two initials, allegedly so that the people would not become

overly chummy by calling them by their first name.

Brother Woodring was also a good singer, “a very good singer.” He had a powerful voice. His singing range was somewhat lower than a tenor and higher than base – he had a beautiful baritone voice. He would frequently sing a solo in church and one of his favorites was, “I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses.” He also led the singing in the church very well.

“I liked him a lot,” Mildred said. “His preaching had great influence on me in those days. He was very outgoing with people, very friendly, sociable and jolly, like his son, Allen Woodring. R.L. was very easy to talk to. He was well loved by the people. My mother actually cried when we found out that he was leaving Coopersburg and going to Nazareth.”

Woodring was Mildred’s pastor when she was converted. When she was five or six years old, she attended Camp Meeting. She wanted to go forward to the altar for prayer but would not go alone, so her father carried her. H.B. Musselman and R.L. Woodring wanted her to stand on top of the altar. I said in Pennsylvania Dutch, “I can’t get up” (onto the platform).

On one occasion W.G. Gehman came to Coopersburg to preach as the Presiding Elder. In his characteristic style, he would move about on the platform and even up and down the aisle. On one occasion during his theatric preaching, he moved up the aisle and then walked backwards towards the pulpit. Not seeing where he was going, engrossed in his preaching, he flipped over backwards over the low altar on the floor. Without batting an eye, he did the backward roll, stood upright and continued preaching. R.L. Woodring was the pastor at the time and a bit on the heavy side. (Grace Reed remembers him as “husky” and “bald.”) He was a jolly man. He could not control himself and burst out laughing when W.G. did a backward somersault. “As a child I liked R.L. a lot. He paid special attention to children.” When Mildred was living with her parents at the Home in Center Valley, R.L. Woodring sent her a postcard one year when he had gone to Michigan to attend some conference. This “shows how kind he was to remember a little country girl,” Mildred said.

Mildred continued, “I remember too, it was at Shamokin Camp Meeting that your grandfather was God’s answer to my recovery from becoming sick from the water at Camp. I was so very sick and becoming more and more dehydrated and they didn’t know what to do anymore. But R.L. told my dad to get a bottle of MOXIE (remember the drink that tastes like medicine?) and let me sip that and he believed I would get well. Sure enough, that and lots of prayer was the answer and I still like MOXIE today, but it is hard to get these days.”²⁶

“R.L. Woodring drove like Jehu,” Mildred said. He used to drive a Franklin and then a Jordan to Leitsville and Springtown to preach in services.



R.L. Woodring with his son, Allen George (A.G.)

route man and have us, along with my grandfather (living with us) move to Center Valley to the MBC Home so that my dad could manage the Farm and my mother assist in the work at the Home.”²⁷ When the Musselmans lived there, they took care of five older people plus five or six orphans.

“Mrs. Clara Woodring was very quiet and reserved but we loved her too – a very nice lady,” Mildred said. “She would do anything for you. I can still picture her very stately – very nice to talk to. She talked to everyone. R.L. and his wife made a good team and complimented each other.”

“I remember the night R.L. Woodring, H.B. Musselman and W.G. Gehman came to our house in Springtown,” Mildred said. “They asked my father to give up his job as bakery delivery



My grandparents, mother, and Uncle Allen in 1931

Nazareth – 1925-1934: Unknown to my grandfather, his move to Nazareth was his last move. In the providence of God, he was called home to his eternal rest and reward in 1934. It was fitting that he would have a fruitful ministry in Nazareth. During his earlier years in Nazareth, he baptized thirty-five believers; the membership rose from 53 to 85. Around this same time, R.L. Woodring started the “Systematic Bible Readers’ League” which grew to almost eighty members. Progress was also made slowly in other fronts.

Pastor Woodring died suddenly in June of 1934 at the age of sixty. In his obituary they wrote, “Pastor Woodring was a talented singer. His congregation will never forget this last service in his church at Nazareth before his death, when he sang that beautiful hymn entitled, ‘An Evening Prayer.’²⁹ The first stanza says, *“If I have wounded any soul today, If I have caused one foot to go astray, If I have walked in my own willful way, Dear Lord, forgive!”* Even in 1998, when Ronald Hoyle researched the history of the Nazareth Bible Fellowship Church, some of the “old-timers” remembered that beautiful song which he sang.

“After brief funeral services at the parsonage at Nazareth on June 13, the main services were held in Bethel M.B. in C., Allentown, Pa., in order to accommodate the large assembly of relatives, Pastor Woodring’s congregation, and the many friends who had learned to love him. Here the auditorium and galleries were filled. On account of the broken down health of Sister Woodring, who was confined to her home, the services were broadcast over Radio Station WCA through the courtesy of the owner, B. Bryan Musselman, Pastor of the Radio Church.”

“Rev. H.B. Musselman, who had been his Presiding Elder for twenty-eight years, preached the funeral sermon, assisted by Presiding Elder W.G. Gehman and Pastors B. Bryan Musselman, C.H. Brunner and H.K. Kratz.”

“A large concourse of people followed the remains to Union Hill cemetery,³⁰ at Weissport, where a number of his associates in the ministry carried our brother to his last resting place, awaiting the glorious resurrection at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”³¹

REV. ALLEN GEORGE WOODRING

Upon the sudden death of R.L. Woodring, Clara Woodring came to live with my mother and dad in Chester. I



never met my grandfather, but my grandmother lived with us until she passed away in 1950 at the age of 79 while we lived in Mt. Carmel. Though the two children of Richard and Clara Woodring undoubtedly shared the characteristics of both parents in some measure, I believe my uncle, A.G. Woodring, took after his father in a significant way, and my mother took after her mother. In my eyes, I see my grandfather through the likeness of my dear uncle Allen.

Allen George Woodring was born in Weissport, Pennsylvania, July 10, 1893, the son of Richard and Clara Woodring. He was converted at the age of 13 when his father was pastoring the Graterford and Harleysville circuit of churches (1905-1907). He attended the common schools.

When his parents lived in Quakertown (1908-1910), he began working as an apprentice printer for the Quakertown Free Press before entering the ministry.

At the age of 22, he married to Hilda M. Moyer, a member of the Bethlehem Church, on October 8, 1915. R.L. Woodring officiated their wedding on the second floor of the Mission Building in Easton where a large living room was located.³²

On April 12, 1917, Allen G. Woodring was granted a Quarterly Conference license. In the same year, at the Annual Conference of the MBC, without having served in the Gospel Herald Society, he applied for and was granted the Annual Conference License. My uncle was on the fast track of becoming a minister in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. He was then assigned to the Walnutport-Northampton circuit.

By the 1918 Annual Conference, A.G. Woodring was listed as a “Probationer.” He became a member of the Board of Publication and Printing, an appropriate appointment given his experience as an apprenticed printer. At the 1919 Annual Conference he was appointed the Recording Secretary for the Annual Conference.



In the 1920 Annual Conference, he delivered a twenty minute sermon one evening and was recommended for ordination. This was just three years after receiving a Quarterly Conference license and without any participation in the Gospel Herald Society. W.G. Gehman preached the Ordination Sermon at 2:15 P.M. when A.G. Woodring was ordained. He continued to serve in the previously appointed conference tasks. In fact, for twenty-five years A.G. Woodring served as the Recording Secretary for the Annual Conference.

The churches where A.G. Woodring served are as follows:

Walnutport-Northampton circuit, 1917-1923

Fleetwood, Blandon, Terre Hill circuit, 1923-1945

Reading, 1945-1952

Quakertown, 1953-1955.

His years of ministry in the circuit of Fleetwood, Blandon and Terre Hill (1923-1945) were memorable with long lasting fruit. Allen and Hilda were dearly loved by their parishioners. One man in Terre Hill declared to me many times that A.G. Woodring was his favorite preacher.

Dorothy (Bitting) Weber, wife of Clayton Weber of Fleetwood and Oley Bible Fellowship Churches, told of the way her father was converted. He never attended church. One day when he was on the roof of a house working, Rev. A.G. Woodring climbed up the ladder and talked to Mr. Bitting. A.G. Woodring invited him to attend the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in Terre Hill. Mr. Bitting returned home that evening and said to his wife, "Guess what. Can you believe it? A preacher climbed up on the roof today and invited me to his church." So they decided to attend and eventually they were converted and became members in the Terre Hill MBC.

Dorothy Weber went on to say, "Hilda and Brother Woodring were very precious; very sincere and a good preacher. He was interesting. Hilda was a very good singer. We had lots of quartets and singers. A.G. Woodring was a very friendly man, a very good person."³³

A.G. Woodring officiated at the wedding of both Clayton and Jack Weber. When Jack got married, they went to the Fleetwood parsonage and had to get A.G. Woodring up out of bed to marry them. Then A.G. asked to go with them to Philadelphia where they were going for their honeymoon. Then they had to come back to Terre Hill that night because A.G. was conducting revival meetings. They arrived late.³⁴



**Uncle Allen and Aunt Hilda
1931 at Fleetwood parsonage.**

Rose Hummel of Fleetwood wrote to me on November 12, 1991: "My thoughts go back to 1934 when I was 20, and Harry was 24, we stood together in the living room of your Aunt Hilda's and Uncle Allen's home, the parsonage at 119 N. Richmond Street, with very little fuss, no music, no flowers, no rings, the ceremony was performed by *dear, gentle Brother Woodring* and after the last prayer he said, 'Now in your married life, you will need two bears, remember to bear and forbear! (Italics added).'³⁵ My Aunt Hilda then prepared "a meal of vegetables, very delicious," Rose added.

My parents and the Woodrings would celebrate all the holidays together, meeting at each other's homes alternately. Leonard was their only child. Since he was at least fifteen years older than me, his presence in these family gatherings did not make an impression on me. If he was present at all, he often left for some sporting activity at school. Leonard was a fine young fellow – handsome, athletic,

intelligent and sociable, a leader among his peers. He was very kind to his parents and kind to everyone. He exhibited the characteristics of his parents and his grandfather, R.L. Woodring. But we simply did

not spend much time together because of the age difference.

Like my grandfather, my uncle was outgoing, fun loving and people centered. Both my uncle and aunt were jolly people, smiling, laughing and celebrating life. Together my uncle and aunt made a great team for visiting members and winning their love and confidence. My own home was always loving and peaceful, but relatively quiet; their home was more lively and exciting.

My uncle was a kind, gentle, loving man with a positive, hopeful and joyful attitude toward life. Both my uncle and aunt greeted me with a warm hug and a kiss on the lips. Never do I remember in their home any harsh or argumentative words. Harmony prevailed. They loved to play table games. My mother commented on occasions that trouble affected my aunt Hilda like water running off a duck's back. She never exhibited any care in life. Whether

my uncle felt the troubles inside is another question. He did suffer from diverticulitis in his later years of life.

During his years living in Fleetwood and Reading, he conducted the children's meeting at Mizpah Grove Camp Meeting every afternoon in the tabernacle. I well remember the scores of kids who used to come to sing, listen to his flannel graph Bible stories and Bible memorization. Obviously, for a pastor to keep the attention of children, he needed to be active, lively and humorous.

When my uncle was transferred to Reading MBC, after twenty-two years in Fleetwood, Blandon and Terre Hill, Reading had the largest Sunday School in the entire denomination: 486 enrollment and 352 average attendance, larger than any Sunday School in the B.F.C. today except one.³⁶ A.G. Woodring made 680 pastoral visits in 1946, more than any other pastor except for N.H. Wolfe in Bethlehem who made 772 visits. Three weekly Class Meetings (prayer meetings) were held with the pastor attending 135 in that year. In those seven years when A.G. Woodring pastored the Reading MBC, membership grew from 345 to 418, making it the second largest church in the Pennsylvania Conference, behind Bethel, Allentown in its hay day with 491 members when C.L. Miller was the pastor. The weight and burden of all these pastoral responsibilities was carried by one senior pastor without any assistant.

A.G. Woodring also was a former Vice District Superintendent of the Church for some years; and served on its Beneficiary and Church Extension Committee.

He retired from active ministry because of ill health in 1955 after two years of ministry in Quakertown. On April 11, 1965, my uncle passed away quite suddenly. The memorial services were held in Grace Church, Reading on Thursday, April 15, at 2:00 p.m. His Memoriam published in *Fellowship News* stated: "Brother Woodring was always gracious, cheerful and full of good works. His ready spirit to carry the load in every phase of Christian service will not be forgotten. Brother Woodring was a dedicated man of God. He was a beloved pastor, a wise and faithful counselor, esteemed husband and most godly father to his son. He loved his grandchildren and they loved him dearly. Through his untiring ministry untold numbers were brought to Christ and established in the Truth."

REV. RUDY H. GEHMAN: MY FATHER'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Early Years of Formation



Dad's parents and siblings; boy kneeling in front center is my dad, with Aunt Katie, the little girl held by my granddad

My dad was born on 19 November 1898, "in an old-fashioned Mennonite home"³⁷ on a farm near Bomansville, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Joseph and Barbara Gehman. Rudy was one of nine children, the second youngest. When my dad was six years old, Pappy Gehman bought a 120 acre farm where my dad lived for twelve years. Dad attended White Oak, a one room school house. Schools were not graded as now. Students advanced by Readers, beginning with a Primer, then First Reader on through Fifth. The latter would compare today to eighth grade. He was probably 13 or 14 when he quit school.

After Pappy Gehman left the farm, he operated a shirt factory in Bomansville from 1916-1921. Various members of the family joined their helping hands. As a young man my dad began working in the shirt factory with his

brothers, Wayne and Monroe. In 1921 Pappy Gehman moved to Adamstown where for one year he and my dad operated a feed mill. Then in 1922 they moved to Denver where Pappy bought and managed his own business which became known as "The Gehman Feed Mill." It still operates today.

During that time Aunt Katie led my dad to the Lord in her bedroom when he was 21 or 22 years of age. He told Kathryn Dietz how he was saved in his sister's bedroom. "I felt so light," he said. '*Ichvesis, ichvesis,*' meaning 'I know it, I know it.' He knew that he was saved."⁴²

Preparation for Ministry

Soon after this my dad left the work with his father and went for training and ministry. My dad attended Bluffton

College Academy for approximately two years, presumably to supplement his elementary schooling gained in the one-room schoolhouse.⁴³



Student at Moody Bible Institute, 1925.

In the summer of 1924 he painted “the new farm buildings” Pappy Gehman had built. The first sermon that he preached is dated January 4, 1925 when he spoke in Denver, PA. He then set off to acquire some biblical studies by attending Moody Bible Institute, January through April of 1925.⁴⁴

Although we know little of his studies at Moody, I did find among his sermon notes a four page paper that appears to be a talk that he had given at Moody Bible Institute, based on II Timothy 2:15. I gather from these pages that he developed the foundations of disciplined study for sermon preparation at Moody Bible Institute.

Why he limited his Bible studies to one four-month term is unknown. With Pappy Gehman’s opposition to higher education he may have lacked courage or conviction to pursue a diploma at Moody over his dad’s displeasure. Pappy had opposed Katie’s desire to attend high school and then prevented her from attending Moody Bible Institute. She only achieved her dreams through Moody Bible Institute correspondence courses. But his thirst for knowledge and his desire to prepare for ministry drove him to do some study. Aunt Katie also suggested that he may have taken Moody Correspondence courses like she had. She further commented, “Although his education was limited, he was a student and read a lot.” Years later, Mildred Musselman, one of his parishioners and a Steward in Coopersburg in the 1950s, wrote, “Rudy Gehman was a great student of the Bible and a good preacher and friend.”⁴⁵

Preacher in the “New Mennonite” Pine Grove Mennonite Church



Following his brief training he began to preach in the “Pine Grove Mennonite Church” in Bomansville from mid July 1925 through October 2, 1927, the very same “New Mennonite Church” which his dad was so instrumental in helping to build up.

He was first ordained to the Gospel ministry by Rev. A.M. Fretz of Perkasio, PA, on January 24, 1926. The very next Sunday he preached as the pastor of the Pine Grove Mennonite Church. The very first sermon registered in his ledger of sermons is dated February 7, 1926. It would appear, therefore,

that in his mind this was the beginning of his official Gospel ministry.⁴⁶

Since the services in the Pine Grove Mennonite Church were bi-monthly on Sunday mornings only, he would visit other Mennonite churches, often preaching in evangelistic services. According to his preaching diary, he preached in Denver, Mechanic’s Grove, Greenville, Ephrata, Adamstown and Allentown. On July 27, 1925, he conducted a funeral. Aunt Katie frequently accompanied him on those trips. Often people thought she was his wife. Katie writes, “It was probably during those years that we became closely associated. He was definitely closer to me than either of my other brothers.”

In February, 1915, Menno Myers was sent by Rev. A.M. Fretz, the elder/pastor of “The General Conference of Mennonites,” to hold evangelistic services at the New Mennonite Church at Bomansville. There he met the Gehman family and eventually married my dad’s sister, Hettie H. Gehman.

Preacher in the Gospel Herald

My dad left the “New Mennonites” founded by Oberholtzer in Bowmansville and transferred to the Gospel Herald Society and the other “New Mennonites” founded by William Gehman. He began serving in Jersey City, New Jersey in October 1927, with his first recorded sermon dated October 14, 1927.

Presumably, my dad became connected with the Gospel Herald through his sister, Hettie, and his brother-in-law, Menno Myers, who had left the General Conference of Mennonites and entered the Gospel Herald Society. In the fall of 1921 M.M. Myers and Hettie (Esther) were sent to Lebanon, Pennsylvania, to take charge of the work



Menno & Hettie (Gehman) Myers

there.⁴⁷ Lebanon was known as a “hard field of labor” but they labored together for eleven years and laid the foundation for the MBC/Bible Fellowship Church in Lebanon.

In October, 1928, the MBC Annual Conference considered the question of recognizing my father for ministry. Upon examination, they recommended that he be granted an Annual Conference License⁴⁹ And thus he became officially recognized as a minister in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. He served as a “Probationer” for seven years before ordination.

His Gospel Herald Society appointments are as follows, according to the dates in his sermon diary.

Jersey City, New Jersey	14 October 1927 to October 1929
Camden, New Jersey	28 November 1929 to 29 October 1932
Chester, Pennsylvania	1 December 1932 to 11 October 1935

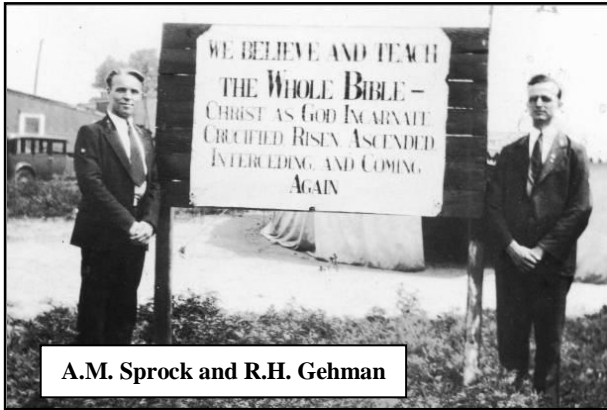


Gospel Heralds (1928/29): Seated, left to right: C.E. Miller, E. J. Rutman, Wieand, W.G. Gehman, Director: E.B. Hartman, C.O. Reed, E.W. Bean, Rudy Gehman; Standing, M.M. Myers, Eugene George, W.W. Hartman, A.M. Sprock, H.H. Hartman, ??, ??, J.T. Anderson.

A major part of the week’s ministry was devoted to the selling of the Gospel Herald magazine. Every morning, for five days a week, the Gospel Hearlds were required to do colportage ministry. David E. Thomann would introduce himself as a Mennonite missionary. Many Gospel Heralds did not like this aspect of ministry. It not only became a means of distributing Gospel literature and opening doors for witness; it was a source of income.⁵⁰ My father sold anywhere between 12 and 30 Gospel Heralds daily, according to his scanty records.

Many baptisms of new converts occurred. According to his records he baptized 45 by immersion in the Delaware River during his three year ministry in Camden. During his three year ministry in Chester, PA, he baptized nineteen, including ten who were over 23 years of age, one being 60.

Life was not easy on the side of finance. The MBC appropriated \$15 to \$20 monthly for each couple. The offerings from the small missions were added, together with the little profit earned from the sale of the Gospel Heralds. From this the expenses of the mission were first paid. Whatever was left over was distributed to the Gospel Heralds. W.G. Gehman came every month for ministry and to receive a report.



A.M. Sprock and R.H. Gehman



R.H. Gehman with children's ministry



R.H. Gehman and Herbert Hartman



Menno Myers describes his experience when serving in the Gospel Heralds in the Camden, New Jersey mission. "Here our faith was often severely tested," he wrote. "We received no salary, only free-will offerings and a small profit from the sale of Bibles and literature. It was during the years of depression. Our cupboards were very often empty, but God supplied our needs."

On one occasion, "when we had nothing in the house to set on the table for the evening meal, except maybe a crust of bread, Esther was cheerful and I believe she had faith that God would supply the need in time. She set the plates, etc. on the table. Esther, myself and the three boys sat down around the table with nothing before us to eat. We returned thanks to God, and when we had done that, thanks to God the doorbell rang. One of the boys ran to the door, and believe it or not, there was a large box full of all kinds of groceries, a great deal more than could be used up in one day."⁵¹

Before becoming a Gospel Herald, my father had life-insurance. This he surrendered when joining the MBC because of the church's stand against life insurance. In 1896 the MBC conference passed a resolution, recognizing the "great evils around us of life insurance," and recommended that instead of life insurance, churches should care for the poor of their classes through "some benevolent principles, such as supporting and visiting the sick" and the use of deacons to look after the "poor of their class."

My dad was truly a humble man, full of patience and forbearance which enabled him to endure such deprivation. Pastor R.C. Reichenbach said to me, "Your father was one of the gentlest people I know. He would never lord it over you but was gentle. Whatever he said to you was very fatherly, gentle and kind. Your mother was also very sweet and quiet. She never spoke much. In the Gospel Herald Society your dad was a very sweet person to be around. His attitude was one of graciousness. He was not outspoken. He was one of the quiet men. Even in the Annual Conference he was a quiet individual. But he was faithful in serving his people."⁵²

In October 1931, after serving in the Gospel Heralds since October 1927 and being a probationer for three years and having completed his three years' Reading Course "creditably," and believed to be a "sincere, conscientious and promising young man," the MBC delayed his ordination, along with E.W. Bean and A.M. Sprock, for more

experience to prove himself.⁵³ My dad continued to serve faithfully and patiently.

Marriage of Rudy H. Gehman and Dora N. Woodring



Sometime during my dad's service in Jersey City or Camden a friendship developed with my mother, Dora Naomi Woodring, daughter of the Rev. R. L. Woodring of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in Nazareth. Mildred Musselman was driving home with her parents from Easton where the MBC held a Conference. They soon discovered that the car in front of them belonged to R.L. Woodring. They saw two people sitting in the back seat and one of them was Rudy Gehman alongside of Dora Woodring. Mildred's parents said, "Oh, oh! It looks like Rudy is going home with the Woodrings. Must be something is going on with those two. We'll be having a wedding soon, we believe! And so it



was."⁵⁴

On 6th August 1931, Pastor R. L. Woodring married my father and mother in the Nazareth parsonage where my grandparents lived at the time. My dad was living in Camden.

Ordination

As I have said, my father had been previously ordained on January 24, 1926, in the Bowmansville Mennonite Church. The time for his ordination in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church came in October, 1935, when he was ordained and admitted into the Conference Bar.

Unfortunately, his father-in-law, R. L. Woodring, had suddenly passed away on June 10, 1934, so he did not have the privilege of witnessing the ordination of his son-in-law. Both of his children were now in the ministry.

Delayed ordination in order to be proven in ministry was good MBC/BFC discipline. Some could not bear the test of extended probation. M.M. Myers, the husband of my father's sister, Hettie, began in the Gospel Heralds in 1921 and was a probationer for three years, 1933-1935. But he gave up after that and disappeared from the MBC. Perhaps he also became discouraged with the lack of income or for other reasons he left the MBC. Menno then became the pastor of "The Non-Sectarian Gospel Tabernacle" in Camden, NJ.⁵⁵

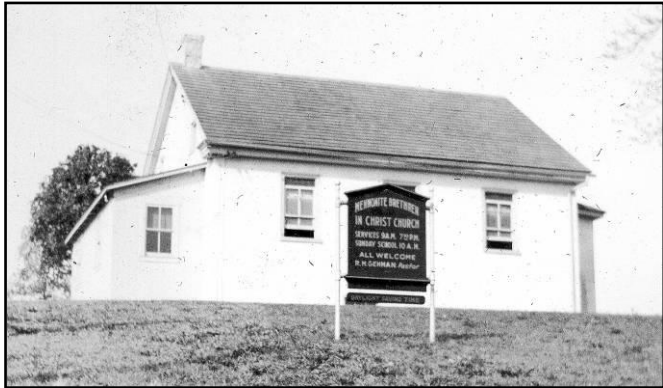
First Church Appointment: Graterford and Harleysville, Pennsylvania, 1935-1945

My dad was assigned to the Graterford/Harleysville circuit in October 1935. Being conceived in Chester, I was born on the day before Christmas at 12:30 A.M. in the River-view Hospital in Norristown, PA in the dead of winter with snow on the ground. It was a white Christmas with much joy. My names, Richard Joseph, relate me to both my grandparents: *Richard L. Woodring* and *Joseph H. Gehman*.

Circuits of churches: In those days the MBC had many circuits. They were convenient for two reasons. Many churches were too small to support one pastor. When combined, they provided adequate support. Furthermore, the pastors were few. My uncle, A. G. Woodring, pastored a circuit of three churches for twenty-two years (Fleetwood, Blandon and Terre Hill) and even had surplus energy to commence a fourth meeting point in Kutztown. When Berean Bible School was founded in 1950, it began to provide greater numbers of candidates for ministry. Thereafter, the circuits began to dwindle in number and eventually disappeared.

Mennonite aspects of our churches: In many ways the MBC could be characterized as "New Mennonites." MBC members bought cars and used radios. Men and women blended into society with their clothes, not following the Old Mennonite dress styles. Nevertheless, the MBC eschewed the fancy and clung to the plain. Our two churches in Graterford and Harleysville were small and plain with simple straight back pews. No steeples adorned the building. No crosses inside; no stained glass windows to "distract" from their simplicity.

The Graterford MBC Church was located at the end of a dead-end street without easy access, beside the railroad tracks. Because of its location, a visitor needed to search for it to find it. The Harleysville MBC was perched on top of a steep embankment along a major road. Though we ate in the basements of these churches every quarter, when the Presiding Elder visited our churches, those basements were not plastered, finished or furnished.



Left: Graterford MBC; Above: Harleysville MBC c. 1936.

The pastors in those days, unlike the former custom, wore a coat and tie without a turned collar. Likewise the weddings were simple, almost always conducted in the parsonage with only a best man and bridesmaid. No traditional wedding gown was worn except for Perma Wismer. Many couples, mostly from Harleysville, were married by my dad during those years.⁵⁷ He also married his sister, Katie, and Harry Wealand.

Pastoral support: During the first half of my dad’s stay in Graterford, we were still feeling the effects of the depression. Most of the members were farmers. Others were blue collar laborers in factories; for example, Isaiah Copenhafer worked in the flag factory. No white collar, professional men were found in the congregation. The members were basically lower middle class farmers and laborers.

We always had enough to eat with a limited diet. Every fall the churches celebrated a Harvest Home festival for the pastor, meeting at the parsonage. The members brought all kinds of food stuffs, both canned and perishable. Whether as an avocation, or as a means of supplementing the food, my dad always farmed a large “truck patch” in Graterford where he grew tomatoes, peas, string beans, potatoes, radishes, turnips, corn and other vegetables. We also had fruit bearing trees. We stored certain foods in an underground cellar in the backyard during the winter.

In 1935, when my dad went to Graterford and Harleysville, there were 62 and 60 members respectively. The yearly pastoral income from the churches was \$472 and \$420 respectively. With other contributions his support was \$1,105.00 for the year or \$92.00 per month.⁵⁸ MBC pastors were supported not through a budget but through voluntary contributions given each month to the “Steward,” one in each of the churches. So the monthly support was not uniform or guaranteed. (To jump ahead two decades, one Steward in another church confided to my dad in that particular church that one well-to-do member chose not to contribute that month. His explanation was that my dad, who loved to do woodwork in the basement as a hobby, had come to pick up some cuttings and scraps of wood which he had from his construction business. Since my dad had received those odds and ends of wood cuttings, that was this contractor’s contribution to my dad’s monthly support.)

Ministry of my father: My dad drove his Plymouth to visit members and travel to the Harleysville church, paying for its purchase and maintenance from his monthly income. He attended two mid-week prayer meetings, one in Graterford and one in Harleysville. One church arranged to have Sunday School before the morning service and the other afterwards. That enabled my dad to lead in worship and preach in each of the churches. In those days the pastor led the entire service, reading the Scripture, praying, leading the singing and preaching. Sunday evening services met jointly in alternate locations.



My dad sitting on our Plymouth, holding me when I was three months old

As shepherd of the flock, my dad made visitation paramount, making an average of 391 pastoral visits yearly for ten years. One year he preached 167 times; the average was 127 sermons.

Prayer meetings were conducted by Class Leaders who led in singing, prayer, the reading of the Word with appropriate remarks, followed by “a season of prayer” and concluding with testimonies. During the prayer, we all got on our knees and began to pray audibly but quietly, all at the same time. Some led in prayer more loudly. The

length of time for prayer depended on when the last one finished. The praying began with a gradual crescendo with some leaders praying quite loudly. When I prayed as a child I prayed softly enough so that no one else could hear, but loudly enough so I could think. The time of prayer ended when silence fell over the congregation.

Some people have thought this manner of praying was a strange babble – everyone praying audibly at the same

time. But history offers many examples and I have heard first hand reports in Africa of the Holy Spirit falling upon a people during times of revival when the believers feel constrained to pray at the same time and with audible voices. The MBC grew out of the Great Awakening of the mid nineteenth century. It is very possible that this phenomenon was known and experienced in the early days of the MBC. My own opinion is that our way of praying was a relic left over from those days of revival. The days of revival had passed but several forms and traditions continued which had their roots in the Great Awakenings.



Testimonies were opportunities to tell of something new that happened, some answer to prayer, some spiritual struggle with eventual victory, some problem or need for which prayer was requested, or some witnessing experience. A few testimonies were stereotypical but most were not. One young lady I well remember in a later church used to testify without variation each week, “I’m glad that Jesus saves, keeps and satisfies and I want to live and shine for him until he comes.” However, most prayer meetings had fresh, encouraging words from the believers.

These testimonies were punctuated with “Amen” and interspersed with the singing of choruses. Choruses were lively and experiential of the living reality of the Lord. Recently I tried to list the various choruses that

we sang in Graterford and Harleysville. Many were taken from the MBC *Rose of Sharon* hymnbook. These memorable choruses made our prayer meetings so enjoyable.⁵⁹

During those first ten years, my dad was active in annual conference, though not a member of any powerful boards. For seven years, 1936 to 1942, he served on the Finance Committee. For many years after 1943 he served on the Committee on Examination of Presiding Elders. He was a member of several other committees and in 1936 he gave a twenty minute address Friday evening.

Second Church Appointment: Newark, New Jersey, 1945-1948

The first half of the 1940s marked momentous times for the MBC with the changing of the leadership. W. G. Gehman, the Presiding Elder for the Easton District for thirty-seven consecutive years and the influential leader of the Gospel Herald, had unexpectedly fallen asleep in Christ in 1941. In 1945, when H. B. Musselman stepped down as Presiding Elder, T. D. Gehret and P.T. Stengele were elected as Presiding Elders. After 43 years of “faithful and efficient service” as Presiding Elder, H. B. Musselman was elected Presiding Elder Emeritus.

Neither the church nor pastor had any determining voice about the posting of pastors in the MBC. Each church sent a lay delegate who was consulted, but the final determination of appointments rested with the Presiding Elders. At Annual Conference, when they called the roll of the pastors, each pastor responded whether or not they “submitted themselves unconditionally to the conference.” On that basis the Stationing, Boundary and Appropriating Committee was read aloud. At that moment each pastor, seated in the pew, learned where he would be serving the following year. That moment was one of high drama during each Annual Conference.

When the Stationing and Boundary Committee was read, R. H. Gehman was sent to Newark, New Jersey, a small “mission” church with a membership of 40. Numbers of older pastors at various times have expressed to me surprise and dilemma over this assignment, but to my knowledge, my dad never expressed any displeasure.



Our apartment on second floor next to the church

Moving to Newark, NJ was a culture shock for me. It was city-life, living in an apartment. Noise easily carried downstairs to our neighbors below us. On one occasion I was helping my father by stamping some tracts. With one hand I pounded the stamp on the ink pad, then stamped the tract, back and forth as fast as I could. “Stop bouncing that ball” came a voice from downstairs.” “We’re not bouncing a ball,” we replied. “Stop bouncing that ball,” she persisted. Obviously, there were restrictions we faced living in an apartment. Neither did we have a front porch or land to cultivate. I’ll always remember

some time after moving to Newark that we took a “pleasure ride” to the countryside. It took about thirty minutes to leave the concrete jungle and reach the farm pastures. When I saw a cow, my heart leaped for joy. I never had any dealings with cows but somehow the sight of a cow made me feel at home. How much more must my parents have felt that way? Moving to Newark, New Jersey, was indeed a culture shock, at least for me.

Fortunately, the church owned a small fenced plot which we could see from our kitchen window. My parents utilized that to the full with flowers and vegetables planted.

The church building was purchased by the MBC in 1942 and was not a traditional Mennonite meeting house. It was a beautiful little church structure with a steeple, stained glass windows, a pipe organ and cushioned seats – all on the older side, but nevertheless quite attractive and un-Mennonite. My mother loved to play the pipe organ, including sheet music with Handel’s compositions. When my dad officiated the marriage of four Italian sisters they were dressed in elegant wedding attire. Rachel Yacovelli’s veil was six and a half yards long. My mother played “Indian Love Call” and “I Love You Truly” on the pipe organ. The MBC was metamorphosing.



Squeezed between my mother and grandmother on plot of ground behind our Newark church.

Third Church Appointment: Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania, 1948-1954

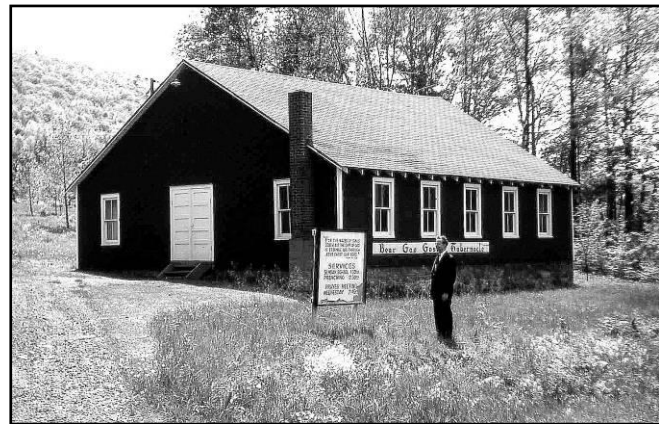


In 1948 my dad was assigned to Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania, in the anthracite coal regions with many eastern European immigrants with Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Churches predominating. My parents loved this appointment. The same Plymouth we had in Graterford carried our family from Newark, New Jersey to Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania in October, 1948, for our first Sunday there.

My parents thrived in this environment and the church grew. We had many fine families who formed the solid core of the church. In addition to the MBC conference church, my dad pastored the Bear Gap Gospel Tabernacle over the picturesque

mountains in a rural setting. The Mt. Carmel area had previously been a health resort, prior to the coal mining. It is a beautiful, mountainous area. Because of the strip coal mines, the landscape around Mt. Carmel appeared like a bombed out area with large gaping holes, mounds of dirt, and putrid smoke pouring from underground coal mine fires.

But Bear Gap was a world away from all that and provided a beautiful contrast. My parents and I attended Sunday School and Sunday morning worship in Mt. Carmel; Sunday afternoon worship service in Bear Gap. Sunday evening I attended Menno Youth, the evening service, and followed by choir practice. Normally, we did not attend the Bear Gap Sunday School but during times of Sunday School contests we did. That was a full Sunday schedule for my dad, as well as his teenage son.



During the six year ministry in Mt. Carmel my dad preached 144 sermons every year on average, and made an average of 460 pastoral visits every year. In Mt. Carmel we had two weekly prayer meetings, plus Bear Gap. On average my dad attended 121 prayer meetings in the year.

He baptized 64 people during those six years. The Sunday School average attendance grew from 88 in 1948 to 121 in 1954. Those were the days when Sunday School was attended by many who did not attend the church service. Church membership was smaller, but grew from 81 to 92 in 1951. Thereafter the membership began to decline to 85 due to coal mine closures. How well I remember those gloomy days in the early 1950’s when the men would exit after the Sunday evening service and stand for a long time outside discussing the closing of the mines.

Jobs were lost. People sought work outside the anthracite region. As a result, we lost many solid, core families through transfer to other churches. Even men who were not coal miners suffered because of the depressed economic conditions.

Though we had a number of unionized coal miners in the congregation, we also had a number of men who owned businesses and others who were white collar executives and tellers in banks and businesses. These included the owners of two dairies with their families. As a result, our members contributed generously. In 1951 the 92 members in Mt. Carmel contributed \$9,195. In my eyes, our Mt. Carmel church was small. But when you eliminate the five largest giving churches in the MBC in 1949, (Bethel Allentown, Reading, Bethlehem, Chester and Emmaus), Mt. Carmel gave slightly more than the average of all the other churches.

A major renovation project was undertaken to upgrade our church building. It was a wooden frame building with an alley separating it from the Episcopal Church. The renovations included: placing shingles on the outside, plastering the inside, carpeting the whole sanctuary, refurnishing the pews, hanging new light chandeliers, purchasing new pulpit furniture and renovating the basement for Sunday School rooms.

In our community my dad was active in various capacities. We participated with the evangelical Protestant churches in Youth for Christ. During my Commencement from High School in 1954, my dad offered the Invocation and Benediction. (The pastor of the Greek Catholic Church gave the Baccalaureate Address.)

Fourth Church Appointment: South Allentown and Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, 1954-1958



*Left: Salem, South Allentown;
Above: Coopersburg B.F.C.*

Hurricane Hazel swept through the Lehigh Valley the third week of October 1954 when the Forty-Second Annual Conference of the MBC convened in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Rev. F. B. Hertzog was the Chairman. The hurricane blew with gale force winds and knocked out the electricity the evening of Friday, October 15th. By candlelight, all the delegates listened with expectation to the stationing report. As if the loud thunder clapped, the announcement was made that my father was exchanging pulpits with Herbert Hartman who had served in the circuit of South Allentown and Coopersburg. If the 1945 stationing report assigning my dad to Newark, New Jersey was a shock, even more shocking was this new assignment for Herbert Hartman, the Vice District Superintendent. He was moving from a circuit with a combined membership of 250 members to Mt. Carmel with 85 members. As obedient servants of the Lord in the MBC, these pastors moved.



In that same year the South Allentown, Salem Church, had petitioned Annual Conference to be recognized as a separate charge and supplied with its own pastor. Therefore, high on the agenda of Salem, South Allentown, was becoming well established in order to support their own pastor. By 1956 pastoral support was sufficient so that Carl Cassel was assigned to Coopersburg and my dad remained in South Allentown for two more years.

This new assignment to South Allentown was quite different from Mt. Carmel and presented a new set of challenges for my dad. Although the membership of Salem was nearly 30% higher than Mt. Carmel, many of the members were less stable. Carnality and spiritual immaturity afflicted numbers of people in the congregation evidenced by conflict. There was a succession of disturbances of one sort or another. After one such episode, an elder told my dad. "You can now see that in our church when one problem passes, another is around the corner."

There were mature, stable and well established families and individuals in Salem, but many were aging. Within four decades the church withered away and closed. Providentially, my dad moved on to another pastorate in two years.

Fifth Church Assignment: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1958-1961

In October, 1958, my dad was assigned to the Lancaster B.F.C. Though a newly established church in 1950 with



My dad sitting at his roll-down desk in the office located in the parsonage in Lancaster where he was translated to glory in 1961

a smaller congregation, it had mature, well established families who had transferred from several other MBC churches, including five families from Mt. Carmel. For my dad, who was now beginning to feel his age, it was a pleasant and rewarding three years of ministry before his translation into glory.

Generally his preaching was confined to Sunday mornings and evenings, so he preached an average of 84 times each year. During those two years and nine months my dad baptized 18 people. The Lancaster BFC grew from 39 to 50 members and the Sunday School average attendance was 103.

My mother mentioned that my dad frequently spoke of

retirement. I suspect that he began to feel his age, though he was not sickly. The Lancaster BFC was moving along well; harmony prevailed with a good spirit of unity. Presumably, he would have served there an additional number of years. But God in his sovereign wisdom took him home painlessly and instantaneously on August 17, 1961, at the age of 62 years and nine months.

The spiritual gifts manifested by my father included “the pastor-teacher.” The members loved and respected him; this was evidenced by the numerous former church members who attended the memorial service in the Grace Bible Fellowship Church in Reading. A few years later the Lancaster BFC established “The R.H. Gehman Leadership Award” in honor of my dad which was bestowed on various leaders of the Lancaster B.F.C.



In front of Lancaster Church

Reflections on my Dad’s Sermons



In the words of Paul, “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep...” Even so my dad served God’s purpose well in his generation. He was faithful in all of his service to God. Growing up in the Mennonite tradition that disparaged education, having a father who frowned on higher education, even preventing my dad’s sister from attending high school and forbidding her from attending Moody Bible Institute; and then entering the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church which frowned on higher education for its clergy, my dad was fortunate to have pursued high school studies at Bluffton College Academy and attending one term at Moody Bible Institute. His preaching was greatly enhanced by that.

I have in my possession all his hundreds of sermons, neatly typewritten, from the beginning of his ministry. When looking at these sermons we must remember several facts. In his day one pastor did everything. My father made twice as many pastoral visits as most pastors do today in the BFC; even five times more than some do. Because he preached both Sunday morning and evening, and because he preached in circuits of two churches, he preached twice as many sermons as many do today. He did all the pastoral counseling, supervised the Christian Education in church, worked with the youth, conducted the Vacation Bible Schools, as well as the other normal pastoral duties of weddings and funerals and chairing committee

meetings. In most churches today the pastor has a plurality of assistants. So when you compare the sermonizing today with the days of my father, one is comparing apples with oranges.

My dad's theology was mainstream evangelical Protestantism with a clear understanding of justification by grace through faith alone, and sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit. His understanding of the relationship between grace and law, and salvation and works is very biblical. This teaching of justification by grace alone through faith alone through Christ alone and apart from good works echoed my dad's experience of conversion when he declared, "I felt so light." He exclaimed, "*Ichvesis, ichvesis*," meaning, "I know it, I know it." He knew that he was saved through repentance and faith in Christ apart from any good works. His understanding surely was enhanced through his studies at Moody Bible Institute. His clear preaching on justification very soon after his studies at Moody would seem to point to Moody's influence on his thinking. Furthermore, the books he used for sermon preparation were all from this same evangelical stripe.

He had a great concern for total dedication to God, a complete surrender to God's will. He reflected the Keswick teaching of the Deeper Life with its emphasis on being united with Christ, dying to self, and living the resurrected life in Christ. He believed that many Christians lack this total devotion to God. He further taught that total consecration will lead one to eschew the temptations of this world. Total consecration to God involves a life of faith, love, and prayer.

His messages are Christ-centered, preaching more on Christ and his death than on any other one topic. In contrast, to an amazing extent, he seldom preached on the distinctives of Mennonite theology, such as pacifism, non-resistance, affirming and not swearing by oath, and foot washing. He did believe in divine healing and preached once or twice on this topic in each church where he pastored.

He was clearly dispensational in eschatology. The only references to authors in these sermons are dispensational scholars. All the traditional marks of Dispensational teaching of the end times are found in my father's sermons. His frequent emphasis on the imminent return of Christ made an indelible imprint on my mind.

Though I am not sure that he had a full understanding of Perseverance of the Saints as we understand it, nevertheless, he made some surprising statements concerning the assurance of salvation. Never once did I find any reference to the possibility of losing salvation. He taught in one message that the believer is secure and concluded the message by singing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine."

I found no evidence of legalism or an unbiblical approach to the separation from the world. Legalism is the belief that one earns and merits salvation by doing good works and obeying the law. Pharisaism elevates "the traditions of the elders" so that they must be kept equally with the law of God in order to merit salvation. Quite the contrary! My father emphasized salvation by grace through faith in the redemption provided by Christ on the cross. Salvation for him was not a works-righteousness. His teaching on Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 3:9-20 clearly anchors him in the theology of the Protestant Reformers who taught justification by grace through faith alone.

He maintained an emphasis on separation from the world from the beginning to the end of his ministry, but his emphasis is on the separation from the impurity and sinful lusts of the world that are manifest in certain practices. His understanding was that certain "worldly" practices were unacceptable for Christians because of their impurity.

I'm thankful to God for my godly heritage and the Christ-like example of both my mother and dad. My parents reflected the beauties of Christ, and my dad's teaching rooted me in biblical faith.

NOTE: To complete the century of the Woodring influence in the BFC with my own complete story, you can read my recently published Memoirs, entitled, *Passing it On: Lessons Learned in Life*. This is available either from Amazon.com or from the author who can ship it direct to you for \$15.00. For an unabridged copy of the Tribute to my Dad (with his ancestry) and an unabridged Tribute to my Mother (with her Woodring heritage), you can find this on the BFC Historical Web site.

END NOTES

¹ Personal testimony of R.L. Woodring in *The Gospel Banner* on April 2, Vol. 18, No. 14, 1895, p. 29.

² Handwritten letter from my mother, dated March 15, 1972.

³ *Ibid.*

⁵ This report is taken from “*Peace in the Valley*” by William H. Bartron.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁸ A testimony of D.B. Rote: *The Gospel Banner*, Published Weekly by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ of the United States and Canada, October 28, 1897, p. 687.

⁹ *The Gospel Banner*, Published Weekly by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ of the United States and Canada, June 11, 1897.

¹⁰ *The Gospel Banner*, June 26, 1897.

¹¹ *Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church Conference Journal*, 1934, p. 29.

¹² *The Gospel Banner*, Vol. 18, No. 14, Ap 2, 1895, p. 219.

¹³ Through a personal interview with Jansen E. Hartman, Fellowship Courts in Whitehall, PA in 2006. *Bot* was the name of the disease and Jansen E. Hartman believes this is how it was spelled.

¹⁴ “*Peace in the Valley*” by William H. Bartron, p. 7. (Much of the information in the paper by Bartron was obtained from the MBC Quarterly Conference Minutes in Lehighton and Weissport not available to me.)

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁶ Handwritten letter from my mother, dated March 15, 1972.

¹⁷ Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, *Annual Conference Journal*, 1896.

¹⁸ Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, *Annual Conference Journal*, 1934, p. 29, 30.

¹⁹ Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, *Annual Conference Journal*, Fifteenth Session, 1898, p. 28.

²⁰ Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, *Annual Conference Journal*, 1934, p. 29,30.

²¹ *The Gospel Banner*, June 15, 1897, p. 380.

²² *The Gospel Banner*, Vol. 20, No 32, Aug 10, p. 498.

²³ *The Gospel Banner*, Vol. 20, No. 51 Dec. 21, 1897.

²⁴ *The Eastern Gospel Banner*, First published in 1917. Organ of the Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. Published by the Union Gospel Press Printing Co., Pastor C. H. Brunner, Editor, Jan. 10, 1918, p. 31.

²⁵ Personal Interview with Mildred Musselman on the phone; and in person.

²⁶ Personal letter from Mildred Musselman, dated June 13, 2007.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Annual Conference Journal of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, 1934, p. 30.

³⁰ It should be noted that the family of R.L. Woodring did not have sufficient funds to purchase a tombstone. H.B. Musselman, his Presiding Elder, provided the funds for the stone. He was buried on the cemetery lot purchased and used by John Ziegenfuss, my grandmother’s father, and his family.

³¹ *Annual Conference Journal of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, 1934, p. 30.

³² Personal letter from my mother, dated January 18, 1981.

³³ Personal Interview with Dorothy Weber, June 11, 2003.

³⁴ Personal Interview with Jack Weber, June 11, 2003.

³⁵ Personal letter from Rose Hummel, dated November 12, 1991.

³⁶ Compare this with the attendance of the five largest Sunday Schools in the BFC 60 years later in 2006: Cedar Crest, Allentown, 552; Emmaus, 393; Sinking Spring, 327; Coopersburg, 288; Lebanon, 255.

³⁷ *Life and Experiences of Mrs. Esther H. Myers* by M.M. Myers. Privately published about 1950.

⁴² Kathryn Dietz, Interview on 3 August 2003.

⁴³ My aunt, Katie, states in a letter dated March 16, 1972, that he studied at “Bluffton College Academy for two years.” However, his photo album creates some uncertainty. He wrote a caption of a picture thus: “The above is taken in Bowmansville in the fall of 1919, just before I left for Bluffton. What a day!” A few pages later he has pictures of Bluffton dormitory which he dated, “1923-1924.” Also a picture of the First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, “decorated for Christmas, 1924.” If he went to Bluffton in January 1920 (after “the fall of 1919) and stayed until the Christmas of 1924, that would mean four years. Were his plans of 1919 delayed until two years later? Did he go to Bluffton after “the fall of 1919” for a short period, returning to Pennsylvania for a time before returning to Bluffton to complete his two years? We may never know. It is difficult to believe that he did stay in Bluffton for four years. We shall assume that my Aunt Katie’s time period of “two years” is approximately correct and that certain unknown things transpired which create an apparent conflict in his photo album.

⁴⁴ Confirmed by a telephone conversation with the Registrar at Moody Bible Institute in December 2006.

⁴⁵ Letter from Mildred Musselman, dated June 3, 2007.

⁴⁶ This seems to be in contradiction to the official records of the Pine Grove Mennonite Church mentioned above.

⁴⁷ The information on Menno and Hettie Myers is largely derived from a small booklet that he published in memory of his deceased wife, Hettie (Esther), entitled, *Life and Experiences of Mrs. Esther H. Myers* by M.M. Myers. Privately published about 1950

⁴⁹ The minutes read, “W.G. Gehman, President of the Gospel Herald Society, presented the names of A.M. Sprock, E.W. Bean, R.H. Gehman, C.L. Miller and C.O. Reed as Applicants for Annual Conference License. Resolved, That these brethren be referred to the Committee on Examination of Applicants for Annual Conference License.” Sometime later during the conference the report of the Committee on Examination of Applicants for Annual Conference License was submitted. “We, the Committee on Examination of Applicants for Annual Conference License, beg leave to report that we have examined the brethren A.M. Sprock, E.W. Bean, R.H. Gehman, C.L. Miller and C.O. Reed and recommend them to this Conference for Annual Conference License. B. Bryan Musselman, C.H. Brunner, F.M. Hottel, Committee.

⁵⁰ David E. Thomann; Interview on 8 July 2006.

⁵¹ *Life and Experiences of Mrs. Esther H. Myers* by M.M. Myers. Privately published about 1950,

page 28.

⁵² Interview with R.C. Reichenbach, retired MBC pastor and former Gospel Herald, 3 Aug. 2003.

⁵³ The minutes of the 1931 Annual Conference Year Book read: "We beg leave to report that we have interviewed E. W. Bean, A. M. Sprock and R. H. Gehman, who have completed their three years' Reading Course creditably and have labored acceptably in the Gospel Herald Society for a number of years. We believe them to be sincere, conscientious and promising young men of good character but owing to the fact that they have not had the opportunity to labor in the Church, we recommend that their ordination be deferred for the present. B. Bryan Musselman, E. N. Cassel, C. H. Brunner, Committee."

⁵⁴ Letter from Mildred Musselman, dated June 13, 2007.

⁵⁵ *Life and Experiences of Mrs. Esther H. Myers* by M.M. Myers. Privately published about 1950, page 6.

⁵⁷ Pictures in the photo album include: Perma (Wisner) and Stanley Hipzer, Evelyn (Detweiler) and Donald Bechtel, Robert Zieglers, Kathryn and Clayton Dietz, Stan and Pearl (Ziegler) Hackman, Norman and Mabel (Ziegler) Apple, Lloyd and Elva (Ziegler) Gebert, Arlene and Jake Moyer.

⁵⁸ All the following statistics and conference data were obtained from the Annual Conference Yearbooks of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church and the Bible Fellowship Church.

⁵⁹ "Jesus never fails, Jesus never fails. Heaven and earth may pass away. But Jesus never fails." (George Palmer used to start his radio program with this chorus during World War II.)

"Cheer up ye saints of God, there's nothing to worry about; Nothing to make you feel afraid, nothing to make you doubt. Remember Jesus never fails so why not trust him and shout. You'll be sorry you worried at all tomorrow morning."

"No, never alone, no never alone; He promised never to leave you, never to leave you alone. No, never alone, no never alone; He promised never to leave you, never to leave you alone."

"Jesus is good to me, Jesus is good to me, so good, so good; Jesus is good to my soul." (Rose of Sharon, p. 628)

"Oh there's honey in the rock my brother, there's honey in the rock for you. Leave your sins for the blood to cover. There's honey in the rock for you." (Rose of Sharon, p. 194)

"Singing makes the burden lighter, singing drives the care away; With a pray'r and song the path is lighter, Keep singing all the day; Singing in the early morning, Singing as the moments fly. And others who hear you, Will answer by and by." (Rose of Sharon, p. 438)

"Have faith in God, the sun will shine, Though dark the clouds may be today. The Lord has planned your path and mine. Have faith in God, have faith always."

"Down in the dumps I'll never go. That's where the devil keeps me low."

"So I'll sing with all my might and I'll keep my armor bright. But down in the dumps I'll never go."

"Wide, wide as the ocean, High as the heavens above; Deep, deep as the deepest sea, Is my Saviour's love. I, tho' so unworthy, Still am a child of His care. For His word teaches me that His love reaches me ev-'ry-where." (Rose of Sharon, p. 454)

"A little talk with Jesus makes it right, alright. A little talk with Jesus makes it right, alright. With trials of every kind, praise God I always find, a little talk with Jesus makes it right, alright." (Rose of Sharon, p. 722)

"Oh our Lord is coming back to earth again, Yes, our Lord is coming back to earth again. Satan will be bound a thousand years, we'll have no tempter then, After Jesus shall come back to earth again." (Rose of Sharon, p. 78)

"His yoke is easy, his burden is light, I found it so, I found it so. He leadeth me by day and by night where living waters flow."

"O what He's done for me! O what He's done for me! If I tried, to eternity, I never could tell all He's done for me." (Rose of Sharon, p. 487)

"Coming again, yes, coming again; Jesus, my Saviour, He's coming again. Heavenly Bridegroom, down from the sky, Coming to take us with Him on high." (Rose of Sharon, p. 633)

"I'll be present when the roll is called, Pure and spotless thro' the crimson flood; I will answer when they call my name; Sav'd thro' Jesus blood." (Rose of Sharon, p. 529)

"And when the battle's over we shall wear a crown! Yes, we shall wear a crown! Yes, we shall wear a crown! And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown In the new Jerusalem. Wear a crown, wear a crown, Wear a bright and shining crown. And when the battle's over, we shall wear a crown In the new Jerusalem." (Rose of Sharon, p. 373)

"He careth for you, He careth for you. Through sunshine or shadow, He careth for you."

Interestingly enough, I have a little motto given to me in 1940 by my Sunday School teacher in Graterford, Miss Bean, which says, "He careth for you." This must have been a popular chorus sung at that time. It was during the European war leading up to World War II and this was a comforting chorus.