

reunion

An instrument of hope and encouragement

by Fern Yoder

Serving others is an important aspect of my life! I am motivated by the opportunity to share God's wonderful plan of salvation through Jesus Christ which I have experienced in my own life. The church I attend, Woodlawn Amish Mennonite, has always been very active and supportive of local and foreign mission programs. Our young people are encouraged to serve in some type of volunteer mission program. I remember as a little girl listening with fascination to the reports of missionaries who were home on furlough.

My first experience in a formal service opportunity was teaching school at our church's mission in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, Canada. In addition to teaching, I helped with girls' clubs, teen retreats, Sunday school, etc. During my term of service I had the privilege of living with an Ojibway Indian family. This experience taught me a lot about different cultures as well as reinforced some of the Anabaptist values that I had taken for granted. As a result of this experience, I will always have a heart for the First Nations People of Canada.

A few years after my term of service in Canada, a local minister, Joe Miller, and his wife Mattie invited me to visit their mission, International Fellowship Haven, in Haiti. My love for adventure, travel and people found me on my first mission trip to Haiti almost 20 years ago. What a life changing experience!

Almost every year since then I have been traveling to Haiti with a

(cont. on page 3)

It seemed like a great idea: musings from a Mississippi work project

by Jozi Bently

It seemed like a great idea at the time. Throw some work clothes in a bag, fly across the country from Oregon to Indiana, drive all the way down to Mississippi, spend a week performing manual labor of various kinds on a hundred-year-old building...

Wait. That sounds sort of like a terrible idea. At least, that's what my husband told me. And so did pretty much everyone else I shared my vacation plans with.

"Vacation building a porch? For someone else? You go right ahead," they smirked, and continued booking their cruises to Mexico.

But I grew up in a Mennonite community, raised by Mennonite parents who took me to a Mennonite church – a church where each student has the opportunity to go on at least two short-term mission trips before they graduate high school. Those trips lit a fire inside me. I learned very young that helping others can be a powerful experience for both the giver and the recipient. Anabaptist history is saturated with the traditions of service and community and both my church and my parents took the time to teach me how to give of myself in the spirit of sharing Jesus' love with those around me. I mean, of course, "Love thy neighbor," right? But who's to say my "neighbors" are limited to the families living on my street? Why can't my neighbor be a couple that lives 3,000 miles away in a state I've never been to before? Which is, of course, where this story ends up.

So, we start with the unassuming catalyst for the whole adventure: Menno-Hof, sitting quietly in Shippshewana, Ind., and doing its awesome thing like it always does. In September 2010 Menno-Hof welcomed host & hostess Larry and Maxine Miller from Mississippi. Like all volunteers, they spent a lot of time getting to know the Menno-Hof staff and becoming reacquainted with the surrounding area (Larry and Maxine were both raised in Northern Ind.).

During this time, Jerry Beasley, executive director for Menno-Hof, invited Larry and Maxine to visit his church, (cont. on page 2)



(left to right) Paul Yoder, Jozi Bently, Don Miller, Jerry Beasley, and Glen Weaver take a well-deserved break on the handicap accessible ramp they built at the Mashulaville Dormitory, Macon, Miss., the week of March 6-11, 2011. (photo by Larry Miller)

“It seemed like a great idea...”

(cont. from cover)

First Mennonite, Middlebury, Ind., in order to help them get to know some area churches



but also to share with the Sunday school class a little bit about the work and ministry that Larry and Maxine do in Mississippi at the

The “Middlebury Mennonites” repair the porch ceiling and roof at the Mashulaville Dormitory. Visit mashulavilledorm.com to learn more about Larry & Maxine Miller’s ministry in Mississippi. (photo by Dale Riegsecker)

Mashulaville Dormitory.

Well, that did it. Tell a bunch of Mennonites about a great ministry, share some areas where that ministry might need a little help, and they will be all over that opportunity like white on rice. Especially if one of those who hears about said opportunity is my father, Don Miller.

My dad has never passed up a chance to offer a helping hand to anyone, be it his neighbor across the field or hurricane victims in Louisiana.

So, Dad and Jerry began talking about the possibility of putting together a team to travel to Mississippi to take care of some of the dormitory’s more pressing structural issues.

At some point during this planning process, I got a call from my dad. He mentioned the plans to take a team to Mississippi, and then he dangled the carrot. “Would you want to go?” Such a casual question, asked so innocently... of course I wanted to go! Leave Oregon behind, run for the gulf!

You read that right: Oregon. As in, the coast farthest away from Mississippi. I couldn’t pass up an opportunity to go and serve alongside my father. Watching him bless those around him was a subtle lesson in all of those Anabaptist values that have been impressed upon me all my life. His actions weren’t lost on me as an

impressionable little girl and they stuck with me as I grew older.

Our goals in Mashulaville were fairly straightforward: build a handicap access ramp, repair and pour some sidewalks, fix up several drywall areas, and repair a porch ceiling and roof, along with various other minor odds and ends. I asked my dad quite a few times for reassurance that it was okay that I was coming along, seeing as how I had never built a ramp, poured a sidewalk, or repaired a roof. He told me, “Oh sure, we’ll find something for you to do. I’m sure Maxine could use some help in the kitchen, too.” Suddenly, I was nervous. The last time I remembered ever producing anything edible out of the kitchen was back when I worked at Das Dutchman Essenhaus (Middlebury, Ind.) in high school and put together cream pies under the watchful tutelage of the sweet Amish ladies who occupied the pie corner in the bakery.

As we drove through Tennessee, I was starting to second-guess my ability to be anything but a hindrance on this trip. I was the only girl, so I began to look up recipes on my iPhone just in case.

Less than a week later, we had accomplished all we set out to do and perhaps a little more. Dad was right—the guys found ways to keep me busy. Before I arrived I didn’t know how to do anything but wave a hammer around. By the time we left they had collectively taught me how to help build a ramp, pour some sidewalks, repair the porch, and some other odds and ends. Plus, I figured out how to fix up the dormitory sign *all by myself*. Plus, I didn’t break anything. Plus, I made pie. That’s right. I made enough pie for 12 hungry men. Fears conquered! I was not a massive liability!

This was a week that I entered into somewhat blindly, hoping that I might be able to make a contribution of some sort. Given the nature of what we were trying to accomplish, I thought I was more likely to be in the way than anything else.

Before embarking on this trip, I had prayed fervently for a chance to give somebody – anybody – some sort of blessing, no matter how small. What a silly prayer. God has bigger ideas than I, and His plans are not (cont. on back cover)

Reminder: renew your Menno-Hof membership today to continue enjoying your member benefits. Download the membership form online: mennhof.org/php/get.involved

Menno-Hof wish list:

- ~wireless mic system: \$550
- ~7 station phone system: \$2,500
- ~hedge trimmer: \$125
- ~laminator: \$100
- ~digital camera: \$300
- ~rototiller, rear tine: (new or used)
- ~cash register system: \$2,000

If you are interested in donating any of the listed items, contact Jerry or Susan at (260) 768-4117. Monetary contributions can be sent to **Menno-Hof, PO Box 701, Shipshewana, Ind., 46565**

Why we give



“At **Woodlawn Amish Mennonite Church**, Goshen, Ind., we show support to Menno-Hof because of its value in God’s kingdom building. The simple message of faith as lived out by our spiritual forefathers and their children is an inspiring and challenging message to society in general and perhaps more importantly, to ourselves.

As a father and pastor, I enjoy taking our children and teens to Menno-Hof to listen and see “our” story be given in a positive, faith-building way. The story needs to be told, because the message of Jesus and life through Him is the most important one there is to share. May God continue to bless Menno-Hof.”

-Steve Miller, pastor

by the numbers

- 4,368** flowers planted in the 2011 Menno-Hof quilt garden:
528 daisies
3,648 begonias
96 cosmos
96 snapdragons
- 6** new persons began as Menno-Hof volunteers in 2011.
- 57** volunteers and spouses, board members and staff attended the April 19 Menno-Hof volunteer appreciation reception.
- 58,546** volunteer hours have been given to Menno-Hof to-date.
- 2,738** —the number of volunteer hours given by Doris Yoder since she began helping at Menno-Hof in 1990. This is the most hours recorded for any one person!
- 851,409** visitors to-date (since 1988 when Menno-Hof opened)

Gift shop update: new vendors!



Sylvie Gudín Koehn, Elkhart, Ind. (Mennonite) | cards

“When I paint I always pray for God to lead me and to speak through me. My hope is that my paintings will bless others as well.” Sylvie and her husband, Brent, have two children. Sylvie’s faith story on becoming a Mennonite will be featured in the summer issue of *Reunion*.



Anne Lehman, Middlebury, Ind. (Amish) | barbed wire stars

“The barbed wire that I use to make the stars was at one time used as fencing for the livestock on our 104 acre farm. We have milk cows, horses and ponies.” Anne and her husband, Eugene, have seven children.



Lamar Miller, Millersburg, Ind. (Amish) | wooden toys

“When I was a young boy my dad had a heart attack forcing our family to move to a smaller homestead. He started a woodworking shop and I helped him. It was always my dream to have a shop similar to his.” Lamar and his wife, Ruby, have three sons.

Beginnings and endings

Welcome!

Dan & Norma Grieser, Clarksville, Mich.

host & hostess: May-July 2011
4 children; 10 grand-children



Why did you choose to come to Menno-Hof? We came to give of our time and we’ve been blessed, meeting

people from all over the world, sharing our faith and the Anabaptist story. It has given us a new appreciation for our heritage.

Good-bye

Bill & Marilyn Goossen, Beatrice, Neb.

host & hostess: March-April 2011

Bill’s steady, dependable, comfortable presence and Marilyn’s bubbly, lively, exuberant spirit will definitely be missed at Menno-Hof! God Bless you, Bill & Marilyn.

“An instrument of hope...” (cont. from cover)

medical team, visiting villages that have no medical facilities. Haiti has been plagued with droughts, hurricanes, flooding and in 2010, a major earthquake. The opportunities and resources for the Haitian people are very limited. I always come home inspired and challenged by our Haitian friends – it takes so little for them to survive and to be content. A trip to Haiti reminds me how blessed we are and to be grateful for the resources and opportunities we have available.

My prayer is be an instrument God can use to bring hope and encouragement and to share Jesus’ love— not only with the Haitian people but with everyone.

Fern lives in Millersburg, Ind., attends Woodlawn Amish Mennonite Church, and is a member of the Menno-Hof board.

Loren Beachy, Amish columnist for *The Goshen (Ind.) News* “The Plain Side” toured Menno-Hof in April and wrote a review for the newspaper. You can read it on *The Goshen News* web site by linking through our web site: mennohof.org

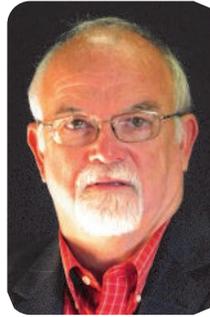


Fern Yoder
Menno-Hof board

DIRECTOR'S DESK

I welcomed the use of the Director's Desk for this article because I feel it is important for individuals to share these experiences. To have it come from a young lady that demonstrates how her parents' influence played out in her adult life is a wonderful witness!

The work project was very satisfying even though the Mississippi rain challenged us. It is a great thing to work, fellowship, worship and play with other Christians while pursuing a life that pleases God.



Jerry Beasley

“It seemed like a great idea...” (cont. from page 2)

limited by a klutzy Oregonian who can't hammer a nail straight. As usual, His plans included teaching me more than just how to pour a sidewalk. I learned how much grace the men of the “Middlebury Mennonites” (as Larry dubbed us) could have for an underachiever like myself as I struggled to keep up with their work. I learned that God is at work in the most unlikely places, and how merely the presence of an ambassador of His peace can make a difference in a single life. I learned that you should always check the ground below before you toss spare hammers off the roof (sorry, Glen). I learned that racial unrest is alive even today in the south, but that God has workers of all colors planted in His field attempting to break the color barriers. And I learned about what an amazing power God's people have when they join together for a common purpose—His purpose—not just to help repair buildings but to stretch boundaries that without Christ may seem impenetrable.

So, it seemed like a great idea at the time. Turns out, it was.

Jozi and her husband, Andy, live in Sherwood, Oregon, and attend Countryside Community Church. Jozi transcribes insurance files and enjoys blogging in her spare time at jozmassage.blogspot.com with “erratic and sporadic updates on things I find a little interesting.”

Jozi's father and mother, Don and Bernie Miller, live in Middlebury, Ind. Don is the owner and operator of JBD Dragline and also volunteers at Menno-Hof as a tour guide.

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Fern Yoder, Millersburg, Ind.



Reunion is published quarterly to keep our friends informed of happenings at Menno-Hof. Direct questions or comments to info@mennohof.org

Menno-Hof Amish-Mennonite Visitors' Center

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