

## An instrument of God's love

by Rosa Bortrager

Menno-Hof gives us a wonderful opportunity to open our hearts and our homes to exchange culturally and share the love of Jesus.

As Anabaptists, everything we do centers around the ministry of Jesus and how He taught us to be servants. In His daily walk among people, Jesus was so in tune with the needs around him, reaching out and touching many lives. What an example for us to emulate!

Every person we meet on a daily basis opens the door of opportunity to introduce them to Jesus of Nazareth, the man from Galilee who has given us such an abundant life of blessing!

Let me never forget –every person is worth understanding and has a purpose and plan in the kingdom. However, each individual is free to choose God or reject the kingdom. Let me be an instrument of God's love.

*Rosa passed away unexpectedly April 15, 2012, at her home in Middlebury, Ind. Rosa and her husband, Calvin, began volunteering at Menno-Hof in 2010. Rosa was a member of Townline Conservative Mennonite Church, Shipshewana, Ind. Several weeks before her death, she wrote the above article to be printed in the Reunion newsletter some time.*

## My miracle in Shipshewana

by Joanna Rangel

My name is Joanna Rangel. I came to the United States from Mexico 19 years ago along with half of my family – I have 11 siblings. My mother died six months after coming to the States.

I am studying at St. Augustine College, Chicago, in order to get my associate degree as an administrative assistant. My final English assignment in 2012 was to write an ethnography research paper about the Amish community. I was to interview an Amish person, record the interview, videotape it, take pictures and find facts and artifacts. I was terrified because I didn't know where to start my research. I was especially frightened with the interview because of my difficulty with the English language. In my opinion, to interview an Amish person would be almost as hard as finding water in the desert.

I heard many assumptions about the Amish and I was absolutely sure it would be complicated, so I took the easy way by using information from the Internet. After I turned in my paper, my teacher mentioned during class how disappointed he was that someone used plagiarism in their research paper. I felt like the thief who is caught stealing. After I assumed responsibility for my actions, I begged my teacher for another chance. Sometimes it is hard to prove that you have the potential to do things well when you've lost credibility. I knew I needed a miracle to restore my image, and write a ten page essay in less than one week.

It was almost by accident how I found out about Shipshewana. Someone had told me about the flea market and that the best days to go were on Tuesday or Wednesday but I couldn't go until Wednesday. So with my reputation hanging by a thread, I packed my notebook, camera and recorder, and started my journey to the unknown. As my husband and I drove the three hours from Chicago to Shipshewana, we started seeing farms, horses, buggies and Amish clothes hanging on hangers outside. I felt magically transported into another time period.

Unfortunately, no one let me approach them. After continuous fails to interview an Amish person, I stopped to photograph a horse and buggy parked in front of Menno-Hof. I thought it was just another souvenir store and I thought to myself "this will be the last stop." We decided to enter and right there was my miracle.

I met Rosa Bortrager, a sweet lady who seemed like she knew what was going on inside of me. She was working behind the cash register and asked me, "are you going to take the tour?" I didn't know what she was talking about. And almost without thinking I said, "actually I'm working on an English assignment about the Amish and I need to interview somebody." Rosa said that she grew up Amish and perhaps she



Joanna and Rosa Bortrager enjoying conversation around Rosa's kitchen table. (photo provided)

**My miracle...** (cont. from front) could help. She also explained to me what to expect on the Menno-Hof tour but I *never* expected to hear what she offered me next. She invited us to have dinner in their home on Saturday! I accepted her offer without hesitation.

I couldn't believe it! I found everything that I was looking for in one place. I had everything except time so we decided on the short tour through Menno-Hof. Marlin Jeschke was our guide. During the tour, I felt like for a moment I was in a time machine. I traveled through the history of the original Anabaptist movement and its division into the Mennonites and Amish. I lived the suffering, persecution and torture of the first Anabaptists. As an immigrant I also identified with some of their sufferings. Marlin not only answered all my questions, but also offered to read my essay which was definitely an honor for me. At the end I was surprised when he gave me a book. I left Menno-Hof feeling that I was the most fortunate person in the world. I had tons of information for my research.

The time passed by quickly and before I knew it, it was Saturday. I was back in Shippshewana with my family and this time without pressures. I went back to Menno-Hof to take the rest of the tour which was very educational. I learned a lot about the differences and the similarities between Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites and all about their common historical roots. I was listening with fascination to the rest of the presentation when one of the volunteers asked me if I was Joanna because I had a phone call. I still don't know how Rosa figured out I was there since I never called her to confirm the dinner invitation. I thought she wasn't serious about dinner but she was – and she and her husband, Calvin, were waiting for us.

When I entered Rosa & Calvin's home I felt a calm atmosphere and spirituality inside. We had a wonderful meal that I wish I could have every day for a month. We had the best applesauce I've ever tasted. As we ate we talked about how I learned so many things about Amish and Mennonites. Rosa also talked about her family and some other personal painful histories that they share with us. In the beginning it was hard to imagine holding a conversation with my new friends. However, I realized that we were speaking the same "language" – it didn't matter if my English wasn't perfect. It was a moment when language wasn't an obstacle to communicate with each other.

I could not believe how quickly the time passed and we needed to return home. I left

Rosa's home with a feeling of satisfaction. I was so shocked and saddened to find out about Rosa's death several months after our visit. I feel like I didn't get to adequately express to her the enormous pleasure it was to know her.

I really loved Shippshewana and I will never forget the wonderful experience I had there. It doesn't matter what I got for my final grade, the important thing is the experience of a lifetime that I gained. Miracles are all around—sometimes we just need to ask for one.

Joanna and her husband, Daniel, live in the Chicago area. Joanna is also the proud mother of Maggie, who is an honors student.

### Faith connection: a partner congregation

Shore Mennonite Church, Shippshewana, Ind.  
Founded in 1865

Shore Mennonite is a fellowship of believers rooted in the life of Christ as experienced through the Anabaptist tradition, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We seek to live the gospel and to share the good news of salvation and hope in Christ.

We have chosen to become a church partner with Menno-Hof because we can depend on it to be an accurate source of information for interested tourists in the area as well as members and baptismal candidates from our own church.

Menno-Hof has been blessed with 23 volunteers from Shore Mennonite since 1990. Currently, there are eight members giving their time at Menno-Hof.

*If your congregation is interested in becoming a church partner with Menno-Hof, contact Jerry or Susan for more information.*

### Reconnect & reminisce: 25 years

A reunion for Menno-Hof volunteers

To kick off a year-long celebration for Menno-Hof's 25th anniversary, **a reunion has been planned for persons who have volunteered at Menno-Hof any time from 1988 (when Menno-Hof first opened) to the present.** Volunteers are truly at the heart of Menno-Hof and make it possible for us to open the doors on a daily basis.

Sunday, May 19, 2013  
3 p.m. at Shore Mennonite, Shippshewana  
4 p.m. refreshments and visiting at  
Menno-Hof

RSVP to Susan: [info@mennohof.org](mailto:info@mennohof.org) or 260-768-4117

*Details coming later about additional anniversary celebration events during the next year.*

### Menno-Hof wish list:

~sofas for volunteer apartments

~washer & dryer for apartments

~37" flat screen TV with DVD capability

~6X8 trailer with hitch

### 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  
Shippshewana, IN 46565



## Coffee, Cookies and Community: a Menno-Hof Sunday evening series

*Objective:* to reinforce the Anabaptist values of *community* and *service* while stimulating thought and action related to how we do justice & witness in the world as we make lifestyle decisions that reflect our values and commitment to follow Christ in daily life.

February 24, 2013, 6 p.m. at Siloam Fellowship, Goshen, Ind. (corner of SR 4 & CR 35)

### **MDS volunteers: the hands and feet of Jesus in a post-modern world**

*Kevin King, executive director, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)*

Hear how Anabaptist faith communities work together in responding to disasters in the United States and Canada through Mennonite Disaster Service and how each of us have a responsibility in how we reflect our faith community through service to others.

March 24, 2013, 6 p.m. at Menno-Hof (RSVP required)

### **Nurturing community and faith when Anabaptists move off the farm**

*André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness & interchurch relations, Mennonite Church USA*

For generations, Anabaptists have nurtured Christian faith in tight-knit communities where life is deeply intertwined with the rhythms of the land. How do we nurture faith and a commitment to service and witness when we move to towns or cities and enter the mobile, individualistic, and materialistic life of our culture? André will reflect on this question, drawing from his family's experience living as intentional neighbors with five other households in South Bend's near northwest neighborhood. This group shares meals, prayers, childcare, cars and more with each other as they seek to love God and neighbor in that setting.

April 21, 2013, 6 p.m. at Menno-Hof (RSVP required)

### **Service and witness: an Anabaptist blend**

*Les Gustafson-Zook, constituent relations coordinator, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Great Lakes & Steve Nolt, professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College*

The impact of Anabaptists today working together to meet spiritual and physical needs cannot be overstated. Hear the history of Anabaptist values of service and mission in North America and how it shapes their witness and ministry both locally and around the world.

**“We took a guided tour of Menno-Hof and I was amazed at the incorrect information about the Amish I had previously thought was fact.”**

—recent online review

## Help keep the Anabaptist story alive: become a Menno-Hof member

Become a member and help us continue to tell the story of how God is working in people's lives—past, present and future.

### Membership benefits

- the joy of supporting an organization with values similar to your own
- free admission for you, your family and friends
- quarterly *Reunion* newsletter
- e-mails with promotions and upcoming events
- 15% discount on gift shop items and books.

### 2013 Menno-Hof membership

Yes, please enroll me as a member as indicated below:

**Individual—\$35** includes free admission for you; 6 admissions for your family and/or friends

**Family—\$50** includes free admission for you, your spouse and children; 10 admissions for your family and/or friends

.....

Enclosed is an additional gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

*Gifts in excess of membership fee are tax-deductible.*

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Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_



Make checks payable to Menno-Hof and mail to PO Box 701, Shipshewana, Ind., 46565

## DIRECTOR'S DESK

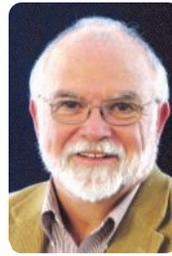
The Menno-Hof staff and board have chosen “community and service” as themes for the next two years (2013 and 2014). You might be wondering why we adopt themes and what are the expected results from doing so? First, as with any organization, it is helpful to have clear objectives that can assist us in measuring whether we are providing a service consistent with our overall vision and mission. Secondly, it is usually effective to have both long and short term goals. These two-year themes serve as a guide for us in developing short term goals and programs. Finally, we are selecting themes that reflect Anabaptist values that we cherish and want to nurture both in our own faith communities and the greater world.

Community and service have been and continue to be important to Anabaptist faith communities and are the topics that drove our plans as we developed the 2013 Menno-Hof winter series “Coffee, cookies and community” as well as other programs that may be developed throughout this two year period. We hope to engage folks in discussion about what community means and about how we continue to live as

faith communities today, remaining open to expansion and an effective witness to the world around us.

On Sunday, January 27, 2013, John D. Roth, professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, spoke to us about the relevance of community for Anabaptists today and the Biblical and historical basis for valuing community in the Anabaptist faith communities. His presentation was followed by a time of conversation by those in attendance.

I hope you will join us for these events and you too can experience the growth and insights resulting from such presentations and interactions. See event details on page 3.



**Jerry Beasley**  
executive director

### Menno-Hof staff:

**Jerry Beasley**, executive director  
**Susan Miller**, managing director  
**Charlotte Long**, program and communication associate

### Board of Directors:

**Larry Chupp**, president, Shipshewana, Ind.  
**Lovina Rutt**, vice-president, Goshen, Ind.  
**Andrew Eversole**, Goshen, Ind.  
**Rachel Nafziger Hartzler**, Goshen, Ind.  
**Dorothy Hostetler**, Shipshewana, Ind.  
**Donna Jones**, Shipshewana, Ind.  
**Orie E. Lehman**, Shipshewana, Ind.  
**Wayne Schrock**, Millersburg, Ind.  
**Don Stauffer**, Union, Mich.  
**Alvin J. Yoder**, Shipshewana, Ind.  
**Fern Yoder**, Millersburg, Ind.

### Hours:

Monday—Saturday: 10 a.m.—5 p.m.

*Summer hours (June, July, August)*

Monday—Friday: 10 a.m.—7 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m.—5 p.m.



Reunion is published quarterly to keep our friends informed of happenings at Menno-Hof. Send questions or comments to director at [info@mennohof.org](mailto:info@mennohof.org)

### Menno-Hof Amish-Mennonite Visitors' Center

PO Box 701  
510 S Van Buren St, SR 5  
Shipshewana, IN 46565  
Tele: (260) 768-4117  
Fax: (260) 768-4118  
E-mail: [info@mennohof.org](mailto:info@mennohof.org)  
Web site: [www.mennohof.org](http://www.mennohof.org)

### Beginnings and endings

Menno-Hof hosts & hostesses:

#### Frederick & Sandra Gingerich

Au Gres, Mich. | Feb. - March

#### Jerry & Allene Kaiser

Aberdeen, Id. | April

#### Dick & Annie Boshart

Lebanon, Pa. | April

#### Dan & Norma Grieser

Sebring, Fl. | May

#### Dave & Candace Stobbe

Winkler, Manitoba, Canada | May

**Thank you** for giving your time and care to Menno-Hof. May you be blessed as you have blessed us and the Menno-Hof visitors!



# MENNO-HOF

AMISH-MENNONITE VISITORS' CENTER

P.O. Box 701

Shipshewana, Indiana 46565

*See and Hear  
the Amish-Mennonite Story*