

recently become Christian was coming from Japan. This was our business; this was our family; this was our college. . . .

Now, I confess that my idealism has been dramatically tempered. After many years of trying, I have finally admitted that I can't fix every problem. I can't ensure every student's happiness. I resist the notion that every failure at this college is my responsibility. . . . But I still love the notion of shared vision. I'd like to think that I can have a part in building something grand. I want to feel needed. And I suspect that concept of dreaming and planning and working together . . . was the most important sidewalk Dr. Wiebe ever built.

Book Review

Joel A. Wiebe, *Remembering . . . Reaching, A Vision of Service: A Fifty Year History of Fresno Pacific College* (Fresno: Fresno Pacific College, 1994). Available for \$22.95 at Pacific Bookshop, 1717 S. Chestnut Avenue, Fresno, CA 93702. Reviewed by Kevin Enns-Rempel.

Anniversaries are times for remembering the past and reflecting on its importance for the present and future. Particularly significant anniversaries, such as the fiftieth, usually call for a more formalized remembrance, often through a written history. The fiftieth anniversary of Fresno Pacific College this year is no exception. In honor of that momentous event the college authorized the preparation of an official history. Written by Joel A. Wiebe, it is the first book-length treatment of the college's history and thus helps fill a significant gap in the historical record of the college and Mennonite Brethren higher education in general.

Wiebe has considerable first-hand knowledge of the college's history, which helps explain his being chosen as author of this book. Beginning in the mid-1950s, he served as a staff person for the U.S. Board of Education, which oversaw the program of Pacific Bible Institute. In 1957 Wiebe joined the administration of the school as Dean and helped direct its transition to a junior college in the early 1960s. He also served as Acting Director of the college in 1960-1961 while President Arthur Wiebe completed his doctoral studies. Joel Wiebe left the college in 1963, but returned in 1989 to serve briefly as interim undergraduate dean and acting graduate dean. He also directed the 1994 accreditation self-study, since which time he has worked on writing the college's history.

Wiebe accurately notes that Fresno Pacific College has undergone significant transitions during its first fifty years, transitions so distinct that in some ways it makes more sense to speak of "schools" than "a school." These changes have included such diverse factors as name, location, academic program, administrative oversight, and even athletic mascots. First known as Pacific Bible Institute, the school became Pacific College in 1961 and then Fresno Pacific in 1976. The campus has moved from its original location on Van Ness Avenue to a downtown YWCA building, and from there to its current campus on Chestnut Avenue. What began as a Bible institute in 1944 evolved into a junior college in 1961, a senior college in 1965, and a graduate school in 1974. Originally owned and controlled by the Pacific District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, the school was adopted as part of

a unified United States Mennonite Brethren program of higher education in 1954, before returning to Pacific District ownership in 1979. After calling themselves the "Messengers" during PBI days, the college adopted the "Viking" as its mascot in the early 1960s before becoming the "Sunbirds" in 1981. Such a bewildering array of institutional changes illustrates the difficulty of defining a thematic center that ties the various eras together. Wiebe suggests, however, that there has been considerable continuity throughout these transitions, and that one can nonetheless speak of a common vision.

Wiebe has chosen to divide the college's history by decades, suggesting that each one represents a distinctive period in the school's history. Usually this strict ten-year division serves the purpose well, though occasionally it seems artificial and unconnected to any real transition in the development of the college.

Chapter one ("Beginnings") covers the years 1944-1953, in which the Pacific District Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches catches a vision for an institute of higher learning on the West Coast and establishes Pacific Bible Institute in 1944. Wiebe suggests that West Coast MB frustration with non-Mennonite schools such as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and distrust of "liberal" theological trends at Tabor College were the driving forces behind establishing the new school.

Another likely factor overlooked by Wiebe is the dramatic westward demographic shift within the MB world during that time. By 1944 the Pacific District of MB Churches had grown significantly larger than the Central District and almost as large as the Southern District. By 1955 those same trends would make the Pacific District the largest district conference in the United States MB Church. These rapidly growing membership numbers seem to have instilled a sense of confidence and independence in West Coast Mennonite Brethren and caused them to seek institutional expressions for it. Perhaps no single institution represented early Midwestern dominance more than Tabor College, and it hardly seems surprising that West Coast Mennonite Brethren challenged Midwest hegemony by establishing their own school.

Chapter two ("The Unified Program") begins with the 1954 decision by the General Conference of MB Churches to establish a unified program of higher education under the Board of Education. Under this plan Tabor College, Pacific Bible Institute and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (founded in 1955) were all governed by a single board representing all MB churches in the United States. This decision marked a significant stage in the college's development. No longer was it simply a regional Bible institute but instead a part of the total national educational program of the MB Church. What remained unclear, however, was how the various schools would fit together into this unified plan. Supporters of both Tabor and Pacific wished to see their school given more prominence within the general program. It was generally assumed that there simply was not sufficient financial support or a large enough pool of potential students to justify two regular colleges within the MB Conference. Wiebe notes the opinion of more than one outside consultant during this era who said that the Mennonite Brethren had no business operating two liberal arts colleges—and perhaps not even one. The subsequent success of both Pacific and Tabor speaks volumes for the determination and faithfulness of those persons committed to Mennonite Brethren higher education.

Despite the opinion of many people that Tabor ought to be

turned into the senior college for the conference and PBI should remain a regional Bible institute, this decade also witnessed the transition of PBI from a Bible institute to a junior college. Bible institute enrollment had begun to drop during the late 1950s, forcing the board to consider a new direction for PBI. This new direction included a two-year junior college program, one that the board hoped would attract more MB students who were otherwise considering other denominational or state colleges. The junior college program was accredited in 1961 and within a short time enrollments climbed.

Chapter three (“Growth, Development and Maturation”) covers the years 1964-1973. The chapter begins with the decision to change the school's name to “Pacific College,” symbolizing its new educational direction. Unfortunately, Wiebe also claims that the school's name was changed to “Fresno Pacific College” in 1964, a decision that actually did not take place until 1976.

During this decade the college evolved again from a junior college to a fully-accredited senior college in 1965. These years also witnessed the development of the “Pacific College Idea,” a document that gave a clear ideological and theological orientation for the growing school. While Wiebe gives prominent attention to the “Idea,” even reprinting it in its entirety, he does not adequately interpret and contextualize its meaning in the development of the college. It marked a shift from the fundamentalist theological orientation of the PBI years to an orientation informed by the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. Furthermore, the idea statement's emphasis on the experimental and prophetic nature of the college placed it clearly within the context of social change and cultural challenges that characterized the era of the 1960s. Such interpretive frameworks, sadly, are missing from Wiebe's narrative.

The beginnings of the first three chapters all are marked by significant mileposts in the college's history. No such event marks the beginning of chapter four (“Back to the Future”), which covers the years 1974-1983. It seems that the year 1979 probably would have been a more appropriate dividing point, since in that year the college was returned to the control of the Pacific District Conference, and in a sense moved “back” while also moving toward the future. Wiebe could have made the case that the 1974 board decision to approve a master's program in education did mark such an institutional turning point, but he does not mention that event until well into chapter four and does not attach particular institutional significance to it.

Wiebe gives considerable attention in chapter four to “regionalization”—the decision to dissolve the U.S. Conference Board of Education and return Pacific and Tabor to their respective district conferences. He also recounts in detail the decision to build the Special Events Center, the subsequent funding problems, and the Pacific District Conference's decision to bail out the project through its “Maintenance to Mission” program. Wiebe concludes his chapter by reprinting two important documents of the early 1980s: the 1982 revision of the “Fresno Pacific College Idea” and Edmund Janzen's 1983 essay, “Broadening the Base: My Vision for FPC.” As in earlier chapters, Wiebe simply lets the reprinted documents stand on their own and offers little or no interpretation of them. Readers are left alone to determine the significance of these and other documents.

Wiebe understands the years since 1984 as a working out of the goals articulated in Janzen's “Broadening the Base” essay. In

chapter five (“The Base Broadens”), he emphasizes college efforts to seek new sources of enrollment and financial support outside the Mennonite Brethren world while simultaneously maintaining close connections to the Pacific District Conference. Wiebe gives particular attention to renewed campus development during this decade, including Bartsch Hall, the swimming pool, the Wiebe Education Center, and McDonald Hall.

Throughout all five of these chapters, the book is generously sprinkled with historic photographs, anecdotal sidebars and tables. At their best, these features add visual interest to the text and bring to light interesting stories that otherwise did not fit into the main narrative. At other points, such as when the sidebars are nothing more than transcripts of *Fresno Bee* sports articles or when they result in three or more different typefaces on a single page, these features serve more to distract the reader's eye than to illuminate the story. Additionally, there are several exhibits at the back of the book documenting administrators, enrollment statistics, budgets, student body presidents, outstanding graduates, athletic records and other information.

In the most general sense, Wiebe's book adequately outlines the administrative history of Fresno Pacific College. The casual reader will come away from the book with a fairly complete understanding of the college's history and of many major personalities involved in that development. However, several errors and omissions lessen the book's value for the serious and insightful reader.

Wiebe places most of his emphasis on decisions and actions by the board and administration. While those events clearly are very important to the story and deserve every bit of the attention they received, Wiebe neglects serious attention of another very important group, namely, students. While descriptions of student life do appear in chapter one, one can almost forget throughout much of the book that any students ever attended FPC. Given that colleges exist solely for the education and training of students, this omission is particularly glaring. Wiebe largely ignores important issues such as changing religious and social attitudes among students, demographic shifts within the student body, forms of student social life, the role of student leadership, and an analysis of how the college has affected its students in terms of career, church and service activity. These and other questions would have helped round out a history that is too heavily weighted toward the activities of board rooms and administrative offices.

Errors of factual detail appear throughout the book, further diminishing its value for the serious reader. As already mentioned, Wiebe places the adoption of the college's present name in 1964, when in fact it took place in 1976. On pages 111-112 Wiebe incorrectly claims that Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler was converted under the preaching of Martin Luther and that Pilgram Marpeck died a martyr's death, neither of which is true. While neither detail is crucial to the story of Fresno Pacific College, they do raise questions about the accuracy of the research as a whole.

Such errors appear not only in the main text but also in the exhibits at the back of the book. The list of chief executives on page 195 erroneously gives Arthur Wiebe's years of presidency as 1961-1962, when in fact he served in that capacity from 1961-1975. Similarly, Dalton Reimer's years as Academic Dean are given on page 197 as 1971-1972, when in reality he held that position from 1971 to 1981. There are at least three errors in the

list of student body presidents on page 205: the 1969-1970 president should read Jim *Holm* and the 1973-1974 president should read Chris *Somera*, while 1978-1979 president David Anderson was completely omitted from the list. The list of coaches on pages 218-219 omits any references to track & field, cross-country or tennis coaches.

The narrative's chronology occasionally is arranged in unusual ways, causing potential confusion regarding the order in which events took place. On pages 104-105, for example, we move from the establishment in 1970 of the In-Service program to the 1965 acquisition of Upland College's library in the space of two paragraphs. In the same way, the Committee of 100 meeting in 1984 is followed by the donation of Steinert Field in 1977 (page 140). More careful editorial work would have helped to eliminate such awkward transitions.

Spelling problems and other typographical errors mar the book and suggest again that a firmer editorial hand might have been in order. Among the more glaring examples are the misspelling of first president Sam Goossen's name throughout the book; the use of both "Forward" and "Foreward" instead of the correct "Foreword"; the misspelling of "Schulkomitee" on page 26; incorrect spellings of Pilgram Marpeck and Strasbourg Quad on page 112; a reference to the "Student" Events Center on page 145; and the misspelling of "amphitheater" on page 107.

Despite these criticisms, Wiebe's book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Fresno Pacific College. He has pulled together for the first time many important documents and stories crucial for accurately interpreting that story. Those who follow in Wiebe's footsteps to write future historical narratives will find the path easier now that he has blazed a trail.

MCC 75th Anniversary Symposium to be held in Fresno

In honor of its 75th anniversary, the Mennonite Central Committee will convene a symposium entitled "Unit Amidst Diversity: Mennonite Central Committee and the Twentieth Century North American Experience," to be held March 9-12, 1995 on the campuses of Fresno Pacific College and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. According to MCC, the symposium will be a time to "**Celebrate** the watchful care of God and the faithfulness and courage of those who have responded to human suffering since 1920"; to "**Reflect** on following Jesus in a time when self-centeredness and overflowing schedules as well as suffering and chaos challenge the worldwide church"; and to "**Recommit** to service 'In the name of Christ.'"

Themes to be addressed during the symposium include the history of MCC, the development of MCC's organizational structure, the theological ideas that have upheld its work, issues of globalization, an analysis of MCC's significance and meaning over the last seventy-five years, and a time of worship and celebration. West coast participants during these sessions include Paul Toews, Phil and Joy Hofer, Delbert Wiens, Paul Quiring and Stephen Penner.

Registration costs for the full conference are \$25.00; meals

during the event are available on the Fresno Pacific College campus. For further information or to register contact the West Coast MCC Office, 1010 G Street, Reedley, CA 93654, phone 209-638-6911 or fax 209-638-6914.

Genealogy Committee Report

Salt Lake City research trip a success

On October 20-22, 1994 the California Mennonite Historical Society Genealogy Committee sponsored a research trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. Thirteen researchers, mostly from various parts of California, travelled by plane or train to Salt Lake City, where they met on the morning of October 20. While in Salt Lake City, the entire group stayed at the Howard Johnson hotel. Located next door to the Family History Library, this hotel is well-equipped to assist genealogists while they are in town. In addition to meeting rooms for the use of researchers, it is probably one of the only hotels in the world with its own genealogy store.

The Family History Library itself is a massive building containing four floors—two above ground and two below. The ground floor contains records from the United States and Canada; the first basement holds European records; the second basement is devoted to records from the United Kingdom; the second floor contains records from all other parts of the world. Most of our research group spent its time in the first basement with European records. On that floor were over two hundred microfilm readers and a bank of computers for research use, and in excess of one million microfilm reels. In addition to the records in that building, researchers could also request additional microfilm reels from another building across the street.

Members of the group used a wide array of records during their three-day visit. Among the more significant resources utilized were Prussian Lutheran church records, many of which contain extensive Mennonite birth and marriage records. Looking for Mennonites in Lutheran records might seem strange until one realizes that the laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries required all citizens to register such vital statistics with the local state church, much as we record such information at the county hall of records. These Prussian Lutheran records contain a huge untapped resource of Mennonite family data. Other members of the group made extensive use of as-yet uncataloged microfilms recently brought back from eastern Europe and Russia and United Census records.

"Grandma" continues to grow

The "Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry" (GRANDMA), under the supervision and direction of the Society's Genealogy Committee, has now reached almost 55,000 names. Alan Peters, a member of the committee, is supervising the entry of names into the database and maintains the master copy of it. A current copy of the database is available in the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies and may be used by any researcher. Among the latest entries to the database are many names from the 1835 Mólotschna census described elsewhere in