



# Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the West Coast BULLETIN

Center for M. B. Studies  
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## *Dinuba-Reedley Area Meeting Focuses on MB Hispanic Ministries*

The Parlier Mennonite Brethren Church was the site for the Dinuba-Reedley area meeting of the Historical Society on Sunday afternoon, March 6. Through a panel discussion moderated by Grace Seibel Thiessen, those in attendance were given a bird's eye view of the histories of six Central Valley Hispanic M.B. Churches.

On the panel were church planters Dr. A. W. Schlichting, Henry Heier, Donald J. Enns, Don Schmidt; pastors Juan Martinez (Parlier), Jesus Moreno (El Faro), Baltazar Garcia (Calvario), Jose Elizondo (Orange Cove); and church workers Sammy Resendez, Noe Rodriguez, Joe Salinas, and Luciano Mares.

M.B. Hispanic work began in 1955 at the Reedley M.B. Church. Dr. Schlichting was then chairman of the extension committee, which had been challenged to begin the work. A little village known as "La Colonia" (later incorporated as Parlier), was chosen as the place to begin. A dance hall was rented for meetings, services prepared, the community canvassed with flyers, but when the first Sunday came, no one showed. So the next week they decided to pick up the people at their homes and bring them to the hall. When they arrived the building was locked and the janitor had left with the keys. Now what? Hold Sunday school in the cars!

This was an unusual beginning for a church, but its continuance and growth was a credit to the persistence of Dr. Schlichting. Its first (and current) building was built in 1957, and in 1958 the average attendance was over 200.

Dr. Schlichting did not speak Spanish, so he preached through interpreters. In several instances interpreting proved to be a training ground for young Hispanic preachers. Frank Rodriguez, one of the earliest Parlier interpreters, was just a boy when he began this task. He

was chosen because he knew English, but he soon found himself speaking of something he did not know. I suppose you could say he became a Christian through his own preaching! Later he became the pastor of the Parlier Church until his tragic accidental death. Juan Martinez, a student at M.B. Biblical Seminary, currently pastors this church.

Dr. Schlichting's method was to work in an area until he had "worked himself out of a job," and then to move on. In this way new Hispanic churches were begun in Reedley (El Faro) in 1962, Orange Cove in 1965 and Traver in 1979, where Dr. Schlichting continues to work.

Rev. H. R. Wiens caught the vision of Hispanic ministry in Dinuba and a church known as Calvario was begun there in 1963. They bought their first building from the Korean Presbyterians for \$8,000—and that included Sunday school rooms and a parsonage.

Hispanic ministry in Orosi was begun by Darlene Reimer, who lived in that area. She was preparing to go to the Congo as a missionary, but when the doors closed for her, she returned to her own neighborhood, holding Bible studies in her home. Three classes a week were bursting the bounds of her home, so she called Dr. Schlichting for help. Don Enns was sent to Orosi in 1963. He pastored the church there for 16 years. Then Juan Arjona, a student at MBBS, became pastor until he was sent as a missionary to Mexico less than a year ago. Pablo Castillo is the current pastor.

Several observations about all these churches are yet to be made. All were founded by Anglos and all are now pastored by Hispanics. Translators were instrumental in the ministries and often became pastors. The key to all the effort was one-to-one contact in the homes of the people. These churches are still supported by the Home Missions Board, but are steadily gaining more self-sufficiency. These churches have also been active in sending out Christian workers to other places. Parlier alone had twenty at one time. →

These and many other stories were the subject of review and reflection at the March 6 meeting. Growth has been the result of hard work and persistence. The on-going work, according to Dr. Schlichting, depends on one primary concern, "that we do not limit God."

## Annual Meeting April 16, 1983

Enclosed you will find a brochure detailing the events of the H. W. Lohrenz Symposium to be held at the M.B. Biblical Seminary in Fresno April 15-16, 1983. You are invited to attend all the events.

The Historical Society Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the symposium on Saturday, April 16. A schedule is given below:

1:30 p.m. Workshop: "Genealogical Troubleshooting"

Alan Peters will discuss ways to solve problem areas in your genealogical research.

3:00 p.m. Symposium: "Images Remembered" Mariana Lohrenz Remple, daughter of H. W. Lohrenz, will share some of her remembrances of her father.

4:30 p.m. Reception and Dedication of the H. W. Lohrenz Sculpture Garden.

6:45 p.m. Banquet and Annual Business Meeting.

Address: "The Shaping of H. W. Lohrenz as a Leader," Clarence Hiebert.

The banquet will be held at Fresno Pacific College. Tickets are \$6.50 per person and reservations must be made in advance. You may call the Center for M.B. Studies for reservations—(209) 251-7194, ext. 311—or make reservations by mail by so indicating on the Bulletin Response Sheet.

## ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

Below are given the minutes from last year's annual meeting and the President's Report of the past year's activities. These are included here in lieu of their reading at the 1983 annual meeting on April 16. Please read them carefully. They will be acted upon at that meeting.

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD MAY 8, '82

1. **WELCOME**—President Jane Friesen called the meeting to order, and welcomed all members and guests to the annual banquet meeting.
2. **INVOCATION**—Alan Peters gave the invocation.
3. **MEAL**—A tasty banquet meal was served, consisting of German sausage, verenika, green beans, plumamoos, and chocolate cake.
4. **MUSIC**—Margita Wall and Cornelia Ball presented two beautiful duets in the German language.
5. **BUSINESS**—President Jane Friesen conducted a brief business session, in which the following actions were taken:

A. **Approval of minutes**—The minutes of the previous annual meeting, which had been

distributed to each person in attendance, were approved as printed.

- B. **Announcement regarding Molotschna maps**—The Society was informed that the special collector edition of Molotschna maps issued by the Society was selling well. Members wishing to purchase copies of the map were encouraged to do this at the meeting.
- C. **The Society's Gift to the Center**—President Friesen announced that the Society Board of Directors had decided to make the amount of \$1,500 available to the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies to underwrite the copying of all Danzig Mennonite records now being preserved at the Goshen Historical Library in Goshen, Indiana. It is anticipated that these records will be returned to the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle in Crefeld, Germany, making it very important that copies be made for research purposes before they leave the country.
- D. **Resignation of Rev. J. B. Toews**—President Friesen announced that Rev. J. B. Toews had indicated his desire to resign as Executive Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Special words of appreciation were expressed for



the invaluable contributions which Rev. Toews has made during his long career of service within the Mennonite Brotherhood.

6. **REPORT ON CENTER ACTIVITIES**—Rev. J. B. Toews outlined the work of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies during the past year. He highlighted his report by giving special recognition to three men who have given thousands of hours of volunteer service to special areas of Center research requiring their expertise in translating, and their knowledge and insights regarding Mennonite Brethren history. The three honored guests were:

*Otto B. Reimer J. C. Penner R. C. Seibel*

7. **SPECIAL SPEAKER**—Dr. Marlin Miller, President of the Associated Seminaries at Goshen and Elkhart, presented the special address of the evening, entitled, "*Arms, Beards, and the Crucible of Equality*." His address described the trials and testings of the French Mennonites after the French Revolution.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**—The meeting was then adjourned by President Friesen.

Respectfully submitted,

*Alan Peters*

Alan Peters, Secretary

## **82-83 PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

This has been another fruitful, active year for your Society. On January 29, the members in the San Jose area met for an interesting evening with Hermann Hartfeld. On March 6, the greater Dinuba-Reedley area members met with pastors and workers in the area's Hispanic Churches, to discuss their churches' histories. Information concerning our annual meeting is to be found elsewhere in this issue.

At our last meeting, we set aside \$1,500 for the acquisition of Danzig records. Since that time we have received several more donations toward the project. It is good news to report that the records from Goshen have arrived, and that they were considerably less costly than anticipated. Therefore your board has authorized the continued purchase of Danzig records from other sources including Bethel College in Kansas and the Weierhof in Germany. When this is done, Fresno should have one of the best collections of Danzig records available.

Maps of the Molotschna are still available

for sale at this time. Work on the translation of B. H. Unruh's book with the funds earned from sales, is continuing. It will still be some time before it is completed.

The 1984 Tour to Russia is full at this time and we are on a waiting list basis. Our proposed itinerary has been approved and plans are progressing well.

We have co-operated with our sister organization, the Center for M.B. Studies, in their October 21-23 symposium on Mennonite Pluralism, and will again do so for their Spring H. W. Lohrenz Symposium.

We are sad to report the death of board member Bill Siemens on October 2.

Some of our members have made significant contributions in translations, transliterations, and donations of archival materials. We are deeply grateful. We wish to thank all members and friends for their continued support.

—Jane Friesen

## **Archives Update**

1. An important collection of H. W. Lohrenz' papers came to the archives last Fall through the kindness of Mariana Lohrenz Remple. H. W. Lohrenz, who will be honored at the April Symposium, was the founding president of Tabor College, a scientist and M.B. theologian. The collection includes correspondence of conference committees, Board of Missions' field minutes from India and China, documents relating to the M.B. position on war and peace during the World War I era, etc. These papers are a significant aid in understanding the history of the M.B. Church in North America from 1900-1945. The total collection comprises approximately 4 linear feet.
2. Indexing of *Zionsbote* continues. Volume I, 1920-1940, is now complete and ready for publication.
3. India missions records have been updated, first by the deposit of a collection of the late missionary J. J. Dick's papers by his family. Second, with the help of BOMAS, miscellaneous records of early M.B. mission work in India have been acquired.
4. A collection of all the records of the M.B. Conference in Uruguay has been deposited. The material goes back to the M.B. Church in Poland, through its experiences during the war years, through the establishment of the church in Uruguay, to full records of the individual churches.
5. Some personal papers of Elder Heinrich Voth have been received through his son, H. S. Voth of Tucson, Arizona.
6. Translations which have been completed include:
  - a) 1923-1928 diaries of Mrs. J. J. Thiessen of the Zion M.B. Church, by Regina Becker.
  - b) Governmental records of the Danzig area pertaining to the M.B. Church, by Otto Reimer. Mr. Reimer has also transposed numerous sermons of Elder David Duerksen, elder of the M.B. Church in the Crimea.
  - c) The life of Abraham A. Harder, by Anne Dick.