

Our Heritage

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2015

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Memories are Stories Waiting to be Told

Each of our personal stories is a reminder of God's story, Gloria Nussbaum asserted at a workshop held during the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference in June.

Nussbaum, who serves as secretary for the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society, helped those attending her workshop to think about the ways their stories can and should be told as a way to transmit values to younger generations.

She also led attendees through several writing exercises to help them envision what it means to know that "Your Story Matters."

Deuteronomy 4:9 was used to frame Nussbaum's discussion about story: "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their chil-

dren after them."

This assertion that we should pass down our stories sounds like a command, Nussbaum said, one requiring that we make sure to bear witness to our children and grandchildren of the things we have seen. Otherwise, our significant experiences might fade into nothingness.

We tend to discount the important, vibrant role history plays in our lives, Nussbaum

suggested, asking her audience what connotations the word "history" has for people. Responses ranged from "really boring high school classes" to "museums and old stuff." Overall, few people have purely positive thoughts when they think about history.

Nussbaum said that story has far more positive resonances for us, in part because we have a sense that the narrative "is going somewhere." We might want to

You are Invited: A Story-Writing Workshop

Everyone has a story that matters and is worth sharing. The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society invites you to join us for an intergenerational, interactive workshop, "Your Story Matters," as we share stories and discover ways to record/preserve them. And, if possible we'd love to have you come with a member of your family from a generation other than your own... a granddaughter, a son, a grandmother... you get the idea! We'll meet at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center, 6030 S. Whiskey Hill Rd, Hubbard, OR from 2:30-4:30 PM on Sunday, October 18. Please RSVP to Gloria Nussbaum at real2reel@teleport.com by October 1. Refreshments will be served. Hope to see you there!

see the idea of history as really being His story: a reflection of God's story, told in each one of our lives.

If this isn't reason enough to tell our stories, there are other ways that our stories matter, according to Nussbaum. We learn best through stories, which are so much easier to remember than dates, facts, and figures.

The Bible is also full of stories that narrate God's work in others, and Jesus also used stories as a crucial teaching method. And, stories help us understand who we are, where we come from, and what the future might look like.

"In short," Nussbaum said, "stories are life itself."

While many cultures have had a rich oral tradition, some of that has been lost with the advent of technology, Nussbaum said. We can easily keep in touch with our friends and family through Facebook or Skype, but those connections are tenuous compared to sitting together in the same room, sharing stories with each other.

Although we have access to thousands and thousands of stories, something is still missing: that is, most of us have not written down our own stories, "the most important story . . . the story that matters most!"

Mennonites have sometimes felt reticent to tell their

stories. Although the Psalmist writes that "One generation shall laud your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts," (Psalm 145:4), Mennonites—taught to live simply and humbly—may struggle with the idea of doing "mighty acts."

"Playing small does not serve either God or us well," Nussbaum said. "God created us, so why can't we be the best God prepared us to be?"

According to Nussbaum, we know the stories of the famous and the infamous, but we don't know our family stories. But history comes alive when we hear the stories of our families and our ancestors, and if we don't tell the stories, if we don't tell our stories, who will?

"We have a sacred responsibility to pass along our stories," Nussbaum said.

God makes himself known

to each of us through the stories we tell, and listening to our life is like listening to the voice of God, who speaks to us through the human voices in our lives, and through the stories we tell.

"The one thing we all have in common, our memories, is what makes us unique," Nussbaum said. "Memories are stories waiting to be told, and help reflect the unique aspects of God within us."

Telling our stories is also important because it transmits values to the next generations. In the same way we take estate planning seriously—making sure that our material goods get passed along to subsequent generations—we need to assure that other things get transmitted as well.

Nussbaum challenges us to consider whether our physical affects represent our most valuable

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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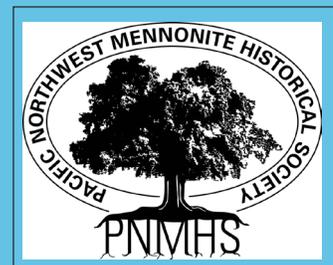
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This newsletter is published biannually by the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society. Send general correspondence to Margaret Shetler, One Towers Lane, #2255, Mt. Angel, OR, 97362. Newsletter items may be sent to Melanie Springer Mock at mmock@georgefox.edu or 110 SW Spruce, Dundee, OR 97115. Back issues of the newsletter are available for \$3 each from PNMHS, 6030 S. Whiskey Hill Road, Hubbard OR 97032-9406.

possession, including our faith and beliefs, our legacies, and how we wish to be remembered.

“What provisions have you made to assure that the essence of you is passed on to your loved ones?” she asked. “You are the key to a priceless legacy that teaches, inspires and encourages those who follow.

“When you share your personal journey, your memories, your dreams, disappointments, triumphs, and hopes for the future, you give a gift that outlasts any other,” she said.

Although we might recognize that stories matter, we may be inclined to say that our stories don’t matter, or that nobody cares about what we’ve done, or that we’ve not done any important work in our lives.

Others might feel like they don’t have time to write down or record their stories, that they don’t know how to get started, or that they feel like, in talking about themselves, they are bragging.

Part of Nussbaum’s workshop included helping people find practical ways to tell their stories. If these life narratives are not preserved, they disappear after two generations, making it even more vital that people find ways to narrate their lives for those who follow.

Still, writing stories down is only one way people can share their life narratives; given current technologies, they can also be videoed or saved through audio recording.

Other less obvious ways of transmitting life stories can include photo and scrapbooks, if the photos are themselves labeled for subsequent generations; quilts that tell a story; cookbooks and recipes that have stories behind them; “ethical wills”; or even working with a personal historian who can

“Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can’t remember who we are or why we’re here.”

Sue Monk Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees

help people find the best, most appropriate way, to tell their stories.

As a way of helping workshop participants practice story telling—and practice being vulnerable—Nussbaum introduced a set of prompts, and asked participants to share with one other person a memory or experience based on the prompt. (See Page 4.)

After this exercise, participants discussed how the act of sharing a story made them feel: whether narrating a life story was enjoyable, allowed

them to connect with others, or even brought up memories they hadn’t considered for some time.

Nussbaum closed her workshop by quoting Marianne Williamson, a spiritual activist, author, lecturer and founder of The Peace Alliance, a grass roots campaign supporting legislation currently before Congress to establish a United States Department of Peace.

In her book *A Return to Love*, Williamson writes “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

“You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do.

“We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the

same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

The “Your Story Matters” workshop was sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society. The PNMHS would like to encourage per-

sonal story-telling, recognizing the rich corporate history that can be built by individual life experiences, and hopes to offer similar workshops in the next year at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center. The first “Your Story Matters” workshop will be October 18 (see information on

page one of *Our Heritage*).

If you are interested in participating in a workshop that explores your own life story, or in holding a workshop at your church, feel free to contact Nussbaum at real2reel@teleport.com or Melanie Springer Mock at mmock@georgefox.

A-Z Faith Story Prompts

At the “Your Story Matters” workshop, Gloria Nussbaum provided these Mennonite-related prompts to help facilitate participants’ story telling. Think how your life interacted with these Mennonite artifacts and ideas, and find a way to share the story of that interaction!

A- Anabaptist, a capella singing, Advent
B- Baptism, Bible, beliefs, bishops, balcony banners, born again, baby dedications, bierrocks,
C- Church (building), Christ, CO, clothing, coverings, Christmas programs, camp, communion, cape dresses, Civilian Public Service, conferences
D- Discipline, disciples, dancing, draft (military), devotions (family), Dutch Blitz
E- Easter, ecumenical, evangelists, Elders, ethnic
F- Faith, Father, food, foot washing, fans (hand-held), funerals
G- God, grace, globe banks, Gospel Herald, General Conference Mennonite
H- Holy Spirit, Heaven, hell, hope, hymns
I- Invitation (at a revival meeting or other event), 1-W
J- Jesus, justice, jewelry
K- Kingdom of God, kneeling for prayer
L- Light of the world, Lord, love, Lent, the “lot”, “literary” events
M- Mennonite, MCC, MWC, MMN, movies, missionaries, Missions Boards, Mennonite Weekly (World) Review, memory verses, More-with-Less
N- Naomi (Bible story), names - “Mennonite”

O- Offering, oaths, outreach, overseas missions
P- Preachers, pews, pulpit, potlucks, peace, PAX, praise songs
Q- Questions you had over the years, Quilts, quizzing (Bible),
R- Religion, right (what was OK/good), “Rook”, relief sales, revival meetings
S- Sunday school, secrets, sewing circles, singing/songs, straight coats, Story Friends, being “saved”, Summer Bible School
T- Teachers (SS), teachings, TAP, testimony, tent meetings, The Mennonite
U- Understanding, unity
V- Voluntary Service, Vacation Bible School, verses (Bible), vices, vereniky,
W- Worship, war, 1-W service, wrong (what was not OK), Words of Cheer, weddings
X- X-cellent times with family and friends,
Y- Youth group (MYF), Youth’s Christian Companion
Z- Zwingli (and other early Reformers), Zaire and other places where missionaries served, zwieback

(Compiled by Gloria Nussbaum, June 2015)

Foundation Principles of Spiritual Autobiography

During the “Your Story Matters” workshop at the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference in Lebanon, Gloria Nussbaum shared these principles for sharing your story, taken from *Remembering your Story, Creating your own Spiritual Autobiography* (Revised Edition) by Richard I. Morgan.

1. Every life is a unique, invaluable story.
2. God speaks to us in our stories.
3. Connecting our stories with God’s story is the work of the Spirit.
4. Painful memories can be healed through stories.
5. Remembering our stories creates community and the future.
6. Faith stories are the legacy we leave.
7. Stories create meaning, at any age.

Tips for Capturing Memories

While preparing to record your faith story, you will often remember stories at odd times that you want to be sure are included. A great way to capture them is to write them on a notepad. But don’t write down the entire story, just jot down three or four words that uniquely summarize the event.

These 3 or 4 words:

- should be as specific as possible;
- should include a person, place or thing;
- should uniquely refer to that particular memory;
- do not need to be a phrase or sentence.

Categorizing these memories under time periods in your life will also help. E.g.: childhood, teen years, working life, retirement, etc.

Then when it’s time to record your life history, you’ll have those stories readily available!

Book Review: Considering the Renegade Amish

Donald Kraybill begins his excellent new book, *Renegade Amish*, by describing attacks on Amish families that feel entirely surreal: because they were perpetuated by other Amish, and because they were so violent, so seemingly inexplicable. Could people known for being “the quiet in the land” really enact such horror on their Christian brothers and sisters?

Kraybill answers this question with a resounding yes. The renegade Amish of the Bergholz settlement did indeed violently attack other Amish, men and women who were not only co-religionists, but sometimes even their own family members. They broke into homes, often at night; forcefully restrained and terrorized their victims by screaming in their faces; and then cut their victims’ beards and hair, before disappearing again, many times leaving in vehicles owned by unsuspecting hired drivers.

The apparent dissonance in these opening narratives and the peculiar nature of Amish acting violently to sheer helpless victims sets the scene for Kraybill’s fascinating exploration of the Bergholz Amish. In compelling detail, Kraybill describes the development of the Bergholz set-

tlement, the odd and troubling behavior of its leader, Bishop Sam Mullet, and the events in 2011 that sent sixteen Amish to trial, and then to federal prisons for sentences ranging from life to one year.

The book’s last chapters also consider United States’ jurisprudence, as the Bergholz case challenges current hate crime laws and the Shepherd Byrd act, established in 2009 to protect victims of hate crimes and to more effectively prosecute hate crime perpetrators.

Kraybill has long been recognized as an Amish expert. His *The Amish*, published in 2013 and co-authored with Karen M. Johnson-Weiner and Steven M. Nolt, is the most comprehensive study on the Amish to date; the book also served as a companion to the PBS American Experience documentary of the Amish. As a scholar of Amish faith and culture, Kraybill brings insight into why the Bergholz settlement might have developed, the ways Bergholz Amish differed significantly from other Amish groups, something Kraybill acknowledged as part of his testimony at the 2012 criminal trial of Bergholz settlement members.

His authority as an Amish

scholar is clearly evident in *Renegade Amish*, as Kraybill sets the development of the Bergholz settlement within the context of wider Amish history and practice, showing how divergent the Bergholz people and their leader were from other Amish communities. Kraybill describes Mullet as “strong-minded, opinionated, and conservative,” an imposing man who “wanted to hold tightly to old customs” and who was critical of other Amish whom he believed were too easily yielding to modernization.

Kraybill narrates the crimes committed by Mullet and his followers, their trial and jail sentences, as well as the appeals process that is ongoing. For those interested in history, *Renegade Amish* is especially significant, as the book shows how the history of religious freedom in the United States may be challenged and changed by the Bergholz case, as the court system decides how people will be prosecuted under the Shepherd Byrd act, and how broadly hate crimes can be defined.

The court cases are still unfolding, although Kraybill’s book ends in spring 2014. But rather than seeing this new ruling as undermining or contra-

dicting what Kraybill has written in *Renegade Amish*, readers should see the potential retrial of the Bergholz Amish as only a continuation of a compelling story: one being written in the lives of those convicted, as well as in the lives of those who were victims of a culturally-specific kind of violence.

Hopefully, Kraybill will provide a follow-up to his excellent book, as the narrative of the Bergholz barbers is clearly not finished yet. ~

This review, by Melanie Springer Mock, is excerpted from "How A False Prophet Led Amish to Violence," *MennoniteWorld Review*, January 5, 2015. See the full review online.

Library Wish List

The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Library depends on donations of members, friends and authors to continue expanding its collection of books by Mennonite authors and about Mennonite genealogy, practices and history.

Members and friends are invited to consider participating in this effort through one of these options:

- Sort through your book collection for titles that are on our Wish List or fit our collection criteria and consider donating them to our collection;
- Browse our Wish List for titles you may have interest in reading, purchase the book and consider donating it to our collection when you are finished,
- Make a financial donation to PNMHS designated for the purchase of books on this list,
- Visit our library and check out a book of interest from our collection.

The status column indicates the date that book was added to our Wish List. You may view the recent additions to our library at this link. <http://www.pnmhs.org/library/wish-list/>

From the Treasurer's Desk

As you may have noticed, we have elected new officers for PNMHS. I have consented to serve as treasurer of the organization. I look forward to serving you in the coming years.

Enclosed with this mailing of our semi-annual newsletter is a membership renewal form. At the top is a note telling you when your membership is up for renewal. If you have any further questions about your membership, you can contact me at pnwmennonite@canby.com or you can call me at (503) 266-7854. Please send your check and the renewal form to me at 1441 S. Ivy, Unit 1304, Canby, Oregon 97013.

As you are aware, churches and societies such as ours cannot operate without your membership dues and contributions. We ask you to include us in your monthly tithing. PNMHS is a non-profit organization which means that all donations are tax deductible. And, please don't forget to add PNMHS to your will or estate.

Jerry W. Barkman, Treasurer

Book Review: Angels by the River

By Ray Kauffman

In *Angels by the River*, James Gustave Speth provides reflections on race, environment, politics, and living on the front lines of change. Speth is the former dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, founder of the World Resources Institute, and cofounder of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

He has also been administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, chair of the UN Development Group, professor of law at Georgetown University, and chair of the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality in the Carter administration. He currently teaches at Vermont Law School and lives with his wife Cameron in Strafford, Vermont.

Speth was born and raised in Orangeburg, South Carolina. He writes, "I never felt disadvantaged when I went from Orangeburg High School to Yale . . . and I was no smarter than a dozen other members of the OHS class of 1960." The year 1968 was fateful for the United States, and also for Orangeburg, home of South Carolina State University. Two months before Martin Luther King's death,

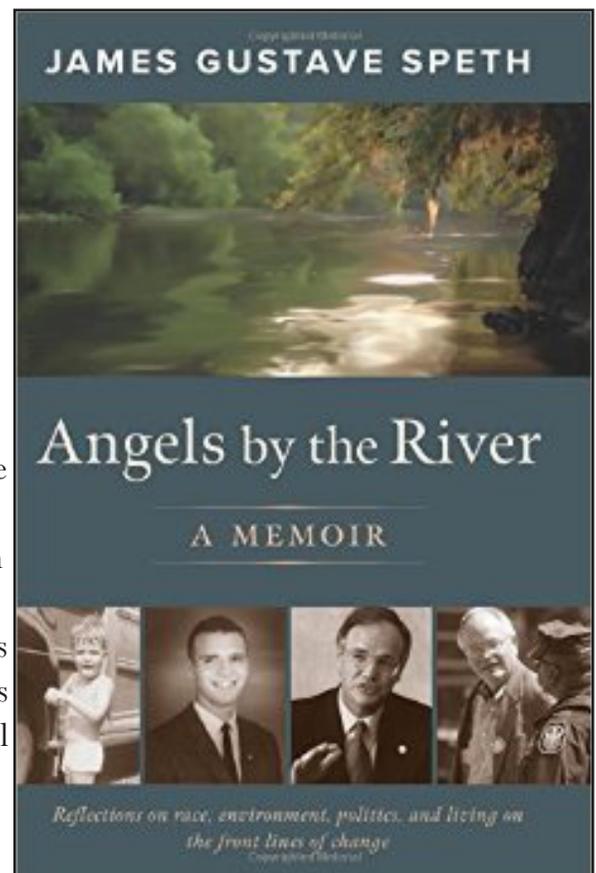
three young black students were killed by state highway patrol officers during a campus demonstration in what is known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

Speth was a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black in 1969-1970. Over his entire life Speth found (or was found) time after time in an opportune assignment or job just as he was feeling like it was time to move on. He did not want a lifetime career doing one thing at just one or two places. Thus his organizational affiliations and accomplishments are many. He says "My accomplishments? Hardly. We are carried forward by others – generous, caring hard-working people, *Angels by the river.*"

In discussing the consequences of carbon dioxide over the long term and climate change Speth says "Although our dominion over the earth may be nearly absolute, our right to exercise it is not." One of his jobs was leading the UN principal agency for international development assistance, the UNDP. He went to

more than 100 countries, both donor and developing countries including some of the poorest and most dangerous places on earth.

He confronted a world of great suffering and deprivation. "These experiences drove home to me that I have lived a life of comfort and plenty and have done little to deserve it, most of it occasioned by being born white and male to nice parents in mid-20th century America," he writes. "The obscene disparities in economic and



social conditions that we see both at home and abroad are the measure of the obligation that many of us share to be a force for change.”

When he was a dean at Yale, 9/11 happened. Speth wrote an essay for the *Yale Daily News* in which he addressed the grieving students. To this day he believes that essay points to the course America should have taken, a course very different from the one we did in fact take. He says “I find it hard to read that piece without joining those Yale students in tears. Like the climate change issue, *We Should Have Known Better*.”

His article is reproduced on pages 117-122 of *Angels by the River*. If one reads nothing else in this book, read this section and another, “Mainstream Progressive Reforms for America” on pages 176-178, which he quotes from another book he authored, *America the Possible*.

For nearly all his life Speth worked within the systems to change them. The next to last chapter is entitled “Ultimate Insider Goes Radical.” Speth, along with over 1000 others, including Bill McKibben, was arrested in Washington, DC in an act of nonviolent civil disobedience protesting the Keystone XL pipeline.

His concluding chapter, “Some Things I Think I’ve Learned,” borrows from FDR’s last State of the Union address in 1944 – a second Bill of Rights: the right to a good job; the right to earn enough to provide food, clothing, and recreation; the right of every family to a decent home; the right to medical care; the right to protection from economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment, and the right to a good education.

Speth says these words were spoken “just yesterday, when I was two years old. . . . Whatever the sad craziness of U.S. politics in the current moment, the proposition that we should have these rights is not radical. . . . To secure these rights, and others, we need to escape the clutches of the reigning neoliberal orthodoxy. We need to build an economy and a politics that give honest priority to PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PLANET, rather than PROFIT, PRODUCT, AND POWER (emphasis mine).

In this review I have not emphasized enough the thrust of Speth’s book: Care of the environment and concern about man-caused climate change, and lack of action by the United States government and corporations.

Speth is a breath of fresh air. He writes about alarming subjects in a humble, authoritative way. He is immanently qualified to speak of imminent issues. He chronicles the failures of capitalism, yet does not stop there; he points to amends and new paradigms. His treatment of his home domicile, the South, is fair and sympathetic without accepting or condoning its prejudice and discrimination. You learn the South is both bright and dark.

Readers can get a sense of the book’s focus from the inside: Speth’s unlikely path – from a Southern boyhood to a career as an influential mainstream environmentalist to his current system-changing activism. An American tale, in all its complexity, Speth’s memoir is an inspiration – especially for readers contemplating how to make a difference in an increasingly complex world.

Lastly, a quote from George Bernard Shaw, which Speth uses on page 190: “This is the true joy of life, being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one.” ~

Ray Kauffman is a recently-retired historian for the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference. He lives in Albany, Ore.

Book Review: For His Sake

By Tina Kauffman

The book, *For His Sake*, is back! Mildred Schrock is the book's original author. Her grandmother, Barbara Schrag, and her husband, Joseph Schrag, and their descendants are the subjects of the book.

Mildred Schrock heard the family story orally from her mother. She tells the story of Barbara and Joseph Schrag and their multi-generational family.

Their Anabaptist ancestors fled from Switzerland to escape persecution to live in Austria. Mandatory military service motivated them to flee from Austria and a little later from Volhynia, Ukraine, "For His Sake" to America in order to live their Anabaptist faith.

This family story, like others, left a long legacy of

suffering: family illnesses and repeated childhood deaths, dust storms in South Dakota, grasshoppers, cold and snow. Oregon became their home.

Many descendants by the family names of Emmert, Mishler, Shenk (Schrock and Schrag), and Wolfer and others, live in Oregon and have scattered over the globe. You know who you are. You will also know what service a "little red apron" plays in the story, and you will see a very old "steamer trunk" used by Barbara and Joseph Schrag that's still in existence.

And how does a Ukrainian-Russian name like David Unger fit into the book with all these Swiss names?

The book, first published in 1972, was in print for over

three decades. Then it was out of print until 2014 when Wilbert Shenk, born in Oregon, nephew of Mildred, revised, corrected and added to the book. Thank you Wilbert for your work.

Read the book and claim the history with your descendants just like Barbara did.

This book may be purchased from Marla Kropf, Shoppe of Shalom, Halsey, OR 97348, or email: shopofshalom@rtinet.com (Note there is only one "p" in the shoppe email.) The book can also be purchased from Wilbert Shenk (wshenk@fuller.edu) or Byron Shenk (bsshenk@comcast.net). ~

Tina Kauffman is the author of Immigrant Daughter. She lives in Albany, Ore.

Memorial Contributions:

The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society is grateful for its many donors. The important work of the organization could not be completed without your assistance. We want to especially thank those who provided memorial contributions to PNMHS in the last year:

Oliver Roth
Clarence N. Leichty
Darlene Kropf
Karen Martin
Marcus & Katie Lind

Update from the PNMHS Board

The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society board meets quarterly to provide direction and oversight for the organization, as well as helping to guide the work occurring at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center and archives.

In the past year, several significant changes have been made to the board. Jerry Barkman, who has served several terms as board president, stepped down this spring, and will be assuming the role of treasurer.

Don Bacher, who had served as treasurer for PNMHS, will assume the role of president. For many years, Ray Kauffman assumed a role on the board as

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference historian, but has resigned from that position. He will remain on the board nonetheless as vice president. Gloria Nussbaum will serve as conference historian, and Pat Hershberger joins the board this year.

The PNMHS board continues to seek volunteers who can assume positions as librarian and as archivist. At present, Margaret Shetler continues to serve as archivist, though she has made a move from her home near Hubbard to Mt. Angel.

Those wishing to reach Margaret will want to take note of her new contact information: One Towers Lane, #2255, Mt.

Angel, OR, 97362.

It was also decided that the organization may begin shifting its outward ministry to its membership and others from twice yearly meetings to one annual meeting, held in January or February, and other types of programming, including seminars and workshops held at the Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center.

PNMHS members are always invited to share feedback and offer suggested workshops to any board member. We are eager to serve you, and hope you can see the organization as a resource that can help you understand your story, as well as the story of Mennonites in the region. ~

SUPPORTING OUR HERITAGE



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All contributions are tax deductible. Please make your checks payable to: **Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society.**

Checks should be mailed to:

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 1441 S Ivy, Unit 1304
 Canby, OR 97013

Ivan & Pearl Kropf Heritage Center 6030 Whiskey Hill Road Hubbard, OR 97032
 (503) 266-6447 pnwmennonite@canby.com

Remembering That Your Story Matters

My grandmother lived most of her adult life in a small, predominantly Mennonite, town in central Illinois. She became a Mennonite only after her son, my father, became a Mennonite pastor.

Grandma never worked outside the home and rarely volunteered. By the time I knew her, her life operated in a fairly typical pattern of cooking meals for family and friends, keeping an immaculate home, talking on the telephone, and watching her afternoon stories on TV.

We might be tempted to believe that little in my grandma's life story had meaning. She didn't achieve much we would recognize as outstanding by the world's standards; she wasn't a leader in the church or community; she did little we would find remarkable. Although she died in 2000, I could easily imagine her discounting her life's worth, saying that any narrative of her life would be boring, because her life itself was boring.

I should say I can easily imagine grandma discounting the value of her life's story because I hear similar sentiments all the time: from the students in the memoir classes I teach, who say that nothing in their lives is worth writing about; from adults

who demure when I ask about their lives, saying they haven't done much worth sharing.

This impulse toward self-effacement sometimes seems strong among Mennonites who have been taught humility from an early age. Certainly, humility is right and good and yet, I wonder what we are saying when we diminish our life stories as being nothing much worth sharing. And also, I wonder what is lost when the stories of others remain untold.

At the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference in June, Gloria Nussbaum led a workshop titled "Your Story Matters" (see page one of *Our Heritage* for more details). Her central message is an important one, and one I often reinforce with my college students: our stories matter because each story reflects the unique ways we are each made in God's image. Each person's story also narrates the work of God in our lives, bearing witness to our sacred journeys from birth until death.

We need to tell our own life stories because they contribute to the history of a time, and a people. My grandma's story may seem boring to some. Yet her story of a patterned life provides important insight for

those interested in Mennonite history.

From her story, we might see what it was like to raise children as a non-believer in a predominantly Mennonite town; how relationships were forged between Mennonites and their neighbors; what being an adult convert to the Mennonite faith felt like; and whether she ever fully embraced the values of Mennonites in the area during the late 20th century.

The Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society recognizes the value of these personal stories. The Ivan and Pearl Kropf Heritage Center is one storehouse for these narratives. But we want to find other ways to encourage Mennonites in this area to share their stories, so that we can affirm the work of God in each of our lives, and so we can trace the narrative of Mennonites in the Pacific Northwest through the lives of individuals who carry the history in their own life experiences.

Hopefully, you can find some way to share your story with others, because stories matter. *Your story matters.* ~

Melanie Springer Mock is a Professor of English at George Fox University, Newberg, Ore.