

11/4

S O P H I A

W I S D O M

*Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister."
Proverbs 7:4a*



FROM THE *Maritimes*

VOLUME 11 • NUMBER 4

Bethany College Library
Box 160
Henderson, NV 89002

SOPHIA

A Greek feminine noun associated with the biblical wisdom tradition, translated "wisdom" and personified in the book of Proverbs; equivalent in the New Testament to *logos*, the creative word that was with God in the beginning, creating and giving life to the world.

SOPHIA is published four times a year by Sophia Wisdom, Inc. No part may be reproduced by any means without written permission.

Sophia Collective

Estér DeFehr, *Publisher*

Lori Matties, *Editor*

Hanny Labun, *Circulation*

Esther Reimer, *treasurer*

Lorie Battershill

Helga Doermer

Christine Enns

Tina Fehr Kehler

Mary Friesen

Jean Reimer

Lis Vensel

Layout/Design

Darrell Dyck, *Pegasus Design*

Printing

Regehr's Printing Ltd.

Subscription Rates

\$15 for 4 issues • \$28 for 8 issues

\$4 single issue

Outside Canada

\$18 for 4 issues • \$30 for 8 issues

Please address subscription forms, correspondence and manuscripts to:

SOPHIA

P.O. Box 28062

RPO North Kildonan

Winnipeg, MB R2G 4E9

fax: (204) 668-2527

e-mail: lmatties@escape.ca

phone: (204) 339-5668

March 2002: Women Mentors

June 2002: Science and Morality

October 2002: Regional Issue

December 2002: Women and Justice

CONTENTS

Editorial

- 3 Ambassador for Bethlehem
– Lori Matties

Features

- 4 Watching and Waiting
For Renewal To Come
– Janet Shoemaker
- 8 Cedar Shores – Irma Penner
- 18 Forever With The Lord – Nan Doerksen

Columns

- 6 From the Source
An Honourable Standing –
Linda Helmus
- 10 Voices from the Past
Like Naomi: Leaving Full,
Returning Empty – Dora Dueck
- 12 Images of God
Image of God and the Abused
Person – Judi Snowden

- 14 Unspeakable Issues
Domestic Violence and Pastors'
Response in Moncton
– Mary Beth Clements
- 17 Letters
- 20 Brothers' Perspective
The Washer Woman
– Tom Snowden
- 22 Shelf Life
Excerpts from *With All
Her Might: The Life of Gertrude
Harding, Militant Suffragette*

Poetry

- 16 No Christmas in Bethlehem –
December 2000, 2001
– Lori Matties

SOPHIA Mission Statement

Sophia offers a forum for Christian women to speak to one another about the joys and challenges of living faithfully in an uncertain, changing world. Its pages give voice to women's stories – their experiences in church and society, family and workplace, their aspirations and disappointments, their successes and failures. It invites expressions of joy and sorrow, concern and outrage. In doing so it hopes to affirm women in their quest for spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness and for the full expression of their gifts in all spheres of life.

Sophia was conceived and brought to birth by Mennonite Brethren women and celebrates Christian sisterhood. Its desire is to welcome differing voices. It hopes to challenge women and men of all ages as they live together in Christian community. The name SOPHIA (wisdom) expresses our desire to search and know the wisdom of God through the Scriptures and our experience as followers of Jesus Christ.

Sophia acknowledges the authority of God, the giver of wisdom, and of the sacred Scriptures, the story of God's dealings with women and men. "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33)

On the Cover:
"Madonna &
Child", a banner
on dark blue
satin, in the
style of a
Byzantine Icon,
by Elisabeth
Vensel.



Our Mission

To be a community of people dedicated to leadership in design, service and customer value in the furniture industry.

Our Values

Building on a heritage of faith, we aspire to:

- Demonstrate integrity in all relationships.
- Promote the dignity and value of each other.
- Respect the environment.
- Support our community.
- Strive for excellence in all we do.

PALLISER®



EDITORIAL

Ambassador for Bethlehem

by Lori Matties

In 1991-92, our family spent eight months in the Holy Land. We lived in an ecumenical study centre perched on the border between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Our children were almost three years old and six months old when we left, and they were a great benefit to us in meeting local people. I got lots of advice about how to care for them, and the baby was a blessing at the centre where many nuns, priests, clerics and scholars had come to study and rest. Many evenings he sat contentedly on someone's lap while they delighted in his new little life.

In 1991 the first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) was winding down, but we still observed many of the hardships the people in Bethlehem lived with every day. In an ongoing strike, shopkeepers closed their shops for half of every day. Increased security meant frequent roadblocks, which prevented people from getting to work. Ambulances were stopped with all the rest, often resulting in worsened conditions or death for their passengers. One time we were in Bethlehem when shots rang out on a crowded street. Within seconds, every metal shop door clanged shut and the street was empty. Gordon, with the baby on his back, had run into one shop, while I and my three-year-old were jostled into another. A few minutes later, shopkeepers carefully opened the doors, only to see some eighteen-year-old soldiers standing, laughing, in the street. Business as usual.

There was a shopkeeper in Bethlehem whom we met on one of our first trips to Manger Square. Majdi was friendly and outgoing, often walking into the Square and inviting

tourists to his shop for tea. He kept a photo album filled with the pictures of people he had met from all over the world. He seemed more interested in meeting people than in selling his trinkets, which were often stacked haphazardly and covered with dust. We visited Majdi often, and also got to know his brother Mufheed who had a shop in the old city of Jerusalem.

We had heard that Christmas in Bethlehem was hard for the local residents, because Israeli government-sponsored tourist events often shut them out. One could obtain tickets to the Christmas Eve mass in the Church of the Nativity, for example, only if one was a dignitary or a tourist. Local parishioners were not welcome. On the morning of Christmas eve, we walked into Bethlehem following a parade with the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Bethlehem. When we arrived at Manger Square, we found it closed off with high chain-link fencing and a checkpoint where soldiers searched every entrant. We met Majdi, smiling and waving to us from outside the fence, unable to enter and open his shop. Chagrined, we decided to go elsewhere to celebrate the Nativity that evening.

Last spring I was able to visit the Holy Land again. We met Majdi, this time in his new shop in the Paradise Hotel on Bethlehem Road. He told us that in addition to his own family of three children he was now caring for the wife and three children

of his brother, who had died of a brain tumour a few years ago. Majdi was still an ambassador for Bethlehem, greeting his customers in Italian, German or English and offering them tea with his customary Middle Eastern hospitality. We bought some trinkets and wished him well.

In the last few weeks I have heard on the news that the Paradise Hotel has been shelled. I wonder how Majdi is managing, and whether he can find the resources to feed

his family. I will think of him this Christmas, in the little town that found room for the baby Jesus, where no Christmas services will be celebrated for the second year in a row. Majdi's life is not so very different from life for the Jews in the days when Jesus was born. In this holy but troubled land, I will pray for the peace once wished upon its inhabitants by angels who heralded shepherds in the fields nearby.

In this issue we are pleased to offer a New Brunswick edition of *Sophia*. Thanks to Judi Snowden who gathered the writing and to those who contributed a Maritime flavour to the magazine. In this fourth annual regional issue, we are grateful once again for a glimpse into the lives and doings of our sisters (and brother!) across the country. They write of serious issues in a serious time, but also explore the hope that is offered to each one of us in the coming of Christ. May the hope of the season bring you joy.

Majdi was friendly and outgoing, often walking into the Square and inviting tourists to his shop for tea.

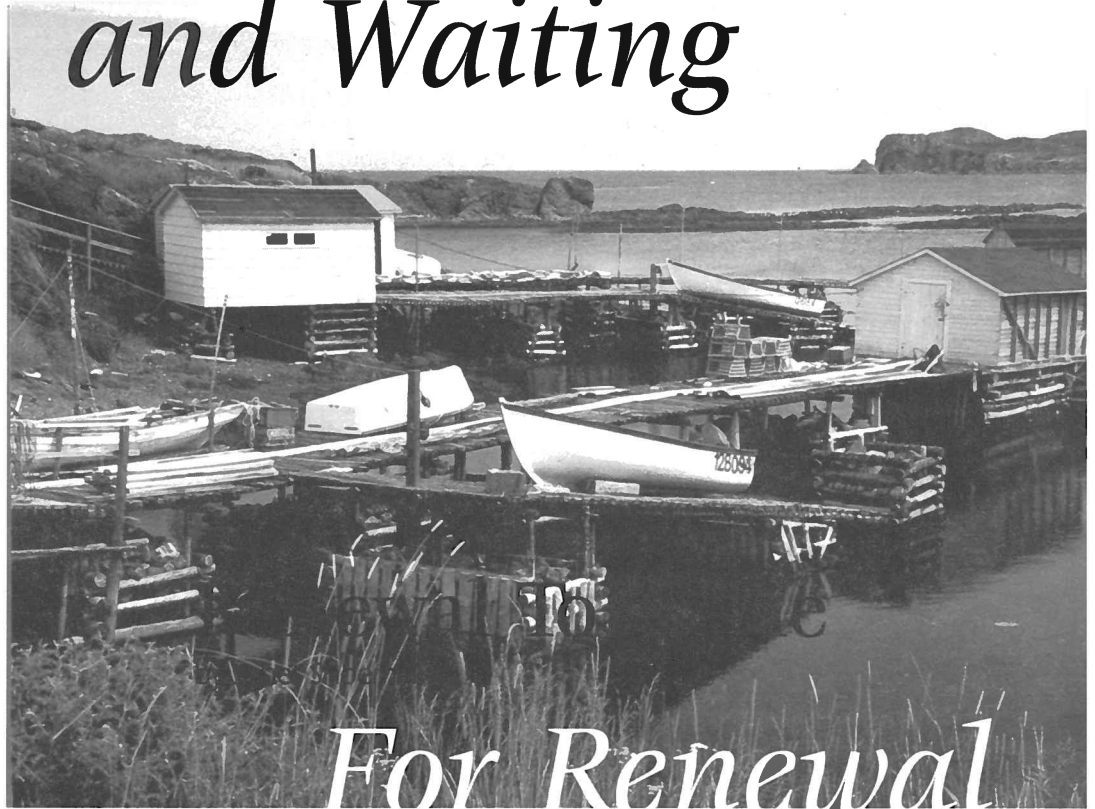
Watching and Waiting

"The place of watching and waiting for those who are coming," is the rough translation of the Mi'kmaq word *esgenoópetitj*. The meaning has special significance for those of us who have worked in the community of *Esgenoópetitj* as human rights observers, for we spend our much of our time here on the look-out for those who come to destroy and steal. But there is also another significance to the name: This is a community that is undergoing a spiritual renewal, watching and waiting for that day when their past wounds, inflicted on them by an oppressive system, have been healed and their rights are recognized by all Canadians.

Esgenoópetitj First Nation (EFN), or Burnt Church, is situated on the coast of Miramichi Bay on the east coast of New Brunswick. For years, people here fished lobster for personal consumption and commercial purposes. But as lobster went from "poor-man's food" to a delicacy, their access to that lobster was denied. For forty years, only three people on the reserve were licensed to participate in the government-regulated lobster fishery.

In September 1999 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Marshall Decision that the Mi'kmaq have a right to access their natural resources to earn a moderate livelihood, unhindered by Canadian interference as stated in the Friendship Treaties of the 18th century. EFN fishers placed several thousand traps in the bay to participate in the fishery. Two weeks later, non-Native fishers sailed into the bay on 150 commercial fishing boats to destroy those traps while the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and RCMP stood by and watched. In another month, the Supreme Court had back-pedalled from its original decision by issuing a "clarification" that gave the DFO the right to regulate the Native fishery.

The following winter, government negotiators worked to get all Mi'kmaq and Maliseet bands of the Maritimes to sign "agreements" giving the DFO complete control of each band's fishery in exchange for more



For Renewal To Come

by Janet Shoemaker

licenses, money and equipment. *Esgenoópetitj* refused to sign. As the spring 2000 fishing season approached, the band drew up its own management plan for a lobster fishery.

On a cold, wet and windy Sunday afternoon in May, two Mi'kmaq women dressed in rain gear squeezed into a small 16-foot motorboat with four lobster traps bearing EFN tags. They sped out into the waters of the bay and dropped the traps while several dozen supporters stood watching from shore. When they returned, two more women repeated the action. That spring, there were never more than 50 EFN-tagged traps in a bay littered with the buoys of thousands of traps set by DFO-licensed fishermen. Yet the government maintained it was an "illegal" fishery and claimed the right to regulate on the basis of conservation. By mid-June, ten people were charged with illegal fishing or obstruction charges under the Fisheries Act.

Resistance movements by oppressed peoples are often seen by the dominant society as rebelliousness and troublemaking. However, these movements are often an

expression of spiritual renewal. African-Americans will assert that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was a spiritual revival among their communities, although white society did not recognize it as such. When people who have been oppressed for centuries finally stand up and claim their right to determine the path for their own lives, there is a spiritual undergirding fueling and sustaining that process.

Working with Christian Peacemaker Teams in *Esgenoôpetitj*, I have sensed a spiritual awakening within the community. There is a movement to bring back spiritual traditions that were long-forgotten or denied as a result of forced assimilation by Canadian society. There are women who are working to bring community members together to communicate with each other in the traditional method of talking circles. It was also the women who coordinated and operated a summer camp for the children where they learned about their cultural heritage.

That small act of placing fewer than ten lobster traps in Miramichi Bay on that early spring day was only the beginning of a larger movement. By late summer, the number of people fishing with EFN tags jumped from a handful to dozens as fishers exercised their right to fish. Because of the excessive use of force by the DFO, Burnt Church

quickly gained national attention, and support poured in from First Nations communities across the country. Burnt Church became a symbol of Native strength in the struggle for sovereignty.

In spite of the risk of losing all their equipment, the fishers persevered, knowing that they had a constitutionally-sanctioned treaty right to do so. The DFO responded by bringing in dozens of officers from across the Maritimes to make clean sweeps of the bay in repeated attempts to break the community. Fish buyers and fish processing plants were threatened by government officials if they bought or processed Native-caught lobsters. RCMP vehicles were permanently stationed at all entrances to the reserve. RCMP and Coast Guard helicopters daily circled low over the waters and fishers in the bay, and sometimes over the reserve itself in an attempt to intimidate. The low-intensity warfare tactics of the Canadian government came to a climax early on September 29, 2000, when DFO boats ran over two small EFN fishing vessels and their crews.

The toll of last year's struggle has been enormous,

leaving the community economically, mentally and spiritually exhausted. The psychological warfare took its toll on the women and children who feared for the lives of their husbands and fathers and had nightmares brought on by the daily low-level helicopter flights. Many fishers lost most of their traps, some even lost their boats. By the end of the season, nearly 40 people had been charged with illegal fishing, assault or obstruction of a fisheries officer. The inability to afford legal representation has left them victimized again by the court system. The inability to pay thousands of dollars in fines will make them political prisoners.

This fall, the struggle has been much quieter, and this is giving people a chance to recover their strength and their spirits. The harassment continues, however. The government declared a small strip of water parallel to the coastline as the community's allotted fishing zone. The zone is but a fraction of the area the Mi'kmaq would otherwise fish in; it is essentially that area of the bay least populated by lobster. The boundaries of that zone seem to change on a daily basis, as the DFO regularly confiscates traps in areas that were inside the zone on previous days. In spite of the Marshall Decision, the DFO insists that this is only a food fishery, not meant to provide any kind of livelihood. The creation of the zone has effectively silenced the struggle for now by giving people a chance to fish, even if not on the most desirable terms.

An elder from another reserve spoke of a vision a Mi'kmaq elder had twelve years ago. He saw a renewal of the Mi'kmaq people, but it would take twenty years for the results of that renewal to be evident. The speaker believed that renewal would begin in *Esgenoôpetitj*, the place of watching and waiting. I understood him to say that the community's strength to stand against government pressure was that renewal in process. The women's efforts to bring the Mi'kmaq traditions of spirituality and community-making into the commu-

nity's consciousness and daily life was also that renewal in process. Perhaps, in another eight years, there will be no need for watching for hostile intruders in *Esgenoôpetitj*; instead, there will be a welcoming of healing and recognition of the Mi'kmaq First Nations' treaty rights.

Resistance movements by oppressed peoples are often seen by the dominant society as rebelliousness and troublemaking. However, these movements are often an expression of spiritual renewal.

.....
Janet Shoemaker has worked full-time with Christian Peacemaker Teams since January 2000, and had served as a Reservist since 1997. She has worked on CPT projects in the West Bank, Mexico, South Dakota, Haiti, Colombia and *Esgenoôpetitj*. When not on project, she calls Goshen, Indiana, home.

An Honourable Standing (Luke 13:10-17)

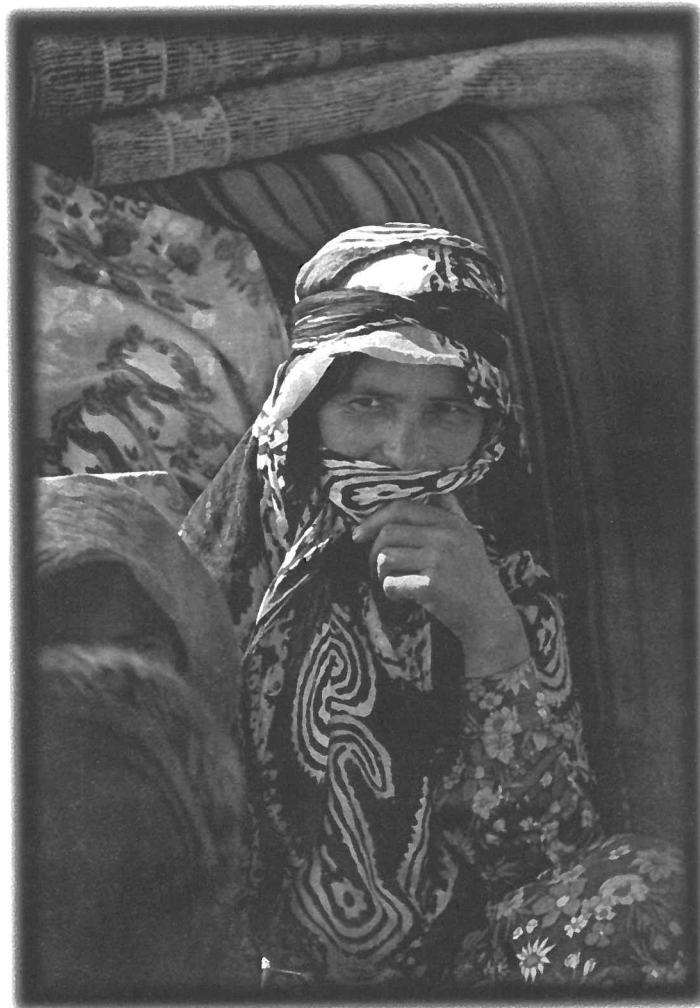
by Linda Helmus

The day had begun like all others. She had no reason to believe anything would be different. Late that morning, she slipped into the synagogue. Grotesque and shadow-like, she moved slowly with her eyes focused on the ground. Simply to appear in the synagogue was an act of courage. She took her place behind the grillwork in the back that separated the women, children and slaves from the men. Even here she seemed to claim her own private space; the other women with their children moved aside to accent her isolation. For eighteen long years she had not stood straight, broken in spirit as well as body. It had been so long that others took her condition for granted; they did not remember when she had not been bent over. And they had good reason to discard her to the tattered edges of their world.

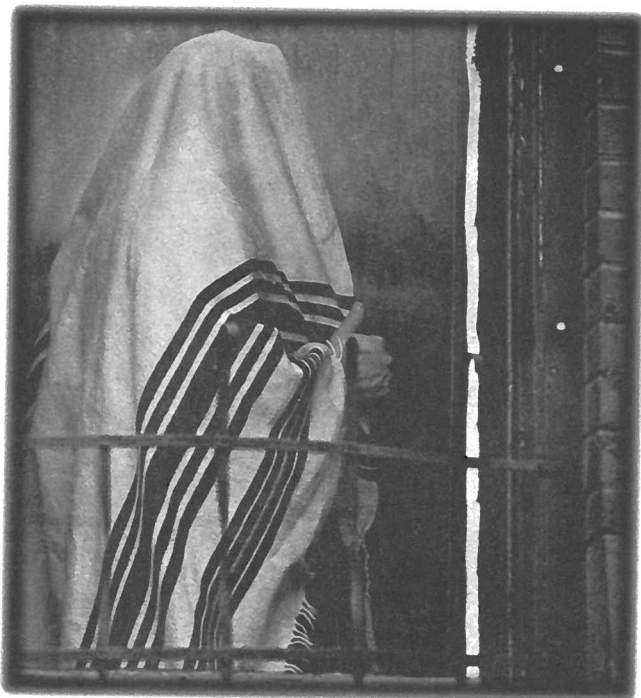
In the prevailing understanding of the day, the woman's affliction was perceived as divine punishment for sin. According to the dictates of the law, she had been cast out to the margins of the community, so that her "unclean spirit" would not taint the righteousness of the rest. Every day, for 6,570 days, she woke up bent with pain, with her field of vision restricted to others' feet, knowing that they saw her as a sinful, crippled woman they would not dare to touch.

Such bent-over untouchables do not only walk off the pages of Luke's Gospel. They wear out shoes on our city streets. A few years ago our family vacationed in Washington, D.C., during Thanksgiving break. Winter had come early that year, and as we crossed city blocks on foot, we shivered when powerful frigid winds swept us around buildings. But we were not the only ones trying to brave the sudden rush of Old Man Winter. In a downtown park, underground in the subway tunnels, and huddled around grates that belched steam from Washington's great halls of power, shabby homeless figures intercepted our walking. In a city where powerful hands literally shape the world, I imagined other hands – homeless hands – rubbing themselves raw for warmth. The arms, legs and feet of the homeless man lying near the Department of Justice surely took a beating from the cold that November. But I suspect even stronger was the beating that came from constant rejection by those who blamed him; from being knocked down again and again when he tried to get up; from a life lived without a home, family or security.

In some cities, sharp wire cages have appeared over



steam grates to keep the homeless poor from sleeping there. Atlanta launched a campaign for a "vagrant-free zone" as a step toward a "clean and safe" environment for new businesses and downtown redevelopment. Phoenix passed a law declaring all garbage city property, so that people scavenging for food from a city dumpster could be arrested for "stealing" a loaf of stale bread or a piece of bruised fruit. In our obsession with antiseptic living and working environments, we have denied the poor among us even the crumbs from our tables. We have assumed we would never become like them. Consider a photo story in the *Lancaster New Era*. The man sipping coffee in the picture lived at the Miami International Airport terminal for eight weeks. Forty-nine year old Alex Ervasti, a world traveler and failed businessman, is now bent over by debt and homelessness.



But bent-over persons do not populate only our cities. Some also sit in the pews of our churches. Some years ago an elderly couple began attending our congregation and soon after became members. In his early eighties, Paul was a retired seminary professor. He still considered himself an active, engaging person, and eagerly volunteered to preach and teach. After a few of his sermons, the pastoral team struggled with what to do about Paul, who lamented his decreased speaking invitations in the wider church. Others in the congregation resented his pressuring them to teach Christian education classes with him. Yet at an earlier time he had generously served the denomination with his pastoral gifts. How could we spurn his enthusiasm and relegate him to the sidelines now? On the other hand, his desire to be useful threatened the polished way we worshipped – the way things had been for us.

Bent-over persons do not populate only our cities. Some also sit in the pews of our churches.

On that day in the synagogue Jesus shattered the “peace” of the way things had been. While he was teaching, his attention was arrested by a bent-over woman. He stopped, called to her to step out from the shadows and come to his place of freedom. Without fear, without a moment’s hesitation, she responded. All eyes were on her as she made her way across the mosaic floor. When she reached him, his words sent a tremor through her body. Then he touched her – and in that shocking act, her spine tingled and moved. In an instant, her eyes met his gaze, level with hers. For the first time in eighteen years, she

saw a face. Her joy carrying her praise, she danced her way out of the synagogue into the bright light of that resurrection day.

For the homeless population in Atlanta, there is also good news. Recently a coalition of churches there formed the Open Door Community, a group lobbying for not forcing the homeless into prescribed pockets away from the shopping and business districts. Instead of viewing these persons as an embarrassment, the Open Door insists on their right to live anywhere in the city, just as any resident. In Lancaster, another kind of displaced person finds hope and a home. At Beth Shalom, a residential program for unmarried young women with small children, Joyce found a safe place for herself and her baby when her angry parents issued an ultimatum; get an abortion or be shunned by your family. Today she stands tall as a proud single mother, training to become a licensed practical nurse.

The elderly in our churches also deserve an honorable place. When we re-envision them as chronologically gifted, we are better able to re-frame their legacy in the present. With the affirmation of the pastor and others, Paul discerned the importance of his “Amen ministry” on Sunday mornings. At his usual place in the fourth pew, he would sound out a loud “Amen” anytime during the worship service; sometimes it came during the sermon, other times after the congregational prayer. We grew to expect his dear confirmation of the Spirit’s presence and even to hope for it. When Paul suddenly died a year ago in March, there was no one to trumpet the “Amens” in his place. Yet, the man we now mourned, we had earlier resisted.

Resistance to those who threaten our way of doing things, our boundaries, is not just a contemporary response. Earlier in his Gospel, in chapter 6, Luke presents Jesus as the “Lord of the Sabbath,” as one with authority over it. But the power men of the synagogue were indignant with Jesus’ audacity on this occasion. Their rabbinic principle permitted healing on the Sabbath only in critical cases, not for chronic conditions like this woman’s. Jesus’ decision to heal her on this day, publicly and in a house of prayer, proclaimed his message that people took precedence over tradition. Using a rabbinic form of argument, Jesus developed his case by moving from lesser to greater examples. If they had no qualms about untying their animals on the Sabbath to lead them to water, how much more should such a woman be released from her bondage! In shaming them, Jesus was not merely accusing them of being legalists; he was attacking a kind of scriptural inter-

Continued on page 9 ►

On Tuesday, September 11, the day of the deadly catastrophe, I was alone in the woods by a secluded lake, totally oblivious of the turmoil in the world.

I had driven to our camp in the morning, just 40 kilometers from our home in Fredericton, to get ready to receive friends from Ottawa. While waiting for their arrival, I sat by the lake, note pad and pen in hand, prepared to write about "Cedar Shores" at Scotch Lake. Peter and I have a great love for the outdoors – especially lakes and forests. I cannot adequately express the peace and serenity we feel in nature – in God's creation.

We feel privileged to have this camp on an acre of forest, and we like to share it with family and friends. We came upon this place in 1995, and that is a story in itself. I'm writing a book about "Cedar Shores," and wanted to give the readers of *Sophia* a glimpse of the beauty and tranquility of a little spot in New Brunswick.

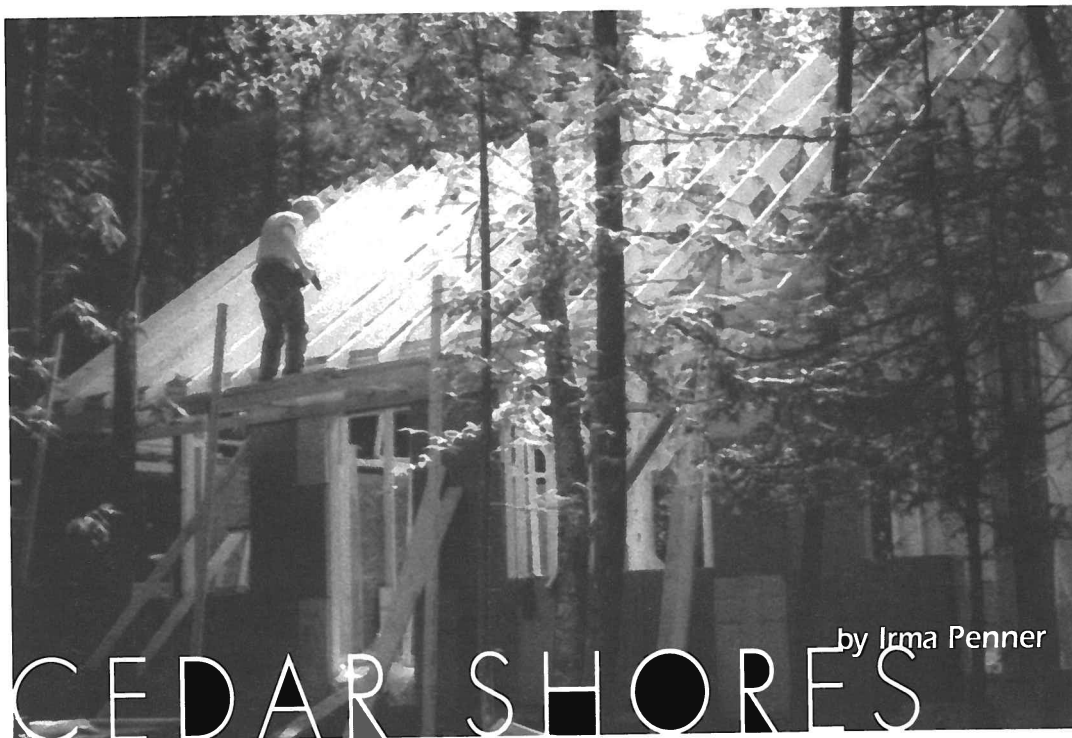
And so, I wrote – or attempted to write on that day – and was perplexed that I struggled with words. Then, while I became totally absorbed in the peaceful setting, I unexpectedly found

myself thinking about the people in the Middle East. Why do their lives have to be embroiled in war? How are we so privileged to experience such serenity? If only they could experience something like this!

My cell phone rang at five o'clock, just as our friends arrived. "Did you get my message this morning?" Peter asked.

"No," I said, "I left early." I hadn't called him before I left home because I knew he was at a meeting. And even though I detected a serious tone in his voice, I continued brightly, "Bob and Eeva just arrived!"

Peter was momentarily silent. I then knew something was wrong. "The Trade Centre in New York," he said quietly, "was levelled."



In the quiet of these woods, with the water faintly lapping on the rocks, we feel at peace and can reflect on God's wonderful creation and on what is expected of us – even in these troubled times.

"What?" I said in disbelief.

"A terrorist attack."

I felt numb.

Peter arrived an hour later, but our meal at the lake, and even the sunset, felt different from any other time.

From nine o'clock that evening throughout the following day, I was glued to the TV in Fredericton, playing catch-up on emotions that others had felt that day while I lived in a "cocoon."

Under such circumstances I could not submit my intended article about our joys in a serene and secluded setting at Scotch Lake. Nevertheless, I want to share that we have experienced countless blessings there, in particular, the announcement of the coming of our fourth grandchild. We are most grateful that every member of our family enjoys God's creation at Scotch Lake. If even one member considered the

camp, without running water or electricity, to be too rustic, it would have an impact on everyone. We're glad that our daughter Teresa, son-in-law Chris, and grandchildren Rebecca, Janet, Grace and Trevor, who live in Riverview, near Moncton, come at every opportunity.

The camp is also a restful place for our younger daughter, Yvonne. She, too, enjoys the sound of the loon and the birds. She likes to walk along the narrow lane surrounded by tall maple, birch, hemlock and fir trees. But after a few days she finds it too isolated, as she enjoys visiting people and going to the malls. She turned 30 this year, prompting us seriously to consider long-term plans for her future. Yvonne has a disability; her condition is called Rett Syndrome. She cannot speak, and she requires assistance in everything to meet her basic needs. Our vision is for

Yvonne to live in our home with a trusted companion while we live at Scotch Lake. We also anticipate that Yvonne would spend some time with us – in our new place.

We built the shell of a winterized cabin this summer; it is our retirement project. We had chosen an area with mostly dead and fallen trees and cleared the land by hand – sparing every tree possible. As there is no electricity; we plan to use propane and solar power. The cabin is insulated under the floor and on the ceiling with steel door cut-outs, each 2-foot by 3-foot panel bearing a cross. These insulated steel panels provide physical comfort and protection; we see the symbol providing the same in the spiritual context.

I also see us making our camp available as a “retreat,” a place of escape from outside stresses. The catastrophe of September 11 has heightened stresses and affected everyone in one way or another. Yet, in the quiet of these woods, with the water faintly lapping on the rocks, we feel at peace and can reflect on God’s wonderful creation and on what is expected of us – even in these troubled times. Being called to be peace-makers and to “love our enemies” is not easy. But I can’t imagine a more serene and peaceful environment in which to become re-focused on God and re-energized to do our part in this world, than here at Scotch Lake. As we extend a warm welcome to anyone in need of a retreat, I like to think that we have found a new role of service here in New Brunswick.

.....
*Irma (Wiens) Penner grew up in Winnipeg. She and her husband, Peter, served with the Mennonite Central Committee from 1981-90 in the area of disabilities in Newfoundland and New Brunswick. She wrote about their experiences in **The Right to Belong: The Story of Yvonne** (self-published, 1997). Irma enjoys writing stories for her four precious grandchildren.*

From the Source

Continued from page 7

pretation that prevented them from discerning the saving activity of God. They had boxed in the Law so closely that even God’s healing of this woman could not be praised. Clearly, Jesus’ culturally-subversive act not only challenged unjust laws and societal assumptions; it indicted the people in power who perpetuated them.

As parents of young children or teenagers, we also hold a position of power. We have the prerogative to create rules and limit choices. How tempting it is to make our children in our own image – or shape them to become the accomplished pianist or star athlete we wish we had been. When we clutch tightly what we think belongs to us, we miss the joy of seeing our sons and daughters stand tall in the fullness of their creation. And our calling as parents perhaps becomes less honourable.

For women called to pastoral ministry but denied ordination because of gender, the power men of the synagogue can be identified in denominational patriarchy. Despite the fact that seminaries are no longer male citadels, pastorate doors are barely open. Or the crippling of women comes in the form of limited options: pastoring small rural churches or positions as chaplains, ministers of Christian education or associate pastors. Hope for change becomes dimmer when dialogue is shut down. At a local conference meeting, where women were not invited to speak officially, the issue of women in pastoral leadership was discredited as unbiblical. Some women who attended deliberately dressed in black. For these women the journey from bent over to standing tall may seem longer than eighteen years. But they have not lost hope that a fully recognized standing as pastor(s) will eventually be theirs.

In Luke’s miracle story, a crip-

pled woman was called out from her place of shame to receive a new, honourable name as “daughter of Abraham.” Her inclusion in the family of Israel symbolized her full standing in the community; she was someone who now could become the person God intended. Jesus’ invitation to her is also to us – to step out from our bent-over shadows of diminished self-esteem or lost joy or thwarted calling – and stand tall in the fullness of our giftedness.

While I was still an MDiv student, my sixteen-year-old daughter was baptized by confession of faith. At the end of the water-pouring ritual, our associate pastor invited her to rise and walk in newness of life. It was a poignant moment for me. After the service, a woman approached me and said, “If Nora had a younger sister, in a few years you would baptize her.” In Catherine’s gift of words, I was again raised up in that community of faith. I claimed my calling, and I suspect I even walked away a little taller.

.....
Linda Helmus graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary in May 2000 with an MDiv degree. The following year she served as Interim Worship & Preaching Associate at Akron Mennonite Church (Akron, PA). Engaging a text through biblical study and sermon composition is both humbling and energizing for her.

Like Naomi: Leaving Full, Returning Empty

by Dora Dueck

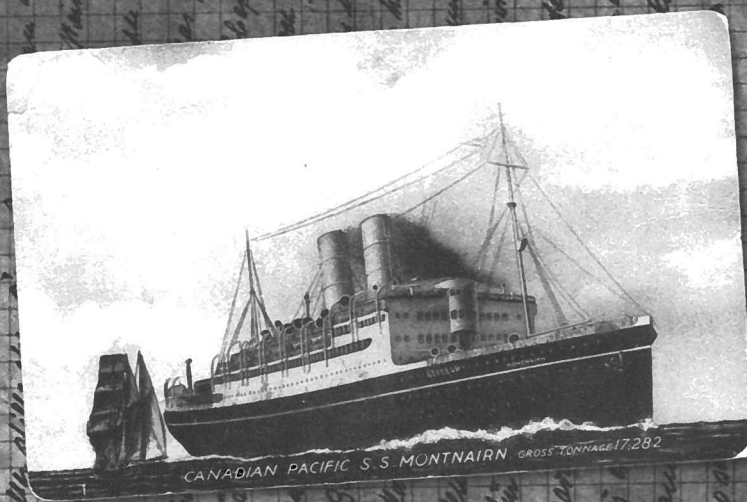
This is a Maritimes issue of *Sophia*, and I have no Maritimes story from the past to offer. But I've just finished Rudy Wiebe's new epic of the Mennonites, *Sweeter than All the World*, and have realized anew how "maritime" the Mennonites were; if not exactly seafarers, they were still intensely engaged with water for much of their early history, reclaiming land and building dikes in both the European Lowlands and in Prussia.

I was struck too by the themes of place (so many places!) and suffering author Wiebe so insistently, almost obsessively, advances in this Mennonite novel. These two themes intertwine in the piece of women's writing I've selected for this issue: "A Sister's Difficult Experiences" by Anna Wiens, published in the MB periodical the *Zionsbote*, 12 March 1902.

Anna's narrative moves in a circle: from "home" in the Russian Molotschna area to a new settlement in the Terek region and back home again. She and her husband, Johann, were among the pioneers of a new settlement in the eastern Caucasus (southeastern Russia) near the Caspian Sea, which eventually comprised some 536 families in 15 villages.

Anna's stay in the Terek was short, but she returned home in a much different situation than she left it. The story stops and swells around 14 desperate days, its times and dates carefully documented, in which the drama shifts between the larger and contrasting spaces of heaven and earth, salvation and damnation. Here the only physical movements are those steady, hectic, anxious ones between the bedsides of the dying husband and daughter. They give way to, and reach their climax in, the solemn and spiritually significant walk of the funeral procession.

voices from the past



I will never forget this year, 1901, for the experiences were so difficult and the pain unforgettable. You probably know that we had moved to the Terek. [I] experienced and lost much there. I am like Naomi: I went away full and came back empty, though strengthened in the Lord. The dear Saviour has wonderfully kept me, though taking me through difficult ways. We moved from Alexanderkron on June 28 and arrived, healthy and happy, in our new home on July 7. Everything was strange and uncultivated (wild) to us, and we felt we should return immediately, the

mosquitoes were so bad. I often think, if only we had moved back right away, I would not have had to bury my loved ones there. But now they are gone. After three weeks, we lost a cow. That was a bitter blow. We bought two horses for 125 Rubles, had them three weeks, and then they were stolen. We prayed much there, asking the Lord, why has this happened? A voice came to me that said, this is nothing, it will get even worse.

As my dear husband and my dear child, Helena, 19, became ill with fever on Tuesday, August 26, and grew sicker, I immediately remembered the voice. [Those words] came true. There was no medical help available, indeed not much human help of any kind, so I was alone with my little children and had to serve the two patients day and night – but the dear Lord helped me, praise be to him, here and in eternity. My husband had severe diarrhoea; he grew very weak and had fever every other day. On Sunday the 2nd he got up yet, also Monday, but he was very weak. Wednesday he could not get up at all, and had great pain in his back and right side, as well as in his head; [I] always cooled him with vinegar and cold water. Helena was also very ill, I could hardly keep up with everything by myself. Thursday morning I went for help, to change my husband's bed, but it was nearly impossible. He did not say anything more, just groaned. I saw where things were heading, and said to my children Johann and Justina: "Let's pray yet, before our Papa dies." We knelt by the bed and prayed that the Lord would give him a gentle death, which also happened. We also sang....

Oh you dear ones, what a joy that will be, with the Lord, the one who gave his life for us poor sinners! At nine that evening, my husband passed away. I stood at the bedside with my children, our Papa was gone.

So much was going through my mind, I cannot describe it. Can you feel with me, all you dear friends? I closed my husband's eyes and straightened his arms and legs and he was gone from this earth, but we will see each other again in heaven; the last thing we did was pray together. When I asked him, "Papa, what shall I do with the little children when you die, and Helena also so sick?" he said I was still young and healthy and still had parents, things would work out already, but if he lived and I should die, what then? Helena had great pain in her head and body; she screamed so much I became very anxious and afraid she would die; and she wasn't ready [to die]. I immediately set myself in the gap and asked the dear Saviour to preserve her mental clarity and give us grace and hear our

*I gave everything over to
the dear Saviour and felt
myself surrounded by an
indescribable love.*

prayers. He did it; help is nearest when the need is greatest. She right away said that she would die. She had twice had experiences [with God] but did not live for the Lord. She prayed much for forgiveness of her sins. She said, "Mama, will God still accept me?" I asked her if she was sorry for her sins. She said, yes, very sorry. It pained her that she had grieved the Lord so long. She also confessed her sins. I read her the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" and so on. She became glad, received peace in her heart, prayed much, thanked and also sang... When Papa died, she had wept for me yet, over how I would manage. I told her the Lord would work everything out for good. I came upon the verse: "His counsel is wonderful and he accomplishes it

well." I was now able with God's help to bow to his will, but [I] attained [this] grace with much struggle and prayer; [I] was gladdened and comforted and was able to comfort my dear ones with tears and under the cross of Jesus, where all comfort is fulfilled. I was so happy in my spirit that my child wanted to die and had become so happy to die. When we

had washed our Papa's body and carried it out, Helena said, "Mama, we want to stay together and live for the Lord." On the morning of Friday, Sept. 7, [her body] was very cold. I said to her, "You are dying." No, she said, I should give her something hot to drink. I should wash and comb her. [I] called the children to the bedside and she bid them and me farewell. I asked, "Helena, are you dying?" "No," she said, "but tomorrow I will be with the Lord." I left the bedside, didn't know what to do with myself; [I] returned to her. She looked at me so kindly. I asked, "Lenchen, is dying hard? She said, "No, I am completely well." [She] raised herself to sit up in bed. I held her and laid her down again; she was very cold and remained that way until midnight, when her hour [of death] arrived and she was gone. That was in the night of the 7th to the 8th. My husband's coffin had already been made, the other was immediately cut as well. Saturday we got everything ready and Sunday the 9th was the funeral, and truly a very large one.... After the service the two coffins were loaded and we went to the cemetery. I took my children by the hand and silently followed the burial procession. I gave everything over to the dear Saviour and felt myself surrounded by an indescribable love. God's love is so great, I felt myself carried by grace. My own self disappeared, there was only love and grace. After the two bodies had been buried together in one grave, everyone went home. I stayed alone,

Continued on page 13 ►

Image of God and the Abused Person

by Judi Snowden

The following article is a reprint from The Women's Concerns Report, a publication of the Mennonite Central Committee. It specifically focusses on the search for God in the soul of an abused person. I believe that the Image of God, which is in all of us, has been hidden because of the presence of evil, and more specifically any particular evil to which we might have been exposed. All of us need to search for that hidden image of God within ourselves that has been obscured by the veil of darkness. All of us can find that presence of the Holy One. The Apostle Paul said it well: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." 1 Cor. 13:12 NKJV



ally abused by a man from our church, I was already conditioned to believe that I was bad, perhaps deserved it and that it was even my fault. Whatever image of God I might have seen in myself and others was even further obscured by deep shadows of fear and shame.

Victims of abuse, especially child victims, are forced into a very dark world. They suffer an extreme violation of the body and soul that destroys values, boundaries and

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 NRSV

Human beings are a living theology, a revelation and representation of God. In the Genesis 2 account of the creation, we are told that "...the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." (2:7) According to Hebrew tradition, to breathe into another's face was an act of deepest symbolism and in doing so, something very inwardly yours was transmitted into the other person's being or spirit. The very essence of life that God breathed into the first human being was sacred, the divine image of God that is in each one of us. But do we always see that imaged in ourselves and in others?

I grew up in a faith tradition that stressed the total depravity of all people: we were innately sinful and could not help ourselves except by salvation through Jesus. As a small child I sat through many sermons, Sunday school classes and children's meetings that reiterated that theme. It only caused me to be filled with fear and shame. The picture of Jesus hanging on my bedroom wall so terrified me at night that my mother had to remove it. I did "get saved" at the age of six, but I had no one to teach me about the beauty of being human or God's unconditional love. I did learn that children were to be seen and not heard and were, at all times, to be obedient to adults.

So, when I was eight years old and began to be sexu-

trust. It is a devious evil attempt to strike at the heart of who we are as human beings, at the very image of God.

Some would have called me a resilient child. I did survive but not always very well. I lived my life with as much integrity and vitality as I could. But there was always something wrong. Carolyn Holderread Heggen states it very well: "Most adult survivors of abuse have put such emotional energy into mere day-to-day survival that until they begin therapy they are unaware of the ongoing effects of their childhood abuse. Instead, victims may have a sense of vague anxiety, or generalized emotional pain and sadness that permeates everything they do..." (*Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, p.28).

Most of all, I couldn't see God. I couldn't feel God. I felt alone and abandoned. God's image was removed from my awareness. I couldn't feel God's love. I only felt shame of who I was.

Healing for victims of childhood abuse can be very difficult in the faith setting. When the perpetrator of the abuse is religious it can be even more difficult. The man who abused me said that he had not been a Christian at the time of the abuse. Since that time he had had a conversion experience and had been forgiven. I was the problem since I had not forgiven him. His pastor agreed. This only increased my guilt.

As I began the journey of healing from the pain of

sexual abuse, I also began a quest to find God. Where had God been during my pain, where was God now? My husband was a great source of strength and encouragement. Through him I saw God's unconditional love and support. This gave me courage to seek further. But I encountered many roadblocks from the church community, from individuals and from the church leadership as I sought healing and reconciliation. I became badly revictimized. I began to look for God in my own heart.

I think my most powerful revelation was early in my healing journey. I was lying on my bed, praying and crying, as I did so many times. Just as vividly as if he were standing in the room, Jesus was there. He was surrounded by a soft, warm, yellow light. I was a little girl with braids flying in the air, running into his arms.

He picked me up, swung me around, and held me with such love and tenderness. He held me tight, and I heard the words, "You have always been in my arms, and every time you were abused, so was I; every time you were hurt, so was I." I will never forget that moment.

Healing is hard work that is always ongoing. I don't think it will ever be over in this life. I have learned that in order to see God, I must look inside myself, at my yearnings for goodness, for a world without sin and violence, for a world that is just and pure. These very longings come from God within me. My quest for God was that very breath of the Spirit calling me to herself.

.....
Judi Snowden works for Mennonite Central Committee Canada as co-representative for the Maritimes Program. She is a musician and published composer of choral and piano music. She enjoys swimming, cycling and sewing. She lives with her husband, Tom, and her dog Patsy near Bouctouche, New Brunswick.

Voices From The Past

Continued from page 11

standing by the grave, and thought about everything, whether what had happened to me had ever been heard of before. I went into my hut with my dear children and was able to yield myself to God's will. Calm and quiet, tired and without strength, I passed the first week. No one was groaning, they were gone, and all in 14 days. Oh how the Word of God is accomplished, "pain and sighing will be no more, joy and rapture will embrace them." My dear ones are there! Isn't that a comfort for us all? Immediately after the funeral, I wrote my parents, asking for their help and support; I wanted to come home right away, for what would I do there with my little children? Johann is 11, Justina nearly 9, Jakob 6, Peter nearly 3. Justina and Jakob also had the fever in the Terek. Fourteen days passed, suddenly there was my brother Jakob. We sold everything I had and then returned; [we] had a very hard journey. The children had the fever and the train was very crowded. The dear Saviour helped us through everything, to him the glory.

I am now living with my parents in Klippenfeld, in the summer house, the two [oldest] are going to school....

*Widow Anna Wiens,
 formerly of Alexanderkron*

There is another kind of movement in this story, besides those mentioned in the introduction, and that is the pendulum-like swing between Anna's expressions of her difficulty and her assertions of faith. For example, she writes how difficult it was to care for the patients in the hut, especially alone, but then immediately praises God for his help. This pattern continues throughout the piece. On the walk to the cemetery Anna felt as if her self [mein Eigenes] had disappeared, but standing alone at the grave, the sense of the unique self

had forcibly returned, as she suggests that no one has experienced what she has.

These swings in the narrative are part of the religious sensibility – the style, if you like – of Zionsbote writing. This style, with a narrative frequently interrupted by biblical reminders or religious ejaculations, may often sound simply reflexive, simply learned and inserted from habit; its piety sometimes jars a little. At other times (as generally, I think, in this account), it reflects the swing between the "real" and the "ideal" we all experience in articulating our experience, especially our struggles. Sometimes we set the "being" and the "believing" deliberately and even dissonantly beside each other in the hope that they will coalesce, if not here, at least in the future when "faith will be sight." Sometimes too, in both the telling and the experience itself there is a gentle swing that seems outside our own efforts, one that is surely the lilt of grace between our distress and God's carrying arms.

.....
Dora Dueck is a regular contributor to Sophia. She recently became grandmother to Benjamin Gregory Dueck. She welcomes your comments and may be reached by email at hldueck@home.com.

¹ He was 63. Judging from the ages of her youngest children, Anna was probably considerably younger.

² Diminutive of Helena.

Domestic Violence and Pastors' Response in Moncton

by Mary Beth Clements

None of us grows up saying, "Gee, I sure hope I get into an abusive relationship when I'm older." I certainly didn't. By age 16 I had already experienced enough abuse in my life, both sexual and emotional. I was determined not to be abused again. I went to university to begin my undergraduate studies, but soon realized I was only there to escape my family. I returned to my hometown where I met the man of my dreams. He was caring, loving, and a wonderful listener. I felt safe with him. We married and had a beautiful daughter.

Two years later I was pregnant again but my marriage was falling apart. My husband and I had become strangers. He spent most of his time out of the house, drinking and abusing drugs. Eventually, I left with my daughter, even though I was six months pregnant. It was probably the scariest and hardest decision I have ever made. I was certain I couldn't live without him. I spent almost every waking moment wishing he still loved me, longing to be with him.

During this time, however, I began to notice things. I began to realize all the things I gave up because he didn't like them. I began to see all the relationships I had been afraid to pursue because he wouldn't approve of them. It wasn't that I couldn't cook. It was that I couldn't use the non-stick pans the way he liked me to, so I stopped cooking. It wasn't that I disliked jazz music (I actually love it). It was that he didn't enjoy it, so I didn't listen to it.

Over time, I understood more and more the level of control he actually exerted in our household. I had never noticed it before. I began to realize the degree of emotional abuse I had been exposed to. I began to understand that I had once again become a victim of abuse. This didn't happen overnight. It took many hours of counselling and prayer to unearth the woman inside me. I am now learning to accept her and to give her life.

Out of these experiences and an opportunity to work on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee Maritimes came the following research on Domestic Violence in my community. Since I was very interested in the way clergy thought about abuse, how they had dealt with women who were abused, and how many women had approached them, I devised a survey for pastors in the greater Moncton area. The figures below represent only those who responded to my survey, and conclusions should not be drawn beyond that scope.

A Snapshot of Abuse

Though concrete profiles of a woman who is abused and her abuser cannot be offered, there do seem to be some common denominators. She is generally under the age of 25 and has lived in a common-law relationship for less than two years. Her family income is less than \$30,000 annually and she has some high school education. She has probably witnessed abuse as a child or been a victim of abuse herself.

The male abuser is often under the age of 25, as well. He probably struggles with chronic unemployment and has a low family income. His education level is often lower than that of his partner. He has most likely witnessed abuse as a child and probably has fairly strict gender-based views. He often deals with impulsive behaviors and issues of control. His acts of physical violence are almost always preceded by emotional abuse and can involve alcohol consumption.

Perhaps one researcher said it best: "A large portion of family violence is committed by people who do not see their acts as crimes against victims who do not know they are victims" (Carden 1994, 539).

Demographics

- 91.4% of responding clergy were male
- 34.3% were between 41 and 50 years old, while 28.6% were between 31 and 40
- 40.0% were Baptist, 14.3% were United, and 11.4% were Pentecostal
- 54.3% have ministered in a pastoral capacity in this city five years or less, while 25.7% have ministered between six and ten years.

Experience

During their time here, 74.3% of responding clergy have been approached by a woman within their congregation who claimed her male partner used violent or hostile actions toward her.

Of those, 76.9% have been approached by one to three women, while 15.4% have been approached by four to seven women. The types of abuse included physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse.

When the cleric has counselled a woman in this situation, 58.8% have referred her to both/either a Christian counsellor and/or a transition house or woman's shelter;



LINDA TOWES

50.0% have referred her to a psychologist or psychiatrist, while only 35.2% of the referrals were to government agencies. Note that these percentages do not total 100% because the respondents have often made referrals to more than one agency.

Attitudes

When asked in which situations the respondent would not feel comfortable providing counselling without assistance, 49.9% suggested sexual abuse and 37.4% suggested physical abuse. (Again, note that the respondents could choose more than one category.) However, 43.8% suggested they would feel comfortable counselling a woman in any of those situations without outside assistance.

59.3% of respondents suggested that they have recommended "separation or divorce when the situation warranted it, although reconciliation was always preferred." An additional 25.9% recommended "a brief time of separation in the hopes of reconciliation, but never divorce." The remaining 14.8% had not been in this situation.

When asked who is responsible if a man uses violent or hostile actions toward his female partner, 40.6% held only the male partner responsible, 28.1% suggested sometimes but rarely both partners are responsible, while 31.3% stated that often both partners are responsible.

Access to Information

77.1% have information in their church to which a woman

could be referred. Yet, 80.0% would be very interested in updated information.

Questions to Consider

Why did none of the clerics from one particular denomination make any referrals to Christian counsellors, nor did they suggest that they would?

Why does such a high percentage of clerics (43.8) feel comfortable counselling a woman experiencing any type of abuse? Education? Hands-on experience? Confidence in the healing power of their faith? Lack of trust in outside sources? (It does not seem to be the latter based on the percentage of clerics who have made referrals.)

Reconciliation seems to be the main thrust or goal behind their counselling practices. If this is true, how does it affect the options a woman is presented with? Can separation truly be presented as a viable option if reconciliation is always preferred?

What are the implications when 59.4% of the clerics who responded suggest that a woman is sometimes responsible for the violent or hostile actions she receives from her male partner? How would this affect any counselling she receives?

If 80% of the clerics are very interested in updated information, should this need be met? If so, in what way and who should provide the information?

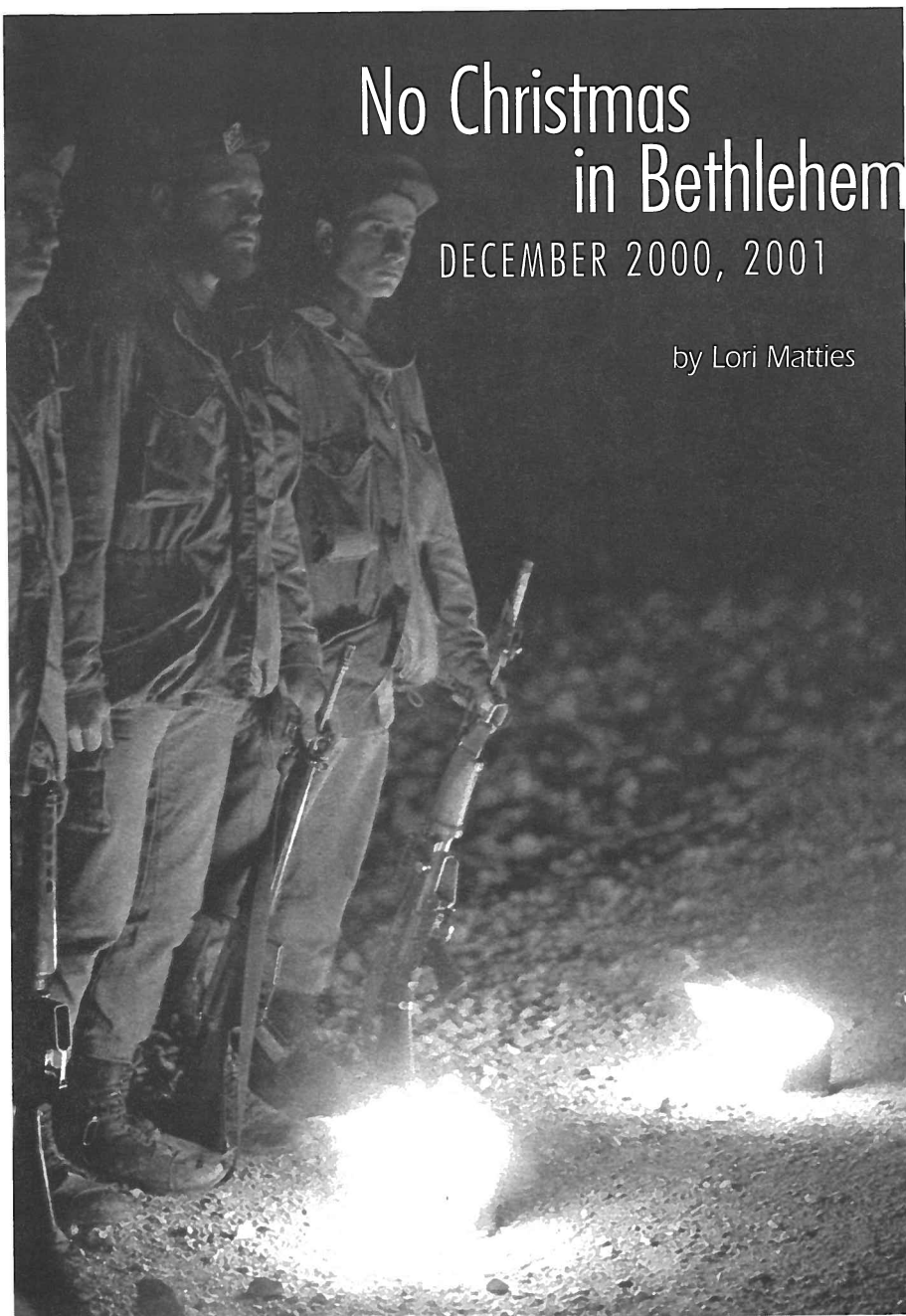
Other interesting relationships between variables are actually non-relationships. I expected to find a relationship

Continued on page 17 ►

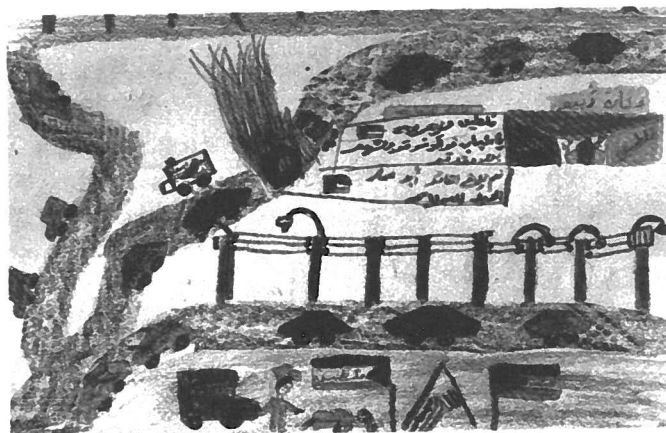
No Christmas in Bethlehem

DECEMBER 2000, 2001

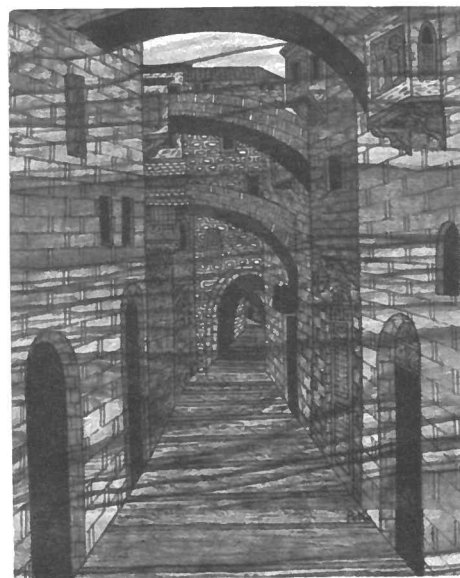
by Lori Matties



Israeli soldiers on night watch.



Painted by a Palestinian child, age 12, of Nablus.



"Via Dolorosa," Jerusalem

the cries will be heard
to the molten core of earth's
centre. to the breathing heart
in the body of God.

in this *intifada*
sons and daughters throw rocks
answered by tanks –
toddlers learn murderous words

in the year zero,
God breathed in the dust
pushed out Mary's womb
and slipped beneath our skin

and now the blood-slicked bodies of every
shrapnelled soul
caught surprised
in the cross
fire are also flesh
of every breath we've ever
tried to rattle through our grieving
ribs.

we are the bullet, the stone
the gravel that cries out
if every person is silent
if there is no
christmas
if no one sees
(the kitchen fire in india
the gas sniffers in labrador
the smouldering bones at ground-zero)
the breathing heart beating in
the body of God.

LETTERS

I could identify with Dora Dueck ("348 Pieces," 11:3) when she described receiving her *Sophia* in the mailbox as having "the privilege of opening it as a gift." That is exactly how I feel when I find it in my mailbox on the way to work in the morning. I can hardly wait to get home after work, make a pot of tea, and sit down with the latest issue of *Sophia*. Keep up the good work!

Elaine Friesen
Piney, MB

A touch of uplifting humour now and then would add yet another favorable dimension. Keep up the good work.

Hilda Rempel
Winnipeg, MB

"Living Word" by Helga Doermer (11:2) was a real inspiration. Keep up the good work!

Irma Epp
Winnipeg, MB

Thank you for continuing to inspire and challenge me!

Carolyn Wagner
Edmonton, AB

I would like to see more spiritually uplifting articles.

Anne Kublick
Winnipeg, MB

I enjoy the thematic approach, the artwork – the content is generally inspiring. God Bless!!

Hildegard Baerg
Abbotsford, BC

Could we have more contributors from other parts of Canada?

Matilda Hamm
Burnaby, BC

Thank-you to everyone for the excellent publication you continue to put out. Blessings!

Wendy Dueck
Kleefeld, MB

Sophia welcomes your comments. You may send letters by email, fax or snail mail, to the addresses listed on the inside cover.

Unspeakable Issues

Continued from page 15

between a pastor's denomination and his recommendations in a counselling situation of this type. I found none. I expected to find a relationship between a pastor's denomination and who he believes is responsible in abusive relationships. I found none. I also expected to find a relationship between the number of women who approached their pastor and the recommendations the pastor would give. Again, I found none.

How We Can Help

With our look at the research complete, perhaps the most important points are left to be made. Where do we go from here and how can we help bring healing to the lives of these women and their children? One way might be to help clergy acquire the resources they need to handle this issue. This could include:

- Written information about where to make appropriate referrals, including an updated list of agencies mandated to deal with this issue in a particular area, along with telephone numbers, hours of operation and contact persons;
- Opportunities to learn more about this issue and how they can be effective with the counselling they provide. Workshops or teaching sessions might be ways of doing this;
- Round table discussions between clergy and outside agencies with the goal of understanding how they can work together in the healing process. These could include members of the local Council of Churches, transition houses and Social Services departments;
- Counselling services for pastors who have women approach them. Dealing with this type of crisis can deplete a pastor's emotional and spiritual reserves. Access to a counsellor who could aid in the "debriefing" process might be of help.

Domestic violence can and does affect women from all walks of life. This also includes women who are actively involved in their church. Pastors need to be equipped to deal with this situation in a healthy and supportive way. I was fortunate that the pastors at my church were understanding and supported my decision to leave my husband. They have been instrumental in my journey toward healing and restoration. I only wish this were true for every woman.

.....
Mary Beth Clements is a single mom of two beautiful girls, Katie and Emma. She's a fourth year Sociology major at Atlantic Baptist University and is a member of a wonderful faith community in Moncton, NB, called The Pool.

FOREVER With the LORD

by Nan Doerksen

The sun had barely risen; the others in my cabin were still sleeping. Quietly I dressed and walked down to the lake shore – Turtle Lake in northern Saskatchewan. The water was perfectly calm, reflecting rays of sunlight through a light mist rising from the lake. A canoe with fishers moved noiselessly towards shore; nearby a clutch of ducks gabbled in hushed tones. Suddenly the silence was broken by a moose call – loud, urgent, blasting the air! Satisfied, refreshed, I walked back to our cottage, stopping only briefly to eat ripe saskatoon berries from a bush nearby.

In July of this summer four of my siblings and I, with our spouses and one grandson, made a pilgrimage to Speedwell, Saskatchewan, the place of our birth and childhood, to put a tombstone on the grave of our maternal grandmother, Gertruda Fransen, nee Pankratz, Krause, daughter of Johann Pankratz, one of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren church in the Kuban. Our sister Mary, who died at the age of four, is buried there with our grandmother in the same grave. We came from B.C., Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. We stayed in a camper and cottages at Turtle Lake, where we swam and fished long ago.

Almost nothing is left of the once prospering Mennonite community. The homesteads gave way to a community pasture as people moved to more fertile areas in Canada. The church is long gone, but two families of the original settlers are still there; they keep its history alive and the grass trimmed in the MB cemetery. Red ants and sand-berries still thrive there, and a bear visits the place, we were told.

My grandmother died in 1940 at the age of seventy-eight and was buried in the churchyard of the Speedwell Mennonite Brethren Church, where my father, Jacob A. Enns, was the pastor. My family moved away from there in 1948, but just before we left my father fulfilled a commitment he had made in 1928 when their four-year-old Mary died and was buried on their homestead. At that time he had promised to move her to a cemetery when there was one available. Now she was placed in Grandmother's grave.

In the summer of 1925, on the ship Empress of Scotland, my young parents, with three children and my

maternal grandmother, embarked on a journey toward a new life in Canada. My grandmother, twice widowed, chose to flee Russia with her only daughter and youngest living child, leaving behind three sons who predeceased her, and six living: one in Germany, one in Brazil and four still in Russia, who planned to follow shortly. None ever did; she never saw any of them again. Except once.

Early one morning, as her grandchildren were dressing near the only heater in our compact log house, Grandmother, in great agitation, came into the room. "I've seen Peter," she said. "There was a tapping noise at the window in my room. When I looked up, I clearly saw my son Peter, with a happy expression on his face. Then he was gone. What can it mean?" Carefully the time and

date were recorded. Some time later a letter arrived from Russia to tell Grandmother her son Peter had died exactly at the time she had seen him at her window.

I remember my grandmother as an omnipresence in our home during the first six years of my life. She was the one who put us to bed Sunday evenings when my parents and older siblings attended church. She listened to our prayers, told us stories of life in Russia and sang us to sleep. She gave me my first knitting lessons. Always dressed in dark brown or black, her dark hair streaked with grey in a single braid coiled at the back of her head, she was there in her rocking chair. Later, when she was no longer with us, I heard stories of her courage, her independent spirit, her curiosity.

In Moscow in 1925 where the family was detained for

*I remember my grandmother
as an omnipresence in
our home during the first
six years of my life.*

six weeks till they could make arrangements to leave Russia, Grandmother, alone, went to join the queue in Red Square to look at Lenin in his tomb. In Quebec city the family again was detained because my father was diagnosed with trachoma and hospitalized for an indefinite period. The rest of the family was in the refugee camp. Grandmother, unable to speak either French or English, took matters into her own hands, deciding that she and my mother with the three children would continue on their train journey to Winnipeg, where they were to be met by Father's brother. When the German-speaking person who was to assist them to board the west-bound train in Montreal and provide them with food for the journey did not appear, Grandmother went in search of him. When she finally located him she scolded him roundly, putting the fear of God into him! Abashed, perhaps terrified, he wasted no time in bringing them food, but then he promptly disappeared, leaving them to board the train alone.

But my favourite story was the one she told us herself. One day during the church service at Speedwell, Grandmother felt something running up her leg under her long skirt. Inconspicuously she firmly confined it with her hand, stood up and walked quietly out of the church, shook her skirt to release the mouse, and returned to her seat.

The land on which the church stood was once part of our homestead, and before that it no doubt belonged to the aboriginals who roamed the area. Once, as I walked home from school along a path near the church, I saw an Indian woman digging Seneca roots on our land. I watched her for a moment, then she saw me, and we both went on our way.

"Forever with the Lord" is the bottom line of the tombstone. After the hard work of erecting the stone under a blazing sun, we stood in front of it as our youngest brother read Psalm 23, from which the words are taken.

To me it was important after all these years to celebrate the lives of these two: a dear grandmother and the sister I never knew. Hot buns, coffee and freshly-baked saskatoon pie, eaten in communion, were a fitting celebration.

.....

Nan Doerksen is the author of several books for children and an active member of Brunswick Street Baptist Church in Fredericton where she lives with her husband. They have three children and one grandchild.

Back Issues

Back issues of Sophia are available for sale for \$2 each, plus postage (\$1, Canada, \$1.50, US).

Volume 1- *sold out*

Volume 2 - *Untitled*

2:1 - *Untitled*

2:2 - *Women and Work*

3:1 - *Faith of our Mothers*

3:2 - *Caring for Each Other*

3:3 - *Imagining a Better World - sold out*

4:1 - *Practising God's Presence*

4:2 - *Travelling Light*

4:3 - *Artists Among Us*

5:1 - *Growing Up in the Church*

5:2 - *The Business of Women*

5:3 - *Come and Eat - sold out*

6:1 - *Our Bodily Heritage*

6:2 - *Rest and Recreation*

6:3 - *A Pot Pourri of Fine Ideas*

7:1 - *A Musical Mosaic*

7:2 - *Life Writing*

7:3 - *Sisters - sold out*

8:1 - *Forgiveness*

8:2 - *Tending the Earth*

8:3 - *Transitions*

8:4 - *Adventuring Women*

9:1 - *Worthy of Worship*

9:2 - *Marriage and Other Worthy Endeavors*

9:3 - *Unrevealed Until its Season*

9:4 - *Volunteering: The Heart of Ministry*

10:1 - *Celebrating the Gift of Writing*

10:2 - *Enduring Legacy*

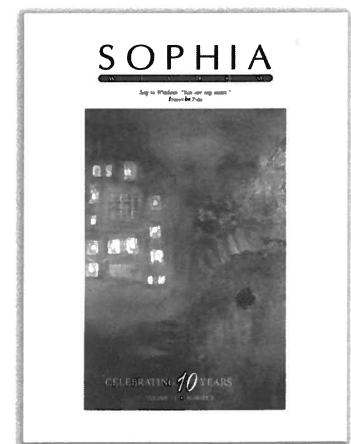
10:3 - *Encounters With God*

10:4 - *Fear Not*

11:1 - *Community*

11:2 - *What Have We Learned?*

11:3 - *Celebrating Ten Years*



The Washer Woman

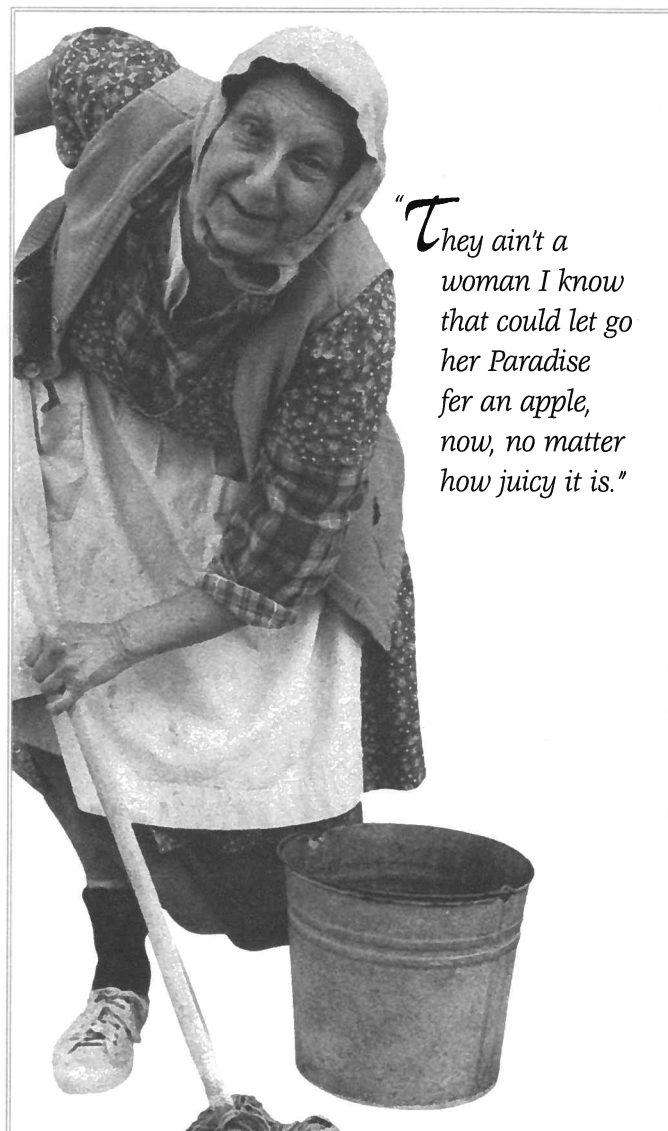
by Tom Snowden

If you travel to Prince Edward Island, you might wonder what would happen to the economy there if Lucy Maude Montgomery and her character Anne suddenly ceased to exist. Only potatoes and fishing would be left, it would seem, no more Japanese tour buses traveling across the bridge or tourists from New England and Ontario scooping up all those Anne souvenirs, even if they are made in Taiwan. Or, in our area of New Brunswick, near Bouctouche, we seem to live in the shadow of *La Sagouine*, the wise washer-woman character of Antonine Maillet. Her book and play about a poor woman of the area in the first half of this century is so popular that the presentations of the play at the local centre in Bouctouche, *Le Pays de la Sagouine*, bring some millions of dollars into the area each summer season, with people attending from much of the French-speaking world. The large open-air theatre, over-looking the Bouctouche River, is jammed night after night throughout the summer for this celebration of French Acadian culture. The actor, Viola Léger, who has played *La Sagouine* for thirty years now, was recently appointed to the Canadian senate in recognition of her achievement.

Montgomery and Maillet both capture something of the social powerlessness of Maritime women from time past. They also celebrate the irrepressible strength that is not dependant on the social standing, wealth or power that comes from being born a white male, like myself.¹ In fact, the social powerlessness of these characters provides the darkness upon which the light of their characters is displayed.

Anne we know so well, her red braids and fierce temper a match for any challenge, it seems. *La Sagouine* is hardly known in English Canada, which is too bad. Maillet wrote the book as an expression of interviews with three women living in shacks by the river here in Bouctouche. The descriptions of their poverty are shocking. The book is translated into folksy English by Luis de Cespedes for unilinguals like myself.¹ In 183 pages of soliloquy, the washer-woman dispenses a wisdom not easy to come by, seen from her perspective, on her knees, scrubbing floors. She talks about youth, Christmas, the priests, the good Lord, the lottery and death, to note just some of the chapter topics. Her comments bring one to laughter at the absurd and tears for the sublime almost simultaneously.

I'll let her speak for herself. On talking to rich peo-



"They ain't a woman I know that could let go her Paradise fer an apple, now, no matter how juicy it is."

VIOLA LÉGER AS 'LA SAGOINE'

ple: "Ain't easy to know what to say to those folks. Them, well, they can talk 'bout their kin, their trips to the ol' countries, their summer houses 'n their winter houses, 'n they can talk 'bout their kids bein' in college or in the gov-e'ment. But us, we ain't got no educated boys, no kin'folk in the States, 'n we can't change houses fr'm one season to the other, or go to som'other country, lik'em tourists. We ain't got no holidays cause we ain't got no jobs. We work aroun' the houses. 'n they ain't no paid holiday there. No forty-hour week either, 'n no pension fer yer ol'days. Yer ol' days, you spend 'em like the other days: scrapin' 'n cleanin'... Yep!" (p 17)

On war: "Then they was the war. Fer us, I reckon it

was the best thing.... Cause they never stopped sendin' us our cheques the whole time our men was on the other side. 'n the wives of the men that didn' come back, they kept gettin' their widows' cheques. 'n *Caillou*, that lost one of his legs in England, he got more fer that lost leg than fer all the work he could of done with the other one. 'n *Jos Chevreu* that came back with two holes where his eyes was... well they paid fer his dark glasses, his white cane 'n they gave'm a pension....

"...That was twenty years ago. We're up to our necks in poverty again. A war, it brings jobs, 'n som'n to fill yer stomach. But it lasts five 'r six years 'n then they make peace. After, we gotta go back to our oysters, our clams, 'n our quahaugs. 'n times get tough again. 'n poverty strikes. 'n there's only one thing we can do: wait fer the next war that'll get us outta this hole once again." (p 107-108)

On theology: "Cause they already tol' us that wonderin' too much about religious matters makes you lose yer faith, it does. 'n once lost, seems not even Saint Anthony can help you get it back." (p 122)

On the role of women: "Every priest says the same thing. They even was one that distrusted his own mother, they says.... Ah! A woman is always a woman, the bishop use' to say. 'n she's the one that committed the first sin in the Garden of Eden. Her man took a bite off the apple only cause his wife gave it to him. Cause a man is weak, you see, 'n he couldn' resist. It ain't his fault; his wife had no business temptin' him like that, makin'm topple over into a life of sin....

"Well, I got my own sayin' that if the woman pushed her man into doin' som'n wrong, well they must of been someone that pushed her too. 'n that it couldn' be all her fault. Cause they ain't a woman I know that could let go her Paradise fer an apple, now, no matter how juicy it is." (p 124)

On prayer: "...Well, when I don't remember what comes after: 'Pray fer us sinners 'n give us this day our daily bread'... I say whatever comes to my mind with words the Good Lord can und'stand. But more often than not, I don't say not'n at all, cause of my scrubber's knees that can't stand much kneelin'. I end up sayin' to the Good Lord not to depend on me too much, but to give me the grace to depend on Him, Amen. It ain't a prayer you can find in the holy books 'n I wouldn' try to say it in church; but at our place, kneelin' by the stove, I figure that

between the two of us, maybe the Good Lord isn' so infinitely fussy." (p 128)

On her family: "...Yep, twelve children., 'n I managed to save three. Nine of them died when they was babies. You see, in 'em motherin' days, they wasn' even bankin' for the houses, 'n only green wood 'n kinklins fer heatin'. 'n to make thing worse, them nine was born between All Saints' day 'n the Spring thaw. The three that was born with the raspberry pickin', survived." (p 178)

On herself and men: "Heh! ...Well, you won't let 'em catch you behind curtains, you ain't that crazy. *Sagouine* 'r no *Sagouine*, you gotta respect yerself!" (p 26)

On human agony: "*Ludger a Nezime*, well he drowned, it ain't what you can call a sudden death. When he realized his wife wasn' comin' back, that she'd pretty well left for good with her brother-in-law, he got 'mself drunk just like a man can get 'mself drunk, 'n he walked to the end of the wharf 'n jumped. He'd told *P'tit Jean* all about it, the night before, but the other one didn' believe'm. Water's too cold, he says to him. That's why he drank 'mself stiff so he wouldn' feel the water." (p 53-54)

You get the picture. This woman ignores a lot of what other people talk about and speaks clearly where a lot of us are mum. She speaks of life without the pretense that often comes with the opportunities privilege brings, with an honesty unfettered by fears of being thought crude and with an insight you can't seem to find on the news these days. Poverty is not pretty nor is it acceptable when we live in a world of where all could have enough, but poor people have insights we need, if we can only find a way to make ourselves listen. It will change us and we may realize that we are poor, too, in our polite and sterile world. Wouldn't it be refreshing to hear a news reporter begin with, "We're bein' told lots o' things, but here's what really goin' on here, yep!"?

.....
Tom Snowden was born and grew up in Sackville, New Brunswick. He and his wife, Judi, serve as Maritime regional co-representatives for the Mennonite Central Committee. They live in Saint-Joseph-de-Kent, near Bouctouche, New Brunswick.

¹ Antonine Maillet, *La Sagouine*, translated by Luis de Cespedes (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1979, 1985).

Excerpts from *With All Her Might: The life of Gertrude Harding, Militant Suffragette*

.....
by Gretchen Wilson (Fredericton, NB: Susanne Alexander, Goose Lane Editions, 1996).

Compiled by Elisabeth Vensel

Gertrude Harding's memoirs were fragments at best, pasted into a scrapbook and given to her family. In order to write this biography of her great-aunt, Gretchen (Wilson) Kelbaugh gathered much more material from friends and relatives, and discovered many of Gert's exploits in reports on the women's suffrage movement in England. Her story is intriguing, tracing her meanderings from her childhood home in New Brunswick to Hawaii, to London, mostly in the care of older siblings. In London the carefree girl discovered a "cause" that captured and directed her energy and courage.

The book is even more fascinating as a window into the early years of the women's rights movement. Wilson writes, "The push for the vote by women ... created worldwide upheaval that eventually changed the way society views women. Without political equality, social equality would never come. Yet the total picture of the struggle for female suffrage has been packed in short paragraphs in our history books, and so has the violent revolt by British women. It was a movement without precedent, yet it continues to be treated without prestige."

"The so-called Reform Law of 1832 was actually regressive for women By the insertion of 'male' before 'persons' in the act, women were legally disenfranchised for the first time in British history."

"Upon marriage, a woman became the legal responsibility of her husband – indeed, husband and wife were treated as one person before the law. All her wealth, possessions and property passed absolutely into his

Imagine the thrill for a feminist to learn that her great-aunt was a key member of the most radical group of women the world has ever known: the Militant Suffragettes. Perhaps it was fate that kept me from reading my great-aunt's memoirs until I was both a feminist and a writer, and thus ready to do something with them.

I was shocked to learn about the violence with which the government treated the Suffragettes. I was angry to realize that an important part of Western history – the freeing of half its citizens – is still largely ignored by text books.

In some ways, Auntie Gert's memoirs help explain myself to me. Here is, finally, a relative I can relate to. She died in 1977. I wonder whether she knows that she gave me my first book on a silver platter. I hope she knows that, through her biography, and eventually a documentary, she and I are continuing the push for equality together.

Gretchen (Wilson) Kelbaugh

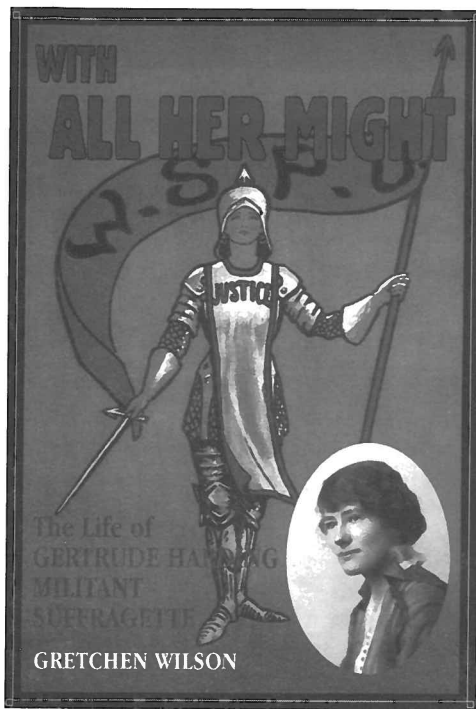
hands, to do with as he pleased. Her body belonged to him, she being in his legal custody. As a mother, a woman had only limited legal power over her infant; children were in the custody of the father unless he was insane. He could take them from their mother, and he was in charge of their education, religion, and place of residence. If he wished, the father could put up the children for adoption or bequeath them in his will to another adult, even though the mother lived."

"Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter, Christabel, were personally responsible for the militant suffrage movement in England. They were driven to violence by the belief that many of the hardships faced by women and children in Victorian England, such as inhuman working conditions, rampant prostitution and the white slave trade (abduction of children and young women for the sex industry), would last until women got the vote. Together the Pankhursts helped build the Suffragette movement into an internationally known organization of thousands; together they led the organization on an extreme course of militancy, jeopardizing in the process their strong public support, relations with family and friends and in Mrs. Pankhurst's case, her health." In 1903 they formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

Mrs. Pankhurst had seen firsthand how the absence of human rights demeaned women when she had been an overseer of a paupers' workhouse.

"Christabel Pankhurst had one of the keenest minds in Britain. She graduated in law from Victoria University, Manchester, in 1906, one of only two graduates to receive first class honours, but even so, being a woman, she was not allowed to practise law."

"From the first imprisonment in 1905 until 1908, the Suffragettes' preferred methods of getting jailed were heckling politicians and attempting to enter the House of Commons to present a delegation to the King through



the Prime Minister. The willingness of large numbers of women to defy the police and go to jail came quickly, considering that for centuries before, women had not even formed political organizations or held public meetings." The protesters were most often placed in "the second division of Holloway Prison, the section for common criminals. Had they been sentenced to the first division, reserved for political prisoners, life wouldn't have been so bad, but in the louse and rat-infested second division, the women were stripped, then clothed in prison uniforms and forced to scrub stone floors and endure solitary confinement." Most of them were upper class women unused to such hardships.

After the first arrests the public newspapers ended a forty-year conspiracy of silence and finally brought the protests to the attention of the public. To garner more sympathy the prisoners went on hunger strikes. They obtained early release as their health failed. The government retaliated by force-feeding and then drugging them, almost causing several deaths.

One of Gertrude Harding's first assignments was to destroy two glass houses containing rare orchids at Kew Gardens. Wilson writes, "It is difficult

to understand why women felt justified in committing such acts of violence as attacking works of art and setting empty buildings ablaze. Often the women themselves found their acts repulsive. As I contemplate Gert and her comrades, I'm drawn into the mind of the individual woman as she argues with herself over whether to throw her first stone. If she throws the stone, she will be hurtling herself away from comfort and into the world of the Other, of the few people who cross the border of perceived civilization in order to expand it. If she throws the stone, it will be the single most significant act of her life."

As the campaigns escalated the police recruited helpers, who often went untrained and without uniforms. They frequently roughed up the demonstrators, especially the leaders such as Mrs. Pankhurst. In order to provide protection and resistance Gertrude Harding was asked to organize a female bodyguard. But their strength was limited. At a rally in Glasgow: "It took a hundred constables to arrest one sick, middle-aged woman, but arrest her they did." Because of concerns for her safety Christabel Pankhurst was often stationed in Paris, where she directed operations and wrote articles for the WSPU pamphlets.

Their first paper was published in 1907. "The Pethwick-Lawrences then decided to publish 'Votes for Women' weekly. They dropped the price, and by the end of June, 1908, circulation had shot up to ten thousand copies per week." In 1912, after the party split on the issue of militancy, a new paper called "The Suffragette" started up. A police raid on their offices and the arrests that ensued garnered public support, from other newspapers in particular. Gertrude Harding took charge of this paper in 1914, and in 1915 she put together yet another paper named "Brittania."

With the onset of war, the Pankhursts declared an end to militant protests. Instead they urged the Prime

Minister "to allow women to join the workforce in greater numbers and to ensure that women who took over the jobs of men who were in the army would be paid the same wage as the men had received." Large numbers of women served the war effort at home and close to the Front. "One long-term result of this massive, though short-lived, change in the workforce was that men saw the varied abilities of women and became more inclined to acknowledge their right to vote."

"On February 6, 1918, an act was passed granting the vote to all men over twenty-one and to women over thirty who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property of at least five pounds annual rent, or university graduates (over the age of thirty-five)."

"Some say that the Suffragettes' fight was counterproductive and that the vote would have come anyway from the push for political emancipation by suffragettes worldwide. But the radical front of a social or political movement pulls the movement. The Suffragettes emerged amongst hundreds of other suffrage groups around the world. They set the most radical policies. In Ottawa, Washington, Paris and Amsterdam, people saw pictures of Suffragettes. They saw pictures of educated women shouting 'No!' to double-talking politicians, working women taking time out from their busy, back-breaking lives to march on Parliament, old women trying to push their way past policemen and genteel ladies throwing stones through windows. Without such examples, would the women of Canada, the United States, France and the Netherlands have pushed, by constitutional means, as hard and as long as they did? And in Great Britain, if suffragettes had caused the government no more trouble than staging large, peaceful demonstrations, would Lloyd George and the other MPs have granted women the vote in 1918?"



PAINTED BY NABEEL ANANI

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord, rejoice, rejoice, my spirit,
in God my saviour; so tenderly has he looked upon his servant,
humble as she is. For, from this day forth, all generations will count me blessed,
so wonderfully has he dealt with me, the Lord, the Mighty One. His name is Holy;
his mercy sure from generation to generation toward those who fear him;
the deeds his own right arm has done disclose his might; the arrogant of heart and
mind he has put to rout, he has brought down monarchs from their thrones,
but the humble have been lifted high. The hungry he has satisfied with good things,
the rich sent empty away. He has ranged himself at the side of Israel his servant;
firm in his promise to our fore[bears], he has not forgotten to show mercy to
Abraham and his children's children, for ever.

LUKE 1:47:55 NEB