

A Place in the Kingdom

Paintings and Heritage Stories Celebrating Farm Animals

by artist Lynda Toews
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Paintings are numbered to correspond with price list insert.





BIOGRAPHY: Lynda Toews has degrees in Fine Arts (Honours) and Education from the University of Manitoba. Her involvement in arts education includes teaching, writing the Manitoba provincial position paper for arts education curriculum renewal and writing the education section of an art Web site for the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Toews has had artwork and art criticism published in *Sophia Wisdom, Other Voices, The Plug In Harold, Rhubarb, Canadian Mennonite, The Carillon, and the Dawson Trail Dispatch*. She has exhibited in juried and group shows at several galleries and her recent solo exhibits include *The Silent Contribution* (Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach) and *Barn Dance* (Steinbach Arts Council). She was also the featured visual artist with her Nativity painting at the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops concert in 2014.

EXHIBITION STATEMENT: I was born in 1962 and grew up in Winnipeg. I spent summer holidays with Mennonite relatives in the country, where I developed a love for nature, including animals. Since moving to rural Manitoba I find myself drawn to the individual personalities and beauty of the local farm animals - especially when the sun is lower in the sky and warm light delineates their forms. Being alive is an amazing thing. A mechanic can completely disassemble a motorcycle piece by piece, put it back together, and it will run again. A surgeon could not do that with a living creature. Painting these animals, declaring them beautiful and worthy of our attention, is one way of honouring and celebrating a portion of God-given life.

Working with this subject matter led me to explore the connections between the contribution of farm animals and the Mennonite journey of survival (I am sure many other cultural journeys are similar). Historically and today we are dependent on farm animals for so many things. They provide(d) labour, transportation, meat, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, wool, lanolin, glue, heat (use of manure bricks for fuel), alarm clocks (roosters), mouse traps (cats), fertilizer, insulation, security (guard animals), artist brushes, leather, violin bow hair, gut strings, certain medications, porcine heart valves, companionship and fun. We provide farm animals with food, care and protection. Considering all this, I propose that some reverence is due them.

Consequently, as well as being inspired to produce paintings of farm animals I began to collect personal stories of past Mennonite farm life. (My paintings are not direct illustrations of these stories because I work mostly from my own photographs of living animals.) To share personal stories from older Mennonites about their relationships with their animals will hopefully forge stronger connections between younger and older, and urban and rural people. Herein is a collection of some of these stories, arranged by age of storyteller (all born before 1962). As far as possible considering space limitations, I have attempted to retain the original words of the speaker and to use most of the story content collected. My intention was not to be interpretive or analytic, but to present personal histories mediated through story.

My hope is that farm animals will find a place of honour in our minds and kingdoms: the animal kingdom, the Mennonite kingdom, the art kingdom, and the kingdom of God. After all, they were even present at the Nativity.

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"A people who have not the pride to record their own history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great" -- Jan Gleysteen

Helen Schellenberg (nee Giesbrecht) b. 1922 d. 2013 Winkler, Manitoba 1930s - 40s
(artist's maternal aunt who sadly passed away a few short weeks after sharing this story)

"One year we bought a pig from a man in Winkler. Nettie and Abe (*younger siblings*) were pre-schoolers at the time. This pig was full grown but half starved. We had no pig pen, and no money for wood to make one so this pig was just loose in the yard and traveled wherever he wanted. He rested with the cows and even the horses. One day he slept between the horse's legs in the barn.

In spring dad was plowing and harrowing the fields. We had a very long narrow piece of land and only had one horse, so he borrowed a second horse for these jobs. We'll never forget what we saw one day when dad was harrowing: here was our dog out in front leading the way, tongue hanging out and tail wagging, then came the two horses, then the harrow, then came dad on foot, then came Nettie and Abe and the cat walking behind, and then some distance after that was our skinny pig following them.

Pig killing happened in fall. Many families came together to do it. Dad found the killing part very very difficult – and this year especially so, because he had to kill our skinny pig who had followed everyone around.

In those earlier years we had a very small cow barn built for four cows, but we had five in there so it was very crowded. We also had a horse, a dog and cat, the pig, and three barns of hens. We came to dislike eggs because we ate so much of them. We used egg yolk for shampoo and it made our hair very shiny and soft.

We had to milk the cows twice every day. At corn weeding time we would milk them at about 6:00 am, have breakfast and then go to work on the field. We often came back late from weeding corn but first we had to milk cows before getting our supper. It was a long day! I was about seven years old when I had to start milking. One cow was a very difficult milker – short teets (only three fingers fit), a huge low udder, and she was also a kicking cow. She gave a huge amount of milk, but hers was not creamy like the others. She was a holstein and the other cows were jersey's – much creamier.

One year dad did extra work at his uncle's neighboring farm. This uncle had many hens and each hen had a band around its leg with a number. When laying an egg, her number would be recorded in order to keep track of how many eggs each hen laid. The eggs from the hens who laid the most were taken for hatching and those chicks would later be used for breeding. Dad had all of the hen's numbers memorized!

Later on (I was late teens or early 20s), we had a bigger barn and 30 pigs. I had to feed the pigs. I took two big pails of feed at a time and went to the barn always whistling. The pigs were in the pen outside the barn, many lying down. When they heard me whistling they rushed and crowded into the barn to get their food. Another time I was walking in the yard and whistling absent-mindedly (not on my way to feed the pigs). Those pigs remembered the connection between the whistling and the food and they got up and crowded into the barn, but with no food coming. The next time I came whistling with the food pails in hand, they remembered that and didn't get so excited. They are much smarter than one would expect!"

Peter Hildebrand b. 1922 d. 2013

Edenthal, Manitoba c. 1945-46

Peter's daughter Trudi Graham recorded hours of Peter's storytelling when he was 84 years old - here are excerpts of these recordings.

"We lived in Edenthal and mom stayed at home during the summer most of the time. She came to work in the beet fields when beet harvest started – topping beets. Mom had powerful hands and she was a strong woman.

Our dog Pup came with us when we moved there and he never left the place. As long as we were there he never left the place. When I went to the neighbor and asked him to come he would follow along but that was it. I could talk to him like talking to a man. If I wanted him to do something and asked him to do it, he'd go do it. My dad bought that dog from Frank Shroeder in Blumenthal. Frank Shroeder had that dog until he was four years old and one day the dog didn't want to do exactly as he wanted so he pulled his ears. He was finished. The dog never did anything for him after that so my dad bought him.

He was just a mutt, but a very smart mutt. He would only listen to me and dad, he wouldn't do anything for anybody else. Just when we asked him to do something, no problem. And we had some really good laughs at the way he went about things. When the cattle buyer came to load up pigs dad took the dog to the pig pen and told him 'we want this pig, and we want that pig, and that pig on the truck'. Well, the dog would go in the pen and chase them into the truck. And then one pig jumped the fence and he went after that pig and got a hold of its ear. That pig was screeching at full throttle and the dog just stood and held it there. Then I hollered at him 'bring the pig back' so he brought the pig back to the pen and when he was close to the pen the pig wanted to go. He let go and the pig went back into the pen but jumped over the fence again and the dog followed right away and then the pig went up the ramp. Then of course the cattle man wanted to buy him. I said 'Oh, no, no – that dog's not for sale.' He said 'I'll give you fifty dollars'. I said 'There is no way I would sell that dog – you can see what he does – he's our helper.' Then the dog stood close to me and I patted him on the head. He loved to be praised. That was his praise. He did something for you and then he came to you and you patted him. He was a wonderful, wonderful animal.

And we had a horse and I think if I had asked her, 'May, go and get the cows', she would have gone into the pasture and got the cows. She was about as smart as the dog. But I trained that horse from the time she was a week old. I trained her to lie down and I would lie down using her neck as my cushion and take my nap in the barn in the sunshine where it was nice and warm. She never tried to move as long as I lay there. Once I got up, she got up and she came with her head right to me. I knew what she wanted because once or twice I had given her tobacco, as much as a cigarette. That filly loved tobacco. And if I'd come in the barn after lunch and she was right near the door, I just called once and she was there and she'd lie down and I'd lie down too. She knew what I wanted, and she always got the reward too.

One time dad put her in a harness. She wasn't used to hard work but she was willing to do anything you asked of her. He was seeding in mud and that was too hard for her. She wasn't used to that and he overdid it for her. And a couple of nights after he was finished doing that I went to see May. When she got up, she fell to her knees. I felt

her legs and I felt something's wrong. And I said, 'May, this time we'll walk home', and I walked beside her a mile and half instead of me riding.

Spring came and it was muddy and a bunch of us boys thought we'd ride to Altona just for fun, and they all tied up the horses when we arrived. I didn't tie my horse, but they thought if they went home before I wanted to go home, my horse would follow. But that horse would never leave me alone. Never. They road home and I was in the restaurant with Arnold Heinrichs. He had lost part of his one leg and was on crutches. We were good friends. When we were in the restaurant a policeman came into the restaurant and asked 'Whose horse is that out there?' I said 'I don't know, it could be mine.' I looked out the window, 'Yeah it's mine'. I said 'Should I bring her in?' The restaurant owner said, 'No way, no horse in here.' So I said to him, 'Well then sell me a chocolate bar'. So he sold me a chocolate bar. I went outside and this I had never tried before. I said 'May, you're on the sidewalk. Step back two steps'. She stepped back two steps. The policeman had tried to back her off the sidewalk and she had kicked him with her front foot. He was scared. And I just talked to her and she backed up. He was standing right beside me and he didn't say a word. I guess he just thought she just needs a boss who knows exactly what to do. Then I gave her the chocolate bar and said to her 'May, I'll just be in here, we'll soon go home. You just wait here'. And she stayed there until Arnold and I came out and then she followed us as we walked with Arnold to his house. He had a gate to open and a door to get in. I went to open the gate for him and the door and she stood beside the sidewalk. When I came out I got up on her and went home. I had no reins, no nothing. Didn't need them. I talked and she listened. There's not many horses like that. But if you start with a foal when it's young and keep it up when they grow up they will learn everything.

But she was no good to run for the buggy in a trot. She wasn't a trotter, she liked to gallop. And she liked an easy lope and when I went to Helen and Jake's place 4 ½ miles, she loped about two miles and slowed down, walked a little ways (she wouldn't trot) and then when she had taken a breather she went into a lope again right onto their yard. I didn't have to ask her to do that. She did that on her own. She was a wonderful animal. But when dad loaded her up in front of the drill with three other horses the other ones could take it, but she couldn't. She wasn't used to hard work. She was used to carrying someone on her back. She was a riding horse. If colts got out or if horses got out of the pasture then I rode back to go after them. I trained her that if you're a headlong ahead, then throw yourself on that horse (on the leader) and they'll all turn, not just one.

One time, I guess I just wasn't paying attention because I went flying off out of the saddle and I hit a fence with my right shoulder – that's why my right shoulder is so much lower than the left. And I guess I was knocked out because when I woke up she was rubbing my left cheek with her nose. A horse has bristly hair at the end of the nose, and that's what she rubbed my cheek with. Then I opened my eyes and she stood looking at me and I guess she saw my eyes were open now, and she held her head down so I could get a hold of the bridle with my left hand and she slowly raised me up. She didn't walk away right away - she stood and waited and I guess she waited to see whether I could stand. So I showed her I was okay. My shoulder hurt very much but then she went and stood in the ditch about 2 ½ feet deep and she stood right near the side of the ditch and leaned over as far as she could without falling and I could step over her back. I had the

left rein – that one I could pick up but not the right one because my right arm wouldn't do anything for me. Once I had the left rein in my hand she walked out of the ditch and she walked into the village. She walked passed Uncle Isbrand's place, then our place, then Sawatsky's place, and then the third driveway where Uncle Peter lived and that horse walked into Uncle Peter's yard. How did she know that he was a chiropractor? How did she know that there was help? That was something nobody could ever figure out! But that's where she walked. And Uncle Peter had seen me through the window coming into the yard and he came outside. When I got to the gate he was there too and said 'What have you done?' I said I fell off the horse. He said it was a bad fall. He got me off the horse and took me inside and set my shoulder as good as he could. He said I had to come back in a couple of days because he'd have to do some more yet, but it would hurt too much now. I said it doesn't matter how much it hurts, it hurts anyway. But he wouldn't do more, it was enough for one day. I walked outside, took the reins and walked home with May beside me. But that horse hadn't walked away either. She had stood there until I came out."

Ben Giesbrecht b. 1924 (artist's maternal uncle)

Winkler, Manitoba 1930s - 40s

"We had two horses named John, at different times. I was a Sunday school teacher already when we had the second John, my favourite one. He was black and he had a 'four-wheel drive' - he could turn on four feet. When you'd ride that horse, if you weren't careful it would turn with the front legs and hind legs too so you really had to hang on. When you went with him to get the cattle from the field, there were no cattle left on the field when John got them. You just gave him a little tap on the back, the *rigje*, and then he went. He knew what to do, and you had to hang on! We also used him for harrowing. (Later Ben's daughter Linda told me that people used to take a milking pail out onto the field where the cows were and milk them there instead of bringing them into the barn for milking.)

I was two years old when we left Russia. I was far younger than 12 when I started milking cows. I was about 12 or 13 when we still had no tractor, just a two horse plow – you had to hold the plow with two handles. We worked all day in the sun. I cultivated corn with the horse when I was about 13 years old (no rider, just on foot). I did seven rounds 'till dinner (*lunch*) time from the morning, six rounds 'till *faspá*, then another seven rounds in the evening which would make it about 20 miles, and then went home. And lo and behold what do you think I saw when I got home? All the children were playing baseball! So I unhitched the horse and ran into the field and we played baseball – nobody would know that I had 20 miles behind me already.

As the oldest boy, certain things were up to me. The ladies did not run the barns, the men did. The winter was weary. We had a 12-foot barn with horses and cows. It stormed so much and we didn't have a roof, only straw on top. And then from the roof to the ground it was all snow packed and the horses had to pull the stoneboat (manure sleigh) up to where the sun did shine already to the field outside. When it snowed at night, it was difficult to get into the barn in the morning at 5:00 am. We had lanterns, so we went to the side of the barn where there was the least snow, shoveled it away and

used a crow bar to get the window open. Then we climbed through the window and brought the food and water for the animals in through the window.

We were helping my in-laws killing pigs, in spite of a coming storm. Usually November 11th was pig killing day. So, we were at the in-laws' barn about ½ mile away and a storm was coming from the Northwest, and you couldn't see a thing. Dad went home after on foot with the snow in his face, and he made it! That was very scary."

Tina Toews (nee Giesbrecht) b. 1927 d. Dec 2009 (artist's late mother)

Mom wrote down these stories to give to her grandchildren in approximately 2001.

Winkler, Manitoba 1930s - 40s

"My dad always planted many acres (about 60 acres) of corn in spring. In June there were always a lot of weeds among the plants. We kids (my brothers and sisters and I) had to stay home from school and weed the corn. This was hard work. We had to get up early in the morning, milk the cows (sometimes we had seven cows), feed them, feed and water the pigs and chickens, eat breakfast and prepare lunch to take along to work because we didn't come home for lunch. So when we were all ready dad got the horse hitched to the wagon, we all climbed in and off we went. Sometimes the fields of corn were quite far away. When we got there, we each took a row with our hoe and started working. The sun soon became hot but we couldn't sit in the shade of trees. No, we worked until lunch time and then we all sat around, some under the wagon for shade. Of course we couldn't all fit under the wagon so we ate in the hot sunshine. Did we ever get sunburned! And so it went, day after day until all the corn was clean of weeds. As soon as we were finished weeding once, more weeds had come up where we first started weeding. So we did it all over again. It took us about a month to finish all this, and that's how long we missed school.

After summer holidays, and having been back in school only about a month, the corn was ripe and ready to harvest. So we kids all had to put our books away and get ready to go to the fields to harvest corn. We had to get up early and milk the cows, feed the pigs and chickens – we had about 300 chickens. Then eat breakfast and by 7:00 am we were on the road leading to the corn field already. We had a long wagon with a horse hitched to it, and we would each take a row on one side of the wagon. We would break off the corn cob from the corn plant and throw it on the wagon until it was full. Then one of us (we had to take turns) would get on the wagon on top of the corn and drive home, unload the corn, give the horse some water and eat our lunch (mom was at home cooking lunch for us). We would pack up the hot lunch (mostly always potatoes cut in cubes with onions and gravy on them; sometimes she cooked beans and put onions and gravy on them) and then we would load the lunch onto the wagon and away we went back to the field. Those that had stayed on the field and worked sat down to eat their lunch now, while the person that came back with the lunch had to start working right away. After lunch we continued to pick corn and throw it onto the wagon until it couldn't hold anymore corn. Now came the best part of the day. All of us would climb onto the wagon on top of the corn. Since the wagon was quite narrow, we had to sit in line (one behind the other). By this time our horse knew the way home. We didn't even have to use the reins. So the horse trotted slowly along because it was a big load that he was pulling, all the corn and about five people on top of it. And then dad would start singing

and we all sang along, beautiful songs he had taught us when we were quite young. The moon was shining already, the horse knew the way home, and we were happy. Soon we would be home to unload the corn and do the chores in the barn. Then we went into our house, washed up and sat down to supper which mom had made. Then, put some ointment on our cracked hands and we were off to bed. It did not take us long to fall asleep. Next morning and all day, day after day, the same thing until the corn was all in. We were sure glad when it was all finished. Then we could go to school again.

When I was about 18 or 19 years old dad had built a little sleigh. It was about 3 x 5 feet and about 15 inches high. One end of it was left open. This sleigh was used in winter to take the manure from the cows and horses in the barn to the field to dump it there. The sleigh had runners and we hitched one horse to the sleigh. The manure was simply shoveled off the sleigh into the snow.

Now my siblings and I would go once a week to church for orchestra practice. We carried our instruments to church most of the time, but sometimes it was too cold to carry them. We lived about one mile from church. So this evening we got the sleigh ready (yes, the sleigh we used for manure). If there were tiny pieces of manure left, they were frozen anyway. So, my brothers put some clean straw on the bottom and then spread some blankets over. Then we put our instruments (violin, mandolin, guitars and my accordion) on the sleigh and covered them with blankets so they wouldn't get too cold. We didn't have cases for all those instruments, only my accordion was in a case. Then we all got in, sat down on the floor of the sleigh, covered our legs and feet with blankets and away we went, the horse pulling the sleigh.

So when we got to down town (Winkler) we turned down the first street and right at the corner lived some people who had two vicious dogs. When they saw us, the horse and something behind the horse that looked like people, they thought, 'boy, we're going to get them'. So they came running full speed at us, and the driver (one of my brothers) was urging the horse on faster, faster, but to no avail. The dogs were right by the sleigh by now, nipping at the blankets that were on our feet and legs. We were so scared, didn't know what to do except try to outrun those dogs. All at once, they bit into the blankets so tight that they pulled them off the sleigh onto themselves. Now it was their turn to be scared. They wiggled out of the blankets, left them right on the street and made one b-line for home. Well, what to do? We stopped the horse and went back, picked up our blankets, got back into the sleigh, covered our feet, legs and instruments again and headed off to church laughing all the way at those vicious frightened dogs. I don't think they ever bothered us again."

Marie Giesbrecht (nee Friesen) b. 1931 (artist's maternal aunt by marriage)
Reinfeld, Manitoba 1930s - 40s

"In our childhood days my sister and I enjoyed playing house with our dolls. One summer season our empty corn bin located in our cow pasture became our ideal spot to set up our doll house. The bin was located quite a distance west from our house and barn and next to our fenced-in vegetable garden. The corn bin was constructed with a wooden floor and roof, and wall framed with studs covered with chicken wire. Slats that could be pushed back and forth served as a door. We had a great time arranging our furniture and playing with our dolls.

By this time our cows had emptied the water troughs, which were located closer to our barn, and decided to proceed west for greener pasture. They paraded passed our corn bin followed by a bull. This angry bull spotted us and came to investigate. We were afraid of him and our fears mounted when with his head he tried to push open the slats – our door!

Feeling trapped and anxious, in our child-like faith we prayed for help. God answered our prayers by giving one of us the idea we should call for our dog, Karo. In one chorus we shouted 'Here Karo, Karo, here Karo, Karo'. Lo and behold in a few minutes Karo came running from the barn barking furiously and chased the bull far away. We made a dash for the slats, pushed them open and ran to climb the fence into the vegetable garden where we were safe. God works in mysterious ways!"

Marge Hildebrand (nee Giesbrecht) b. 1933 (artist's maternal aunt)
Winkler, Manitoba 1930s - 40s

"Northwest of our farm was land that dad rented – we had very little land of our own. We grew corn and sometimes sunflowers there and had to go there with the hayrack and two horses to husk corn by hand or to cut the sunflower heads off with a knife and throw them onto the hayrack. To get there we had to drive the horses across neighbours' fields and yards until we got to highway 14. It was kind of scary to take that hayrack creaking and swaying through the ditch on one side and over and then through the ditch on the other side of the highway, which was a gravel road then.

Horses were such an important part before the tractors. When the first batch of Mennonites came over in the 1870s they didn't have horses necessarily, they had oxen. And then they would travel with their oxen. Often animals saved the lives of many people and I know with horses there are stories where they would get into a blizzard setting and the farmer would have not an idea where he was. It was dark and he just gave the reins back and let the horses do. In one story I heard, all of a sudden the horses stopped. And the farmer thought, well here's a straw stack – he could see that – he would bury into there and ride out the storm. When the storm cleared and it was all over he looked out at all the snow and you know what? He was at home in his own straw stack! Horses have that knowing. They were also used for all kinds of other farm work. We had many other animals too and they all had names, but they were outdoor animals, and our cats were outdoors. They were there for mousing.

In the fall when most farmers had harvested their crops, there was quite a bit left on the fields. Then the cows would be allowed to roam free and eat what was left over on the fields. They would have a really good diet there! Sometimes finding the cows could take awhile but basically our cows would stay together and the neighbour's cows would stay together. When we found them we had to chase them home. Once we got one cow going, the rest would follow. Sometimes we had to take a horse and dog to go find them. On the night of my baptism I had to go find those cows yet first! I'll never forget that – I don't remember much about my baptism, but I sure remember having to get the cows! I was so disappointed because I was so tired and dirty and we didn't have showers like now. We bathed in a metal tub.

Then in spring the same scenario would happen. As soon as the snow was gone we let the cows out and they would be only too happy to get out of that barn and roam the

fields again. We had to herd cows all summer long until the crops were harvested. As early as grade two, I went along to herd cows in the heat of summer. I remember my age because I brought my dolly along and it was so hot one day the colour on its face melted off. Later I remember staying out of high school well into October helping with the farm work. I would take a harmonica along and once the cows would start lying down (very often I would rest in some gully with grass) and they would lie down and I would play my mouth organ. And of course they had to bring all that cud back and chew it. You could just watch it coming up from the stomach along the throat and they'd start chewing that. How they could swallow it into the next stomach compartment, that I don't know. That was sure interesting!

We had a large chicken barn and we had to gather eggs. Often when going to the chicken barn, the roosters would fly at you. When gathering the eggs, sometimes you had to take them out from under a hen and get your hands pecked. But selling these eggs was part of our income. For night the chickens had a *Floak* (perching platform) to roost on to avoid the cold wet floor. It was also our job to make sure they were all up there and if not we had to pick them up and put them on the *Floak* for night.

The pigs ate ground up crops (chop), slop from the kitchen, and schwienskrut (pigweed). We had to pick all this pigweed to feed them and I remember it gave my arms quite a rash. It was Helen's job to feed the pigs and Tina had to milk the difficult cow. In fact we girls had to work on the fields all day, milk the cows, gather eggs and then make supper and do dishes yet too.

At one point we had two horses, a white one named Smile and a brown one named Birdie. We used to use a weed killer on the potatoes in the garden and on the grass at the edge of the road. It was this green powder you mixed with water. One day Smile somehow got out of the barn and was eating the weeds on the edge of the road. We knew nothing about toxicity then. Suddenly the whites of her eyes turned red and she started running all over through the yard and around everywhere, just going crazy!. Only mom, Mary and I were home so it was my job to stand by the barn door while mom and Mary 'herded' her into the barn so that I could shut the door behind her. She must have been poisoned, but she lived somehow.

We worked very hard from a young age on the farm and sometimes there were dangers, but working so hard together made us a very close family to this day."

Mary Peters (nee Giesbrecht) b. 1935 (artist's maternal aunt)

Winkler, Manitoba 1940s

"I remember an unpleasant encounter with one of our horses. One summer day I was getting our cows in for milking. Our horse was among the cows as I herded them from the far pasture. When we approached the barn, the cows knew just what to do. They went around and into the barn at the east end which I couldn't see from where I was. I was very close to the barn when the horse turned around and came full speed around the barn. I was right in his path! He ran right over me, knocking me down. I remember being on hands and knees on the ground, the horse stepping over me and striking me lightly on my back with his hind hoof. I was unhurt. My mother, who was sitting on our porch, saw it all. I'm sure God's angel was there protecting me.

After our mother passed away, my sister Nettie and I, age 16 and 19 were left to do all the housework – baking, meal making, canning, and getting ready for winter. When dad and the boys were busy on the fields, we would also do all the outside chores, like milking and feeding the cows, and carrying large pails of slop to the pigs. And now it was time to slaughter chickens. Scalding them to loosen the feathers, and taking their insides out was bad enough, but who would chop off their heads? I just couldn't do it, so poor Nettie was brave enough and did it!"

Jake Reimer b. 1937 d. 2014

Roseau River, Manitoba 1940s - 50s

(Jake's parents were from Rudeweide, then moved to Tolstoi, then to Roseau River)

Jake remembers moving from Tolstoi to Roseau when he was five years old. They had some of their belongings on a hayrack pulled by two horses through a swamp (no roads back then). "All of a sudden one horse fell down and the guys had to jump off the rack into that cold water (this was early spring) and unhook the traces so the horse could get back up. A couple of strokes with the whip and away we went.

We had an old mare, actually a bronco, came from the wild horses yet at that time. She had two colts, Barney and Bob. They were a team for pulling, I tell you, those two horses! The neighbour was hauling oat sheaves off the field and got stuck because the field was a bit soft. He had a couple of big clydes weighing about 2000 lbs, but Barney and Bob were about 1200 lbs. The neighbour comes over and he says to dad 'Hook your horses onto my rack, and with four horses they should be able to pull this out'. Dad says 'you know what, you take your horses off and I'll put my two on'. The man says 'Are you crazy?' Dad says 'Do you want it out or do you want me to go away'. So he took the clydes off and dad put his little Broncos on and turned the wheels to pull it out at an angle. Those two horses pulled so hard they just about went down to the ground and pulled that rack out of there. If I wouldn't have seen it I would have never believed it.

We had another neighbour, mom and dad always got together with them. They were very poor, and one day they needed a washing machine so badly. Dad had a good heart for helping people so he said 'I'll trade you (we always needed another horse), I'll trade you the washing machine for a horse'. So the neighbour comes over with this mare, Minnie, and brings it into the barn. So, John my brother right away says to me 'Why don't we put the harness on this new horse that we got, to pull the manure out'. We had a manure sleigh in the barn and we loaded it way up. So we hooked her up and we pulled the load right out of the barn. The neighbour was surprised because this horse wouldn't even pull the traces tight for him at home.

Around that time people would come around to breed horses and Minnie got bred anyway. That's where Chucker came from. Anyway, later on we'd use Minnie for everything else and we were hauling wood to school. All of a sudden she stopped and refused to go. I used the techniques my dad used to get her to go. Earlier we used to haul all our water up from the river in a 45 gallon drum on a manure sleigh. Then all of a sudden one day that mare pulled the sleigh half way up the river bank and then she stopped and wouldn't go any further. So I went to my dad and told him the horse refused to pull the sleigh. 'Oh', he said 'that's what I've been looking for'. He was really into horses from when he was young. So he came up there and he talked to that horse

as if it was one of his babies – talked and talked and patted her. And finally he hooked her back up and he asked her to go and she wanted to jump ahead right away but he held her back. Then he asked her to go again and as soon as the traces were tight he'd say 'ho'. He repeated this so many times I almost felt sick. But then all of a sudden he let her go and up she went and never bothered again until we took that load of wood to school, and then I used that same technique on her.

Now years later we had her colt Chucker. One time my mom and dad took me out to Dominion City to a fair and I think it was Montana Steve there with his horse Flicker. He showed all the tricks that horse could do. Then when I went home, I figured I'd like to try this too. I was about 14 years old. I started out by putting a rope around Chucker's front leg, threw the rope over him and stood on the other side. I lifted the leg up and pulled the rope tight. So he is standing there on one foot. I pulled him toward me and because he was on one foot, he lay down. We did that quite a few times until he got pretty good used to it. Finally, all I had to do was lift his leg up and tell him to lay down and he did it.



Then we started with the blocks. I had blocks about 14 inches square and a foot high. I had him with his front feet on there and then his back feet. The first few times I had to put all my weight under his second hind leg to push him up better.

This second one is a joke – what I'm doing here is I'm sitting on those blocks (two blocks together). I'd sit on them and I'd put his one leg up on my shoulder, his other leg is

on the block hidden behind me. It looks like I'm carrying the whole weight of the horse.



This one below was a lot harder. First I got him to lie down like I described earlier. I tried to get him on his back and I turned his head to the side so that he could balance himself. That's when I got on top of him, hooking my feet over his rear feet and put my hands on his chest and made an arch out of it. Then I'd have to get somebody to take a picture.



The last one was a lot harder to photograph because Chucker was so quick to jump up and come back down. When I rode Chucker to get the cattle I would have one foot in the saddle, holding the reins on the horn and I would say 'okay Chucker, let's go', and he would always rear up, just like that and then he would take off. Let him race with somebody else, and there was no way to stop him.



We also had cows, pigs, sheep and chickens. A neighbour came to get a ram – we had a ram for sale. They came with two horses and a sleigh with a box on it. The neighbour says to dad, 'How are we going to load that ram?' Dad says, 'leave it to the boys'. So the boys made that ram mad a little bit behind the sleigh and he charged through the open door. All our life we had a lot of fun but it was also hardish because we were always poor."

I asked Jake about how he thinks the Mennonite faith and culture influenced the relationship with their animals. He said "We loved our animals to death, but we also needed them to respect and obey us because it was so much a part of survival."

Al Hamm b. 1938

near Grunthal, Manitoba 1940s

"We had a dog named Ted. I don't know if there's much of a story behind it, but I was close to my dog Ted. In wintertime we would roll around together in the snow – he was very playful. We seemed to connect well.

Ted was interesting because he was so well-trained. My dad must have trained him somehow. He would walk with me across the road to the pasture to get the cattle and he would herd up the cattle and bring them home. Another interesting thing about Ted, and perhaps other dogs too, is that he could predict a thunderstorm hours before it was even there. He would shiver and hide behind the stove in the summer kitchen and we would know from that that there would be a thunderstorm coming up. He was just an ordinary farm mutt, kind of like a border collie but bigger. Dogs are very important on the farm – for herding and for letting us know when there were strangers coming on the yard.



Al with Ted

Strangely, I can't remember how my friend Ted died. I don't know why.

We had a mixed farm: 10 milk cows plus heifers, hogs, chickens and two horses. We used the horses for raking hay and mowing hay, and sometimes in my younger years after a big snowfall, dad would hitch a sleigh to take us to school. The roads weren't always good so the horses came in handy.

I'm the oldest of five. By today's standards that might be considered lots but back then it wasn't so big a family. We kids had to help out on the farm. I milked the cows by hand, starting when I was about seven years old. My dad didn't get his first milking machine until late 40s - early 50s. I had to take the slop to the pigs in pails and fill the chicken troughs up with grain and with water.

We slaughtered a huge hog every fall for the winter, and also chickens. Neighbours took turns hosting hog slaughtering day. That was done together as a community and

it wasn't just a work day, it was like a fun day. A lot of jokes were being cracked and conversing and storytelling and that type of thing. We always had fresh meat on the table and mom had a big vegetable garden in the back like all Mennonite families had back then. When I look back it was probably a good way of life, but kids were certainly taught how to work right from young.

One of the things I like to do with my granddaughters is to tell them stories about growing up on the farm. Life on the farm the way I knew it was not bad at all. It's important for the next generations to know and remember."

Peter Friesen b. 1938

Grunthal, Manitoba 1940s - 50s

"We were milking cows from a young age already and sometimes we would have fun with it. I would hold our cat's head in place while aiming the cow's teet at its mouth. It didn't take long before I could let go of its head and it was licking up that stream of milk all by itself, even trying to paw the stream toward its mouth if it moved. Sometimes I would shoot the stream of milk a couple of stalls over at my brother where he was working, but if my mom or dad caught us they would say, 'milk goes in the pail, boys!'

When I was ten years old, I was playing football at school one morning in spring. My cousin went to kick the ball I was trying to kick, but he kicked over and got my leg instead – broke it so the foot was twisted around backwards. We had no hydro and no ice, so by the time they were able to get grandpa over at 5:00 pm (with horse and caboose) my leg was pretty swollen! Grandpa was a *Trajchtmoaka* (*self-taught*

chiropractor), so with no anesthetic and only a pillow to bite, they held me down while he set my leg.

My dad was happy when the leg healed in a few weeks because he wanted me to haul the manure out of the barn with the bull and sleigh (*an ox is a castrated bull*). My brother John and I loaded the manure onto the sleigh in the barn and the bull pulled it all by himself 1/8 mile away to the top of a high manure pile. He would not stop until he reached the top of the heap. There he would wait until we came to unload the sleigh.

Oxen have an advantage over horses when pulling very heavy loads because they are more sure-footed.



Stove-heated caboose



Peter and John on the sleigh

Horses sometimes lose their footing and hit their noses on the ground. I remember, even as late as 1948, when cars would get stuck in the mud or snow (we had no tractors to clear the snow) we would hook up the bull and it would pull with all its might – even going onto its front knees – and it could pull the car out!"

Nettie Wiebe (nee Giesbrecht) b. 1938 (artist's maternal aunt)

Winkler, Manitoba 1940s - 50s

"At home we only had a small fenced-in pasture which most of the time was not enough for our cows. So we had to herd the cows to the wide stretch of road 1/4 mile east of our yard. There was plenty of lush green grass with the road being only two ruts where buggies and tractors had driven occasionally. My brother Abe and I would drive the cows to this area and watch them so they would not go into the grain fields beside the road. The railway track ran past this road and we would have to make sure the cows did not wander into the railroad fence and be struck by a train. Since we spent most of the day here we would look in our garden for a few long rhubarb stalks with large leaves to take with us to put up a make-shift shelter from the hot sun. Being kids we took along nails from home to put on the tracks and let the passing train flatten them into 'knives' to play with. Being young and innocent I remember being very scared when the train came because I was sure our nail on the rail would make the train tip over.

I also remember when we did have sufficient grass in our fence and the cows would graze there all day. When evening chore time came around we would call out to the cows ¼ mile away, 'C'mon, C'mon'. Slowly Molly, the lead cow, would raise her head and start moving leisurely along their well-worn path in the fence towards home and the barn. In their correct 'pecking order' the other cows would fall in line and they all came home, without us having to walk that 1/4 mile to get them.

One spring there was a lot of water running along the ditch on highway 14 which eroded the soil around the bridge at the end of the wide stretch of road where we herded cows when our pasture was not sufficient. This particular day all the cows came home at suppertime except one. My older brother Henry rode out on horseback to check where the cow was. We saw him riding out to the bridge, look around and come home at a top gallop. The cow had fallen into the eroded part which was about 5 or 6 feet deep and apparently broke her neck. We could not rescue her and lost a good milk cow that day, which was a big financial loss for my parents.

It was fun teaching young calves to drink from a pail when they were weaned from their mother. They would thrust their head in all the way and come up choking and sputtering, and then do it all over again. So we dipped our fingers into the milk and let the calf suck them while we gradually lowered our hand into the pail. Eventually they learned to drink from the pail.

We had a lot of fun playing with our dog Chubby. On summer evenings we would romp around in the grass with him. Then one of us would sneak away, throw a blanket over our heads and come around the corner of the house on hands and knees, growling like a bear. Chubby would bark and bark from a distance until we threw off the blanket, and then he would come bounding to us and joyfully romp again. This dog was petrified of thunder storms. If it seemed like a storm was brewing we would lock him up in the barn. But he was able to thrust the door open and made one B-line for our back door which never had a lock. He would push the support aside and come in, sometimes sopping wet already and make a dash through the entry, kitchen, dining room, and into the boys' bedroom and hide under their bed. No amount of pushing or pulling got him out – he was rooted to the floor! So we had to let him stay there until the morning.

Most of our chicken farming was done when I was quite little so I don't remember much of that. But I do remember holding the fluffy new baby chicks in my hands, and being disappointed when the soft fluff gave way to white feathers. The odd time I was allowed to bring feed and water to the chicken barn and these little chicks were so eager to get what I was bringing that they ran all over my feet and I would have to 'shuffle' walk so as not to step on them."

Len Penner b. 1941

Manitou, Manitoba 1940s -

"We had a pair of horses. One was Nancy and she was a pacer so she had the 'get-up-and-go.' The other was a gelding named Tony and we used to hitch them up together to go five miles into town (Manitou). We'd be traveling along and of course Tony was slower, so he would get angry that Nancy was always pulling faster than he wanted to go. A number of years later, Nancy was getting older and Tony still got mad at her, now for wanting to go slower than him. Nancy couldn't win. That was quite a shift.

We had a one-horse caboose that we used to drive to school with in winter time. One day the horse had not been harnessed properly. The tongue slipped out of the chain that was on the collar and it went straight down into the hard, packed snow and the whole caboose turned upside down. I was able to jump out before it did that, but my brother kept hold of the reins and went over with it. The two of us got up and picked up the top of the caboose and put it back on. The trauma must have put it out of my brother's mind, because until his deathbed he did not remember that whole episode.

We had another 10-person, 2-horse sleigh that my dad had built and we had a little woodstove inside so we could keep the family warm on the way into town because it was five miles to church. The 'school bus' was horse-drawn as well in those days.

We had work horses, but smaller than percherons. Our horse Jean, which we got as a filly, did not want to back into the barn with the sleigh (the stone boat) behind. One day my brother hooked up another horse to her butt-to-butt, with Jean facing out and the other one facing in. We encouraged the one facing in at the front to pull hard and that little black horse Jean, she bumped her nose on the cement a couple of times and after that she learned how to back up.

We had a mixed farm: pigs, cattle, horses and chickens. We had about 25-30 chickens just for our own use. I remember getting the little chicks and making sure they were warm. In my early teens I sometimes had to milk 11 cows myself, for example, if my parents went visiting on a Sunday afternoon. I remember because by that time I had already cut the tendon on my baby finger and couldn't bend it, so the milk would run down it and boy that was cold in the winter!

We had a dugout that was about ¼ mile away from the barn. My job in winter, twice a day, was to lead the cattle to the pump that was by the dugout. There was no pump house, so the pump was out in the open. I had to pump water into the trough for the cattle and they could drink a lot! Eventually my dad had a well dug right beside the wall of the barn and we took some stones out of the high foundation, built a pump house outside and closed it all in so that you could walk straight from the barn into that pump house and that sure saved a lot of steps."

Maria Toews b. 1942 (artist's paternal aunt)

Horndean, Manitoba 1940s - 60s

My father's mother passed away when he was a baby. My grandfather re-married but his second wife also passed away. With his third wife he had six more children and Maria is the oldest. Aunt Maria calls her parents "Oma and Opa" when speaking to me.

"Opa got a John Deer Model D tractor in 1946, but prior to that we had horses. One horse I remember in particular was Tom. I had a brother who used to crawl under the fence from the front yard into the back where the horses were kept. Tom would pick him up by the seat of his pants and drop him over the fence back into the front yard.

The last two horses we had were May and King. May was a lovely mare, born in May of course. King was a gelding and he was the laziest thing that ever walked. I can remember when I was nine or ten years old, Opa would hitch the horses up to the hayrack and I could drive the horses. There would be a lot of moaning and groaning by King. May would be doing all the work but King was moaning and groaning. And that was typical of him. We had a cultivator that you would hook up to a horse, and Opa was probably strong enough to push it himself, but every year we would cultivate the garden (in the years before rototillers). Then we'd hear this moaning and groaning and there was King. He wasn't doing much work at all – Opa was really pushing the cultivator.



Opa with May and King

We always think that King committed suicide. It was around 2:00 in the afternoon in winter when Opa would let the animals out of the barn so he could clean it, and give the animals some fresh air and exercise. Our dog Buster and King would chase each other. The dog would chase the horse, and then the horse would chase the dog. This time Buster was chasing King and King stumbled and fell hitting his head on a tree. He got up, shook himself off and seemed fine. Opa always checked all of the animals before going to bed and here King was dead in the stall – so the dogs and cats had frozen horsemeat to eat the rest of the winter. You used everything.

We had four cows: Lily, Molly, Bossie & Daisy. Oma didn't let us kids milk because it was her only chance to get a break from the younger kids. I was the oldest, and I was pretty quiet (back then, chuckle). I used to milk Molly when I was about five years old. And if I wasn't the one to come and milk Molly, she would start to moo because her routine was off. I used to sing to Molly too. Oma and Opa were Sommerfelder at the time and I used to sing *Loben den Herren (Love the Lord)*. I used to sing to our tomcat, Peter, too. He was a tabby and he killed any other cats that came on the yard. I used to sit on the chop pail and I'd sing Sommerfelder chants to Peter.

Oma used to get 100 chicks every Easter. I was little and just loved the little chicks, and I hugged and squeezed one so much, it didn't make it! And we had this rooster who used to chase me when I went to the outhouse. Then it would stand outside waiting for me. I used to be so scared! But one day I decided to get brave and I grabbed it by the legs, took it to the horse trough and baptized that rooster. After that he left me alone.

Teddy was a stray collie. Somebody tied a cardboard box to his tail with barbed wire and he eventually lost his tail. When your father (*John Toews*) started working in Winnipeg, he'd usually come home on Fridays and Teddy seemed to know when it was Friday because he'd go sit out on the driveway and wait for him!



Artist's father with Teddy

Teddy used to guard. Oma would leave a baby in a carriage outside and tell Teddy to watch it. That dog wouldn't let any of us near it! One thing I was taught was to be careful of travelers such as salesmen who would come to the door. Sometimes farm women would get attacked – they were so isolated at home and the men would be out on the fields. I was taught to have a pot of boiling water in the kettle in hand when answering the door alone. But Teddy kept watch for strangers and Lord help anybody he didn't know! There was a salesman who managed to get through the front yard to the door. Teddy heard Oma latch the door and came running and ripped that salesman's pants to shreds. He never came back.

Opa loved animals. He was a bronco buster and broke horses when they came in from Alberta. I loved the little calves. They had such soft tongues. One time I hurt my finger playing baseball and I'd let the calf lick it better. After that I always let them suck on my fingers – it was a nice massage. We milked our cows, but when there were enough calves for the next generation, we slaughtered the older ones for meat. I never ate a tough piece of meat until I went to Winnipeg.

I named every animal. At one point we had 20 cats and every one of them had a name. I'd go to the barn and all I did was sit quietly and soon I'd be covered in cats. If you sit quietly, they come to you. Tina (my sister) loved little pigs. Oma told her never to go into a pig pen when a sow had farrowed. But little Tina would come into the house cradling a little piglet, and never got hurt stealing it from the sow.

The first time Oma (Opa's third wife, my mother) cooked corn for supper, Opa walked out and said 'I don't eat pig food'.

My boys Murray and Stephen spent a lot of time at the farm when they were very young. One day they had been playing out in the yard (age about two and three) and couldn't be found anywhere. Eventually we found them curled up with the dogs in the dog house.

Opa's parents lived in a housebarn in Blumenhof, about eight miles from Horndean. We would go there with horse and sleigh, either the cutter sleigh or the caboose. In winter we would heat bricks in the woodstove and put them on the sleigh under the blankets and we were cozy warm. We traveled along dirt roads before the present day highways.



Artist's great grandparents' housebarn as seen in the Supper Chores painting



Toews cutter sleigh

We used to get invited to a lot of pig-killing bees. Opa was sort of a kosher butcher. There were no guns allowed at our house. If you shoot a pig, its squeal will sound horribly human! So, Opa used to take a heavy 10-lb mallet, hit them behind the head to stun them, hang them up, slit the throat and let the blood drain. If they are shot, they can go into tetany and the meat is tougher. The idea is that the animal feel no pain and to have an attitude of thankfulness that the animal is giving up its life to feed you. That was the attitude of the native hunters. Some

people say plants feel pain too – well you might as well commit suicide if you can't eat anything!

For a pig killing bee, three or four families would get together to slaughter several pigs. We'd leave the house really early in the morning and have a big breakfast together, and there would be these huge caldrons of scalding water to get ready. The pigs would be put in them after slaughter to loosen the hair, which would then be scraped off. The ladies cleaned all the intestines to be used for sausage casing. They were emptied, washed, scoured with salt and then scraped with a knife inside and out. Opa made the sausage – really good sausage! He had his own smoke house. In my memories as a kid we were all kicked outside in the afternoon to play and we had all the smoked frozen sausage hanging in the summer kitchen (it was winter). In summer we stored food in the cellar, and we could also slaughter a chicken any time.

Tina (sister) was the best chicken catcher on crutches you ever met (she had osteomyelitis). She'd be out there on her crutches and she'd have a hook Opa made, and 'whoosh' – she'd get them! Once you hold a chicken upside down by the legs it is totally docile. That's how I got the rooster into the horse trough. When slaughtering, they would run and flop around headless for awhile and we used to make bets to see how long they'd flop. Oma used to clean the thing that they'd crow with – I guess the trachea – and give it to us kids and then we'd crow with that thing."

Darlene Gerbrand b. 1948

Stead, Manitoba

"We moved to Stead from Winnipeg about 30 years ago and had a hobby farm.

We went to a farm auction and we decided that we were going to buy a lawnmower to go behind the tractor. We came home with a jersey cow, Daisy (hey, she had a fertilizer attachment). We had no fence, no barn, and no clue how to milk a cow. We had a young lady living with us and she knew how to milk so she taught me and we got an old greenery and turned it into a barn. Daisy was a beauty. She wanted her neck scratched. She would hook her horn on your arm and stop you dead in your tracks and you couldn't leave the yard until you gave her a good scratch under the chin.

We also had Root & Toot (two pigs who like to root around in the soil). They pulled up all sorts of things – we happened to put their pen on top of an old house site. They rooted out an element warmer, and they found a 3- and a 5- weight iron. My neighbor had the handles for them. We had so much more jersey milk from Daisy than we could use, so I mixed it in with the pig feed. You milk the cow twice a day and you end up with all this luscious cream. I even learned how to make butter. My husband Peter made that

schmont fat (cream gravy) – it was enough to put 40,000 pounds on you in one sitting!

It was fun, and then somebody decided that we needed a horse. They showed up on our yard, saw our lone cow in the pasture and said we needed a horse too. I had no intentions of buying one, but they said we could have it. The following Saturday, two guys came along in a van with a Shetland pony. We named him Sugarbear. He was fun and the kids enjoyed him. Then somebody else gave us another horse and she was 13 hands high (13 x 4 = 52 inches at the withers). She was actually quite nice to ride and we named her Duchess.

When we moved to the country we had our dog Shep, a black and white border collie. He was a beauty and he was my best friend. He got himself caught in a claw trap and he was there for 13 days. When he got home he had holes in his paw. It was like the good Lord had led him out of there. He came home, he had not ripped his paw off, and he had not chewed his paw off like some wild animals do. I asked the good Lord to bring him home, or that I could find him so that I could bury him on my yard if he was dead. That was before Christmas and I used to walk up and down my road calling him and crying and praying. Finally around the 27th of December we had gone into Winkler and a friend was looking after our other animals on the yard and all of a sudden she phoned and said 'guess who's home'. Well, that was it – we packed up the kids and went straight home. We have no idea how Shep got out of the trap, only the good Lord knows that one. Shep came home and the next day we took him to the vet in Beausejour but he had lost at least 25% of his body weight if not more, and he had gangrene in his paw. We had his paw amputated and were to go back the next day but couldn't because there was an ice storm, and he passed away then. So, we buried him on our yard like I asked the good Lord if I could. It brought me closer to the Lord to see that kind of miracle. The good Lord knew that having a minister or other people around me who would try and bring me to the Lord wouldn't work. I'm an animal lover and that would bring me closer to Him, to show me the miracle that Shep would come home, even after 13 days!

Later we had a dog named Bobby who was also a border collie. She liked to try and herd everybody in her yard. When we had Sugarbear, he was partially blind. We'd let him out and he'd walk around close to the house. If he got too close to the road I'd just go out and yell 'that's too close'. At night I would walk out the door and I would say 'okay, time for bed' and Bobby would put Sugarbear to bed. She knew he was partially blind so instead of herding from behind, she would run in front of him and twirl around so that he could see the motion. Then she'd lead him all the way back to his stall. Sugarbear also stayed close to Duchess, always a tail-length from her and she took care of him."

Bill Giesbrecht b. 1950
Grunthal, Manitoba 1966

"I was born at home in Barkfield, Manitoba about six miles southeast of Grunthal. On March 4, 1966 Southern Manitoba experienced a heavy snowfall with high winds that made the roads impassable for that weekend. Our family lived 3.5 miles south of the village of Grunthal. We were short of some essential groceries, and a shopping trip had been planned for Saturday, the day after the storm.

I had leased a horse named Smoky for the winter and was using him for riding and hauling the animal manure to the field in a homemade wooden sleigh. I was 15 years

old that winter, and immediately volunteered that Smoky and I would take the sleigh to Grunthal so the shopping could be done. After some discussion between my parents they agreed that my father and I would go to Grunthal to shop. I harnessed Smoky, cleaned the sleigh, covered it with some clean hay, and off we went. We rode the sleigh and made it to Grunthal in good time. The shopping was done, we wrapped the perishables in blankets that we had brought for that purpose, and headed for home.

The homemade sleigh that we were using was made of 2 x 6 inch boards for the runners and a plywood top. I had curved the 2 x 6 boards at the front and drilled holes in them to attach the singletree, so the horse harness could be attached. Although large stretches of the road were covered in snow drifts there were other stretches that had blown bare, leaving gravel exposed. About one mile out of Grunthal, suddenly the sleigh gave a lurch, and took on a distinct sideways cant. I stopped Smoky and we got off the sleigh to take a look. The gravel had worn down the sleigh runners, to the extent that one of them had worn through the hole that I had drilled. This left all the weight of the sleigh being pulled by one runner. We were able to rig a temporary fix so that the sleigh would ride straight, but we quickly determined that the sleigh would not last if the weight of the groceries and our body weight were on it. So we decided that we would walk. I lead Smoky and walked at the front with him, and my father walked with the sleigh and kept an eye on the groceries. My father was experiencing some health problems that winter, and was not able to do heavy work or other physical activity for an extended time. Smoky and I were young and had energy, with the result that we walked faster than my father, and he gradually fell behind.

As I continued to walk with Smoky, dad fell further behind. Suddenly Smoky stopped. I pulled on the reins, but he would not move. I looked to see if the harness was okay, checked Smoky's feet to see if he had a stone lodged in his hoof but all was okay. However, try as I might I could not get the horse to move. During my checking and coaxing, my father had caught up with us. As soon as he was even with us, Smoky started walking. We continued towards home and dad started falling behind again. When he was about 50 yards behind, Smoky stopped again and would not move. This time I figured out that he was waiting for dad, so I just waited with him until dad caught up. As soon as dad was even with us Smoky started walking again, and we continued

all the way home like this. We made it home without further problems. When we got home I unharnessed Smoky, put him in the barn, gave him water and feed, and wondered about a horse that knew enough that he would not leave a human passenger alone on the road, but insisted on waiting at regular intervals so that he knew all of us were okay!"



Smoky

Mary Epp (nee Giesbrecht, artist's maternal cousin) b. 1951

Winkler Manitoba, c. 1960

"I remember one week when dad was away, mom was left in charge of feeding all the farm animals. One day she went to feed the pigs and they were noisy and boisterous and even tipsy. She didn't know what was going on so she called her brother to come over and check things out. Well, it was determined that these pigs had gotten into some old barley that had fermented."

Kathleen R. Sanderson (nee Enns) b. 1953

Elm Creek Manitoba, c. 1963

"I was raised on a farm near Elm Creek, Manitoba. We had dogs, cats, chickens, pigs, sheep, goats, cows, horses, and Shetland ponies. But the greatest of all of these was my daddy's prize horse, Pat. Pat was born when dad was in his late teens. Although I don't know the circumstances, dad claimed Pat as his own right from birth. When mom and dad moved to the farm as a young married couple, Pat came with them.

Pat was used for everything from hard work to all of us kids riding him. I always rode bareback with only a bridle. We would love to gallop around in the fields and up and down the country roads, waving at the neighbours as we flew by. Pat loved being ridden and I found that it de-stressed life from its everyday worries.

As Pat aged, he was used only for riding. He was getting too old to do any more farm work. At the age of 33, Pat was old but still stood proud and tall. He loved being around my dad and dad loved being around him.

One spring day, dad came in and asked if anyone had seen Pat lately? He had realized that he hadn't seen Pat in two or three days. As we looked around, all of us had to admit that none of us had seen him. Dad was concerned because he knew how weak Pat was and although the temperatures were warm enough, there was still a lot of snow in the bushes.

Dad organized us kids and we each went a different direction. With only a quarter section, we could see each other most of the time. We fanned out and started searching. It didn't take long. We found Pat in the east bush lying on his side in the snow. All the fight had left him. Dad guessed that Pat must have lain down in the snow which melted through with his body and made his legs higher than his body. It was evident that Pat had fought hard to kick at the snow to get up but to no avail. It had been a few days and Pat lay there shivering, no longer with a will to live.

We called our dad and he came running along with the other kids. My heart broke as dad looked down at Pat. My daddy was a strong and sometimes very demanding person, but now he stood there with tears in his eyes. His heart was breaking and he knew what needed to be done. He sent all of us kids to the house and asked my brother Ernie to bring the gun back to the bush. He looked a long time at Ernie and then told him he didn't have to hurry back.

Shortly after my brother got back to the house we heard the shots – one, two, three – it was over. My dad didn't come into the house for a long time that day. We never talked about it ever again. Dad was a lot like that, he just kept all his hurts and disappointments way deep down inside.

At the age of 59, after battling cancer for several years, my daddy passed away. I miss my daddy terribly and remember the good times. And I praise the Lord that dad rededicated his life to the Lord in those last three years of his life and he was looking forward to moving up to heaven.

I don't know if there are animals in heaven but if there are, I know my daddy is galloping around heaven on Pat. My mom just passed away this spring and I love to



Peter Enns



Peter riding Pat

imagine that Pat is hitched to the buggy and mom and dad are having evening rides around the gardens as they listen to the choir singing.

I love and miss you, mom and dad. I miss you too Pat. Wait for me. I'll be there in the twinkle of an eye."

Ken Penner b. 1954

RM of LaBroquerie, Manitoba, c. 1962

Ken told me this story about his father:

"I remember when a pig was soon to give birth, dad would put pepsi and aspirin in her feeding trough. Apparently this concoction would make the sow quite docile and prevent her from becoming startled or upset during the birthing process and possibly harm the piglets. There were no drugs available then, so they found a way."

Linda Klassen (nee Giesbrecht, artist's maternal cousin) b. 1954

Winkler, Manitoba, c. 1966

Linda was raised on a dairy farm near Winkler. The painting Taking Turns is based on her memories. Here are some other excerpts of her memories:

"I remember when after the cows had been in the barn all winter, we would let them out for the first time in spring and they would jump and buck and prance around playing in the field. They were so happy!

A friend of mine was afraid to ride her horse, so we rode double with me sitting in the front. We rode bareback and when the horse stopped to put its head down to eat, I slid down its neck. I landed on my butt and was quite surprised, but the horse just kept on eating and didn't even seem to notice.

One time we had company from town and my brother John and I told them that all brown cows gave chocolate milk. To prove it to them, I told them that I would go in and get a cup so that we could milk into it and show them. Well, I put in some chocolate milk powder and went back to the barn and gave it to John who was already sitting by the cow ready to milk her. The kids were very surprised and believed us. They were probably around five and seven years old"

Lorena Kehler (nee Hildebrand, artist's maternal cousin) b. 1958

c. 1989

"Once upon a time there was a family with a little boy and two little girls. The older girl, Amy, loved cats. She wanted a little kitty of her own. Her daddy did not like cats

in the house but she agreed that the kitty could live outside. So a little black kitty was found and loved by her. The kitty grew up and began to wander farther and farther from home in her hunting expeditions. Oh, the sad day when the kitty dragged herself home, very badly injured – so badly in fact, that we had to say goodbye to the dear black kitty.

Some time later in the spring, when cats have their babies, a very pregnant black cat wandered into the yard. Nobody knew where she came from and nobody wanted her except this family who had once had a black kitty. They were very happy to have another black kitty, especially the children. This kitty needed a name – what would they name her? Ah yes, after the kitty in their story book. This storybook kitty, Mimi, was also black, was homeless and found a home. So this stray black kitty was named Mimi.

Mimi was a very good mother and a good hunter. She had many litters of kittens, some of them in interesting places – like inside the neighbour's boat, or up in the rafters of the garage. One kitten fell out of the nest she made up there, onto the cement floor of the garage, and survived! One time, when she was having her kittens, neighbour children were invited to come and see this miracle of birth. They had never seen something like this before.

Mimi lived with her babies in a shed that had a swinging pet door. This door allowed her to go in and out at will. When the kittens were old enough to be running around she would take them outside for tree climbing lessons. Or, when she caught a mouse or a bird she would bring it, live, to her kittens for hunting lessons. One time, after we had been away for a few days, one of her kittens was missing. She hunted for that little kitty until she found it, brought it home and put it back in the shed. All the babies were grounded for a day or two. She made them stay in the shed!

Mimi did not like dogs – not at all. One day, when Mimi had kittens, the neighbour man was warned not to let his dog come into the yard with him when he came to visit. He didn't think it would be a problem, but Mimi did. She jumped right onto the dog and rode his back all the way back to his house! Another time family came to visit, bringing their dog along. They were warned that Mimi might not be too happy and would protect her place. She did. The border collie cross chased her into the shed with the swinging pet door and what did the dog do then? Well, of course she stuck her nose in through the door and Mimi was ready and waiting.

As I said before, Mimi was a very good hunter. One day a kingbird decided to harass her, swooping down at her. She was very still, just crouching lower and lower with every swoop. Suddenly, when the kingbird swooped really low, she pounced! That was the end of the kingbird.

One day she jumped into a bathtub full of water to have a drink. When Mimi got older, she would sometimes sneak into the house in the evening and hide. There were a couple of scares at night when she jumped into someone's bed to cuddle!

Mimi was very loyal to her human family. They tried to give her away to a good farm about two miles away when the children were growing up and not wanting a kitty so badly anymore. They brought Mimi, with her babies to this nice warm barn and a couple of little boys to play with. Then her human family went on a holiday. When they came home, there on the front step sat Mimi, waiting for her family. Her new family had come twice to get her but she always set out for home again. She took her babies with her on this journey across a busy highway and along another one. One of the kittens

ended up at one farm along the way and another at a different farm but Mimi was at home. In fact, some time later when her family moved a few blocks away to a new home, Mimi would not move with them. She just went back to her old home.

This family had had a good life with this stray kitty that joined them for a time. They have many fond memories of her.”



Amy with Mimi and her kittens

Victor Wollmann b. 1961
South of Beausejour c. 1972

“When I was about 11 years old, we had a horse and he had three colours and we actually named him Pinto – just a beautiful horse. He was an abused horse when we got him, so it took quite a while to get him tamed down so that anybody could ride him. It just happened that we had a dog with exactly the same colours as this horse. We called him Curly. They both kind of clicked with each other, and we used this horse to go get the cattle for milking. It got to the point where we didn’t even have to saddle him. We just went on his bare back without even a bridle and he would start bringing the cows home and then we would give him a treat. Curly would come with the horse all the time. This went on for a couple of months one summer but of course in the winter the cows stay in the barn. In the spring, herding the cattle into the barn would start again. It got to the point where you wouldn’t even have to jump on the horse, you would just have a container of oats and a stick to bang on it and he would come have some oats before he would go get the cattle. He would also get more oats after he was done. It took about 1½ years to train him to do this, and he did it with the dog. Later Pinto got sick and died, and his buddy Curly died right afterward.

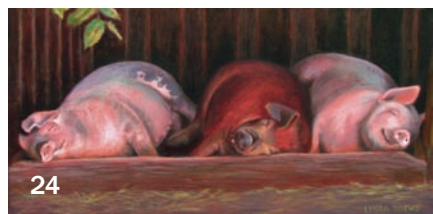
Besides being buddies with the horse, Curly would come just after we ate lunch to get a bone. Just after lunch we would jump on the tractor and go about half a mile down the road to the nearest swimming hole. That’s what we did in the summertime, just for about half an hour and then it would be time to get back to work. This dog followed us all the way there, jumped in the water with us, came back out and ran all the way home behind the tractor.

I remember a black team of four horses that they would hook up to a sleigh and these horses didn’t need any direction. They used to go into the bush to pick up wood. They would stop at the wood pile where they were supposed to until it was loaded and then they would go back around again and go into the bush again. I was probably about five or six years old but I can still remember that. All the washing machines and the heating was done with boilers before they got into the coal and were still using wood.

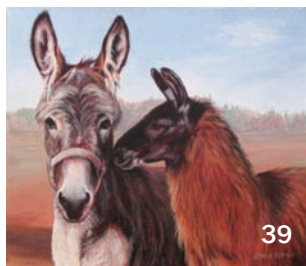
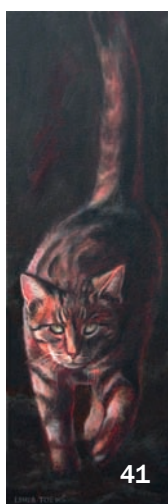
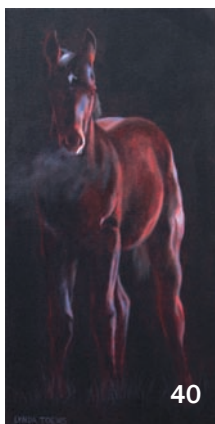
If you train a horse right and treat it well, it will do anything for you. It will be just like having a little baby. It’s about how you connect with the horse.

God didn’t create animals for us to abuse them. Now if you learn how to get along with them it’s good. God created them for a reason, so they must have their place. We had a friend who was very sick, she has passed away now but when she lay in bed sick, her dog would not leave her side.”

“We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals” --Kant







ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The paintings herein are based on photographs taken by Toews right here in southern Manitoba. As much as possible, Toews has made an attempt to find and speak with many of the local farmers whose animals she painted. Overall, she has been impressed with their dedication to their animals and the obvious respect and care they provide. She extends sincere appreciation to those who allowed her onto their property to take pictures and ask questions. Toews is also very grateful to those who took the time to share their personal stories and photos and for permission to make them public.

Toews also wishes to thank the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery for providing the opportunity to exhibit in their space. And above all, she thanks her husband Gary Brown for all his support and encouragement and for the chance to fulfil her dream of working professionally as an artist.



Design, layout, photography and editing: Lynda Toews

This storybooklet is also available in pdf format at: <http://gallery.mennonitechurch.ca/LyndaToews>

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A Place in the Kingdom

Paintings and heritage stories celebrating Farm Animals

An art exhibition by Lynda Toews • Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Spring 2015

PAINTING PRICE LIST (sizes width x height in inches, price does not include GST):

1 Border Action	14 x 12	\$ 235
2 Equally Yoked	24 x 16	\$ 500
3 Supper Chores	48 x 28	\$ 1700
4 Rosie	14 x 12	\$ 235
5 Minus Thirty-Five	24 x 12	\$ 375
6 Safe Under Mother Oak	40 x 30	\$ 1200
7 Heads'n Tails	10 x 10	\$ 175
8 Menno's Morgan	14 x 11	\$ 225
9 A Safe Place	14 x 12	\$ 235
10 Gobbledigook	12 x 12	\$ 210
11 Peck'n Scratch	20 x 10	\$ 225
12 Hereford There-a-Ford	14 x 12	\$ 235
13 Milking Time	16 x 20	\$ 475
14 Spring Lineup	24 x 24	\$ 600
15 Evening in Neubergthal	30 x 20	\$ 600
16 Lazy Sunday Afternoon	24 x 12	\$ 375
17 Sheepish Grin	10 x 10	\$ 175
18 Breaking New Ground	30 x 40	\$ 1500
19 Rodney the Red	8 x 10	\$ 155
20 Golden Narcissus	16 x 12	\$ 250
21 Like Father, Like Son	30 x 22	\$ 650
22 Buster's Brood	48 x 28	\$ 1500
23 Fowl Language	8 x 10	\$ 155
24 Meddachslop	20 x 10	\$ 250
25 Percheron Beauty	20 x 16	\$ 475
26 A New Day	24 x 12	\$ 375
27 Silver Lining	20 x 10	\$ 250
28 Bantam Glory	8 x 10	\$ 155
29 September Glow	24 x 12	\$ 375
30 The Commitment	50 x 40	\$ 5000

All paintings are acrylic on canvas

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PAINTING PRICE LIST (sizes width x height in inches, price does not include GST):

31 Out on Bale	12 x 16	\$ 250
32 Red-Haired Boys	24 x 18	\$ 530
33 Donkey & Mila	24 x 24	\$ 600
34 Barn Draft at Sunset	20 x 16	\$ 475
35 Goliath	16 x 12	\$ 250
36 Mama's Boy	24 x 24	\$ 600
37 The Individual	36 x 12	\$ 575
38 The Red Barn	10 x 8	\$ 155
39 Best Friends	14 x 12	\$ 235
40 Espresso	12 x 24	\$ 375
41 Nocturnal	10 x 30	\$ 430
42 Queen of Spots	10 x 10	\$ 175
43 Dairy Princess	10 x 8	\$ 155
44 Curious Gals	10 x 8	\$ 155
45 Gandalf the Wise	8 x 10	\$ 155
46 Frozen Fritz	8 x 10	\$ 155
47 Digging at Dawn	16 x 12	\$ 250
48 Leghorn Waggle	20 x 16	\$ 475
49 Cool Chick	8 x 10	\$ 155
50 Taking Turns	20 x 16	NFS

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All paintings are acrylic on canvas

There are prints available of many of these paintings. Please contact artist.