

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
MICHAEL KLAASSEN (1860-1934)

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I was born on August 26 (old calendar) (September 7, new) 1860 in the village of Koeppenthal, in the Samara municipality, Malisch district, Russia. My parents, Marten Klaassen and Marie (nee Hamm) at that time lived in the schoolhouse, where my father as of recently had become schoolteacher. When I was born, I had one brother, 4 years older than I, who died in 1865, and a sister Marie, who died at the age of 19 years. One brother had died before I was born. In the first 4 years of my life I was supposed to have been a sickly, whimpering child, who only learned to walk and talk at 3 years. Thus my parents had little joy and much work with me during the first years of my life. Before I was 6 years old my father took me into school since I had to go only from one room into the other. Even my studies didn't progress at first, since, as later was found, I had bad eyes and was cross-eyed at that.

Koeppenthal lay in a valley at the river Malisch which flowed through the middle of the village. On both sides were streets were rows of houses: 25 households. Our school-house was situated at the end of the village. Not far from the school, on a side street, there was a store, the district office; and behind our garden on a higher site the big church which was built in 1864. Quite early in life I was allowed to go to church with my father, who was "Vorsaenger" (led the singing) and to sit beside him on a little bench. On either side of the river which flowed through the village, trees were planted. Behind each yard was a garden. So our Koeppenthal was a lovely place. We also had a nice garden which father had planted at the schoolhouse. I remember vividly the many games we played in the garden when there was company. My grandparents, Jacob Klaassens also lived in our village not far from us, with their daughter Widow Abr. Froese; also my uncle Dietrich Klaassen, and David Hamms. D. Klaassen was a Deacon, D. Hamm an Elder.

My parents were not rich in worldly possessions, so had to live relatively frugally. But they were both devout and sought to bring us up in the fear of the Lord both at home and at school. As long as I can remember my father had regular family devotions morning and evening. One of my most beautiful memories is of the yearly Christmas programs, first in the school, later in the church. Also, I love to recall the pleasant games during recesses on the playground by the school. Thus my school years passed by more-or-less quietly and serenely. When I was 11 years old, my father went to the town of Saratow with me to an eye specialist, Dr. Bonwitsch. I received glasses. When I was older I was allowed to help out at various uncles during seeding vacation time, which I really enjoyed.

I attended the village school until I was 13 years old. I learned the Russian language from my youth, but mainly German. My parents had only 2 cows, as well as 2 hogs which were butchered, plus a heifer, and about 2 dozen hens. In 1873 father wrote a Church History Book. In order to have it printed he travelled to his old home in Prussia. In the early 70's the "Kreis Schule" (High School) was built in our nice village. Here a German teacher, Johann Penner from West Prussia and John Quiring from our village, a previous student of my father, as Russian teacher, were hired. Both teachers lived in the schoolhouse on the first floor, whereas the classrooms were on the second floor. I entered this school in the fall of 1873. The classes were alternately half a day German and then Russian. There were only male students—about 34. Here we had to study diligently. However, since I had nothing much to

do at home, I could concentrate on my studies. I had my own room at home, so nothing hindered my intense activities. We had excellent teachers, who knew how to influence us towards this goal: "There's only one way to strive forwards in the bounds once entered—with all one's strength." I was allowed to finish the 3 year course and was examined at the end of the 3 years. I received quite good standing. Thus I was privileged to have had 10 years of schooling. This profound Christian teaching had led me and others into the right paths of definite Christian convictions and endeavors, and has been of incalculable worth in my later life. God be praised in time and eternity. God reward parents and teachers for what they did for me in patience and faith. I was only an ordinary student. But I had such wonderful opportunities, which have been of great blessing to me because of strict discipline and much endeavor on the part of my teachers. Father's wish was that I study to be a teacher, probably also because I was not strong physically.

Since I had a mind for farming, I entered into service with John Bergmann, Lysanderhoch, 7 "verst" from Koeppenthal, after my 3 years of High School. I had good employers but found the work very strenuous. But it wasn't too bad. Since in this vicinity I had next to no communication, that is with the young people, I stayed home on Sunday afternoons when I often had to watch the children of the family. I was here from July 1876 to Christmas 1877. In spring I went to Koeppenthal every Sunday to the Baptismal class. I was baptized upon the confession of my faith and received into church membership on Pentecost, second holiday, by Elder David Hamm.

Upon the special wish of my Grandfather, Jacob Klaassen, I ended my service at Bergmanns and came to my uncle Dietrich Klaassen in Koeppenthal, near my home. Here I was in active fellowship again with the young people of my age. I was very much attracted to my very dear uncle and, also my aunt. My cousin Barbara, and also Dietrich who still attended High School were still at home. Here I stayed from New Year 1878 to October 1879. At Bergmanns in those 1½ years I received 40 Rubles. At my uncles, the first year 45 R. and the second year 72 R. During the second year I was allowed to cut grain ahead with the "Reff." Time went by very pleasantly. Especially since I could run across to grandfathers very often, who could tell such interesting stories of olden days when the French were billeted with the Mennonites in Prussia in 1806. O how often my cousins, Dietrich, Abraham and I sat by grandfather who talked so interestingly and lively and often made us laugh heartily. In 1868 the grandparents celebrated their Golden Wedding, for which occasion father composed suitable poems for the 8 grandchildren. A few years later grandfather could celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ministry. Since cousin D. Klaassen graduated in 1879 uncle did not need me any more, so father hired me out to Bernhard Jantzen in the neighboring village Hahns-Au. Here I began my service in October 1879. But I have to mention another event. In May 1879 grandfather got sick, and after an illness of about one week, died. He had never been really very sick. He was buried at the Koeppenthal cemetery. Some day we shall see each other.

At Bernhard Jantzens they were very good to me too. I had my own room. The other servant was Russian. There was a little old grandmother here, in whose room I often sat and read on evenings. Here I also had lively fellowship with the young people, also learned to know my later wife, the unforgettable Margaret Jantzen. Choir practices with teacher Bartsch and hog butchering were pleasant changes. Also there were evening services on Thursday evenings, which were led by Cl. Epp. My employers visited much evenings, so I had many opportunities, about once a week to non over to my future parents-in-law, Jacob Jantzens. Thus I spent a lovely time in Hahns-Au, which came to an end towards end of July.

Already in 1874 the Russian legislation had introduced general military service. Of course, Czar Alexander II had provided for alternative service of forestry. Most of the Mennonites in Russia accepted this and remained quiet. However, a large group of the Molotschners emigrated to North America in 1874. Several deputations were sent to Petersburg to try to work out some way if possible that we could settle somewhere in the wide domain of Russian territory and live according to our faith. Thus father went to Petersburg twice—1878 and 1879 and once to the Molotschna; Christmas 1879 he came back. For some time our fathers had been thinking that perhaps we could find a place in Central Asia—still under Russian protection where we could have freedom from military service. In Petersburg our deputation had met the Governor-General Kaufmann of Taschkent, who invited them to come there and promised them freedom [from military service]. Quickly a consultation was held at B. Jantzen's where I worked, of those who didn't want to stay and serve. Jacob Hamm and P. Wiebe (Molotschna) were selected to travel to Central Asia in order to get information about the place, freedom and travelling facilities. The deputation came back with favorable conditions. Governor-General von Kaufmann promised freedom and land. Thereupon preparations were made for the journey to Central Asia—to undertake the long journey with our own vehicles. The first caravan of 10 families left the homeland beginning of July 1880.

During that time my parents moved out of the Koeppenthal schoolhouse in which they had lived for over 20 years and had become very much at home. How they diligently worked and experienced many joys and sorrows! The death of their oldest son, Jacobus, a very gifted, obedient child, had been especially hard for them. Also my parents who had moved to Jacob Hamm's, prepared themselves for the journey. Since my parents had no interest-bearing possessions for sale and father had lent out about 2000 Rubles, and couldn't collect it, this preparation and really emigration was a special act of faith on their part. So father bought 4 horses, harness large wagon and a spring wagon called "Tarantas" from those who owed him money. Since during this time I quit my job at B. Jantzen's, I came to my parents in order to help with the preparations. It was decided to start off on August 13, 1880. I was not quite 20 years old at that time. 13 families had prepared themselves for the journey. I will name them as they travelled in order:

1. Heinrich Jantzen, my uncle. His oldest son Abraham always went first.
2. Joh. Penner, minister, and my former teacher, son-in-law of H. Jantzen. A young Herman Pauls went with J. P.
3. Then my parents, we drove between Penners and Schmidts
4. Heinrich Schmidt and his old father.
5. Behind Schmidts, Eduard Dicks.
6. Mrs. widow C. Andres.
7. Minister and later Elder Jacob Toews.
8. Mrs. widow Ens, her sons Bernh. and Cornelius
9. Mrs. widow Abr. Esau
10. Gerh. Esau
11. Phil. Bier
12. Franz Froese and
13. Bernhard Jantzen where I had been employed.

Everyone gathered at uncle Michael Hamm, Medenthal and ate dinner. A farewell service was held and about 2 p.m. we left, eastward on the way over Nova Usan, Uralsk to Orenburg on the Ural River. The farewell was naturally quite hard for many. I didn't take things that hard. For night we formed a circle. In the middle of the circle was the consultations as well as

evening and morning devotions took place. Also sometimes when a load of hay and oats was bought it was laid down here. In the beginning it often rained, but since the wagons had coverings it wasn't too bad. My parents and sister Helene 4 years old, travelled in the spring wagon. Sister Marie, brother Jacob, 18 and 13 yrs. and I on the big wagon. Evenings we young people often got together for a time of singing under the direction of teacher Penner. The trip was very interesting. Our way led through good and bad weather, over good and bad bridges; yes, through slough holes and rushing streams. We went through Orenburg, where father had to buy another horse and wagon, through the Ural Mountains to Orsk. This stretch was very romantic. Our way led through pleasant mountain valleys, by steep cliffs, and past fruitful green meadows. We camped near a Tartar village one Sunday. We had gone past a steeply rising conical mountain. It looked like a Camel's hunch—about 1000 ft. high. Since the mountain didn't seem very distant, we young men, about 6–7 fulfilled our desire to go and climb it that Sunday afternoon. But we were deceived by its distance and height. However, we climbed it and came back to camp very tired. Since we had 2 very dear ministers with us the Sunday services under open sky were very lovely. Really everything went very orderly and correctly under the leadership of uncle Heinrich Jantzen.

From Orsk we turned southward and passed a row of fortresses. When we rested a few days in Irgis, my parents celebrated their silver wedding anniversary, here at the rim of the sand desert. The choir sang the practiced songs early in the morning in front of the wagons of my parents. After dinner there was a common meal with a service. It was a beautiful festive occasion. Many lovely songs were sung: "Es erglaenzet uns von ferne ein Land" and "Alles wohl," and others.

Now we took our way into the sand desert which stretches 200 verst to Kasalinsk. On one stretch we had to lay something in front of the wheels because of the deep sand. Grain and hay had been bought for this stretch and loaded on camels for transport. We almost always travelled on the "Post-road". Here in the desert even drinking water had to be taken along as provision. One evening we came to a resting-place where a well was situated 4–5 verst beside the road. We went there on horseback. One wagon with small containers was taken along. Finally we got there. Each thirsty horse was allowed to drink only on pail full. In the camp everyone waited by the hour. But God protected and led us.

We luckily also came through this part of the way. In Kasalinsk at the Syrdaria not far from its mouth where it flows into the Aral sea, we rested a few days, then hurried on. At the Aral see we found beautiful seashells and at a somewhat hilly country the so-called "Marien" or Ironglass. In Turkostan father and I visited an important Mosque. Before we reached Tashkent we had to go over a mountain chain. On top it was snowing and became quite cold. One mountain was so steep we had to put something against the wheels of the wagon. I still remember the next night when cousin Joh. Jantzen and I had the night-watch that it was very cold. After that we travelled down to the valley and it got warmer again.

On November 24 we reached Koplambeck, where the 10 families who had left sooner were a waiting us, 20 verst northeast of Tashkent. Oh, how graciously and lovingly God had protected us and led us on that long (2600 verst) way. Here we saw many new things. Living quarters were erected in the formerly constructed barns with an earthen wall and flat roof, the front side open. These stretched lengthwise. Rooms were constructed from sundried bricks about 14 by 14, one room for each family, just a wall in between, each having one door and small window. Since there was a mild climate we could drink tea on the flat roof on sunny days. Already in February flowers bloomed on the green hilly "Steppes" behind Koplambeck.

An active life developed here. Especially satisfying were the “Lovefeasts” held every Sunday, when we had much singing and letters from the homeland were read. In winter I was sick with “Sumpf”[swamp] fever for 3 weeks, but got well gain. But sister Marie died here of “Flecken” typhoid, 19 years old. Also 2 of my friends and cousins died: Abr. and Heinrich Jantzen. Oh, what deep sorrow. In all 12 persons died here. Already in February the horses were pastured on the mountains. Otherwise clover was fed to them. We could often bathe in the nearby river. About end of March or beginning of April the Honorable Governor-General Kaufmann passed away. I had seen him once and also saw him in the coffin in his uniform.

Since Czar Alexander II had already been murdered in March 1881, and Alexander III came to the throne, as well as a new Governor-General, Chernyayev¹, our freedom here came to an end. A sizable group of our Am Tract people had already broken up from Turkestan and settled at a new place in spring of 1882 behind Aulie-Atta. They had received some land there from the Government and settled there. They had left the “Am Tract” in September of 1881—a large train, among them also my future parents-in-law. Also a large group of Molotschna Mennonites had arrived in Tashkent soon after us, and had settled in Tashkent, doing vehicle repair work. In summer 1881 they moved to the settlement at Aulie-Atta. (I have gone ahead a bit). We at Koplambeck had to leave the place and in June again prepared to move on. 12 persons had died here from fall till June, among who was also our dear Marie. The country was too fever-prone, also our dwellings damp and not rain-proof.

Again we travelled with our own vehicles over Tashkent in a southerly direction through the “Hungersteppe” to Dschisak. From here we turned west through a mountain range over beautiful mountain streams, also through a so called “Felsentor” (Rock gate) on the way to Samarkand. A little distance to the right was the Sarafscha valley. In Samarkand we had good living quarters: a large yard with big buildings, a pond and big shade trees, surrounded by a high wall. Here we found more southern fruit- wine, lovely big grapes, figs, pears and apricots. But very unhealthy climate for us. Many got sick with dysentery which weakens so much. Father and I both got sick. An elderly man died here. Here we visited the tombstone of Tamerlane [now called Timur], an Asiatic prince. After staying 10 days, we moved on, on very sandy roads towards the Russian border, over Katte-Kurgan, a Russian town and Sarybulak a Sartan village. The dust was so thick at times that one couldn't see the front wagon. About 30 families were in this train. we went into Bukhara, but had to go back since Bukhara didn't want us. At last a bit sideways of the road, near a mountain ridge we thought we had found our goal. Since the border wasn't clear here, we thought we could stay, but were mistaken. Here we started to lay out a village, making sod huts. Everyone did as best as he could. Father was very sick and I not well. But they also made a hut for us. But because of father we had to find quarters at Ed. Duecks. However, the Bukhara Government sent officials to chase us away from this place, after we had already arranged for staying. Whoever didn't go voluntarily was forced. Yes, they destroyed our huts while people were still in them. We packed up our things voluntarily and back we went over the border to the Sartan village of Sarybulak. But first we had to bury our dear father. He died on the evening of November 25, 1881. Since the excitement was so great already, we had to bury him laid on a bed frame and covered with a coffin lid. Brother Joh. Penner held a funeral-service in the evening. Here too quite a few had died and were buried. So our settlement here ended with sorrow. Our family had gone down from 6 to 4: Mother, I, 21 years, Jacob 14 and Helena 5 yrs.

¹ In Michael Klaassen's original text the new Governor-General's name was given as “Thernajew.” However, von Kaufman's replacement was Mikhail Grigorievich Chernyayev or in Russian: Михайл Григорьевич Черняев.

In Sarybulak we all found shelter. We had to arrange a donkey barn for a dwelling, a room at the most 10 by 10 ft. I made an oven of bricks. Also one of the walls had to be made and a window put in. Since there wasn't room for 2 beds I made a double-decker bed from raw pipes. The roof was so low that my brother and I lay close to the roof. The roof leaked in rainy weather like a sieve. A Mosque served as a place of worship. Thus we made it through the winter. That really was a very poor hut. In spring I found a better dwelling for us. Our wagon stood on the yard. All families were housed similar to us. The whole village was actually made up of miserable clay huts. Our necessities were brought from Kattakurgan—12 verst distant where Russian military was stationed. We had sold our spring wagon and kept only 2 horses. Near the village was a spring from which we got our water. The horses were pastured early in spring. In winter there was little snow and ice, but cold rain. Since we were again on Russian territory one of our young men, Jacob Jantzen, my future brother-in-law was ordered to enlist. That brought great anxiety. In a consultation among the brethren it was decided that minister Jacob Toews and uncle Heinrich Jantzen should go to Tashkent with Jacob where he was to enlist. Further it was decided that I should go along, partly because I was his friend, and also as interpreter. Thus we started on our way about in March with the Post (mail). A very pleasant journey. In Tashkent we went into the Gov.'t offices where we handed in a written petition in Russian which I had written, to the vice-governor. Since Jacob was very short-sighted we hoped for release. But it wasn't done that quickly. First he had to submit to a long-winded examination in the military hospital.

The last and largest emigration had been about 40 families strong, that winter in Turkestan. In this procession were also Jacob's parents, my future parents-in-law. Probably a while before Jacob had to go to the hospital a group of these immigrants came as far as 2 stations before Tashkent. The other group had moved to Aulie-Atta. Jacob and I met them by horseback 2 stations before. That evening when we arrived I could greet my dear Margaret and discover that our mutual love was unchanged. My dear uncle Michael Hamm was also in this group. We accompanied them to Tashkent. The family of Herman Bartsch (Mrs. B. my cousin) and Joh. Jantzen had come to Tashkent earlier from Turkestan. The group stayed on a bare place in the town for a few days. From here several brethren under my leadership rode to Koplambeck where we had spent the winter of 80–81. The group took its way to the border where our people were. Bartsches and Joh. Jantzen stayed. Uncle H. Jantzen went home. In his place Jakob Jantzen, my future father-in-law stayed in Tashkent. Jacob was in the hospital. We had found quarters in the town and visited Jacob daily. Now when Bartsches had also decided to go to the border I went with them. The trip went well. The others stayed in Tashkent. Later 2 brethren went to Tashkent and stayed until Jacob was free. I was away for 9 weeks and Jacob about 13. Finally they could come. The last train had moved into a place outside of Sarybulak and lived in their wagons. Here in Sarybulak my brother and others were baptized by uncle Joh. Jantzen (not Elder). During the summer a deputation was sent to Khiva, who came back with the news that we could move there.

On August 13 I got sick with typhoid fever which got worse till the 26th. I was near, very near death. Joh. Penner prayed for me for a blessed ending. I had a terrible struggle with the devil. But the Lord Jesus was near me tangibly near, and I would have died peacefully. But God's ways and purposes for me have been marvelous. I recuperated. Thus we broke up for our journey to Khiva. On August 31 we started out again with our wagons. Our family only on one wagon, where I had to lie bedded as invalid. Since my brother was too young, cousin Joh. Jantzen drove with us. We travelled through Bukhara. A ways behind the town of Bukhara the river Sarafscha [Zeravshan] ended. Thus far we travelled in its very fruitful valley where the fields were watered by the river. But there it lost itself in the sand the desert begun. Our

wagons had to be taken apart and all our things loaded on camels since there was no road. One event I must mention. We passed by a deep abyss—on the right side there was a steep decline. The road took a turn right there. There was something wrong with our wagon so that it wouldn't turn, so we went straight down the decline. Of course I lay in the back of the wagon; it was so steep that I almost came to stand up-right. Mother gave a cry. But we were at the bottom already. God's angel had kept the wagon so that nothing was broken. Luckily brother Jacob had just got off a little while ago. Below there was a level plain, so we could bring our vehicle onto the road again. Thus we went on with camels. The men rode on horseback. The rest of the people had to ride on camels and in such a way that on each side of the camel was a frame made of rods, one person sitting in each. Being sick I had to lie down. On the other side of my camel were mother and Helena. Jacob rode a horse. Thus we travelled past precipices and over sand hills to Ildschick at the Amu Darya a navigable river. How long this desert journey lasted I don't know, since I was still very sick. After landing at the Amu Darya, everything was loaded onto flat boats in order to travel to our destination. The young men and youth rode on horseback alongside the riverbank. I lay on the boat in bed and know very little about this trip. The trip was without misfortune. At Petro-Aleksandrovsk we met with our young men again. About 12 verst below Kiptschak, a Chiwisian town, from where we later brought our necessities, we settled at the Lausan close to the Amu Darya.

About 40 verst further on below on the Russian side of the Amu Darya there was a town called Nukus. Of this settlement I knew very little, since all winter I was still very sick as a result of typhoid. I couldn't help at all yet. Who built the first sod hut for us I don't know. Since it was close to the river we had to move higher up. Many moved about 1½ verst farther on where it was quite high and started a village. Another group to which we belonged, also Jacob Toewses, Heinrich Jantzen, Joh. Penners and others, settled a bit higher close to the first village. About half a verst still further from the river another group laid out a village. Each of these lower villages was surrounded by an earth brick wall but not the village higher up. In the center of the village a nice church was built of sundried bricks. A straight road led from us to the church. This place was called "At the Hill" (Am Berg). Both our villages were called "Lower Kallas" Kallas means fortress. My future parents-in-law also lived "At the Hill" as well as Heinrich Wiebes. They had built well. Beginning of summer I got better and stronger. However, in February when we still lived in the sod hut I began to groom the horses. We had a black and "Fuchs -stallion. [i.e chestnut stallion]" The latter kicked my leg. The left knee was dislocated and the top thigh bone split. Mother helped me into the room. I lay 4½ weeks without medical help. The pain grew so intense that I had no rest at night. The knee was very swollen. Then we sought help from Mrs. C. Unruh. She was supposed to be able to estimate the damage and fix cases like this. Why didn't we get her right away after the accident? An old man had examined my leg and said it would soon get better. Mrs. Unruh told us that was wrong and set the knee, with horrible pain on my part. That was on a Friday. Sunday there was to be communion. I told mother she should go, Jacob and Helena were with me. Mother went. While she was gone I needed to go on the chair and the knee went out of place again. Monday they got Mrs. Unruh who put it in place again. Oh, how hard this accident was not only for me, but for my dear mother. During this time neighbour Abr. Jantzen visited me often and helped out at our place. Thus I lay again according to the strange counsel of my God. While everybody was so very busy. In August our house was built in the aforementioned Kalla. By that time I could help a bit again. Also brother Jacob helped. The house was built of "Patzten" sundried bricks. A barn was built, the walls with upright raw reeds tied together and stuccoed with straw clay; the roof the same.

I think in September we moved into our new home. I built the oven and fireplace with bricks, though I had to use a crutch and cane, then later in fall I could walk without. We had harvested only a little millet and maybe potatoes. The wild hogs did a lot of damage. They were shot by Cossacks and bought by us. Our cattle fodder was mainly obtained from reeds, also sweetwood, [Ocotea] about 5 feet was chopped off and tied in bundles. It was good feed for cattle. We had only 2 horses and a cow. In winter December 15, 1883 my dear Margaret and I had our engagement and December 29 the wedding. It was a double wedding—my brother-in-law Jacob with Susanna Becker. We were very happy. Rev. Jacob Toews officiated for both couples in the church. Wedding text: 1 Timothy 6:12. On our wedding day it snowed heavily, but was mild. As a bridal couple we did a lot of visiting. Thus among so many hardships and actually unfavorable circumstances and prospects I could take home my dearly beloved Margaret as my wife. Thanks to the mercy of God.

Already before our wedding there had been robberies by the “Jamudes” a Turkish tribe. Horses and cows were stolen. Yes, a young man, Heinrich Abrahams was murdered. Of course no resistance was made. But we tried to chase them away. Gradually we started guarding. One night cousin Cornelius J. and I were on guard in our Kallah when we heard some shooting. Those were the robbers! We young men about 6 got on the horses to see what had happened. Naturally we had no weapons, not even sticks. We rode there and suddenly were surrounded by the robbers who shot at us. Our merciful God protected us in spite of all our foolishness, so nothing happened. We had no doubt chased them away. We all came home safely. But how unwisely and thoughtlessly we had acted. How my dear mother had been worried about me. Another time the danger came nearer. In our neighbourhood we heard shooting. We men all went to the scene armed with sticks, however, not to hit but to scare the horses away. When we got there the robbers were gone. In all these troublesome times we have never laid hands on the enemy, as Br. Fr. Bartsch remarked in his writing that we sacrificed our non-resistance. In winter the robberies got worse, so that brother Heinrich Toews and I took occasion to go to General Grotenheim in Petro-Aleksandrovsk. He asked the Khan whether he, the Khan would protect us or whether he, the General should undertake this. Thereupon the Khan offered us a place 12 verst southeast of the city Khiva. There he could more easily protect us. However, a number of families had applied to America by letter and received means to immigrate to America. Unfortunately the family of my dear wife was not among these. But my mother, brother and sister decided to go. However, since we were just married, we decided for the time being to go with those who wanted to move to the place promised by the Khan. And so there was a very sad parting and very hard farewell. Mother remarked that she would likely not ever see us again. We were hoping to follow the next year.

That was in April 1884. Thus about half the families moved on, wagons to the northeast of the Aral Sea towards Orenburg. Mother rode in a one-horse wagon with Jacob and Helena. And we drove southward towards the city of Khiva. How far it was and how long it took to get to our destination I have forgotten. We moved into a garden of pears and apricots, about 12 verst south of Khiva. Here was a lovely pond surrounded by “Ruester [Elm]” trees about 50 feet high. This gave wonderful cool shade. While our loved ones took their cumbersome way past the Aral Sea and the Ustart, our life in the garden (called Ak-Mesched) developed actively. Patzen [bricks] were made. I had a gray horse which had to tread the clay. I worked together with cousin Michael Hamm. The houses were built beside each other. That gave a row from north to south. Then a row attached to each end to the west. Each had several pear and apricot trees which bore wonderful fruit. Our house was 16 by 16 feet. South of us just separated by a wall were Jacob Jantzens, then P. Quirings with the mother-in-law. We had a

good cow and hens. On irrigated land we planted potatoes and vegetables. So we had our nourishment later. The church was built in the middle of the garden. Heinrich Wiebes lived not far from us, and so we had active fellowship. We had three ministers so we didn't lack spiritual edification. In September our loved ones had arrived in Beatrice, Nebraska. We received and wrote letters regularly. Near us was a lake about one verst wide and 30 long which was frozen solid in winter, so there was smooth ice.

1885 In spring "Geschwister" Heinrich Wiebes and we made the decision to follow our loved ones to America. In May we again bade farewell. Oh, again so painful to leave the dear mother behind. But my dear wife never complained. We travelled first to Petro-Aleksandrovsk, where my dear wife got sick. It was almost 60 verst from Ak-Mesched on the Russian side. Here Wiebes and we bought a wooden-axelled one-horse Russian wagon, made a covering over it, and prepared for the desert journey, about 500 verst to Kaslinsk. at the Syr Darya and near the Aral Sea. After a stay of about 6 days we started off. The wagon had to be pulled by 2 camels. We had provided for toasted bread, meat and butter as well as a goatskin full of water. A few other families travelled only by camels. Since we often travelled by night brother-in-law Wiebe and I alternately sat on a camel. We had 2 Kirgisiens as camel drivers with us. With those we were about 11 persons. The road led through deep sand, over smooth rolling road and sand hills. Off and on we came upon wells. But in the water there was camel manure and other dirt. It had to be sifted and then boiled. So it wasn't too bad. Usually we travelled from 2 a.m. till 10 a.m. then again from 4 p.m. till about 10 p.m. On Tuesday 21 May we left the Russian town of Petro-Aleksandrovsk. Saturday already we stopped at a suitable place before sundown. We wanted to rest on Sunday. Everybody was well. We prepared for supper. Just then we saw a caravan coming from the north toward us. It came closer. What a surprise! It was Johann Bartsch, Colporteur of the British Bible Society. What great joy in the middle of the desert to have such a pleasant chance, meeting a dear friend. We spent pleasant hours together. Sunday afternoon we had to part again. Bartsch went to Khiva, we to Kasalinsk. It was really quite depressing to travel in the desert for 10 days. About Thursday we came near the Syr Darya River. We hadn't seen any trees and meadows for many days, now we met green meadows with herds of cattle, and the nearer we came to the river, the lovelier the area. I will never in all my life forget what an impression this contrast made on me. Oh, I thought, what a more wonderful contrast it will be to enter heaven's glory after this earthly pilgrimage. Therefore I want to gladly bear all the earthly woes and privations. Finally I will leave the desert behind me and will come home by the mercy of my Lord. Oh, that, will be joy, when that death has taken will be reunited there. There under the trees of Life, by the stream of Life hand in hand to rest with the blessed. And I with them in the presence of the Saviour singing because no parting can grieve us. O Lord, bring me and my loved ones to this place!

We got to the Syr Darya and were transported over with a ferry. We arrived at Kasalinsk—the east side of the Syr Darya—safely. Here we disembarked and rested before we took the mail-coach to go on. On the mail route we met many acquaintances and places we had already been which was very interesting. Thus we passed Orsk and finally arrived at Orenburg. Here we had to wait three weeks for our things from Khiva; also met travelers from Aulie-Atta. But here we had a very sorrowful experience. Wiebes little Mariechen got sick and died. It was their fifth or sixth which they had buried. In Orenburg lived a member of the Herrnhuter Brethren Church, Mr. Morganhau. This dear family was very friendly. He officiated at the funeral. After we had arranged for everything in Orenburg we went by train to Samara. Then on the Volga by ship down stream. This journey would have been very interesting, but my

dear Margaret became very sick. Thus we came to Kasaken-town² on the east side of the Volga, across from Saratov quite miserably. We had to lead my dear wife. We could hardly get a room, because in places Cholera had broken out. Wiebes went to the Tract to the old home. We had to stay. After a few days my dear Aunt Mrs. Jakob Klaassen came with my wife's cousin Gerhard Thiessens on Thiessen's very comfortable covered spring wagon to get us home. Oh, how glad we were when my aunt came. We left and found quarters with uncle and aunt Klaassen, later at uncle and aunt Johann Thiessen. My dear wife was quite sick. Had very severe headaches. She was sick about 7 weeks, in our dear old homeland where we were born and raised. We visited a while yet, and I don't know exactly when, but end of August we bade farewell. Elder Quiring held a good farewell message and then they brought us to Kasaken-town.

So we left our lovely Koeppenthal in order to find a new home in the new world. We went over Moscow where we had to wait a few days because of our passports, and over Vilna towards the Prussian border and over Königsberg [now called Kaliningrad] to Elbing [now called Elblag]. Here we disembarked. Wiebes went to Marienburg [now called Malbork]. From Elbing we went on a rented coach through the so-called Ellerforest to Tiegenhoff [now called Nowy Dwór Gdański] in West Prussia where we have relatives. First we went to our cousin aunts, Maria and Helena Schulz in Tiegenhoff. Here we were received in a friendly manner and received lodging. Various relatives came there to greet us. Visited from here with dear relatives. I also had the privilege of visiting my dear mother's teacher, Herr Schoen in the some school where mother had gone to school. Also visited Abr. Regiers who lived in the former household of my grandfathers in Tiegenhagen. So we saw where our forefathers had lived and worked. I also visited the house where my mother was born and grew up. We stayed in Prussia for one week, where I felt quite at home. Then we were off to the train in Dirschau. Oh, how delightful and interesting it was for me. I could recognize many a family trait in our dear relatives. In Berlin again, a few days of delay, where we saw many strange things as in Moscow. From Berlin to Bremen where we rested a few days and had the opportunity of hearing Otto Funke preach.

On October 1, 1885 we probably boarded the ship. Also in Bremen saw many interesting sights, always in company of "Geschwister" Heinrich Wiebes. From Bremen port we were to go to the new world; leaving the old world to find a new home in the new. The continent where our ancestors had lived for thousands of years we left behind and soon we went through the North Sea, English Channel into the Atlantic Ocean. We could see the coasts of England and France. In the Ocean liner "Ems"- we crossed the ocean in 9 days. Again and again I had to remember the wonderful leadings of my faithful God. Whereas many people live and die in their immediate neighbourhood without getting out very far, we were now steering towards the third part of the world, North America. On a Sat. October 10 we set foot on the New York harbour. Thank God! We had been seasick, but otherwise took the journey quite well. There were of course many scenes to observe. A little old mother had remarked that no doubt no one would leave the ship alive—she had been that seasick. Here we learned to know oatmeal for the first time. Also we met a Mr. J. Suckau who had been visiting in Prussia. We stayed in New York till 7 o'clock in the evening. Then we left by train over Philadelphia to Chicago. Here we separated from H. Wiebes since they wanted to go to Kansas where his mother, brothers and sisters were, whereas we to Nebraska, where my mother and our uncles lived since a year ago.

² The German name was Kosakenstadt, the Imperial Russian name was Pokrovsk (Покровск), but now the city is Engels (Энгельс).

We arrive safely on October 13, 1885 in Beatrice, Nebraska. Here we were received at the station by Mr. Louis Zimmermann and sister Helena. Then I could see my dear mother and sister and brother again. But my dear wife was oh, so far from her mother and sisters and brothers. But she never complained or accused. She was a heroine. We were in a new world and met up with many new things. That winter we were alternately with uncle Heinrich Jantzens and uncle Joh. Jantzens. Mother was at L. E. Zimmermann, deacon of the church and Mrs. Zimmermann a relative of mother's. Helena went to the town school and brother Jacob had taken on a job. In spring we rented a farm of 80 acres, but could only move on in fall. It was a severe winter -up to 30 degrees below (R). However, we could go along to church regularly as also two of our ministers served, uncle Joh. Jantzen and teacher Joh. Penner. The Elder Gerh. Penner was then 50 years old. We soon joined the Mennonite church which was situated 3 miles west of Beatrice. End of March we could move onto our rented farm, where there were new buildings and a well 70 feet deep. In order to save money I had made a bed-frame, 2 tables, a bench and a pantry shelf in winter. We bought 6 chairs second-hand for 25¢ a chair. A cook-stove, dishes etc. we bought on installments, two horses each \$125.00, two cows for \$30 and \$25 and a sow for \$6.00 as well as chickens - all bought on credit, also implements, a wagon and harnesses. Since on the rented land there were about 200 bushels of Welsh-corn to be husked I received the permission from Mr. Zimmermann to pick it for myself. That was very favourable for us, but with all the mud and dirt not quite easy. But I had corn to feed. The house was 16 by 20 feet and an upstairs. Later an addition was built. I was allowed to sow 6 acres for pasture. So I had 72 acres to plough. We lived on this farm for 5 years. Brother Jacob was boarding at our place for a few years. He had rented land nearby. I finally owed about \$600. But with diligence and economizing God gave grace that I could repay. Yes, after 5 years when we moved to town we had paid all debts and \$300 to spare. Farming would have been enjoyable for me if I would have been well. Ever since I was 17 years old I had a lot of trouble with stomach pains. Also my dear wife was not well. We had already been to the eye Dr. in Berlin. The medicine was good too, but she also, suffered from women's ailment for which she also had medicine. Her eyes were not infected but so weak that she couldn't read.

Our first daughter was born on May 11, 1887. That was of course a great joy. We named her for her grandmother, Maria. Mother was with us and Br. Classen for the delivery.

The harvests at first only corn were fairly good, the price quite low. Thus we went on amidst joy and sorrow. Next year 1888 our little darling became ill with the "summer sickness" and died June 11. O God, that was grief! Teacher Penner gave the funeral sermon. In the same year also my wife's mother died in Khiva. In the fall my wife had another miscarriage and so our hopes again were buried. In 1889, December 7, the Lord gave us a little daughter, Helena. Since we had a fairly good crop we undertook a trip to Kansas to visit the "Geschwister." We had placed little Helena in a small basket. she was about 9 weeks old. At the station in Newton, Kansas, the officials wanted to put the basket in the baggage car, thinking it was baggage. But with that the young mother pounced on them crying "that is my child." Everybody laughed about it. We prolonged our visit to 3 weeks. During the next year I was especially sickly so that my courage for further farming failed me. When we came to America I had thought of studying and to become a teacher. But I was too poor. Now I thought of working in a store. Brother Jacob took over the farm and I sold implements and horses and moved to Beatrice in October 1890.

I bought a little house and lot for \$475 and got work in a grocery store owned by F. Clausen. And so we had become townspeople. At first I got \$12.50, later \$15 a month. But my

condition didn't improve. After trying to work in this business for 1 year and 6 months I again rented a small farm of 66 acres, at the station of Hoag near the tracks in the neighborhood of dear friends, 5 miles north of the church and 2 miles from brother Jacob. The house had to be remodeled from the inside, but there was a good barn and nice shade trees around the house. We liked this better than living in town. Also had a cow, 2 horses and other things had to be bought on credit. In March 1882 we moved in. October 29 a son was born to us a lovely boy. But we were not to keep him. In December 1893 he died of pneumonia. Oh, that was a great sorrow again and our hopes were buried. Now we had only Helene. Since rent always went higher our attention was drawn to a new settlement in the territory of Oklahoma. We read about it in the "*Bundesbote*" that there was much room yet for settlers. The Government gave the land free to settlers. We asked God for His guidance. After I had corresponded with Rev. Peter Pankratz who encouraged me, the four of us, Peter Horn, Peter Quiring, brother Jacob and I undertook a trip to Shelly, Oklahoma where Rev. Pankratz lived and where also the mission station with Missionary Kliewer was situated.

In March 1894 we traveled to Oklahoma and each of us took up a quarter of land. We filed it in Oklahoma City. I have to mention yet that in spring of 1892 P. Quirings and Jacob Jantzens had moved from Khiva to Nebraska. Jantzens moved to S. Dakota in 1895 and Quirings in May 1894 to Oklahoma. We still harvested that year in Nebraska and left in August for Oklahoma. Thus again we dissolved the bond of fellowship. We had been members in the Beatrice church for 9 yrs. Again we had to make a beginning in a new settlement. Our cattle and implements were loaded on a train car. Br. Jacob and I went along. Our dear mother and my family went by train. We landed on a Saturday in Mino with our car and our loved ones arrived Monday. We then drove with our wagon the 65 miles through valleys, sand and good roads. Br. Jacob and I each had 3 horses and a cow, and each a bit more than \$200. In August we arrived at Quirings. We were all happy. Our dear God had helped us with everything, lovingly cared for us, protected and led. Quirings had made a sod hut. As for us, we had to build, buy feed, sow wheat, dig wells, and get the rest of our things the 65 miles from Mino. I built a sod hut leaning against a hill 14 by 14. Feed was very expensive. But wheat was only 39¢ a bushel. I sowed 10 acres yet. Church services were held every Sunday at the home of Rev. Pankratz, later in the school house. And so we began our work.

The first winter sister Lena married cousin Jacob Jantzen who also moved to Oklahoma. Br. Jacob went to Kansas the same year and married Kaethe, the daughter of Elder Jacob Toews, Newton, Kansas. Other relatives moved in so that we had a nice group of acquaintances. We soon joined the Bergthal church there with Rev. Pankratz as minister. mother moved to J. Jantzens after Jacob married and had her home there till she died. In February 1895 a son was born to us in the sod house. We called him Johannes (John). A strong boy. Our farm work went forward slowly among much hard work, many privations, but under God's gracious guidance. In spring I built a sod house at a suitable place where I could get water, but it didn't stand up when it rained. Here daughter Margaret was born on February 17. That year we raised 400 bushels wheat and we could build a wooden house 14 by 18 by 12 high and move in the fall of 1897. It was impossible to live in the sod house anymore. One Sunday morning it rained real hard and an outer wall fell in. We had to go to Br. Jacob with our children. He had his homestead on the same section.

In the summer of 1895 I was elected as deacon, and later when the Bergthal Church split and our group took the name of Schar I was elected as minister in spring by the Schar Church. The vote was as good as unanimous. Elder J. Toews of Newton, Kansas officiated at the ordination on August 15, 1896. At the same time my brother-in-law P. Quiring and

J. Jantzen were installed as deacons. Thus my God had given me an important work. On October 1 I held the first wedding ceremony for P. Gaedderts. In that same winter we built a church 28 by 40 on J. Jantzen's land. The life of the church actually developed quite favorably. Just one thing disturbed us. There was no lack of harmony among the members, but between the ministers it wasn't there. For about 2 years I wrote every sermon which was a lot of work. But also at other occasions as weddings and funerals I was given the opportunity to serve. Off and on there was talk of election of an Elder. It seemed there was no one else eligible as Brother (or as he was generally called, "Ohm") Punkratz, since he was a naturally gifted man and I in comparison, awkward. But many must have feared the opposite. So there was at first mistrust and all kinds of dissonance which finally led to a separation in the church. Because of punishment of a brother's transgression it came to a point where they wanted to excommunicate us. Very sad! We went. Had our own worship services for about 3 months in the schoolhouse and finally we organized as the Herold Mennonite Church. Through the instrumentality of the "Committee for Church concerns of the Western District Conference" we bought the Sihar church for \$325 and so had our own church household. Also the organization of the Herold Church was sponsored by this committee. This took place on September 14, 1899.

Our farm work progressed slowly. To work out my sermons took much time. Also I had to make many a trip. On June 27, 1899 our daughter Agatha was born. Around this time the railway was built to Weatherford—21 miles from us. Up till that time we had to bring our products to El Reno and still building material had to be brought from there. That was very cumbersome and took four days back and forth. It would be interesting to describe such a trip. But that changed and many things were easier. I always had much work and little strength, but much courage. Pastures had to be fenced in and land broken up, on top of that the building and travel. But slowly things went forward. On November 20, 1901 a daughter was born, Anna, and November 24, 1905 Marie. In 1902 we had joined the Conference and in 1904 invited the same to our church. In 1900 brother-in-law Jacob Jantzen was elected as minister. And in 1901, April 17 I was elected as Elder and ordained Apr. 20 by Elder Jacob Toews. In this year for the first time I served with baptism and Holy Communion. God gave work and grace that I could serve with joy. In 1903 my brother was elected as minister and ordained by me.

On October 18, 1904 the Western District Conference began in our church. There were many visitors. In this year we had no crop so to say. But God helped graciously. Our church grew well—about 90 members. Our children grew up. In 1899 and 1900 we had German school. But it wasn't good enough. My dear wife was very concerned about our children. Also brother Jacob. Both urged me to undertake the teaching of German school, since I wasn't strong enough anyway for farm work. So we decided to rent our land, build on another room and begin the classes in a small room. The latter we had already built. And so it happened.

In the summer of 1901 we built and in November I began classes with first 5, then 6 pupils: our Helena and John, Quiring's Peter and Lieschen and Figuth's Katherine, later Jacob's son Jacob. It was a small beginning, but it, was one and was done with God's help. That was the same year that I under took the Eldership. Later we had to move into our largest room. Had 31 pupils there. Then in 1905 in fall we built an extra little schoolhouse on our yard which later was enlarged. I have had up to 35 pupils. I received \$12½ up to \$28 monthly. But then I always provided for heating. God gave grace that we could carry on this way for 17 years. Various pupils came from our church, Mennonite Brethren and others. The last year our Margaret taught school. Thus slowly things moved forward. I also served with Baptism,

Communion, elections and ordinations in four neighbouring churches. Also in the Salem Church with election and ordination of H. D. Schmidt for the ministry. I served the Ebenezer, Bergthall and Friedesthal Churches with baptism, communion and ordination of the brethren H. Riesen, Joh. Fleming and P. R. Voth as Elders. My God gave me much work. I also went to the annual Conferences and twice to the General Conference. In 1908 the General Conference was held in Beatrice, Nebraska. Since, for a long time we had planned to visit the Jacob Jantzens in South Dakota, and since our church had promised me \$50 to go to Conference we and Geschwister Quirings started off August 20, 1908 first to the Western Conference in Kansas and then to the General Conference in Beatrice, and finally to South Dakota where we visited our loved-ones for 10 days. We had Marie along 5 years old. That was a very pleasant relaxing trip. In April 1908 brother Jacob's wife died. Oh, how deep was our sorrow. He stayed alone with 6 boys.

Since we were always living in very moderate conditions with regards to income, I had always said to my dear wife, "Just wait till John is grown, and then we will see better days". She didn't really want to believe that. Nevertheless, John grew strong; his studies moderate and had a great desire to farm. But Oh amazing God, Thou God of our people! Already in fall of 1908 soon after our return from South Dakota my dear wife got sick and we were afraid she would leave us. She was very weak. But she recuperated slowly, but couldn't go with us Christmas Eve. However, we could celebrate our Silver Wedding on January 10, 1909, although she had to lie down. We had invited the dour Elder J. Toews from Newton who had a very, good sermon. She got better again and could be up and around. But next fall she became ill again. After New Year 1910 we slaughtered hogs. She was very active, went in and out sturdily and so we were very happy. But during the night Friday to Saturday she complained of pain in her back. We thought it was lumbago. But no, after Dr. Weber had examined her he said it was pneumonia. But there was also hemorrhage. Dr. Weber took care of her and we got a nurse to care for her and so we hoped for improvement. That night 29th I didn't lie down. Our sick one had slept from 7 o'clock. I hoped for improvement. But God had ordained it differently. About 2:30 that night her breathing changed. We woke the children and before they were all there her soul had left the weak body. She had gone home. But who can describe our grief! Mine and the dear children's! I couldn't understand that the Lord would take this dear treasure and that the dear children should be robbed of their mother. She was gone and we left orphaned. She had always taken the lead with her prophetic knowledge. But she had a presentment of this. When I told her while she was sick that next Wednesday, February 2 was John's birthday she said "Yes, I wonder whether something else will happen." And so it was. On February 2 we took our dear deceased from home to the cemetery. Oh, I can't say what grief ransacked us. We had telegraphed Elder J. Toews. He came and also Br. Bernhard Wiebe from Kansas, and brother-in-law Wiebe as well as cousin Cornelius and Herman Jantzen from Nebraska. Elder Toews and B. Wiebe gave messages—Ps. 37:5 and Eccl. 12. It was a cloudy, cold day -11 below. We cannot describe the sorrow and grief, left alone with 6 children. One week later there was a funeral again. Brother Jacob accidentally drove over the head of his little five year old son Herman, with a load of wheat. He died immediately. O God, why? It was us if our grief receded behind this one. In that time many tears were shed in our family. The first Sunday after our funeral brother-in-law J. Jantzen preached about Elijah who was told "You have a long journey ahead of you" My God led in such a way that I was occupied very much in other churches during that year. I often felt unutterably miserable and lonely. My children too. For help I had a Mrs. Gratz for about 9 weeks.

On March 30, 1911 I remarried with the young woman and church member, Katherine Dalke. She had taught English and German school for four years; 2 years in our school district. Elder J. Toews of Newton officiated. H. D. Penners of Newton had also come. And so I had a faithful wife again. On Jun 20, 1912 our son Albert was born. On October 16, 1913 son Edmund was born and June 16, 1915 son Herman, April 11, 1917 daughter Katherine, and September 10, 1919, daughter Martha. Since 1915 our son John already did the farm work. He was only 15 years old. Through the years we had bred young horses so that it didn't cost as much to do the work ourselves. From 1902–1915 we had the land rented out, but didn't do well thereby. But since I had to look after the ministry and schoolwork I couldn't take care of the farm work.

In September 1914 I could attend the General Conference at Meno, Oklahoma with my dear Katherine. The children took care of everything at home. Had a blessed time there. Eighteen of our church members also went. In 1915 our Herold Church built a nice new church on the place where the old church stood. With organ, pulpit, benches and all it cost us \$4004. The money was collected within one year, voluntarily. Had an excellent building committee: deacon P. A. Quiring, H. Jantzen and J. S. Schmidt. The latter was foreman. The church was built very correctly and solidly and was consecrated on December 5, 1915. Text of my sermon was Matt. 2:13. The official brethren, J. S. Krehbiel of Geary, J. B. Epp of Meno, J. Fleming of Bergthal, H. Riesen and P. R. Voth of Gotebo and Missionary Wiens of India, also J. Reimers from the M. B. Church were there. An unforgettable, beautiful day for our church. Everyone was joyous about the goodness of God. The building was built in good understanding. We had a stately church. The day of consecration was really a day which the Lord had made. Two meals were given at the church to 600–700 people

Our outward circumstances had improved since John took care of the farm. But already in the later years we had better income because of good milk cows etc. In fall of 1916 John and Margaret took a trip to S. Dakota to their uncle J. Jantzen. We were in Kansas and Nebraska with friends and had a wonderful time. Peter and Lieschen Quiring also went. In summer of this year we had built a new barn 32 by 32. With the fittings of a sling for hay it cost \$350. J. S. Schmidt was foreman for building. Jacob and Marin Klaassen and our John helped. In February 1917 my dear wife and I could make a trip to Kansas. We had many pleasant days. In winter of 1914–15 Margaret went to Gotebo to H. Riesen for preparatory school. Graduated the same year. Later she has taught German school at Vinita and Inola. In 1918 she taught at home. In 1910, September 7 our Helena was married to Gustav Dalke. Her mother had decided on that day yet. In 1918 Aug 1 our daughter Margaret was married to Herman Horn. Mid-August Gus Dalke with their 2 children, Margaret and Erna, and Herman Horns went to Canada by car.

This brings me in my writing to a very dark time in my life. It began in spring of 1917. In April the U.S. had declared war on Germany. That brought us Mennonites into a difficult situation. On June 5 all young men between 21–30 had to be registered. Also our John had to go as well as 16 young men of our church. They comforted us with the fact that farmers wouldn't be taken, also that those who for conscience sake didn't want to be soldier could fill out certain forms which said that the person in question could in no way take part in the war. We especially consoled ourselves that John was the only boy and what's more had weak eyes. We thought for certain that he would be classified us unfit. The young men had to present themselves in the courthouse in Cordell and be examined. But the opposite was the case. John's name was among the first to go. Then we started working—went to Oklahoma City in order to work for freedom at the higher authorities. I went four times because of John and

other young men. Petitions were made up, forms filled out and correspondence done with the respective agencies. All in vain. We were coddled and rocked into hope. In vain. Conferences were held. Five Mennonite churches in Washita County united to work for the cause. A committee was elected for this. In this committee was the Elder of the M. B. Church, Heinrich Flaming, David Kuhn and I also from the Western and General Conferences committees were chosen to go to Washington in order to work for freedom at the highest courts. All work was in vain. O God how hard was this time. They deceived and deluded us in order to draw us into the net and the enemy was allowed to Draw in the snare. We have often blamed ourselves later, why we didn't keep away from everything tight from the beginning. Why did we allow registration? But it was presented in such an innocent manner. No one was supposed to do anything against his conscience. Good promises were given in Washington. Why did we allow the young men to be examined? They promised and we believed too easily: several young men thought of fleeing to Canada, where there was freedom of conscience yet. Also our John had agreed upon to leave on a certain day. We felt it was dangerous, since we feared that the Government would punish deserters with shooting them. What's more we heard that the Canadian border was closed. Finally President Wilson announced that all those who didn't want to bear arms could undertake the non-resistant service, and those who couldn't do anything for conscience sake should be brought into a special camp and no one should be forced to do anything against his conscience.

That was the decisive event for us. He thought the war wouldn't last longer than a few months and for spring John could be home again. And we also always hoped that he would be rejected because of his eyes. God had permitted that we were thus drawn into the net, and all work, hopes and prayers seemed in vain. John worked diligently, prepared everything for the fall seeding. First it sounded as if the first should go middle of September but on October 4 John got his red card. Oh, how easily he could have escaped to Canada. Since I was in the committee it was also my responsibility to accompany the first group with the other committee members to St. Antonio, Texas. The Conference also advised to go as far as it seemed feasible, conscience wise. Oh, if only the Conference Committee which travelled to Washington had been unified, then would have been granted freedom by the Government How good it would have been. It wasn't to be. On the whole the Conference took a very strange attitude concerning the military matter. Whereas we should have become clear at our Conferences how far we could go without acting against God's laws and our faith, instead it was discussed how we could show our loyalty to the Government and how we could help the country. It all came to a head and the clouds of trouble increased. And strange! Whereas many of us had a number of sons who could stay, mine had to go. What added to this was the fact that in Cordell there were officials who looked, for spite and savagery of war. Besides it was known to them that I had taught German school and had had much to do with the officials concerning our young men.

So on October 4 they were to appear in Cordell. We all went to Cordell with the auto. For dinner we were at the parents. Oh, that, was a hard road. John never saw his home again. Towards evening we said farewell with many tears. John asked for forgiveness for anything with which he had grieved us. Yes, here I have to add that the evening before we had a farewell service in church where the young men who were to go sat in front and brother Jacob Klaassen spoke on "My Grace is sufficient for you", and brother-in-law Jantzen on "Thus it has to be." Of this day I could say "O Day so black and gloomy, as darkest midnight." If God's faithfulness hadn't held us we would have despaired. Where had we come? We were enticed into the net. Before we left Cordell there were fiery speeches while a small group amidst tears sighs and prayers took farewell. Oh, what scenes! There were also some married men

who had to bid farewell to their wives. What a gruesome game this war! What unspeakable misery it brings to us and others. God will recompense the evil ones. The committee to which I belonged, as had been decided, was to go along. Amidst the uproar of the ungodly our poor boys held to board. The world seeks to get over these evil days with noise and shouting. When we were gone my dear ones went home with the car we had bought about three months ago in the hope that all would be well. Agatha could drive well already. However, we were not allowed to go on the same train with the boys. But on our train a car of recruits was hung on. Of these some come to the back door of our car and admitted sounds which reminded us of demons. Really they acted us if they were mad. But those were English.

At 6 in the evening we had left. In Hobard R. R. Voth joined us. So we were four Mennonite ministers. Naturally my mood was much more depressed then that of the brethren. We now travelled over Ft. Worth to St. Antonio, Texas where we arrived next day at 8 p.m. The young men had come to their destination, Camp Travis, a little earlier. It was about five miles northeast of St. Antonio. About this time I had written in my diary "Look above this time O poor heart!" Oh, where have we come? Was it that for which our fathers worked, suffered und sacrificed? All in vain? Forgotten? Could it be—my son in military camp? In earlier times the hard tests had been directed to the ministers and older people. Now the young men were to endure them. Their faith was to be proved. Earlier the churches had taken a firm stand in trials—that was what was lacking now. Even though much talk was made, conferences held, trips made, dealings with the Government, all to no avail. President Wilson and his councils had to keep us in suspense so long until it was too late. How much different was the situation in Prussia during the wars of liberation; a devout king who wanted to spare the consciences and treated them with consideration. Though Germany at that time was really in a bad situation it still granted us the "Privilegium." Here it was different. With how many lies and deception this war was supported also by the U.S. and how much fault the Government had in driving the poor people who didn't want war into the pit, eternity will tell. We Mennonites were probably already in such a condition that God had to permit a purification test.

So next morning we went to Camp Travis. Naturally I was desirous to find my son. After much fruitless running and searching, I met him only at noon. We looked up the main residence and communicated with the first agent. He said John should have been left at home; he would look into the matter, also met General Murphy and General Allen. Friendly lords. On the way down I had talked to the men about the fact the John would probably not dress in soldier's uniform. When they told this to the General he called John and asked him whether he would not put on the uniform, and John said, No. He let him go. The next day Sunday, to the Camp again. For night we had been in St. Antonio. Again I had to look for John till dinner time. In the soldier's camp there is no Sunday. Sunday evening then we bade farewell and went home; our young men stayed in Camp. It was on a Sunday when John made a stand against the command of his superior. He was to work in a store as on a week-day. He said he didn't work on Sunday. The superior scolded, but left him alone. Since John had very week eyes but the Doctor thought he just pretended, they stormed and fumed terribly while examining him. At my next visit to Camp Travis I told this to Gen. Murphy, whereupon they later treated him more friendly. At home we always hoped they would let John go free because of his eyes and sometimes it seemed so, but nothing came of it. The young men worked till Christmas partly in the store, kitchen or barn. They were allowed much freedom so that they could get used to the life of a soldier. Later quite a few had to drive vehicles. In December daughter Helena, my wife's sister, wife of P. J. Quiring who's was also in camp, went to visit them. We found them well. They had barn work, had a good captain who was an English Baptist. They had not been molested further during that time. Our men were all housed together which was

good for them. They could have spiritual fellowship and sing together. They were under the leadership of Albert Voth and a Quaker, Charles (son of P. R. Voth). We arrived Friday evening and stayed till Monday evening. For night we went to the town of St. Antonio. The young men stayed in Camp. Saturday A. P. Krehbiel and professor Rev. J. W. Kliewer also came to camp. But left that same evening. Sunday morning I could give the young men a message from God's Word; also in the evening and Monday evening. Naturally in the German language. We also sang German songs. Sunday afternoon we visited a Zoo where there were many wild animals and beautiful parks and ponds, laws, flowers, trees, hills, caves etc. Sunday evening we were in a different area at a river near a refreshing well. Here later 13 Negroes who had rebelled were hanged. Sunday evening John and Peter Quiring borrowed uniforms and came to St. Antonio for night. Monday we visited Kellyfield where there was an Airport. There we saw many aeroplanes flying around in the air, take off and land. Everything was for war. Monday night we said Goodbye and went home. Oh, this farewell! At home the churches of Washita County had decided to send a minister to the boys every second Sunday. Thus also my trip was paid for by the appointed treasury—about \$35. The longer our young men were in the camp the more they realized that all their activities were war services. Thus about 16 Mennonite young men decided to withdraw from every activity. That too the boards allowed. That was at Christmas time. During this time Rev. Jacob Baergen visited Camp Travis. He made a trip to Corpus Christi, Texas with a number of young men. John went along too.

When the young men refused the work in camp as war work they were brought to a special camp about 2 miles from Travis where they lived in tents and could bathe every other day. They enjoyed this since they were more for themselves. That lasted till about May. Then one day, it Saturday, they were given the command to have the uniform on by Monday morning. On that Saturday there was much discussion, Bible searching and prayer. With this the final decision would be made. About 60 refused to do it. Tuesday morning then a number of soldiers came on horseback—about 200 with officers, surrounded the camp, made a terrible uproar and the interrogation began. Among this escort they had to go to a different camp with their few belongings. That was a building with a strong wall around it where they had to camp outside in the scorching sun about 4 days and nights. One day they had to line up before General Allen. He held a very scathing speech. Then he summoned all those who were determined to remain in their refusal to be a soldier to step forward. 45 young men came forward, among them also my dear John. Oh, how these dear young men must have trembled and feared for what lay ahead. After a war council they were sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. A few had withdrawn and so 45 remained true to their confession. Thus the world treats those who want to remain faithful to the Lord unto death. Now the condemned were locked together 2 by 2 by chains and brought to Leavenworth to the U.S. prison. On the way they had to get off in a town and were led along the streets among ridicule and derision. In prison they were behind a high wall, in prison clothes with big numbers in front on their pants and the back of their shirts. Thus my dear John was in prison with other fellow sufferers for their faith. Among these 45 were also unbaptized, mostly educated, also non-Mennonites. Of Mennonites all were represented. Most were from our Conference, 2 of our church. Also here in Leavenworth they were allowed to discuss God's Word and pray together. At first they could send German later English letters home. At first they were guarded heavily, later they had many favors and trust. So God had permitted that in the U.S. persons were also imprisoned because of their faith. The young men were brave. God had given them faith rather to take upon themselves the cross and shame than the honor of the ungodly blind world. In September 1918 I visited John in Leavenworth in accompaniment of Helena and

Lieschen Quiring. During that time John had to milk cows for the Government. He was well and healthy. For each of 2 days we could spend 2 hours in conversation.

The year 1918 was a grief-filled one for us. In April our 9-day-old Katherina died. In May our little Herman died (almost 3 yrs. old) of pneumonia. Edmund was also very sick of pneumonia. But God had another great sorrow, for us. The fury of war increased to such an extent that we were afraid they would also take the older married men into the army. Gus Dalke, my son-in-law had to get measured and examined in the courthouse. He was married for 7 years. Daughter Margaret was married August 1 with Herman Horn. These 2 and 2 more families left Okla. mid-August on their way to Canada. They arrived at Rosthern and later Laird, Sask. the whole way by car. Since it seemed they would register and enlist the girls too, daughter Agatha also went. My brother had immigrated to Canada earlier already because of his sons. A good number, about 16 families have immigrated to Canada during that summer and fall because of the war because Canada as yet did not enlist the Mennonites.

On October 16 I received a telegram from Leavenworth which informed us that our dear John was very sick with pneumonia. I feared immediately that he would die. Oh, that was hard! My constant prayer to God was that I could see my child again. I left on the 17th on the first opportunity to Leavenworth, Kansas. Oh, how I prayed. Especially when I left Clinton, I prayed earnestly for my child. And exactly then he went home. On the morning of the 18th arriving in the office, I heard, "He is dead!" O God, what have you done? He is dead! And they didn't even allow me to see my child. The Lord had led in such a way that Br. H. D. Unruh was visiting his sick son. So he offered me support in one of the hardest hours of my life. Next morning they sent my dear John in a coffin to Clinton Okla. by express. Naturally I travelled home in the same train and arrived Sunday, October 20 in Clinton together with the body. We were brought home. A number of friends had got together at our house. We opened the coffin and what did we find? It was my John, but in uniform. Immediately those clothes were taken off and his own put on. I said, if you have refused the uniform in life, you shall not wear it in death. Although it would not have made any difference to his salvation, I couldn't do otherwise. Upon investigation as to his death from one of his co-prisoners who was with him when he died, I heard that John's last words were, "I'm going home." That was such a joy amidst all the grief. Already on my last visit he had cleared away many things that he was burdened with. When I said Good-bye to him then, I said, "If we will not see each other here on earth again, we want to take care that we will see each other above." He said yes to this. That was the last that we talked together. I have the blessed hope to see him again through Jesus Christ. On Monday, the 21st we bedded him on the Harold Cemetery beside his dear mother. The funeral couldn't be held in church because of the Flu epidemic, so was held in the car-shed. Brother-in-law J. Jantzen spoke on Ps. 16:6 and Br. P. R. Voth on Isa. 40:6-8: precious comforting and solemn words. Thus all my earthly hopes in my strong son were buried with him. But his was a goodly heritage through Jesus Christ.

In this year we had harvested nothing so to say, except Alfalfa. Of wheat 15 bushels—too much Russian thistle and dry. My nephew, Martin Klaassen had planted the wheat in fall. In spring I probably sowed and planted. The summer before that we had bought a new Ford car, John was still home. If we had known what was coming we wouldn't have bought it. So we harvested little. I tried to cut the wheat with the self-binder, but had the bitter experience that I didn't know how to handle the machine. If my son-in-law, G. Dalke hadn't helped me the oats probably would have stayed on the field. It gave 150 bushels yet. In summer my nephews, Jacob and Martin Klaassen had fled to Canada quietly. Already when John still lived

we had come to an agreement that it would be best for us also to move to Canada. My thoughts wore in that direction. My mind was set on B.C. Father-in-law had already sold, because Herman the youngest son was also of age to be conscripted, if he hadn't gone to Canada quietly. He arrived safely at Herbert, Sask. Father-in-law C. K. Dalke had made a round trip through Canada—also Sask. and B.C. He advised against going to B.C. He liked it at Laird, Sask. where my brother lived better.

So on October 21 my dearest son was buried and not in the uniform. That I didn't allow him to keep it on seemed rather doubtful to some of the brethren. Brother-in-law Quiring and John Peters and I had planned to make a trip to Canada in fall. We had planned to leave November 4, 1918. In the morning of the same day Jacob Jantzen and Abr. Regier came to me and advised me to leave as soon as possible, since my life was in danger by a gang. After dinner mother, Anna, Marie as well as the little boys went to Clinton with me to the train. There we bade farewell with tears and I have never seen my home Again. Since I had already sold the 2 mules and the car, as also 2 young horses I had the necessary money for the trip, as we had harvested little. The 3 of us left for Canada. I hadn't said farewell to the church nor anyone else. We went by way of Kansas City, Minneapolis to Winnipeg. We crossed the Canadian border November 6 and arrived in Rosthern on the 8th from where Br. Jacob Klaassen got us to his farm. I greeted my children Dalkes and Horns who lived there in Tiefengrund at Laird. From there we 3 went to Edmonton, Alberta and came buck to Laird, where we heard that my wife's youngest brother Herman had died of the flu. A new great sorrow, especially since he was going to marry daughter Agatha. The parents were notified by telegraph. My dear wife had meanwhile had an auction sale and loaded a freight car together with Heinrich Jantzens who also wanted to follow their son to Canada. Since the parents wanted to come to the funeral, my dear wife decided to come with them on that long and with children difficult trip. Friends who had helped with the auction now helped with the packing. They left on November 15 from Clinton, leaving our home and arrived in Rosthern on November 19. There I could greet my dear ones again. But under what circumstances? Partly as refugee, and then through strange leadings of our God, torn from home and church and landing in the land of midnight.

O God, Thou God of Thy people! Strange are Thy ways with Thy people. This horrible war was the reason. I had learned to love my home in Okla. and had become so intimately bound to the Herold Church and then to be torn away so suddenly! Originally I had wanted to come back and wait. But now my dear wife, Albert, Edmund, Anna and Marie had arrived. Actually so unexpectedly. Now we were strangers in a foreign land. On November 21 the dear Herman HUS buried by the Tiefengrund Church in the nearby cemetery.

That happened under great sorrow and many tears. The memory of him remains a blessing. Praying he had gone to sleep. The parents and Helena had come too. Gus Dalkes and David Dalkes lived at A. Regiers in the barn. Since Loewens were at D. D. too, we had to be divided up. Our train car with our things arrived and we unloaded. Herman Horns didn't like it at all in Canada and they returned to Okla. December 11. They bought our farm for \$6,500 and moved into our previous home. We stayed in Canada. But we also wanted to look at Manitoba so we men, Joh. Loewens, David Dalke, father-in-law, Gus Dalke, John Peters and P. Quiring and I went to Manitoba to Winkler. After we had looked at land and had opportunity to buy not far from each other, we all bought land through F. F. Siemens. The land lay north west about 8–10 miles from Winkler. Gus Dalkes and I bought for (\$1200 a ½ section with buildings where at first we could live together—4½ miles north of Morden, man. The parents-in-law, Joh. Peters and P. Quirings went back to Okla. and moved onto their farms in spring;

with all their belongings. The rest of us went back to Laird to our loved ones. Then we loaded the car again and moved to Winkler with the family. Our farewell from Laird was not so easy since my brother Jacob Klaassen and other church members stayed there.

We arrived in Winkler on December 21 and moved into a house for \$7.00 a month. Gus Dalkes also stayed in Winkler. Here we could celebrate Christmas in the Mennonite church. I was often asked to preach here. In the course of the winter horses were bought as well as feed and seed for planting. Since we were unknown we paid good prices. For the land I held a debt of \$1,400. Had paid \$5,350 for the quarter with buildings. In March Gus Dalkes and we moved onto our farm. We had bought 4 horses for \$560 and 4 cows for \$295 and many other things. The winter hadn't been very cold. The first year I farmed the land myself with Agatha and Anna helping. The second and third years I rented it to G. Dalkes. They built a little house on our yard and the other buildings we used together. In summer of 1920 we built a church for \$4500. About half of it was in debt after we had diligently collected and given. It was dedicated October 17, 1920. Since then we have had our Sunday School and worship services in this church. Before that we gathered in father-in-law's house and later in the barn. Since here the children have to go to English school for 10 months, we have had German school in the summer holidays and on Saturdays which daughter Agatha and I taught.

On August 14, 1921 in the afternoon we were privileged to celebrate my 25 yrs. of ministry. The brethren Jacob Hoepfner, P. Epp, H. Born and H. H. Ewert gave addresses, later deacon P. Quiring and I. A blessed service. On October 6, 1921 we celebrated the marriage of our daughter Agatha to Jacob Sawatzky. The ceremony took place in church with Rev. B. Ewert officiating. On July 9, 1922 the wedding of daughter Marie with David Sawatzky took place. Since Br. Jacob Klaassen, uncle of the bride had come to Conference in Winkler, he officiated at their wedding. Both pairs live in our vicinity.



This is as far as father wrote in his autobiography. However, to finish his life story I have looked through his diaries of the years 1921 to 1934 and taken out the main events which would seem important to his children and grandchildren. His story thus far I have tried to translate word for word from the German. Of course some expressions are uniquely German. I have tried to be as literal as possible, but some words may be just a shade different in meaning. I have not added any comments or explanations to his story.

The following then is a short summary of what took place in father's life after 1921 till his death in 1934.

Life went on much in the same way on the parent's farm north of Morden. On June 18, 1921 a daughter, Esther was born. On May 4, 1922 father left with a delegation on a trip to Mexico. They travelled through Eagle Pass, Piedras Negras, Torreon, Durango City, Mexico City, Saltillo, Monterrey, Laredo back to San Antonio, Texas, through Oklahoma where they stayed for a while. The whole trip had been 6,000 miles. Father's ticket for this trip was free. They returned December 18.

On Sept 6, 1923 while father was attending a Conference in Freeman, S.D. a son, Carl was born. April 19, 1925 daughter Anna was married to Ferdinand Harms. Uncle Gus Dalkes went to the wedding, but not my parents.

December 26, 1925 my Grandfather C. K. Dalke passed away after a lengthy illness. They lived quite close to my parents, so it was easy to run over for a visit. Albert, Edmund, Martha and I were sick during this time with the measles. So it was a very trying time for father since he was responsible for the service for the funeral. Also there was company from the States—Uncle Albert Dalke and other Dalke relatives.

In January of 1926 I had an operation on my cheek where I had a boil.

During the years that Uncle Gus Dalke live close to my parents it is amazing to note how much father depended on Uncle Gus. No matter what the need, Uncle Gus was always there to help, advise or fix. Later when they moved to Morden, I believe father stopped by their house every trip he went to Morden. They always gave us a welcome. Also Uncle Gus had a threshing machine and threshed for us many a year. Jacob and David Sawatskys too live in the neighborhood and were a great help to father.

Father was very often sickly, so already before the boys, Albert and Edmund were teenagers they had to do a great deal of work on the farm. Also because father needed much time to prepare his sermons. We had a room north of the living room which we called "Nordstube" (Northroom) where father had his study. If the door was closed we children had to be quiet and not disturb him. Needless to say, it was a hard life for father trying to keep up the farm work and the church work as Elder and leader. So very often too, he was called to another church to speak or to attend Conferences. He made many a trip to Winkler, Morden, Altona and Gretna area. At times he also taught German school during the summer months and on Saturdays. The first years Agatha helped him with this.

On March 9, 1926 the 10 month son, Herman, of P. Dalke passed away of pneumonia. In March 1926 David and Marie Sawatsky moved in with us till November. During the spring of that year there were many dust storms. In Jan. 1927 Lilly Dalke, daughter of P. Dalke died. During all these years there was much activity in the church: Choir practice, led by Abr. Voth every week (often on Sunday afternoon and evening) Some of these Choir practices were held in homes. Also, every month, a "Jugendverein" or Christian Endeavor program was held in church for which there was always a good attendance. People came from many neighboring districts for these programs. In church there was S. S. and worship service every Sunday morning. Highlights of the Church year were the Christmas program for children and youth—usually on December 24 in the evening, and the "Kinderfest" in the summer. The latter was usually held outside under the trees if the weather permitted. Father also attended many Sunday School Conferences.

There also was much activity in the community. People needed each other, so many things were borrowed back and forth. There was hardly a day when some neighbor or relative didn't drop by, or father, stopped somewhere on the way to town. Also we had very much company and did much visiting among our relatives and also other church people. In church there often were visiting speakers, Rev. P. Epp, Morden or someone from Winkler or Altona. Very often these men would stay at our house for overnight. Father became good friends with H. H. Ewert, Rev. Benj. Ewert, Rev. Jacob Hoepfner and his grandson J. N. Hoepfner, Rev. P. Epp, Rev. J. J. Siemens and many others. It was always a great occasion whenever visitors came from the U.S., especially our relatives. Once or twice my parents took a trip to Laird, Sask. to visit the relatives there: father's brother, Uncle Jacob Klaassen and others. This always seemed to be so refreshing for father.

In spring of 1929 father bought our first car—a Ford. And in winter of 1930 our first washing machine—hand operated. The farm work was done by horses. Also before we had the car travel was by horse and buggy, wagon or carriage and of course by sleigh in winter. Our drinking water was taken from a well—also for the horses and cattle. For washing in summer rain water was used and in winter we melted snow. The snow was hauled into the house in big tubs and put into a barrel by the cook stove. In Jan 1931 Martha had the misfortune of getting boiling water on her leg. She was sick for quite a while. In February Albert got his hand severely injured in a cutting machine.

The church work completely took up father's energy and strength. Physically, as noted before, he was often weak and very often sick. But it seemed when Sunday came around he was well enough to go to church and serve. This work gave him much joy and very many times in his diary he adds, "sehr schoen" or "gesegnete Zeit" (very good, or blessed time) after describing a worship service, Jugendverein, or some Conference. He especially loved singing and often made note of it in his diary - how he had enjoyed the Choir songs and the music. In the years about 1928–31 some young people got together for instrumental practices. They held these in various homes.

Materially we were always rather poor. Father had many frustrations with the farm work. Horses died, or cattle, machinery broke which often meant the 5 mile trip to Morden for repairs. This was especially hard in harvest-time. Cream, butter and eggs were taken to Morden and sold. Clothes and groceries bought from the meager checks. We were always glad when we got something new, since so many of our clothes were home-sewn and often made over from old material. Father never complained. But deep down we know from his autobiography that he had had the wish to study, but circumstances didn't allow. I don't remember much about his sermons, but others have told me that they were always given with deep devotion and power from God.

During the years 1933–34 father was seriously sick quite often. This made him weak so that he had little strength. However, except for a few times he always seemed to be well enough to go to service on Sunday morning.

In May of 1934 Uncle Peter Dalke became sick and had to be taken to Brandon mental hospital for treatments. This seemed to be quite a hard experience for father. Also in May of that year Martha started work at a farm north of us—Bartelmans. She had to work extremely hard, so it was hard on the whole family.

In May 1933 Albert and Agnes (Friesen) were married. The wedding took place on a very rainy weekend when many bridges were washed out. Rev. J. N. Hoepfner who was to officiate couldn't come till late.

Towards the end of July I took sick with diphtheria—very sick, so that the Dr. had to come out several times. We were then quarantined. Father suffered many severe headaches.

Father was especially fond of his grandchildren. Many a time they would come, to our house and stay for night, or were allowed to go to their place. In his diary he has not entered the dates of birth of his grandchildren, at least not all of them. However, between 1921 and 34 the following were born: Wanda, Ferdinand, Eldon (I'm not sure about Elsa) to Jacob and Agatha Sawatsky; Verna, Rudolph, Dorothy, Annamarie, Alfred ? to David and Marie Sawatsky; Clara & Ted to Herman and Margaret Horn; a daughter who died in infancy to Ferd

and Anna Harms (I'm not sure whether this was before 1934) (later Erwin was born to them). Margaret and Erna, daughters of Gustav and Helena Dalke were born in Okla. earlier. Later David and Marie had more children: Arthur, Ronald, Esther Pearl (who died) and Harvey.

In October 1934 father still went corn picking; in rather cold weather. The last entry in his diary was October 8. Later Edmund wrote a short diary of his illness. Father took sick with pneumonia the evening of October 8. which progressively got worse. On October 16 he had made many arrangements yet, and wished Ed. a happy birthday. On October 17 he became unconscious. Visitors and relatives came and stayed by his bedside. He passed away on October 18 at 5 a.m. The Oklahoma children came too late to see him alive, which grieved them very much. It seemed unreal and impossible that father was gone. He had fought a good fight and remained true and steadfast in his faith to the end. There was a very big funeral.

Thus ends the story of father's life. He lived to be 74 years old. In his life he bore many hardships. He made 4 major moves: from Russia to Khiva, to Nebraska, to Oklahoma, to Canada. His hardest experience and deepest sorrow was no doubt the passing of his beloved son, Johannes. Physically he was sickly and not strong, but he showed deep insights with a strong unshakable faith in the God in whom he trusted. May this account be a very special blessing to all who read it. His memory stays with us and may we all strive for a faith like father had.

(This last part written by daughter Esther C. Bergen)



Editor's note: In scanning and reviewing this text I changed the spelling of some words, usually place names, for example: "Chiwa" was changed to its more current English language spelling of "Khiva." I added a few notes in square brackets, [], and two footnotes.—Victor G. Wiebe, editor.