
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
of
EVA ENNS FEHDRAU

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Translated by Mrs. F. J. Enns
1964

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DEDICATED
to my
Nieces and Nephews

FOREWORD

Having meant much to them some of the younger generation urged Aunt Eva to put in writing her life experiences. Another and more compelling urge came from within, an urge to help transmit our Christian heritage to the new generation. "To the glory of God," she gave as a reason for telling of one experience, but we can apply that to the whole booklet. Not having had a family of her own for most of her life she has belonged to all of us in a special way. We are grateful that now in her sunset years she once more shares her life with us—and that in the form of this booklet.

Frank

CHILDHOOD YEARS

I, Eva Fehdrau (nee Enns), was born July 22, 1879 in Reno County near Inman, Kansas, as the second child of Johan and Eva Pauls Enns. At that time my parents lived on an eighty acre farm, in a two room sod house. On this farm I spent my first twelve years, my childhood years. I very well remember when my little brother John, age one year and three months, died. I was then three years and three months old. At that time children's caskets were carried in a sling over the shoulder, and funerals were held in the home.



Our parents had a lovely orchard. There we children often played and ate the good fruit, which it seems to me was then more appreciated than it is now. Here I also enjoyed school. At that time school was in a home. When I started to school it was in the "summer room" of Jacob Siemens' house. Jacob Martens was the teacher. The first day I had to stand. I called the letter "a" (German au) as my parents had taught me. I always forgot the short sound "a," as the teacher wanted me to

say it. Soon I cried and was allowed to sit down again. On cold days father took us to school on horseback. He set me in front of him and Jacob sat behind, holding on to him. There were no automobiles in those days. One day two boys deserved punishment and the teacher took a stick and went into the barn with them. That scared all of us. Six winters we went to private school, two at Jacob Siemens' Sr., one at Jacob Siemens' Jr., and three at the old Toews' home.

In 1891 when I was twelve years old our parents sold the farm and bought a 160 acre farm in McPherson County. That was something new to us children. There also was a big orchard with the most wonderful fruit, and much work for old and young. Here I attended district school for one winter. The instruction was in German. In later years part of the housework rested on my shoulders. I also learned to sew and knit. In those days all the clothes were made at home, such as suits and overcoats, and ours was a big family to sew for. Often we, especially our dear mamma, sewed till late at night.

CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

Here deeper experiences, than I had in my childhood, came into my life. In the year 1897 I realized my lost condition before God, and came to the Lord, and after earnest struggle in prayer, found peace in the blood of Jesus. I was baptized July 13 by Elder C. M. Wall, and received into the church. I went through a deep experience and I would like, to the glory of God, to tell about this here. I had been under conviction for a long time; had asked the parents' forgiveness where I had been disobedient, and where other things bothered my conscience, had tried to clear them away. But I did not feel the assurance of salvation; there were still doubts.

A few days before baptism Rev. C. M. Wall and the other preacher brethren were with us to examine me and another soul, who also was to be baptized. The other soul testified that Jesus was her Savior and seemed happy, but I was depressed. I said though, that I could believe that I had forgiveness of sin, only

could not be completely happy. Baptism was to be Sunday. My desire was to be truly happy in baptism. Before going to bed I searched my heart to see if there was still something that was bothering my conscience and robbing me of joy. When I took God's Word to hand, I felt that everything was under the blood of Jesus. However doubts assailed me and I earnestly prayed the Lord that He should give me a sign that He had received me and I need no longer doubt. Thus I went to bed. That night I shall never forget. I wrestled till dawn, like Jacob. Satan wanted to dispute everything. He showed me that since I had told the preacher I had forgiveness of sin when I really had no assurance of this, I was a liar. It was a big battle, yes, a foretaste of hell. But praise God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ. When morning dawned I arose with the determination that I must pray through. I don't know how long I prayed, but I know that I prayed through. "Es heiszt ein Ringen soll's durch die Wolken dringen." (It means a struggle if we are to break through the clouds; but the Lord gives victory.) That place still seems a sacred spot to me. The manner in which I prayed is still vividly in my mind. I used the words of Christ to Peter where He said, "Get thee behind me Satan!" When I had said this I felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from me. Then I saw a light in the distance, but there was a big mountain separating me from it. While I continued praying the light drew nearer, suddenly the mountain of sin was gone, and Jesus stood before me in shining robes with a cross in His hand. In spirit I fell at His feet and heard His voice say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." O, what joy I had, everything was light in and around me, all doubts were gone. When I arose from my knees it was broad daylight. I went to the window, it seemed as though everything had changed.

Old things had passed away, all things were new. My mother said later, "I saw immediately that something had happened to you." Yes, my prayer was answered, the Lord had given me assurance, and I was very happy. And I am happy today that I passed through this experience. When temptations come I

remind the enemy of this and he retreats. I was jubilant at baptism and have been ever since. I felt like the hymn writer when he says, "Wüstens doch die Leute wie's beim Heiland ist, sicher würde heute mancher noch ein Christ." (If people would only know how wonderful it is to belong to the Savior, many would today become Christians.)

DEATH IN FAMILY

Two years later my sister Katharina was saved and baptized. But only for a short time could we serve the Lord together. She died March 8, 1900, after five weeks of illness, at the age of 16. That was a great sorrow for the family, especially for me. I have often asked the Lord, Why couldn't I go in her place? She was always so well and had a lovely singing voice. It seemed there would have been many more opportunities for her to be useful than for me, but the Lord knows best.

For some time I was in poor health. I had worked too hard when I was a child. Already when I was very young I had to help in harvest, shocking and stacking wheat. Even before that I had to ride the lead-horse before the binder, arrange the wheat bundles on the wagon or on the stack as a helper to the stacker, barefoot, without gloves, in sun and heat, from early to late. Our parents reached prosperity only through frugality and hard work. God's blessing has also followed me.

PREPARING FOR SERVICE

As to every one, so to me also came the question, What shall my life's work be? I was always interested in missions, and when I read mission reports, which were not many in those days, there was always a desire in me, Would that I could do such work. In 1901 I heard my first mission message by a missionary. I was deeply touched and knelt in my room telling the Lord that I would like to be a missionary. But I knew I couldn't, I had no English schooling, and I had to help my mother. In 1901 my oldest brother was married. In 1904 we

changed farms again. The parents sold this place that, through many experiences had become very dear to us. They bought a quarter (160 A) where they already owned 240, one mile east of here. Moving was much work. This new farm needed almost all new buildings. In the fall of 1905 we built a barn. In 1906 the house was almost wholly torn down, the main part remodeled and a new wing added. We did all the painting ourselves. Through these hard years my health broke down again. (It had been built up, at least partly.) I went through hard testings, and the desire of former years came to the forefront once more. I came to the conclusion that the Lord had further work for me, but I did not know where. The road ahead looked dark.

One day in the fall of 1908 Prof. Schleifer of McPherson College came to our door wanting students for college. We did not know much English and he not much German, so we sent him to the field where father and the boys were in the haying season. George had been interested in going to school. It was as if scales fell from my eyes and I saw the way open for me to study. When the school opened in fall we were there, my brother and I.

There were many problems to overcome since I had not had any English. The determination within gave me courage to go on. After one winter in McPherson College we were home for the summer months and helped in the harvest. August 10, 1909 I made a trip to Chicago to see mission work there. The 26th I started my trip home again. When I arrived home the next day, I found my father very ill. He had been thrown from the pony he was riding. Those were long and anxious days for the family. We feared for the worst, but by the grace of the Lord our dear father recovered. That winter my brother and I attended Tabor College since there was more of a choice of subjects in the German and more Bible. At Christmas my brother Abram became ill with pneumonia. On January 8, 1910 he had lung surgery and recovered slowly. During that winter George advanced enough so he could teach school the

next winter. I continued my studies at Tabor College, but I was not well, and my courage often wanted to fail me. Then I had the flu and became very ill. Seemingly I could not recover and so followed the doctor's suggestion and went home, dropping the last semester. I lacked courage, everything seemed impossible; I might not be able to take up mission or hospital work because of health reasons. The next winter I was home, but was dissatisfied and very unhappy. Within me I always heard, You are not where the Lord wants you to be. I began praying very earnestly for the Lord to reveal His will to me. Then one night I heard a voice saying loud and clear, "He who putteth his hand to the plow and looketh baack is not fit for the kingdom of God." I was certain that the Lord was speaking to me and was convinced that He wanted me in His work.

MISSIONS AND NURSING

I dedicated myself to the Lord anew, body and soul. After five months of Bible study at Hesston College, I was accepted as a worker in the mission in Chicago. I arrived in Chicago February 22, 1913 and for three years helped A. F. Wienses in the mission. I felt very inadequate in the work, but looking to Jesus and leaning on His promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness," I became confident. I was very happy in the work for Jesus, especially in the work with children. There were many struggles and hindrances, but they all brought blessings. The Lord always gave victory. About a half year before I left Chicago I realized that the workers no longer wished for my help. I then asked the committee to release me. I left Chicago February 9, 1916 and arrived at my dear parents' home in Inman the 10th.

I continued my correspondence course in nursing which I had started in Chicago. In May 1916 when George Ennses moved to Meade, and she was not very well, I went with them to help them get started. I also helped in harvest and otherwise. In between time I studied till I finished the course, and then took up nursing. By October 1918 I had nursed different sick

people. When Abe's wife Tena died I stayed with him taking care of his two little sons, Leonard and Frankie, till he married again in 1919. Then I once more took up nursing, and was active in that work for three more years. I worked with joy and love and received many blessings. Often I prayed with the sick and asked them about their soul's salvation, and we re-



joiced together. During these years several marriage proposals came to me, but I could not see God's leading in it, so did not accept. When I was not working I made my home with my parents who with anticipation looked forward to my return joyfully. Sometimes I had been away for five or six weeks.

REACHING THE SUMMIT

My life in these last sixteen years was a tumultuous one, now here, now there, this work and that, from one rung to

another, but the summit had not yet been reached. This highest point was reached when I was joined with Aron Fehdrau in the state of holy matrimony, July 30, 1922. Through the leading of the Lord we joyfully took this step. On August 2



we moved into our home one mile south of Inman, and tried to make it a real home. It was all very dilapidated and we had much work and worry till we had everything in order; but after that we were comfortable and enjoyed our home. The Lord blessed us with health and filled our hands so that we could be His stewards in different ways and places. We planted a small orchard and sowed a few acres of alfalfa. In spring we also planted some kafir corn. We had a few chickens and a cow. This all gave us something to do. Since my dear Aron was not very strong we rented the rest of the farm to others for wheat. Then when there was opportunity we helped—in the harvest, during threshing, or in sickness.

TIMES OF TESTING

After we had been married nearly three years we experienced a great sorrow, the death of our dear brother John Enns. This was especially hard for the dear sister and her two boys, Abie and Johnny, having to give him up so early in life. In the same summer both of our fathers died: father Aron Fehdrau on July 20, and father Johan Enns on September 8, 1925. This was a hard time for us all. Father Fehdrau died suddenly after one day of illness. Father Enns had been ill with dropsy for over a year, but passed away quite unexpectedly.

On December 2, 1925 I became ill and was in bed 15 days. We went through deep experiences, but the Lord made all things right—. After this it seemed that every year things happened. On August 1, 1926, our dear mother passed away very suddenly, and on August 6 grandmother Fehdrau, after a long illness. We were very lonely and felt this sorrow deeply, but knowing that they were safely sheltered gave us comfort. The same year on August 26 Aron had surgery on his eyelids. It was successful and we had great joy. That fall in October 20 we had to say farewell to our brother and sister Frank and Agnes when they left for the mission field in Africa for the first time. In September 1927 Aron was very ill and the future looked very dark, but the Lord again undertook. However from that time on his health seemed weakened.

On March 22, 1928 brother Abe's wife Margaret passed away. This was very hard for my brother and his family, especially since he also was very ill with the flu. On January 27, 1929 Abe was married to Susie Warkentin; thus happiness again entered that home.

GIVING UP THE FARM

Because my dear Aron's health was poor and I too had suffered much from rheumatism we were forced to give up the farm, and wanted to sell. The Lord opened the way and we sold the farm to John Klassen on July 25. The twelfth of August

we bought a house in Inman, and also another 80 acres of land.

On August 20 we left for California, arriving in Reedley in the forenoon of August 23. There brother Jacob Neufeld met us. After dinner and a rest they took us house hunting. Before evening we had found two rooms. Jacob Neufeld was so kind as to get our things from the depot, and we slept for the first night in our rented home. Aron was very tired and weak when we arrived. The cleaning up at home and then the trip had been a great strain. After one week he became so weak that we became alarmed about his condition. The Lord heard our pleading and with His and the doctor's help he grew stronger. We spent a little over six months in California and came home to Inman January 27, 1930. We were really happy that Aron's health had improved so much. However after one week at home he became ill once more with the flu. With the help of the doctor he became better, but not completely strong. Several times he had chills which weakened him very much. We were forced to do something, so on April 12 we decided to take him to the Goessel hospital. I stayed with him there for one week and then we spent two more weeks at the Old People's Home.

After those two weeks the doctor told us we could go home. Aron was much improved, and he thought he could gain strength at home. So on May 2 we went home. Aron was up and around, but his strength would not return. We started to build, first a chicken house, then in June our house. Rebuilding the house was too hard for him; first the worry then the noise. This did not give him the needed rest to recover strength. In July he again became very ill and I was afraid he would die. One evening I wrestled in prayer till I was able to say, "Thy will be done, Lord." And then the Lord helped. To Him be glory. Then the house was finished and it was more quiet. When fall came his health returned, and we could do the rest of remodeling ourselves. Then for some time we enjoyed life. We often went visiting which made us happy. Aron was not very strong but we could do our work together. I often suffered with lum-

bago which was hard for me, but for two years we were without special sickness. In January 1933 Aron became sick once more with the flu. Even though he was not too ill, he was very weak and could neither eat nor sleep. We called the doctor, used the "schnaller" (an instrument for blood-letting), and Mrs. Abram Fehdrau gave him treatments. Finally Dr. Johnson's medicine helped him. He regained strength and after five weeks we started going out once more. Then we enjoyed fair health for a while. For my dear Aron however, things were not well. He had a throat ailment that caused him suffering so that it was hard for him to swallow. I felt so sorry for him and comforted him by saying that in heaven it would be better. (When I think of that then I am content to know he is there now.) We often stayed home because of this. It was difficult for him to eat, and to talk. People had difficulty understanding what he said, so he preferred to stay at home. Since his eyesight became poor he asked me to read aloud, this I did and we were happy and content together and time went by fast. During summer evenings we took rides into the country to see the landscape and enjoy God's wonders in nature. Also in harvests we made short trips.

LOSS OF DEAREST

In the fall of 1934 Aron's sight failed more and more, especially in his right eye. This was another concern, and we wondered if he might lose his sight completely. This was a great trial for my dear Aron as he confided to me one day. I was at the sewing machine and he sat at the other end of the room in a rocker. He got up, came closer to me, sat down and started to tell me how hard it was for him to think of becoming blind. Was there perhaps something we could do to prevent this? We talked of one thing and another, and Aron thought he could perhaps let Dr. Krause look at his eyes. I said, Yes, that would be good, so Dr. Krause could give us his opinion. He had taken some treatments from Dr. Krause for his neck,

thinking that it was probably responsible for the condition of his eyes.

A few days later he went for another treatment and inquired about his eyes. After the examination the doctor told him he had a cataract on his right eye which was ready to be removed. Doctor advised him to have it done at an osteopathic hospital in Wichita by a good eye specialist. When Aron came home he asked me if we should not have this done. It was a bit hard for me to give my consent as I feared Aron was not strong enough. But since this was his wish I did not want to stop him. Before we made the final decision we went to Newton to see Dr. Enns and ask his opinion. He said the cataract was ready for removal and advised us to go to Wichita since he did not perform such surgery. On Oct. 8 we visited Peter Flaming in Buhler who had had such surgery, but had not been helped, he had waited too long.

After much planning we came to the conclusion that we'd let Dr. Krause take us to Wichita. The morning of Oct. 9 we went to Abr. Fehdraus and told them of our plans and asked him to go with us, so he could be there during the operation. He was willing. We decided that if the doctor found the cataract ready and Aron strong enough we would stay there for the operation. The 11th of August was to be that day. On the day before we washed and I also ironed. That evening we talked about a number of things. I also made him promise that should he have to take ether we would not consent to the surgery as I felt Aron was not strong enough for that. I felt the weight of the Alps on my mind, a premonition of something that could happen; but since Aron wanted so much to be able to see I didn't want to be against it. I also comforted myself with the thought that, should Aron not be strong enough the doctor would not advise surgery.

The next morning at seven we left home not knowing that Aron was locking our door for the last time. A number of times we had taken all this into prayer, also the night before, and again this morning we asked the Lord for His guidance.

We seemed content at that time but now I sometimes wonder whether we did take it seriously enough. (But in all cases we are prone to look back with regret.)

When we got there we did not need to wait long. Aron's eyes were thoroughly examined with a microscope and tested to determine the extent of vision. It proved that he saw practically nothing with that eye, and the cataract was ready to be removed. They examined his heart, lungs, and blood, and declared him strong enough for the operation. Now it was for us to decide whether we wanted to go ahead or not. At Aron's wish we made the decision to stay and have the surgery. Preparations were made and the next morning at ten thirty the operation was performed. He was given an injection beforehand and local anaesthetic in the eye to make it painless. This took quite a while, and I think that is where the body received too much poison, which weakened his heart. The operation itself took only seven minutes. When the doctor pulled off the cataract Aron's whole body jerked and he told me later it felt as if the whole eye was being pulled out. The doctor asked him immediately whether he could see, and he answered with a weak, "Yes, I can." Quickly cotton was put on the eye and it was bandaged so no light should get in. He was taken to a darkened room. The operation was to cost one hundred dollars, and I had to write out a check for fifty dollars as a down payment. Aron went to sleep under the anaesthesia and a nurse sat by his bed to watch him. So I went to the store to get night clothes which we saw we would need. At five o'clock he awoke and upon my question, if he had much pain he said, "No, not much." I stayed with him till ten o'clock, and then went to the room I had rented for the night. That first night everything had gone quite well and he ate some breakfast.

He was to lie perfectly still on his back. But his back began to pain so much that it was almost unbearable; he was nervous and started to move around. This was not good for his eye the doctor thought, so they gave him a hypo to quiet him down. That was a hard day for him, and also for me. He lay there so

helpless without any drink or food. He snored so heavily that it was hard for me to hear and see. It was like a knife in my heart, and I became fearful of his ever waking up. I went through that day praying and wondering how things would turn out.

At five o'clock the nurse came and started to speak to him. When I saw that I went to him, stroked his arms and spoke to him. On my question how he was feeling he answered that he did not feel bad, that he had slept well. Then we were hopeful.

Sunday morning he seemed cheerful but strained, he had not slept well. Since it was Sunday I took the English Bible that was lying on the dresser and read John 14:1- . I believe it was the Holy Spirit that guided our thoughts to a better place than where we were at the moment. When I had finished my dear Aron said, "Oh, how wonderful it will be when we will have entered those mansions." The doctor came that afternoon and looked after everything. Then he asked Aron whether he could see and Aron answered that he could see very well. That was a great joy to us!

I stayed till noon and when his tray came I fed him because he could not see well enough to eat by himself. But it was complicated; he was lying on his back and eating had been bothering him before. Now he had to cough so much that he did not get much eaten. The doctor had promised that he would let him lie on his left side for a while in the afternoon to rest better. He was looking forward to that. When the nurse came and turned him on his side, he wanted to sleep. He told me I should eat dinner and go to my room to rest. This I did but could not sleep. After a short rest I went back to the hospital. When I entered his room he told me he had been very sick, had had much pain in arms and legs, and his heart fluttered very much. I rubbed his arms and legs, but his heart continued to flutter. It was a heart attack. He was tired, then rested a little and felt somewhat better. For me everything looked dark and again and again the thought came to me, Will he make it? I did not want to give up hope and comforted myself with the

thought that he could get better. Coming to my room that night however I could not sleep. I felt there was a separation ahead. It was a hard battle till I was ready to give up my dearest and say, "Not my will but Thine be done, Lord." But the struggle till I was ready to submit was fierce. I knelt at one side of the bed, then got up, walked back and forth in the room, knelt at the other side of the bed, and walked again—this I repeated a number of times. I sought help from the Lord and He heard me, I could be calm before Him. He also gave me strength to take the HARDEST from His hand, to Him be praise! After this I slept.

When I came to the hospital early in the morning I found my dear Aron very ill. He had perspired so much that there was, so to speak no dry spot on his nightshirt. His arms and legs were ice cold, and I thought he was dying, and I now believe he was not far from it. When I stood beside him and felt his cold arms I said to him, "Maybe you will have to die here." He gave me a very loving look and said, "I don't know, but I don't think so." During the day he recovered somewhat, his body was warm and he felt better, but his heart kept beating fast. Tuesday, October 16 he seemed cheerful. When I left him he was eating the grapes I had brought him. Since the doctor thought we could be going home after three days, I planned on going home by bus to get a car to take us to our home. I would be back at the hospital the next day.

When I got home I went to Abram Fehdrau's and told him why I had come. He said their children Jacob Klassens had a new car and would be glad to get us whenever we wanted to come. I went to our house to rest. At eleven o'clock that night Abram Fehdrau came and told me there was a phone call from the hospital calling for me. I called back and was told that Aron was very ill. Dr. Krause took me and Abram Fehdrau to Wichita where we found that Aron had passed away. Abram Fehdrau called the undertaker. Then we went home. I stayed with Fehdraus but could not sleep. In the morning I called the Fehdrau families and all had dinner at my house.

After dinner J. J. Enns took me, Abram Fehdrau, and Abram Toews in Waldo's car to Goessel wher we chose the casket. On Friday, October 19, we had a short service at our home. Then the funeral service was held at the Bethel church at two o'clock. (So far Aunt Eva Enns Fehdrau's account of her life.)

Aron W. Fehdrau reached the age of 62 years, 7 months, and 6 days.

LATER YEARS

About 24 more years Aunt Eva lived in her lovely little house, helpful, hospitable, being concerned or worrying about the



whole Enns family (because, "Nobody else worries if I don't"). We know that a staunch faith lives in her heart, God's will is to be her will, His way, her way.

In the fall of 1958 she went to the Inman Home for the Aged. She had been in ill health for some time. On November 1 of that year her goods were sold at public auction, and on January 12, 1959 her house and property also were sold.

On her 80th birthday on July 22, 1959, some of her nieces and nephews prepared a special celebration for her about which she often talked later. In 1960 Frank and Agnes Enns came home from the mission field in the Congo and she celebrated her 81st birthday at their house with cake and coffee.

March 17, 1961 she had the misfortune to fall and break her leg. She was in the Bethel hospital for a number of weeks. But the Lord was good to her and she came back to the Home and learned to walk again. When the new Pleasant View Home was built she moved into a room which she appreciates, and often speaks of the good care she receives.

"Even to your old age I am He,
and to grey hairs I will carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save" Isa. 46:4.





