

THE MENNONITE-POLISH FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

December 2012

Dear Members and Friends,

Thanks to all of you who continue to build bridges of friendship and understanding with our friends in Poland and the Low Countries, especially the Netherlands. Friendships and mutual understanding have developed strong ties with the lands of our ancestors. At the same time, some of our most stalwart friends are passing from the scene. Many of you already know that Bolek Klein, distinguished leader in Nowy Dwor and the whole Vistula Delta region, died recently. Here is a brief report:

Honored Polish Friend of Mennonites Dies

Bolek Klein, leading champion of friendship and understanding between Poles and Mennonites, died on December 15, 2012. He was a key leader in bringing new understanding between Mennonites and Poles after the tragedies of World War II. He hosted and welcomed visitors to their former ancestral homes, arranged various meetings to promote understanding, led the drive to create a fine museum in Nowy Dwor with prominent displays of Mennonite contributions to life in the Vistula Delta, arranged for press coverage of Polish-Mennonite events, and much more. The Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association sent flowers, and Harry Lau sent photos of the event. Harry, Bolek's associate for many years, has agreed to carry on Bolek's pioneering work.



A "Mennonite Day" in the Elblag *Gymnazium*

In May 2012 Nancy and I were invited to visit the high school in Elblag to see a special presentation on the significance of the Mennonite role in the life of that city. Teachers and students had prepared reports, photographic exhibits and a remarkable video display of Mennonite contributions to the life of the region. Nancy and I were surprised when we arrived: classes had been dismissed and students were assembled in a large auditorium for the special event. I was not surprised that Bolek had been a key player in arranging this event.

Later he and two instructors showed us evidence of the Mennonite impact on the life of this city. Many of the readers of this report will recall that the first Mennonite city church in Poland was built in this city, and is still well preserved, although Mennonites in the city later built a new church.

One of the instructors of the language classes said her some of her students would like to have pen pals in North America. If some of you wish to pursue this matter, please write to me and I will provide names and addresses of contacts.

An “International Mennonite Conference”

The “Klub Nowodworski” is planning an international Mennonite conference, July 5-7, 2013. A series of meetings will be held in several former Mennonite centers, beginning with the former Mennonite church in Gdansk on July 5. Harry Lau and Marek Opitz are working on details. Our association is contributing \$1000 to help cover expenses. More details will become available this spring. If you are interested, please contact me.

Upcoming Tours of Mennonite Historic Sites

- **Historic sites in Poland, with Alan Peters**
The 2013 tour is sold out; the 2014 tour will take place in late June/July.
Contact Alan at lnptrs@comcast.net for further details.
- **Historic sites in the Netherlands and Belgium, with Paul Toews**
The 2013 tour is sold out; the 2014 tour will be in July.
Contact Paul at pttoews@fresno.edu for further details.
- **Historic sites in Ukraine with Paul Toews and Olga Shmakina**
June 2014.
Contact Paul at pttoews@fresno.edu for further details.

The MPFA, founded in 1988, is open to all who are interested in the story of Mennonites in Poland, the Low Countries, and Ukraine. Annual dues (\$20.00) may be sent to:

Mennonite Library & Archives
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