



ARCHIVES NEWS

Respecting the Past | Forging the Future

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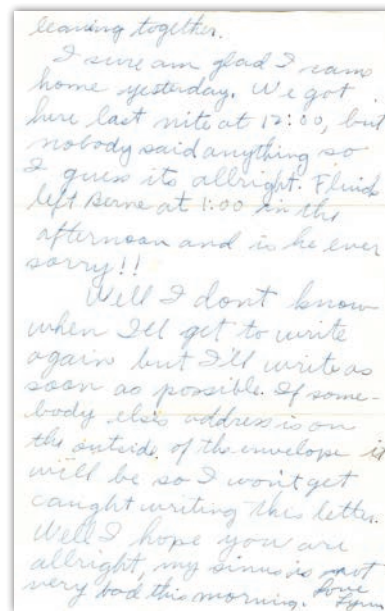
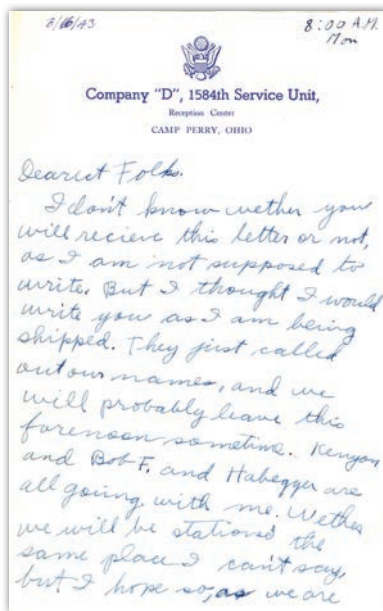
Learning about Lynn Liechty, WWII non-combatant

By Naomi Klassen

My internship at the MC USA Archives this summer has been fascinating. On my first day, I began processing a small collection of letters written between 1943-1946, during World War II.

These letters are a lasting record of correspondence between Lynn Liechty, a Mennonite 1-AO non-combatant, and his family and friends back home in Berne, Indiana. His letters mark a heartfelt effort to communicate with his community, as he reflects on his service at an Army Base in Kearns, Utah, to island territories, including Guam.

Perhaps surprisingly, the bulk of Liechty's messages were calm, even mundane—describing meals, daily training routines, chapel services and his occasional work as a dental medic. It became apparent that the challenges of serving as a non-combatant during WWII were sometimes more mental than physical. Throughout this period, Liechty experienced external pressure to adjust his Anabaptist beliefs and values. One of his most striking letters, sent to his father in 1943, is about a confrontation regarding whether he would train with a gun.



Liechty wrote, "Well, I got my first real test today." Due to a squadron mix-up, he and a small group of other non-combatants were sent to train in a rifle range. Liechty wrote, "I knew we were into a showdown," as he prepared to speak up about the mistake. Despite his anxiety, "after a little prayer, [Liechty] stepped out in front of that group of men" and told the squadron leader that he was leaving. This situation was eventually resolved with the aid of a senior captain, but it was an exercise of faith for Liechty. At the end of his story, he described his nervousness and gratitude that "the Lord was right beside me."

I was impressed by Liechty's positive attitude and honesty about the challenges of serving as a non-combatant. To learn more about Liechty, visit the MC USA Archives or email archives@mennoniteusa.org.

Citations: Lynn Liechty Papers, 1943-1946. HM1-1057. Mennonite Church USA Archives. Elkhart, Ind.

The stories in the Archives help us define what it means to be Mennonite. This issue contains two stories that remind us of our call to be peacemakers, one featuring the letters of Lynn Liechty and the other on CPT. This edition also includes a home archiving guide. I hope you leave this issue feeling inspired by peacemaking and preservation.

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Home archival tips

By Olivia Krall

Visitors to the MC USA Archives often ask, “How can I preserve my photos and documents?” Here are some helpful tips to preserve your family’s story for decades to come.

Environmental control: Keep your materials in a controlled environment that does not have large fluctuations in temperature or humidity. Heat and humidity speed up natural deterioration and increase the risk of threats, such as mold and pests. Avoid storing materials where there is the possibility of water damage or near food. If possible, keep the temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit and the relative humidity between 30-50%.

Document housing: For long-term preservation, acid-free folders and boxes are best. These items are available from suppliers such as Archival Methods or Gaylord Archival. If that is not possible, use file cabinets or clean cardboard boxes with lids that close. Make sure that storage containers are sturdy, do not give off a strong odor and were not previously used to hold food. Plastic totes are not recommended for long-term storage, as plastics can off-gas chemicals that are damaging to documents.

Preserving photos: Photographs are particularly sensitive, and it’s important to choose storage materials that will not speed up deterioration, such as photo sleeves or folders that have passed the Photographic Activity Test (PAT). Do not use adhesives, tape or metal fasteners that may discolor and damage photographs and documents. Place items into file folders within the containers for added protection.

Cataloging: Keep track of your documents by labeling and making box lists. Label folders with a short description of the contents and the date the items were created. Label photographs by including a piece of paper with the image. Note in pencil who is in the photo and where and when it was taken. If that is not possible, label the photograph lightly in pencil on the back. A photo is most interesting to the next generation when they know who is in it!

Make a box list that lists each folder inside a container in order. These are great for finding a specific file or item in a collection of multiple boxes and for identifying if anything has been misplaced or gone missing.

Look for more home archival tips in upcoming issues of the Archives News.



New collection highlights CPT's work in Palestine

By Olivia Krall

For nearly 30 years, Community Peacemaker Teams (formerly Christian Peacemaker Teams) has been active in Hebron, a Palestinian city in the West Bank.

In a speech at the 1984 Mennonite World Conference Assembly, theologian Ron Sider called for the creation of "a new nonviolent peacekeeping force." Sider challenged the church saying, "Unless we are ready to die developing new nonviolent attempts to reduce conflict, we should confess that we never really meant that the cross was an alternative to the sword."

In response to Sider's proposal, the Church of the Brethren, "Old" Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church collaborated on a new peacemaking initiative, originally named Christian Peacemakers Team, in 1986. Friends United Meeting joined as a sponsor in 1996.

In 1995, the Palestinian mayor of Hebron invited CPT to come to the city to work as non-violent, international observers. CPT describes its work as having four main components: accompanying, advocacy, observing and reporting, and solidarity. CPT's insistence on a solidarity that reflects the unequal power dynamic between the Palestinians in Hebron and the Israeli settlers and soldiers has set it apart from other international organizations in the city, which focus on being impartial observers.

The MC USA Archives contains many stories of CPT's work for a just peace in Hebron. These stories include CPT's resistance to an illegal fence put around Professor Mosallam Ali Shreateh's wheat field, volunteers accompanying students and teachers on their way to school after they were harassed by settlers, and CPT's work to prevent the demolition of Palestinian homes.

A new donation to the MC USA Archives by a CPT alumnus tells the story of an October 1997 delegation that was part of CPT's "Rebuilders Against Bulldozers" campaign. In a diary, photos, emails and other materials, the collection showcases the actions of the eight-person team working for peace.

The delegation took a two-week trip to Palestine. The second half of the trip was spent in Hebron with a long-term CPT team to learn about home demolitions by the Israeli government and participate in direct action to prevent them.



*Home demolition near Hebron, October 1997.
Photos by Viginia Wilcox.*



On October 14, 1997, CPT was called to a home demolition in the village of Beit Omar, just outside Hebron. CPT arrived halfway through the demolition, and Israeli soldiers prevented the team from approaching the house.

In previous demolitions, CPT members climbed onto houses and refused to move to prevent the destruction of the home, which led to their arrests. In this case, prevented by soldiers, delegates took pictures and documented the event so they could bring evidence of the demolitions home to politicians and the public. In addition to bearing witness to the home demolition, delegates met with families whose homes were destroyed to listen, learn about and document the destruction.

To learn more about the Archives' CPT collection, visit our online catalog at mennoniteusa.org/peacemaker-85-11 or reach out to Archives@mennoniteusa.org. To learn more about CPT's ongoing work in Palestine, visit cpt.org.

*Citation: Christian Peacemaker Teams Records. X-56.
Mennonite Church USA Archives. Elkhart, Ind.*

Meet Naomi Klassen, MC USA Archives summer intern

"Growing up, I always enjoyed watching documentaries with my dad and was excited to go to history class at school," said Naomi Klassen, summer intern for the MC USA Archives. Klassen is heading into her senior year at Goshen (Indiana) College, where she is completing a double major in history and criminal and restorative justice.

The internship allowed her to explore possible career paths. "I was really motivated to get some experience in an applicable workplace, such as this, that focuses on archival work," she said.

Klassen said that she was excited about her first project involving a collection from Benton Mennonite Church in Goshen and to do hands-on researching, organizing and problem solving. "Reading through old records was something I was looking forward to," she added, with a smile.

Klassen attends Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen. Her internship was generously funded by the Schowalter Foundation.



Mary and Mac Bustos, Davenport, Iowa, circa 1982. Mac Bustos was pastor of the Segunda Iglesia Evangelica Menonita. They had moved to Davenport from the Iglesia Menonita de Lawndale, Chicago, Illinois, in 1963 to provide leadership for a new mission. Mac was ordained to the Christian ministry in 1969. Among the many ways that Mary served, in addition to congregational ministry, was as a member of the publication committee for El Noticiero and a steering committee member of the Office of Congregational Education and Literature in Spanish.



Citation: Hispanic Mennonite Convention Collection, I-06-006, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Elkhart, Ind.



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Historical Archives

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