

# THANKS, JOHN!

by Lorraine Frantz Edwards\*

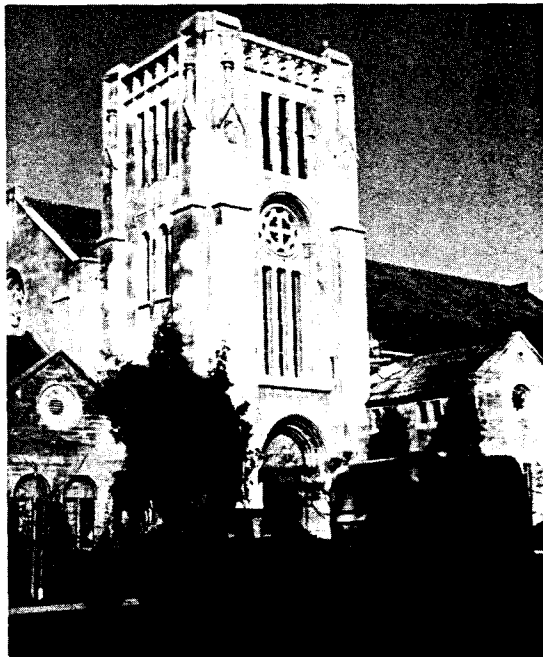
I found myself laughing out loud as I read John W. Heisey's article in the January 1988 *Mennonite Family History*. He said to "Get Out of Town!" and described my situation exactly. "Don't stay at home and try to do all your research by mail. Get out and see for yourself what is available."

My husband is in heaven, my children are grown and have families of their own. Hating the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays (because I'm alone), I "threw" all my time and energy into my computer genealogy. Sixteen hour days were not unusual!

Mr. Heisey said: "Visit the old homestead. Locate those old cemeteries, churches, schools and other public and private places once so familiar to your ancestors." The idea appealed to me so I decided to use my next holiday for a short trip to the library at the University of LaVerne.

LaVerne, California, is now a part of the mosaic of cities in the San Gabriel Valley—a next door neighbor to Pomona. It is only 100 miles from my residence in Lancaster, but I repeatedly "put off" the trip because I had so much data to put in the computer, lots of correspondence, etc., etc.

On Saturday, January 16, I pulled my little camping trailer to LaVerne—the hometown of my Frantz grandparents. I hadn't been there since I was a child. (I didn't even



*Church of the Brethren at LaVerne, Calif., with Lorraine's car and trailer in the foreground.*

\*Lorraine Frantz Edwards, 45365 Cedar Ave., #1, Lancaster, CA 93534-1972, an avid genealogist the past few years, has listed over 5000 family names in her computer, and loves to discover another new genealogical "pen pal". Her grandparents on her father's side were Brethren.

know their former address.)

I spent the day reading through family histories. I found lots of valuable information, despite the fact that a student librarian said "we don't have a genealogy section." The LaVerne Library has a "Special Collection" that chronicals the history of the Church of the Brethren and families/members thereof. My roots are in the Brethren and Mennonite Churches—all the way back to Immigrant Michael Frantz and Immigrant Jacob Showalter.

Every book I thumbed through had names that I recognized. Many were already in my computer and I was able to add a birthdate or marriage.

At closing time, I reluctantly left the library but went no further than my car and trailer in the parking lot. I spent a quiet evening in reading and writing, and went to bed early. (That was a luxury because I'm often on my computer until midnight!)

It rained hard that night, but I enjoyed the rhythm and melody. (I often get so busy that I don't hear the heart beat of the earth.) Southern California experienced millions of dollars in damage as the storm raged throughout the day. (The rest of the nation felt the fury as the storm moved eastward.)

About 9:00 a.m., I drove around until I found the Church of the Brethren, parked my car and trailer in the alley behind the church, and made a dash through the rain to an open back door. I inquired, and was directed to an adult Sunday School class. A pleasant lady motioned for me to sit beside her and asked my name. I perceived that she was the class secretary because she recorded the names as they arrived. Her list of names read like the index of my genealogy!

At 10:30, I was seated in the very old sanctuary. Tears welled up in my eyes—I sensed that my grandparents had worshipped here—maybe they sat in the same pew. (I've since confirmed that, indeed, they worshipped there—my grandfather was the first custodian of that new (now 58 year-old) structure. Aunts, uncles and cousins, too, had honored our Lord and Savior in the Church of the Brethren.

Special holiday hours at the University Library permitted me to do a lot of reading (more reading than research). I made at least 110 photocopies for later inspection at home. I conversed with the Librarian, Dr. Marlin L. Heckman, and learned of his research and publication regarding the Lordsburg College (forerunner of LaVerne University).

I'm so glad I "got out of town", and I'm eager to return to LaVerne again. I now have the former address of my grandparents—and their final resting place. I also know, belatedly, that my dad and uncle attended classes (in 1919) in that charming old hotel-turned-college.

A computer/genealogy "nut" is one of the nicer terms used to describe (me) Lorraine Frantz Edwards. This may sound strange, but after my brief holiday, I feel a new excitement and challenge, a new vigor and zeal! I'm ready to "get out of town" and visit some of those other places mentioned in John Heisey's article: archives, court-houses..... And next time I'll take my portable computer!