

# First Threshings

## First Mennonite Church

Ash & Grand

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*As water falls on dry tea leaves  
and brings out their flavor,  
so may your Spirit fall on us  
and renew us  
so we may bring refreshment  
and joy to others.*

*Sing the Journey, no. 160*

## Rest and Recuperation

By the time you read this, we should be back. But I write this now from the perspective of anticipation. It's been almost four years since Ann and I have gotten away for a week-long vacation together. We thought about it, and the last time we could remember being gone for a week together was when we drove to Winnipeg in summer 2004 to visit our seminary friends. So, we are anticipating our trip with excitement. The plan is to board the Amtrak in Newton Thursday morning, March 27. Ann loves trains and has wanted us to take a train trip for some time now. In fact she was so excited about this train trip that she told a friend, "Ever since I was a train, I have loved to ride kids!" Now that's excited. The woman needs a vacation.

We are to arrive in Flagstaff Thursday night, spend the night in Hotel Monte Vista. We have been warned by Ann's brother that this hotel is something of a cross between an historic hotel and a dive. Friday morning we rent a car and begin our drive to the Hopi reservation via Sunset Crater and the Grand Canyon. Ann's parents have been on the Hopi reservation for several weeks now building a volunteer workers' house. Actually they have been there quite often over the past few years, first to build the school gymnasium and now the house. Jim is the contractor and volunteer coordinator. Doris is the cook. So we are looking forward to finally seeing that to which they have been giving so much time, and all the people and places they have been talking about. Interestingly, our son Mark will be at the reservation that same week as he leads a group of Bethel students for a spring break service trip.

From there we plan to circle the Grand Canyon, staying at Zion National Park Lodge and taking a side trip to Bryce Canyon National Park. Then we plan to drive to Las Vegas. Don't worry about gambling. We will not budget as much as a nickel for that. But I have been curious about this city for a long time and look forward to simply walking the strip and taking in this aspect of American culture. From Vegas we return to Flagstaff via Hoover Dam. Another night in the Hotel Monte Vista, then we board the Amtrak for Newton Saturday morning, April 5.

We should get in to Newton around 4:00 o'clock Sunday morning, just in time to show up to preach the sermon that morning. Not. Thank you Nadine Friesen and Deryll Amstutz for leading Sunday, March 30, and Susie Kliewer and Doug Bartel for leading Sunday, April 6. However, I see we have a congregational meeting set for April 6 after the fellowship meal, so I will try to make it for that. See you then.

*Randy*

April 2008

**Minutes of March 19 Church Ministries Council Meeting (abridged)**

Present: Pastor Randy Smith, Nadine Friesen, Marvin Funk (moderator), Bonnie Funk, Verda Albrecht, Eric Codding, Judy Harder, Nancy Klaassen, Carolyn Kleiber, Loren Groening, Elfrieda Funk (recording secretary). Agenda: mostly reports/ brainstorming. Minutes of March 2, February 28, January 24 meetings were approved as presented. Stewardship Committee: interim secretarial staff are: Verda Albrecht, Jan Goertz (alternate Mon/Tues); Linda Mathis (Thurs/Fri). A job description for this position is being devised. The 2008 directory needs to be completed soon. Care Committee: Our four deacons are: Marlin Bartel (Pat Bartel asst); Deanne Duerksen (Ann Smith asst); Elfrieda Funk (Ruth Ann Penner asst); Verda Albrecht (Elaine Jantzen asst). Church members have been divided among these deacons. A final list of all who have committed to serve this year should be distributed soon, then there will be an affirmation celebration. Another DnA session is to be scheduled soon. Technology Committee has met: final decisions on future needs will be made by the Ministries Council, then the congregation. Vision Council: discussing/proposing: (1) using the April 6 congregational meeting to discuss possibilities re. Wed evening programs (whether full, partial or no partnership w/Trinity); (2) recommending bringing to the congregation in May that Randy be offered another three-year term; (3) staffing options for youth, Christian Education, worship: possibly offering stipends (to members first) to address these needs. Current youth pastor budget could go toward such support. Strong preference is that youth ministry continue; youth need to be encouraged and made aware that we appreciate them. Discussion followed on what space could be designated for the youth. M/S/C: *Ministries Council approves the #1 proposal from the Vision Council for the April 6 congregational meeting and gives them the responsibility of chairing it.* M/S/C: *The congregational meeting and vote to issue another three-year term to Pastor Randy be on May 4, and information for this meeting be announced to the congregation according to the constitution.*  
Next Ministries Council meeting: April 24 at 7:30 p.m.

The unabridged version of the minutes is available in the office.


*Jesus Christ is the One who can transmute everything we come across.*  
*Oswald Chambers*

**This month's events**

- 2 6:15 p.m. Fellowship meal.
- 7:00 p.m. Wed evening activities.  
Adult bible study (*The Parables of Jesus: Connecting the Bible to Life* led by Pastor Koehn)
- 5 8:15 p.m. Worship Committee meeting
- 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Ruby Friesen's auction: Fairgrounds. TFY to serve.
- 9:00 a.m. Clean-up at Shirley Reusser's farm (1883 N. Falcon). Lunch served. RSVP to Ruth Ann Penner or Elfrieda Funk.  
Justin Hiebert returns (accompanying TC choir tour)  
3:30, 4:00 p.m. Nursing homes services
- 5:00-7:00 p.m. German supper at Grace Hill M.C. Tickets \$10. Children 6-under, free. Benefit: local/area missions.
- 6:30 p.m. Help clean Fairgrounds for verenike-making day. Contact Lee or Verda Albrecht at 947-3425.
- 6:30 p.m. Morning Star Ranch banquet, Tabor College gymnasium. Tickets: \$10, available in church office. Poster on bulletin board.
- 6 Randy and Ann return home.  
Noon: fellowship meal/congregational meeting to discuss future direction of youth ministry and Wed evening program.
- 8 4-H Building, Fairgrounds: verenike-making. (You can help any time, particularly noon-3:30 p.m.: cookies sign-up sheet on bulletin board.
- 10 6:45 a.m. Care Committee meeting
- 11-12 MCC Sale, Hutchinson Fairgrounds (Fri: 4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.; Sat: 6:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (approximately))
- 13 6:00 p.m. Inauguration service (at the Bethel College Mennonite Church) to celebrate the new Newton Hispanic Mennonite Church.
- 14-16 Retirees' Relaxation retreat, *Caretakers of Creation*. Pre-register by April 9. Info on bulletin board.
- 25-27 Men's/Boys' retreat *Wrestling with God*. Info: Brent Voran 316-283-1072.
- 26 8:00 a.m.-noon. Workshop led by Lynn Miller on *The Power of Enough*. RSVP to Shalom Mennonite Church: 316-283-7395 or [office@shalomnewton.org](mailto:office@shalomnewton.org). Freewill offering.
- 27 **Deadline** for submitting entries for **Pumpkin book**. Needed are: book title/cover designs, drawings for inside pages, etc. Details on orange sheet distributed March 23.

**Booklets (giving more information) are available on the table in the foyer:**

**MCC Sale  
Camp Mennoscah**

 **If you participate in any "First" activities, please take photos and submit them to Rod Franzen for possible inclusion in the 2008 congregational retrospective.**

**“We may be poor but soap is cheap: you can be clean and you can be friendly.”**

Getting to know Art and Linda Jantz

*I visited with Linda in her room at Parkside. She is spending more of her time in her wheel-chair but, ever gracious, she moved a couple of magazines off her easy chair and insisted I sit there for the interview.*

*“My parents were John J. and Anna (Lehrman) Schmidt, and they farmed two miles east and two-thirds mile south of Goessel. When I was four, they moved to four and a quarter miles east of the Alexanderwohl Church. I had one brother, Eldon – he was older than me – and Phyllis was younger than me. We went to school – Pleasant Valley School number 27 – one and three-quarter miles from our home – and we would walk there most of the time, except when the roads were very bad or it snowed; then my dad took us to school in the buggy. One or two trips he took the lumber wagon and we had to wrap up with *Furdiëke* (quilted robes).” Her lapse into German prompted me to ask her if she grew up speaking German and she said, “We spoke English in school but I was fluent in German. And my dad would read the scriptures to the family in German.”*

*“What were some of the games we used to play?” she echoed me. “Well, one inside game was *Who Has The Button?* And, sometimes the teacher would show a map from our textbooks and then call out names (of places) and we had to find them. And we played *Tic-Tac-Toe*. Outside, we played baseball and *Cat & Mouse* and *Fox & Goose* and *Tangle-up*.”*

*“What’s *Tangle-up?*” I asked.*

*“It’s where we all formed a ring together and we had somebody come to the middle and tangle themselves like everything with the others – and the one who was ‘It’ had to untangle them.” She laughed gently. “It was fun.” And, after a short pause, she added, “And *Hide & Seek*. There was this one little knot-hole missing in the wall and we would go and hide in there.”*

*When I asked about other school memories, Linda quickly recited the names of her first, second and third- to-fifth grade teachers. Spelling was her favorite subject. “That was something that was easy for me,” she smiled, then added, “I wish, now, I had studied more geography; that’s very interesting.” I asked which areas they had visited and she mentioned places from New York to Wisconsin to Montana. As she mentioned northern states, she pointed north. That’s something that always amazes me about people around here: even when they’re in a building, they know their compass points!*

Continuing with her school memories, Linda said, “The teacher would ring the school bell about five minutes before we had to be there. We brought our own lunch and, when it was very, very cold, our teacher would give us children the right to heat our lunch on the stove. It was a big stove. He started it in the morning with coal, then, when it was burning, he’d switch to wood. The wood came from the residents that lived nearby. And, if anyone had cobs, that’s always a good starter.

*“I remember we had a big dictionary in front; it was several inches thick,” and she gestured that.*

*“How big was your class?”*

*“In our class we were four. But, for a couple of years, or maybe just one, we – my brother and I – dropped out. My folks couldn’t send us. So I went to work out in people’s homes. One lady had just come home from the hospital; it was a lot of responsibility: I had to do everything – laundry, cooking, cleaning – and they had two big boys at home. That was almost too much. I was very unhappy about the job. Not the people,” she hastened to add. “Then, a couple heard about it. We had the privilege of staying with them: if we would clean house, we could go to school. I was very happy!*

*“In eighth grade, we had a lady teacher, Grace Waltie, who roomed at the J. S. Penner home, and she presented herself into school, and she taught us many things, like how to crochet – my mother had given me the basics – and that was nice. She was a real neat little lady and, for the school closing, she had us all together with her family and she would give us a picnic.” This was a great treat and very much appreciated by all the students. When, years later, she came back to visit, Linda had no trouble recognizing her. (There must have been special relationships built up between country teachers and their pupils in those days: Art had a similar experience with one of his teachers tracking him down decades later.)*

*In 1999, Linda Mathis, then-church secretary, had asked Linda to write up some of her Christmas memories for “First Threshings”. She wrote, in part, “Financially, times were hard but there were always gifts for everyone, even if they weren’t large. We never had a Christmas tree in our home. On Christmas Eve, our parents placed our presents – candy and nuts – at ‘our place’ on the table. On Christmas morning, our father read the Christmas story and led us in prayer and singing Christmas songs. On Christmas Day, we went to church to worship, and afterwards, we were delighted to go to ‘Grandma’s house’. It was enjoyable to see our cousins, and we all shared and enjoyed the Christmas*

dinner which consisted of *Pluma Moos* and *Shencha Flaesh* with horseradish and *Zwiebach*. After dinner, we recited our verses and Grandma had a gift and a sack of candy and nuts for each of us." Linda treasured many of her gifts and only recently gave them away to family members.

"Do you have memories about the dust-bowl days?" I asked.

"Oh yes, we had dust!" she said emphatically. "We were brought home one afternoon because it was so bad that they wanted to bring us home before it got so terrible. Dust was everywhere. One time we were visiting Art's parents and we found about six inches of dust in the ceiling: the wood (slats) was bent and it got caught up there."

After graduating from Goessel High School in 1943, Linda worked in the egg department of the Central Kansas Co-op Creamery in Hillsboro. Her main job was to candle eggs but she occasionally helped out with the milk-bottling when they were short-handed.

"How did you candle eggs?" I asked.

Linda was visualizing the process as she described it - re-living it, because she talked in the present tense. "They have a tall row of boxes built up overhead and they have a bulb in there, and the outside is all dark, then when they candle the eggs you have to switch on your light so you have it to work with, and when you look at the eggs they put that egg right up against the bulb and that egg's yolk will show up. And, if the eggs aren't good they have spots on them and that's maybe a Grade B egg instead of Grade A. And, when they are black inside, that means they are bad. We put them in the case and they hauled them away. What became of them, I don't know, but I tell you" she emphasized, "they stink!" She made quite a face, then smiled.

One of her fellow workers at the creamery was Art Jantz's brother and it was through him that they met. Art grew up about twenty-five miles southeast of Syracuse, KS, on a farm with the usual complement of cows and pigs, and they raised crops. They were poor, but always thankful they had enough milk and food - and Art quoted his mother as saying, 'Soap is cheap. You can be clean, and you can be friendly.' And Art is known for his bright smile and friendly manner.

He, his older brother Ed and younger sister Nettie attended the Antelope Grade School, a three-mile walk (or pony-ride) from home. Initially, they spoke only low German but Edward, three years older, had learned English and served as their translator. "During the winter, the teacher would fix hot oyster stew on the coal stove for our noon meal," he said in an interview a few years ago. For recreation, he

recalled playing the games *Fox & Geese* and *Andy Over*.

When Art was only nine, his father was in a traffic accident. Fog. Blowing dust. A curve in the road. A truck carrying pipes that pierced his windshield and hit him. He survived for three months with his wife at his hospital bedside, but that left the three young children to fend for themselves at the farm. After she returned home, they struggled on in their two-room house but the continual dust storms and drought, followed by the Great Depression, drove them to move to Marion County where they had relatives. Here, they experienced further hardship when, not long afterwards, their farmhouse burned to the ground, destroying all their possessions. They moved to Lehigh, and, after graduating from Lehigh High School, Art did farm work for a while, then worked at the Tip Top Restaurant in Hillsboro. He was obviously a hard worker, and conscientious, because, in 1946, a customer, who was the storekeeper of the Schaeffler Mercantile Store, offered him a job. The store sold everything from ladies' hats to groceries and it was at the meat counter there that he started as a meat cutter. He learned his trade from Arthur Ebel.

"That's where he worked when we met," Linda said. "Then, he was offered a job at a grocery store in Lindsborg cutting meat: they made all different kinds of sausages. And they had a bakery there - home-baked goods. And," she added, "they had nice little Dahl horses."

Art and Linda returned to Hillsboro after a year but it was during that year that Art joined the Bethany Oratorio Society, singing in the *Messiah*. He continued this for twenty-three years, his family accommodating his love for singing (and, particularly, the *Messiah* and some of Bach's sacred works) by driving to Lindsborg every Sunday during the rehearsal season. By then, they had four children, Bob, Rhoda, Donald and Vernon.

Linda was mostly a full-time home-maker but, to help make ends meet, she worked at Betty's Café for a while, and baked cinnamon rolls at home for several restaurants, and *zwiebach* for Vogt's IGA. Then, in 1975, she started baking and decorating cakes for people.

Ever the servant, Linda also did much volunteer work. One project, which extended for about twelve years, was to put her love of crocheting to work: she made caps for newborns at Salem Hospital. The project started with premature twins who were very weak, to help them retain their body heat. At the time, it was estimated that an average of fifty babies were born there every year, so she made

*about 6,000 caps: each one taking about three hours. "Of course," she said in a 1986 interview, "babies come in booms," so there were times when she had to work hard to catch up. She found the work relaxing, however. "When we sit in the evening and watch TV or just sit and talk, I very seldom have my hands idle, I am usually crocheting. My labor was a labor of love for my community."*

*Art worked as a meat-cutter for Al and Dan's Grocery Store in Marion, first as an employee, later as a partner. In 1979, he sold his share in the store. Then, not ready to retire, he went to work at Vogt's IGA. He became known as a 'master sausage stuffer', and, during the Hillsboro Smoked Sausage Festival, he enjoyed using many antique sausage presses to demonstrate sausage stuffing. Twenty years later – a few months shy of his eighth birthday – and after fifty-four years in the meat-cutting business, lifting heavy carcasses and cutting them up with sharp knives – he was proud (and grateful) to be able to say that he left with all his fingers intact, and his back still strong.*

*Art always enjoyed walking, and aimed to cover two to three miles a day. He kept up his walking until quite recently, when he was a familiar sight around town. He is living in an adjoining room to Linda's at Parkside.*

*(Much of Art's history was gleaned from the family's memories book.)*

*Linda wrote a short autobiography for their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration, March 8, 1997, and ended it with this statement:*

*"As the years have come and gone, so rapidly I might add, we are slowing down. We are grateful for each new day God gives us to share with each other. God has been good to us, providing for us the necessities for daily living, and we thank and praise him for all these blessings! To God Be The Glory!"*

*Art and Linda are both godly, kind, gentle souls who have served their church and community well. They have six grandchildren and, of their family, Bob and Judy Jantz and their daughter, Becky Klein, are active members of our congregation.*

*On April 3, Art and Linda will be celebrating their 61<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary.*

I appreciated being able to use materials from the family's "memories book" which was largely compiled by Linda over several years. The book includes family members' memories and clippings from *The Hillsboro Star-Journal* and the *Marion County Record*, some of which I have quoted from. PB

## **Spirit of Fire** (Excerpt)

The Pentecostal spring of the first Christian church contrasts sharply with the icy rigidity of our Christianity today. Everyone senses that at that time a fresher wind blew and purer water flowed, a stronger power and a more fiery warmth ruled than today among those of us who call ourselves Christians. We all know that in spite of the different churches, the community life of faith and love represented by the early church is almost completely absent today.

What has Christianity in general lost? What was the all-important event that took place in Jerusalem? The word of Jesus, and even more, his life and deeds from the manger to the cross, were really alive and present in that first circle of the Christ-movement. This community of faith and community of life in the first love was marked by the risen Christ – the Christ who had said, "I am with you always." Everything depends on seeing the mystery of the risen Christ as unconditional love. There is only one thing that knows no conditions: that is love. There is only one absolute: that is God's rulership. There is only one direct way: that is the experience of God's love in Jesus Christ. In Christ, his love is put into practice.

Eberhard Arnold  
(1883-1935)

## **HABITS OF THE MISSIONAL CHURCH** by Jim Schrag

1. Practice God's presence and care.
2. Turn, repent, and receive God's grace.
3. Seek to do what Jesus is doing.
4. Weave strangers into the fabric of fellowship.
5. Proclaim forgiveness, justice, truth, and peace.
6. Seek to say what Jesus is saying.

### **Habit One – Practice God's presence and care**

The power of God's presence through us is remarkable. In our presence with a neighbor who is lonely or facing family difficulties, we embody God's presence, as our vision statement says, "...so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world." ....We know the loneliness of feeling that "no one cares to listen" or "no one understands". Practicing God's presence is to listen to, more than talk to, the people in need who live around us.

How is our congregation embodying the caring presence of God to those around us?

### **Habit Two – Turn, repent, and receive God's grace**

Mennonites are by nature "works" people. We get a lot done that way, and often win the world's admiration. So we think "doing it" is enough. A mid-western Mennonite farmer went with other MDSers to assist his neighbors in a nearby town after a flood. At the end of the day someone asked him, "Why did you come to help us?" "Oh," he replied, "It rained over my way, too, and I

couldn't work in the fields." Such "modesty" for our good works misses the opportunity to convey God's grace to others. You see, it is not about us! It is about God working through us to show God's love to the world. Being missional for Mennonites may require repenting of our "sufficiency" in good works and learning how to talk about God's grace which is "presented" in what we do.

### **Habit Three – See to do what Jesus is doing**

Being "Christ-like" is an ideal Mennonites are taught from an early age. How we understood this to "be like Jesus" or to *act* like Jesus?" If we are to "be like Jesus" we will possess Jesus' attributes of faithfulness, purity and steadfastness. If we "act like Jesus", we will demonstrate his courage, single-mindedness and self-sacrifice. We will go places we have not gone before. The missional question for us may not be "Who is Jesus?" but rather, "What would Jesus do now?" We will ask whether our friendships cover as broad a spectrum of society as Jesus' friendships did....What about that neighbor with whom you think you have little in common? How do we act toward opposition and possible injury because of our call from God?...We talk about our missional calling leading us "across the street and around the world." That will require the action of walking across the street, not just gazing over the curb and wondering what it is like "over there".

### **Habit Four – Weave strangers into the fabric of fellowship**

How often have we been asked if our circle of friends places us within reach of missional opportunities? Many of us, even pastors, have had to admit that our relationships are largely defined by other Christians like us. But sometimes God intervenes in our comfortable patterns....and perhaps I ought to get in there with God's designs, laying aside my own predispositions and feelings about these "strangers" in our midst.

Who has God sent to our congregation?

### **Habit Five – Proclaim forgiveness, justice, truth, and peace**

This habit sounds familiar to us – a reminder that not everything about God's missional calling to our church is new and strange. Many Christians of other traditions find the Anabaptist penchant for these callings to be ever more compelling. They beg us not to hide our candle under a bushel in these important aspects of God's presence in the world through us. But before we rest on our laurels and think we have this habit mastered, we would do well to remind ourselves of the many schisms that scar our history as Anabaptist/Mennonites. Church fights – among those who think they have forgiven everyone, know what justice is, claim truth absolutely and have mastered the practice of peace – turn out to be among the most ugly of all conflicts....Jesus did not say "have no enemies," rather he said, "love your enemies." The presumption of our Lord was that everyone who follows him will have

enemies. Denying that people oppose us, disagree with us, and even wish us ill so that we can claim that we "have no enemies" helps us avoid the perilous realm of "loving our enemies." Since there is no one to forgive, we need not make peace because peace is already established! Instead of denying conflict or avoiding it, as we often do, Christ chose to walk straight through conflict, at an incredible cost to himself. On the cross he forgave those who had placed him there. Christ's faithfulness to God's call to walk the path of conflict and forgiveness brought redemption for us all. So perhaps for us as peace-claiming, truth-loving, justice-seeking people, the most challenging of the missional habits will be in the areas of forgiveness, justice, truth and peace. The habit that we think we know the best is the habit that we may neglect the most!

### **Habit Six – Seek to say what Jesus is saying**

How does the spirit of Jesus speak through us? How do we know "what Jesus would do" in a particular situation? This is an important component of grasping a missional vision and lifestyle. The Gospels are the closest thing to Jesus' voice that we have. They must come alive for us! We must see ourselves, and each other, in the Gospel stories of searching, healing, failing and finding. The stories of the Gospels (as the voice of Jesus) need to be retold in terms of our immediate circumstances and surroundings. We don't always "tell the Gospel stories" as much as they guide our way of speaking. Does the congregation know who literally lives across the street from the church building? Do we believe that if Jesus were present, he would want to know about, and relate to the people on "our street?" Being Christ-like is speaking in the tones that Jesus would speak. The best way to learn to speak like Jesus is to learn from his example in the Gospels....for most of us...this is how we can best say what Jesus is saying.

*(Taken from Mennonite Mission Network website and submitted by Sharon Ressler.)*

### **Retarded Grandparents**

(As reported by a teacher)

After Christmas, a teacher asked her young pupils how they spent their holiday away from school. One child wrote the following:

"We always used to spend the holidays with Grandma and Grandpa. They used to live in a big brick house but Grandpa got retarded and they moved to Arizona. Now they live in a tin box and have rocks painted green to look like grass.

They ride around on their bicycles and wear nametags because they don't know who they are any more. They go to a building called a wrecked center, but they must have got it fixed because it is all okay now, and do exercises there, but they don't do them very well. There is a swimming pool, too, but, in it, they all jump up and down with hats on.

At their gate, there is a dollhouse with a little old man sitting in it. He watches all day so nobody can escape. Sometimes they sneak out.

They go cruising in their golf carts. Nobody there cooks, they just eat out. And, they eat the same thing every night: 'early birds'.

Some of the people can't get out past the man in the dollhouse. The ones who do get out bring food back to the wrecked center and call it potluck.

My Grandma says that Grandpa worked all his life to earn his retardment and says I should work hard so I can be retarded some day too. When I earn my retardment, I want to be the man in the dollhouse. Then I will let people out so they can visit their grandchildren.

Submitted anonymously by a member.

📧 All submissions of interest to the FMC family are welcome and will be included, depending on timeliness and space availability. If possible, submit your materials at least ten days before the first Sunday of the following month. Comments, pro/con, regarding any aspect of the newsletter are also welcome. Please address these to Pat Bartel, Compiler/Editor.