

Katie Funk Wiebe, *My Immigrant Father*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2016. Pp. 311. Softcover, \$22.95.

Although the title of Katie Funk Wiebe's *My Immigrant Father* implies the author intended to write a straight forward biography of her father Jacob Funk, that is not the case. The work is much more than that. In fact the author pursues two goals in this book: a) to describe the historical context in which her father Jacob (Jake) lived; and, b) to portray the specific stages of his life.

To deal with the former, the author chronicles in detail the major events that influenced the context of his life. To begin with, these involved his Mennonite background, that is, his family's religious traditions. More specifically, Wiebe outlines the several stages of Mennonite history. These passages include references to the movement's origin in Holland, the period in Prussia, the migration out of Germany to Russia in the eighteenth century and finally the movement into the modern age during the last two centuries. With regard to the latter she describes the context of the First World War, the subsequent Russian Revolution and the migration from Russia to Canada. In concentrating on Canada, she elaborates on the difficulties of settlement in the 1920s, the trials and tribulations of the dirty thirties and then the strain of the Second World War. In each of these historical contexts the author describes her family but also the larger Mennonite community as evidence of how the crises affected individuals as well as the group. In her depictions and summations of the contexts in Europe and Canada, she elaborates on the effects not only on Mennonites but also on other social groups including Russians, Canadians, revolutionaries and other conscientious Christians. In doing so, Wiebe has written an effective social history.

After painting the larger picture, Wiebe turns to deal with the final stages of her father's (Jake's) life. Specifically, the last several chapters depict his retirement and problems of coping with old age. In this section, Wiebe touchingly expresses her love and appreciation for her kind and sensitive father. As a devoted daughter, she relates his decline and death with compassion, understanding and appreciation. She also elaborates on how her dedicated mother stood by her father's side to support him to the end. Author Wiebe's account reveals how deeply she understood not only her father's individual life but also his role as a family head and prominent

member of the Mennonite community before and after migration to Canada.

The weaknesses of the book are few. Funk Wiebe's knowledge, experience, and skills as a writer make her account very readable. The only places in the text where she can be faulted are, I believe, the sections dealing with family details, for example, with those pages listing multiple names and numbers or relatives. Admittedly, some of these are too long and distracting. At one point, even the author recognizes that perhaps she has gone too far with details (24). However, those are minor flaws. The broader historical sections reflect just how much research and study the author expended to make the events and characters understandable and accurate. The author's inclusion of traditional Mennonite exotic-appearing recipes for everything from soup to cake at the end of each chapter cleverly emphasizes the uniqueness of her subject. In short, the book represents a major accomplishment not only for Mennonites but also for those interested in twentieth-century European and Canadian history; this book is a worth-while read.

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