

## My Review of “*Workers Together With God*”

6 years ago, at our 70th Anniversary, Arnold Stobbe asked if I would write a history of the mission for the 75th Anniversary. (Yes, last year, 2016). I already had about 7 jobs at Western Tract Mission, but I really like making books, and this sounded like a truly worthy goal. I gathered up a box full of photos from the Records Room, and got my volunteers on Wednesday afternoons to scan the photos into the computers in my office.

By 2015 I was getting a bit nervous, as I hadn't started writing the book yet, but I wanted to research to get as many facts straight as possible. At every prayer meeting from January on, I asked that the Lord send me volunteers to whom I could delegate some of my jobs. No new volunteers came that were interested enough to take responsibility.

Then in July, at a Board meeting (with our new Millennial Board members) everything changed in a matter of minutes! It was decided that we needed to stop everything and pray and seek God's face for just how this mission was to carry out our mandate to our (younger) generation. In one swoop all my 8 jobs were taken away. I was relieved, but - "What about the history book?" I asked.

"Oh yes, you should keep that job!" So I moved my office home, and began to give this one job more of my attention. Gradually, it ate up more and more of my weekly and daily life. Linda Unger, one of my volunteers, continued to come to help me out on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. Now I had boxes and bins full of binders and folders at home, full of Minutes and Annual Reports, but they had been typed decades ago on typewriters, and would do me no good for the book until they were in the computer too. So Linda and I spent many months typing up those old documents. (For which I am EVER so grateful now!)

In 2016 I began to write up the story, copying and pasting liberally from the previously published articles in the Western Tract NEWS which became *Reflections* in the early 1990s, also checking facts and dates in the Minutes and Annual Reports. The previously scanned photos and slides began to fill in as illustrations, and as I got into the years since 1999 when I became involved, I could use more and more of my colour photos. That first draft was finished New Year's Eve, of 2016.

2016 was a busy year for us as we were selling our building and moving our office into a new location at 2222 Ave. C. North. We didn't have time for a 75th Anniversary. Arnold said we could celebrate a year later. Whew, a reprieve for me!

This year, 2017, I have been doing the layout work, preparing the book for printing, and in August gave out some Advance Review copies to the Board members and a select number who have worked in the mission for many years, some as long as 15 or 17 or 20 years. Their feedback has been invaluable for polishing the book up and correcting mistakes. (There may still be some, but they should be much harder to find now!)

In fact, since that Celebration night, I have been informed of two flaws in the book. I have the wrong photo for Russell Rice, the second Director, and I provided no address or contact info for those who wish to give us feedback.

Ouch! Of course, I'll fix that if we ever do a reprint. (I know the last 40+ books would sell if someone would promote them; I've just hesitated to volunteer... sigh!)

### **The Special Features of *Workers Together With God***

It is not a novel, but a history (His Story) and includes many details, and many people over 8 decades! As one reviewer said, "Can you imagine anyone else doing this over again some time in the future?"

No, I cannot! Although it is easy to read, it is more like a reference book. Instead of chapters it has Eras. Each Director, or main leader has an Era named after them, for the mission had a certain flavour and style during their years of leadership.

### ***Elliott Era 1941-1956***

This Era is about Mr. George W. Elliott, a business man in Langham, SK., the founder, and how he started this mission, encouraging members to order tracts every 4 months and send them out by mail at their own expense as a means of evangelism. He encouraged people to write out their testimony and send it in, and also their photo, poems, etc. He had



several young women helping him with correspondence with the members scattered all over Canada, and the USA, and even in other countries.

## Rice Era 1956-1978

Mr. Russell Rice was mechanically inclined and felt that it would be better to print tracts in-house than to buy them from many other places. God led him to build that long large building at 401 33rd Street West, and fill the basement with big industrial printing presses!

Those presses were just in place when the Saskatoon Revival began in November 1971. Soon the presses were running day and night to produce the literature the revival meetings needed. As a result of many children being saved at those meetings, they looked for a way to teach and disciple them, and came upon the Mailbox Club lessons. Soon there were thousands of students of all ages, and many salvation decisions!

In retrospect it would appear that this Era was the golden one, with millions of pieces of literature printed and shipped out around the world, many testimonies of people saved through tracts, plus the ones from the Mailbox Club lessons, and two years of revival testimonies published in the *Western Tract NEWS* as a result of the **Saskatoon Revival** in 1971!

## Anhorn Era 1979-1993

Mel and May Anhorn were from Langley, BC, but were working with Source of Light Ministries in Georgia, USA, with the Mailbox Club, when they read in the *Western Tract NEWS* that Mr. Rice was inviting applications to be his Assistant. They came to Saskatoon, and Mel became the Director as of January 1, 1979.

He was more of a business man, and saw great potential in the Book Nook bookstore at the front of the building. He suggested it be given a separate name and location. It became Harvest House Christian Supplies, in Plaza 22 at the west end of the city.

He brought in Chuck Aney to be Director of Native Ministries, and computerized the offices. The Mailbox Club continued to grow! At one point it had 8000 students! The Board closed down the bookstore when it was falling into debt. The Anhorns left in April 1993, moving to Vernon, BC.

## Aney Era 1993-1996

Chuck Aney was asked to be the next Director. He'd just had a triple-by-pass surgery and had more health issues so his Era only lasted 3 years. He felt he had to leave for health reasons. He was the one to change the *Western Tract NEWS* to *Reflections*. It was still the publication which kept the members and followers informed as to what was going on in the mission, but it got a new look and approach. Chuck also made a deal with Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, AB., to buy their Correspondence Dept, which they were closing down. It became our Enrichment Courses by mail, offered to adults who wanted a more in-depth study of the books of the Bible.

## Stobbe Era 1996-2017

Dave Wolfrom was President, and Arnold Stobbe, a Board member, at the time that Chuck left. They ended up with a lot of work, managing the mission and interviewing prospective directors. The other Board members had jobs, but Arnold was retired and living in Blaine Lake. He started driving in on Wednesdays to spend the day trouble-shooting any issues in the office, and calling the staff together for prayer meetings. Gradually, when no director came on-board, Arnold found himself in the role of interim Director, or Acting Director, as he called himself. It may have seemed as if he was just filling in temporarily, hoping to hold everything together, but in reviewing all the things he instituted and the good works that God did through him, we gain much more respect for him.

Arnold introduced weekly staff prayer times, and an Annual Day of Prayer. He recruited volunteers who turned out to be faithful and well-gifted for their roles. It was Arnold that started the website (where I got involved), and which gave us a global web presence. He initiated the Music/Dessert nights & Walkathons which seemed to bring in more funds every year!

It was his idea to publish the *There is HOPE* booklet, and later the one called, *The Peace Factor*. Both were filled with true testimonies and a call to respond to Christ and to ask for Mailbox Club Bible lessons. These were mass printed and mailed at admil rates to large numbers of postal codes so that every residence in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, Labrador, PEI, and Nova Scotia, plus part of New Brunswick, were covered with the gospel. It was also Arnold who met weekly for several years with a small group of 'millennials', who were eager to evangelize their generation. Then he drew them into the mission!

The climax in the Stobbe Era, is the Ruten Era, which just started officially this year on March 31 at the Annual Meeting. The future looks bright as a younger generation is gearing up to reach their generation for Christ in new and effective ways. The goal: nurturing revival and mobilizing witnesses.

### Sources of Information

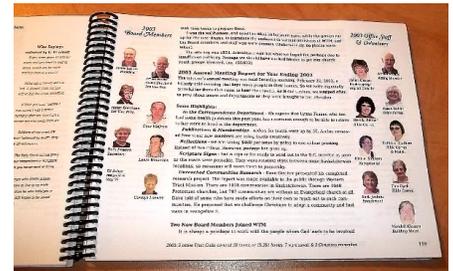
My sources have been Board Minutes, Annual Reports, and articles in the *Western Tract NEWS* and in *Reflections* over the years. Reference numbers like (SD103) for example, tell you that if you go to the office and ask to see the Source Documents binder, you can turn to that item and see the original item from which that passage was taken (I've just changed the tense to the past for the sake of the story, since those things are no longer current events). That item will even tell you what issue of *Western Tract NEWS* or *Reflections* it came from, or which year's Annual Reports.

76 years is a long time! So many details have been left out (like when someone was dismissed because they were NOT good workers). To include even every positive and good detail would fill more than two shelves of books. So we've condensed this into one quite interesting book to read.

Remember, it is a history book, not a novel, but it is a page-turner! With LOTS of photos! [I hope I found the right one for you!]

### The People Index!

Since it involves easily 253 or more individuals (and I happen to LOVE people!) I decided that the story would work better if the people involved in that particular era would be on the margins of the pages looking up at you as you read about them. Some of them only make one appearance and then disappear, for they were there a short time. Some were there for 18 or 20 years! Their faces come with you through a number of pages and you begin to feel you know them somewhat.



The cover, by the way, only shows 5 photos - a small sampling of the many people who have worked with the Lord in Western Tract Mission - and now in Impact Canada Ministries.

However, if you want to find yourself, or a relative who used to work in the mission, you might have to read most of the book to locate those photos and details. To make it easier to get a brief profile, all the people are listed in the People Index in the Appendix at the back. It gives thumbnail sketches of 250+ people that worked in this mission. And, more names come to light all the time! (The Appendix includes a 7-page Time-Line of events).

### The Main Benefits to YOU if you Read This Book, *Workers Together With God*

is in that you will be astonished at the great things God did through such ordinary people. You will be inspired - encouraged - and praising God at things like;

how a business man was revived, and decided to distribute tracts

how he devised a system of mailing them out and taught it to others.

When he organized this into a ministry with members, the numbers doubled and tripled over and over!

Eventually there were 3000 and even 6000 members and helpers in WTM!

Jake and Dora Hoepfner travelled all over Canada and the USA and led countless people to faith in Christ and recruited new members/distributors in the 1960s and 70s!

Many people were saved through the tracts that were mailed around the world!

Quebec was covered with special campaigns of mailing out French tracts several times.

The presses were ready just before the Revival broke out!

Then the presses produced millions of pieces of literature, in many languages and sent to many countries.

Ministries sprang up in other countries that modeled themselves on Western Tract Mission.

So many testimonies are in the margins of children saved through the Mailbox Club! (Just a sampling).

Also, many testimonies of people who experienced Revival in 1971 and the years beyond.

The fundraisers and the booklets of testimonies that were mass mailed so no home was left out in a number of provinces.

Oh-! so many wonderful stories! If I try to list them all this letter will become a book too!

### **We're NOT a Hole in the Wall**

Please don't think of this mission as a hole in the wall, where people disappear, and nothing ever happened there. We have just been too modest - and perhaps didn't realize that we should be sharing our testimonies of God's work in our midst and through us - to bless and encourage others.

### **Well, Workers Together With God**

**is going to do that now!**

You can help us get this book of testimonies OUT THERE by letting us know that you want to order yours NOW. If you pay in advance, that will help cover the printing costs. You can do that by phoning in your order, (306-244-0446) on a weekday, 9 to 5, and Kurt or Michael will enter your credit card number in the interac machine and it is done.

You may also send in a cheque by mail to:

**Impact Canada Ministries Inc.**

**2222 Ave. C. North**

**Saskatoon, SK. S7L 6C3.**

### **Homecoming Atmosphere!**

I saw October 13 as being very much like a Homecoming as some of these people who worked there 20 or 40 years ago, meet people they knew back then, but haven't seen in many, MANY years. Oh the hugs and the conversations! Can you just imagine it? Well, that's how it happened too. Some people that I would have liked to see there didn't come, but we had about 200 folks and it was a very good celebration.

### **You can still order a copy of this big book; Workers Together with God.**

Because it weighs 2 lbs. It costs about \$10 to mail it to you. So the price is \$50 if you pick it up, and \$60 if you want it to be mailed to you.

Give us your details when you phone in your order to the office – **306-244-0446**. Or, simply use the form I've attached, and send in your order by mail. I'll pass it on to the office if you wish to send it to me first.

It has been a joy to talk with you like this about all these exciting things! Many Blessings & Thanks,

*Ruth Friesen*

Impact Canada Ministries Inc.

(Board Secretary)



**Impact Canada Ministries Inc. (formerly – Western Tract Mission Inc).**

Yes, I'd like to order  copy/copies of **Workers Together With God @ \$50.00/ea** . (I will pick it up at your office).

I know I will not be able to pick it up, so I am paying \$60.00 to include postage. Here is my address:

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