

## MY FATHER'S BACKGROUND IS MENNONITE (VICTOR FROESE)

As presented (verbatim) by Brenda Froese as part of a high school report c. 1980.

My father's background is Mennonite. His family originated in the Netherlands. They went to Russia around the 1780's. In 1939, World War II began and the Russians began terrorizing the Mennonites because they spoke German. My father, Victor Froese, was born in Neuendorf, Ukraine in 1940.

His family tried to leave Russia in 1941. They travelled in a wagon train. My grandparents' wagon did not get across the border, but the one in which my father and his older brother Franz were in with their aunts, got through.

My grandparents were forced to remain in Russia and dad hasn't seen them since. Dad's mother died and his father writes to my great-grandmother once in a while. Her letters are the only ones that get through.

After leaving Russia, my father went to Germany. He lived in Buxtehude from 1941 to 1949 and attended school there for a year or two

My father came to Canada in 1949. This was possible because of the MCC. They had lists of refugees in Germany that wanted to come to Canada and the people (Mennonites) who are already established in Canada could sponsor a person or family.

VOLKSSCHULE IN BUXTEHUDE

Hauptbuch-Nr. 1603

**Schulzeugnisse**

Viktor Froese

geboren am 9. Juni 1940

in Neuendorf, Ukraine, Kreis Ljowotschje

Religionsbekenntnis ev.-luth.

Pflege-Sohn/Tochter des Gertrude Harder

in Buxtehude

Erste Einschulung Mai 1947

in Buxtehude

Zur Beachtung:  
Die Erziehungsberechtigten werden gebeten, durch Unterschrift zu bestätigen, daß sie von den Eintragungen Kenntnis genommen haben.

Allgemeine Zensuren und Fachzensuren:  
1 = sehr gut; 2 = gut; 3 = befriedigend; 4 = mangelhaft;  
5 = ungenügend

J. Vetterli, Buxtehude CCF 823 1378/2000 9.48 Kl. A

Copy of Zeugnisheft für Viktor Froese, Buxtehude 1948



Mr. H. Hildebrandt of Abbotsford, BC sponsored by dad, my uncle Frank (he anglicized his name) and their aunt, Gertrude Harder. They came by boat to Halifax, and took the train to the west coast.

They lived with the Hildebrandts for a year (house at left).



After this they rented a berry farm near Yarrow for another four years or so.

After giving up the berry farm, they moved into Yarrow and lived with Tante Trud (their aunt).

She worked at a cannery which was across the road from where they lived.

It burned down at least twice while they lived there [actually there were two canneries].

My dad and Uncle Frank in raspberry field (1951)



Pacific Coast Packers



Cascade Frozen Foods

Because the area around Yarrow and Abbotsford is predominantly Mennonite, it is possible for the people there to retain much of their culture. They still speak German in their homes and there are some who can't speak English, although most can understand it.





Aerial photo of Yarrow (source unknown)



Great Grandmother Katherine Froese and Aunt Mary



Froeses 1978: Uncle Henry, Brenda, Uncle Gerhard, Great Grandmother (Katherine Froese), Aunt Mary, Cousin Henry



My great grandmother speaks only German and a little Russian. She wears homemade clothes and most of what she eats is produced on the farm. The farm, which is owned by my dad's uncle, Henry Froese, consists of a small house, a summer kitchen, and two barns.

They own two or three cows at a time, a few chickens, and they have raspberries and strawberries. They sell milk and eggs to the neighbours and the berries go to the cannery or store depending on the quality. They still use a hand-operated separator and make their own butter, and drive a 1978 Dodge Omni.

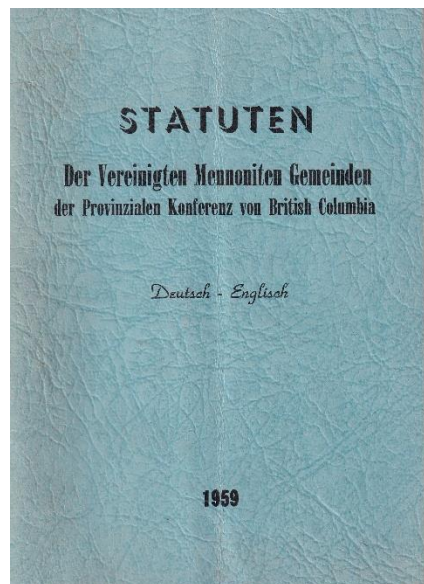



They recently bought their first TV - a 12" black and white one and an organ. It's a strange mixture of old and new.

When my father and my uncle emigrated, however, they went to school where the majority of the kids were native and spoke only English. They were picked on because they spoke German, therefore they quickly learned English and without any accent.

The Mennonites around Yarrow don't really have a dress code, so they wore the same clothes as everybody else. They'd did retain their religion, of course, because everyone else was Mennonite too (my dad changed to the Baptist religion after marrying my mother because that is her denomination).

1978: My Mother Sandra making jam



  
BRITISH COLUMBIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**SECONDARY REPORT CARD**  
Grades VII to XIII

TO THE PARENTS


The aim of education is to provide the student with an opportunity to acquire knowledge, habits, and skills, and to develop traits, attitudes, and ideals that will enable him to live usefully and happily. Students vary greatly in scholastic as in other natural abilities. That young person is fortunate whose parents are frankly, helpfully, and encouraging, irrespective of the level of his or her scholastic ability.

Name: VICTOR FROESE Division: 26

Grade: X September, 1956 to June, 1957

School: CHILLWACK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

School District: Chillwack School District No. 33  
Name and number.

  
Homeroom Teacher.

When re-ordering please quote FORM R-3.

**ATTENDANCE**

	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
Days absent	7	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	0.5	—
Times late	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Only by the co-operation of Parent and Teacher can the school do its best work. Therefore, if there is any information concerning the welfare and progress of your son or daughter that you think would be helpful, or if there is anything in this report that you would like to discuss, please see the Principal or Teacher or Counsellor as soon as possible.

Teacher-Parent Conference	First Report	Second Report	Third or First Report	Fourth or First Report
Teacher: If a talk with the Parent is desired, please check here.				
Parent: If a talk with the Teacher is desired, please check here.				

**PARENT'S SIGNATURE**

First Report: Gertrude Harder

Second Report: Gertrude Harder

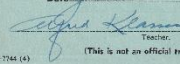
Third Report: \_\_\_\_\_

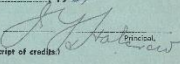
**TRANSFER OR PROMOTION**

The following points should be noted:—  
(1) Pupils are not automatically promoted from year to year in any grade or subject.  
(2) Promotion in a subject or grade is generally dependent upon the standard achieved during the school year.  
(3) Grades of D and E during the year are indications of probable failure in a subject or grade.  
In case of doubt, Parents should confer with the Principal.

Assigned to Grade: 11 Chillwack Senior High School

Date: June 12, 1957

  
Teacher.

  
Principal.

(This is not an official transcript of credits)

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My father graduated from Chilliwack High School in 1959 and went into Education.

He got his B.Ed. from UBC, his M.Ed. from Western Washington State College and he taught at Yarrow Elementary and Chadsey Elementary for several years.

In 1969 he received an offer of a job at the University of Manitoba which he accepted. He now has a Ph.D. (University of Minnesota) and a full Professorship at the U of M.



1954



My father's grade 4 class at Kilgard Elementary 1950 (top row; 3rd from left)

After moving to Yarrow, Vic attended the Yarrow Elementary Junior High School.

The first photo below shows him in his graduation year 1956. He is in the top row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right.

Vic was the Yarrow Junior High School Student Council President during the 1955-56 school year.





The photo below shows Vic in 1962 with his Grade 6 class, his first teaching job in Yarrow.



Photo of "my dad's first teaching job at Yarrow"

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## POSTSCRIPT

**Brenda Froese** was born in Chilliwack in 1963; moved with her parents to Winnipeg in 1971 and still lives there with her partner and grandson, Justice. She has a degree from U of M, an M.B.A. from Royal Roads University and is a manager at Manitoba Hydro.

**Victor and Sandra Froese** have retired (from UBC) and live near Yarrow (2020). Their son, **Roland Froese**, was also born in Chilliwack in 1965 and lives in Toronto. He has a degree in computing from Simon Fraser University and works for IBM.

Yarrow Elementary School Teachers 1961-62



Map of Ukraine area & route my dad followed (in yellow).

