A Brief Franz F. Hubert Family History
Sources: Dave E. Hubert, Katie Unger (née Martens), Ed Giesbrecht

Franz F. Hubert (Oct. 2, 1875 – Jan. 1, 1964) was born and raised in Margenau, a village in the Molotschna Mennonite settlement in what was then Russia, but is situated in the present Ukraine. His parents were Franz Hübert (1850 – 1920) and Elisabeth Janzen (1852 – 1891). Franz married Helena Wiebe (1877-1903) on June 17, 1897, and together they had five children: Helen (1896 – 1924), Franz (1898 - lost during the revolution in 1919, when he was ordered to help move troops and supplies with wagon and horses, and never seen again), Anna (1899 – 1906), Mary (Mieche; 1901 – 1971), and Elisabeth (Liese; 1903 – 1984).

When his wife Helena (née Wiebe) died, our grandfather married Helena Barg (1874 – 1948) on July 12, 1903. Her parents were Jacob Barg and Tina (née Matthies), from Tiegerweide, another Molotschna village near Margenau. Together they had seven children: Jacob (1904 – 1972), Henry (1905 – 1985), Johann (John; 1907 – 1930), Katherine (Tina; 1908 – 2004), Peter (1909 – 1979), Susie (1913 – 1996), and David (1917 – 2003).

In 1907 the family moved to Siberia, in the vicinity of Isil-Kul,120 km west of Omsk, to join other family members that had moved a few years earlier. A married sister then also followed, thereby bringing to Siberia four brothers – Jakob, Franz, Heinrich, and David – and a sister Anna (Dick). The Franz Huberts first lived in a sod house, but hard work, ambition and perseverance paid off. By the time of the Russian civil war, which followed the 1917 revolution, Grandfather was the owner of a large and prosperous farm, with a substantial home. In consequence, he was branded a *kulak* by the Soviets and a large part of his land was confiscated and given to a neighbour that was not as successful, even though he too had come to the region when Grandfather had. This so disturbed Grandfather that he determined to start over in a new country. (In relating this, Aunt Tina Kroeker [Hubert] stated that the forced redistribution of his land was the providence of God because if they had not left when they did it is very doubtful that they would have been able to emigrate later.) Grandfather's brother Jakob, in addition to having farmland, also served as an Elder (*Ältester* - a senior church leader) to a number of Mennonite Brethren churches in villages stretching along the newly constructed Trans-Siberian Railway. Like his brother Franz, Jakob and his family also emigrated from Russia, but by 1929 were not allowed into Canada, so ultimately settled in Brazil. The brothers Heinrich and David and sister Anna remained in Russia.

In 1926 the Franz F. Hubert family, now with nine children—Mary (Mieche), Elisabeth (Liese), Jacob, Henry, John, Katherine (Tina), Peter, Susie, and David—emigrated to Canada. They first settled in Duchess, Alberta, near Brooks, where Bernard Barg, Grandma's brother, had already settled. The boys soon found work on farms, thus learning to farm the western Canadian way.

In the meantime, Grandpa looked around where he could settle permanently. Among several other communities he visited Coaldale, and decided that was the right place. It had farms for sale and other Mennonites had already settled there, whereas Brooks was home to mostly Pennsylvania Dutch people. When the time came to move, two kits were ordered from the Eaton's catalogue—a wagon and a

hayrack. To these were tied two cows and some horses, with which the four oldest sons, Jacob, Henry, John and Peter, set out on the prairie roads, camping under the wagons for the two nights en route to Coaldale. The rest of the family travelled by train.

The family rented a farm three miles west of Coaldale from C. R. Daniel. A few years later Grandpa purchased two quarters of land just west and north of the town, the site which then became the permanent Hubert home for Grandpa and Grandma and the next generations of the family. This farm, with a Victorian style home and large, hip-roof barn, was originally owned by Harry Suggitt, who founded the town in 1904.

For many years Grandpa ran a threshing outfit, doing custom work as far away as Wilson Siding, nine miles to the south. In the early years, the crew moved with the threshing machine, staying on site and going home only for Sunday. With horse and buggy, Grandpa fetched the supplies that Aunt Mary, the cook, needed to feed the crew. Meals were plain but plentiful and nourishing, and the work hard, but the men enjoyed the camaraderie and did not mind. When more Mennonites later settled near Coaldale, the crew worked closer to home, and when a car and truck were later purchased, the crew even came home for meals. Some of the men slept in the large barn's hayloft, leaving for work after an early breakfast.

Besides having the threshing crew, Grandfather was otherwise also active in the community, helping to organize both a cheese factory and a credit union. The cheese factory was a great boost to community farmers, helping to provide ever needed cash. For years, Grandfather served on the boards of both institutions. He was also an ardent outdoorsman, often taking time for both fishing and hunting. Although he found game and fishing near home, until late in life, for both sports he also accompanied sons and friends into the mountains to the west.

Grandmother lived only long enough to see David, her youngest son, marry. Grandfather, however lived into his late 80s, long enough to see great grandchildren. His grandchildren and great grandchildren are now scattered all over the world, having studied in universities in Canada and the United States, as well as Russia, Germany, England, Brazil, the United States, and Canada, and worked as professionals, businessmen, tradesmen and farmers in China, Japan, South America, Europe, Africa and throughout Canada and America, from the Northwest Territories to Florida, and from Vancouver to Ottawa and Montreal.

The Hubert Home in Coaldale

Cleaning Fish
(Note the large barn, with hayloft, in the background)

Threshing Crew

L – R: Mary (Mieche) Hubert, John Kroeker, Peter Hubert, Peter Martens, ?, ?, David Hubert, Jake Martens, Grandfather