



# The House Of Yoder Newsletter Summer 2024

**KENNETH L. YODER (YR261191434) HOUSE OF YODER BUILDING SUPERVISOR  
AND LONG TIME BOARD MEMBER PASSESS AWAY EIGHT DAYS FROM TURNING  
90 YEARS OF AGE.**



**Kenneth Leo Yoder (YR261191434), of  
Grantsville, MD. Born April 23, 1934. Died  
April 15, 2024.**

Kenneth Yoder, a name that is associated with many organizations of historic importance, including the building supervisor and board member of The House of Yoder. Kenneth spent countless hours studying, de-

signing and planning the building of The House of Yoder.

Our appreciation to Kenneth, his wife Ruth and family for their dedication to The House of Yoder.

## **A Biography of Kenneth Yoder**

Compiled by Isolde Yoder Porter, daughter of Kenneth and Ruth Yoder

“At a farm house in Grantsville, MD, on April 23, 1934, in the house of Alvin and Martha and their three children, a new baby arrived. They named him Kenneth Leo. Later six more children were born. This family grew up on the Cornucopia Dairy Farm, and it was owned by Kenneth’s father from 1928 to 1968.

There were many cousins, aunts and uncles who made frequent visits, which made for a lot of fun. There was never a dull moment. All of these cousins, along with the joys of farm life, like finding a nest of baby kittens, or the dog having puppies, or watching a cow giving birth to a calf. Or later owning their own dogs, rabbits and pony seemed like a perfect life to Kenneth.

Yoder School, also affectionately known as “dutch college”, was located about a mile north of Cornucopia. The children always walked to this one room school for grades 1-7. For a time, their grandfather Harvey Yoder taught there.

Kenneth was an outdoor type of person who dreamed that he would someday have his own farm, and he was always glad when he could stay at home and help on the farm rather than going to school. Hunting and trapping were much more exciting than school. As time went on, working hard on the farm, had some challenging times, and it was also a time of doing some rapid growing up.

Church was very important for their family. Kenneth’s dad was often the Sunday School superintendent and teacher. They attended Maple Glen Mennonite Church, Grantsville, MD., where their grandparents also attended. Maple Glen was a member of the Amish Mennonite Conservative Conference. There was a large Youth Group of about 60. Their activities were singings, a singing school in the fall and occasionally a corn husking. Kenneth joined this church in his early teens and was teaching a Sunday School class and serving on the Youth Committee in his later teens.

World War II had ended in 1945 when Kenneth was eleven years old. He had heard a lot of reports of the extreme suffering of the refugees. His mother was Chairperson of the church Sewing Circle. She led the group in sending a lot of relief to Germany through MCC (Mennonite Central Committee). Ken-

neth felt that all of this was background that God used in calling him to volunteer for a two-year term of service in the PAX Program, an organization for conscientious objectors. His location would be Germany.

In preparation for going to Germany, he took the GED tests and went to Eastern Mennonite College and studied German, which was very helpful for his time there. In April 1955 he celebrated his 21st birthday on the SS Grootebeer in the Atlantic Ocean on his way to Espelkamp, Germany to help in the resettling of refugees. At the request of the Conservative Mennonite Conference he was loaned to them, by PAX, to help in their mission program.

He mostly helped in the teaching of children and youth, but also helped in the evangelical churches relief and resettlement program.

When his two years were up, he decided to continue his work in Germany with a building unit through the PAX program. He then had plans to return home, but his plans changed when the Conservative Conference decided to build a dwelling house and chapel at Espelkamp, and asked if he would extend his time there to head up the building program. Through much prayer and consulting with his mentor, his answer was to stay.

He stated that this building experience was like a free education in construction. They were under the regular supervision of an architect, where they were taught various building techniques. This project took some over one year.

During this time, he and Ruth started to date. In 1952 her family, as refugees, had moved to Espelkamp into one of the houses built by the PAX boys. Even though Kenneth was around construction at home, like helping to build the Maple Glen Church, working with PAX developed a bigger interest in construction.

After three and one half years in Germany, he decided it was time to go home.

His first year at home he helped to remodel the Goodwill Nursing Home in Grantsville, MD and other building projects.

During this time, he and Ruth corresponded weekly by letter, in German. In December 1959, he was on his way back to Germany to see Ruth. Soon after, they were engaged, and on March 5, 1960, they were married in Germany, and almost immediately moved to the United States, and started housekeeping. Once back home, Kenneth was again involved in construction, remodeling the family dairy barn and adding an extension to it. He continued in construction in 1960 and 1961.

In 1962 brought major changes to Kenneth and Ruth. In April they moved to a farm in McHenry, Maryland and started farming. In May their second daughter was born and in August Kenneth was ordained to the Christian ministry and began a heavy schedule of preaching. This created a schedule that was, as Kenneth described it, "almost overwhelming". A lot of proverbial midnight oil was burned.

In 1968 they moved back to the home farm, where his Dad wanted to retire. This farm

was large enough to afford hiring help. He felt this was a wise move in that he didn't need to spend as much time in the barn, giving more time for the church work.

Soon after this he was elected to a 7 year term on the Conference Mission Board. During time he served on two different deputation trips to Germany and one to Central and South America. This was also when the Conservative Conference sent the first missionaries to a Muslim country. In Conference he also served on many other committees, including the Peace Witness Committee, the Church Welfare Committee, the Ministers Fellowship Committee, and the Historical Committee. He shared that this experience was very enriching and broadening of his life.

Over the years, a total of 7 children were born into the family. Raising a family, preaching and farming took on a busy schedule, but this didn't stop Kenneth from continuing to see new opportunities in life.

Kenneth took pride in his herd of Holstein cows. In the desire to provide quality nutrition to the cows he used supplement from a program called Agri-King, selling to other farmers. This eventually led him and 3 others to starting their own company, SYMO Life, Inc., of which he also worked in sales. He also served on various boards and committees related to the dairy and farming industry.

Another area that Kenneth pursued was that of being a landlord. He had some local apartment rentals as well as a housing project in Harrisburg, PA area.

The homes in Harrisburg, were in an area that had many boarded up houses in need of repair, along with many destitute people in need of hope. He did most of his own repair, and in spite of challenges along the way, he rented out homes to many people for over 30 years.

Kenneth was an avid reader, and was often seen reading and studying for not only his preaching sermons, but for anything that may have sparked his latest interest. He was a man of visions and seeing the overall picture of a project, which led him to getting involved in many different projects in his life, some short term and some long term. His knowledge on many of his interests were valued by people of similar interests.

Kenneth loved people and had a heart for those in need spiritually as well as physically. He was involved in the “Coral Ridge Evangelism Explosion” ministry—a ministry that trains people how to share their faith in Christ boldly and lovingly. This mission involved some training sessions, along with visiting homes where Bible Studies and prayer were held.

In the early 1980’s he felt led to begin a mission church in Boynton, PA. The church was called Hope Haven, where souls came to Christ through this mission, and where many people were blessed in serving there. Children were taught the love of Jesus through Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Many lasting relationships were made from this ministry.

Another of his interests was in history and genealogy. He mentioned that possibly because of his father’s interest in history, he, as well as several of his brothers, developed a real interest in this. He was elected to the board of the Casselman River Area Amish and Mennonite Historians. At an annual meeting in 1992, Lowell Bender and Alta Schrock asked for time to present the case for a “Yoder House” in the Spruce Forest Village. From this meeting, a new organization was born, later called The House of Yoder, of which Kenneth chaired several boards to bring this to fruition. This House now sees many visitors every year, those interested in Yoder history, as well as those interested in historical artifacts and the mid-1700’s building architecture. His love for history also led him to other organizations that he was a member of and frequently served on their committee: the Lancaster Historical Society, The Berks County Historical Society, The Herr House, and up to recent years, the Casselman Valley Historians.

Kenneth loved to have a talk with anyone over a cup of coffee. And it was not unusual to walk into their house and see someone sitting at the table doing just that. You never knew who might show up as a guest, but everyone was always welcome. He also continued his planning of projects, as long as he could lift a pen, and give some reason to his thoughts.

In later years of his life, he gave more time to his love for nature, plants and birds. He especially enjoyed working at the pond, planting

many trees and flowers, or sitting in his recliner in his pavilion, and watching the birds that would nest near or on the pond. Here he spent much time in thought, reflecting about the ways the Lord had blessed his life. In his autobiography he stated, "Any success in my life I attribute to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the source of super wisdom and strength . He has given me a life that was rich and full and much better than anything I could have planned for myself."

As the years went by and his health declined, it was decided he would go to the Goodwill Mennonite Nursing Home in Grantsville, MD, where he could receive the care that was needed. It was here that he spent the last 11 months of his life. He went home peacefully on April 15, 2024 to meet his Maker, and to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all eternity. It is well known to all of us that his greatest desire is that he would one day be able to see all of us again, by also giving our hearts to the One who plans and directs our lives, Jesus Christ. A verse that has followed both Kenneth and Ruth throughout their lives is Proverbs 3:6; "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."



Kenneth Yoder, building supervisor during construction of The House of Yoder.

## Obituary for Kenneth L. Yoder

Kenneth Leo Yoder, 89, of Grantsville, MD, went peacefully to be with his Maker on Monday, April 15, 2024, at Goodwill Mennonite Home, Grantsville, MD.

Born April 23, 1934, in Grantsville, he was the son of the late Alvin H. and Martha N. (Maust) Yoder. He was preceded in death by one brother Clark Yoder; and four sisters, Ruth A. Tice, CoraAnna Yoder, Ellen Yoder and Mary Opel.

Kenneth was a farmer, minister, and entrepreneur. He was a member of Maple Glen Mennonite Church. He had a heart for the lost and was a friend to those from all walks of life. As a young adult, he served 3 1/2 years in Germany under PAX. In later years, Kenneth was a avid historian. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Ruth (Reimer) Yoder; two sons, Dirk (Karin) Yoder, Grantsville and Dwight (Janelle) Yoder, Swanton, MD; five daughters, Sylvia (Bill) Mast, Salisbury, PA, Isolde (Jim) Porter and Karen Tice, all of Grantsville, Heide Yoder, Oakland, MD, and Annetta (Charles) Enlow, Friendsville, MD; 15 grandchildren, Brent (Kelsie) Mast, Wendy (Andy) Sommers, Jodi (Mike) Rugg, Jennifer (Troy) Sommers, Greg Bender, Matthew Tice, Kaity, Meghan and P.J. Harris, Trent (Dana) Yoder, Levi and Cristy Enlow, Aiyana, Caleb and Blake Yoder; 11 great-grandchildren, Lucy, Alice, Molly, Penny, Brock, Brody, Keragan, Paxton, Gavin, Milo, and Ezama; four brothers, Roman, Ezra (Mary), Mark (Mayla), and Jim (Edith) Yoder; two brothers-in-law, Marvin Yoder and Don Opel. Services were Saturday, April 20, 2024

at Maple Glen Mennonite Church, Grantsville, MD.

Internment at Maple Glen Cemetery.



March 5, 1960, Germany. Ruth Reimer and Kenneth Yoder wedding picture.



Kenneth and Ruth Yoder with copies of the book that tells about Ruth's experiences in a refugee camp.



Pictured to the left is The Oasis. A favorite place for the Yoder family to enjoy the beauty of "The Oasis"

## **“THAT’S SOME GOOD DIRT”**

By Dwight Yoder, son of Kenneth and Ruth Yoder

“My dad passed away one week ago today. Saturday we buried him. It was a really nice funeral with lots of nice things being said about him and all of his accomplishments. He lived a full life and shared God’s love with lots and lots of people from all around the globe and from different walks of life. It feels really good to have been lucky enough to have been his son. If I only ever accomplish a smidgen of what he did on this earth, in my lifetime, I’ll be happy.

But Dad wasn’t perfect. He was opinionated and hardheaded, or maybe determined is more of a proper thing to say. He didn’t worry too much about what other people thought. That, along with being a dreamer and visionary, allowed him the ability to get things done.

As a kid growing up on the farm, it often felt like my siblings and I were tools that he would use to get done what he set out to accomplish. There were even those years in my teens and early twenties where I was bitter and angry about it. Maybe it wasn’t the fact that I felt overworked and misused as much as it was that I felt like everything was about dad, and that I wasn’t able to be my own self. It took awhile, but eventually I forgave him and through that, started seeing that everything he did wasn’t just about himself, even though some of my perceptions were true. His identity was in Christ. Everything he did and everything he was passionate about, and even the person that he was, those were the things that God wanted him to use and share God’s love with others.

Whether it happened during his years in war-torn Germany or earlier in life, I’m not sure. But somewhere along the way dad acquired a great love for God and a passion to share Jesus with everyone, especially the down and outers in his life. That became the drive behind everything he did. Farming was the vehicle that allowed him to preach, and also allowed him the ability to get out in the community. He wasn’t always able to get the pieces of his life to fit perfectly together but he was determined and didn’t let that get in the way of what he felt called to do. Sometime as a family, we suffered for it. But dad tried to make it right. He wanted to be a better dad. He gave each of us kids cows that we could raise and breed and create our own little herds on the farm, while he paid for the feed and all of the other expenses. We could sell them or do what we saw fit. He even asked how he could be a better dad, I didn’t respond, I just assumed that it couldn’t be that hard to figure out how to be a better dad.

And now I’m finding out that I’ve inherited or learned a lot of those traits and characteristics from Dad. Both the good and the bad. I’ve had my own experiences that have helped me see my faults, and helped me realize that I can’t be good enough to earn my way to heaven and that only believing in Jesus gives me that ticket. Just like Dad.

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I've also learned that we were created for a purpose. Our bodies are basically made from dust and other properties that God breathes life into. The combination of our body and personality and our mannerisms create the vehicle that our soul lives in while we're on this earth. Like Dad, I believe that when we die our bodies go back to the dirt and if we believe the gospel message of Christ, then our soul goes to heaven.

I've experienced God's love so deeply that I want my whole life to share God with others and just like Dad, I see my passions and interest as ways to do that.

And just like my dad, I get so determined and so dogmatic about doing what I think I'm supposed to be doing, that sometimes I hurt those around me. For me, it's writing outdoor stories with little tidbits of God's love sprinkled in here or there. To do that, I'm constantly looking for one more story, one more turkey, one more shed, one more adventurous story, just a little more time in the woods. And to make up for the lost time in the shop, I work a little later. And that takes time away from my family and that's when I start to find things getting out of whack. I'm trying hard to find that balance and just like Dad, I wish I was better at it.

As we stood by the grave and the pastor said those words, "earth to earth, and sheds to ashes, and dust to dust," through my tears, I couldn't hold back the thought, "that must have been some good dirt. "



The family of Kenneth and Ruth Yoder



### **"Tribute to Dad"**

By Annetta Yoder Enlow, daughter of Kenneth and Ruth Yoder

He was born in Grantsville and raised on a farm  
A hard working boy blessed with good looks and charm.  
He'd take his dog Rover, his traps and a gun  
A skunk in a gunny-sack sure made the day fun.  
He debeaked the chickens and helped milk the cows.  
And got the horse ready for pulling the plow.  
He walked to Yoder School, uphill both ways  
In three feet of snow until seventh grade.  
In a family of 10 he never got bored.  
At a very young age he gave his heart to the Lord.  
He loved all kinds of people from all walks of life  
Even went overseas and came back with a wife!  
They came home on a ship, a VW in tow  
Settled down on the farm and their family did grow.  
He was a farmer a landlord and even a preacher  
With a house full of kids and a barn full of creatures.  
He built houses for birds and houses for bees  
For his children he built a house in a tree.  
He built us a pond that became his Oasis  
He spent time out there on a regular basis.  
A place to gather with family and friends  
Or just sit and be quiet and take time to reflect  
And count his blessing one by one and watch the setting of the sun.  
This place not only brought him glee  
But's where he prayed for you and he prayed for me.  
He'd pray that we'd find the peace that he found  
And the joy in spreading God's love around.  
It's hard to imagine how heaven will be  
But somehow I'm sure there will be flowers and trees.  
And a pond full of frogs and cattails and fish  
And so many blessings we don't want to miss.  
And Dad will be waiting for you and for me  
To join him and Jesus in eternity.

# THE HOUSE OF YODER

Beginning in the summer of 1992, Jack Dueck's (Penn Alp's manager), attention was drawn to an old barn being restored. Jack, having a keen interest in history, began to think; what if some of these old logs could be salvaged and used for a historical purpose. Jack visited the farm and discovered that it was owned by David N. Yoder. At that visit, Jack noticed the old stone foundation in the field nearby. Finding out that the foundation was that of an old Yoder homestead, his interest turned from discussing logs to stones! That idea was shared with Alta Schrock, founder of Spruce Forest Artisan Village, and Penn Alps Restaurant, near Grantsville, MD. Alta was likewise interested. She and others had already helped salvage other historical building, such as the Compton School, the Miller House and others. Would there be any Yoder's in the area that would be interested in building a Yoder house?

The idea was tested among a larger group of Yoder's that were attending the annual gathering of The Casselman Valley Historians which was held at Maple Glen Church, Grantsville, MD on September 4 and 5 of 1992.

Coincidentally, the historian focus for the weekend was on the history of the Yoder's. An announcement was made at the Friday night session for all interested persons to meet the next morning prior to the opening of the regular session to discuss the new idea of building a Yoder House. The next morning 25 people met for a time of discussion and brain storming. Interest in the building was strong.

Therefore the group decided to meet the next spring of April 27, 1993. The steering committee met with Doris Ours, Phyllis Weaver, Charles, (Bud) Yoder, Henry Yoder, Esther Yoder and Lowell Bender in attendance. The group began to grapple in earnest with the numerous questions. And with that—history was made.

Ground breaking was held on Saturday, November 16, 1996 at the Spruce Forest Artisan Village/Penn Alps

Restaurant, near Grantsville, MD.



Ray Yount, Carl Yoders, Doris Ours share the shovel while Kenneth L. Yoder "supervises"

The first Annual Meeting of the Yoder House was held November 16, 1996 in the Great Room at Penn Alps Restaurant, Grantsville, MD. Twenty seven people attended the meeting. The original executive committee consisted of the following people: Lowell Bender, Doris Ours, Edgar Yoder, Harvey L. Yoder, Paul H. Yoder, Phyllis Weaver, Gerald Yoder and Kenneth Yoder. Election of officers resulted in Doris Ours, President; Harvey L. Yoder, Vice President; Treasurer, Edgar Yoder and Secretary, Paul H. Yoder. Lowell Bender became Vice President in 1999, when Harvey Yoder relocated to Missouri. Doris Ours held the position of President of the Board for 19 years, until she requested to be replaced as President because of health concerns. Daniel J. Yoder then became President of the Board until his passing in 2018. Harvey L. Yoder is now President of the Board; Curtis Duff is Vice President; Heidi Yoder, Treasurer and Mayla Yoder, Secretary. You are cordially invited to visit The House of Yoder!

# CELEBRATES OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY!



Building the root cellar



Framing the walls



Stone masons working on the outside of the house.



April 4, 2020 The House of Yoder hidden by the destroyed spruce trees after a very strong wind storm.



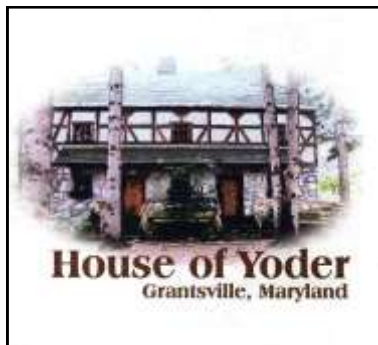
Repairs done to The House and new trees planted.

The House of Yoder Newsletter

Mayla H. Yoder

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The House of Yoder Member ship: Make check payable to “The House of Yoder” and mail to Mayla H. Yoder 1210 Main Street. Apt. 1 Berlin, PA 15530

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	1 Year	5 Years	Lifetime
Individual	\$25.00	\$100.00	\$1,000.00
Couple	\$35.00	\$150.00	\$1,500.00