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## Review of: *From Vision To Legacy*—Lester and Sarah Gingerich

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Review of: **Gingerich, Lester, and Sarah Gingerich. 2022. *From Vision To Legacy*. Gambier, OH: Rhoda Joy (Gingerich) Yoder. Pp. 307. \$15.99.**

By: Mildred A. Martin  
Beachy-Amish Mennonite

They married young and, within months, were stationed in Central America, as pioneers in 1961 for Amish Mennonite Aid missions. What began as relief work for hurricane victims turned into a 50-year saga, as relationships were forged, souls were saved, churches were planted, and grapefruit were bowled (page 261). *From Vision To Legacy* is an autobiographical life story of Lester and Sarah Gingerich, told in alternating streams of thought: his and hers. This spicy slice of Amish-Mennonite history opens with bits and pieces about ancestors immigrating from Germany but soon arrives at the narrators' own births and lives from the mid-twentieth century on. The motivation for this book, as the title implies, seems to be primarily to inspire a missionary vision in readers, as the book explores the legacy left by one outstanding couple's experiences.

The writing style is simple, folksy, and unpretentious. Children looking for missionary adventure, as well as adults seeking to understand the beginnings of the Beachy Amish-Mennonite's work in Latin America through Amish Mennonite Aid, can both find something here worth reading. The authors' treatment of the inevitable human struggles and differences of opinion between church leaders is done with delicacy and good, wry humor.

To put the timeline of the book into historical perspective, note that Hurricane Hattie hit Belize in 1961, during John F. Kennedy's presidency, and this was the year Amish Mennonite Aid began to reach out into Belize—which at that time was still known as British Honduras. Then, in 1969, when American astronauts first walked on the Moon, Lester Gingerich's family returns to the United States.

The travels taken by Lester and his family are described with dizzying speed: from the United States to Belize, and back and forth again by land and air. Lester remarks matter-of-factly that he had taken several hundred airplane flights, to Costa Rica, Israel, Arkansas, Florida, etc.

Of historical value, the book provides an overview of how Amish-Mennonite churches were formed in Belize, Costa Rica, and Florida. During his decades of bishop work, Lester also provided oversight for other churches in the Southern United States. Readers who are interested in mission history and the formation of church policy will enjoy reading the practical solutions the couple found when cultural adaptations must be made. What can you do, for example, if you are ready to observe Communion and discover that there is no grape juice readily available in Belize?

Perhaps a weakness of the book is its "family story" focus: not every potential reader has the same appreciation for other people's family reminiscences. But, plow through those first introductory chapters and eventually you arrive at the more general interest heart of the book: the horrors of Hurricane Hattie in 1961 and the compassionate response of Amish Mennonite Aid pioneered by Lester and Sarah.

As a child, I was personally privileged to live and travel in Costa Rica and Belize and to attend the same church as the Gingerich family during their Florida years. My father, William McGrath, and Lester were contemporaries and friends. Readers who do not know the Gingerich family, though, can still be caught up in the adventure stories and enjoy the many photos.

This book is very much a part of the Anabaptist tradition of inspiring, by example, a "Go ye and teach all nations" theology.

*Mildred Martin has been reading and enjoying books for sixty years. She lives in Central PA and is a member of Shade Mountain Fellowship Church.*

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