

# Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies

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Volume 11

Issue 1 *The Plain Anabaptist People at Mid-Century (1930-1969)*

Article 10

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2023

## Review of: *Carpenter Under Construction: The Story of Don Plank—Diane Freed*

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### Recommended Citation

Swartz, James, and Kathryn Swartz. 2023. "Review of: *Carpenter Under Construction: The Story of Don Plank—Diane Freed*." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 11(1):111.

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## Book Reviews

*Selected for this issue's theme: The Plain People at Mid-Century (1930-1969)*

Review of: **Freed, Diane. 2021. *Carpenter Under Construction: The Story of Don Plank*. Self-published. Pp. 189. Softcover, with color illustrations. \$14.00.**

By James & Kathryn Swartz  
Southeastern Mennonite Conference

*Carpenter Under Construction* is the story of Don Plank's life, written by his youngest daughter. It briefly touches on his early life and moves through major life events. About half of the book covers the busy later years in life when he and his second wife moved from mission to mission in various support roles. Don was a good carpenter, but Freed puts more emphasis on what God built Don to be rather than on what Don himself built during his long life.

Chapters one to five are a collection of early life incidents Don remembered: Don bravely going off with his brothers to start school but crying afterwards when he discovered the pet lambs were sold that day; the family dog keeping a salesman in the car, and later dumping a chamber pot—in the house; the work horse team pulling a truck and its load of hay out of the mud; Don's conversion, and his apology and costly restitution paid for carelessly damaging a sawmill; being the top student in his high school senior class, but giving up the honor of the valedictorian speech.

Chapters five through ten further reveal Don's developing godly character and discernment as he went to Bible School in Ontario, married his first wife, Doris, and helped with parenting their three children. The Mennonite church was allowing things to come in that the Planks could not support, so they had to choose to join another group. Don was involved with leadership in that congregation. Later, Doris passed away after an illness.

Don was nearly sixty when he made the move to Virginia and began working at Campbell Copy Center and later Christian Light Publications. Meanwhile, Norma Hartman, the widow of Don's friend Marion, moved to Virginia to teach at Berea Christian School. Don and Norma eventually married, and together they served multiple times in the Southeastern Mennonite Conference's Puerto Rican mission, and also lived in Hartwell, Georgia, and New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, in service roles. In their golden years, Don and Norma moved back to Ohio to be closer to more family members.

While this book was probably written primarily to preserve these stories for Don's posterity, it can challenge anyone to a more surrendered following of Jesus, whether that is at home or on a mission field far away. As in building with wood, in life there are decisions to make that will affect the final outcome of the project, as did Don and Doris's decision to leave the greater Mennonite church to join the smaller Conservative Mennonite move-

ment. Don and Norma chose to focus on service, not retirement and relaxation after sixty-five, a legacy of service others can emulate.

*James and Kathryn Swartz live in Rockingham, Virginia, and worked at Christian Light with Don Plank.*

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