

Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies

Volume 11
Issue 1 *The Plain Anabaptist People at Mid-Century (1930-1969)*

Article 14

2023

Review of: *Make Us A Blessing: A Biography of Elmer B. Zimmerman*—Fred M. Zimmerman

Sheldon Raber

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/amishstudies>



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), and the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

Please take a moment to share how this work helps you [through this survey](#). Your feedback will be important as we plan further development of our repository.

Recommended Citation

Raber, Sheldon. 2023. "Review of: *Make Us A Blessing: A Biography of Elmer B. Zimmerman*—Fred M. Zimmerman." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 11(1):115-16.

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by IdeaExchange@Uakron, the institutional repository of The University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* by an authorized administrator of IdeaExchange@Uakron. For more information, please contact mjon@uakron.edu, uapress@uakron.edu.

Review of: **Zimmerman, Fred M. 2021. *Make Us A Blessing, A Biography of Elmer B. Zimmerman*. Dover, DE: Fred M. Zimmerman. Pp. 287. Hardcover.**

By Sheldon Raber
Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church

The title page of *Make Us a Blessing* states that the book is “The Life of Elmer B. Zimmerman – Farmer, Machinist, Developer, and Church Builder – 1918–1978.” The book is clearly intended as dedicated “to all those who could call Pop ‘Grandpa’ or ‘Great-Grandpa.’” Because the book is written by Elmer’s son, Fred, the history includes many personal insights.

The first thing that stands out is the collage of full-color photos on the front and back cover, including photos of Elmer. Photos of an airplane, a unique garden tractor, a construction project, a street sign, a custom built camper, the Rocky Mountains, and Numidia Mennonite Bible School are all part of this collection – a very fitting introduction to this biography. Over 100 photos and documents are found in the book. These include family photos, one of Elmer’s letters written for an English assignment in school, business advertisements, a 1952 income tax return, and Elmer’s obituary. These illustrations and photos certainly add to the family memories scrapbook feel of the work.

Anecdotes in chapters one to four are about Elmer’s childhood, marriage, and his young children. These stories will be mostly interesting to his descendants. Elmer B. Zimmerman was born on March 17, 1918 to Martin and Susanna Zimmerman in Martindale, PA. He grew up on a farm along Hurst Road just outside of Martindale and attended Conestoga School. When Elmer was 17, the family moved to a farm on Garden Spot Road northeast of Ephrata. Elmer grew up attending Weaverland Conference church services

with his family. He was baptized and received as a member of Springville Mennonite Church in 1936.

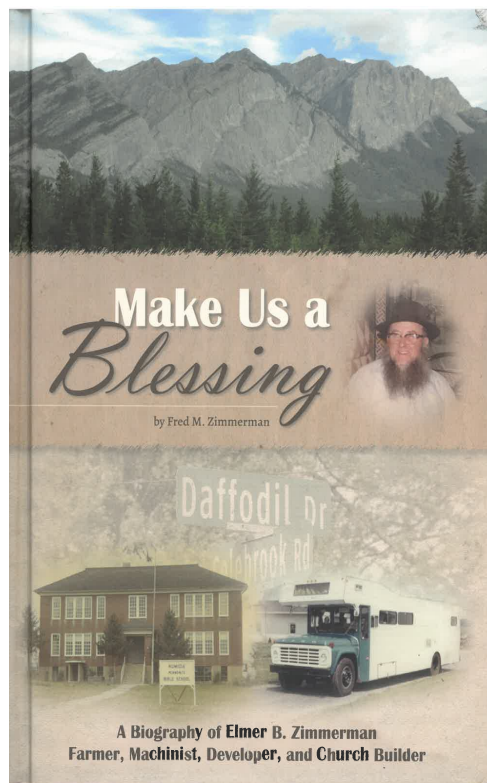
Elmer married Anna W. Martin on Thanksgiving Day, 1938. To this union were added four daughters and five living sons. Elmer and Anna set up housekeeping at the farm in Martindale where Elmer had lived as a child. In 1940, Elmer and Anna moved to the farm near the northwest corner of Route 222 (later named Route 272) and Garden Spot Road.

While farming, Elmer began doing mechanical work. In 1946, he purchased a piece of land across Garden Spot Road and erected a shop that became known as Garden Spot Machine Shop. In addition to repairing and reselling equipment, Elmer developed some of his own products. One of his better known pieces of machinery was the E-Z-Farmer Garden Tractor. A four-page brochure for this tractor is included in the book’s appendixes. For several years, Elmer owned and flew a small Piper Cub airplane which he used for his business. With his own landing strip at his farm, he sometimes used the airplane to make service calls to repair hay balers by landing right in a customer’s hayfield!

When the Weaverland Conference informed Elmer that his airplane was in violation of church regulations,

Elmer and Anna joined the Lancaster Conference, attending at Indiantown and Denver. In 1951, Elmer attended the Brunk tent revivals and he considered his experience at those meetings to be his New Birth. From that time on, Elmer wanted his life to be led by God’s Spirit. After his revival experience, Elmer was concerned for people’s souls. He actively witnessed for Christ to those he met.

Elmer and Anna provided a temporary home for numerous children and adults over the years. They, along with their family, were among the first to be involved in the mission work that later came to be known as North Lebanon Mennonite Church.



In chapter eight, many details are included about the beginning of the work at North Lebanon that will interest those who have a direct connection to that congregation. When North Lebanon Church left the Lancaster Conference, Elmer stayed with the Lancaster Conference. However, soon after that, in May 1967, Elmer's family was among the group at the first service at White Oak Mennonite Church. White Oak was a congregation formed by a group who had interest in leaving the Conference under the bishop oversight of Homer Bomberger. When Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church formed, the congregation and the Zimmermans became members of EPMC. In 1955, Elmer and his family moved to a farm on Colebrook Road in Lebanon, where Elmer lived for the remainder of his life.

Construction played an important role for the rest of his life. Elmer turned part of his farm into a housing development. In addition to his construction crew and housing development, Elmer was involved in many church-related building projects. In 1967, one of his first church construction projects was to remodel Numidia Bible School for the Mennonite Messianic Mission (MMM). Elmer was the maintenance supervisor at Numidia for many years. Other church-related construction projects included the MMM Wilmington Volunteer Service unit house, Brickerville Mennonite School, Rod and Staff Publishers' Warehouse, Orchardville Mennonite Church, and several construction projects on the mission field in British Columbia and Guatemala.

Because of his travels for construction projects, Elmer often took others along on the trips. Elmer built three custom motor homes so he could take more people along. These motor homes were called EZ Way #1, EZ Way #2, and EZ Way #3, each bigger than the previous one. Many details of the people, places, and projects of Elmer and his EZ Way trips are included in chapters 22 to 24.

On his trip to Guatemala in June 1978, Elmer was sick and could not work much. He was plagued with increasing tiredness on his trip to British Columbia in July and August of the same year. A visit to an old-fashioned family doctor in August pronounced him good for another hundred years, although the doctor did give him some pills to give him pep. Around the middle of August, Elmer got a puncture wound in his arm from a nail. It became infected. Elmer died suddenly on

September 2, 1978, at the age of 60. An aneurism in the brain, resulting from acute leukemia, caused his death. Chapter 26 gives many details of his funeral, and a transcript of his funeral service is included in the appendices. By no choice of his own, Elmer took the lead in his death, as he often had in life. He was the first member of White Oak Mennonite Church to be buried in the new cemetery across from the church along Newport Road.

Elmer's wife, Anna, lived almost another 20 years. She died on March 24, 1998. Chapter 27 gives a brief overview of Anna's life, as well as a summary of her last twenty years.

The nine appendices give supplementary family history and items related to Elmer's life.

The book should be especially interesting to Elmer's descendants, as well as to close friends of the family. Elmer's life is described through an accumulation of anecdotes, remembrances, and documentation from first hand memories of family and friends. The author did well at compiling those memories into a chronological biography. Elmer Zimmerman wanted God to use him and make him a blessing. He often prayed, "Bless us and make us a blessing." That blessing can continue to anyone who reads this book and is inspired by Elmer's life of faithfulness.

Having never personally known Brother Elmer, I found this book especially interesting since his grandson Ethan was my sole classmate for a number of years in school at Kenton, Delaware. I have many pleasant memories of times spent in the home of Fred and Leora Zimmerman during my childhood days. Fred Zimmerman's second wife, Sandra, was our 7th grade schoolteacher. She assisted in the writing and editing of this book. I offer a personal thank you to Fred and Sandra and the Zimmerman family for making this biography available.

For order information, send a SASE to Fred M. Zimmerman, 138 Titer Drive, Dover, DE 19904.