

A SIGNIFICANT MEETINGPLACE

The Elmira Independent

By Bob Verdun

I found it rather satisfying when I learned recently that a new Mennonite congregation has been formed in Elmira, and that it is holding its meetings in the local Legion hall.

The hall, of course, has excellent facilities for many types of meetings and functions That is not the point.

What is interesting is that it is being used for religious services by a *Mennonite* congregation.

In my 17 years as this community's newspaper editor, I have often tried to bring together our Two Solitudes. I get along well with pacifists and war veterans; I respect the views of both sides, and I have encouraged positive interchanges of ideas between them whenever possible.

Both groups have the same goal, and have made different types of sacrifices trying to build a peaceful world.

It has troubled me whenever I have heard the occasional comment from a war veteran about pacifists being cowards, or from a Mennonite who associates a Legion hall with nothing more than old sweats swapping gory war stories over too many glasses of beer. Neither stereotypical view is fair or accurate.

I have known some Mennonites who would not attend a public meeting held at the Legion hall – one that had nothing to do with the Legion – because they could not rise above their narrow concept of what the Legion represents.

I hope that such ideas are history now. Certainly the greatest part of that gap has been bridged when a new congregation of Mennonites is happy holding weekly church services in the Legion hall.

Would that the greater issues that threaten world peace could be solved as simply!

