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Have you renewed your GHJGS membership yet for 2020?

Membership Dues: Individuals: \$20, Families: \$25, Libraries, societies, and individuals residing over 100 miles from Houston: \$15

Mail checks made payable to GHJGS to: Michael Skoller GHJGS 4537 Palmetto Street Bellaire, TX 77410 Or pay online: http://ghjgs.org/membership/

DOR TO DOOR

Greater Houston Jewish Genealogical Society
Houston, Texas Summer 2020 Issue

Dear Members of GHJGS,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and safe. Life in quarantine continues for many of us but we adapt and in many ways, the new platforms of virtual meetings and learnings are exposing us to much more than we may have had access to prior.

Unfortunately we had to cancel our 3 part personal history workshop in April and May but we are lining up some great speakers and providing you with information and links to special workshops and online meetings.

Our renewals from 2019 are down this year. We still need your support, both with numbers of actual members as well as your financial support. Usually by March we have caught up with renewals but because of Covid, those renewals are lagging. So if you haven't renewed, we ask you to help support us now. Our financial dues, while modest, help us cover fixed expenses we incur as well as create a base we can utilize to pay for special speakers. We also have a history of purchasing books for the Clayton Genealogy Library and would like to continue supporting that. Please use the link at the top of this newsletter.

I hope to see you online at our next quarterly meeting, Thursday September 10th at 7 PM. Best wishes and stay healthy,

Stefani Elkort Twyford
President, GHJGS
president@ghjgs.org
281-639-8447

September 10 - General Meeting



Topic: Solving Genealogical Puzzles With Targeted Testing
Speaker: Janine Cloud, Group Projects Manager Family Tree DNA

Details:
DNA testing has proven to be a valuable tool for genealogists to find family members and build family trees. Sometimes, though, testing yourself may not provide the answers you need. In this talk, Janine Cloud explains how to determine which test may work best for your type of puzzle, and how to figure out the best test candidate to help solve your particular puzzle. This meeting and workshop will be a live webcast and details will be available shortly. Please be sure you are on our mailing list so that you'll get notifications on how to access.

Janine Cloud, a fifth-generation Texan and registered member of the Cherokee Nation, became interested in genealogy when a grade school assignment to complete a pedigree chart prompted her to question family members about her ancestors. She started working at FamilyTreeDNA in 2011 where she created the Group Projects – Events team she now manages. Janine has given presentations at conferences such as the National Genealogical Society Conference, RootsTech and RootsTech London, as well as numerous local organizations.

[Click here](#) to register for this event.

December Meeting: December 10, 7 PM

Topic: Endogamy: Considerations for Analyzing Jewish DNA for Genealogy

For centuries, for religious and social reasons, Jews married within their community (endogamy). As a result, Jews all share DNA from a small group of common ancestors. Predictions for relatedness based upon shared genetic material, therefore, are often significantly closer when compared with DNA results from members of non-endogamous communities. This talk will explain how endogamy adds challenges to Jewish genetic genealogy and offer methods for breaking the code.

Join well known Jewish genealogist Lara Diamond for this fascinating presentation. Registration link coming soon.



GHJGS ON FACEBOOK

Did you know that GHJGS has an active presence on Facebook? We are constantly adding links that may be of interest to our members. Including many webinars and meetings that are open and accessible to you.

We also invite you to [like our page](#) and use that forum to "Ask The Experts" any questions or requests for help. Many of our board and members have strong skills and are more than willing to help you. If there is someone in particular that you'd like to see your question, make sure to "tag" them with an @ before their name. That way they will see the request. We also post all kinds of information that will inform and educate you on your genealogical journey.



GHJGS Board member Max Heffler, a IAJGS conference attendee every year for the past 13 years, attended this first Virtual conference. He shares these reflections.

I knew a virtual conference was going to be different. It was. I typically fly in on Saturday and get registered and enjoy 5+ days of conference and then fly home Friday. This year, I had planned to miss the Friday maintenance event at the office but when it went virtual, there was no Friday travel and I was able to work. No hotel to acclimate to amenities, etc. I believed it was shortened to 4 days due to being virtual but then I heard next year will be in Philadelphia and will also be 4 days. Philly was my wife's home town and where our daughter is finishing her Biochem PhD. She will complete prior to the conference so I'm not sure she will still be there. My mother-in-law also lives there.

** Back to this year's conference, instead of gaining weight from hotel food, I lost it by running and swimming more than I ever have in my life - during breaks.*

** Unlike a live conference, where I only rarely was distracted by e-mail and other things, it was easier to become distracted.*

** During each presentation, there was a chat windows of people greeting from wherever there were in the world and trying to sometimes read that distracted me from portions of presentations.*

** I am a JewishGen volunteer on the Yizkor Book project creating webpages for them. When I am at a physical conference, I get a week break from this task as I'm away from my hard drives. Since I was working from home during the virtual conference, I created a set every day, sometime over lunch but sometimes during presentations so my focus was sometimes less than a live conference.*

** My favorite presentation was one on the use of facial recognition software to identify unknown ancestors in family photos. It was fascinating to see what can be done at little cost. Talk about breaking brick walls!*

** I attended 16 presentations during the 4 days and feel that it was definitely worth attending. I do wish I could have seen faces of the attendees instead of only the presenters.*

In Covid Lockdown, the Family Historian Has a Captive Audience

The ranks of amateur genealogists have grown during the coronavirus pandemic, and they're boring their sheltered relatives; 'I don't know why he isn't fascinated'

By Kathleen Hughes July 14, 2020 10:42 am ET
From an article posted online at the WSJ

Many households already had that earnest and sometimes annoying member: the family historian. During the pandemic, their numbers have grown, and they are spending endless hours tracking down ancestors, scanning photos, building family trees online—and attempting to share it all with everyone else.

Pamela Haltmeyer, 77, has been trying to interest her husband in her findings as they shelter at home in Garland, Texas. Mrs. Haltmeyer, a retired language therapist, has been working on her family tree, trying to identify other descendants of her great-great-grandfather, John W. Noble.

She may have found one and plans to send the woman a DNA kit as a gift, along with some cookies, just to be sure. Her husband, Norman Haltmeyer, isn't enthused.

"It seems like Norman would be fascinated by the tidbits that I share with him," she says. "It's history. I don't know why he isn't fascinated."

Mr. Haltmeyer, an 84-year-old retired psychology professor, explains: "Other people have other things to do," he says. "Life now is more important than what happened 20 ancestors ago."

The distant past can seem very present to family historians, particularly those with endless hours at home. Ancestry, the family-history website, says it has seen a 37% increase in new subscriptions year-over-year during the pandemic.

But being trapped at home doesn't mean the rest of the family is interested, as Sherry Gooden discovered. The former waitress was quarantined with her husband and children aged 5, 8 and 20, in La Porte, Texas, when she took her first "deep dive" into family history.

In April, she opened the Tupperware bin, stored for years in her mother's shed and then in her closet, confronting hundreds of old photos. She spread them across her bed and took pictures to post online. "I plan on sharing every piece of everything I can for anyone in the future," says Ms. Gooden, 43. "I have become obsessed with it."

When she showed her family the photos, they looked but quickly left to do something else. "I couldn't catch them with anything," she says, "even the cool stuff from my great-uncle with the CIA." Her son C.J. Curry, 20, says the spy finding was "pretty interesting," but: "The random stuff isn't interesting." Husband James Gooden, a 49-year-old pipe-fitter, says: "Once she got past the great-great-grandfathers, I lost interest."

Focus on the scandals, and everyone will be interested, say some professional personal historians, who are paid to help people research their histories and create books and videos.

"Let's be honest about this topic," says Peggy Greenwood, 76, one such historian in St. Louis. "Genealogy is boring. But everyone loves a good story and family history is filled with very good stories."

Great stories aren't always easy to uncover. Found Chris Strickler, 58, a retired industrial buyer in Akron, Ohio. He caught Covid-19 early this year and was in bed a couple of weeks, he says. He spent hours every day tracking his ancestors to the late Middle Ages. "I was blown away," says Mr. Strickler, now recovered. "I never knew I had relatives in Bavaria." He told his family he was descended from the Counts of Parsberg in Bavaria. Bavarian nobility, but no stories or scandals. "My wife couldn't care less about my discoveries," says Mr. Strickler. Tracie Strickler, 42, says that when he got sick, she didn't have time for Bavarian forebears: "I had my hands full taking care of him and the kitties."

He later researched her family, tracing it to Jamestown. "That was more interesting," she says. Fay Lehmann, 72, a therapist in Melbourne, Australia, has been working during lockdown on the fourth draft of her family-history book, "Being a Bosworth, A Rich Tapestry of Life." She asked her daughters, both in their 40s, if they would maintain the history stored in eight archival boxes. "Oh Mum, I don't think we will do anything on it ourselves but I'm willing to store it," she says the older daughter, Rami Ryan, told her.

Mrs. Ryan, 43, a property manager and yoga teacher in Perth, West Australia, says she is glad her mother is writing the book, but: "If I sit with Mum, I want to hear about her. I don't want to hear about all these people I haven't actually met."

Most people don't become interested in family history until their 30s or later, when they have children, says Pam Cooper, a family therapist and professional personal historian in Cambridge, Mass. By then, the older generations may be gone. "With the pandemic, there are older people are at home with extra time and they want to make sure they tell their story," says Ms. Cooper, 69. "It's interesting to us now because we're afraid we're going to die!"

To escape her small apartment, Linda Andersson, 59, drove from Campbell, Calif., to a Wisconsin cabin with her 24-year-old son last month. They drove five days. Ms. Andersson mostly talked about her search for her great-grandmother. "I have been trapped in a car with my son for five days and he is so tired of hearing about his great-great-grandmother in Norway," says Ms. Andersson, a technical writer. "He just looks at me and listens." Her son, Jacob Andersson, a student, says he wants to be supportive, although "I have been kind of indifferent to it for a while."

Zoom can help tell the younger generation the stories, says Sister Allyn Marie Horton, 71, a Catholic nun and former librarian living in Joppa, Md. When she brings up family history, she says, her brothers' response has usually been, "Oh, there she goes again."

She found an appreciative audience in her 10-year-old grandnephew, who was home in Burke, Va., after schools closed. She did a Zoom call with a story about an ancestor who, bayoneted during the American Revolution, survived on a British prison ship. Six more Zoom history calls followed. "We both enjoyed it," says Sister Allyn. "I am planting the seeds. I suspect my grandnephew will take part of my collection and be interested when he retires."

Feel free to follow the link and read the article online where there are lots of pictures.

