

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF OUR PRESENTERS

- **Patti Gillespie:** At first a busy stay-at-home wife and mother of six children for 20 years, and then an English and French teacher for 20 years, Patti Gillespie now enjoys building a third career of genealogical instruction and research. Patti served as the Denton Stake's first Indexing Director for seven years; at that time, she began speaking on genealogical topics to local societies and genealogy seminars, and liked it so much that she kept right on. She is currently finishing up her second year as President of the Wise County Genealogical Society, of which she is a founding member and organizer; she is also a committee chairman for the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG), a family history consultant for the Decatur Ward, a temple worker, plus she is active in her local Wise County Historical Association activities. Patti also has started Family Lines, her own research and life story business, and can be found on LinkedIn.



- **Debbie Greenlee:** Debbie became particularly interested in Polish genealogy as an adult living in Texas.



As Debbie became more and more involved in Polish genealogy she began to share her knowledge with others, first becoming heavily involved with the Poland Roots and GenPol genealogy mailing lists and later as one of the founders and administrators of Polish Genius in Yahoo Groups. Today Polish Genius, a free email list, boasts over 940 members from all over the world.

Debbie began making biennial trips to Poland in 1996, both to her ancestral villages and to acquaint herself with the country as a whole. The photographs she has taken have become the foundation of her Debbie's Photos of Poland web site, which has over 650 Polish villages which can be viewed by those who cannot return to their ojczyzna (fatherland). The web site also contains indexed records and trip diaries. Interested in transcribing records of genealogical interest, first by transcribing lists of names and dates from monuments and then later transcribing both civil and church records of interest.

As Debbie became involved in Polish genealogy, she began to learn Polish and she became a member of the Polish Genealogical Society of America, the Polish Genealogical Society of Connecticut and the Northeast, and the Polish Museum of America in Chicago, the largest Polish museum outside of Poland. Realizing the museum's constant need for additional funding, Debbie began a generous giving program that made her one of the Museum's most consistent benefactors and most valued supporters. Debbie feels it is vitally important to preserve the photographs, books, records, posters, folk attire, letters, art and all things Polish that are archived at the Museum. When in Chicago she always visits the museum and doesn't miss an opportunity to promote the Polish Museum of America. A room in the museum has been named in Debbie's honor for her years of consistent generosity and she is affectionately called the "Red Rose of Texas" by the Museum staff.

Debbie also supports a Catholic elementary school in Chicago that teaches Polish on Saturdays, and the elementary schools in Bukowsko and in Pobiedno, a village near Bukowsko. Debbie has also made presentations about Poland to area elementary classrooms in Arlington.

Debbie's passion for research began before computers were invented. This involved writing letters, making telephone calls, buying and reading books and of course, using the LDS

Family History library. She eventually learned how to use a computer and is jealous of how easy it is for people to do genealogy today.

- Involved with the Bukowsko Triangle mailing list and web site and developed a relationship with the parish priest in Bukowsko, who allowed her to
- Transcribed and indexed virtually all of the parish's historic birth, death and marriage records. Most of the transcriptions (ongoing) and indexes are placed into an online database on the Bukowsko Triangle web site
- Work includes editing an English translation of a history book of the village (Bukowsko Gmina) and surrounding area and heading up a project to publish a diary written by the elementary school principal during the late 1940s, has drawn so much attention to Bukowsko that the city has named her its unofficial ambassador,
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- Supports a Catholic elementary school in Chicago teaching Polish on Saturdays, and the elementary schools in Bukowsko and in Pobiedno, a village near Bukowsko.

Debbie has made presentations about Poland to area elementary classrooms in Arlington. She has written many articles for magazines, newspapers, and web sites and is considered to be the person to go to regarding Polish genealogy. If she can't give you the information off the top of her head, she has references available which handle that. Debbie spends most of her time in Poland photographing and transcribing. For more information, visit Debbie's web site at Polishfamily.com

- **Kirk and Darlene Hathaway:** Kirk was born in Idaho and has served in many positions in the LDS Church. Kirk and Darlene have been married 35 years in March. They were married in the Salt Lake temple in Salt Lake City, Utah, and have three children: all are adopted. The first two were adopted through LDS Family Services as newborn babies. The third was adopted at age five from an orphanage in Tula, Russia. The Hathaways have lived in Flower Mound, Texas, for 21 years. They were called to serve as Area Family History Advisors in November 2013. They serve 35 stakes in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri. They love visiting the saints and sharing the joy of family history.



- **Aaron Holt:** Aaron Holt is an Archives Technician at the National Archives at Fort Worth. A Native Texan, he was raised in a small town outside of Fort Worth. During his twenty-five year career with the National Archives, he has worked on a variety of records including those from the Federal courts, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Customs, Natural Resources Service, Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Attorneys, Coast Guard, U.S. Court of Appeals, and many other federal agencies. He assists patrons with their genealogical questions and research. He has presented numerous programs to genealogical, historical, and local societies on an assortment of topics including but not limited to beginning genealogy, researching Military records, deciphering federal population censuses, using Bureau of Indian Affairs records, and using the National Archives online resources.



- **Jeanette Hurst** holds a BA in History from BYU, a MA in Medieval Studies from the University of Notre Dame and a PhD in History from Cornell University. Before retiring, she taught at The University of Dallas and the University of Texas at Dallas. She began



researching her own family history in earnest 15 years ago, focusing on her English ancestors. She has been a family history consultant and presenter at genealogy conferences and local society meetings for over 10 years.

- **Louise Hilton Jeter:** Louise Hilton Jeter, B.A. History. Avid amateur genealogist with many years of experience in courthouses, church records, European microfilm, and online databases. Served 18-months as assistant (volunteer) archivist for the Diocese of Baton Rouge; former school teacher (for three years). Married, mother of eleven grown children.



- **Ila Fichtner Johnson:** was born in Seattle, Washington, and raised in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. She was married for 25 years, had three sons, and moved 32 times, living in most of the states within the United States. She has been in Texas for the last 20 years. As she grew up, she used to play on the floor and listen to the stories her grandparents told. She went with her mother to different court houses and the National Archives looking for information. When she retired, she began working on her father's genealogy; they were Germans from Russia. Little did she know what she was going to find. She now has a very large database for them. Four years ago, Ila started teaching Beginning Genealogy in the senior program at Tarrant County College. Today she teaches Beginning Genealogy using Legacy, Advance Genealogy using Legacy, On Line Genealogy, and a Special Interest Group for Genealogy and is the leader of the local chapter of the Tarrant County Legacy User Group. In her spare time, she enjoys quilting and scrapbooking.



- **Sabra Johnson:** joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1982. Since that time, she has been an avid researcher in African-American genealogy. The majority of her research has centered in Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia. Her presentation covers some of the obstacles encountered when researching African-American genealogy.



- **Travis Morris:** was born in Oklahoma but raised in Texas. He was a graduate of Paschal High school in Fort Worth and was attending Arlington State when Uncle Sam called and he spent the next 6 years in the United States Navy. Travis was interested in family since his early years. When asking his grandfather what nationalities he was made of he got the reply French, Irish and Indian. Family tradition was that his other grandfather was a Texas Indian that killed a man and fled to Oklahoma. He has recently taken a DNA test to verify the validity of that tradition. Travis purchased a copy of Personal Ancestral File 1.0 when it was first released and put it on his boss's computer and began to investigate and input his family. Soon he began to attend classes at the Computer Counsel of Dallas and then teaching a class on Personal Ancestral File at the same facility. Travis Morris, John Wiley and a few other teachers at the Counsel put together an origination called GeneTech to show the use of computerized genealogy. GeneTech produced about ten annual shows in the Dallas Fort Worth area. Travis has recently completed a Family History Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Ladder-day Saints and has lectured on FamilySearch and Indexing.



- **Lynell Moss:** is a 6th generation Dallasite. She has been researching her own and other's families since 1968. She has been in a leadership position with the Plano Family History Center for 24 years and is the Director of the Great Family Search Conference



- **Joseph Ryan:** Joseph Ryan is an Archives Technician at the National Archives at Fort Worth. He holds a BA from A&M, an MA from U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and a PhD from the University of Kansas--all degrees are in American History. After serving as an Officer in the U.S. Army for 20 years, he is now working on records from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Natural Resources Service, U.S. District Courts, NASA, and the U.S. Court of Appeals. In his short tenure with the National Archives, he has spoken several times on Researching NARA's Military Records.

- **Becky Savoie:** was born in the swamps of southeast Texas: right on the Gulf Coast and the Texas/Louisiana border. She is the sixth daughter of nine children. Growing up, the family didn't eat at the dining room table much: it was usually covered with genealogy papers. When her parents evacuated for Hurricane Rita, they took both their vehicles. One contained their personal belongings. The other, a small truck, was filled to capacity with boxes of genealogy. That little truck sat in the Savories' garage for about two weeks until it could be driven home. Becky worked full-time at the Family History Center in Arlington for four years, and now substitutes there occasionally. She has worked many years on her own and her husband's genealogy; concentrating on New York and Nova Scotia.



- **Jan Breshears Thomas:** Jan Breshears Thomas is retired from a computer career. Her mother, Faye Blackwell Breshears, did family research for 50 years and passed in 2000. Jan retired the next year and began loading her mother's research on Family Tree Maker. At last count, she has over 67,000 people on her tree. She has been admitted to several ancestral societies including DAR. During her research, she discovered around 2008, findagrave.com. Since then, she has posted over 25,000 pictures, mostly headstones, and created nearly 10,000 memorials. She participates in the Forums and has learned how to use the site to her advantage. The class she teaches today will be a Beginner's course. Maybe next time she will be able to do other classes that will teach more advanced techniques. She has presented beginning and intermediate classes on findagrave.com to other Genealogical Societies and did countless presentations during her career.



- **Laura Weekley:** Has been volunteering, researching, and teaching genealogical research for over 20 years, including exploring AncestryDNA for over 2 years. She loves Family History and Science for many of the same reasons. Both require gathering facts, making theories, studying, using deductive reasoning, coming to conclusions, and sharing the findings. Laura started learning DNA techniques to help herself and others. You can find Laura here at the Arlington Family History Center on Wednesday evenings.

