

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF OUR PRESENTERS - 2025

Maggie Braun:



Maggie Braun, a Texas native, grew up in Orlando Florida. She literally “fell” in love with genealogy research at the age of eight when she stumbled over a four-foot obelisk grave marker that had tumbled down and was buried at the bottom of a knoll. With that fateful fall, she discovered a family cemetery that had disappeared from living memory. Eventually, twenty individuals were found, and Little Maggie made the local paper!

Maggie graduated from Valdosta State University (Valdosta, Ga) with a BA in General Studies with an emphasis in History and Humanities. She went on to earn her Master of Art in Secondary Social Studies. She taught Texas History, American History, World History, and Art for many years and now works for the State of Texas.

Christopher D. Bryant:



Christopher D. Bryant has dedicated the past 20+ years to his work as a professional genealogist, writer, editor, family heirloom preservationist, historian, lecturer, oral historian, reunion planner, cemetery researcher, and transcriber, and he continues to remain active in each of these roles. He is the founder and researcher of C.D. Bryant Genealogy as well as a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists (APGen), Arlington Genealogical Society, and Dallas Genealogical Society (DGS). He specializes in African American, Native American, and Hispanic history and culture while also analyzing DNA to assist in uncovering family mysteries. Along with these specialties, Christopher is an active volunteer for Find A Grave and a transcriber of new records that are recently digitized. Christopher frequently presents at genealogy events, where he shares his techniques for addressing complex genealogical challenges and stresses the importance of accurate and complete historical documentation. Further information about Christopher and future events may be found at his website, www.cdbryantgenealogy.com.

Suzanne Fritz:

Suzanne Fritz is a Librarian with the Fort Worth History Center. She relocated to Fort Worth, Texas from Naples, Florida where she worked as a Public Service Librarian and Genealogy Specialist. Suzanne received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College and her M.S., L.I.S., from Simmons College, Boston. Suzanne is interested in a variety of topics including: Italian-American immigration, German-American genealogy, and Native-American records. She's realized that one of the benefits of moving to Texas has been discovering how much there is to enjoy in regard to Texas genealogy and history.

Ila Johnson:

Ila Jean Fichtner was born in Seattle, Washington in 1942 to John Fichtner and Anne Fern Woods. She was raised in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. She served in the U.S. Army from 1961 until 1964 where she met and married David Johnson. She is the mother of three sons, and the grandmother of 4 grandchildren. Ila has moved a lot, living in 11 different states including Alaska.

Ila started her journey into genealogy at a young age going to courthouses with her mother to look for records on her ancestors. She and her mother use to spend hours in the National Archives looking at Micro-Films as well as at the Family History Centers. She has some of her lines back into the 1600 century and a very large database now. She works at the Family History Center the third Saturday each month and spends hours every day working on Family Search/Family Tree as well as Odessa3.org. Ila has ties to lines from Germany, Russia, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Her sons also have ties to Norway, Sweden, France, and Native American on their father's side.

She has been teaching Beginning Genealogy, Advance Genealogy and Genealogical Research at TCC south campus now going on 13 years. She loves helping others also discover who their ancestors are, where they came from, what communities or states they lived in, what their occupations were and about what their life's were like.

Russell and Betty Jo Lee



Russell and Betty Jo Lee

We are a family of 4 boys, 4 daughters-in-law, 23 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

We moved to Arlington Texas in February 2022 after serving missions in Vietnam, and Colorado Springs. We served as service missionaries in the Texas Fort Worth Mission. In 2016-2017 we lived in China and taught English at Nankai University with the BYU China Teachers Program.

Russ graduated from BYU with a degree in Communication and worked in business as well as healthcare.

BJ graduated from the University of Utah and worked as a Medical Technologist for 40 years.

Bernard N. Meisner Ph.D., CCM

GenealogyTalks@att.net

817-575-7451 (cell)

1309 Danielle Drive

Bedford TX 76021



Bernard Meisner Bernard Meisner is a genealogist and lecturer based in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. He began researching his family over 35 years ago and enjoys sharing lessons learned from that experience, including his mistakes. Although he knew only one grandparent (his maternal grandfather) he has successfully identified all of his great-great grandparents, almost half of his triple- and quadruple-great grandparents, and his Meisner 8th great grandparents.

He is a past president of the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society, a co-leader of the Dallas Genealogical Society's German SIG, and is a member of the Germanic. Texas State and the National Genealogical Societies. He has been invited to write several articles for the Texas State Genealogical Society's quarterly magazine, Stirpes.

Bernard earned a B.S. in physics/German from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in meteorology from the University of Hawaii. He has completed coursework of the National Institute for Genealogical Studies, the Texas Institute of Genealogical Research, and the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh.

Lynell Moss



Lynell Bennett Moss is a 6th generation Texan who has been exploring her family history for over 50 years. She has served in the Plano FamilySearch Center for 33 years, 12 as Director, FSC Consultant Trainer for 25 years, and Director of the Great Family Search Conference for 19 years. She is a member of National Genealogical Society, Texas State Genealogical Society and Dallas Genealogical Society.

Becky Savoie:



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 parent's 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 Savoies' 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.

Brenda Watlington:



Brenda Posey Watlington was born in Fort Worth, TX and grew up in Arlington. She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington in 1983 with a BS in Math/Computer Science. She went on to receive an MS in Computer Science from the University of Texas at Dallas. While working more than 30 years as a Computer Software Engineer, she has pursued genealogy as her hobby and passion. Her computer background has been a great advantage as the technology of genealogy has advanced in the last decade. She now resides in Plano, TX and is the Asst. Director of the Plano FamilySearch Center; also working there as a Consultant. She has been a speaker at the Great Family Search Conference sponsored by Richardson and Plano FamilySearch Centers from 2013 to 2022.

Lisa Van Gemert:



Lisa Van Gemert shares best practices in education with audiences around the world. She is an expert consult to television shows including Lifetime's "Child Genius," a writer of award-winning lesson plans, numerous articles on social psychology and pedagogy, and three books, including the award-winning *Perfectionism: A Practical Guide to Managing Never Good Enough*. A former teacher, school administrator, and Youth & Education Ambassador for Mensa, she shares resources for educators and parents on her website giftedguru.com. An avid family historian, she serves as a volunteer genealogist for the Daughters of the American Revolution and as her ward's Lead Family History Consultant.