

GENTREK: Family History Expo - Mesa, AZ - 2008

by **Dae Powell**

presented by **Jayne McCormick**



By now you've been with me on at least one genealogy conference/cruise. . .at least vicariously through these presentations. For those of you who were there, it was even more fun for me, since I was able to meet you and share the experiences.

This one was my first "Expo" – somewhat different than a conference or a cruise. First I'll mention the drawbacks, then I'll mention the benefits. Here we go –

Drawbacks:

- 1~ Not an exotic location
- 2~ Accommodations not usually in same building as conference sessions
- 3~ Meals not included (as in cruises)
- 4~ No printed syllabus included with admission
- 5~ A few of the presentations I wished to attend were at the same hour as others

Benefits:

- 1~ Much less expensive
- 2~ Friendlier conference staff
- 3~ A real, personal conference with endless opportunities to interact with the speakers
- 4~ Good seating at most of the sessions
- 5~ No parking fees
- 6~ Near the local library and Family History Center
- 7~ If you are LDS, near the temple, too
- 8~ Syllabus included on CD with admission

For me, the benefits out-weighed the limitations. And about those drawbacks:

- 1~ Mesa, Arizona may not be exotic, but the weather was better than any I've experienced at either conferences or cruises.
- 2~ My accommodations were within walking distance of the conference.
- 3~ The food was all reasonably priced, with the exception of that sold in the convention center itself. I had several meals that were tasty, healthy and enjoyable. I also found benefactors who saved me time and money by sharing their lunches and lunchtime with me. Thank you so much, **Dear Myrtle**, and my **GENTREK** pals **Joyce, Kathy and Colleen**.
- 4~ I was able to purchase a printed syllabus separately (thank you, **Kim**).
- 5~ I managed to visit personally with presenters whose lectures I was unable to attend.

The spirit of cooperation and love of family history pervaded the whole affair. Everyone was available to help everyone else. Flying home, several on the plane asked me what I was smiling so much about. I introduced myself as Happy Dae, but further explained that I'd been given a two-dae preview of heaven. We had a genealogical discussion all the way to Dallas and I think we all benefited from it.

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I arrived late morning Thursday, 13-Nov-2008. Having no breakfast on the airplane drew considerable protest from my tummy. Upon arrival at the Best Western, not Dae's Inn, I unpacked my kit and hung my clothing on hangers to de-wrinkle. Foraging out onto Main Street, I found interesting shops and restaurants. Had I walked two more blocks east, I'd have encountered a lovely Mexican food café, but hunger directed me into a Subway where I bought a footlong spicy Italian sub, a drink, and chips. *Yummy*. I visited the café that evening for dinner, however. The enchiladas were delicious and the tortilla chips extra crisp. The salsa was a might tame, but tasted good just the same.

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As I walked about the town, looking for the location of the Expo, I noticed two wonderful things: wide streets and fruit-bearing trees! And the air smelled fall-fresh. People greeted me in front of their homes and businesses. I love this place!

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I went directly to the center and a building marked "A". There I was told I needed to go over to building "B". I found the room names I'd read about in the previews of the conference online. I'd found it! I walked through the entire building and came upon a table with people working hastily and a few posters welcoming folks to the Family History Expo. Here I met **Kim Savage, Janine Morgan**, and **Holly Hansen**, leaders of the conference and principal organizers. Holly quickly put me to work slicing ribbons with her for exhibitor gifts. Well, I volunteered, not knowing she would have me demonstrate my lack of scissors dexterity. It was fun and easy work, however.

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I sauntered into the exhibitor hall, where many were setting up their wares and displays. I spoke at length with several of them, none of whom needed any help from me. (I wouldn't have asked for a fee, guys.) Then, as the afternoon was fast becoming evening, I wended my way to the local library where I was able to access my email and pare it down a bit. They have a friendly, inexpensive system there for non-card holders: one dollar for one hour of computer time. Excellent! Their computer books occupied several shelves and I looked at a few for some ideas.

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I left the library with the last rays of sunlight streaming through the trees and strode home in the still, warm air. OK, I did stop by the Mexican restaurant for enchiladas.

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I collapsed on the bed, which was firm and very comfortable. I gathered up my printouts and began to plan the following dae's activities, presentations and people I wanted to meet. I was tempted, but only slightly, to toss my papers aside and plunge into the neighboring pool for a cool swim, but I resisted. Instead, the radio provided a nice background whilst I mapped out my next adventures.

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Friday, 14-Nov-2008. I awoke before my alarm sounded and proceeded to shower and shave. Of course, the alarm still went off--all with my head full of shampoo and the rest of me soaked. I assumed it would eventually stop, so I remained at the task. Oh, no! The alarm continued and was soon accompanied by bangings on the wall from the neighboring flat. I dried off and reset the alarm and the pounding abated. I was in an informal mood, so I donned my jeans and **GENTREK** shirt and popped over to the breakfast supplied by the hotel. They had waffles! Now I knew I was going to move here. They had english muffins, bagels, blueberry muffins, fresh fruit, scrambled eggs, bacon and sausage. There were four different juices and milk and coffee. There was even hot and cold cereal. Amazing.

I ate with some interesting folks, all of whom were there for the genealogy expo. They wanted to know the topics I was presenting so I gave them a wee teaser to encourage them to attend my sessions. They did, too.

After breakfast, I gathered up my laptop, hotel keycard, and paperwork and trekked over to the conference center. It was jam packed with registrants. I stood in the "M-R" line and proceeded slowly to the front, where they told me I was in the wrong line – speakers must register with the walk-ins. <sigh> At the proper location, finally, they signed me up, loaded me down with the syllabus CD, a bag of printouts from sponsors and gave me a CD-holder with a few goodies inside. It was then I realized I needed a printed syllabus for notetaking and such. No such luck! (All sold out and the printer even shorted the order.) Throughout the morning I begged and pleaded and somehow **Kim Savage** took pity on me and sold me one. Thanks again, Kim, it was very handy.

Mine being the last presentation hour of the dae, I was able to visit several presentations throughout the morning and afternoon. I attended a land records and jurisdictional challenges presentation delivered by **Arlene Eakle**, one of my early genealogy mentors and author of the first edition of *The Source*, published by Ancestry. She is a thorough researcher and encouraged us all in this regard. At the end of her presentation, I noticed **Mark Tucker**, of ThinkGenealogy.com, sitting at the rear of the room. I introduced myself and we had a short chat and each promised to attend the other's lectures. More about both, later...

I found myself wandering around the bourse or exhibit hall and chatting with so many interesting people. I spoke briefly with **Diane Haddad** of *Family Tree Magazine* fame, although the throngs prevented any real interchange. We resumed later the next dae and I'll cover that later.

After a nod and quick chat with **Dick Eastman** at the Footnote.com booth, I ended up having a delightful conversation with **Dear Myrtle**. Her kiosk was primarily quilting, which she displayed for a friend. We discussed each other's projects until lunchtime. I intended to dash out and grab a sandwich or taco, but Myrt offered me her Quizno's sandwich. I accepted, but only ate half of it, knowing that after her presentation she'd be famished.

"Discovering Your Military Ancestors", by **Christine I. Mathis** was for beginner to intermediate researchers and well-presented. Although I had all the military links on my web site, <http://shoestringgenealogy.com/usmilitary.htm>, I still enjoyed the speaker and subject material.

I stopped in at **David Graham's** "*Ancestry.com World Archives Project*" discussion. He entertained questions and gave an interactive display of how data is transcribed from record images. I even won a T-shirt in the raffle. (And later found a way to pack it and take it home.)

Preceding my presentation in the same room was **Marlo E. Schuldt**. He gave a lively and entertaining presentation on "*Easier Scanning for Great Results*". Although he used and demonstrated his Epson, he covered other makes and models, also, including my Hewlett-Packard scanner. I learned a little more about photo editing, too. After his presentation I asked if he would loan me the use of his projector for the following hour and he was happy to do it. But...someone reminded him that he needed it elsewhere and had to rescind the offer.

I knew that **Dear Myrtle** had a projector and raced to her booth to see if she would loan it to me. She did and all went well. My presentation? It was "What Next?" -- an interactive pseudo-case study with healthy doses of humour thrown in. I even got a chuckle or two as Peter Doubt's mother's name came up: Florence (Flo) Naze. There were many excellent comments and

questions, making the entire hour most pleasant. Then, as I was dismantling the hardware, three lovely ladies presented themselves up front and gave me the key to the state of Arizona. I was delighted to finally meet **Joyce, Kathy and Colleen** face-to-face after all these years chatting with them online. What a treat and I even got hugs, too!

I returned **Dear Myrtle's** projector with profuse thanks. (Thanks again, Myrt. I don't care to imagine having to mime that presentation.) The entire dae was a success and I enjoyed every minute of it. I didn't win any of the drawings in the exhibitor's hall, but was pleased to see some that I knew who did. I trudged back to the hotel laden with goodies, for which I had no idea how I would transport back home.

I logged into the hotel's WiFi and cleared more email. I took the opportunity to vote for SSG, too. All in all, I managed 4 fresh votes from Mesa that I know of. The WiFi connection was somewhat intermittent, but I was able to reconnect rapidly.

In my flat I went over my "**City Directories**" presentation and discovered that the Internet links needed to be added. This I did whilst the radio played Frank Sinatra and other 1940s music. Very nice. I didn't include fancy wipes and other visual effects to the slides so as not to detract from the important content I wished to emphasize. Many presenters used several visual effects well, however, so this is not a criticism.

Friday, 14-Nov-2008. Again I arose before the alarm clock sounded, but this time I turned it off prior to getting ready for the dae. Yesterdae I donned my **GENTREK** shirt and blue jeans, but todae I dressed a bit more formally. I even wore my genealogy tie and received a couple of comments on it. **Dick Eastman** and **Bruce Buzbee** mentioned they had ordered the same tie from a catalog. (At least I'm in respectable company, I thought.)

I snagged a smaller breakfast this morning -- just a piece of fruit and a blueberry muffin and headed over to the conference halls, towing my laptop and documents behind me.

I attended **Dear Myrtle's** presentation on "**How to Find out Where to Look,**" and although it was for beginners I gleaned a gem or two, also. I told Myrt that I wanted to see how the Pros do it. I was not disappointed.

Entering the exhibitor's hall once more, I encountered Dr. Colleen Fitzpatrick, author of **Forensic Genealogy**. We spoke at length and I felt I'd met a kindred spirit. I purchased her book and she graciously signed it. And *Hurrah!* it seems she'll return again to the St. George, Utah Expo in February, 2009.

The book wasn't the only purchase I made -- I stopped by the **RootsMagic** booth and talked with one of the friendliest folks ever. I use **The Master Genealogist**, as many of you know, and inquired what "FamilySearch Certified" meant. I asked why **TMG** wasn't FamilySearch Certified, and she told me that they didn't seem much interested in working with the FamilySearch folks. Considering the progress the folks in FamilySearch have made this year and the plethora of new offerings on their web site, I think **Bob Velke, et. al.**, have made a mistake. I spoke of the things in **TMG** that I found valuable to ME, and was greeted with "Oh! **RootsMagic** can do those, too!" I purchased a copy of **RootsMagic 3** with downloadable upgrade when **version 4** is released (about Jan 2009, Debby). I believe those wishing to purchase **RootsMagic 3** with the upgrade to **ver. 4** can still get the \$20 deal for a few more weeks.

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I attended "**County Web Sites: an Overlooked Resource**" led by **Jean Wilcox Hibben; PhD, MA, CG**. She's right -- I've overlooked them, too. This was more or less for beginner and intermediate researchers, but it was packed full of interesting ideas. You can Google search the county name, state, and "genealogy" and find amazing facts and leads. Other avenues to County Web Sites are www.Linkpendium.com and www.CyndisList.com. I learned a new one, too -- www.epodunk.com. Worth the price of admission. Epodunk has a photo of Mount Rushmore currently displayed and no, Obama wasn't on there.

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After a wonderful repast among friends -- **Colleen, Joyce** and **Kathy**, who shared their goodies with me -- I trotted off the best presentation hall of the Expo. And I was fortunate enough to be presenting "**City Directories**" there. The previous speaker had promised her projector to another, so I was bereft of a large display. Or so I thought. I went (again) to **Dear Myrtle**, but **Mark Tucker** already had her unit elsewhere. Then **Dr. Fitzpatrick** offered to share the projector she had borrowed and would use in the same theatre after I was finished. Fabulous! I set it up with ease and connected it to my lappie, and clicked over to the presentation and was introduced by the Expo assistant. The presentation went splendidly and I was delighted. I stayed with the projector and answered questions from several who remained in the room for the next lecture.

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Dr. Fitzpatrick entered, set up her system and connected to the projector. *Nada*. I checked the connections and we tried several "hot keys" to enable the remote video on her laptop to no avail. A technician came in and after ten minutes announced that the laptop and projector were incompatible. My laptop had worked wonderfully well, so she used mine for her presentation.

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I skipped off to see **Mark Tucker's** presentation: "**Navigating Research with the Genealogical Proof Standard.**" Leave it to **Mark** to come up with this clever play on GPS and navigation. Excellent. **Mark's** slides and presentation were perfection itself – amazing for a professed first-timer. His bibliography leaned heavily on **Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, FASG** and **Donn Devine, CG, CGI**. Who could expect more? For those who don't know **Mark**, he's the developer of the wonderful chart at his blog, **ThinkGenealogy**. Download his chart at <http://www.thinkgenealogy.com/page/2/> or search for Genealogy Research Process Map – get it!

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I returned to the theatre and caught the last 12 minutes of **Dr. Colleen Fitzpatrick's** fine presentation, "**You Will Never Look at Your Old Photos the Same Way Again!**" Her photo-analyst skills are sharply honed. I was inspired to read her book, which I'd purchased that morning, when I returned to the hotel that evening. A college curriculum could be constructed from its information.

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The attendees were very enthusiastic with her depth and her sense of humour. (I **knew** we were kindred spirits!) I helped her dismantle the equipment and complimented her on an outstanding presentation. If you have the chance to see either **Mark** and **Colleen** and they are presenting at the same time, as they were then, I cannot help you. It would be like choosing between solutions to two of your brick walls and you only get to have **ONE**.

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Kathy and I attended **Bruce Buzbee's** presentation on his **RootsMagic 4**, not yet released. As I mentioned earlier, I'd just bought it, so I wanted to learn more and ask a few questions. Interestingly, he answered most of my questions via his demonstration. **Bruce** is an amazing guy – intelligent, forthright, creative and very personable. After the presentation, I knew I'd bought a winner.

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I returned to the Exhibitors' Hall and returned to the **FamilyTree Magazine** booth and resumed the chat with the lovely **Diane Haddad**. No, she's married -- don't get the wrong idea. She's very sharp and interested in everything genealogical and journalistic, and rightly so because she's the Managing Editor of the most popular genealogy magazine on this planet. She loves humour and we bantered a bit together. Then Bruce Buzbee came up and we all chatted some more. They made me feel at home and had solid answers to my questions. I look forward to more conversations with them at St. George, Utah next February.

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Kathy and Joyce corralled me at the end for the grand prize drawings, none of which we took away. We went to Denny's for dinner and had more enjoyable conversations among ourselves. We skipped dessert and Joyce drove me back to the Best Western. It was the best time ever!

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I spread all my goodies across the other bed, grabbed Colleen's book and settled in for a good read. Eventually I noticed the time, marked my place and turned down the lamp. I slept like my ancestors were watching over me. Mayhap they were.

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Somehow managing to get all my stuff packed into my bags, I proceeded to the front desk, paid the bill and awaited a taxi they called for me. I'd left a nice tip in the room for the housecleaning crew who took excellent care of me while there.

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I mentioned the flight home at the beginning. I distributed several business cards, which Jayne made for us, and we had a lively discussion about tracking down ancestors and some of the interesting traditions that had been handed down to us.

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Jack and Grace seemed delighted to have me home again, and life seems simply brighter after **Mesa, Arizona**.

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