

Interfaith Voices GT Column: Genealogy Ties Us All Together

By Alice Henderson Rampton

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"In all of us there is a hunger, marrow deep, to know our heritage - to know who we are and where we came from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness."

— Alex Haley, *Roots*

One of the most popular hobbies in the world today is genealogy or the study of one's family history and ancestors. Genealogy now includes the search of public and family records, along with information provided through one's own DNA results.

Family history or genealogy is an important tenet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, based on theological belief that families are forever. With this in mind, it is important to strengthen relationships with all family members, both those who are alive and those who have died. Latter-day Saints believe that the eternal joining of families is possible through sacred sealing ceremonies that take place in temples. A related scripture in Matthew [16:19](#) says, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Besides the comforting concept of eternal family units beyond the grave, there are vast reservoirs of wisdom and relationships that can be gained as we learn from our ancestors. In Malachi 4:6 in the Old Testament, these profound words describing Prophet Elijah's visit have resonated with me, "And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers (mothers) to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers (mothers)."

When I was in my late twenties, I decided to interview my parents and write their personal histories. Malachi's promise was literally fulfilled as I sat down with a tape recorder, pen and paper and asked them questions about their lives. Learning how 4-H scholarships were the only ticket to college for my mother, endeared me to the many sacrifices she made in her pursuit of higher education. As I interviewed my father, I learned that his family lost their farm and home during the aftermath of the Great Depression, resulting in their need to move into chicken coops for a period of time. This helped me better understand his mantra, "Where there's a will, there's a way." He managed three jobs at OAC so he, also, could attend college. My heart was turned toward my parents in a reciprocal bond that lasted their lifetime, and I believe, eternally.

Since 1894, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has collected genealogical records from over 100 countries including billions of documents. One of the main vehicles for distributing this information is through a free, on-line program entitled FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org), available to anyone.

In addition, the LDS church operates 4,600 family history centers in 126 countries. These volunteer-staffed centers provide free computer access to many major genealogical sites. We are fortunate to have family history centers nearby in Corvallis, Newport, Salem, Eugene, and Lebanon.

Paul Woods, Corvallis Family History Center Director, shared that the Corvallis center, located at 4141 NW Harrison, is open to anyone year round on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday; 9 am - 4 pm, 7 pm - 9:30 pm. Summer closure is July 25-August 8. Over 40% of the patrons are not members of the LDS Church. For information, call [541-758-0857](tel:541-758-0857). Trained volunteers are there to help individuals new to this exciting genealogical journey or for those with years of experience.