

## [Family History Success Requires Spiritual Motivation: Here's My Story, Part 1!](#)

Let's face reality. Habits are difficult to change. Changing bad habits can change your destiny for a brighter future. The golden rule to changing habits is that you have to replace a habit with another habit. As members of the Church, we have all the tools to be perfect in our pursuits. But we are all mortal with habits that can certainly hinder us towards celestial happiness through hesitating and rationalizing which can result in a lack of action in following through on important decisions in our lives. Genealogy is one those pursuits that can exhibit how our habits can result in procrastination. Carol Swensen has a great handout entitled: [What Can You Do in Family History in Just 5-15 Minutes?](#) and **The Family History Guide** offers similar activities for individuals, family, kids and youth as well to pursue genealogical activities on a daily basis in a seamless manner. But again, doing it is entirely another matter.

While I was on the treadmill this past week, the Dr. Oz TV show featured a person who has a best seller book based on the "5 Second Rule" which is simple to understand and its actualization is in three steps: "Cue," "Routine" and "Reward." I'm not here to sell her book but her quote, "You can't control how you feel. But you can always choose how you act" which triggered me to reflect my entire 50 years of pursuing temple and family history work within a brief moment as I clearly understood at that very moment why my dedication to genealogy isn't an accident or a fantasy based on addicting types of passion and behaviors but based on my needs to be in control of one's actions to achieve my life's goals.

### **Here's My Story of How I Pursued my Life's Dreams Without the Book!**

In this posting, I will only focus on the circumstances that have led me to achieve my temple and family history work. It all began with my love for geography in elementary school as the world is so diversified and beautiful so I always thought of life in global terms. When I pursued my Ph.D. degree at Brigham Young University, I was introduced to the Church but I needed to get baptized in Florence, Italy because of strong opposition by my parental and grandparents towards the Church. The Church's love for family and family history was a motivating factor for me to consider doing my genealogy but again my family made it nearly impossible to pursue it because of their lack of cooperation along with origin of all of my ancestors being located beyond the "Iron Curtain" established by communist countries. But that didn't stop me as I will explain my story in a capsule of the past 50 years.

### **Step One: My Patriarchal Blessing**

Members of my Church consider their patriarchal blessing as scripture. The first four of the very five paragraphs in this blessing clearly state how I was to conduct my life in a manner to pursue genealogical work especially since I was the only member of my entire family to join the Church. After leaving BYU, I became a high school band director in New Jersey. The position was an absolute bust as half the band quit on me at the onset of marching band season. But in my despair, I turned a negative situation into a positive situation as I started my American family history pursuits since the "Iron Curtain" pursuits were impossible to pursue without in-depth American research because of my family's lack of assistance. This "Routine" was a critical habit that I developed early in my career and marriage. So I immediately applied for nearly kind of civil, church, obituary, cemetery, immigration and other kinds records I could imagine. This habit was my "Cue" of not allowing my negative feelings and challenges get in the way of my actions towards family history. Earning a Ph.D. degree requires not only intelligence but good habits of not procrastinating because the academic pressures are immense since the degree has to be completed in 7 years. During subsequent vacations, I traveled to different parts of the mid-west and east coast to visit what relatives I knew about. I fellowshiped with them and slowly but surely was building a bridge beyond the resistance of my immediate family and for genealogical success. Resulting that I was taking control of my destiny which was my "Reward."

## **Changing Habits: A Secret Ingredient**

I knew that I had enormous limitations and problems in doing my family history work. And only by assertive action, would I ever succeed even with a powerful, affirmative patriarchal blessing. So from a deficit amount of family information, I initially pursued a positive course of action well into the next decade. I prayed and fasted regularly, paid an honest tithe, served the Lord faithfully but even more important, I believed in the sanctity of the family as being ordained of God and central to His plan for our eternal happiness. Families are intended to help God's children learn and grow in righteousness. Marriage between a man and a woman is also ordained of God. The blessings that occurred over the past 50 years for me while actively pursuing temple and family history work cannot be ignored. The more I did and sought family history, the more satisfaction I had and the temporal and spiritual blessings came in many various ways. The self-discipline of establishing a good routine of doing genealogical work early in my marriage, career and church membership was rewarding to me. The "Cues" were already there. The "Routines" were self-established by me and the "Rewards" were blessings to my family, career and for my ancestors that benefitted every member of my family too numerous to mention even whenever the frailties of life occurred such as unemployment, cancer, accidents, financial stress, etc.

## **Closing Comments: The Importance of My Preliminary American Genealogy**

The importance of me pursuing genealogy early in my career, marriage and church years was critical because of still another factor. I was the youngest child in my family in which all of my extended family members were near their retirement years. My only sibling was nearly 10 years older than me. If I had not pursued my American genealogy at that time from 1970 into the 1980's, many family stories, documents and other tips for future research would have been lost forever. The importance of learning from your extended family members can never be under estimated. Windows of opportunities can literally be lost whenever these relatives pass away. Without these windows of opportunities for doing original family history in person, I would have never been able to travel and later achieve such successes in Poland, Slovenia and Ukraine. Knowing that I have now established huge extended family roots, humbles me in all that I do in my career that has extended now 10 years beyond my retirement in 2009 including still teaching at Evergreen High School at the age of 76 as well as a father, a church member and now as a temple and family history leader that I presently serve the Lord in the Foothills Ward. During this 10 year retirement period, I also served the Lord as an Employment and Self-Reliance Missionary.

Because I recognized the genealogy "Cues," established "Routines" and sought spiritual "Rewards," my genealogical pursuits have always been a labor of love with no regrets to the time, the financial expenses and/or extended travel involved. Fellowshiping with ones extended family are blessings in and of themselves that have helped me appreciate my own membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in which the family unit is the very core of the Church.

In future installments, I will continue to outline numerous strategies that have continued to evolve as my genealogical endeavors have extended well beyond initiating research about my American genealogical family roots. For those "Doubting Thomas" of how to establish "Routines" that can realistically be accomplished in timely pursuits, please listen to the author's rebuttal of why her "Five Second Rule" often fails. This 3:47 minute video clearly presents how to avoid this syndrome through ones attitude for positive change which often is the very difference between success and failure in our life's pursuits. Click [here](#) to view this video to avoid experiencing such a crash course in life! And above all, look forward to the next installment because it gets even more exciting, challenging and rewarding as my genealogical endeavors have continued to accelerate at "warp speed."