

[Family History Success Requires Spiritual Motivation: Here's My Story, Part 3!](#)

The progress of my first two decades of family history research were modest with my four generation family tree but not extraordinary because all my ancestors originated from beyond the "Iron Curtain." Simply stated, I had no direct means of research my ancestors further. November 9, 1989 was a pivotal event in world history which marked the falling of the "Iron Curtain" which marked the end of the Soviet Union's communist domination with their Eastern Europe satellite countries. However, communications for researching church and civil records were not user-friendly and the Church's Polish microfilmer who could have help me unfortunately was convicted of a crime and sent to jail so I was unable to proceed with any confidence. In fact, I was unable to obtain my grandmother's birth certificate even though I correctly submitted all the vital statistics. This hurry up and wait scenario went on for the first half of the 1990's which was frustrating because the opportunity to do original research wasn't readily available even though the "Iron Curtain" was down.

Out of blue, Roslyn made a brilliant statement to me in 1995 that perhaps we could take the whole family to pick up my son in Munich at the end of his German mission in July, 1996 and then continue to travel to both Poland and Slovenia to do family history. I was quick to look at a map of Europe to evaluate that Munich, Warsaw and Ljubljana represented a perfect equilateral triangle trip. What made the trip even more feasible and realistic was that in 1992, the entire family did an east coast family history trip by car to Indiana, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut and New York to visit distant relatives, to fellowship them and literally play our musical instruments to pay for our lodging and meals. It was a great family history activity that bonded us together.

There were two other events that helped me to finalize this Eastern European odyssey trip.

- I was able to successfully contact the Munich Stake and the mission presidents in the Warsaw Poland and Ljubljana Slovenia Missions to allow the entire family to present a fireside in the "Spoken Word" format with a missionary theme narrative in their native languages along with special music numbers and congregational singing of hymns from their Church hymnals. Our family musical ensemble consisted of two violins, two clarinets, bass clarinet and piano/autoharp which is not exactly a formal orchestra.
- Fortunately, my 1985 networking with the editor of the Polish *Jazz Forum* magazine proved to be the deal breaker as he was willing to spend a 10 days with us driving through Southern Poland and we needed him as an interpreter/translator since I was never taught Polish by my family. We rented two cars and traveled as a caravan from Warsaw through rural Poland and met with distant relatives and local priests which made it possible to obtain original research as my editor friend was indeed a miracle from our original 1985 meeting in our home in Chicago. The 60 to 75 minute firesides were equally as important because the audiences were warm and hospitable to us. The oddity of the firesides was that we never did them in English since the narrations were always in their native languages of German, Polish and Slovene. My son's German mission came in handy as he was the Munich fireside narrator. To view the power of our initial meeting of our relatives in Krempachy, Poland, you can view the excitement of our first encounter when we knocked on their home door. Click [here](#) for a 1:06 video clip. To view the rural landscape of Krempachy, click [here](#) for a 4:24 minute video clip. My grandmother's family in Krempachy was so poor that at the age of 13 and being the eldest child with no future of ever inheriting the family's homestead, she was sent to America without any family to accompany her to Clifton, New Jersey as her brothers were given that birthright.

The success of this initial trip to Eastern Europe was astounding. We visited cemeteries, churches, lived with my relatives, eat together and visit the local churches and most important of all, my entire family experienced this miracle together. We even performed the fireside for our local relatives and their friends.

In addition, we also visited another part of Poland in Galicia where Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland all adjoin together which is where my paternal ancestors came from. Here's a short video clip of the first person that knew of my relatives 50+ years prior. Click [here](#) for a 1:34 minute video clip. My paternal ancestors were Greek Catholic and here's a short video clip of their very small but very special rural church. Click [here](#) for a 1:50 video clip. To make this complete for my venture international family history trip, we also went to Novo Mesto, Slovenia, the birthplace of one of my great-grandparents. Because we were also doing a fireside for the Church, the Austria-Slovenia District President was our narrator as well as our interpreter/translator.

1996 Trip Successes Lead to An Unusual 1998 Eastern European Trip With Even More Impact

The success of the 1996 Eastern European trip was awesome for reasons already cited. But in 1998, there were more unusual circumstances that motivated me to do a second trip to Eastern Europe. First, this 1998 trip was unusual in that my second son was completing his mission in Moscow, Russia. Second, because of the 1996 trip successes, I was inspired to pursue a lengthy research assignment of networking with my paternal ancestors (Ukrainian Carpathian Mountain people) who were forced to be ethically removed from Poland immediately after World War II because the Russian occupation of Poland was worse than the German occupation under Hitler. Consequently, these family lines were lost for 100 years (1898 when my paternal grandfather immigrated to the USA till 1998) when I eventually was successful found a Ukrainian Mission interpreter who was able to find a Ukrainian to travel to eastern Ukraine on the Russian border in search of these missing families with the incorrect addresses. Incredibly, she accepted this nearly impossible assignment with no phone books or digital records available and she accomplished this dream. This testimony experience was posted July 30th. Click [here](#) for its powerful testimony experiences. Imagine for exactly 100 years, relatives on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean didn't even know anything about their trans-Atlantic relatives. Click [here](#) for a short 2:19 minute video clip that will quickly warm your hearts to know that there is much love, celebrating, singing, dancing and compassion when families unite together whether it be on earth or in heaven! This video is a must-see event to view.

The combination of visiting my son near the end of his Moscow, Russia Mission and visiting lost family relatives was far beyond my imagination and the native language of these Eastern Ukrainian relatives was Russian! This trip again involved most of my children and we expanded our similar Church firesides to Kiev, Ukraine, Budapest, Hungary, Moscow, Russia, Warsaw, Poland and Ljubljana, Slovenia which represents an extensive trip along with tremendous family bonding experiences. What a great experience to meet with lost relatives of 100 years and sharing these experiences with the entire family.

Our Three Ingredients for Successful International Family History Trips

Without any hesitation, this trip taught us three important and essential aspects about family history travel to Eastern Europe.

- Do your American genealogy first with accurate documentation about ancestors, time-line of their vital statistics and their geographical locations. You must have a trusted interpreter/translator to make family history inroads as no travel agency can accommodate that requirement. Without these accurate documentations, you will be taking an expensive vacation at best.
- Important to be hosted by a family in each of these eastern European countries for seamless traveling, socializing and researching because they can more personally speak with the "Gift of Tongues" when seeking sensitive family history information with civil and church officials. In addition, you will be much safer when escorted by host family members than without supervision.
- The Church firesides were the common bridge for accomplishing both the interpreter and "Gift of Tongues" communication skills plus gave our children an insider's view of their relatives as well as each country's people and culture that hotel accommodations could never provide.

Closing Comments

The last major family history occurrence of the 1990's occurred in 1998 when I met the Denver Temple Recorder in the Littleton Family History Center. There I was introduced to the only two Church microfilms of Snietnica and Stawisza where my paternal ancestors originated from. All of my other Eastern European root locations did not have an microfilms available, even to this day. Unfortunately, extracting names from unindexed microfilms proved to be too much for me after multiple visits because of my lack of language skills. But it gave me a thirst for future extracting/indexing if I could somehow find others to assist me which gave me hope for the future. And by the end of the next decade, my wishes and dreams started to become reality from my very humble genealogical pursuits beginnings in 1970 through the 1990's. If there's a magical story to share with you, it is my patriarchal blessing which provided both short and long-term hope for accomplishing much in terms for both temple and original family history research. And to share this sacred, scriptural counsel and live it with my family is the ultimate story to share because if I would have waited till I was officially retired in 2009 to pursue family history travel endeavors actively, none of these postings would have ever been possible. Nor could any of my children could have ever experienced it together as a family when they were later older, married and had their own families!!!

Look forward to the fourth posting covering the first decade of the 21st century because even more important occurrences took place to further accelerate the "Spirit of Elijah" that already had a 30 year head start!