

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF OUR PRESENTERS - 2019

### Tom Black:



**Tom Black** was born and raised in the San Francisco area from 1951 to 1969. He attended Brigham Young University from 1969-1971 and 1973-1976. He served a full-time mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1971-1973 in Denmark. He has earned a BS/MS degree in Microbiology at BYU and then attended Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. He earned an MD degree in 1979. Dr. Black was trained in Pediatric Surgery and has taught in the Dept. of Surgery at the University of Texas Medical School in Houston from 1987-1999. He has been in private practice as a pediatric surgeon in the Dallas/Ft. Worth from 1999 to the present. In addition to his full time job as an MD, he is currently serving as Bishop of the Arlington 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward. He has been married to his sweetheart, Ruth, for nearly 45 years and has six sons and 10 grandchildren. He has a strong interest in Family History and Temple Service. His mother is  $\frac{3}{4}$  Danish and  $\frac{1}{4}$  Swedish and that is his basis for his knowledge and practical experience in Scandinavian research. While at BYU, he took classes in Scandinavian research and how to work with genealogy.

### Suzanne Fritz:



**Suzanne Fritz** is a Librarian with the Genealogy, Local History and Archives Unit of the Fort Worth Public Library. 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.

## Patti Gillespie:



**Patti Todd Gillespie** brings energy and humor to her classes. An avid hobby genealogist for 30 years, Patti formed *Family Lines & Stories*, her own research company, 4 years ago. She researches for clients and speaks to groups small and large in and out of Texas. A former teacher of French & English, Patti very much enjoys speaking and teaching genealogy research processes. In 2019 she continues as assistant to Texas Institute of Genealogy Research, speaker at RootsTech among other events. In 2018 she was asked to be the secretary for Texas State Genealogy Society while speaking in various states and researching for clients. In 2017 Patti was recruited to serve on 3 committees: Association of Professional Genealogists--Lone Star Chapter, Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy (SLIG), and the newest national institute, Texas Institute for Genealogical Research. In 2016 Patti was selected to assist NARA Fort Worth with indexing slave manifests and she spoke at the Texas State Genealogical Society state conference. In 2015 she performed as the chairman of the video and streaming portion of the national Professional Management Conference sponsored by the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG), and she was awarded the Birdie Monk Holsclaw IGHR award. Patti is a founding member and third-term president of the Wise County Genealogical Society, and she also teaches a six-week beginner's genealogy course in her community. Patti also serves on the boards of Wise County Historical Society. Patti attends as many conferences and watches as many webinars as she is able to manage with her clients, husband, children, grandchildren, rescue dog and acreage in Decatur, Texas.

## Marilyn Hay



**Marilyn Hay** Marilyn was born and raised in Ft Worth, Texas and attended East Texas State University (A&M @ Commerce now). She received her degree in Law Enforcement and was a Dallas Police Officer for 32 years and retired in 2007.

Marilyn began her genealogy in 1972 when she was in college due to her great aunt giving her 10 family letters from the Civil War era. She began to wonder who the people were that wrote or received the letters and so began her search. She can go back numerous generations on her mother's side but only to her grandfather on her father's side. She is determined to find her fraternal great grandparents some day!

After retirement Marilyn started teaching seniors in Online Genealogy and iphone/ipads at Tarrant County College's NE campus. She is active in the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society and currently holds the office of Membership Chairman.

### **Illa Johnson:**

**Illa Fichtner-Johnson** has been doing genealogy for over 50 years. She started with her mother, going to court houses to look for records. Her mother's lines are from Pennsylvania but her grandparents on her father's side are Germans from Russia.

Illa currently teaches Beginning Genealogy using Legacy Family Tree, and Foundations of Genealogical Research at TCC's South campus. She is also currently working on a complete list of the German Villages that were located in Russia for Family Tree. She lives in Fort Worth.

### **Sabra Johnson:** (pictured with Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.)



**Sabra Johnson** joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1982. Since that time, she has been an avid researcher in African-American genealogy. The majority of her research has centered in Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia. Her presentation covers some of the obstacles encountered when researching African-American genealogy. She says that she loves her. Always has and always will.

Her research experience is in records from African American records from Tennessee (Davidson, Maury and Wilson counties); Alabama (Lee) Georgia (Dodge) North Carolina, Texas. Sabra has been a family history consultant for 20+ years. Her natural curiosity has led her to unravel many of my families puzzling mysteries.

### **Lynell Moss:**



**Lynell Moss** is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation Dallasite. She has been researching hers and other's families since 1968. She has been in a leadership position with the Plano Family History Center for 24 years and is the Director of the Great Family Search Conference

**Bernard Meisner:**

**Bernard N. Meisner** is a genealogist and lecturer based in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. He began researching his family almost 30 years ago and enjoys sharing lessons learned from that experience, including his mistakes. He has the strong right wrist typical of long-time genealogists; the result of endless hours cranking microfilm readers in the years prior to the Internet! Although he knew only one grandparent (his maternal grandfather) he has successfully identified all of his great-great grandparents and several triple- and quadruple-great grandparents. He is past president and social media chair of the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society and is a member of the National Genealogical Society and the Texas State Genealogical Society.

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 attended the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh each of the last three years, completing courses in Irish and German research.

**Kelli Merk:**

**Kelli Merk** began working on her genealogy when she attended a Continuing Education course on family history at Tarrant County College in the 1990's. Since then, she has become a life member of the Mid-Cities Genealogical Society in Euless, Texas and the Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants in Horner, West Virginia. She has taught classes on various topics such as Getting Started on the Internet using websites such as Heritage Quest, Cyndi's List, and Family Search among others. She lives in Arlington and assists in the Family History Center on Wednesday evenings.

**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 parents 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.

**Jenny Sweeney:**

**Jenny McMillen Sweeney** is an Education Specialist at the National Archives at Fort Worth. She has been with the National Archives for over 11 years and enjoys providing education/outreach programs to teachers, students, and the general public. While at NARA, she has co-authored the eBook *Baseball: The National Pastime in the National Archives* with her NARA Education colleagues. Prior to coming to NARA, Sweeney worked as the Education and Tour Programs Manager at the Legends of the Game Baseball Museum for the Texas Rangers. While in graduate school at the University of Texas at Arlington, Sweeney was fortunate to be an intern at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Sweeney lives in Arlington, Texas with her husband Tom, daughter Julia, and two crazy dogs, Rosie and Cleo.