

LOOKING BACKWARD, LOOKING FORWARD

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This last *Ancestry Daily News* of 2005 is a perfect time to look backward and forward at our genealogical and family-history efforts.

RESEARCHING

Looking Backward. How many new ancestors did you find in 2005? It can be interesting to look back each year and think about whom you found—and how you found them. And how many former ancestors did you identify in 2005? Yes, that's what I said, former ancestors. I remember a number of years ago an exchange of letters with a very highly respected genealogist in which we both admitted that we had reached a point in our research in which we were, as he put it, "pruning branches off my family tree," as we realized that some connections simply didn't hold up to critical scrutiny.

Looking Forward. To get a good start on 2006, identify one line with good potential for discoveries that you can focus on. Also review your pedigree chart for the weakest link. From experience, I can tell you that this is usually something that you acquired early in your research, that came from a compiled family history without footnotes, or that came from the Internet. Commit to digging in and doing "real research" to confirm or refute the connection.

SHARING RESEARCH

Looking Backward. Where are the results of your 2005 research? Did you compile the information into a family history to share with others or into reports to yourself to aid in future research? Or is it buried in piles of paper and scattered throughout files on your hard drive? (I'm sure Juliana is nodding at this last point.)

Looking Forward. Are you a big-project person or a little-steps person? If you are a big-project person, take time now to think about the one big project that you would like to complete in 2006 and write a goal statement and a timetable to post near your computer. If you are a little-steps person, make a list of twelve ancestral couples and commit to completing the research and writing a narrative for each family group, one per month. Another idea is to pair up with a friend or genealogy cousin and agree to send an e-mail on the last day of each month describing your research results during the month.

SHARING THE PAST

Looking Backward. What have you done this year to share the family memorabilia that you have collected with others in your family?

Looking Forward. Consider creating a 2006 photo calendar with a picture of an ancestor or an item of memorabilia for each month. (It is especially nice if there is a related event in that month.) Most image-editing software has a text tool that will allow you to write the person's name and other information on top of the photograph or in an area added below the photograph.

SHARING THE PRESENT

Looking Backward. Have you preserved the events of this past year in your life for your descendants and family members? I write an annual Christmas letter that does this. Well, that's not true. I have established a tradition of Epiphany letters, which often get written in the quiet following the Christmas hoopla. (The greeting-card companies are missing a sure bet here. I'm certainly not the only procrastinator around, and there must be a huge market for Epiphany and Happy-End-of-Year cards.)

Looking Forward. If you aren't the kind of person to write letters, how about a chronology? Readers of this newsletter know that some of us are huge fans of chronologies as a research tool. This is a perfect time to create a personal chronology for 2005 and set one up for 2006. In addition to personal aspects such as vacations, moves, jobs, and (unfortunately for many of us) health problems, remember to include all events that meant something to you: births, marriages, deaths, and graduations of relatives and friends.

SAYING THANK YOU

Looking Backward. Did you thank those who aided in your research, not only those distant cousins who provided you with information on your common ancestry, but also those who made information available in print or electronically? Several patrons of the Genealogy Section at the Dallas library brought holiday goodies for the staff to say thank you, including scrumptious homemade Armenian paklava.

Looking Forward. You needn't bake. Now is the perfect time to write thank-you notes to the staff and volunteers at the archives, genealogical societies, historical societies, libraries, and elsewhere to thank them for everything they have done to help others with their genealogical research.

Thank you Juliana and crew for everything you do to make *Ancestry Daily News* the helpful tool that it is for family historians and genealogists!