

Speech at Lorraine Roth evening

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Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. Deuteronomy 32:7

In my life I have probably given more time to remembering the days of old and considering many generations than the average person. I do really enjoy history and especially family and church history. One of the aims of this little speech is to express my appreciation to Lorraine Roth for her help to me in pursuing one of my great interests in my life. As the Bible verse indicates, I asked my elder, and she has told me.

Let me go back to the beginning.

- When 18 years old I filled out family chart in the middle of my Bible. I was intrigued by this exercise. My parents and aunts helped me. At this time a great something was awakened within me search out my roots.
- I dropped this study when I became a school teacher at age 20. Two years later I married.
- A number of years after our marriage, my interest in genealogy was renewed. My wife Ruthann accompanied me to the Archives and Library at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo. I was amazed at the books the librarian was able to pull out for us.
- We had a whole table of books in front of us when a Mennonite pastor (I forget his name) walked by and chatted. He told us about Lorraine Roth.
- Later I telephoned Lorraine at her downtown Kitchener house, to ask for some leads in the family lines I was researching. I expected her to tell me she will look this up, and call me back, or give me some guidance as to where I can find the information I am looking for, but no, right there on the phone, hardly without blinking, without going to refer to any Family History books, she told me the names of some of my great-great-grandparents, and helped my fill in quite number of my missing links. I was shocked. What kind of person was Lorraine that she could rattle off this genealogical information to an unknown young man from Wellesley? I had been searching for years, and she rattles off what I wanted to know over the telephone.
- This was the beginning of a long friendship and working together.

As some of my relatives and friends saw the large family fan charts I made for myself and for our two sets of parents, I started getting orders from friends in our community. I probably made about 25 of them for various people who connect to our Amish Mennonite immigrants in Ontario. Lorraine gave me lots of clues for this work when I got stuck.

Lorraine helped us publish two family history and genealogy books:

1. The Jacob Wagler Family History and Genealogy, Sesquicentennial 1839-1989
2. Roots and Branches of the Herrfort/Herford Family - 1992

I watched carefully, and learned much from her, and recently a committee and I were able to put together and do the set-up of another book without much help from Lorraine. This book entitled, *Minnesota Meanderings*, is the story of the Amish Mennonite settlement in Nobles County, Minnesota to where my grandfather Menno Jantzi moved at 7 years of age.

Lorraine and I share another common ground. She has spent years in Central America on mission work. Our family has spent nearly 12 years in Ukraine in church planting, and with my wife and daughter we plan to return to Ukraine next week to pastor our church in the city of Chernovtsi. I have appreciated her support and letters when we served in the foreign field. She understood us.

I think there is a close connection between studying family history and church history. As I studied the history of my Amish Mennonite roots, which reached back into Europe, I could not help but learn about their faith in God, and how their faith guided their lives. As I study the lives of my ancestors, my own faith is enriched, as I observe the Bible principles they lived by. Lorraine's research and writings has helped me learn these things. In our work in Ukraine, one of my main aims is to help our dear Ukrainian people to find the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to live by the Bible principles that our Anabaptist forefathers also lived by. Had it not been for my previous studies I am not sure I could be passing on the Anabaptist vision to the Ukrainian people.

As a safeguard against a computer crash, Lorraine has given me a digital copy of her research of 100 or so Amish Mennonite names of families that have settled in this part of Ontario. With this information I have been able to help many people learn about their roots. Their responses to the information I give them is usually the same – they are overwhelmed with the vast amount of research that has been done by Lorraine, and made available to them. It is my desire and dream to see Lorraine's research to be published someday in book form.

A hearty thank-you to you, Lorraine, for your work of research, for teaching me so much, and the enrichment you have brought to our community. Words are insufficient to express what I wish to say at a time like this. To name a Reading Room at Conrad Grebel College after you, is but a small honour for what your work has contributed to us all. I wish God's richest blessing and rewards upon you.