

Ancestral tug lures her to tracing genealogy

By MIKE SCANLON

Sandy Olson makes the Daughters of the American Revolution look like young whippersnappers.

The venerable DAR only requires proof of your bloodline back to the Revolutionary War. Mrs. Olson knows who her ancestors were back to 1510. They lived in Holland then, and in 1630 moved to what we newcomers call the United States. Her husband Ole's family is known to 1730 in Sweden.

Not that she considers that anything remarkable — "some people have traced their lines back to Adam," she said.

A member of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Mrs. Olson is a Mormon whose faith encourages her to trace her ancestors. And since she runs a Ford Road store specializing in giving you a boost up your family tree, you might say she practices what she preaches.

"ALL GENEALOGISTS feel a special tie to their ancestors," said Mrs. Olson. "They're the kind of people I feel warm around, and they're the kind of people I trust. There's a spiritual aspect for everyone, no matter what faith they are."

As a Mormon, Mrs. Olson believes in an "eternal family." That really isn't much different from the beliefs of

other Christians, except Mormons also believe they will help their ancestors' chances in paradise with "baptism for the dead."

But to baptize great-grandpa, you first have to find out who he was — which sometimes is not as easy as it sounds.

"On my maiden name, it took me seven years to get out of Michigan," said Mrs. Olson. "I had a brick wall. It just takes perseverance."

If you're a lazy sort with an idle curiosity, don't bother trying to hire Mrs. Olson's perseverance.

Mrs. Olson sells books and offers helpful hints. "We don't always have the answers, but we know how to send you where to go to get it," she said, mentioning specifically the Detroit libraries' Burton Historical Collection, state archives at Lansing, and the Mormon archives in Utah, "one of the largest repositories in the world."

The Mormons keep the records because they don't really trust anybody else to do it.

"THE BRITISH had to burn at least one courthouse in every American county," she said. When that happened, the records went up in smoke while the bureaucrats went elsewhere.

And now, some tips from the pro.

"Years ago, the best source in town was the newspaper, because if you bought a pair of shoes, it was in there. It was their way to communicate between small towns," she said.

Cemeteries, because tombstones carry birth and death dates, are also good sources of information, said Mrs. Olson. Be forewarned, though — there are plenty of cemetery records that the British or somebody else put to the torch.

Mrs. Olson has also had success deal-

ing with stonecutters who make headstones. One of them, in a small Ohio town, was able to put her in touch with two sisters in their 90s who were related to Mrs. Olson.

"I always wanted to see what my great-grandfather, Levi Clark, looked like," said Mrs. Olson. "One of them just opened up a photo album and pointed at a picture and said, 'But my dear, he was just an ordinary man.'"

THE SISTERS also had 100-year old

pictures of many of Mrs. Olsons' other ancestors.

Of course, there are also government files tracing birth, marriage and death. In the trade, they are called "vital records."

Language is often a problem. Mrs. Olson had to hire a professional genealogist to finish tracing her husbands' family because she had difficulty with the 250-year old Swedish used in the

records. "What she did in an hour I wouldn't have done in a whole day," she said with a touch of professional admiration.

Not to say that genealogy doesn't hold the promise of some nasty forebears, although Mrs. Olson doesn't think trying to find them is much of a motive for a genealogist, "not unless you're from the Jesse James family."

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L.R., Plymouth

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stones. Does diet influence their formation?

F.S., Dearborn

Dear F.S.:

It depends on the mineral composition of the calculi (stones). There are very few types of calculi that are directly caused by diet. The large majority are made up of triple phosphate crystals and are almost always the result of long-standing infection in the urinary tract. Diet can play a small role in their formation since these crystals tend to precipitate easier in an alkaline urine. Increasing the dog's water intake and allowing him or her more frequent opportunities to void urine can both help to prevent recurrence, no matter what the type.

The Southeastern Michigan Veterinary Medical Association welcomes questions from readers. While each one cannot be answered individually, questions of general interest will appear in this column. Write to: ALL ABOUT ANIMALS, S.E.M.V.M.A., P.O. Box 688, Plymouth, Michigan 48170.

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