

## LESSONS LEARNT FROM RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

1. **Be observant, pushy, precise and systematic. OOPS!**
2. **Work from yourself back up the family tree but be prepared to work laterally when you hit a wall.**
3. **Carry your pedigree and research to-do list with you when on holiday – you may need it.**
4. **Do not pay for certificates unless you have to, someone in the family may already have the certificate. A variation on this is to let your mother-in-law pay.**
5. **Don't believe everything you are told – confirm the information with evidence from several official sources if possible.**
6. **Names have a variety of spellings and it is important to check the variations. Many of the population of interest were illiterate and did not know the spelling of their names and those recording wrote what they heard.**
7. **Don't believe all the information from official sources. Death certificates are least reliable, (the person who knew most is dead), marriage certificates are a little better, and birth certificates are more reliable, but, one in 6 children may not be assigned to the correct biological father, *and* informants *do* lie. And censuses have errors. Even headstones may be wrong.**
8. **Don't believe everything that professional researchers tell you. Check, Check, Check!**
9. **Contact all the living you can first, the dead are not going anywhere and by the time you look for them, more records will be available. Advertise in local papers.**
10. **Use the electoral rolls and telephone directories and internet, facebook and email to contact possible relatives. Ring, write and be persistent. Where possible, visit the oldies in person.**
11. **Network, Network, Network. There is probably someone in the family who has already done some of the hard slog. Talk to as many people as you can about your interest, before you buy certificates and spend hours repeating research that others have already done. Check the Net, but don't take it as gospel. Like minded people can advise of other resources that you may not have accessed.**
12. **Cruise or free wheel when researching, you can turn up unexpected information in unlikely places. Read everything. Google the name.**
13. **Be prepared for strange occurrences, scandals and shocks.**
14. **Reimburse family for photocopying, copies of photos etc unless you come to a reciprocal arrangement.**
15. **Have an organized system of keeping records and labeling photos that others can also follow, for when you are gone.**
16. **Write everything down, even your sources with dates etc.**
17. **Carry a camera everywhere, you don't know when you will need it.**
18. **DNA testing can reveal shared matches which may confirm your paper trail of research, or conversely open a can of worms.**
19. **Be sensitive to others values. People may be upset about illegitimate children, shotgun marriages and lost infants.**

20. **Have your research duplicate records backed up and filed in several places in case of computer meltdown or fire. All those years of work are valuable.**