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Dons-Blædel, Betty Edith

Af Betty Edith Dons-Blædel
& Kenneth Arturo Marlow Araujo

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Dear Ania,

Our interest in genealogy, researching who our elderly have been and what they have done, the problems they faced and how they resolved them must be common to most of whom dare to publish a tree, starting with their parents and grandparents, and continuing far back as they can.

Probably involves a desire for identity, of belonging, that today is exacerbated by the speed changes take place, cosmopolitanism prevails in society in general. The mass of human beings.

Aristotle in his "politics" was saying that humans are social animals. In fact, today we live in cities, like cattle or flocks, without identity. Whoever we are, we have the feeling that there are thousands like us, and we have the feeling of fading into a gray background. Gray by the speed with our lives run.

Just a couple of centuries ago, people moves very little, the families knew each other, and were united by family bonds, religious beliefs and shared lands. This provided them identity, a sense of "being in the world" that has now disappeared.

This has nothing to do with the sense of the traditional family tree, where the ancestors were understood as surety and patent of being "somebody's child ". According to this in Spanish was originated the word "hidalgo" (gentleman), where past glories (real or invented) lent the necessary patina of being "socially acceptable."

The nowadays boom observed in the creation of family trees was made possible by the Web and the Internet, added to the personal computer. And now allows a large number of people to research, find family members, and share documents and images all throughout the world. These are the tools which have democratized the genealogy and become a favourite amusement for many older people, who do not want to disappear without a trace of their presence, and placing on theirs tree, all the family memories, as a legacy to the future.

A very strong impulse to preserve the memory of their elders is quite common in families that for one reason or one other, they had to leave the ancestral homeland and move to other places, another continent, other habits, other faiths.

We believe, Betty and I, which the increasing of family trees creation, occurs mainly in countries that received a strong immigration, mainly the Americas and Oceania. Although if a family moved "in totum" to another continent, the sense of rootedness was strongly as well. They had left the climate, the landscape, the mode of being. Even they must acquire the new customs very quickly, yet without time enough to assimilating them entirely. This created a kind of "homesick" or "Morrinha", sadness or melancholy for the life left behind.

The creation of a tree, in somewhat strange but effective way, brings back to life that atmosphere, that the descendants did not know directly, but absorbed it during childhood, from our parents and grandparents.

In our case, these are mainly the reasons for our work:

Betty's father born in the village of Ferreyra, Córdoba, Argentina, but his father and mother were born in Denmark, and immigrated to Argentina when they were adults. He came first, and once he was established, they married by proxy in Denmark, and then she travelled abroad to join her husband. It was a time now lost, when Argentina was one of the most prosperous and progressive countries in the world, and welcomed with interest the contribution of people from all Europe.

Betty's mother came at the age of 3, from Switzerland, with her parents. Her father was a native of Colmar, Alsace, where he happened to be born as a German, serviced his military conscription in the Germany army (with its typical helmet with spike) and then had to become a French citizen, according to the new border treaties. He went to Switzerland and in Basel met his bride, whose parents were from Swiss.

In my case, my father emigrated from Australia in 1909 in the arms of his mother, with two slightly older brothers, along with my grandfather in law, to establish a field establishment ("Estancia") in Argentina. They were cheated by the nephew of a prominent family of Marine Brokers of British origin, practically as they got off the boat. This man sold them a quiet extended field, in Pigüé, in the province of Buenos Aires, and disappeared before it was discovered that he had forged all the papers and was not his field. Having lost all their capital my grandfather in law and my grandmother had to restart his life more painfully than they had imagined. My grandfather got a job in a British company that manufactured farm machines due to his native language and knowledge of farm machinery. These were beginning to be a boom in the country and thanks to it; he could give his family the education needed to recuperate, as adults, the economic level they had lost.

Through my mother, belong to families whose heads came to the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata, to occupy seats in the colonial government, and in the country, married creole descendants in some cases, the first settlers of the second foundation Buenos Aires, by Juan de Garay in 1580.

I am a passionate of history and old books so in my youth I collected some data and stories from my mother's family, whose ancestors were witnesses and in some cases actors, of the creation of this new country, Argentina, Therefore I felt very romantic and heroic about it. I had also felt a strong curiosity about my father's family in Australia, whose ties were cut, due to distance and communication difficulties during the last century with a country from the antipodes. A month ago, one of the interesting Smart Matches sent by My Heritage happen ¡ At last! That we could make contact with the wife, of a second nephew of mine, in fourth generation, of my father's side in Australia.

Currently, we are updating our respective trees with family members that we were missing.

Another Smart Match, contacted me with Manuel Augusto Araujo, with whom I have not exchange letters yet, but I guess he is a descendant of one of the three brothers Araujo (or Araújo, a in Galician way) who reached the Rio de la Plata during the reign of Spanish King Charles III because the creation of the viceroyalty between 1776 and 1782, to hold public office in the Municipalities, created by Charles III for a more effective state oversight and lessen the importance of the councils. Two of the brothers went to Buenos Aires and the third went to Corrientes and Brazil.

Our work in the family tree (Betty and mine), began at first fulfilling a wish from Betty's paternal grandmother and grandfather, who had strong family ties with his brothers and brothers in law who had remained in Denmark. He had received from his family a book, a edition of "Slægten Blædel 1954- Den Bog" originally published in 1908 and kept updated until 1954, He died at 98 years old, the 14th December, 1955, a year after the last update.

The first member of the Dons Blædel family who immigrated to Argentina was not him, but his brother Paul, who after a dangerous experience in Patagonia, alone with his young wife and first child, returned to Buenos Aires where they took up residence. This Paul "translated" his surname into Spanish, eliminating the original "æ", transforming it into the sound in Spanish more similar, an "e". He also left the compound surname Dons-Blædel - changing it to Bledel. So this generated in Argentina a large and prominent family Bledel, of the same origin.

As years passed, we lost contact with Denmark and our lives took different channels. Newlyweds, Betty and I tried their luck in Mexico City, where our first two daughters were born. The death of our first girl at the aged of 20 months, caused by a malpractice, rushed our back to Argentina, trying to find comfort with our families. In Argentina we both work, Betty in her career as a teacher, and I in an industrial company, in the engineering department the first ten years and administrative positions the rest of the 36 years always in the same company.

When both Betty and I retired in 1995, I started writing, and in 1998, fulfilling a desire of Betty, we began to pass her family tree to a family genealogy site. This Site was sold in February 2010 to our current provider: My Heritage.com.

Simultaneously I had begun to pass the book into Internet compatible formats such as .PDF and .txt crowning this task in December 2008. Currently, for concerned family members, there are ways to download a free "Blædel Slægten 1954 - Den Bog", in .PDF Adobe.

Once we finish the copy of the data of the "Slægten Blædel" in the tree, we add our children and continue with my parents, and so on....now up to more than 1700 people. At the time I am writing these lines, our tree has much more than 1800 people, thanks to the inputs from our relatives in Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. We have not yet contact and update families residing in Denmark, Norway and USA. who will surely add new branches to the original tree.

Several relatives have only fractions of the tree, (their close ancestors plus children and grandchildren). I have struggled (and still costs me great job of argument) to convince the more reluctant to understand that a family is a great social web, and its beauty and

practicality, is not in following only one branch until we find a predecessor of historical significance to be proud of, (vain glory), but in finding and representing all the members related to a genetic line, and its ramifications confluent and effluents. In other words, multiple trees in only one big family.

I think it is really important the philosophical and anthropological value of this,

As we want the tree set up in this way, succeed, remains in time and not break up again into saplings of 15 people, it was necessary to appoint several Administrators from the different families belonging to different branches, which assist in keeping update the tree, and eventually delegate this work on a successor. I explained to the support staff from My Heritage, the importance of allowing several administrators in a tree, because if you duplicate the original tree in as many trees as managers are, their task is not reflected automatically in the others. On the contrary, they become large trees, but private, and for our purpose, clear above, it is catastrophic.

One reason is that individual efforts are often sporadic; life itself is responsible for eliminating some, and the work of those who grow it at the time, would be to register these disappearances, until a son or grandson of the branch in question, feel the need again to return to work, adding new members. In this way we can keep the tree alive, always growing and expecting new discoveries that could extend their roots beyond the first existing members.

Ultimately, this way of creating and maintaining a family tree as a collective work, fulfills a sense of social and historical democracy. Formerly, a family tree had a strong element of elitism, and a sense of social superiority. Today, thanks to the Web and technology tools that My Heritage.com and similar organizations offer to ordinary people, we firmly believe that along of generations, different factors such as geography, personal fate, and many other exogenous events in the life of the people, by modifying the different sections and temporary layers of this web, it would show extremely varied and interesting aspects in time and space.

Our hope is that works like this will be useful in the future, to specialists in social science, anthropology and history, throwing new light and setting new parameters on the phenomenon of humanity. We hope this can help to finally achieve peace between all people.

Furthermore, and this is very important, a tree big enough, no doubt will cover a broad variety of genetic backgrounds, and if we could see it clearly in our tree, that we have worldwide ancestors or descendants, Asian, African, Middle Eastern or other origins, then the concept of "racial purity" that so much damaged made in the thirties of last century. And so has affected before and continues to damage even now, the brotherhood of the peoples worldwide (or to simplify and eliminate political factors among nations, who exploit this itch including nationalism) .

Finally, we want to thanks My Heritage.com the opportunity of using your organization to find and establish contact with relatives from family areas that otherwise would have remained unknown.

Betty Edith Dons-Blædel --- Kenneth Arthur Marlow Araujo