



# Research Committee Annual Report July 2005

Submitted by

Gene Pennington, Research Director

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## **Introduction**

***"As genealogists we work in the present, studying the past to share in the future. How we do it today will be tested by our descendants tomorrow."***<sup>1</sup>

It seems that our Board just can't escape personal challenges which make us work even harder to try and meet our goals and objectives. I commented in my report last year that "It is my hope that we don't see any more years like this past one again". Well, we came close. While we didn't loose any Board members, many of us, or our spouses, battled cancer, faced major health challenges and personal financial hardships and even dog maulings!

Once again, our Pennington Research Association members showed their strengths and character. They willingly accepted the challenges facing us and have worked very hard to help us meet our stated goals and objectives.

My hat is off to all of you and I want to thank all of the members of the Board for staying the course. We have made some very significant gains towards realizing our mission, goals and objectives and this would not have been possible without the Board's leadership.

The DNA Study continues to amaze us with new findings and has helped us to look again at the relationships between some of our existing Family Groups. While we had hoped to use our DNA Study to bolster traditional genealogical research to foster the merger of several of our Family Groups, we have not been able to do so. However, as a result of this effort, many people are working hard to record and share their research efforts with other researchers. Until now much of this research was held by individuals or remained in local libraries or archives.

We completed a full year of operation for the website for the John French Master File (JFMF). We started off 2004 with almost all of our members joining, but in 2005 those numbers are down significantly. We are discussing the possibility of allowing all PRA members to have the same access rights as the Group Leaders. That change, if approved, along with some other ideas are being discussed now.

This report reflects the abilities and qualities of the members of the Research Committee. Without their skills, tireless efforts, dedication and concern for the PRA, none of our successes would have been achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from John Vincent Wylie, Professional Genealogist in an article written in *Everton's Genealogical Helper*, July/August 1998, page 223.

I want to mention the hard work and dedication by our Assistant Research Directors, the Chairman of the DNA Committee and our Obituary Database Editor. We were fortunate to find a volunteer to manage the BPIP and I'm excited about the stated goals this year. The PRA is blessed to have such an outstanding Team.

- Carmen Johnson -- Responsible for the John French Master File (JFMF) and our PRA Members only website on MyFamily.com. Carmen is also the Group Leader for Group 7.
- Rene'e Davis -- Responsible for our Family Groups and Group Leaders. Rene'e is also the Group Leader for Group 9 and the Treasurer/CFO for the Pennington Research Association, Inc.
- Guye Pennington – Responsible for our Bobby Pennington Index Project
- Nick Pennington – Chairman of the DNA Committee. Nick is also the Group Leader for Group 33.
- Margaret E. Wood - Obituary Database Editor

## **Projects**

The Research Committee made significant progress this past year. The major projects we worked on this past year and their status are:

- Maintain the PRA website – On-Going
- Bobby Pennington Index Project (BPIP) – This important project has started again thanks to our new ARD, Guye Pennington. See BPIP section for details.
- Pennington Pedigrees Indexing CD Project – This important project has started again thanks to our new ARD, Guye Pennington. See BPIP section for details.
- DNA Study – We're preparing for the next phase. We continue to add more volunteers and retesting for additional markers – On-Going
- Operate the website for the John French Master File (JFMF) and monitor how it is utilized by our Group Leaders and members. – On-Going

These projects are listed by their priority. They were assigned these priorities based on discussions with the Board, the Research Committee and what I thought must be completed in order to accomplish our primary goals and objectives.

## **Noteworthy Accomplishments**

- We started working on the Bobby Pennington Index Project (BPIP) recently. We asked for volunteers and Guye Pennington responded to our plea for help. After exchanging information with him and talking with him on the phone, he agreed to accept responsibility for managing the BPIP and was recently appointed as the ARD (Assistant Research Director) responsible for the BPIP.
- Communications with members and other researchers continued to improve and we will continue to work hard to focus on this important goal. For the sixth year in a row there was an increase in the number of queries and general e-mail messages. We did try to hold on-line meetings with Group Leaders and members on our new website for the JFMF but this was dropped again due to a lack of interest. It would appear that the technology is a problem and the timing of the "chats" is probably the main obstacles. I hope in the future we can take advantage of this technology as I still see it as being a very valuable tool.
- Collection of genealogical information from new members and other researchers has improved. Since July 2004, I have collected 14 reports and/or gedcom files. All of the reports have been forwarded to the Editor of the Pedigrees to be published, if I received the author's consent to publish. All of the reports and/or gedcom files have been placed on the PRA Members only website, if I received the author's consent to publish.
- Our main website ([www.PenningtonResearch.org](http://www.PenningtonResearch.org)) continues to grow and improve. We have received a number of positive comments and suggestions to improve it. We continue to add new features and information to the website. We reached a milestone this year with an average page hits per month of 158,459 (compared to last year's average of 129,755)! Our highest month for this reporting period was March with 190,318 page hits (compared to last year's high of 187,255)!
- We successfully operated our PRA Members only website on [www.MyFamily.com](http://www.MyFamily.com). There are all types of family history reports, gedcom files, miscellaneous files and information on the new website. The website is available to all PRA members. Group Leaders can now work directly on their Group's gedcom (Family Tree) and make changes/additions/deletions on their file without having to go through our petition process. This was another major goal for the website and we have achieved it!

- Hundreds of new and returning PRA members were sent "Welcome to the Pennington Research Association" and "New Member Process" messages via e-mail or a letter by U.S. Postal Service. This follow up, combined with the new member material sent by our Membership Chair, Barbara Pennington, continues to be a tremendous success. I receive positive comments regularly from new members and in some cases they have become Family Group Leaders. This process has greatly enhanced our ability to reach out to new and returning members and has helped us meet our primary goal of providing value to our members.
- DNA Study – We have completed Phase II and published two (2) updated Phase II reports and several updated DNA charts by Nick Pennington, DNA Chairman.

## **DNA Committee Report**

### ***Progress Report for the DNA Study (June 2004-June 2005)***

In the period 06/30/04 to the present date 14 Pen(n)ingtons have signed up for the DNA Study, which is about the rate that we have been gaining participants over the last couple of years, but four less than last year. The DNA bank account which is comprised principally of donation money from PRA members stands at \$632.30 as of 5-16-05.

In this time period the PRA account has expended \$59 for three members of the study totaling \$177 (the money was spent on participant UK1 and a member of groups 5 and 14 to expand their marker number from 25 to 37). This was done to address an interesting similarity between these members of the study and two individuals with the Radcliffe surname.

I should point out here that all Radcliffes have paid for their own testing. The two Radcliffes had independently upgraded their sequences to 37 markers. The hypothesis behind this investigation is that there is a known connection between a Hugh de Radcliffe who married a Margery de Pinington in 1220 whereupon their sons took the surname Pennington. Thus some present day Penningtons could match some Radcliffes. Recently, a member of the same lineage as Hugh de Radcliffe and now head of an aristocratic branch of the Radclyffe family in England took the DNA test and matched very closely these three Pennington individuals (22 and 23/25 and 30/37). Given that there have been about 60 opportunities for a mutation to occur in the 780 intervening years we would expect to see about 3.8 mutations with 25 markers and 5.6 with 37 markers. Since the final panel of 12 markers seem to mutate at a faster rate than the first two panels this result suggests that indeed the DNA does not rule this theory out and perhaps even supports it!

A couple of years ago we set aside \$1000 from our DNA fund to test 10 Penningtons from the UK who had interesting lineages. This year the PRA expended \$99 to pay for the first 12 markers for another British Pennington. This individual paid for the remaining 13 markers to bring the sequence up to the required 25 markers. As it turned out this Pennington did not match any yet tested in our study.

What have we learned in the last twelve months from the DNA Study? I think quite a lot. Of the remaining individuals not yet discussed, whose results are back, we found that 6 of them fell into PRA groups quite nicely (some expected this and some had no idea where they would fit). The useful thing is that some had good paper trails that help us to identify the sequence that goes with the PRA Group. This was particularly true for Group 7. One Pennington tested has a paper trail to Micajah the progenitor of Group 7 and he matched perfectly a group of 11 Pennington men from Groups 4, 7, 20, 30 and 31. Another Group 7 individual only learned that his ancestors were Group 7 indirectly through the help of the JFMF and his perfect DNA match with this group of 11 men. Groups 6, 10, 28 and 33 all gained DNA matches this year, some knew they should match and others had no idea of their heritage.

This year there was some confusion about exactly where Group 26 fits in the DNA study. A sequence obtained early on from an individual who thought he was Group 26 (but was not too sure) placed him in a group with Groups 9, 19 and 29. Then another individual was tested who was very sure he was Group 26 but he did not match anyone! This caused great confusion. Then it became clear that this later person was indeed a member of Group 26 but through a maternal Pennington connection (and not their paternal Pennington line) so the Y chromosome DNA probably did not represent Group 26. The problem appeared to be solved when some DNA results, obtained for free by a Pennington who was tested with the Sorenson Foundation, were contributed to our study. This private foundation has a project that attempts to test 100,000 individuals and collect their family trees. This individual gave us his family tree which showed that he was from Group 26, a descendent of Wheeler Pennington. He matched individuals from Groups 9, 19 and 29 and the person who originally thought he was from Group 26. This should be a great help to the genealogy of these four groups as all of these Groups look as if they followed the same migratory path over time. The great thing about running this study for me is that you never know when a very important piece of the puzzle will fall into our laps and solve a major mystery in the genealogy of the Penningtons.

Nicholas J. Pennington Ph.D.  
DNA study coordinator  
PRA Group 33 leader.

## **Websites**

We operated our PRA Members only website hosted by MyFamily.com for the entire year. The website is moderately successful and it needs to be improved. Likewise, our members should take more advantage of its' features and we need to find ways to better inform them of all of its' features and how to use them.

The website is located on [www.MyFamily.com](http://www.MyFamily.com) and is used by PRA members. Only Family Group Leaders are able to change/delete certain information on the website and some Group Leaders have posted material this year. We are discussing the possibility of giving all PRA members the same access rights so they can add/change/delete information on the website just like the Group Leaders.

I post new family history reports, family trees (gedcom files), news and other genealogical material on the website for our members to use in their research.

A brief examination of our members shows that while we have about 117 "registered" members on the MyFamily.com website, about 45 have not visited since April, 2005. Some of those are Board Members or Group Leaders.

I have no explanation as to why many of our Group Leaders do not seem to be adding/changing anything to the Family Trees and/or files. There are some Group Leaders (notably Carmen, Rene'e and Jim) who are contributing to the website but the majority of our Group Leaders do not appear to have worked on their Family Trees and/or added anything to the file cabinet section.

I find this trend most troubling, especially since the 2 main purposes for creating the new website was to give our members direct access to the JFMF and to allow the Group Leaders to work directly on their Family Trees and to easily add reports, communicate with their Group members, etc.

I am really starting to wonder if the website on MyFamily.com is worth the time, effort and expense (even though it is a very small expense).

Last year I said there is a strong possibility that if this trend continues I will recommend to the Board that we no longer support the PRA Members only website hosted by MyFamily.com. The amount of time, effort and expense it takes to operate this website may not be worth it when we have such a low participation rate. While the downward trend has continued, I am not prepared this year to recommend to the Board that we drop the website on MyFamily.com.

While I can say that both our websites have been very successful and they have helped us to meet a couple of our major goals, I am concerned about

the future of the PRA Members only website on MyFamily.com. Participation by our Group Leaders and members has dropped off and we do not know all the reason/s even though an informal survey by Rene'e Davis did provide us with some excellent insight into some problems. We'll be studying these issues in depth as the year moves forward.

We still receive hundreds of queries submitted to our website. We save all queries submitted to us via the forms on our website and post them on our website. Likewise, any replies are posted on our website.

We save each month's queries and replies and made them available to the Editor of the Pedigrees who publishes them in the Pedigrees.

A big problem surfaced this year with our mail server on Interland for PenningtonResearch.org. We had created many e-mail "alias" addresses for our Board, Officers and some Chair positions. However, those addresses were "harvested" by web "crawlers" or "spiders" and have been used to send out viruses to thousands of others. We had to remove all but one or two of the e-mail "alias" addresses but now our e-mail server has been used extensively in what is known as a "Phishing" scams.

I'm working very hard to minimize the problems but this is going to be a long drawn out fight. I'll keep the Board informed of my progress. In the meantime, I will not issue any e-mail "alias" addresses.

While we have implemented several ways to use our websites, we must continue to explore new ways to provide on-line access to the information the PRA has such as the Pedigree and Courier and their indexes. Each of these data sources has tremendous value to our members and other researchers.

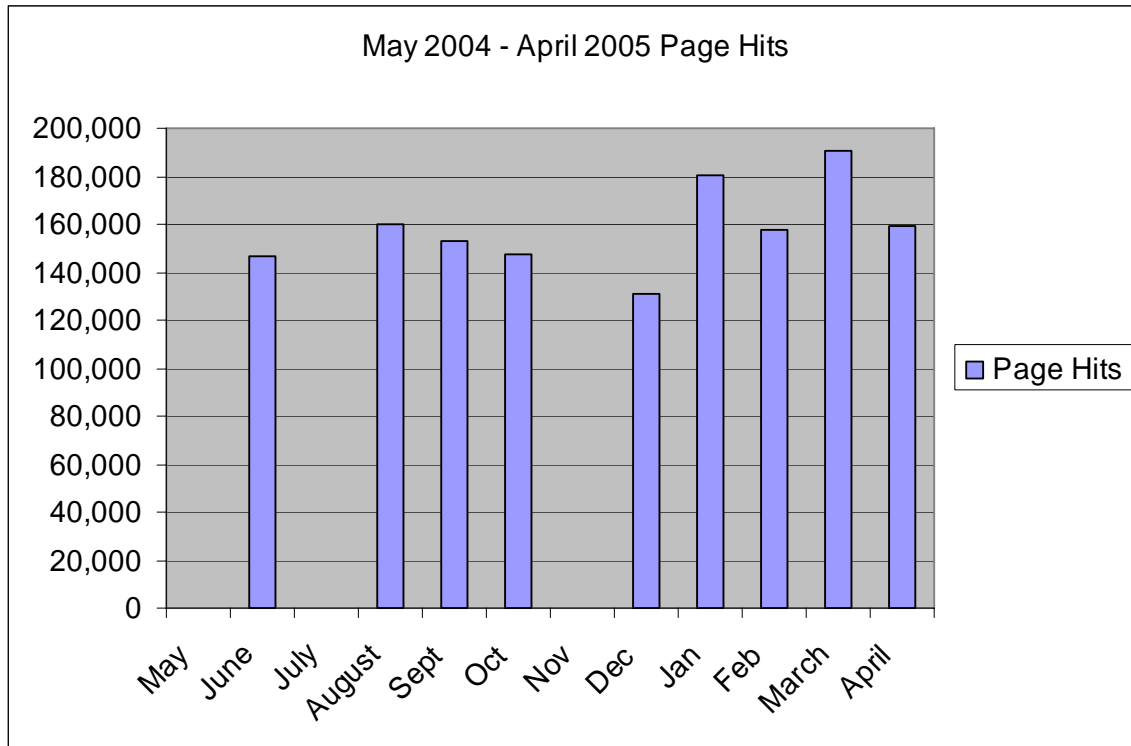
Remember that the futures of the websites are limited only by our imagination.

Below is a chart summarizing the number of page hits our website has experienced between May 2004 and April 2005.

We hit a new record of 190,318 page hits in March 2005. That's an incredible achievement when you think of how far we've come since we started our website.

When reviewing these numbers, remember that these are PER MONTH! The website average is 158,459 page hits per month (for the 9 months we have data) as compared to an average of 129,755 page hits per month for the same time period last year.

There were three (3) months without data for some technical reason that our web presence provided can't explain and unfortunately, there is no way to go back in time to retrieve them.



## **Mail List**

The Pennington Research Association's mail list was more active in 2005 than previous years. I believe this is due to some diligent work by some of our Board and Research Committee members who have posted interesting items on the list often. However, we must not give up our quest to make better use of our mail list. This is another example of how the PRA provides tools and methods to help our members but they are not used very much. I suggested last year that we might consider dropping it from those things the PRA operates, however, given the level of activity this past year, I think we should keep the list working and continue to monitor it and I'll report to the Board next year and make any recommendations at that time.

I want to stress, once again, that our Board, Staff and Research Committee members should set the example by using the mail list more for communications and research exchanges.

As of May 16, 2005, there were 132 subscribers to PRA-L (normal mode) and 49 subscribers to PRA-D (digest mode) for a total of 181 subscribers.

The purpose of the PRA mail list is:

1. To provide information for researchers of the Pennington surname;
2. To provide general information such as announcements, research tips and resources and;
3. To provide an easy method for PRA members to communicate with each other;
4. A discussion list for research and;
5. To provide a source for queries and answers to queries for the editor of the Pedigrees should he/she choose to use them.

## **Message Boards**

Ancestry.com and Genealogy.com

In addition to the mailing lists, genealogy message boards continue to play a major role in genealogy research. We have seen continued growth on the Pennington message boards hosted by Ancestry.com and Genealogy.com.

On Ancestry.com, the boards include wills, pensions, queries, obituaries, births, cemeteries, census, deed, immigration, marriage, bible and biography. This board is operated by the PRA and Margaret Woods, Obituary Database Editor, posts to this board when information is sent to her. Operation of this board has helped the PRA to meet its mission.

On Genealogy.com's surname message board several messages have been posted by PRA members. This is a busy genealogy surname message board. This board is not operated by the PRA and anybody can post to the message board.

I encourage the Board, Staff, Research Committee and all Pennington researchers to utilize both message boards to help with their research and communication with other Pennington researchers.

## **BPIP (Bobby Pennington Indexing Project)**

This very important project is back on track again thanks to our new ARD responsible for the BPIP, Guye Pennington.

Specific goals for the BPIP are:

- Scan the remaining Pedigrees issues from where Bobby Pennington left off through 2004
- Create indexes for each of those new scanned issues
- Update the BPIP index database through 2004
- Update the BPIP program software (and install instructions) and explore the option of converting the database to MS Access and build

- other search capabilities using MS Access rather than dBase version 5.0 that BPIP now uses.
- Convert all MS Word files of the Pedigrees and Couriers through 2004 to Adobe Acrobat format (pdf)
  - Create a CD which will contain the BPIP program, installation instructions and Adobe Acrobat format (pdf) copies of all of the Pedigrees and Couriers through 2004
  - Place the BPIP program, installation instructions and Adobe Acrobat format (pdf) copies of all of the Pedigrees and Couriers through 2004 on the PRA's members only website.

This will allow us to both sell and/or distribute the BPIP program with indexes through 2004 to researchers and PRA members.

As you can see, the BPIP is a very complicated project. However, we believe, and the Board agrees, that it has great potential for our members and other researchers. Further, we will bring it current and find some method to make it available on a CD and on a website.

Guye Pennington has set his goals for the BPIP which are consistent with the Board's goals.

- To create a CD-ROM that is searchable.
- The CD-ROM will have all the back issues of Pennington Pedigrees and Pennington Cousins Couriers on it.
- Convert the current platform for the project to a combination of Microsoft Word, Access, and Adobe Acrobat Reader for the various storage and retrieval issues.

Guye adds that with his familiarity with the proposed software it will help make the conversion a smooth process. In addition, Guye states it is a good bet virtually everyone in the PRA either has Microsoft Word, and Access and Adobe Reader on their home computer, and if not, they likely have access to Microsoft or Adobe products at work or through a public library. Thus, the CD would be more user-friendly.

I have scanned many of the previous issues of the Pedigrees and Couriers and have saved them in Adobe Acrobat format (pdf) so some of the work has been completed. I have also scanned several issues of the original "Pennington Lending Files" that were the very first publications of the Pennington Research Association.

As the BPIP moves forward, we will refine and publish the procedures that will be needed to manage the BPIP given today's requirements and concerns for privacy and copyrights.

The BPIP will be the focus of the Research Committee again this year.

## **JFMF**

Carmen Johnson, Group Leader for Group 7, is our Assistant Research Director (ARD) responsible for the JFMF and our member's only website hosted by MyFamily.com. Carmen has worked very hard to establish communications with all of our members to help them obtain access to the website and to understand how to utilize all its' functions.

She has been successful with her efforts and she is to be congratulated on her accomplishments.

We continued forward with the major changes implemented in 2003 on how we work with the John French Master File (JFMF) after they were approved by the Board. The two changes are:

- A new purpose statement: The JFMF is a working database for research purposes -- not a database that we will try to keep as up to date and as accurate as possible.
- The JFMF will be placed on the MyFamily.com website and made available to PRA members only.

Our member's only website has been in operation for two (2) years now and it continues to by my hope that it will help us to resolve some of the major concerns with the JFMF that have been identified in the past. The most important features are the ability for our Group Leaders to add gedcom files directly to the website and to modify them once posted.

Additional Features are:

- The website allows a member to search any of the gedcom files
- The website allows a member to print Family History reports.
- The website has a built in "chat" feature that allows members to have "chats" at any time with each other on the Internet.
- The website contains digital images of genealogical material such as deeds, wills, census records, Family History reports and photographs.
- The website has a calendar for us to post important events
- The website has a "News" section where we post important news

I pointed out last year that it is very important that our Group Leaders participate frequently on this website. This year we did see good participation by some Group Leaders, but over all the Group Leader's participation has not been as high as we had hoped. Some of our Group Leaders are active on the website but the lack of postings by most of the Group Leaders leaves us with the impression that they are not interested. The majority do not use the many features available for them to share genealogical information and to communicate with their Group members.

Despite our best intentions, and the specific direction from the Board to “fix” the problem for the past three (3) years, we have not yet found a total solution to this problem.

To ensure the Group Leader’s participation, the Board, for the past three (3) years agreed that should a problem develop or if the Group Leaders do not participate, the Group Leaders will be notified of their lack of participation and asked to get more involved and be more active.

This year several “Guests” and “Users” (Group Leaders) were removed as authorized “Guests” or “Users” from the PRA member’s only website on MyFamily.com because they were not active for several months the later part of 2004 or early 2005 (total of six (6) months of inactivity). We sent e-mail messages to all our members (and Group Leaders) informing them they would be removed as “Users” or “Guests” if they did not login to the website or renew their 2005 PRA membership. We also posted the announcement on the PRA-L mail list.

To date, I have not been contacted by any of them. This tells me something about their interest and their perception of the value of the website and their role as a Group Leader.

Rene’e and Carmen and I have discussed this problem several times over the years and despite our best efforts, we have not devised a successful solution to the problem. I have asked Rene’e to contact the Group Leaders who are not living up to our expectations and to ask them to change or inform them they will be removed as a Group Leader. Unfortunately Rene’e has had many personal challenges this last year and she has not been able to follow up on this request, however, she could did conduct an informal survey asking for comments about how things were going. Please read her report for details.

If this next year is better for Rene’e, she and I will work on this problem and report to the Board as we move forward.

### ***JFMF Report***

By Carmen Johnson, Assistant Research Director for JFMF

During the past year we have had an increased amount of activity regarding the MyFamily site. Still not as much as I would like to see. We currently have about 100 members accessing the site. As before, the Group Leaders need to take a more active role, including myself. There has also been some misunderstanding about User Rights that have caused some problems. On the positive side, we have had several members post their family information through their Group Leaders or Gene or I on the site.

This needs to be encouraged more and perhaps the Group Leaders need further information on accomplishing this task. I would say that my goal for the coming year is to increase the activity and access on the MyFamily site and to encourage the Group Leaders to take a more active role in adding reports/pictures etc. to the site and communicating their research into the Family Groups on the website.

## **Family Groups**

Rene'e Davis, Group Leader for Group 9, is our Assistant Research Director (ARD) responsible for Family Groups. Rene'e continues to work very hard to establish communications with all of the Group Leaders and to stimulate discussions on a wide range of topics concerning Family Groups.

She has been successful with her efforts with many of the Group Leaders and she is to be congratulated on her accomplishments.

We continue to see some "detachment" from the PRA by some of our Group Leaders. There are a few Group Leaders who do not respond to e-mail messages and/or phone calls or contribute any research to the PRA Member's only website or share information with other researchers.

I hope that with the continued support of the Board and the active and interested Group Leaders we will see more activity by the Group Leaders.

With new DNA Study details being published recently and some much focused research by some Group Leaders, I believe we can expect to see merges of some of our Family Groups in the future.

### ***Group Leaders Report***

By Rene'e Davis, Assistant Research Director for Family Groups

The first thing I must do before getting to the heart of my report is to thank many of the dedicated PRA Members and some very significant others. The 'family ties' that exist in this genealogical organization has got to be envied by all others in cyberspace. I have been absent in all my duties a great deal since early September 2004 until just recently. They say – "when it rains – it pours". Excuse me, "I had FLOODS around here!"

Without the help of Gene Pennington, Carmen Johnson, Jim (NC) Pennington, Barbara Pennington, Barrie Petty, Dana Davis and Nick Pennington, Tom Hatcher, Guye Pennington; the welfare of the PRA could have been damaged. I had a number of volunteers to help during a tough time. I really appreciate each and every gesture of help and hope. I thank, Jay Williams (not YET a member) for his delightful expressions. His perfect timing and sense of humor helped get me through a difficult time. If I left anyone out, it was not intentional.

Despite my absence as ARD for Family Groups, we gained two New Members to the PRA. The Research Committee stepped up and took over in my place. I was not there to help the new members with the preparation or submitting of their family material. My PRA Cousins "took care of business – with style!" I was able to handle the personal tasks in front of me and was comforted knowing all of you "had my back". I thank you for your help!

Glancing at the Group Leaders Report from 2003, there is not a great deal of progress in the way of involvement of our Group Leaders. A few of the Group Leaders stepped up to the plate. We all benefit from the GL's activity. As a group, they have showed their persistence, professionalism and just plain old 'hard work' this last year. Whether it was Myfamily activity; submitting Gedcoms; group files vs. DNA; group merges; welcoming new group members or Pedigree publishing; The fact remains, the activity shown is being accomplished by the same few Group Leaders that have always stayed involved in the various aspects of the PRA. Those same few Group Leaders have worked their little hearts out. We did have an increase in Group Leaders attending the Reunion last year, which was wonderful.

This past year, I personally have been contacted by more people interested in the PRA which resulted in a few new members to the PRA. At the same time, I am contacted by members that are frustrated due to the lack of activity from a GL; or lack of follow-up on their PRA website query made into a specific Family Group.

I know the GL's responsibilities are time consuming and endless. I also have first hand knowledge of the detriment done to the PRA and the members when there is not activity by the Family Group Leader.

By the end of 2005, my personal goal as ARD for Family Groups is to: communicate with each GL and establish exactly what if any difficulties they have performing their responsibilities; Work to solve GL's mechanical problems on the Myfamily website; build a consensus as to whether the weak performance is mechanical or indifference and whether the problem can be overcome with assistance. It is my responsibility to see that the Group Leaders enjoy their responsibilities and dedicated to our members using the Guidelines the PRA established for the Group Leaders.

It is also a possibility, when I contact the GL's, they are afraid to complain or they think they might hurt someone's feelings. One thing is certain, we have crossed a huge threshold when we opened the family files to our members and we are taking the risk of losing them. We need more communications on both sides to master this problem.

Many of you remember the unofficial Poll I took last year from our Group Leaders. The purpose was to get feedback from around the PRA on a few of the subjects the PRA was working on last year. I am pleased to say some of

our GL's also shared their suggestions / remarks on some questions. The anonymous results are as follows: Out of the 23 Group Leaders with access to email, 19 responded in some way to the poll.

1. In general, how would you rate the MyFamily website (e.g. content, presentation, accessibility)?

Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Good 17 Fair 2 Poor \_\_\_\_\_

If, you rated fair or poor, please let me know what you would like to see changed.

**Remarks:**

Searching the Family trees takes forever to download, I gave up.  
Learning the software and moving around the website not user-friendly.

2. When entering data into your file on the MyFamily website, do you find the procedures user-friendly?

Yes 3 No 11

**Remarks:** Not enough time to learn software.

3. In your opinion, please check all that apply to you regarding the MyFamily website:

11 I have downloading problems (ISP)

3 I need help with understanding the program

15 I think the website is good for our members

Remark: Has great potential

9 I have no new data to enter

4 I have no time to enter data

5 Feedback from my group is good

**Remarks:** Good marks with what I have had time to enter

1 I am not interested in the new website

2 My group members are not interested in the website.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to go back to the petition process for changes to our group files

**Remarks:** I sure hope not

6 I have not asked or received feedback from my members on the website

**Remarks:** I remain hopeful our members will get accustomed to the website.

I think it is too early to tell.

I believe it has a future in the PRA.

4. If the PRA should make available the use of credit cards and/or PayPal (secure website) for membership renewals and Pedigree orders would you use this service?

Yes 7 No 11

5. As a Group Leader, are you (please check all that apply)  
15 100 % pleased with your role and responsibilities as Group Leader.

       In need of help with my duties

15 Having problems getting your group members involved

4 Enjoy your role but cannot dedicate as much time as I want.

Other comments: **None**

6. In your opinion, do you think the lack of activity on the MyFamily website by our members is due to:

       No interest

15 procedure problems, (log on etc.)

1 Other

**Remarks:** I have no clue.

Do you think it is too soon to make a decision on the inactivity by you or our members?

Yes 5 No       

7. We have tossed around the idea of having gift items such as tote bags, wall clocks, key chains, etc with the Pennington Crest displayed on them at very reasonable prices. Would you use this service?

Yes 7 No 5 Undecided 6

8. The PRA mailing list: (check what applies)

7 I think it is a good tool for all of us

1 I would rather communicate personally and not on the list.

**Remarks:** Some members have problems with what is in the file. I don't want to share what is said on the list.

       I don't see the need for it

11 I have not checked to see if my group members are subscribed to the list

       I am not subscribed to the mailing list

4 Use when there is a question for my Family Group.

9. As you know our membership numbers fluctuate. If you have lost any members in your family group, do you think the majority of members are leaving because of:

15 Personal problems

       Lack of interest

11 Moving on to other surnames

\_\_\_\_\_PRA guidelines for submitting information is too hard

2 Other, please explain:

I have no clue. I am in contact with many of my family group members on a regular basis, but none seem interested in joining the PRA.

I am guessing that what they are looking for is available to them without joining the Assn.

10. The Pedigree publication, do you think it is keeping the interest of our members?

Yes 9 No \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything you feel we could add to the publication to benefit our members?

**Remarks:** A suggestion, I think if we could find the time to have something published in the Pedigree by all the Group Leaders it would enrich the already excellent publication.

11. Our DNA Study, are you or your group members interested in the results of the ongoing study?

Yes 11 No \_\_\_\_\_

12. Should we return to the Petition Process for modifying our Group Files?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No 17

I was pleased with the response from our Group Leaders. The results are interesting. It does show this past year's changes by our Board and Officers to be a positive direction for the PRA. The creation of the MyFamily website; sharing of the JFMF along with Family Group files proved a success. Thanks to the difficult and time consuming work from Gene and Carmen. Also, without surprise, our Group Leaders are pleased the Petition Process is history. The move on the DNA Study is well received. All in all, it shows our Group Leader's agree we are headed in the right direction. It also reflects the need to polish some of the changes made. I thank all of them for participating in the poll.

Jim Pennington was recently appointed to be the Family Group 30 Leader. He has worked very hard on a possible merge with Group 31. He is not ready to make that final determination as yet. Like fine wine, it takes a while to cure.

Teresa Gorge has done a great job on the website for Family Group 6. It has a great presentation and documented the sources very well. Great Job! I am anxious to see Teresa and Colleen Schwanz, who published some good stuff on the Beeson family in PP #36-2.

Ric Blake, in spite of his very serious illness, continues to produce material for Group 26. He has produced a new manuscript, "The Descendants of William & Elizabeth Pennington of Monroe Cty, WV." The book is loaded with new information and insight into the descendants of this family. Ric has a reputation for being thorough. A great addition for all interested in Group 26, possibly 21 and Group 9. I have not given the information yet to Gene and Barrie to place on the website and Pedigree Publication page. As soon as I get a cost breakdown to print, I will get the information to them. Ric's reputation is also known for his generous donations to the PRA. All of the proceeds from the sale of his publications are donated to the PRA. He is an inspiration to all of us.

Before all of life's interruptions, I was working with Rod in Group 8. We are dissecting the Abraham and Catherine William (?) Pennington in Little Capon, my stomping ground in Hampshire County, WV. There seems to be some kind of correlation during this time in both Family Groups. I will keep everyone advised if we come up with any semi-concrete information. We all know this takes time and patience.

We also have a number of members in Groups 4, 7, 16, 30 and 31 working hard to make ends meet. Good luck to all. I'm sure there will be some news on this in the near future.

Thanks to all of our Group Leaders for the hours of work, patience, know-how, dedication, personality and sharing you do with our valuable members. You make all the difference in the world to our members. Without your direction and help, they would have moved on. I hope to share any ideas; suggestions you may have to make our jobs easier and future benefit our members. All of us appreciate you.

## **PRA Obituary Database Information**

By Margaret E. Wood, PRA Obituary Database Editor

We have a total of 692 obituaries in the Data Base as of May 13, 2005. The 2004 cutoff date was July 18, so this figure represents 10 months, less 5 days of obituary additions to the file, totaling 41. (The only reason for the shorter period is that the report was due before June 1.)

During the 2003 to 2004 period, about 50 new obituaries were added, so this year is running about the same. The obituaries come to me on the internet and by regular mail--mostly from about a half dozen devoted PRA members.

I process the obituaries in the same way I explained last year by logging them in as they come in. I keep a data base in my computer and also make a paper copy. I put them on the Rootsweb Message Board and send them on to Barrie as well. It seems to me that I have fewer inquiries from the

Rootsweb listings than I did the first several years. Most of the time I have no further info to give them anyway as most are not of PRA members and families. In going over my file, I find only 89 of the 692 have supplied PRA Group numbers, so most are newspaper obituaries of those many Penningtons across the country. I appreciate everyone taking the time to do so, but I would like to stress again that if the sender takes the obit from a newspaper to please send the name, city, state and date of the newspaper. Also if the Pennington connection is not mentioned in the obituary, please say what it is.

I welcome any suggestions, criticisms or comments about the data base or how we could further use it.

## **Future**

Despite major efforts by the Pennington Research Association Board and many dedicated volunteers, one significant issue continues to challenge the Research Committee this next year – the apathy by some of our Group Leaders. I believed that with the implementation of the new website on MyFamily.com, we would see some resolution of this problem but it continues.

Neither of our Assistant Research Directors nor myself have any specific recommendations at this time. We will continue to encourage the Group Leaders to participate and to help find ways to resolve any concerns they identify. However, it is important that the Group Leaders work themselves to be an integral part of the Pennington Research Association. It is only with their help that we can meet our mission, goals and objectives.

I continue to believe the future of the Pennington Research Association is very bright. We have identified some of the challenges and we have worked very hard to overcome them.

We must continue to explore new ways of making our information available in printed and electronic media and on the Internet.

The purpose of an association such as the Pennington Research Association is to foster the exchange of genealogical information and to embrace others in our extended family.

I encourage the Board members to renew their commitment to our vision, our mission and our goals.