

Another Perspective

Written by Lori Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

Interest level in genealogy varies

How are we related? It's interesting how some people take a keen interest in genealogy and others don't. I was raised analyzing the relationship detail, and I find that folks use the term "cousin" loosely.

We recently got together with our niece and her family. My daughter, Brooke, posted a picture of her kids swimming with her cousin's kids and referred to the fun with cousins.

I guess I'm more into genealogy than I realized because I'm aware of the true relationship. Children of cousins are second cousins. And the children of second cousins are third cousins. Does it really matter? No. That is, unless you're tracing genealogy.

We had a treat last summer when my cousin and her husband brought their family from Australia for the first time. My grandson, Austin, enjoyed playing with the children and especially took interest in their accent. Just the other day Austin mentioned his "cousins," and we recollected some of their Auzzie dialogue.

Are they his cousins? Not technically. They're actually a generation older than him. But "cousin" works.

My sister's daughter, Molly, has carried on the interest of understanding family connections. When my daughter had Austin, Molly wanted to know their relationship. Her mom explained that Austin is Molly's first cousin once removed. Putting her little thinker to work, the 8-year-old asked my sister if she was the grandma once removed.

Pretty sharp thinking, but my sister is the great-aunt. And a "great" aunt she is.

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Russ's mom was a Gloy. Real confusion stems from three Gloy siblings marrying Pankonin cousins. How is Russ related to Trudy, Ron, Naomi, Donald, Robert and Royston? At the Pankonin reunion, they're second cousins. At the Boehmer reunion which has Gloy descendants, they're first cousins. Whoa!

Then to top that off, Marlene, Margaret, Bev and Mary are his first cousins on the Pankonin side. And the ladies' uncle on their maternal side was also an uncle by marriage to Russ on his maternal side. For you Perkins County readers, in later years, that same Uncle Wilbert married Bob Bounds' mother, Marian Hodde. Don't even try to make sense of that!

I grew up as a Johnson. Obviously that's a very common name, but the potential of our line continuing for multiple generations is limited.

Dad had just three cousins on his Johnson side, and they were children of his aunt so they aren't Johnsons. Well they're Johnson relatives, but they don't have the Johnson name.

To date I have two Johnson cousins who each have a boy and the buck stops there with the name continuing in our line. Brian and Samuel, it's up to you. No pressure!! That is unless my nieces would choose to keep the Johnson name and pass it on to another generation. Highly unlikely.

And Dad has a whopping two cousins on his maternal Hunsaker side. They're bachelors so our line of Hunsakers has reached the end. We have come across other Hunsakers over the years, so other lines are still in progress. I would surmise there's a distant connection, but who knows?

There's the same situation on the Gloy side, but that name could turn dormant. Again, Russ has two Gloy cousins who each have a boy, but so far one of those has had girls.

You might imagine that Mom was in disbelief when she met Dad to learn he had a grand total of five cousins. Her Christensen and Andersen families were obviously more productive as she had 37 first cousins who she knew and another five who died young.

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The Pankonins continue to be plentiful also. We attended a Pankonin reunion with more than 300 relatives when our oldest daughter was a toddler. And they've continued to reproduce. Whew! If someone asks Russ how we're related to another Pankonin, he generally tells them to ask me.

Our daughter, Celeste, was in a college class with Paul Pankonin. Although others asked how they're related, they had never seen each other. Paul's father, Dave, was a Nebraska senator so we got asked that question as well.

We knew they were from Louisville and that Dave's brother, Phil, is Russ's age. He played on the basketball team that challenged the Grant Plainsmen in the high school state championship in the '70s. And we knew they were not descendants of the five brothers included in our Pankonin reunions.

We have a dear relative who has done a fabulous job tracing Pankonin history. We went back five generations, and I'm pretty sure that Christopher Pankonin was the great-great-great-grandfather of both Celeste and Paul. So they are fourth cousins, and Russ is a third cousin to Dave and Phil.

Had there been a girl within those five generations who took a married name, we'd have never known a connection. Makes you wonder how many people marry their relatives.

Common names also play havoc with genealogy clarity. Russ's third cousin, Phil Pankonin, is obviously not the Phillip Pankonin who lives in Imperial. And Brian Pankonin who graduated from Chase County is not the Brian Pankonin who owned the bakery in Grant. Now keep it straight!

Family. Somehow we're all connected down the line back to Adam and Eve. I won't be losing any sleep figuring out how.

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