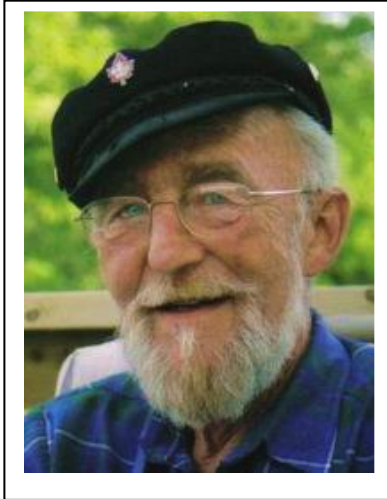


### Premature Disclosure



Family History researchers will often find and be given information that really belongs in the private, not, public domain. It is very important that we handle this material in a principled and ethical manner. High on the list of this type of information is the vital data of living persons.

Commercial websites that host Family Trees usually will censor out any such vital information and some genealogy programs will also censor it out when preparing a webpage or a report. Even our governments regard this information as subject to privacy rights in their access to information programs.

There can be all kinds of reasons why people are not anxious to have their exact birth or marriage dates announced from the rooftops. Age disparity in a couple, birth legitimacy, just plain sensitivity about age, or a sense of personal privacy can make a person uneasy or unhappy if it becomes everyone's business.

The information is important for the family historian but there is no need for the historian to publish it when there is any chance that it might embarrass or distress someone.

Reader Jacqui Chisamore found a website where someone had posted all the vital information on living members of her husband's family and it was she who brought this problem to my attention. Publishing this kind of information is not just irresponsible and an invasion of privacy, it shows a complete disregard for the feelings of others.

As family members, we are also privy to all kinds of family stories that may be amusing in the family, like when uncle Bill tells about a night of drinking and revelry. The humor is lost, however when Uncle Bill reads the story on a website, which is advertising his peccadillos to the world.

So let us be very careful about what we write. Omar Khayyam, the Persian astronomer and poet, wrote in the *Rubaiyat*;

*The Moving Finger writes and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.*

This topic segues into the treatment of Black Sheep in the family and we will discuss that next week.

### A New Tactic for Queries

We have often suggested placing your queries on Rootsweb County Bulletin Boards or those on county GenWeb or County Genealogical sites. This is still a good idea but what if the person who has the information you want is not computer savvy or doesn't visit the Bulletin Boards.

The Mobile Genealogical Society grappled with this problem and came up with a unique solution. They are preparing a list of Genealogy and Family History columnists throughout the English speaking world who are willing to post requests for information in their columns. Furthermore they are making this resource available to all researchers, not just their members.

They have the columnists organized by country, province/state, county, etc. and provide sound advice on what to send and what not to send. You can gain access to this resource by going to: [www.siteone.com/clubs/mgs/newstand.htm](http://www.siteone.com/clubs/mgs/newstand.htm) . The name of each column listed is a hotlink to information about it and contact information for the columnist.

It seems like a great idea and I will be giving it a shot myself in the near future.