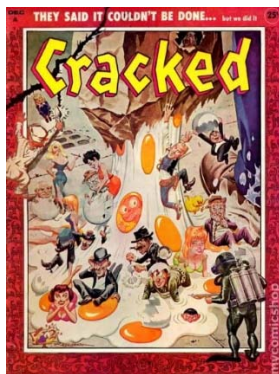




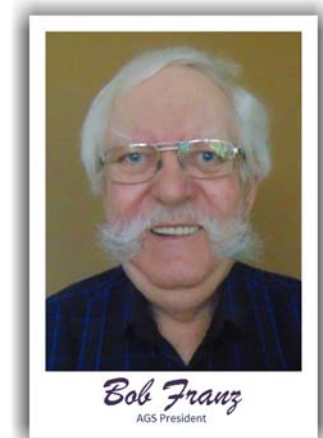
The President's Message

September 2016

British anthropologist Robin Dunbar has proposed that the maximum number of individuals one can maintain a stable social relationship with is 150. David Wong, American humour writer and executive editor of Cracked.com coined this group as our monkeysphere.



(Cracked was once a leading satirical magazine that had to cease print publication in 2007 due to declining sales and distribution problems. It instead became a satirical website whose articles today receive hundreds of thousands, and some several million, hits! I don't know about others involved in the current debate regarding Relatively Speaking going digital, but I find that humorous.)



We know who each person is and how each person relates to every other person in our monkeysphere. They are our family, friends, coworkers, perhaps neighbours, and members of our church and social groups. We conceptualize these individuals as people and we treat them as such. Those outside of our monkeysphere are one-dimensional characters—they are not seen as real people. They are beyond our realm of real caring.

Which brings us to today's topic, the health of the Alberta Genealogical Society, one of the three pillars or focuses of this Presidency, and the focus of our upcoming Retreat the fourth weekend of September. So, what exactly makes a healthy society? **No, don't stop reading.** This is not Bob's list of ten top characteristics of a healthy organization. Plain and simple, an organization becomes unhealthy when its members are no longer a part of the same monkeysphere.

If we are to be healthy, we must immerse ourselves in our own humanity, not just in our personal lives and for the sake of our personal health, but in our social lives, and for the health of the organizations to which we belong. We must talk to each other, really talk. We must be open about what is affecting us and genuinely care about what is affecting others in our group.

And when our group is 734 strong we must transcend the limit of our monkeysphere. We do not need to know every member of our group, but we need to know, and to believe, that these members are people and that they are people who live lives of value, that they are human with human feelings, hopes, beauty, and yes, warts. This has nothing to do with bylaws or polices or codes of conduct and never will. This has to do with the way we treat each other, with treating others as we wish ourselves to be treated, with courtesy and with empathy, no matter what our frustrations or differences of opinions are. We must not just interact with each other, but we must understand each other, not just what each individual says, but how each individual feels, and why each individual does what he or she does.

In our world today we see all around us example upon example of people who live without a sense of feeling for others, people who have become totally desensitized. **That is a sad thing.** These individuals cannot comprehend economic downturns, global warming, resource depletion, the roots of terrorism, or the danger this planet is in. They engage in the viciousness we are witnessing in the American Presidential Race. So it is with an unhealthy organization. Members are no longer treated with decency and respect because they are no longer people. They are “the Board”, “those Communications three”, “that Edmonton bunch”. We interact with suspicions and accusations, with open mouths but closed ears, and closed minds. When, and only when, we begin to greet each other as members of our monkeysphere will we be able to begin to heal.

This is Bob. Let me know what you think.

Robert "Bob" Franz

AGS President