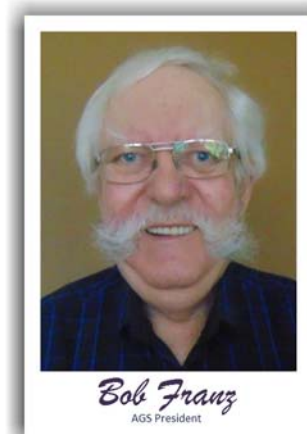




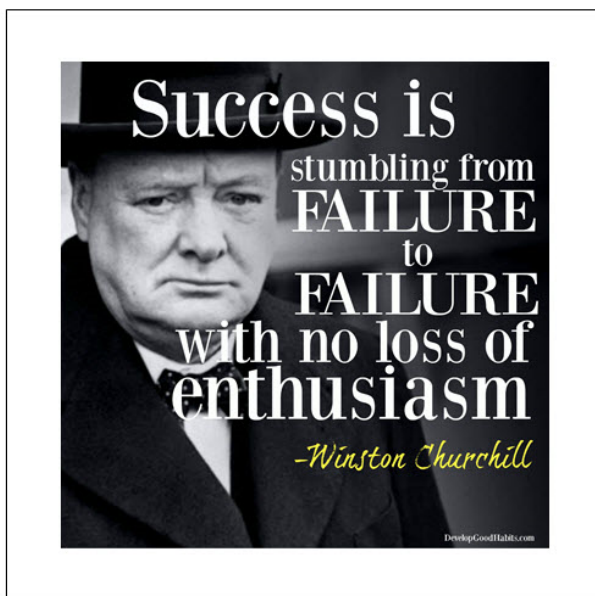
The President's Message

February 2017

There is much fear these days over the isolation of members of our society and the collapse of those institutions that once united people. Each day we read about organizations that can no longer find enough people to take on leadership positions and that are facing declining memberships, organizations that are being forced to fold or to cut out services they once provided. AGS and its branches are not immune to this trend. On the other hand we read about other groups who are thriving, groups who are growing and are highly successful. Why? Why does one genealogical society grow and prosper while another withers and dies? The advance of technology? An aging and changing membership? The general apathy and disillusion permeating society? If one looks closely at those societies which are successful and those which are not, I believe the reason can be narrowed down to one underlying cause: meeting the needs of the membership.



When I began my presidency eight months ago, I identified three pillars upon which it would be based. One was to address the health and management of the organization, which has occupied the first third of my two-year term and has been the focus of past "Let's Talk" posts. As we begin a new year, we still have much to do in this area and we will continue to address the remaining issues, but it is time to focus on the second pillar, enhancing the services and support provided by AGS to its members and to the branches of this society.



Now is the time of year we write our annual reports and reflect over the past year. As I have done so, one thing has stood out: despite past difficulties and differences, AGS has been highly successful. Other genealogical societies have folded due to a lack of funding. Our funding has remained solid. Other genealogical societies have had to cut their services and many have ceased publication of their journal or newsletter. This past year we published a stellar journal

that has received accolades and though we have stumbled with the loss of our editorial team, we have every expectation of continuing to even greater heights in 2017. Other websites have folded for assorted reasons. Ours continues to grow and receive recognition from genealogical bloggers and international leaders. Other genealogical societies have had to cancel workshops and curb conferences. Our conference this year has outgrown its former venue and has had to move. Why? Our success is the direct result of a group of dedicated and tenacious volunteers. Our success is because of you.

I have mentioned but a few of the successes of this society. There are many more. And, like the health of this organization, we have challenges ahead of us. Technology provides us with unlimited opportunities, but it also facilitates an isolationist approach to genealogical research. Our membership is aging, which brings stability and knowledge, but also provides challenges on how to meet the changes that come with age. Yesterday's genealogist was white, middle-class, over 65 and retired. Today's genealogist is still working full time, can be any age from their teen years and up, and of any nationality. Today's genealogist can research at home and has a thousand ways he or she can spend their leisure time. With social media, today's genealogist does not need to travel to socialize. Today's genealogist is eager to contribute and participate, in their pyjamas and from their own home, not at an evening meeting at the library.



I firmly believe this society is back on the road to good health and it is time to address what we are doing and what we need to change to meet the needs of today's genealogist. The first step, dear reader, whether you are an AGS member or a visitor, is to ask what you want and need. The future of this society depends on you. So, talk to us.

This is Bob. Let me know what you think.

Robert "Bob" Franz

AGS President