

I Wasn't Going to Go

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I wasn't going to go. It was too far from Pittsburgh to attend the NGS Conference. It was expensive to stay at a hotel and dine out everyday. I wasn't being compensated for speaking and so would have to pay for everything myself. I didn't know anyone from Pittsburgh going. My youngest child's 13th birthday was at the same time and since I was there at the birth, I would feel guilty not being there at this milestone. I rescue, foster and place dogs, and would have to do something with the current foster. The church newsletter that I edit was due that week. I had promised to run the neighborhood garage sale. With just a couple weeks of school left, band concerts and award ceremonies for the kids would be missed if I went. My husband would be left with all these responsibilities. My clients would have to wait another week for their reports. I wasn't going to go.

But then I realized what I would be missing. I would be missing the numerous lectures offered each hour. So many, it would be hard to narrow it down to just one. True, I could always buy the tapes from Repeat Performances (www.audiotapes.com), but some of the more visually oriented would not translate as well to just audio. I would be missing the vendor hall packed with new products, services and "must-haves." I would be missing out on conference special sale items and one-of-a-kind out of print books. I would be missing getting fresh copies of new books that were available and could be autographed by the authors who were present. I would be missing all the great deals that are only good for attendees. Or the drawings for prizes (one conference even included breakfast with Cyndi Howells!) I would be missing the lunches that were not just a place to take nourishment but a real place to network and make connections and share a laugh with the luncheon speaker.

I have heard that the odds are in a room of 40 people, you could be related to one... but only a genealogist knows which one! I would be missing meeting these cousins. I would be missing the opportunity to place my surnames of interest on the message board and see who writes to me later. I would be missing the APG Roundtable discussion with its opportunity to see people whose names were familiar from the APG-L list. I would miss being helpful and meeting a lot of great people by volunteering for booth duty for the organizations to which I belong. I am a Board of Certification for Genealogists associate, a Genealogical Speakers Guild member, and a director for the Association for Professional Genealogists. These are all very important to me. The APG board meeting is only at the two national conferences each year, so I would miss it if I did not go.

I would be missing the city itself... whether it was research in the local repositories, the views and history around the city, or local shopping for genealogical treasures where one might have to buy another piece of luggage to carry home all the bargains.

I wasn't going to go. But I did. I used my husband's frequent flier mileage to fly there. I shared a room with two other very nice roommates (a treat in itself). I had the big 13th birthday party before I left (he really enjoyed Mom playing laser tag with him). And I

sang on the phone on his actual birthday. I placed the foster dog in an adoptive home. I told the church that the newsletter would be a little late. I told the neighborhood association president he would have to find someone else to do the garage sale. I made sure my husband went to the award ceremonies and took pictures. I told my daughter how proud I was of her. The clients understood and were willing to wait another week. I worked hard to clear off my desk so that I could go.

It was worth it! I got acquainted with so many nice people. I reaffirmed other relationships with friends who live all across the country. I received (and accepted) many offers to help do, or write, or volunteer. I was interviewed by a newspaper reporter covering the conference. I was able to see products demonstrated that I had been contemplating on purchasing. I learned of newly released products and books and was able to be one of the first to buy them. I was able to buy books for my local library's collection at a savings. I learned of special offers to those who belonged to certain professional organizations and were in attendance. I attended lectures that had numerous innovative ideas. I received the syllabus for the handouts for those I could not attend. I learned and learned more. I relaxed at dinner with friends and acquaintances where the conversations were refreshing. Whether it was technology, professional ideas, or telling about a memorable ancestor, it was very enjoyable, with much laughter shared. I am now inspired, rejuvenated, and ready to jump back into my professional life with renewed vigor.

Couldn't afford to go? I couldn't afford not to!

I am now looking forward to attending the NGS conference in Nashville June 1 to 4. I will look for you there too.