

# Pannebakker Familie Views

A Newsletter for the Pannebakker Family Association

Dr . D a v i d P a n n a b e c k e r  
P u p p e t e e r

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**He's been a globe-trotting puppeteer  
Minister travels the world to train, teach, entertain with puppets.**

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Tribune Staff Writer  
Article published Jul 6, 2007

SOUTH BEND -- The puppets sit stacked against the wall in David Pannebecker's office at Trinity Evangelical Free Church. It's as if the colorful creatures are on vacation in his office at the south-side church. But only for a while. It won't be long before the longtime puppeteer, who first got his start more than 31 years ago at Bethel College, will be putting characters like "Ezra the Rat" and others to work again.

"It's been an amazing thing," said Pannebecker, recalling his start in puppetry with a Bethel College touring music group. "I would never have imagined (this). "The puppets have opened doors for me, given me opportunities for travel and teaching. "It's been very good to me in terms of allowing me to have experiences that I don't think I would have as a church organist or a church worship pastor even."

Yes, he and the puppets have been to Spain, Tokyo, the Netherlands and Russia, entertaining, training and teaching. Long before that, though, Pannebecker did advertising work in Chicago for about a decade with puppets and was very successful. In a life that has seen him also work in the financial services for about 10 years, and teaching at Bethel College, in addition to the last six years at Trinity, the puppets have never quite left him. At one time, his home looked more like a Disney studio, with as many as 200 puppets residing with his family. But it all began pretty innocently in 1975.

A young lady in the Bethel touring student music group that Pannebecker was a part of had left it to finish her degree, taking her puppets with her. Pannebecker, a student himself, decided he could come to the rescue. "It can't be that big of a deal, I thought," he said of making puppets. "I had loved arts and crafts as a child, and I just thought, well, let's see what happens. "I sat down in my kitchen with some newspaper and some yarn, and I said, 'I wonder how you make something flat go round.'" His mother was coming to town for a visit, and soon he put her to work. "I presented her with some patterns and she looked at them and said, 'This will never make anything' because it was like nothing she had ever seen. "I just said, 'Trust me. Sew here and sew there.' And within a few days we had a few."

Thus, the career of Pannebecker the puppeteer was launched. Two years later, teaching at Barclay College in Kansas, he got the chance of a lifetime to study in Hawaii under Kermit Love, one of Jim Henson's principal puppet designers. The only reason Pannebecker was able to go to Hawaii was because his in-laws lived there, so he and his wife had a free place to stay. Plus, the school helped pay for the class with professional development money. "Many of the students would show up for an hour or two of his class," Pannebecker recalled. "I camped out at his workshop, 12 to 14 hours a day for six weeks. "I just soaked up everything I could learn, and that kind of really jump-started my career in puppet design seriously as an adult, and the rest is history."

## DNA UPDATE

In the last newsletter, I told about being contacted by Laurie Baker. Laurie has been looking for possible connections to Conrad Pennybaker who received a land grant in the Bahamas from the King in 1789. Her brother had a DNA test done and matched a descendant of Conrad who was in the Bahamas.

Our family database contains a Conrad Pennybaker, who is listed as having died during the Revolutionary War. Conrad's good friend and brother-in-law, Joseph Yadon, apparently changed sides during the war. Laurie wondered if our Conrad might have survived and gone to work for the other side, and was rewarded by the King with the land grant.

We needed to see if there was a link between Laurie's family and ours.

I volunteered to have the DNA test done on me. The results are in.

I am a 25 marker match to the Bakers in the Bahamas. What does this mean?

I am related to those Bakers in the Bahama group. Statistically, there is an 85% chance I share a common ancestor with them in the past 8 generations, which is considered a pretty good match. We are considering extending the DNA results to 37 markers. If the results hold true, that would be a very strong indication of a relationship between our lines.

Laurie has continued her research on Conrad Pennybakers. She has uncovered pay records for a Conrad in the Continental Army. They cover a period from March 1778 to November 1779. The pay records that she found for Conrad Pennybaker in the Kings Rangers cover a period from Feb 1781 in Savannah to June 1783 in St. Augustine. Both of them are listed as Fife Major or Drummer. Laurie says, "If I could have found some records for the Conrad in the Continental Army that were in the same time period as those for the Conrad Pennybaker in the King's Rangers I'd have concluded that they were different people."

At this point, Laurie sure could use some help with the puzzle. "I'm happy to send you, or any researcher you suggest, copies of the documents I copied at the Archives to look for any additional clues. I'd really like all the help I can get to put the puzzle pieces together."

I hope someone out there is as curious about all of this as Laurie and I. If anyone is interested in helping, please contact me as soon as possible.

Bruce Pennypacker, Editor

The Family Association does maintain an extensive genealogical database, compiled over many years by several dedicated family researchers. Since the database includes living individuals, we will not "give away" the entire database, or publish it on the Internet. Your privacy is assured! However, we are willing to help those who have a specific question about their lineage. With each birth and death within the family, our database becomes more out-of-date. For the benefit of future generations, we ask that you send us notification of these events. Please send requests for information, or family updates to the editor of this newsletter.

Each edition will feature stories about our family members. We'd love to hear about you! Let us know what you've been up to. Articles could be autobiographical or tell us about the kids, grandkids or maybe about that big trip or the book you just had published. Send your story, with pictures if you wish, to the editor.

## Puppeteer

His lawyer got him an interview with the Leo Burnett advertising agency in Chicago. "The response was 'where have you been?' and I said, 'I have been knocking at your door trying to get in.'

"That (break) really turned the corner for me," he said. "We started getting a lot of calls and doing commercial work, a lot of industrial film, corporate-theater kind of things." But, alas, a recession came, and soon Pannabecker found his puppets weren't doing much talking or money making. So he came back to this area and began working in financial services for Primerica, as a senior vice president. Ten years into it, he received a call from Norman Bridges, president of Bethel College. He asked Pannabecker if he would work in Bethel's music program, directing their music ministry teams, the very area Pannabecker had gotten his start. "He was familiar with my work in puppetry," Pannabecker said, and Bridges asked him to reopen his puppet studio and incorporate it in his work at Bethel. "It kind of rejuvenated my work in puppetry," Pannabecker said. "Sesame Street" broke down many barriers for puppets in the field of education, Pannabecker said, noting before they came along many educators felt they weren't an effective educational tool.

"They are great story tellers," and can be used to re-enact parables and biblical stories "in creative and humorous ways," he said. Puppets, especially the hand-held variety Pannabecker specializes in, do have their limits.

"Puppetry is very physically demanding," he said. "When you are doing a three-hour show and you have puppeteers who have their hands up and they are in some incredibly unique positions and you are hiding behind rock pieces and trap doors and things, it's a very physical thing." Ten to 12 minutes is about the maximum a puppet can be held up while it's acting, he said, and he tries to keep them to three to seven minutes. He's proud of his work, including his merging of actors and puppets onstage at Trinity. At this time of year, the puppets sit still in his office only to be visited by children after church. Two, though, are in an upcoming play at Bethel College. But they all will work again soon. After all, once Pannabecker first got his hands into them, it seems, he's never been able to quite take them off. "It's been a part of my life," he said, putting on Ezra for a demonstration, "a very enjoyable part."

### FROM THE PRESIDENT RON MITCHELL

In the last edition of this newsletter, I outlined the lineage of the Tennessee Pennybackers. Our line goes through Dirck Pennybacker and his wife, Hannah DeHaven. Dorothy Bertine, a distant cousin, and a member of the DeHaven clan, has been quite ill recently. Dorothy has asked me to extend her thanks for the thoughts, prayers and kind words sent her way by members of our group. Anyone interested in sending additional well wishes to Dorothy, can do so at the following address:

Dorothy Bertine  
DeHaven Club  
913 Chasewood  
Denton, TX 76205

The Pannebakker Family Association has an opening for Vice President. We need to fill this vacancy. We are always looking for people who can give of their time and talents for the good of the organization. Please contact one of the officers listed on the back page of the newsletter if you can help us.

Lastly, I want to wish each and every one of you a healthy and happy holiday season.

## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Remember, when you turn 80, you no longer have to pay dues. So, if you've already turned 80 or are about to, please let us know so that we can make the proper adjustment in our records.

The Pannebakker Family  
Association

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The Pannebakker Family Association is an out-growth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699.

In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."

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