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Press Release

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National Genealogical Society Announces Its 2020 Awards & Competition Honorees

FALLS CHURCH, VA, 20 MAY 2020—The National Genealogical Society (NGS) announced its 2020 award honorees and competition winners at its Virtual Family History Conference NGS 2020 Live! on 20 May 2020. The following awards were announced to recognize excellence, achievement, and genealogical service.

National Genealogy Hall of Fame: George Ely Russell, CG®, FASG, FNGS

NGS introduced its National Genealogy Hall of Fame in 1986. The award honors outstanding genealogists whose achievements in American genealogy have had a great impact on the field. We invite you to visit the [National Genealogy Hall of Fame](#) and learn about its honorees. This year **George Ely Russell**, nominated by the American Society of Genealogists, was elected to the **National Genealogy Hall of Fame**. Born in Niagara Falls, New York, on 24 November 1927, George died in Ijamsville, Maryland, on 9 January 2013.

In 1955, Russell started writing what became a massive output of genealogical articles and books, reaching around 150 publications. From 1970 to 1986, he served as editor of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly (NGSQ)*, bringing it to its high scholarly standards. NGSQ became recognized as one of the four leading genealogical journals, the position it holds today. For several years, he was editor and publisher of *Genealogical Periodical Annual Index*, a pioneer publication in that field. His numerous articles on early Maryland families represent a significant contribution to the literature. As a lecturer at major genealogical conferences, he was an inspiration, mentor, and teacher to many aspiring genealogists.

Over the years, Russell also served on the NGS Council and as a contributing editor for *The American Genealogist* (1982–1993), a contributing editor for *Western Maryland Genealogy* (1985–2013), and founder and first president of the Prince George’s County (MD) Genealogical Society (1969). He was the recipient of the NGS Distinguished Service Award (1978); a Fellow, American Society of Genealogists (1980–2013); a Fellow, National Genealogical Society (1981); and a board-certified associate (Certified Genealogist®) of the Board for Certification of Genealogists® (1967–2012).

Russell’s dry sense of humor was enjoyed by many. He was dedicated, knowledgeable, and a wonderful friend to those who were fortunate to know him personally. His legacy of accumulated genealogical material will be valuable to generations to come.

NGS Fellow: Ronald Ames Hill, PhD, CG, CGLSM

NGS Fellows are recognized for their outstanding work in genealogy or the related fields of history, biography, or heraldry, in addition to significant service to the National Genealogical Society. This year’s **Fellow** is **Ronald Ames Hill** of Portland, Oregon.

Hill is among the most prolific *NGSQ* authors. To date, the journal has published eighteen of his articles. Thirty of his genealogical articles have appeared in other publications. Hill has served on *NGSQ*’s editorial board for seventeen years. In that capacity, he provides the editors and prospective authors with detailed, helpful advice and critiques of papers submitted for publication consideration.

A former NGS board member and conference speaker, Hill has also spoken at Federation of Genealogical Societies and GenTech conferences, the North American Cornish Genealogy Seminar, and the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy. One of his eight model family histories won the 2008 NGS Award of Excellence for a Genealogy and Family History Book.

The President’s Citation: Ric Murphy

The President’s Citation is given in recognition of exceptional, continuing, or unusual contributions to genealogy or the Society. **Ric Murphy**, national vice president for history for the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) is this year’s recipient of the President’s Citation. The award recognizes Murphy for his extraordinary career as an educator, historian, scholar, lecturer, and award-winning author. His work explores the roles and rich contributions made by African Americans in United States history.

As a direct result of his groundbreaking research, Murphy learned that his African American family lineage dates to the earliest colonial periods of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Jamestown, Virginia. In 1983 he submitted his mother’s application to the Daughters of the American Revolution. She became the first African American DAR member during modern times to be recognized for her descent from an African American Revolutionary soldier, an enslaved man named Caesar Russell.

Through his leadership, Murphy has helped residents of communities of color understand the historical and genealogical importance of the African diaspora, the importance of personal genealogical research, and learning about and connecting to their African roots. He has conducted training sessions to help Americans of African descent find their Revolutionary War ancestors and has assisted many to become members of the lineage societies of the Daughters and the Sons of the American Revolution. He is one of the founders and charter members of the only African American lineage society, the Sons and Daughters of the United States Middle Passage.

Murphy recently chaired AAHGS's four-hundredth Commemoration Commission, bringing attention to the arrival of the first documented Africans in English North America in 1619, at Point Comfort in the Virginia colony; and helped to guide the organization in recording the historic contributions and achievements of Americans of African descent over a four-hundred-year period.

The Filby Award for Genealogical Librarianship: Kris Rzepczynski

The Filby Award, sponsored by ProQuest since 2006 with its \$1,000 prize, is presented to **Kris Rzepczynski**, senior archivist, the Archives of Michigan, in Lansing, Michigan.

State Archivist Mark Harvey says Rzepczynski "embodies the many aspects of an exemplary genealogical librarian/archivist." He worked with the Abrams Family Historical Collection at the Library of Michigan from 1998 to 2012. In 2012, he moved, with the Collection, to the Archives of Michigan. He continued hosting the Abrams Family History Seminar and introduced researcher "lock-ins" the night before the seminar, drawing up to fifty researchers who could get one-on-one research attention from a team of family history archivists and librarians.

Rzepczynski regularly writes articles on genealogy research tips and book reviews for the *Trace*, the magazine of the Archives of Michigan, and averages thirty to forty presentations per year, from New York state throughout Michigan and west to Montana. His work and infectious enthusiasm for family history have helped many researchers clear log jams in their research and inspired them to help others.

Working tirelessly to promote archival collections and assist researchers, Rzepczynski still finds time to preserve the collections for the future. Currently, he oversees the acquisition of many Michigan county records that will be housed at the Archives of Michigan. He works with FamilySearch on digitizing records in projects such as the Michigan Naturalization Project and the Michigan Probate Project.

The Conference Award of Honor is presented to the Utah Genealogical Association, Kelly Summers, president, in recognition of the Association's dedication and sustained service in support of the 2020 NGS Family History Conference.

Conference Certificates of Appreciation are given to those who worked unstintingly to plan this year's conference. The honorees include: Conference Chair Luana Darby, AG®; Conference Blog Editor Valerie Elkins; Hospitality Chair Rebecca Dalton; Librarians' Day Moderator Kim Harrison; Local Events Chairs Katrena Mortenson and Zachary Hamilton; Local Host Committee Chair Tristan Tolman, AG; Registration Chair Suzannah Beasley, AG; Local Publicity Chair Erin Pritchett; Vendor Support Co-Chairs Pat Richley-Erickson and Gordon Erickson; and Volunteer Chair Ken Smith.

NGS COMPETITIONS

The NGS Awards for Excellence are presented for a specific, significant single contribution in the form of a family genealogy or family history book, a publication discussing or demonstrating genealogical methods and sources, or an article published in the *NGS Quarterly*.

Award for Excellence: Genealogy and Family History Book

This year's recipient is **George L. Findlen**, CG, CGL, of Madison, Wisconsin. The title of his book is *Our Acadian Martin Family History; The First Four Generations, 1650-1800*.

Honorable mention: **Cdr. Stephen F. Snell, USN (Ret.)** for his book, *Descendants of Thomas Snell (1634-1725): of Fillongley, Warwickshire, England and Bridgewater, Plymouth*.

Award for Excellence: Genealogical Methods and Sources

Robert C. Anderson, FASG, is this year's recipient. The title of his book is *Puritan Pedigrees: The Deep Roots of the Great Migration to New England*.

Award for Excellence: National Genealogical Society Quarterly

Melinda Daffin Henningfield, CG, of Ashland, Oregon, received the Award for Excellence for her article, "A Family for Mary (Jones) Hobbs Clark of Carroll County, Arkansas," published in the March 2019 issue of the *NGSQ*.

The NGS Newsletter Competition honors excellence in newsletter editorship in three categories:

Major Genealogical and/or Historical Societies

This year's winner is *The Virginia Genealogical Society Newsletter*, published by the Virginia Genealogical Society, Orange, Virginia, edited by Deborah R. Harvey.

Local Genealogical and/or Historical Societies

The winner is *The Heritage*, newsletter of the Gwinnett Historical Society, Lawrenceville, Georgia, edited by Miriam Machida.

Honorable mention: *The Newsletter of the Irish Family History Forum*, Long Island, New York, edited by Jim Regan.

Family Associations.

The 2020 recipient is *The Hungerford World Tree*, newsletter of The Hungerford Family Foundation, Inc., in Bonita Springs, Florida, edited by Charles C. Morgan.

Honorable Mention: *The Seeley Genealogical Society Newsletter*, published by the Seeley Genealogical Society in Abilene, Kansas, edited by Paul Taylor.

The Rubincam Youth Writing Contest was established in 1986 to encourage and recognize our youth as the next generation of family historians. It honors Milton Rubincam, CG, FASG, FNGS, for his many years of service to NGS and to the field of genealogy.

Jason DiRusso of Vestavia Hill, Alabama, is the winner of this year's Senior Category for students in grades ten through twelve. The title of his entry is "The Family History of a Boy and His Dog."

Andrea Bergamaschi, of Fossombrone, Italy, is the winner of the Junior Rubincam Youth Award for students in grades seven through nine. The title of her entry is "A Dad, my Superhero: Life of Valerio Bergamaschi."

Honorable mentions were presented to **Logan Starkey** (Senior Category), of Malvern, Arkansas, for his paper, "Up Close and Personal with Four Generations," and **Elizabeth Bradshaw** (Junior Category) of Centerville, Virginia, for her paper, "Carline Grove: A Biography."

The National Genealogical Society congratulates all of the 2020 award recipients and contest winners. Sincere thanks go to the volunteer judges, chairs, and evaluators from across the country who generously gave their time and expertise to review the submissions for each award and competition. Thanks, too, to Janet Bailey, chair of the

Awards Committee, and Susan Yockey of the NGS staff.

NGS asks you to help us with next year's awards. You probably know an individual or organization who exemplifies the qualities we honor with our awards. You may know someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of genealogy, or maybe you have been impressed with a local newsletter. Please consider [nominating](#) them or encourage someone to enter one of our competitions.

Founded in 1903, the [National Genealogical Society](#) is dedicated to genealogical education, exemplary standards of research, and the preservation of genealogical records. The Falls Church, Virginia, based nonprofit is the premier national society for everyone, from the beginner to the most advanced family historian, seeking excellence in publications, educational offerings, and guidance in research. It also offers many opportunities to interact with other genealogists.

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