



# NEWSLETTER

March 2017  
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## Hoaxes and Scams

*Summarized by Bruce Butterfield*

System security is always an important consideration in our internet research and other activities. The meeting theme this month reflects that concern.

Bob Heck began with a new version of his annual look at the ways various odd people or outright crooks try to trick us into doing foolish things. His talk, entitled "How to Identify a Hoax or a Scam" served to remind us that a healthy dose of suspicion and wariness help to keep our heads clear and our pockets unpicked.

Bob began with what has become a classic scam: An email from the FBI, displaying an "authentic" rip-off of the FBI real logo, tells you that you- or somebody using your computer- has illegally downloaded copyrighted or otherwise proprietary materials and that your system will be locked up until you pay a fine of \$xxx within 72 hours. Criminal Case proceedings will commence if you fail to act. You must call the included phone number at once to get instructions about how to pay the fine. The number is, of course, that of the crook who sent the email. Neither the FBI nor any other police or investigation agency would ever send summons or threats of prosecution via email. If you take just a moment whenever you get phone calls or emails similar to this case to think analytically about what you received, a little alarm bell in the back of your brain will begin clanging an alert. You want to call the FBI, of course, but call the phone number that you look up, NOT the one in the phony email.

Bob had a recent experience when a friend called from Florida to ask Bob for advice. His wife had received an official- appearing letter from a "lawyer" in Switzerland, stating that she was in line for an unidentified inheritance, and should send a certified copy of her birth certificate and a certified copy of her father's death certificate to confirm that she was the valid heir. If she failed to respond within 5 days, her eligibility would be cancelled. Bob's advice was: Throw away the letter! Do nothing to respond. It is surely a fake. Despite Bob's repeated warnings, the lady *did* send the documents.

Some time later, a second letter arrived, acknowledging receipt of her papers and commenting that, since all of Switzerland was on a 2-week national vacation, he

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MARCH 8, 2017

MILWAUKEE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Milwaukee County Historical Society*

*By*

*Kevin Abing (Archivist)*

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*Next Meeting is April 12, 2017*

*Klemmer's Banquet Center*

*10401 West Oklahoma Avenue*

*Milwaukee, WI 53227*

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would contact her when he returned. After two *months* passed, she began to have second thoughts. Two months after that, she finally realized that she will get nothing, but that somebody in Switzerland or somewhere else in Europe, has all they need to create a false identity and do whatever illegal things they intended in the first place.

The phone rings. Hi, I'm a technician with Microsoft. We've detected a problem with your computer. We can fix it for you right now- no need to take it to a computer store. We can also save you money; our cost is only \$150. I'll guide you through some simple actions with your mouse to authorize us to temporarily control your computer and we'll get it all back in good shape in just a few minutes.

So, you cough up your credit card number, including the security number on the back, go through the motions he gives you and you watch your cursor moving around the screen and pointing at files. He's done and gone, the computer's missing a few useless old temp files, you're out \$150 bucks, maybe even got a virus or other malware...AND he still has your credit card number and security code and control of your computer unless you know how to cancel the permission. Have a nice day! Just hang up.

You get a phone call or email saying that you didn't appear for jury duty when scheduled. You are in deep trouble. What's that? You didn't get the notice? Hmm! OK, give me some personal information and your Social Security number so I can verify that we might have sent the summons to the wrong person. Oh yeah!

The bank is having some difficulty with a security breach. We need to verify that your account is still OK. Give us your account number and your SSI number so we can clear this up. But of course! Here it is, and thank you for being so concerned about the safety of my money.

Are you beginning to see some similarities to these contacts? They try to catch you unawares, push situations on you that would seem ridiculous if you took the time to think, threaten bad things to be sure you aren't thinking critically, want money sent to odd places using money orders or even bit-coins (monetary version of the plague), or push for personal data, bank account or Social Security numbers.

Bob Heck had other examples that we don't have room to discuss here, but he pointed out some visual clues that can help you pick out an email scam attempt, such as the "Package misdirected" con. The link you are supposed to use will- if you hover your cursor on it- displays at the bottom of the screen an address that doesn't jibe with the purported sender. Also the sender address at the top of the message often is from a

different person or company and may even indicate a different country of origin.

Messages that appear to be from a known sender that have no subject shown or have only a link- or a "Hi, check this out" message are guaranteed to be a trap. Click on the link and "Hello, disaster". SCAM! SCAM! SCAM!

Hoaxes, by comparison, usually are relatively harmless attempts to get people to waste their time or worry about inconsequential conditions or events. Someone's "Cousin Vinny" or an unnamed Microsoft development guy, or "one of the guys at the club" passed on the news that a secret computer virus will wipe out disk drives, or a certain soft drink can cause appendicitis or "If you go out the evening of June 27, Mars will look as big as the moon because it is the closest to Earth in the last 43 years". Unfortunately, a hoax may, either intentionally or accidentally, create fears or actions that harm people or companies. For that reason, if for no other, you need to set your BS detector on "stun" when you get these messages. You can get a pretty good idea about a statement that has an odd sound to it. Ask for details and the name of a source. With a hoax, you won't get any. This situation, unfortunately, also describes pretty well pronouncements by an unfortunately enormous number of politicians.

Bob had in his talk a portion dedicated to genealogy-related scams. Bob says the take on such jerks is that they think that: Many genealogists (meaning family history researchers) are retired; genealogists tend to be trusting souls; all genealogists are rich; many genealogists want to believe that they have either royalty or an American Indian in their ancestry. The "rich" part is mostly wishful thinking, but the other points? Cutting too close to the bone, perhaps.

Noted transcriber of New England data, Gustav Anjou (did he also create the famous pears?), 1863-1942, became famous for his miraculous ability to "discover" genealogies -costing as much as \$18,000- that would prove, without fail, your connection to Royalty. Customers could even specify the country! There still exists up to 200 genealogies created by him, ready to contaminate the work of any researcher who fails to be discriminating in evaluation of located data.

Bob, himself, passed up the opportunity to be recognized as a "Russian Count" by bidding a minimum \$10,000 on e-bay in order to become a "Secret Counselor" via "notarially approved documents". Of course, the only one to whom one might give the "secret counsel" would be Czar Nicholas II who, unfortunately passed away from an allergic reaction to lead rifle bullets about a century ago.

Such genealogy data as represented by companies like the well-known Halberts of Bath, Ohio, could actually be considered sort of useful, except for the fact that most of

it was- and still is- disingenuous at least and, most often, easily found and filtered by any home researcher.

Bob mentioned, and listed in his handout, several websites that offer for fairly substantial "subscription costs" (or offered before being put out of business) stuff from "the world's largest database"- which is...the internet. Bob even pointed out one company that plucks databases from publically accessible websites without permission, republishes the data on their site under a copyright notice of their own. Bob found his own data on the site and learned that he could be prosecuted for accessing his own data without paying for a subscription fee. How's that for chutzpah?

Bob closed out his talk with mention of the now popular "Hey, Grandpa or dear neighbor, I got robbed in London or was arrested in Utah" phone scam or email plea for help. My personal plan if I ever get such a call from my "grandson" is to ask him "Does your mommy know that you are not still in your crib? And when did you start talking?" The number of people who get these calls or messages and don't even wonder "Didn't I just see him (or talk with him) yesterday?" is disheartening. Please, folks, use that big, round thing perched on your neck for more than a hatrack!

Get Bob's handout from our members-only section of our website for even more info on scams and hoaxes.

## Internet and Computer Security

*Summarized by Bruce Butterfield*

After the break, Bill Heck and his associate Doug Rogahn, who also presented a talk last year, took a different tack this time by giving us an enlightening look at the Internet of Things (IOT) - the new world of internet connected machines, appliances and other gadgets that talk to each other, and sometimes us, through the internet.

They began with a photo of a pet-cam monitor that an owner can use to keep tabs on a pet at home while they are off working, shopping or lolling on the beach. In the picture a dog sits in front of the unit that displays the owner's image. Bill said that the device lets the owner talk to the pet and even cause a little trap door to open and give doggie a nice treat. How sweet!

While Bill and Doug refrained from any comments about the actual necessity of many remote devices, they wanted us to be aware of the possibility of abuse by predators who can control or interfere with a vast majority of IOT devices that have uncorrected vulnerabilities. They showed us many slides of images that they found on various internet "social media" sites that included images inside homes, including bedrooms, children's bed and play rooms, displaying a shopping guide for interested thieves. We watched a jumpy video

of a man in his home office and watched children playing in their back yard. We saw photos of "the new car", new snow blower and tools in the garage. This stuff was easily found in unsecured social cloud locations, and there was TONS of it from all around the country- and even outside the country.

Particularly unsettling was the story from a family who sat in their living room while their young child was playing with toys in his room that was "guarded" by an IOT monitor. Everything was fine- they could see and hear the child and talk to him-until they heard a man's voice somewhere in the house. A quick search turned led to the child's room where they realized that the man was talking to the child through the monitor's speaker; he had taken control of the device while they sat "fat, dumb and happy" as the saying goes, and was having a "conversation" with the child.

Bill and Doug said that it is the responsibility of the users to check regularly for updated software in their IOT devices. It is quite possible that a lot of gadgets are not updateable or may have gone through a vendor's end-of-support date. Outdated or unsecured software can be just as troublesome in your thermostat or home security system as in your computer. Bill likes to suggest to folks to ask themselves if they *really, really* need that very hip new widget.

Of course, cyber crooks are still hammering at businesses- and governments- all around the world. A company known as S.W.I.F.T had data on millions of customers swiped, and lost not only money, but many, many customers who no longer trusted them. The N.S.A., our government's super-secret agency last year was cyber-robbed of information on the cyber weapons that they create to cyber-bash other governments' agencies via zero-day exploits. It's tempting to look at this as poetic justice, but those guys-if anybody- should know how to protect themselves, and us.

Ransom ware is still healthy and kicking. Doug mentioned that folks who got their systems locked up by crooks lost about a billion dollars last year. Updating protective programs and being cautious about where you go on the internet still gives you the best chance to be spared. In a by-the-way moment, Doug told us to uninstall Quick-Time if we have it in our systems. Apple no longer supports the outdated program, making it fair game for evildoers.

A company called DYN recently had its server systems overwhelmed by a classic "denial-of-service" attack. DYN is one of those companies who *are* the internet- their servers are some of the ones that connect you to your cousin in Germany, for instance. It has been estimate that as many as 145,000 webcams (like those in your desktop, laptop and pad) have been "zombied" into joining d-o-s attacks. If you're not using yours, keep it turned off.

A roll call of companies hacked over the past year include Airbnb, Fox News (!) and Netflix. There were plenty more. A couple of closing warnings concerned our own careless attitudes toward our internet activities. Bill and Doug showed a photo someone put up as they held up their Super Bowl tickets. Phone cameras are really good these days. An enlargement of the shot clearly displayed a copyable image of the bar-code on the tickets, making counterfeiting a pair possible to one so inclined.

Bill and Doug showed us several "Please Rob Me" photos of vacant homes that can be found by the hundreds, if not thousands on Facebook and other social sites. They asked us to evaluate the "things we share with friends" on the internet. Isn't it interesting to think that we are often our own worst protectors?

This is not about the internet, but Doug and Bill wanted us to see a different type of protection that had a disastrous vulnerability. They had a gun safe with an electronic keypad and an electrically operated locking mechanism that was the identical model of one in a home in an undisclosed state. Two children in that home found the safe and were messing around with it when it opened. Well, they were kids after all, so naturally they took the gun out and messed with *it*. What do you think happened next?

In the aftermath somebody finally figured out how they got the safe open. Doug showed how to do it. He put the safe on a table, smacked it really hard on the top and...the door swung open. He locked it, lifted it about 6 inches and dropped it on the table and...the door swung open. The mechanism had a latch part that was moved by an electrical impulse, but it turned out that it was also susceptible to physical shock in a certain direction. They didn't tell us the make of the safe, but pointed out that, if they need a gun safe, they intend to buy one with a good old-fashioned mechanical lock and dial. Sometimes the buggy whip really works best.

## Upcoming Programs

### April 12, 2017

DNA: How Companies Like Ancestry Derive % Ethnicity (Pat Mundstock)  
The To-America Research on Family Search (Bob Heck)

### May 10, 2017

Preparation for Historical Society Trip (Jane Orne)  
Naturalization Records in Wisconsin (Bob Tatalovich)

### June 14, 2017

What's in the Attic (Louise Stack)  
Photo Magic (Bob Heck)

### June 20, 2017

Bus Trip to Madison

### July 12, 2017

External Storage, DVD Storage, Cloud Storage, Scanners (Sam Colon)  
Moving Data and Software (Bob Heck)

### August 9, 2017 – Terminology & Stuff

Roots Magic (Bob Tatalovich)  
Legacy (Bruce Butterfield)

### September 13, 2017

Victorian Mourning & Funeral Practices (Steve Person)  
Funeral Home Research (TBA)

### October 21, 2017

**FREE** Genealogy Workshop at the Family History Center, 9600 West Grange Avenue.  
8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

## About This Newsletter

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Members interested in submitting articles may e-mail them to [bheck@voyager.net](mailto:bheck@voyager.net). The MPAFUG Publisher will determine if an article will be used in this newsletter. Articles will be used as space permits.

NO COPYRIGHTED ARTICLES may be submitted without express permission of the author and publisher. Articles should be submitted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday to be considered for inclusion in that same month. Credit will be given for your article.

## Meeting Bits and Bytes

Our January, 2017 meeting finally got started at 7PM on February 8 because Ma Nature, showing her nasty side, laid a coating of ice all over the Milwaukee area on January 11- and we just missed another one this month. Can't wait to see what happens next month!

Bob Heck, presiding, welcomed an audience of 163 that included 9 new members and guests who looked forward to their third inoculation against the evil machinations of internet bad guys.

Bob saved his quiz questions from January and used them at this meeting. To enlighten visitors and newbies, Bob sends out irregular, but numerous, messages to MPAFUG members who have an email address registered with Treasurer Lynn Thrasher, that pass on to us information about websites of genealogical interest and other tidbits that may be useful for our members. Bob personally checks out each site that either he has found or that has been suggested by a member. He selects items from those messages as subjects for his monthly quiz. Competition for the fabulous prizes for correct answers gets pretty fierce sometimes; members have been known to print out crib sheets from the messages to get an edge. This month's big prize was a sleek new silver Porsche. The winner was so overcome

that she almost dropped the 7-inch long box it came in! Hey, Bob is really serious about the quiz, but he's not crazy!

Bob started the quiz with a question about the highly touted windows 10 operating system. What did her newly installed system fail to do for Treasurer Lynn Thrasher? Answer: It failed to save her membership updates and data.

Two questions referred to our sound recordings of meetings that are available for listening on our website. How many sound tracks are presently on the site, and for which months are they available? Answers: There are nine tracks so far, and they are for the months of

March through November of 2016. Yes, a few folks actually knew those answers.

Bob next asked for the name of the MPAFUG member who was nominated for induction into the Green Bay Packers Fan Hall of Fame and where does he live? Answers: Frank Lamping, who happens to be a relative of Bob Heck, and he lives in Union Grove. We have since learned that Frank was voted in recently and that he will also be honored as an outstanding citizen of his hometown by the State Government at an upcoming meeting of the legislature. Way to go, Frank!

The last question asked for the meaning of the acronym FEEFHS (fiefs). When it was begun in 1992 (same year as MPAFUG) it was called the Federation of Eastern European Family History Societies. A few years ago, when we enjoyed a talk about this very active group, we believe that it was still called that, but more recently it has been transformed into the Foundation for Eastern European Family History Studies. That second name was the answer that took home the Porsche.



## Help with PAF

Call us if you need assistance in using PAF, or if you have question about MPAFUG  
We're here to help!

NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL Address
Bruce Butterfield	414-462-6097	Babtrfld-mke@wi.rr.com
Sam Colon	414-327-2133	genschr@gmail.com
Bob Heck	414-421-7143	bheck@voyager.net
Bob Tatalovich	414-897-8280	bobt3725@gmail.com
Jane Orne	262-938-9371	orne@Rworld.net
Guy Porth	414-510-0563	guyporth9@yahoo.com
Earl Capps	414-327-4327	elcapps@yahoo.com

## MPAFUG Key Information

### The Steering Committee

Steering committee meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month except December. The meetings start at 7:00 pm at Bob Heck's house (4910 Steeple Drive, Greendale, WI). The Steering Committee is an informal group of members who get together to plan the general agendas for future meetings. All MPAFUG members are welcome to attend and participate in the meetings.

### Our Web Page: <http://mpafug.org>

We invite you to visit our web page and even print a copy of this and the previous month's newsletter. We also have a surname section where you can see who is working on your family line. Members of MPAFUG have access to a members-only web page which contains past newsletters and handouts from our meetings.

### Resources Available:

In addition to our monthly meetings and website, we offer 3 CD's that are available to members for purchase. CD's are \$5 each if picked up at a meeting, or an additional \$2.50 for shipping/handling. Contact Lynn Thrasher - MPAFUG Treasurer, PO Box 14222, West Allis, WI 53214-0222.

- ◆ MPAFUG Newsletters – December 1991 thru December 2013
- ◆ MPAFUG Handouts – 1999 thru 2013
- ◆ MPAFUG Utilities CD – contains 16 useful programs including PAF, Picasa, GenViewer, Open Office, Adobe Reader, PDA to Palm OS, FastStone, IRFAN Viewer/Plugins, FamilySearcher and more

### Membership Information

Membership in MPAFUG is open to anyone interested in learning more about computer genealogy. Membership is \$12 per calendar year for an individual or family. Dues are \$6 for the balance of a year if you join after June 30<sup>th</sup>. To join, send a check made payable to "MPAFUG" to: Lynn Thrasher – MPAFUG Treasurer, PO Box 14222, West Allis, WI 53214-0222.

#### *Questions about MPAFUG?*

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