TRANSCRIPTION OF MARGUERITE DILLMAN'S
ADDRESS – DILLMAN MEGA-REUNION – AUG. 17, 2002
[words in brackets added where necessary for better understanding for the reader]

Okay, hope y'all can hear me. I have emphysema, COPD, bronchial asthma, and everything else that's wrong with my lungs but the Lord blessed me and let me keep my mouth. (laughter) Otherwise, I would be very frustrated.

When I got the request to speak, my friends said, "Boy, you can tell they don't know you [or] they'd never ask you to speak!" But, I'm sure glad to be here and I'm so proud to be a Dillman…and, I hope y'all are, too. We have just got a great heritage. Y'know, I never had an identity crisis in my life. I've known I was a Dillman all my life. My father told me many, many times, I was a Dillman. As a teenager, I'd come home and say, "I want to do this! Everybody's doin' this!" [He'd say], "Dillman's don't do that!" So, I always knew what I was. In fact, he did such a good job instilling in me that I was a Dillman and how great Dillmans were and what they were doin' and did and didn't do that I decided I didn't ever want to give up my name so, therefore, I never married. But, the real reason was that I didn't realize the last person to ask me to marry 'em was gonna be the last person to ask me to marry 'em so I kinda got stuck there!

So, anyway, around twenty-two years ago, the genealogical bug bit me and I started getting very curious about my family. I think the reason was, I went to Ireland not knowing I had any Irish Heritage or roots or anything, I just wanted to go see Ireland and, while there on the tour, people were runnin' off at night goin' to this cemetery and that cemetery and checkin' on their family and I really think that's what made me curious because, before, I knew mainly about the Dillmans because…I've always known I had a Revolutionary ancestor named Andrew Dillman, I always knew the next one was George, and I always knew the next one was Eli, and then my grandfather, Hugh. Andrew Dillman, our Revolutionary War ancestor, is my third-great-grandfather because nobody told my family there's supposed to be four generations in a century and, in the 1800s, there were only two generations in my Dillman family. In fact, any of you who are related to Andrew, please, join the Sons of the American Revolution or the Daughters [of the American Revolution]. It's a great organization; it's a great way to honor your ancestor. They're not a bunch of little old ladies runnin' around in tennis shoes talkin' about their ancestors. It's a nice organization. I belong, have belonged for years and, if anybody wants to join or has children or grandchildren, alls they have to do to get…my records are open. Just request my records and see how you can tie in from there. But, I do encourage you to do that just to honor our Andrew Dillman.

In my research, I have no first cousins so I didn't have any people close; I never grew up around relatives. So, I had to kinda go on what my family told me. Fortunately, and unfortunately, when I was twenty years old, I found that my great-grandfather, Eli Dillman, had written a book on his family history and, at the time, we had…in the process of building a house around us, my family was…we had sold our home before and moved to a lake, faster than we thought, and so, everything was kinda spread around and my mother mentioned the book and she went and got it out of the garage, or barn, and she said, "It shouldn't be there, anyway." She's bringing it in for safekeeping. I was twenty years old and read that book once. A week later, my house was struck by lightning and it burned to the ground and we've lost a lot of valuable information because that was first-hand information. He told about some of Andrew's brothers. There are supposed to be some of the brothers of Andrew that fought for the British but June has researched that and couldn't find anything.

June was my lifesaver at the very beginning. I met June twenty-two years ago via mail 'cause I was trying to straighten out my great-grandfather George's family and found her name and we have corresponded off and on all these years. She lives in California, I live in Florida and we met for the first time last night and what a thrill it was for me to meet June. She's a great Dillman authority.

I was lucky in my research to find that this great-grandfather of mine, Eli, was a very brilliant man. He's amazing! When I die and go to Heaven and if they ask me who would I like to meet, I'm going to say "Eli Dillman" because I know so much about him because he wrote an autobiography that I found from a ninety year old first cousin of my father and [she] sent me a copy. That gave me an insight into the life. It brings you to tears, how hard their life was.

They lived over here in Wayne County near the Ohio border for a while. He wrote very descriptive of the land [from] when they lived in Brown County, Ohio. My ancestors… Andrew came to Kentucky, left the civilization of Pennsylvania to Kentucky as most of us knew through that. And, then, they moved, George moved (his son George who married Mary Rhorer) to Brown County, Ohio and they left Kentucky because of slavery. Kentucky was a slave state, Ohio was a free state. [They were] very opposed to slavery and that was the reason for the move.

Then, my great-grandfather, Eli, married in Michigan and I never could figure out how he got to Michigan, what he was doin' in Michigan. Then, when I got the autobiography, I found out his brother had gone to Michigan to open a store and he went up to help him and he met his [future] wife there. They left Michigan and came back to Wayne County, Indiana, and settled there for a while.

Now, this Eli, I'll talk about him a lot because I just think so much of him. He was born, as he put it, he said his birth was uneventful except for the fact he was only born with one arm. His [other] arm was off at the elbow, that's as far as it went, and, it had a little hand. It is a hereditary thing and it happens, there are a few people that [it] still happen[s] to. I don't know the medical term for it, but, it is…there is…you will often, [well,] not often…I think I've only seen one other person in my life that had that deformity. Now, of course, they amputate the little hand.

But, he must've been just [a] wonderful person. He did so much. My sister has a chair, a rockin' chair, that he hand made. It has never been repaired. Doesn't have a nail in it. It's in wonderful shape. Anybody could sit in it today and rock for just as long as they want to. My branch of the family tree has been cut off with my two nephews and I told my sister I don't care what she does with that chair but it must go to a Dillman descendant so I don't know who's gonna get it but she knows no Dillman cousins. But, I will see to it… if she doesn't get it to the right person, I will haunt her! (laughter) Somebody in the family's gonna get that chair! But, it's a beautiful chair in very good condition.

He also…Daddy also found two table legs that he (Eli) had hand-carved for his dining room table which, unfortunately, we lost when the house burned. Cherry wood, it…they were beautiful.

So, when you're doin' your research, find a good resource like June. She not only knows her line, she knows all the lines! And, she can quote…she was tellin' me who my great-grandmother was name was last night, right on the top of her head.

Another thing that I suggest, pass all your information, don't hoard your information. Don't think it's "my" research, it's "our" research. You never know when a genealogy bug is gonna bite a cousin, their child or when…sometime. I have never met my…this second cousins _____ _____. They all have copies of my research. They didn't ask for 'em, I just sent it to 'em. They don't even thank me, I don't hear a word from 'em, but they've got it if they ever want it. They have the

benefit of my research if anybody ever wants to continue their branch on. I encourage everybody to do that.

And, I also believe in payin' back other genealogists. Several years ago, I was over here in Hancock County doin' research on a maternal line and I found the will book. Somebody had gone through and taken all the names out of the wills and alls I had to do was look up the family name, found the will and all the people mentioned in the will. It saved me tons of time! Now, this is before we had computers. This back when we had to go and dig in courthouses and things like that, which is still fun to do, and I said, "When I retire, I'm gonna pay back." Well, that's one promise I did. When I retired, I went back to Marion County in Florida where I grew up and I have no relatives there or anything. I went through the marriage records, the original books, and I recorded the marriage records of the bride and groom and when they got married and what pages recorded on, from 1844 to 1945, and the Genealogical Society printed it for me. So, I feel like I've done my share, too, because that book is in libraries all over the place. Saves a lot of time sometimes when you can go right to something. So, if you can, if you want to, it's a fun thing to do. Help somebody else that's gonna come along later. However, with the computers and things being put on CDs, it makes it a lot easier than it used to [be]. But,
it's nice to have your name in print, too, someplace, for posterity.

If you don't have money and time to go to a local area…it's fun to go do your own research, but, sometimes, it's very expensive and, sometimes, it's really better to hire somebody locally, especially if you've got a hard problem because they know where to look. You go into a town that you've never been before, you don't this, that, and the other
thing [and], unless you get the right person, you're gonna drive outta town [and] be fifty miles down the road and then say, "Oh, I should've gone and done this." So, sometimes, it's wise to hire somebody. It's worth payin' 'em twenty dollars an hour to do your research if you really want it done and it has to be done locally.

Another thing is, in doin' research, if you're stymied and can't find anything (and, I think we've we all have experienced that), I'm sure all of y'all have done this, experienced this, don't forget your collateral lines. Sometimes, the sister, your direct line's sister married somebody and you know that married name, get on the internet and go to that married name because somebody maybe is searching and they would still be related to you. My Mayflower ancestor that I searched for for twenty years 'cause I heard my great uncle, George Dillman out in California, that he had…he was a descendant of a Mayflower [passenger]. I'd never heard that before and I started checkin'. Well, it didn't come from the direct Dillman line so I started the maternal line. I got to a Johnson who I was firmly convinced was "hatched," (laughter) because I could not find her parents anywhere! So, I knew that my great-grandmother['s] sister had been a Beeson, I went on the Beeson [Forum}, put in a query, got a reply, and this woman's grandmother happened to be that Beeson's wife that was sister to my great-grandmother. So, between the two of us, and she sat down one day at her computer and went into Johnsons and she said, "I think I found 'em but I'm not sure." And, she found a Hugh Morse Johnson. And, when she said that, I said, "It's got to be it because my grandfather's name was Hugh Morse [Dillman]," and I said, "I've always wondered where his name came from," and it came from his paternal side. And, it just so happened I had the New England Historical Genealogy Society CD that I had borrowed from somebody. I sat down with that, that information on that Hugh Morse Johnson and, in ten minutes, I was back to the Mayflower and had my connection after all those years, it just took a little bit of time. Collateral lines, good resource, always use them.

Now, help. I'm attached to this [oxygen tank]. I have lung problems. Pay attention to the family history, health history if you have an opportunity to find out what they had. My first experience was when I found this ninety-year-old great-first cousin of my father's who had the autobiography of Eli Dillman and she knew Eli and she said "I'll never forget him because he had that horrible cancer on his leg." At that time, I was recovering from surgery from a cancer on my leg. There had to be a genetic connection there somewhere.

I have since found in talking to distant cousins, emphysema runs rampant in my family. Cigarette smoking did not help any of us, I'm sure, but, a lot of it, I think, had to do…the weakness was there; the genetic weakness was there. So, if you're a Dillman, and, I don't know whether it came from the Dillman line or the Rhorer line, but, my great-great-grandfather, George Dillman, lost a lot of children to lung problems. So did Eli Dillman. There was lung problems all along. I have second cousins [with] lung problems. So, if you're related to that Dillman-Rhorer [line], watch out for your lungs 'cause it's…I think there's a genetic weakness there. We don't know but those things are important to know. It kinda makes you feel better. "It's not all my fault, I couldn't help it!" (laughing)

One of the fun things of doing research is having a kind of a supernatural experience, and I had one over here in Delaware County around Muncie. Some twenty years ago, I was up here looking for my great-great-grandfather George Dillman's grave and it was raining, it was cold, I was by myself in a little town, a little cemetery, had no idea where to go, and there were two gates to that cemetery. I pulled into the first gate and something told me "No." I backed out and went to the second gate. I got out of the car and walked right to my great-great-grandfather's grave. I saw no other name. It was just like he was there takin' my hand and leadin' me to what I was lookin' for. Unfortunately, yesterday, I was in that same cemetery 'cause the stone was cracked, broken at the base, and I had contacted people tryin' to get it fixed but they couldn't find the grave so I went lookin' and the grave was no longer there. So, I'm staying over to go to Muncie to the courthouse to try to find out where the grave was…I know approximately where it was 'cause I know, I know that spot, I'll never forget that spot, so I can put another marker on that grave. I'm a great believer in grave markers. And, that's the reason why…some people don't understand. They say, "Why do you go to the cemeteries and take pictures of grave stones?" That's the very reason. I have a picture of that original gravestone I took twenty years ago. It's no longer in existence. So…he died in 1869 or so. I mean, you know, it's been around a long time. So, that's one reason. You're there, take pictures! Let other people think you're crazy. That's okay; you know you're not. So, do that.

I also had the privilege of my great-grandfather, Eli, and his wife, his son, a daughter… [his] two sons, a daughter, a daughter-in-law…were in unmarked graves…and another daughter in [the] southeast corner of Kansas and three years ago I was back there and I put a monument with all [of] their names listed on that gravesite because I want people to know that Dillmans were there. I went to cousins that I didn't know and I got half my money back, which was good. And, I wanna thank June because June's not…we're related way back but June was, bless her heart, was there with a donation and I really appreciate it 'cause she feels the same way I do. Let's mark these graves.

And, you know, some people say, "Oh, I don't wanna do my genealogy because I don't wanna see about the "horse thief" or this, that, and the other thing." You know, it's a lot easier to find out about a horse thief, he's got a paper trail. The farmer that didn't steal a cow and nobody stole his cow, they're hard to trace. So, don't be ashamed if you have a horse thief, be glad 'cause, sometimes, it's a lot easier and, of course, it makes it a little bit more interesting.

Another thing that I suggest you do in your research is periodically go through your files. You don't know what's there, you forget, and you get all this information. I have a great aunt who I still have never found her descendants. I'm getting' closer every time but I don't do much research anymore. But, I didn't know her last, er, her married name and nobody could remember. The distant cousins…of course, the cousins, when I was contactin' 'em, they were in their nineties and they had forgotten. In the book of the Dillman, Houser, Rhorer, Hoover Families, it shows that she married "blank," and, so, you know, it's kinda hard to find a woman when you don't know who they married. And, I looked and looked and looked, couldn't find anything, nobody knew. And then, one time, I looked at this autobiography that I'd gotten [for] Eli Dillman and somebody had written in the name "Varner" and, now, I have a last name. And then I have a letter from a great uncle that he wrote to my daddy and he said his baby sister had been long dead in Illinois so I knew she was in Illinois and the letter was written in 1860…I mean, 1960, so, I know that she died prior to that. Then, on the Internet one day, they had these help people that'll help look up different things and so this woman volunteered to look up death certificates for Illinois. I had found them on the 1820 (1920?) census so I knew the county and contacted her and she told me where she had died. Now, I have not done anything further but, at least, I now have got to go get a copy of her obituary and that will tell me her children's names and give me a little hint. But, you can track people down just for something that old because, a lot of times, not everybody lives in big towns. Once, when I was lookin' for another branch, I went to a little town in Iowa and I just used the name and I got phone numbers of everybody with that last name and I just started callin' people until I…they were all related to me but they put me in touch with the one that knew the most, had worked on that branch of the family. So, just use everything. Just…
Most of our cousins will talk to you and [they're] glad to hear from you because the Dillmans were not like Smiths, there're not a lot of us runnin' around. But, that's one thing that I have found that will help.

And, I guess the last thing I wanna tell you, and…oh, the Rhorer-Dillman line, if you're from the Rhorer-Dillman line, you are related to Hoagie Carmichael. I meant to look it up but it's through the Rhorer line, and, he is from over here in Wayne County, Indiana, is where he's from. And, we know we're back to Dick Cheney, too, so…I haven't found too many famous ancestors but I'm glad to have them in my family line. But, one thing I think we can do is to remember why the Dillmans came to the colonies…and they came for religious freedom. They were being persecuted as so many people were in that time. And, the first thing they did in my family is mentioned all the time they went to church, they were all church members, all Christians and that was their heritage, that was what…they were the people that helped make this country what it is today, and, they kept on. And, in this time when it's not politically correct to be a Christian, to believe in God, to mention God, to pray, is the ruination of our country and it's gonna take us down faster than anything. Whether you believe me or not, put it in the back of your mind because I guarantee ya', our God will not put up with what our country's doin'. So, please, pass your religious beliefs on to your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, so that they will have a country that they can live in peace and harmony with God. Thank you.

FOLLOW UP QUESTION

Q: Finding obituaries. Now, how do you do that? Do you have to go to the town and actually go through the newspapers?

A: No. If you've got…local libraries, you can contact libraries if you've got a date, and ask them to give you a copy. Send them a couple of dollars and a SASE and make you a photocopy and send it to you.
Q: The library in the town?
A: In the town, yeah.
COMMENT: Some of the state archives have newspaper collections, also.
A: Yeah, I have found better luck with the local because it's not the major production, you know, for the local person to go and they usually have them on microfilm. If not, then they can refer you to where they are. I actually started my genealogy research goin' back to the little town in Kansas and goin' through the actual papers and tryin' to find information, but times have changed so fast that you don't have to do that. Local libraries will help you. They will look up in their local history books and see if they're written up. There was this great uncle George of mine [who] was written up in Pomona, California because he put in the water works and planted the first lemon trees, and he was one of the developers of Pomona. And, little things like that can help you and give you clues along the lines.

[**Note:** You can listen to an audio recording of this address. Just look for an MP3 file entitled: Marguerite_L_Dillman_Indy_2002]