

Another DNA Find for the Nelson-Tripp Family!

By Sylvia Nelson

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Two years ago this month I attended the funeral of my second cousin's husband. My mother's last surviving cousin came up from California to attend the funeral, and we arranged to meet on the day following the funeral. We went through our Great-Aunt Lucy's chest, now in my second cousin's possession. In that chest was a box of letters Aunt Lucy had received from her two nephews during WWII. I was interested in the ones from my uncle in Hawaii, and my second cousin was interested in the ones from her uncle in San Diego.

One of the first letters I read was from my uncle telling Aunt Lucy about his fiancé, Bette, and how much they loved one another, but that her mother was against her marrying a "soldier boy," and that she was too young to marry in the first place. In the next letter, he told Aunt Lucy that he had been out in the Pacific for several months, and that when he returned to Hawaii, he discovered that Bette and her mother and brother were leaving for the mainland the following day. Several weeks later he received a letter from Bette telling him she was going to be a mother. He said he told Bette to contact Aunt Lucy, and that she would help her get settled; that he would send \$100 a month to her - almost his entire pay check! He said he was not ashamed, that they really loved one another.

This was in June, 1944.

I remember seeing a picture of a woman identified as "Bette" in one of my parent's photo albums. My mother said she was my uncle's girlfriend in Hawaii. By the time I was looking at the photo album, my uncle was married to someone other than Bette, and was the father of four children.

Being an amateur genealogist and just plain nosy, I went looking for Bette. I found information on her in census records in Hawaii, high school yearbooks, and numerous passenger records. I found that her father was from Canada, a WWI veteran, and that her mother was born in Seattle. I noted that Bette and her mother left Hawaii in June and returned the following February. It occurred to me that perhaps there might be someone out there who would be looking for birth parents or grandparents. Oddly enough, I had just had my male cousin's DNA test done to further prove our Putnam/Putman line, my DAR patriot's line.

That was two years ago. Last month I received the following notice through ancestry DNA:

Hi shn98110.

I just received the results of my DNA from Ancestry.com, and it said we are 1st cousins. I was adopted at birth in Los Angeles, CA, and know nothing of my family history. My birth mother's name was Betty Barton (that is what my birth certificate says, but don't know if it is real). Amazing that we live so close. I live in Port Townsend WA, and you are on Bainbridge Island. If you want to get in touch by email with each other my name is Sarah _____. I am 72 yrs old and the DNA says I am English and Irish. Seems like a lot of the matches are from Canada. Let me know if you want to get in touch with each other. I have no idea about my family other than what the DNA says. If you are not interested I totally understand. thank you

My eyes and ears twitched!! Could this person be the child of my uncle and his fiancé, Bette? I immediately wrote back, and said that if she is who I think she is, then I have a lot of information for her. She also matched my son's DNA!

After a few emails, we met in Poulsbo. Our DNA guru, Sue Hassenmiller, went with me. The minute Sarah walked through the door, I knew she was my cousin. She looks a lot like my mother and my cousin (now deceased), and had many characteristics of my uncle and his son.

Sue and I uploaded all tests to gedmatch (mine and my son's in addition to ancestry, and my male cousin's, were on ftDNA). The matches were overwhelming! The centimorgans were well over 1700 for her half-brother, and high for me and my son. I sent Sarah an invitation to view my tree on Ancestry. She was overwhelmed to have so large a family! Her adoptive parents, her adoptive brother, and her husband and son have all passed away. She has a daughter and granddaughter in Oregon. Her adoptive father's family became estranged after he and her mother divorced, and he passed away. Next was to tell my cousins that they have a half-sister. They already knew about the letters. So, I wrote to them. Two of them were ecstatic, but the third a little hesitant. She is the youngest of the three girls, and older than her brother. I am happy to report, though, that she has come around and is now excited to meet her new sister.

Sarah wrote recently:

I am still in shock after all these years of wondering who I came from....

Sarah and I have become good friends, like family! I am getting ready to introduce all of them via email so they can all talk and write before we all get together. I am extremely pleased that my DNA tests were out there, and that I actually was able to help someone find her family!