



Top O' The Morning To Ya

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I gave myself two Christmas presents in December. One was an upright freezer which I love. The other was a DNA kit.

Over the past three or four years I have been using computer software to develop my family tree. I made the mistake of putting the branches of all four grandparents on the same tree so now have over 6,000 people listed. It would have been much more manageable if I had made one tree for each branch. Oh well...

Because I had so many details about my relatives, I thought that I just knew what the DNA results would be. My paternal grandparents were both from England so that was easy. Research done by other relatives had my maternal grandmother's branch back to 1066 AD Norway and I was able to go even further with the software. Her husband, my maternal grandfather, was Pennsylvania Dutch and we had information dating from his ancestors who lived in Germany in the 1700s.

So, my guess was that my DNA report would come back as 50% English, 25% Norwegian and 25% German.

It didn't and I was quite shocked. The results revealed 41% Great Britain, 26% Scandinavian and 33% Other. No problem. I was sure that the 33% Other was German, right? Not! There were what they termed Trace Regions. Only 4% was classified as Europe West. So back to the research. After a couple of days I was able to find a link to Switzerland and Austria. Apparently my "German" relatives were actually not from there but only moved to Germany to escape religious persecution. There wasn't any pure German blood but instead a combination of a number of other regions and ethnicities.

Another thing that surprised me was that the DNA results showed me as 13% Irish. Didn't expect that! I began to think that it can't just be only my great-grandfather's Duggan clan that contributed to this figure. There must be more of the green out there somewhere.

What did I learn from this experience?

1. Don't make assumptions. You might not be who you think you are.
2. History is not always accurate or even shared accurately with relatives.
3. All families have secrets and what you find out or have been told might not be the truth.
4. From the beginning of time, people have moved from their place of birth to different areas or even far off countries.
5. Individuals from different cultures and ethnicities meet and make babies so most of us are a mix of interesting genes.
6. Sometimes information cannot be found so we need to live without it.
7. New technology such as the computer and DNA testing can fill in a lot of gaps.
8. Building a family tree is not only be an interesting pastime but also connects us with interesting people.
9. Creating a family tree and writing your own history is a beautiful legacy for generations to come.
10. I'm part Irish - which gives me one more special day to celebrate each year!

Happy St. Patrick's Day, everyone!