

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

20 November 2017

www.chuckroots.com

The Ripon Bulletin

An Acid Test

A few months ago, my wife Isaura and I decided to go through with having our DNA tested. It's not like we didn't have a pretty good idea what the results would be. After all, she was born on the island of San Miguel in the Azores, Portugal. As for me, the names in my background were all very British sounding.

Several years ago, our oldest daughter, Laura, signed up with Ancestry.com to begin researching our family's heritage. We knew very little about the Roots family, primarily because we couldn't get past my Grandfather. Little was known of him since he had left my dad and grandmother when my dad was only five. He was never heard from again within our family. Back in the '90's I eventually traced several documents to him through the Internet. I found a copy of his draft card dated 1917, stating he was married and living in Houston, Texas. Since he was born in 1883, he would have been 34 years old, therefore, too old for military service. Another document was when he signed up for Social Security in 1935. And the final document I discovered was his death certificate dated 1964. Other than that, we knew nothing about the Roots family.

My mother did not have any family information, nor had she ever heard anything from my Grandmother Roots about the Roots family line.

My wife was born Isaura Maria Rodrigues Matos Cabral. Since her family was from an island in the Atlantic nine hundred miles from the Iberian Peninsula, we assumed her DNA test would have her at 80% or higher full-blown Portuguese (The Iberian Peninsula consists of Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar and Andorra).

So, just what is DNA? I wasn't real sure, so I began to check into it. First off, DNA stands for Deoxyribonucleic Acid. "*It is a molecule that carries the genetic instructions used in the growth, development, functioning and reproduction of all known living organisms.*" In a word, it is the hereditary material found in all humans.

There are quite a few organizations that are doing DNA testing for a nominal fee these days. We decided to go with Ancestry.com. I ordered the packets for my wife and me over the Internet. In about ten days they arrived. The instructions were simple enough. Spit into a special tube until it reached a certain level (maybe a half ounce), then screw a specially provided top onto the tube. In this top was a chemical solution which would, under the pressure of closing the tube, break open

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and mix with the spittle. This would preserve the spit for a specified time. A number was assigned to each tube. Other than that, our names were not included. The numbers would be married up again after the testing was completed and mailed back to us.

About four weeks later the results came in. We went to the Ancestry web site and had a full display of our test results.

Like I said earlier, I was pretty sure the Roots clan was English with a bit of Scottish mixed in. Beyond that, it was anyone's guess.

I must tell you that the results were spot on! From my DNA they pegged me as 49% Great Britain, 24% Ireland/Scotland/Wales, 13% Scandinavian, 5% Europe West, 5% Iberian Peninsula, and 4% Europe South.

The part that intrigued me the most in all of this was how they tracked the migration of others who shared my DNA across the USA. They have my family arriving from Europe landing in Virginia and eventually moving across Tennessee and further south, finally settling in Texas. And sure enough! My father was born in Marshall, Texas in 1909. My mother (née Lake) was born in Lone Oak, Texas in 1915. From separate research, we discovered one of the Roots clan had a farm in central Virginia back in the late 1600s up through the early 1800s.

This has fit in with all the research Laura and I have done on the Roots family going back to 1693 in America. Prior to that it was England. There's still much to learn.

As for Isaura, that's another story! As it turns out, she is 42% Iberian Peninsula, 26% Greek/Italian, 13% Europe West, 9% Great Britain, 5% North African (Egypt), 1% Europe East, 1% Scandinavian, 1% Ireland, <1% Jewish/European, <1% West African/Benin/Togo.

In all, it was a fascinating discovery and will be something our grandchildren and their offspring can enjoy for years to come.

The kicker in all of this came from my granddaughter, Alyssa, who turns ten this week. When she heard us talking about the DNA results some weeks ago, she said, "But Granddaddy, it doesn't say anything about you being born in Milford, Connecticut!"