

PRESERVING
OUR PAST
SINCE 1988

SEARCHERS

NO. 80

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2019, ISSUE 1



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PGSNYS - FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**FOUNDED BY
MICHAEL
DRABIK**

**In May 2015, the
PGSNYS became a
not-for-profit
corporation in New
York State and also
received Federal
501(c)(3) tax status**

**Postal Address:
PGSNYS
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY
14225**

The PGSNYS meets the second Thursday of each month* in the Villa Maria College cafeteria, 240 Pine Ridge Road, Cheektowaga, New York, at 7:00 p.m.

Annual dues are \$20 (\$30 Canada, \$35 other countries), and membership entitles you to three issues of the *Searchers* and participation in the PGSNYS Yahoo Group.

As a new member you will receive an information packet to help you get started. The expiration date of your membership is on the mailing label of the *Searchers* and coincides with the anniversary date of when you joined the Society.

Please remit your membership dues by PayPal on our website or mail a check or money order to:

PGSNYS
c/o Membership Chair
P.O. Box 984
Cheektowaga, NY 14225

Please send any changes to your postal or E-mail address to PGSNYS at the above address or E-mail: membership@pgsnys.org

If you are a member, but not receiving E-mail from the PGSNYS mailing list, please send an E-mail to membership@pgsnys.org

*Exceptions: NO MEETING in July (picnic) or December (Christmas Party)

2019 PGSNYS OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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THE SEARCHERS NEWSLETTER

For submissions to the *Searchers* newsletter, deadlines are as follows:

1st issue (Spring) - due March 1st for April mailing
2nd issue (Summer) - due July 1st for August mailing
3rd issue (Winter) - due November 1st for December mailing

Submissions to the *Searchers* (articles as MS Word doc; photos as .jpg) should be sent via e-mail to: denise.oliansky@gmail.com

PGSNYS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear PGSNYS Members,

It is amazing to think about how far genealogy research has come in the last 25 years when I began working on my family history. The other day I was reading a Facebook post asking how someone could still use their 40 disks of Family Tree Maker. Their new Microsoft Window's software did not support opening the CD and they were devastated. It made me think back to when I had those CD's. I was so excited to get started on my genealogy, only to find out that the CD's did not include Poland. I asked my grandparents about their parents and you would have thought they were in the Polish Mafia. They said they didn't know anything about their family history. It wasn't until they passed away until I found out this wasn't true. They knew more than they told me.

Fast forward to 2019, and there is so much information on the Internet, sometimes it can be overwhelming. Keeping up with all the new websites and how to navigate them can be exhausting. A couple years ago, Elizabeth Nowak revised the PGSNYS 'Getting Started' research guide. You can find it on our website <http://pgsnys.org/research/tips-and-tricks/>. This is a great resource for anyone researching their ancestors. There are a lot of other great tools on our website as well. Please take a look around our website. If you have any suggestions for updates, please email them to information@pgsnys.org.

Sincerely, Nicole Pohancsek

POTPOURRI

WITAMY! NEW PGSNYS MEMBERS

Robert Benbenek, Chesterfield, MO

Leonard Fabian Jakubczak, Gaithersburg, MD

Paulette Cooke, Christiansburg, VA

Charles Bliss, Auburn, NY

Camille & Donald Metz, Buffalo, NY

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Jim & Diane Szulist, Clarence, NY

Vincent J. Litwin, Amherst, NY

Judith A. Nazzarett, Buffalo, NY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The PGSNYS monthly membership meeting on Thursday, May 9, 2019 will be held in the Villa Maria College Student Activity Center, Building #6 on the campus map (www.pgsnys.org). After the business meeting there will be a presentation by author Rosanne L. Higgins about Buffalo Poor Houses.

REMINDER: Electronic *Searchers* OPT-IN

We encourage our members to OPT-IN for the electronic version of the *Searchers* to help PGSNYS save on the costs of printing and postage associated with the paper version. The electronic version will always be sent out the same day the print version is mailed.

If you choose to OPT-IN for the electronic version in the future, **please follow these instructions exactly:**

- You may receive either the print or electronic version, not both. You must continue to pay your annual membership dues to receive either version. To continue to receive the print version, no further action is needed on your part.
- The deadline to OPT-IN for the electronic version of the *Searchers* will always be the 15th of the month preceding the next issue, so that would be March 15th for April, July 15th for August, and November 15th for December.



- To OPT-IN, send an email to denise.oliensky@gmail.com. Type SEARCHERS OPT-IN in the subject line of the email. This is important to ensure your email will not be missed. In the body of the email, type your full name and the email address you want us to use to send you the electronic version of the newsletter. Then hit send. That's all you have to do. You will receive a confirmation email from the editor so you know your OPT-IN request for the electronic *Searchers* was received. Thank you!

PGSNYS Adds 30,000 Records to Search Index by Charles Penasack

Thanks to the efforts of the PGSNYS' volunteer transcribers, over 30,000 records have recently been added to the PGSNYS database. These new records can be searched at PGSNYS meetings and roadshow events and are in the process of being added to the search engine on the PGSNYS website. Researchers may also request a search of the index by sending an email to information@pgsnys.org – an Excel spreadsheet with findings for the requested surname will be provided via e-mail.

The new entries include:

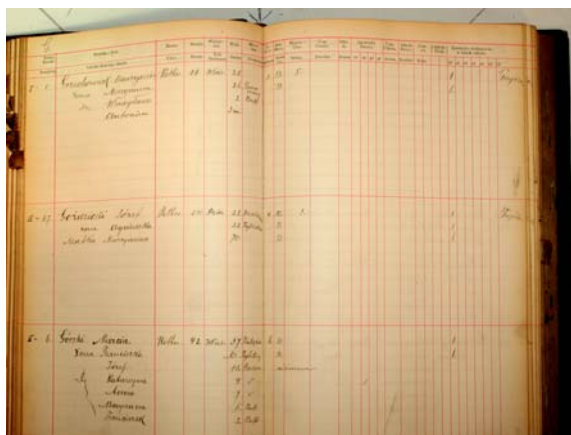
- 4,300 Dziennik newspaper index additions; new entries include death notices and other items from July through October 1946 and updates for 1929, 1930, and 1932-1936; in addition to death notices and related articles, over 1,600 weddings have been added to the index
- St. Stanislaus Parish Baptism Index (1874-1895) (draft) (13,100 entries); entries include dates of birth and baptism and parents' name (note: this database will be updated after

records have been proofread)

- Transfiguration Parish Baptism Index (1893-1897) (1,000 entries); entries include dates of birth and baptism and parents' names
- Holy Mother of the Rosary Polish National Church Baptism Index (1895-1910) (4,000 entries); entries include dates of birth and baptism and parents' names
- Holy Mother of the Rosary Polish National Cemetery Burial Index (1,780 entries; interments occurring more than 50 years ago); entries include date of death and/or burial
- St. Adalbert Parish Funeral Index (1886-1907) (2,900 entries); indexed entries include date of funeral and place of burial
- St. Adalbert Parish Census Index (1888) (3,340 entries); entries in the index include age of each person listed

After finding their relatives in the index, researchers are encouraged to obtain the actual records if they would like additional information. All of the baptism records listed above include the page and record number to assist in tracking down the records. For St. Stanislaus and Transfiguration parishes, the full baptism records generally include places of birth of the parents and godparents' names. These records are on microfilm at the Buffalo Central Library and can also be viewed at www.familysearch.org (registration, which is free, is required) by searching the catalog and selecting Buffalo, New York church records.

Holy Mother of the Rosary baptism records, as well as additional information regarding burials in the index, may be obtained by contacting the parish office or the PGSNYS (hmr@pgsnys.org). These records were re-copied at some point from the original ledgers, which no longer exist, and include godparents' names, but not places of birth.



St. Adalbert Census records

St. Adalbert funeral records are a combination of parish burials extracted from the United German and French Cemetery burial ledgers on microfilm at the Buffalo Central Library (1886-1890) and parish funeral records (1889-1907), which can be viewed at the Buffalo Central Library or at www.familysearch.org. Original records may contain places of birth, parents' names, and causes of death.

St. Adalbert Parish census records include names and ages of everyone in the household, addresses, places of birth (not populated on every page), sacraments received, and parish society memberships. The actual images are not available online, but may be ordered by contacting the PGSNYS (same process as *Dziennik* requests).

Future updates include additional St. Stanislaus and Transfiguration parish records. We hope to add sacramental records from other Polish parishes in WNY in the near future and are always looking for indexers to help transcribe records for our search engine. If you would like to help, please contact Nicole Pohanscek at npohanscek@gmail.com.

Researching Świętokrzyskie Ancestors

by Sandra Maciejewska Porter

Our maternal grandmother, **Agnieszka Kapuścińska Skrok Kiec**, was the only grandparent my younger sisters and I ever knew. Our grandfathers **Jan Skrok** and **Antoni Maciejewski** had both died in 1936, when our parents were only five and eight years old. Our father's mother **Marya Szczepańska Maciejewska** died in 1951, four years before I was born.



I was curious about my grandmother's origins and the land of my ancestors. In 2004, I joined a group tour of Poland, then rented a car to visit Gnieszowice, the small village near Koprzywnica, Sandomierz, where documents indicated my maternal grandmother had been born in 1895. Although I was able to verify my grandmother's birth in the former synagogue that had become the Archives in Sandomierz, I did not think I would be able to do much research in the Polish records.

That changed in March 2015, when I attended the Polish Genealogical Society of Massachusetts presentation by **Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz** at the Chicopee Public Library on *Locating Vital Records in Poland Using Online Resources, or, I Found My Village! Now What?* She answered questions I did not know I had, and her detailed examples clearly illustrated her points. I was inspired.

Following her example, I used the Geneteka database of the Polish Genealogical Society (in Poland!) to find the birth records of my mother's parents, their siblings, and their parents' marriage records, indexed with their parents' names. I learned how I was related to people I knew were cousins, but I was not sure how. Our ancestors came to Buffalo in the early part of the twentieth century from an area near Sandomierz, in the Russian occupied area of Poland, in what is now the Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross) province. To the family names I knew from Western New York—**Kapuściński**, **Kasprzyk**, **Kiec**, **Kwiatk**, **Rzepka**, **Skrok**, **Szczepański**, and **Witoń**—I was able to add my great-great grandparents and the names **Kolek**, **Bartkiewicz**, **Zybała**, and **Kaczmarz** to my family tree. Needless to say, I was pleased to make a donation to contribute to the volunteer site.

When I learned that **Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz** was to give a presentation on *Polish Genealogy Research* to the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State at their April 2016 meeting in Buffalo, I encouraged PGSNYS members to attend. I also reached out to several of my DNA matches in western New York and nearby Canada.

Although one of my DNA matches from southern Ontario was unable to attend the presentation, we exchanged information. She had been adopted, but she knew the names of her birth parents. Her birth father had even given her a tangible piece of her heritage, one of the

coins that had been sewn into the interior hem of her ancestor’s dress when she left the country, telling her that it was ‘not allowed’ to take monies out and that they ‘escaped.’

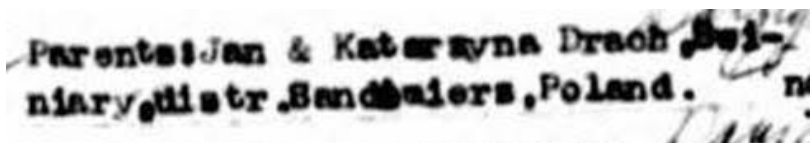


My DNA match had found the ship manifests from her father’s parents’ arrivals in Canada, but she was not sure from where they had come. But I did! I had been down this road, and I knew some of the signposts. And we’re family!



Her grandfather **Józef Drach**’s ship record said he was born in Świniary, Sandomierz. There are two very small villages named Stare Świniary and Nowe Świniary approximately three kilometers south of Łoniów. In Polish, Stare means old, Nowe means new. Both villages are in the administrative district of Gmina Łoniów, within Sandomierz County, Świętokrzyskie, about seven kilometers from Gnieszowice, where my grandmother **Agnieszka** was born.

Józef’s parents were identified as **Jan** and **Katarzyna Drach**. **Jan** is the Polish version of the English name **John**. **Katarzyna** is the Polish name for **Katherine**.



Józef Drach, ship Lituania, Danzig to Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1930

Geneteka had an indexed record that indicated that **Jan Drach** and **Katarzyna Borycka** married in Łoniów in 1895 (entry #23), as well as listing the baptism of **Józef Drach** in Łoniów in 1905 (entry #27). The church in Łoniów

is Kościół św. Mikołaja, St. Nicholas. While the record indices have been posted online, I did not find the original records.

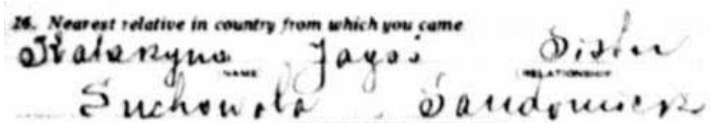
My DNA match’s grandmother was **Aniela Wiczorek**. Her ship record said she was born in Suchowola, and her sister **Katarzyna** lived in Suchowola, Sandomierz. Today, Suchowola is a village in the administrative district of Gmina Osiek, within Staszów County, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. It is not far from Sandomierz.

The nearest church is Kościół św. Stanisława Biskupa i Męczennika, St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr, in Osiek. Since ship and Canadian records said that **Aniela Wiczorek** was born in 1900 or 1901, the most likely record is in 1900, entry 143.

Aniela Wiczorek birth record, 1900, Osiek, Urząd Stanu Cywilnego, Św. Stanisława



Aniela’s nearest relative was listed as her sister **Katarzyna Janoś** (sp?).



Aniela Wiczorek, ship Melita from Warsaw, Poland, to Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, 1924

Katarzyna Wieczorek was a popular name, with baptisms of girls with that name occurring regularly in Osiek.

- 1891 35
- 1893 134
- 1895 71
- 1896 78
- 1897 100
- 1901 83

Although these records were available online, they were written in the Napoleonic format in Cyrillic, because this area was occupied by Russia in the 19th and early 20th century. I was not able to read the records myself, but my DNA match was able to use this information to extend her family tree to **Michał Wieczorek** and **Franciszka Czech** and beyond.

GEDmatch estimated the number of generations to our most recent common ancestor (MRCA) is 4.8, since we share a 19.1 centiMorgan DNA segment on chromosome 3. While we have not found our common ancestors, we found the common location where our ancestors lived.



When traveling in Poland, I stayed at the hotel at Baranów Sandomierski Castle, across the Wisła (Vistula) River from our grandparents' birth places. I also visited the towns of Sandomierz and Opatów, and Krzyżtopór Castle in Ujazd, Iwaniska, Opatów, about 22 kilometers from Łoniów. I had read about these places in James Michener's novel, *Poland*, and I was glad to make the connection to our family history in what is now Świętokrzyskie province.

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In Memoriam



FRANK WILCZAK - January 6, 2019. Beloved husband of 56 years to Dorothy (nee Grzedzicki); devoted father of Denise, Francine (Todd Weiss) Wilczak, Jaime (Kevin) Baldwin and Amy (Mark) Nies; loving grandfather of Jackson Nies, Xavier and Tristan Baldwin; dearest son of the late Helen Szkotnicki; dearest brother-in-law of Lorrie (John Sr.) Hunt; fond uncle of John (Christine) Hunt, Jr., Kim Hunt, Tiffany (Noel) Zimny and Jeffrey (Robert) Hunt; also survived by great-nieces, great-nephews and cousins. Family will be present Wednesday from 2-4 and 6-9 PM at the PIETSZAK FUNERAL HOME, 2400 William St. (near Harlem), where services will be held Thursday at 8:45 AM and at Our Lady of Czestochowa Church at 9:30 AM. Frank was a U.S. Army Veteran in the 24th Infantry Division, a lifelong member of Doyle Hose Co. #2, a member of Central Council, Western and Southwestern Fire Organizations, FASNY, Fireman's Memorial Exhibit Center, Buffalo Fire Historical Society and Polish Genealogical Society. Frank Retired from General Motors in 1997. The family wishes to thank Hospice Buffalo for their care and compassion. www.Pietszak.com

Frank was very active in the PGSNYS from about 1995 to about 2010.



Saving it Forward

by Patricia Rooney



There comes a time when all the available data is found concerning the ancestors. The notebooks have grown steadily over the years to the three-inch variety and several for each relative to boot! All are carefully labeled, containing documents and photographs of varying quality.

Ah, the pride of it all !!!! Such an accomplishment! Proudly they are displayed at meetings and family history conventions and workshops whenever possible. The sharing is exhilarating, similar to hearing a loud applause!

However. **However.**

Nothing deflates like a family member's comment, "Who cares? They are all dead people, and no one knows them anymore."

Any attempt to clarify the research with biological DNA knowledge only increases their need to voice a rebuttal of precise facts that **they** are unique beings with only a smattering of traits from those old ancestors.

"After all, mutations do occur, you know," they smugly say.

"But what about the nature and nurture elements?" you question.

"What about, it is none of your or anyone else's business!" they parry.

As the ground softens beneath you, be prepared for snarky comments about living in the present. Oh, yeah, and you recall Gramma's favorite statement as she would walk out of the room saying, "The past is past."

And like a prophet, you are ignored by most who are your peers and family. Like a historian, you will not be appreciated in your time. Like yourself, you will find writing about your own past to be the hardest to write with minimal editing.

True? **True!**

Chin up! **Lift your chin up.**

There are options. Giving it to a relative is not the only option for saving and passing on all your hard-earned research.

Donate it to a library. You don't have to be rich and/or famous to do this. Isn't that what libraries are for? Go find the local genealogy research room and talk to someone there.

Besides, sharing your stories and records is not about clinging to the past, it is about awakening the imaginations of those curious seekers in the future whose minds love unraveling the

mysteries of life.

After all, isn't that who YOU are?

For me, the way I chose to accomplish this was to become a member of Ancestry.com and upload my family tree. It is a safe and timeless place to save my records and stories. Alternatively, some of my cousins chose My Heritage.

What good is it to have your research safe, but hidden, in a closet or office? That's like keeping a ship tied up in a harbor. Yes, the ship will be safe, but is that why a ship is built?

Your research will do no good being kept private. It is meant to be available to a public. Why not display it? Ever consider publishing it in book form? So what if no one reads it! Like you know that for sure? Come on.

Start simple. Put together some picture books with young children in mind. Give the books as gifts, or just have them laying around the house for grandchildren to find.



I used to read my books to my grandchildren when they came for a visit. I also hope that the books will become more of a treasure once I am gone.

Why not? I think about what I wish my grandparents had told me, so I write it down for those future grandchildren.

Another reason to have your research in books is people love knowing how other people lived long ago. Just remember, this isn't meant to be a dull history book or a book of records. Think of it as a diary. Put some secrets in it.

Sometimes we forget that time moves forward and lives constantly change and so do costumes and language. Ever consider taking a trip back to someplace you went 10 years ago? The changes will be noticeable.

I am taking a class to learn Polish. Now there's a tough mind-bending language to learn! You laugh? Try it.

Guess what? Not only do you learn that their eating habits are changing, but so is the language. Are you eating the same foods your grandparents ate in 1909? Perhaps, but your relatives in Poland are not.

Do you think maybe they would like to know your past? Many of them lost contact with the relatives you know and hold dear. Ever think maybe they are wondering what happened to them? And I don't mean that you have to brag about how well everyone has done here in America.

Guess what? They survived WAR. They had homes and homeland demolished worse than a tornado ripping though.

They want to know that you missed them and that you cared and that sometimes you were not even told of their existence.

Want a pen-pal?

Want to build a memory?

Want to share?

Make a connection with the relatives who are living, and build a history for those yet to be born. Find a way to do it.

Travel.

Use the Internet.

Publish books.

Share your stories at meetings and workshops.

Just do it.



In Memoriam



FRANK MARTIN - February 27, 2019. Beloved husband of 63 years to Louise (nee Schaefer) Martin; loving father of Michael Paul (Eileen) and John Martin; dear grandfather of Matthew, John Michael (Rachel) Martin and Elizabeth (fiance; Alex Atkins) Martin. Family and friends may call Monday from 2-4 and 7-9 PM at the Dietrich Funeral Home, Inc., 2480 Kensington Ave., Amherst. A mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Tuesday at 9:30 AM at St. Aloysius Gonzaga RC Church, 157 Cleveland Dr., Cheektowaga, 14225, please assemble at church. Flowers gratefully declined. Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association. Frank was a past fire commissioner/firefighter with Cleveland Hill Fire Department and a veteran of the Korean War.



Editor's Note: Frank was a long-time, very active member of the PGSNYS, joining in its early years and holding various roles throughout his long tenure. I got to know Frank when I started volunteering on the *Searchers* committee and then served as its editor, as Frank always handled the mailing process with efficiency and dedication. I enjoyed some very pleasant evenings with Frank and his wife, Louise, as we put closure tabs, mailing labels, and stamps on every copy destined for the Post Office, the delivery of which was another task Frank always handled. Around 2015, Frank's health started limiting his attendance at meetings and eventually forced him to give up his volunteering activities. I sorely missed his assistance and company. Frank had a wonderful sense of humor, a great love of family, and a passion for genealogy research. He will not be forgotten.

The Final Questions Answered: DNA Matches Reveal the Outcome of My Birth Father's Life

By Denise M. Oliansky

In the Summer 2018 issue of the *Searchers*, I ended my article about using DNA matches to identify my birth father's family by saying I still wanted to find out if he remarried and had more children, and adding that I was confident it would be through future DNA matches that I would find that answer. Well, my prediction was proved correct.

On February 1, 2019, I received an email (through AncestryDNA) from a woman named Jennifer who said she received a DNA match notice that she and I were first or second cousins, and she was wondering how I was related to her. I checked our joint DNA matches and saw that we both matched with my full sister, but not my half-brother from my birth mother, so I knew our kinship had to be on my birth father's side. We also jointly matched a previously identified cousin on my birth father's paternal side, so I knew we were related through his father's line and not his mother's.

I responded to her message by giving her the names of my paternal grandparents and great-grandparents, asking if she had any of them in her family tree. This was before I knew she had no interest in genealogy and had done the DNA test simply out of curiosity when she received it as a Christmas present. She had just received her DNA results and first matches that day.

She answered, "Richard is my grandfather, but I don't know anything about his parents."

Well, my heart about stopped. Richard was my birth father's name.

With a racing heart, to be sure we were talking about the same Richard, I asked her if her grandfather died in 1995.

She wrote back, "Yes, in Buffalo. He was married to Joan, and they had four children: Bruce, Priscilla, William, and Penelope."

I had to get up and pace the room for a minute or two.

There we have it, folks, the answer to my two remaining questions about my birth father -- did he marry again? Yes indeedy! Did he have more children? You betcha! Counting his four children and the four half-brothers and two half-sisters from my birth mother, I have ten half-siblings!

I guess I could stop right here since the questions are answered, but there is so much more that came to light in the next couple days.

At this point in our messaging, I asked Jennifer to call me, and gave her my cell number. She immediately phoned me. Taking the direct approach, I asked her which of Richard's children was her parent, and she answered that Penelope was her mother.

I said, "Well, I'm Penelope's half sister."

She said, "Huh?" followed by understandable silence.

I filled in the blanks for her, explaining that I and my sister were Richard's children from his first marriage, which ended around 1956, and resulted in my sister and I being given up for adoption by our birth mother.

Jennifer told me Richard never told anyone he had been married before or had other children. Whenever he was asked about his parents and family in Du Bois, PA, he simply said he had no one living. I know that is not true because the previously mentioned cousin match on my birth father's side told me nearly all the family stayed on in Du Bois. Even he still lives there.

Jennifer went on to tell me that Bruce and Priscilla were Joan's children from her first marriage, but Richard had adopted them. It pleased me that he chose that route. So, while they are not my half-sibs by blood, they are by adoption. He and Joan then had William and Penelope. They lived in Buffalo, near Buffalo State College. It pains me some to know that my birth father lived in Buffalo all those years, and I wouldn't have known him if we crossed in the street. I went to Buffalo State, so who knows, maybe we did.

What came out in rapid succession was the following information:

- Penelope first had Danielle, then Jennifer, and then their younger brother Joey, who had a different father than Jennifer and Danielle.
- Penelope died at age 36, officially by drowning, but the family was pretty sure she had been murdered by the Italian mafia guy she had married and divorced before she married Joey's father. He had been violently abusive to her in their marriage and, evidently, after their divorce as well.
- The family did not have any contact with Jennifer's Uncle Bruce who is in Colorado.
- I shouldn't take it personally if her Uncle Bill (William) didn't want to meet me, as he tends to stay to himself.

As I was endeavoring to digest all of that, I casually mentioned to Jennifer that just the day before I had received a message from another first or second cousin match named Daniel from the same line asking how we were related. Jennifer told me she got the same match, but as a sibling!! In his message to her he told her his birthdate and that he had been given up for adoption.

Let that sink in for a minute!

Jennifer told me it was likely her mother Penelope had another child and gave him up for adoption. She used to "disappear" sometime for weeks or months at a time, so she could have hidden her pregnancy.

It was about this point in our conversation that Jennifer said she had to go call her sister, Danielle, to tell her their grandfather had been married before and about their two new aunts. As she put it, "She's going to freak out!"

She called me back later after talking not only to Danielle, but also to Joey, Priscilla, and William. None of them knew anything about Richard having a previous marriage and two other children. Not surprisingly, everyone was shocked. At least I had been through this with my birth mother's side before, so it was old hat to me. For them, though, this was a bombshell.

We arranged to meet at Tim Hortons on Superbowl Sunday afternoon to chat and look at her picture albums. Jennifer, Danielle, and Joey all showed up, and in the course of conversation, I was hit by a few bombshells myself. A classic case of finding out about things you didn't necessarily want to know. They were very forthcoming and open about their family, I'll give them that. At some points I was looking for a wall to bang my head against!

Of course I was most anxious to hear about Richard. They told me Joan was a full-blooded Native American. She and Richard drank a lot, but at some point they decided to quit and both remained sober until after Richard died in 1995, then Joan started up again. Richard worked for Greyhound. Compared to the unfavorable picture my birth mother painted of him ("He's not worth your time. He was not a good person."), and the fact that I knew he was abusive to her, I was happy to learn he seemed to have gotten himself together. From photos Jennifer shared, he seemed fond of his grandchildren. He died young, at only 62. Joan passed away just a few years ago.

My half-siblings (Jennifer, Danielle, and Joey's aunts and uncles) are colorful to say the least.

I asked why they didn't have contact with Bruce. They told me he doesn't just live in Colorado. He lives in a penitentiary in Colorado, likely for the rest of his life. He is a sexual predator and child abuser.

Priscilla, I don't know much about. I know she raised Danielle after Penelope died. Jennifer was raised by Joan and Joey by his father. When I asked if Priscilla wanted to meet me, Jennifer said she was still processing things and felt guilty about the fact that Richard adopted her and Bruce, but gave up my sister and me. I assured her that Richard probably never knew we were put into foster care and later adopted. He likely assumed we were raised by our birth mother. I truly hope to meet Priscilla. Of all of them, she is the one most likely to be able to fill me in about our father.

William drinks. That is all William does, from morning until night. He is not a belligerent drinker, thankfully. Just "a big, happy drunk" is how they described him. He called Jennifer several times while we were at Tim Hortons. He wants to meet me, wanted me to come over to watch the Superbowl with him, and already considers me his sister. I'd like to meet him too; probably early in the morning would be best.

Jennifer has established contact with their sibling match, Daniel, and it is clear Penelope was his mother. Unfortunately, his father is likely the man the family thinks killed Penelope. Naturally, they did not tell him that. If Daniel happens to find other DNA matches that confirm he is his father, they will be there for support. He does not live locally.

The five of us (me, Jennifer, Danielle, Joey, and Daniel) are all connected on Facebook now. At this writing I have not met or heard from Priscilla or William.



My birth father, Richard, with his grandchildren, Jennifer and Danielle, when they were toddlers

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