



Courtesy Photo
Rosalyn Costanzo with her father, Sam Pate

Digging Up Roots

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My journey began when I learned my father, Sam Pate, was dying. Facing the reality of my father's mortality forced me to take a good long look at my own life.

After the initial shock wore off, I got busy. Spending time with my father became my first priority. I dedicated hours and hours discussing his wishes and journaling his memoirs.

I quickly realized my father didn't know much about our family history. Armed with a family coat of arms and a laptop, I started digging.

Considering myself to be relatively technically savvy, I jumped online. I searched Google and I searched Google. Soon, I found that the information highway was in gridlock.

An online search is only as good as the information you already have in hand. In my case, I found my information painfully lacking. Deciphering my family coat of arms was thrilling, though I felt I needed a decoder ring to decipher some of the symbolism used in family crests.

Luckily there are plenty of Web sites available to assist with this endeavor.

I discovered that the family originated in Europe. What a shocker. Anyone who went to elementary school could have figured that one out.

I eventually found that a group of Scottish men with my maiden name were somewhat honorable. What a relief.

However, the gap between the Crusades and the Civil War remained quite elusive.

Knowing my family has been in Dallas for three generations, I decided it was time I headed downtown, bound for the Dallas Public Library.

The downtown library has an entire floor dedicated to genealogy research. With the assistance of one of the available researchers, I was able to locate information about my family back to my great grandfather, but again I was stuck.

Discouraged by how little I had found, I decided to head back online. I was able to reach past one more generation, but I hit a wall when I found five Jeremiah Pates in Tennessee from around the same time period.

How on Earth am I going to know which one of these men may have been the right one? Jeremiah being quite a popular name back in the day, I was stumped.

Just as I was about to throw in the towel, I struck gold. Not literally of course, but as good as gold when it comes to genealogy.

I found the [Pate DNA Project](#). I was blown away. Can this be real?

I thought I had stumbled into what very well could be the most amazing genealogy resource ever. DNA tests being used were for more than just crime scene analysis or finding your "baby daddy." [FamilyTreeDNA.com](#) is dedicated to surname research.

Lo and behold, there they were, waiting for me.

The only problem I found is that female DNA is not specific enough to make for an accurate test result. Tests can be taken, but results will vary and may be inconclusive.

Male chromosome is the most accurate test. My clock was ticking away. How long would this take? Could I convince dear old dad to participate?

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the test is as simple as brushing your teeth. The test consists of swabbing the inside your cheek with a bumpy Q-tip.

These bumpy Q-tips range in price from \$149 for a 12-points of common DNA test to a 67 points of common DNA test for a "mere" \$350 Those are some pricy Q-tips, but I was stuck.

And after all, how much is this sort of information really worth?

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For me it seemed priceless, so I took the bait. After ordering my DNA test kit, I sat like child waiting for the ice cream truck.

Stalking my mailman for three days, I waited for my test kit to finally arrive. I tore open my tiny package and looked at my \$350 Q-tips with childlike curiosity.

To me this seemed entirely too easy. My dad was still apprehensive as I handed over his three Q-tips. Again, I thought, "Can this really be this easy? What am I going to find?"

With my sample collected and the kit neatly packaged, I set off to mail my treasure into the unknown. I found myself sick with anticipation.

All that was left to do was wait, and I learned that I despise being at the mercy of someone else. I am a doer, not a waiter.

At long last ... I got mail — if you call six weeks a long time to wait.

Before me was a series of numbers that just stared back at me. I was dumbfounded. What were these numbers trying to tell me? I felt like calling Dan Brown, but the answers were much easier than all that.

In comparison to the other 123 participants tested, I am a direct descendant of the first Jeremiah Pate I found. I had sadly only discovered one more generation backward, but I am confident that I now know which Jeremiah is my great grandfather.

Unfortunately, my search ended there. I now have all the available information on my family tree. I have tested modern science and the Internet, only to arrive knowing little more than what I already knew.

I can now say with confidence that I am indeed an American. I laugh at the ridiculous rollercoaster ride of a journey I had embarked upon.

At least now I can register as a Daughter of the American Revolution, which reminds me, I need to update my résumé. Maybe one day another distant cousin with more information will join the DNA Project and I might discover how the lines connect across the pond.

For now, my genealogy quest is over and I can get started on my scrapbook projects. Yeah right. ■

For more information on genealogy research, check out some of the Web sites I found helpful. Don't forget to stop by the downtown Dallas Library for some hands-on research.

www.FamilyTreeDNA.com

www.allfamilycrests.com

www.fleurdelis.com

www.genealogy.com

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