

DNA test unites father and daughter after 57 years

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George Hartman's niece gave him a DNA kit for Christmas. Little did she know that it would lead to his discovery of a 57-year-old daughter that he never knew he'd fathered.

The Crescent City resident — who is 83 — figured he would use the kit from the company "23 and Me" to find out how much of his ancestry was German.

"Well, come to find out, I'm not that much German," he said. "I'm more Irish, English and Scottish."

Patricia Stanberry lives in the Mojave Desert town of Boron. She always knew her real father was out there somewhere, as her mother had told her all of the kids in her family had a different father.

"I'd daydreamed of finding him since I was four," she said. "'23 and Me' gave me the opportunity."

Stanberry's husband, Dennis Martin, talked her into taking the DNA test. The company's DNA database showed she had a relationship to one of Hartman's nieces and she made a connection with her first. Then,

about three months ago, she discovered Hartman. After building up her nerve, she rang him up.

“It was kind of a hard thing to do, call him and say, ‘Hey I’m your daughter,’” Stanberry said.

Hartman said he had no reason to doubt modern technology.

“Well, if ‘23 and Me’ says I’m your father, then I’m your father,” Hartman said.

Hartman was working at a remote radar outpost at Cape Mendocino for the Air Force when a night out with the boys left behind a little girl.

“We went in partying at a bar in Old Town area of Eureka. I had a one-night stand. Now I have a daughter,” Hartman said.

By the time Stanberry was born in Red Bluff, the Air Force had taken Hartman cross country to Massachusetts.

Hartman had actually lived in Crescent City beginning in 1960. He was was stationed with the 777th Radar Squadron at Requa Air Force Station near Klamath, where he met his wife, Joanne. After 13 years away, they returned to Crescent City where he eventually retired.

After Stanberry's initial phone call, the father-daughter duo corresponded back and forth, with Stanberry building a bond with Hartman’s other daughter, Victoria.

“They found out they have many of the same traits, same interests, everything, like they really are sisters,” Hartman said.

And when Stanberry told her step-sister about finding her dad, her sibling suggested they hop in the car and go meet him.

So they made the 12-hour drive north from Boron, 702 miles away, for a three-day visit to Crescent City in mid-July.

“I was so tickled to have George as my dad,” Stanberry said. “I had always pictured in my head what dad looks like. George fits bill.”

Hartman said his family immediately took in Stanberry as one of their own.

“With her, now there’s five — three boys and two girls. She’s part of the family,” Hartman said. “Just the way she acted, intermingling. My wife, Joanne, and her got along good.”

They got in his Bronco and toured the town and surrounding areas.

“The Mojave Desert doesn’t have trees and she’d never been in redwood country,” Hartman said. “We drove around the old 101. Toured the lily fields and blew my transmission on the last day coming back to town.”

He said the whole experience was excellent. Outstanding. “You’re wondering how it’s going to go,” he said. “It was really like we’d known each other for ages.”

“We had a blast. Dad took me all over seeing things,” Stanberry added. “George’s wife, she’s been fantastic. I asked if I could call her Momma Joanne. She said kidding, ‘Oh I wanna move in with her.’ I’ve never met nicer people in my life.”

Stanberry is already planning to rent an RV for her next road trip to Crescent City next month to spend more time with her new family.

Meanwhile, Hartman is enlisting the aid of his nieces again to clarify his "23 and Me" results. He said they show that he and his half-brother may have actually shared the same father all this time.

“23 and Me' throws a lot of rocks in the water,” Hartman said.