

Finding Family – May 2019
Cousins, Right Under Your Nose
By Carol Kilby

About 20 years ago, I was searching through the Napa phone book to locate a number. While doing this, I happened to notice a listing with my mother's maiden name. The name is not common and was the only one listed. I decided to call this person and find out if by chance we were related. I did just that and explained that my family had come from County Mayo, Ireland. She said that her family came from County Leitrim and she did not think that we were related.

Flash forward to 2018 and DNA. I decided to have my DNA tested by Ancestry. When the results became available, several names were listed as relatives. Many of them I already knew as cousins but there were a couple of names I did not recognize. I contacted one of them, Maureen, who lived in San Mateo. I explained to her that our DNA match indicated that we were fourth cousins.

She was excited to hear from me but explained that her family came from County Leitrim not County Mayo. Where had I heard that before? I asked her if she had a sister who lived in Napa. Yes, you guessed it. Indeed, she had a sister in Napa and it was the same person I had talked to 20 years earlier. So it appeared we were related after all.

Maureen explained about her family and sent me a chart of her ancestors. We could not determine how we were related since she was from one county and I from another. After some research at the Napa Valley Genealogical Society library, I learned that in the past her family had lived in County Mayo.

I invited her and her Napa sister to lunch at a restaurant in Napa. We met and enjoyed exchanging information. Maureen told me that she had a neighbor in San Mateo who also had our family name in her tree but had never taken the DNA test. They had never found a connection and teased one another for years calling themselves "kissing cousins."

From her married name I discovered that she was a descendant of my grandfather's sister. The neighbor was my cousin and since I was related to Maureen then the neighbor was most likely also a cousin of Maureen's. They really were more than "kissing cousins."

I contacted the neighbor's sister, who was a DNA match to me on Ancestry. Her name was Nancy. She visited Sacramento several times a month to visit her mother and she wanted to connect when she was in the area. We met for lunch at my home. She brought her two sisters, her aunt (who I already knew) and her mother. We had a wonderful afternoon getting to know each other. In a short time, I had met a total of six cousins I had never met and two cousins I had not known about before (Maureen and her sister in Napa).

So one never knows where a cousin might be living. Perhaps right under your nose! Or right next door! DNA, a little digging and a little effort proved worthwhile. If you have not had your DNA tested why not give it a try? Who knows-your neighbor next door may be your cousin.

The Napa Valley Genealogical Society is at 1701 Menlo Aye, Napa. For more information, call (707) 252- 2252 or go online to www.napavalleygenealogy.org/.