

“Finding Lala” Part II

NOTE about DNA; a child has the possibility of receiving up to 3,000 centimorgans (cM's) from their parents. My half-sister Darlene and Aunt Christine submitted DNA samples to Ancestry DNA test, and we are close family matches with over 1,500 cM's for each of us.

April 2019 I was visiting my Dad, it was late at night and he had gone to bed. I visited the My Heritage website and there was a message informing me of about half a dozen matches. There were five 1st or 2nd cousins and a niece. So, I messaged them with what factual information I knew. About thirty minutes later I received a message reply from the niece that read, “you need to talk to my mother” now I am wondering who is your mother? About 5 minutes later I get a message from her mother, a 1st cousin, “based on the information you provided and our degree of DNA match, I know exactly who you are.” Now my curiosity is really tweaked. I message her back to arrange a time to call her the next day. I called this 1st cousin, Debbie, and we spent the next hour and half talking. Almost as though we had known each other all our lives. She gave me so much information that I was quite overwhelmed. Debbie having recently returned, a week before, from a visit to the Carolinas commented that I and Bettie Anne had come up in conversation with one of my aunts. She tells me two of my aunts are still living, and I have three younger half-sisters, Darlene, Elizabeth, and Diane, still living.

Since April 2019 Darlene and my aunt Christine have submitted DNA samples and both came back as close family member, with over 1,500 cMs. through DNA matches and genealogy website hints I have identified over 600 bio-relatives. I now know that those on my paternal side are deceased.

In conversations with my aunts and half-sisters I am discovering many things, such as “our mother searched for me and Bettie Anne till the day she died”. At one point she felt she had found Bettie Anne, but when approached, she denied the possibility and said she didn't want any further contact”. The three half-sisters said, “we have known of you all our lives and have loved you as a brother, so I could forget the half”. I also believe that I have found Bettie Anne, but. In speaking with her she denies the possibility and does not want to be bothered. I promised her that I would not contact her again.

I also discovered that due to some clerical error or omission between Craven and New Hanover counties that my original name, Charles Ray Thompson, and birth certificate were never sealed and removed from public access. So, I am now in possession of my original birth certificate which has much more information than my adopted birth certificate.

Barbara and I took a trip to the Wilmington, North Carolina area in the fall of 2019, to reconnect with my two aunts and meet my three sisters. I am not certain what I expected from contact with newfound biological family members, should I ever find any. But I was surely overwhelmed by the out-pouring of love and affection expressed by all.

But maybe I should not be surprised, as they have known and wondered about me and Bettie Anne their entire lives. While I am just now finding out about them.

Now to finish my story, back to **Finding Lala**; My aunt Christine was fourteen when I was born so she was charged with care and supervision of the little ones. My sister Bettie Anne being three and a half years older, and one of my aunts only fourteen months older than me. It is most likely that in those first two years of life, I spent more time with my aunt than I would with an older sister. For a child under two years old her name would have been much too difficult for me to say, so I called her **Lala**. I now know her name is **Lillie Mae**.

So, in closing, my purpose for sharing these discoveries is to impress upon you two things;

1. Never give up your searching, no matter how tall or thick the wall, nor how wide the chasm may seem. There are always the means to overcome these challenges.
2. Never limit your options. Dare to think outside the box you believe yourself cornered in. There is always a solution, you just have to find it.