

Coincidences in Kentucky

By Carolyn Rutherford

Speaking of coincidences -- my son recently moved from Wisconsin to Northern Kentucky, and for more than 20 years I have been researching an ancestor, Philip RUTHERFORD, who had applied for some bounty land there in 1850/1855. So during our July 4th weekend visit, I made plans to revisit a small library history room in Cynthiana [Harrison County], where most local documents have been moved.

As I sat there reading, in came another researcher (and his fiancée) from Texas, said his name was BROOKS, asked who I was looking for, and then we both started reading.

My husband doesn't do the research, but he enjoys going out with his digital camera and taking pictures of cemeteries, local sites and buildings in the areas we visit for research. As he was walking around Cynthiana a local man (Vietnam veteran) who was watching him from a wheelchair yelled to him and asked why he was taking pictures. Not wanting to seem rude, but unsure he wanted to talk, my husband gave him a short answer and then continued. But this man didn't let him alone, so they began to talk and found out they had served in Vietnam about the same time and places. Eventually my husband walked to a local business, took some pictures of this man with his girlfriend, and then got his name and address because he promised to send him copies.

Returning to the library room I was in, he handed me a small slip of paper and told me about the meeting and that he had to remember to send this guy some pictures. I looked at the paper, saw the name and said to my research companions "Are you interested in talking to a local person named BROOKS?" Surprised and not sure what I was saying, the man said sure but he didn't know any.

After a brief explanation of what just happened, my husband and Dennis BROOKS, who I had been sitting with, went running out to relocate "Sonny" BROOKS -- the man in the wheelchair. They had to do a little looking, but did have his address so they found him. As they talked, it turned out that these two BROOKS men had a common ancestor and Sonny knew a local 80-year-old aunt. He thought she had some family history and pictures. They made arrangements to visit her that afternoon.

The three of them -- Dennis BROOKS of Texas, "Sonny" BROOKS of Cynthiana, Kentucky, and my husband, George, (all Vietnam vets) came back to the library to get Dennis's fiancée, and to tell me what had happened. As they returned, my husband introduced me to "Sonny," saying "I'd like you to meet my wife, Carolyn." At that moment, Dennis BROOKS looks at us surprised again, and says, "Here is my fiancée, Carolyn."

I didn't find much to help me in my research quest that day, but I have no doubt that our being there was for a very important reason. We were able to hook up some people who never would have had a chance of meeting if we hadn't been there.

Coincidence? Fate? Serendipity? Maybe it's just that we are all searching for much more than just the dates, the names, and the locations, and sometimes we experience a deeper meaning in all of this that keeps us going. The good news here has to be tempered with the sad, in that Dennis told us he has cancer and has been given only a short time to live. At least we were able to help him link up to family.

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