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# The Thrasher Newsletter

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Greetings to all of my cousins. I hope you have a blessed Thanksgiving this year, and are making plans to join us at the next Thrasher Family reunion in May.

- Susie Thrasher

## **Judy Russell A Genealogist you should Know**

Nancy Cherry, the co-editor of the newsletter, shared the name of Judy Russell with me recently, and I am so impressed by the depth of knowledge on her blog, <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/>. I highly recommend visiting it yourself. What follows is just one interesting article (edited for space) from Judy Russell's blog, called *The Legal Genealogist*:

### **Half or full...**

#### ***Yes, DNA can usually tell the difference***

It's one of the most common questions people have about DNA testing. Just this past week two different people wrote in to *The Legal Genealogist* with some variation on the theme: Can a basic genealogical DNA test tell the difference between half-siblings and full siblings?



One questioner's parents had passed on but brothers and/or sisters remain who still have niggling doubts about whether they all share the same set of parents. Could they be half-siblings — sharing only one parent — instead of full siblings, sharing both mother and father? And can a less-than-\$100 buy-the-kit-and-wait-for-the-results DNA test really tell the difference?

The answer is usually yes, it can tell the difference, as long as the test results are combined with all the facts and properly understood.

Now... let's be clear here: we're talking about the autosomal DNA test here, and not YDNA testing or mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) testing. Autosomal DNA is the kind we all inherit from both of our parents and that's used, in genealogy, primarily to find cousins to work with collaboratively. YDNA is the kind only men have that's inherited only from their fathers and so is used to trace the direct paternal line. And mtDNA is the kind we all have but that's inherited only from our mothers and so is used to trace the direct maternal line.

Here's the deal: with autosomal DNA, we all inherit 50% of our DNA from our fathers and 50% from our mothers. Because of a random jumbling of the DNA that occurs every single time a child is produced — a process called recombination — brothers and sisters won't share the same exact DNA. One sister might have gotten a bit more from the maternal grandmother's line than the others; one brother might have gotten a bit more from the paternal grandmother's line than the others.

But on average full siblings will share about 50% of their autosomal DNA. Now... since half-siblings are only inheriting autosomal DNA from one shared parent and not two, the amount of shared DNA they'll receive is cut in half: to 25%. And that difference usually shows up fairly dramatically in the standard DNA tests we take for genealogy when we look at the number of centiMorgans (cM for short) that we share with a sibling. That's a unit of measurement in DNA that helps determine genetic distance — in other words, just how closely related two people are. The higher the number of cM shared with a sibling, the closer the genetic distance — or, in plain language, the more likely it is that you're full siblings and not half.

Now the charts we used to use in genealogy tell us we should expect 2550 cM in common with a full sibling and 1700 cM in common with a half sibling. But more recent research has shown us there's a range we can expect to see.

You can see this represented in terms of the statistical probabilities — the odds that two people are full or half siblings — in the DNAPainter tool called [The Shared cM Project 3.0 tool v4](#). Plug in the total cM in common in the box at the top, and the tool will give you the odds: at 1700 cM, the odds are 100% that the two people are half siblings; at 2620 cM, the odds are 100% in favor of full siblings.

My own half sibling, for example, has a range of 1622-1975 cM with his half-brothers and half-sisters. The percentages tool gives us 100% odds for half sibling on that entire range. And my range with my full siblings is from 2566-2858 cM, with the odds for full sibling from 99.71% to 100%.

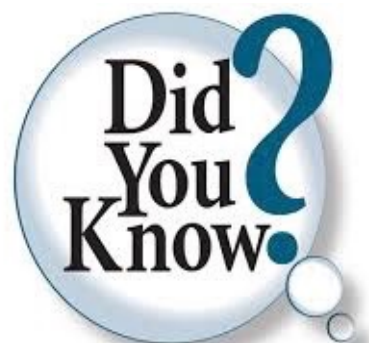
Where it gets dicey is starting around the 2000 cM level — that's where there is some small amount of evidence that a match could be either full or half sibling. At 2250 cM, the odds are pretty close to 50-50 either way. And at that point, of course, you may very well need more than an over-the-counter DNA test to answer the question.

Bottom line: yes, usually, the test data tells you whether you're full or half siblings, as long as you look at all the data, and understand the test results fully.

Oh... and remember... there are real ethical issues involved in DNA testing, and we need to be prepared for all of them before we ask anybody — especially a maybe-full-maybe-half sibling — to test.

*For the full article on Full & Half Siblings by Judy Russell and her sources go to: <https://sable.madmimi.com/c/185028?id=272408.2430.1.88f5dd470683beb71e22f298606ea364> (or copy and paste this address into your web browser)*

According to The Family Curator blog by Denise May Levenick, DNA testing of old postage stamps, envelope flaps and other personal artifacts will soon become readily available to the average consumer. In her blog of April 19, 2018, Ms. Levenick says that now is the time to locate potential specimens, preserve them in archival storage, and plan a testing strategy. She strongly suggests moving items from cardboard boxes into new archival storage if you have not yet done so.



## ***BREAKING NEWS from the Legal Genealogist::***

### ***MyHeritage announces they will begin artifact testing***

It's the Next Big Thing in DNA testing: the ability to extract DNA from artifacts like envelopes and stamps with saliva from relatives who've been gone for decades, and extend our DNA research farther into the past than we can using just the tests of those living today. At this month's MyHeritage LIVE 2018 conference, MyHeritage announced it would be getting into the artifact testing business, with an as-yet-unnamed partner company doing the extraction, and the results being uploaded to MyHeritage for matching.

MyHeritage CEO Gilad Japhet said there are already tests underway, using artifacts from his own family among others, and told the attendees that the results were very promising.

*For more information from Judy G. Russell click on or copy and paste this address into your web browser: <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2018/11/04/artifact-testing-on-its-way/>*

## **The Thrasher School**

### **A Continuing Source of Family Pride**

This article was written and submitted by our TFA President, John E. Thrasher, III:

I have recently been in contact with Shari Williams, a third year doctoral student at Auburn University, about her role in the South Macon Community Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization that currently holds the deed to the property where the Thrasher School stood. The school was destroyed by fire about 1951 and rebuilding began in 1953. Today the school is known in the community as The South Macon High School and the Macon County Training School in the Dawkins Community, Macon County, Alabama.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1924 Gatewood Johnson Thrasher Sr. and his wife Allie L. Thrasher deeded the five acre site to the State of Alabama for the purpose of “securing the extension of aid by the State of Alabama, in the erection, repair, or equipment of a rural school on the lands here described, - - .”

This mission to construct rural schools for African-American students throughout the South was spearheaded by Julius Rosenwald (1863 - 1931), a Jewish-American clothier who became part-owner and president of Sears, Roebuck & Company. Through his efforts and working with Booker T. Washington, hundreds of such schools were built. In addition to the funds received from the Rosenwald Fund, these schools were built by contributions from the white and colored people of the community and appropriations from public funds.

*Suggested references: Google “Rosenwald Schools”; Thrasher Newsletter, February 2018, “Descendants of William Wilson Thrasher”*

From “The Tuskegee Messenger,” Volume III, No. 7, April 9, 1927 (edited):

*Dedication of Rosenwald School:* Sunday afternoon, April 2, (1927), a party of trustees and friends motored out to the new Thrasher County Training School located at the Dawkins Community, Macon County, where were represented three elements of the American people working for better human relations

gathered to attend the dedicatory exercises of the school. There were the people of the community, the white people and the black who had worked cooperatively for the establishment of the school for the Negro youths. And there were the northern philanthropists led by Mr. Rosenwald through whose contribution it was made possible to erect not only this school but 3,700 others throughout fourteen southern states. It was evident without any extravagance of expression, that the spirit of inter-racial co-operation that Booker T. Washington and other leaders, black and white, North and South have sought to bring about was realized.

The Thrasher School, named in honor of Mr. G. J. Thrasher, Montgomery, a white man who donated \$500 towards its construction and who contracted for its construction at a price which represented a loss to him, is building on the 4-A plan consisting of five rooms including a domestic science room. It has an attendance of 148 boys and girls drawn from the neighborhood and from the surrounding communities. Four instructors compose the faculty.

Smiling, happy, pleased by the ceremonies, Mr. Rosenwald declared that the *Thrasher School* was the finest of those he had visited and aided by the fund which bears his name. Declaring that he had been denied the opportunity of receiving an education, Mr. Thrasher expressed pleasure at being able to assist others in getting an education to equip them for life. He told how he had become interested in the school and how he intended to so remain. "We must break the chains of the slavery of ignorance as completely as those of human slavery have been broken."



## ***The next Thrasher Family Reunion***

***May 3-5th, 2019***

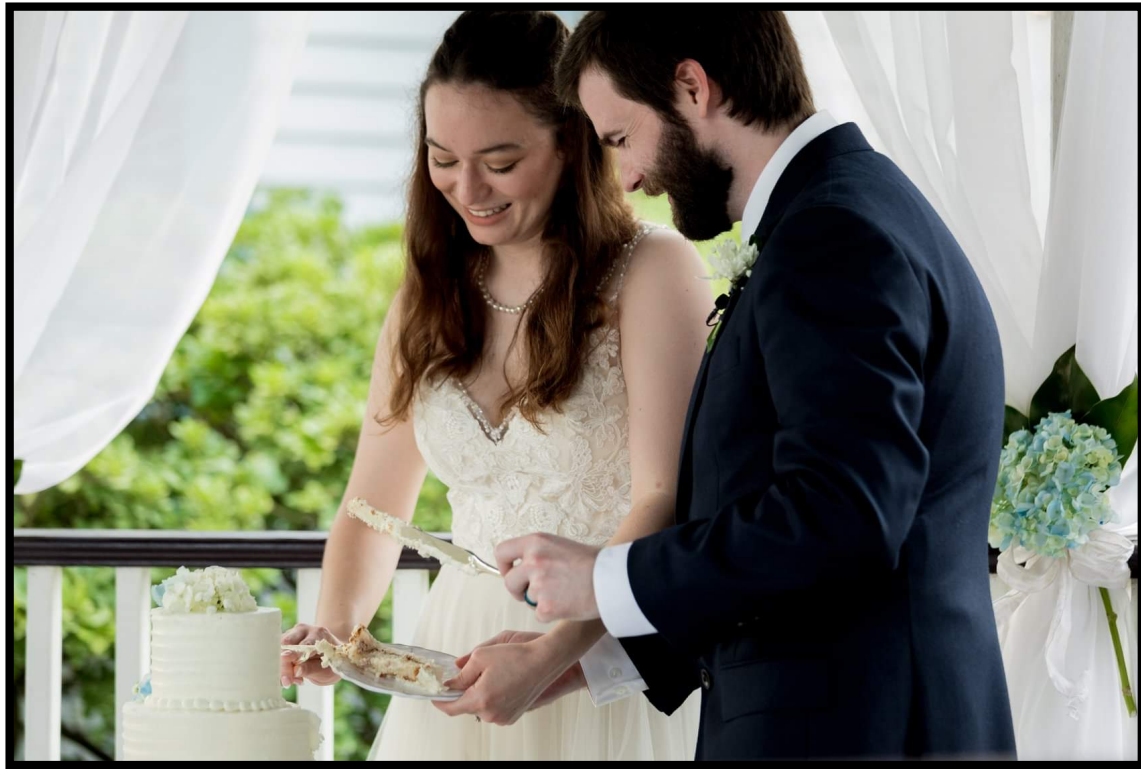
***Davidson, North Carolina***

***Hosted by Angie & Joe Grooms***

Plans are well underway for the upcoming Thrasher Family Association Reunion to be held in Davidson, NC on May 3-5, 2019.

We will be staying at Homewood Suites, 125 Harbor Place Drive, Davidson, NC. A block of rooms is being held until Friday, April 12, 2019. The code for the block of rooms is TFR or Thrasher Family Reunion. Phone number is 704-987-1818.

Friday night we will have a pizza and gelato party at the Grooms wood-fired outdoor oven. Saturday night we are planning a catered dinner at the Homewood Suites.



### **Thrasher - Gillispie Wedding**

Miss Phoenix Marie Gillispie, daughter of Edward & Cara G. Rush of Clearwater, Florida became the bride of Mr. John Patrick Thrasher, son of John F. and Kathy B. Thrasher of Newberry, Florida and grandson of John E. & Eleanor K. Thrasher III of Micanopy, Florida on July 26, 2018. The wedding ceremony was held at 7 p.m. in the gazebo of the Bayfront Marin Historic Inn in St. Augustine, Florida.

Mrs. Thrasher is currently a student at the University of Florida and employed by the University of Florida Engineering Department. Mr. Thrasher is a graduate of the University of South Florida and is employed by the University of Florida as JT User Computing Specialist 2 in the Smathers Library Department. The couple will reside in Gainesville, Florida.



# Murder, She Wrote

By Nancy Thrasher Cherry

Most of us get into genealogy because we want to know more about who we are. We start with names and dates, then learn as much as we can about our ancestors – their occupations, living conditions, religions – for example. Obituaries can provide much of this information, but old newspaper stories also relate cause of death for those who died of unnatural causes.

Murder, for instance.

In the past year, I've come across several interesting cases in Thrasher/Thresher families. This article describes two of them. The first is from a New England lineage not known to be addressed yet in the Thrasher Family Association; the second is a lineage that several of us are working on.



Alison Thresher, age 45, disappeared in May, 2000, just as she was about to start work as a copy editor at the Washington Post. Her car was found several miles from her apartment a day or so later. Her family declared her legally deceased in February 2001. Her sister took control of Thresher's retirement funds and established a trust for Thresher's two children's educations. Thresher's former husband, a photographer for the Washington Post, was granted custody of the children.

Other than the curious appearance of a check which showed up in her bank account two years after her disappearance, the case appeared to remain dormant until this year, but there was activity behind the scenes.

In April, 2018, police released more of the story, which centered around Alison's daughter's Spanish teacher at the Friends Community School. The daughter, now adult, had come forward to disclose that the teacher had sexually abused her, starting when she was ten and he was 32. He was charged with multiple counts and sentenced to over 100 years for these crimes.

Police have determined that during the period of the abuse, Alison suspected the abuse and notified the school and her ex-husband. Soon after she confronted the teacher with her suspicions, she disappeared.

Police believe that Alison was killed at her apartment and her body, which has never been found, carried elsewhere. It appears that the attacker(s) attempted to destroy evidence at the scene of the murder.

Allison's former husband is James M. Thresher, whose current age is listed online as 70. He may be the James Millard Thresher born in 1948 in Malden, Massachusetts found in the Massachusetts Birth Index. James Millard was married in 1977 in Fairfax County, VA to Kerry Lynn Dougherty and divorced from her in 1983 in Arlington, VA. White Pages Maryland lists his relatives as Kerry Dougherty and A. Goodwin Thresher. Goodwin was Alison's birth name.

James Thresher's current home is listed as Bainbridge Island, Washington.

His father was Avery Herman Thresher, who was born in 1922 in Ohio, died in Arizona, but was buried in Orange County, Vermont. The line of descent is rather easy to trace on Ancestry.com back to an Edwin Freeman Thresher born in 1840. There may be an earlier ancestor, Stephen Thresher, born 1788. In any case, this family appears to be found in Massachusetts and Vermont, with one generation born in Orleans County, New York.

The second case is the murder of Thomas Stephen Thrasher, Jr., known as T.S., which, as of early October 2018, remains unsolved. T.S., 29, was shot in the head in December, 2014 while he was sleeping on the couch in his Oak Ridge, Tennessee, apartment.

His wife was home at the time but she is not making public comments on the case.

The police are not releasing statements, either. But T.S.'s father, Thomas Thrasher, Sr., known as Steve, made a plea to the public in July of this year for anyone with information to come forward.



The father, Thomas Thrasher, Sr., is the son of William Thomas Thrasher of Powell, Tennessee, who was known in the Knoxville area and to TFA members as "The Colonel." The Colonel was an early participant in TFA's DNA study and was eager to find his lineage. In recent years, evidence has been found that he was a descendant of Benjamin Thrasher (died 1740) of Maryland.



## Speaking of Elections.....



Submitted by John Paul Thrasher

Michael Thrasher is a British academic, Professor of Politics in the School of Sociology, Politics & Law at the University of Plymouth. He is also Sky News' election analyst.

Thrasher was born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1953. he received his BA in politics from the University of Liverpool in 1974. He remained in Liverpool to study for his doctoral thesis, "The political theory of English local government, 1834-1972". He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1981. He began lecturing at Plymouth in 1977, becoming Professor of Politics in 1997. He is Co-Director of the *Local Government Chronicle* Elections Centre.

With his colleague Colin Rallings, Thrasher has written extensively on electoral systems, results and British politics. He is Co-Director of the *Local Government Chronicle* Elections Centre. Thrasher appeared on Sky News' 2017 election coverage, and has appeared on the channel's election night coverage as a psephologist (a political scientist and voting data analyst) for every election since 1992

With his co-researcher, Colin Rallings, he established the Elections Centre in 1985 in order to collect, analyze and publish the results of local elections in Britain. The Centre produces the annual Local Elections Handbook, now in its 19th year of publication, which provides full details of local voting throughout Great Britain. Twentieth century local election results for a range of authorities are the subject of a new series of Centre publications.

Rallings and Thrasher have published extensively in the area of local electoral behavior. A list of more recent publications can be found below. Since 1984 they have also published a monthly review of by-elections for the *Local Government Chronicle*. These results are used to develop a model that estimates the monthly national standing of the three main political parties. Rallings and Thrasher are frequent contributors to *The Sunday Times* and *Daily Telegraph* while Thrasher is an elections analyst for Sky News.

The Plymouth team has recently completed two other important projects relevant to electoral reform. The first project, funded by the DETR, has examined the determinants of local electoral turnout in England and is available from the DETR website. The second, a report on sub-national electoral systems in Europe, commissioned by the Rowntree Foundation, was recently published. A third project, sponsored by the Leverhulme Foundation, is examining the process and effects of re-drawing local authority ward boundaries and a research monograph on this topic was published in 2001.

**It is STILL not too late to get a 2018**

### **Thrasher Reunion Tote Bag**

I have about 10 unsold tote bags from the reunion. It is made of sturdy canvass and pictures Virginia's Historic Triangle – Williamsburg- Jamestowne – Yorktown.

If you would like one, mail a check made out to me for \$12 and I will mail it to you FREE!

Susie Thrasher  
TFA Newsletter  
1101 Christian Drive  
Watkinsville, GA 30677



## **CALLING ALL THRASHERS AND THRASHER COUSINS**

Please renew your Thrasher Family Association Membership for 2018-19. Dues are collected at the annual reunions each year. Those of you who weren't able to attend the last reunion or just haven't renewed yet, please make your \$20 membership fee check to the Thrasher Family Association and mail it to:

Mrs. Peggy Thrasher  
Thrasher Family Association Treasurer  
P.O. Box 491  
Tiger, Ga 30576

***Please continue to share your news and photos with your  
"cousins by the dozens"***

Sue Q. Thrasher: 1101 Christian Drive, Watkinsville, GA 30677 or by email:  
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Nancy T. Cherry: 3100 Elkridge Court, Beltsville, MD 20705-3239 or email:  
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Be sure to visit our website: <http://thrasherfamilyassociation.com/>