

Jerry Nelson of Volga, South Dakota is a columnist and author of the book 'Dear County Agent Guy'

I wanted to follow up on my column from last month to let you know how the story progressed. To recap, my friend Jerry Nelson from Volga, South Dakota is a retired dairy farmer who now is a writer and author of a book called '*Dear County Agent Guy*'. Jerry writes a weekly column for Dairy Star magazine. With Jerry's permission, I shared the story how Jerry did one of those DNA tests to determine your heritage. Here's a portion of that previous column:

*A Search for Family by Jerry Nelson:*

A few years ago, out of idle curiosity, I took a 23andMe DNA test. I was certain that I'm approximately 100% Norwegian, so it wasn't surprising when 23andMe confirmed that I'm probably the whitest person on the planet. There's a box on the 23andMe website that you can tick that allows your DNA info to be shared. I have nothing to hide, so I clicked the box.

Every so often I'll get a message via the 23andMe website. A young lady messaged that it appeared we could be second cousins. This was based on the fact that we share a significant percentage of DNA. The mystery woman told me that her name is Tammi. She currently lives in the Pacific Northwest, but was born in 1977 in Pipestone, Minnesota and was given up for adoption at birth. Did I know anyone who lived in Pipestone back then? "Yeah," I replied unthinkingly, "My cousin Greg."

Tammi shared some info she had obtained from the adoption agency. Her mother was 18 and her father 20 when Tammi was born. Her parents were young and didn't know what their future might hold, so they decided that it would be best if they put their daughter up for adoption. Tammi's parents eventually got married and had three more children, two sons and a daughter. A bolt of recognition shot through me. Greg and his wife, Sandy, have three children, two sons and a daughter.

She wrote that she had begun to peruse Greg and Sandy's Facebook page and was overwhelmed with emotion when she looked upon the faces of her biological family for the first time. She wanted to make contact with them, but was anxious about the repercussions. I encouraged Tammi, telling her that I couldn't imagine that Greg and Sandy would be anything less than loving and accepting.

Now comes the update or as Paul Harvey used to say 'The Rest of the Story'. Michael is one of Greg and Sandy's two sons. Jerry picks up the story from there.

### **A Search for Family Part 2 by Jerry Nelson**

Michael was skeptical. But Tammi had persuasive evidence that she had obtained from the adoption agency, including the ages of Michael's aunts and uncles at the time of her birth. When Michael viewed Tammi's Facebook profile, he was struck by the strong resemblance between her and his sister Kayla. And then there was this: some years ago, Michael's parents revealed

that he has a sister who was born before they were wed and was given up for adoption. Could Tammi really be Michael's sister? And what should do with this information?

Helmer and Karen operated a small dairy farm at Kenyon, Minnesota. Unable to have children, they adopted two sons, one in 1969 and another in 1971. But Helmer and Karen longed for a daughter to complete their family. In 1977, they were given the opportunity to adopt a newborn girl named Tammi.

After her initial email, Tammi and Michael continued to communicate. Michael became convinced that Tammi was indeed his sister and a full sibling to his younger brother and sister. Michael kept the news about Tammi under wraps. This was no small feat, as he works daily with his father, Greg, at their family's welding shop. One day Tammi emailed Michael that she and her family would be in Minneapolis for a weekend visit with a friend. Could Michael and his wife and kids come to the Twin Cities for a casual lunch? "I don't want to miss this opportunity," replied Michael. "But at this point, I feel I have to tell the rest of the family."

"We never forgot about Tammi," said Greg. "Sandy and I often thought about her, especially on her birthday. We might be at the mall and see a girl about the right age and ask, could that be our daughter? We wondered how her life turned out. We hoped that she was happy." When Michael told his family about Tammi and the proposed lunch meeting, Greg's instant reaction was, "I don't want to wait to meet her! Tell them to come to our house for Sunday dinner." That Sunday would be Father's Day.

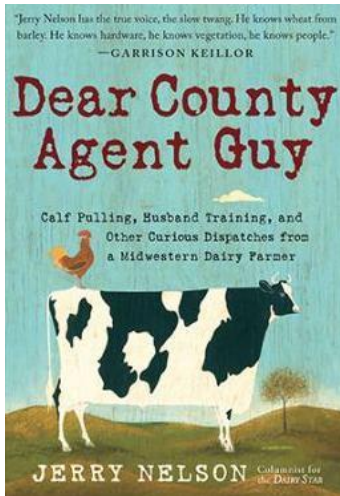
Tammi is an airline pilot. During her 19 years in the Air Force, she has flown gigantic C-17 cargo jets into combat zones. But the upcoming meeting with her biological family was giving her palpitations. "I knew from kindergarten on that I was adopted," she said. "I always wanted to know about my biological parents. I was shocked and overwhelmed to realize that I was finally going to meet them. All sorts of thoughts raced through my head. It was truly a moment I had been dreaming about my entire life. Was this really happening? What will I say when I meet all five of these strangers to whom I am closely related? What if we have nothing in common? What if we just sit there and stare at each other in awkward silence? But there was no turning back now."

On Father's Day, on the sundrenched driveway of Greg and Sandy's home, Tammi hugged her two brothers and her sister for the very first time. And for the first time in 41 years, she looked, through tears, into the eyes of her biological parents. "After five minutes it was like we'd known her forever," said Greg. "She fit in like a piece of a puzzle."

A few weeks later, Tammi had a layover in Minneapolis. Greg and Sandy and their family drove up and took in a Twins game with Tammi. "After the game we went back to the hotel and sat and talked with Tammi until 2:00 a.m.," said Greg. "This whole thing has been so emotional. We are overjoyed to meet Tammi and are very happy to know that she's had a good life."

On their way home, Greg and Sandy stopped at Helmer's home. Helmer, who has been a widower since 2004, insisted that they stay for breakfast. They did, and passed the morning chatting pleasantly about life's unexpected twists and turns. Before they left Kenyon, Greg and Sandy visited the cemetery. They stood beside Karen's grave and thanked her for doing such a wondrous job of raising their daughter.

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My thanks to Jerry for sharing this fascinating story. Again you can read Jerry's columns in the Dairy Star magazine or DairyStar.com. Look for the book '*Dear County Agent Guy*'. I know you'll enjoy it. He writes about how on their wedding night, his wife Julie declined to help him chase cows back into the barn while still in her wedding dress. There's also the story how Jerry offered the delivery room doctor the use of his calf puller during the birth of his first son. They have two boys who he taught to vaporize bugs on an electric fence. It only gets better from there.

Jerry's book, *Dear County Agent Guy*, is available at [Workman.com](http://Workman.com) and in bookstores nationwide.