

We Arrrgh Family

Robert S. Swiatek

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First Edition

If you use material found in this book without permission, the author will force you to sit down to Thanksgiving dinner with your entire family.

You can't watch any football the entire day or have a piece of mince-meat pie, either.

Information of a general nature needs no action. When in doubt, contact the author. Mentioning his book is greatly appreciated.

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for all those gray sheep in families

also by Robert S. Swiatek

Don't Bet On It

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Manual For Workaholics***

for seeing eye dogs only

***This Page Intentionally Left Blank –
Just Like The Paychecks Of The Workers***

I Don't Want To Be A Pirate – Writer, maybe

wake up – it's time for your sleeping pill

***Take Back The Earth – The Dumb,
Greedy Incompetents Have Trashed It***

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We've Got To Get Back To The Garden

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A Family Thing

Did you ever see someone in public and think you went to school or worked with that person? You may have even begun a conversation and found someone you once knew. I hope that this person wasn't an individual who hoped to never see you again. Most likely, you struck up a conversation and soon discovered that she wasn't a relative, classmate or co-worker. Even more surprising could be the fact that she had come from a German, Russian and Brazilian background while you thought the person you were comparing her to was from the Middle East. Apparently, we each have a double, more or less.

I used that concept in my first novel, which had the appropriate title, *Don't Bet On It*. It's all about gambling as well as deception. Two people can have one or two similar features and we mention that to our friends. It could be the eyes, nose, mouth or even the smile. On a few occasions, I told family members that I saw the Pope and Robert Redford at the arts festival I just came from. Neither was there but someone who resembled each was. I met a gentleman who reminded me a great deal of my cousin. My cousin's family has a few Polish in it, while the former hails from Laos. Go figure. A girl I knew had Russian and Polish ancestors, but if you saw her picture, you would probably guess she was Italian. We shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

We also shouldn't come to a conclusion based on a label or name. A person whose name ends in *ski* may have more of an Irish background than you think, while a guy named *McIntosh* might surprise you by mentioning that so far, he hasn't found any Irish roots in his family background, but there is some Polish. Some of this can be explained by looking back over a hundred fifty years ago to the *Peculiar Institution*. Many slaves wound up taking their master's surname. Later I'll talk a bit about Thomas Jefferson and

Strom Thurmond. You probably have a good idea where that will be going.

My first book was published in late 2002 and from that one and each of those that followed, you could usually figure out what they were about from the title. The cover gave more clues, too. Looking at the cover and title of this book, the subject may not be so obvious. It's a book about genealogy. Webster – not the guy from TV, but the other one – defines it as *the study of family pedigrees*, which you can translate into the creation of your family tree, searching for your roots and finding out who is related to you.

Though I will mention some of the people in my family – some names have been changed, but I'm not sure what for – it's not a genealogy of any particular family. I'll begin with some of the terms that are used, followed by thoughts on how to record all your family connections. If you go to various ancestry web sites, you'll soon discover that the templates provided leave a bit to be desired. How do you record it all on paper? Next, will be a few chapters on where to find all the information: close relatives, people who may not be your relatives and complete strangers. The latter may even turn out to be your relatives.

Documents such as birth certificates, obituaries, photos and family files provide clues, as does city hall, the state government, U. S. Government and many of their agencies, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and draft board, even if your father was never in the service. Censuses have names and ages of family members if we can find the right listing. At times, relatives come on the scene that you didn't know you had. Technology can be very helpful: email, web sites and social networks. The local library has a wealth of information, some of which may be what you're seeking.

All along, every search will be concerned with accuracy and you'll find that a stranger may gives you useful additions to your family tree while a supposedly reliable source provides bogus facts. Doubt always comes into play,

but in too many cases, to obtain data, you have to provide other information – which you don't have and in fact, are seeking. Naturally, there's confusion in the picture, too.

I'll mention why I wrote the book and try to answer these questions. Do we believe a woman who says she's 100% Swedish? What does it mean if a guy says he's German – was he born in Germany? How will I obtain information if my name is Smith or Jones? In that case, will it help me to do a generic search on the Internet? Is John Pacholski the same person as John Pucholski? What about Martha Chmielewski and Martha Chmielewska? Are we talking about the same individual? Will the fact that a person changed his name from Alline to Allen be a problem? How about the change from Zimmerman to Dylan?

No book of this kind would be complete with a word or two on miscegenation. I'll try to make a case that it's one of the words that shouldn't be in any dictionary. Try convincing the people at Wikipedia. Next is a topic I'm not that familiar with, but can't be excluded: deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). Police investigations for so many years have utilized fingerprints to nail a suspect, but now they have another tool, which can be obtained from hair, blood or saliva. How are you going to cover your tracks now?

Finally I have the stories – their studies, actually – of a palaeoanthropologist and a geneticist. They're working on the family tree of human existence. The former does it with fossils, bones and evidence left thousands of years ago on the earth. The latter has a different method: DNA. Their approaches are different but they come up with the same results. I won't tell you what that is. I don't want to spoil the ending for you.

One of the words in the title of this chapter is the name of a TV program that aired from 1976 to 1980. **Family** featured an outstanding cast with parents, Doug and Kate Lawrence, played by the fine actor, James Broderick, and highly-praised actress, Sada Thompson, along with children

Willie (Gary Frank), Letitia, also known as *Buddy* (Kristy McNichol) and Nancy (Meredith Baxter). The program was a serious drama about the joys, happiness and challenges facing a typical family, not an evening soap opera, as some may have thought. **Soap** (1977 to 1981) earns that distinction since it was a show at night that spoofed all those daytime dramas, but did it with a great deal of humor. Moreover, it was about family – actually two families, the Campbells and the Tates. The aforementioned Meredith Baxter also was a participant in another program from 1982 to 1989, **Family Ties**. A more recent offering – if you don't mind irreverence – still on the air is **Family Guy**, which began in 1999.

From the previous few pages, you might guess that this is the introduction of the book. If so, why do the words, **A Family Thing** appear at the top of the first page? Indeed, the words above make up the introduction and it may take you the entire book to see their significance. I won't say any more. I almost chose **The Lost and Found Family** – a really fine choice – and I also could have used **Random Hearts**, **My Family**, **Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town**, **The Perez Family**, **Two Family House**, **Our Family Wedding**, **The Family Stone**, **The Family Man** or **Family Plot**. Each of these connects with the book in some way. I chose a movie title for that of each chapter and hope each of my selections fits each chapter subject. In my book on addictions, published May 1, 2012, each of the chapter titles represented the title of a song title or words from it.

I mentioned book titles and covers earlier, so I need to explain this one. For all my books, I try to suit both of these to what's inside. In a way, I may have been slightly off in the cover here, but after further consideration, maybe not. I think my choice is quite appropriate. Originally I decided on **We Are Family**, which is the title of a 2010 movie – I think you have an idea what it's about. I'd recommend this comedy-drama from India except that I haven't seen it.

One day, while doing an Internet search of titles with those three words, I found a few books that used it. I didn't investigate much further, but I think most of them are trash soap opera offerings. I still could have kept that title, but I decided on ***We R Family***. Then I figured I could do better than that. What about a pirate theme? I came up with the title you see on the front. Naturally, the cover was a no brainer – a family of pirates. By the way, *We Are Family* is also the title of a 1979 smash hit by *Sister Sledge*. I should add that the 1979 World Series Champion Pittsburgh Pirates adopted the song as their anthem. If they had known the team had adoption in mind, I'm sure *Sister Sledge* would have spelled the song title correctly.

For a while, I had the middle word of my title as *Arggh*. I wasn't even close. I could have used *Arrr* (with or without an exclamation point after it), since that's another pirate word. In the language it can mean many things such as *This beer is really good*; *Yes, I concur*; and even, *I saw that movie and it sucked*. Those are only a few of the possibilities. The pirate word in my title might be uttered when someone sits on a belaying pin.

One point I bring out a few times in the following pages is that creating a family tree is no easy task. You'll face numerous obstacles, but don't abandon the project. You might think that you'll never finish the venture, and you're right. Going forward, you'll have to wait until your children or grandchildren get married to proceed. Moving back in time you will find that you can't obtain any more information, even if it seems you've exhausted all possible sources.

I have to add a slight warning if you work on a family tree. You'll be surprised when you discover that your relatives include murderers, philanderers, insurance salesmen, senators, womanizers, agents, consultants, lawyers, CEOs, drug addicts, chauvinists, communists, socialists, pirates, farmers, writers, sculptors, clergy, social

workers, nurses, teachers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and saints. I never promised you a rose garden, but notice that not all these people are reprehensible. If you didn't find people like these, you probably were working on the wrong genealogy. One thing I promise you: this is a job that won't be boring. It will be challenging but rewarding. Happy searching!

1. Terms of endearment

Appropriately enough, the title of this chapter is the name of a highly rated 1983 movie about a mother and daughter, starring Shirley MacLaine and Debra Winger. Of necessity we need to define the relationships in a genealogy if it's to have any meaning. At first I planned to skip any explanation for obvious names such as father, mother, sister and brother, but I changed my mind. Let's begin with you, the reader. If a man and a woman get together and bring a child into the world – say, that's you – the husband is your father and the wife your mother. If other children precede or follow you from this same union, they're your siblings: your brothers and sisters. As you can see, you have two parents and your father has two as well. So does your mother. Thus you have four grandparents.

Your grandparents each have two parents each and these people are your great grandparents – you have four pair of great grandparents, or eight in all. Going backwards in time, from this come great great grandparents, great great great grandparents and this goes on and on. If you do the calculations – I hope I did it correctly – you have 4096 sets or 8192 great great great great great great great great great great great grandparents. You'll need a larger venue for the family reunion.

Moving on, the brothers of either your mother or your father are your uncles, while the sisters of either of your parents are your aunts. This may not be precisely correct, but I referred to the husband of my aunt as my uncle and the wife of my uncle as my aunt. This is a common practice and saves us the trouble of coming up with a more complicated appellation for them, such as my uncle's wife or aunt's husband. For my dad, his brother's wife is his sister-in-law and his sister's husband is his brother-in-law. For my mom, her brother's wife is her sister-in-law and her sister's husband is her brother-in-law.

The aunt of my mom or dad is my Great Aunt, while the uncle of either of my parents is my Great Uncle. My children could refer to my Great Aunt or Great Uncle as Great Great Aunt and Great Great Uncle, respectively, but it may be easier to call them just aunt and uncle. This may not apply to Uncle Tom until he buys a cabin.

To your aunt or uncle, you would be a nephew or niece, depending on your sex. In relation to your Great Aunt or Great Uncle, you could either be a *great niece* or *great nephew*, though this classification may be a bit premature since you're so young. As before, to simplify matters, dropping the *great* may be in order. The same holds true for great great niece and great great nephew. The adjectives will be capitalized when you get older.

The sons and daughters of two siblings – brothers, sisters or a brother and sister – are cousins or first cousins. We'll leave out the *first* and just use cousins, here. There's an alternate way of describing cousins: two people with different parents but the same grandparents – one set only. You don't want to even think about people having the same four grandparents but different parents. The sons and daughters of cousins are second cousins. This translates into second cousins have different parents, different grandparents but the same great grandparents – again, one set only. Eighth cousins would be the children of seventh cousins – that explains it very clearly. The alternate explanation won't help clear it up that much: eighth cousins have different parents, different grandparents, different great grandparents, different great great grandparents, different great great great grandparents, different great great great great grandparents, different great great great great great grandparents, but the same great great great great great great great grandparents – again, one set only. This get together will have to be in a National Park, along with the urns.

Now that the picture is perfectly clear, what follows next may fog up the picture: a cousin once removed. He or she is not some relative who crashed the wedding and was tossed out, but an individual separated from you by a generation. It's best explained by an example. You and Dave are cousins. The latter and his wife have a son named Virgil. To you, Virgil is a cousin, once removed. Assume that Virgil marries Tammy and they have a daughter named Bertha. You and Bertha are cousins twice removed. Think of it as being two generations apart. You and your second cousin's son would be second cousins, once removed.

We'll return to the removed relationships, shortly. The names I use here may not be real. My dad's father was married to a woman named Kathy and they had a son named Jim. Kathy died and my grandfather married a woman named Susan – my grandmother. I should add that Susan was my father's mother. Now things get messy as Kathy's brother, Lloyd, married Abbie and the two produced Frank, Ellie and Robert. What is the relationship of my dad to these three?

To begin with, Jim and my dad are not quite brothers, since they have different mothers. They have the same father or half of the requirement, so they are half brothers. We could have the same situation with two children of the same sex – half sisters – or one male and one female. Thus Jim could be the half brother of Erica and she would be his half sister. From what I can surmise, other names for half brother and half sister are stepbrothers and stepsisters, respectively.

If you're into infantile behavior, you'll probably like the 2008 flick, **Step Brothers**, starring Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly. I probably should watch it again – that won't happen – because Brennan and Dale may not fit the real definition of stepbrothers, which can be spelled out as two words, as shown in the movie title – go figure – or even the hyphenated word, step-brothers. Some will argue that the 40-year old characters that Will and John portray are indeed

stepbrothers, if you look at the definition given by some source, so I accept that. If stepbrother and half brother are synonyms, meaning there's no difference between the two, why do we have two words when one will do?

As far as Kathy and my father, she's not his stepmother even though Susan is the stepmother or halfmother – I guess – of Jim. Perhaps, two diagrams are in order.

Al	c	Jim
m		
Kathy		

Al	c	Harold (my dad)
m		
Susan		

Tim	c	Kathy	
m			
Julie	c	Lloyd	c Frank
		m	c Ellie
		Abbie	c Robert

I apologize for the two matrices, but joining them would make them confusing. As you can see, the letter *m* represents a marriage while the letter *c* denotes a child. People on the left are parents or grandparents and those on the right are children. People in the middle are both children and parents, maybe. My dad, Frank, Ellie and Robert are of the same generation and it appears that Lloyd and Abbie are almost an uncle and an aunt to my dad. Let's use those designations rather halfuncle, halfaunt, stepuncle and

steppaunt. Since my dad and Jim are halfbrothers, is the latter my Uncle or stepuncle and are Ellie and my dad halfcousins or just simple cousins? I prefer to refer to Jim and my dad as brothers and Frank, Ellie and Robert and my father as cousins. Frank, Jim and Robert are my uncles and Ellie is my aunt. If we don't do this, we'll make a complicated scenario into a real mess.

Going back a bit, you can see that Frank and Robert and Ellie are really my cousins, once removed. Whatever their real names were in real life, growing up, I used the designation of uncle and aunt. In each case the appellation denoted respect since there was a spread of a generation between us. If you yourself are working on or thinking of doing a genealogy of your family, don't get discouraged. It will get worse.

As you can guess, the *parent* designation isn't quite as simple as I pointed out earlier. What about a grandmother or aunt who raises a child? Things get really complicated when a young girl is raped and eventually gives up the child for adoption. That child has two fathers – granted one is never around and may never see the young one – and two mothers. Certainly the new couple makes up a team of a mother and father. What about a Godfather? Christ had a heavenly Father, but could He be called a Godfather? This probably wasn't so because even though his voice was deep, it didn't sound like that of Marlon Brando.

A few more considerations are adopted children and kids born of affairs. I have a foster child in Africa. Should I include him in the genealogy? When I marry a woman, will she be a foster parent? If she already has a foster child in South America, will the two foster children be siblings and will they be able to obtain supersaver flights to visit each other?

A few other situations not to be overlooked are offspring that are test tube babies. We need to consider a child raised by a surrogate mother, a pair of people who

aren't married, such as a brother and sister, two women, two men or a band of wolves. It could happen. What about a child brought up by a band of Marines or some seminarians? It gets complicated.

Isn't this fun? Here are some more questions. Did I have a new home built with two and a half baths because of my half brother? If I'm dealing with the cousin idea with my half sister, could we eventually have a cousin one half removed? If a person has only one stepbrother, can he do the Texas two-step? If two or more brothers work for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, can we call them *step right up* brothers?

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