

# Tracing Pasts: Using DNA in genealogy expands possibilities

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By [LINDA PAZICS KLEBACK](#)

*Genealogist Linda Pazics Kleback formerly was a researcher at the Bay County Public Library. She now lives in Maryland. For an archive of her columns, go to*

*<http://www.newsherald.com/search/?q=Kleback&fstype=site&x=23&y=5>*

We genealogists have not always gotten the respect we deserve. We were characterized as little old ladies in tennis shoes with an odd hobby. Well, we ladies and gentlemen (who are smart enough to wear tennis shoes for traction and comfort in cemeteries and on ladders in courthouses) are entering a new era.

Genealogy can be more than a hobby. We always could do research for others, but now we have more opportunities. There are more magazines we can write for and more Web sites we can run. There are more conferences needing speakers. But there's more. The use of DNA for genealogy has created wonderful new possibilities. DNA by itself can only do so much to help us trace our families. Couple it with comprehensive genealogical research, and you have a dynamic new way to use our skills.

I have written past columns on the work done by Megan Smolenyak ( [www.honoringourancestors.com](http://www.honoringourancestors.com) ) who helps identify the remains of American soldiers found in Korea. Another person using DNA and genealogy to solve historical or identity questions is Colleen Fitzpatrick. Along with her colleague Sharon Sergeant, she has been in the news lately as a researcher who helped prove that the Jewish memoir "The Angel at the Fence" by Herman Rosenblat was not based on fact. She and Sharon have created the Web site Identifinders International ( [www.identifinders.com](http://www.identifinders.com) ). Here you can read about some of the exciting work they are doing.

As Colleen explains in "The Unknown Child on the Titanic: The Identification of Sidney Leslie Goodwin, Melkham, England" ( [www.identifiers.com/titanic.html](http://www.identifiers.com/titanic.html) ): "In my opinion, working with the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory is the most compelling job that a genealogist can have. Our scientists and genealogists are dedicated to their research, willing to go the extra mile to get results. It is thrilling to me to be in on the development of cutting edge technology that has the potential to solve the highest profile genealogical mysteries in the world."

We genealogists all have our own mysteries to conquer, but the idea of helping to solve larger ones like the possible identification of the remains of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan, a current project of Colleen's, is especially exciting. And as more uses for DNA and genealogy is found, I'm hoping the price for testing will come down so more of us can add these results to our family histories and make even more connections.

If you have thought about employment possibilities in genealogy, there is a section at [www.identifinder.com](http://www.identifinder.com) on Career Opportunities. While most of us will be content to concentrate on our own brick walls and puzzles, some of you may be the forensic genealogists of the future. It's an exciting prospect.

For more information on the possibilities of forensic genealogy, see "Does Publishing Need Genealogists?" at [www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6628125.html](http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6628125.html) .