

Sent to  
Lois Henderson,  
daughter of Ronald  
6/3/87 R.M.H.

RECOVERED FROM RMH'S  
PAPERS AFTER HE DIED.  
BY BRYAN DOUGLAS HENDERSON 17.12.23

Dear Lois:

I arrived home from the funeral of my Aunt Esther (my father's oldest sister) the evening of May 21 to find your letter waiting for me. You've got the right Robert Henderson, though I doubt I can help you much more than your dad could. I am interested, just not all that knowledgeable. I can fill in a few of the blanks for you, however.

On your family tree, mark my father's birthdate as 4/12/1900. He died in July, 1981. He was born in Brockton, Mass. His middle name was Ernest, after an uncle on his mother's side.

My mother was Lucille Morgan and her birthdate was 5/29/1904. She was born in Portland, Ore. and died 5/27/53 in Seattle. My father subsequently married Beryl Fournier Novak. They had no children; Beryl was killed in an apartment fire a couple of years before dad died. She was born in 1906 but I forget her birthday.

DEATH CERTIFICATE  
SAKS MAY 25  
-BRYAN 19.05.16

Make my birthdate 5/15/36, birthplace Seattle. Middle name is Morgan. My kids' mother is the former Deborah May Johnson, born in Bremerton, WA 5/25/36. We split up and her name's now Minton. I married again a few years ago; her name is Mary Doreen.

"Robin Kenneth" should more properly be Robert Kenneth. We tabbed him "Robin" as a child to distinguish him from his grandfather and I. He now answers to "Rob" as did his grandfather. His birthdate was 2/17/62 in Tulsa. He's now a school teacher on Lopez Island, though he will leave that at the end of the term. He's muttering something about getting a Fullbright.

You spell my second son's name the Irish way. For some reason, he doesn't like it any way it's spelled but when he signs checks, it's "Bryan." He was born in Tulsa 10/5/63. He double-degreed in electrical engineering and computer science a couple of years ago at the U-Dub and now works for IBM in San Jose.

10/06/63 -BRYAN 17.12.23  
DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS CAME FROM  
-BRYAN 17.12.23

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Laura Noelle was born 5/2/66 in Frankfort, Kentucky. She starts her senior year at Mills College in Oakland next fall. She's majoring in child psych and is talking about going after a Rhodes scholarship.

I can't tell you anything about the birthdates of Bruce Lee's family. He's about four years older than I. His wife's name is Jean. His sister, Virginia Hall (we call her "Ginna" or "Gin"), was born the same year as I but I don't know the date.

Bruce and Ginna's dad (Hugh S. Lee) died a couple of years ago but their mother still carries on. That's the one you probably ought to be communicating with, though she's not in the best of health, I'm told. But of all of us save, perhaps, Aunt Jess, she is now the most knowledgeable about family history. She recently moved to Eugene to be near her son, so I don't have her current address. I can get it, however, if you wish. I'm sure she'd like to hear from you. I would encourage you to do this; after I "discovered" your Aunt Eleanor, I got in exactly two letters to her, then heard from your dad that she was gone.

The late Esther Henderson was married to Earl B. Jenner who still survives (and survives well) at the age of 87. The Jenners are a whole historic empire unto themselves - early Seattle settlers, they married into the Mercers (of "Mercer Girl" fame) Dennys, etc. They had two kids, both born in Seattle. Earl Henderson Jenner is about eight years older than I, his sister, Marcia ("Marsh" or "Marty") the same age as I. Don't know the dates. Earl's wife's name is Sandy. They have a batch of kids and grandkids. I long since lost track of their herd. Marsh never married.

Jesse and Alden Potter's two kids, Jean and Dick, were both born, I believe, in Eugene, Ore. I don't know their birthdates, though I believe Jean is four-six years older than I. Dick, I think, was born in '37. Both are married and have kids but I know neither names or dates.

As you can see, my information is pretty sketchy. We seven Henderson cousins started out fairly close, then like so many others, went our separate ways. It's only been relatively recently that funerals and weddings have begun to bring us back together. We're planning a cousin reunion for late July, early August. If you're down in the Lower 48 about that time, we'd be delighted to have you.

Now, your "notes" sheet. As you surmise, our great grandfather died in 1916 as evidenced by the enclosed obit in the "George Square Chronicle." Note, though, it's been edited, apparently by the same person who gave the

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obit to "Bess." The writing is definitely not that of her brother, Tom, my grandfather. I assume "Bess" is the one y'all call "Beesh." "Beesh" came to take care of my grandfather after gramma died, though it's arguable who really took care of who. She was always "Aunt Bess" to me.

I never have understood the language of lineage but I don't think your father is my first cousin. Since he and my dad were contemporaries, weren't they first cousins? Though much younger, you are, generationally, my contemporary; I have absolutely no idea how to describe that relationship in genealogical terms.

Another thing: you spell your aunt's name "Eleanor." A family tree chart prepared by your dad has it as "Elinor"....?

The only thing I know about our pre-great-grandfather history is legend. As a small child, my dad told me that, once upon a time, there were two Henderson brothers. One was named John, the other Robert. I don't know when this was, maybe the 15-1600's. At any rate, John got to be some kind of guy--rich, famous, titled even. Robert, on the other hand, went nowhere. Robert, Dad said pointedly, was the one our family descended from.

Dad also said that John was a giant of a man and possessed great courage. One day, his daughter's dress became ensnarled in the revolving wing of a windmill. (I didn't know they had windmills in the Old Country but apparently they did.) John stepped in and, with his bare hands, halted the windmill long enough for his daughter to climb down to safety. According to the story, he "broke" (ruptured) himself in the process, an incurable condition in those days. I think Dad said he got these stories from Aunt Bess.

Another thing he got from Aunt Bess was the Henderson grandfather clock - or at least pieces thereof. I gathered it had been stored in boxes in somebody's basement in Chicago. She had it shipped out West and dad painstakingly restored it. It kept good time for us for many years. Dad told me the clock did not run when it was in our great-grandfather's house in Chicago. It couldn't have, because Dad said he used to get in it when playing hide-and-seek with his cousins. Dad was always pretty slim but he must have been an absolute wraith to have gotten into that clock. The pendulum, of course, could not have been swinging with him inside the clock.

My wife's a clock tinkerer and one of the reasons I married her was so she would fix (not clean) my clock. She never has, claiming that to do so might cause me to feel her usefulness had ended and that I would therefore dissolve the marriage.

Aunt Bess also gave Dad the Henderson watch, a chain-driven timepiece which sits in a rosewood stand and which he also put back in running order. Inside the hunter's case is the home-sewn motto: "As the circle is, so may thy felicity be." According to Dad, both timepieces date from about the time of the American Revolution and both have always been carried and owned by Robert Hendersons. The motto was apparently placed in the watch by the wife of its first owner, who gave the watch to her husband. This may have been the grandfather of our great grandfather.

I inherited a couple of other pieces of Henderson memorabilia, including an oil painting and a Webster's Dictionary. Though falling apart, the latter rests on its original cast iron stand next to the grandfather clock in my living room. It was a wedding gift to my grandfather from his father, according to an inscription on the fly leaf.

According to a note penciled by my grandfather, the painting was given to our great-grandfather in 1866 by an art student friend named Forty. It's a seaside scene, a view, the note says, of the "Coast of Dalmeny (?) in Scotland. The painting hung for many years over the sideboard in my grandparents' home in Seattle; it's now on a wall in my living room across from the grandfather clock.

In the bottom of an old steel trunk marked, "Henderson - Chicago," which came to me after my father's death, I found two, 8"X10" sepia-toned photographs of our great-grandfather. Both show the old man standing, apparently, in his backyard. I don't know where this backyard was but it was definitely in a rural or suburban setting.

Two women are sitting in the distant background. I showed these pictures to my Aunt Jess and Aunt Ev a couple of years ago when I went to Portland for my Uncle Hugh's funeral. They think one of the women is "Old Aunty," but could not identify the other. They guess the picture was taken this side of 1900 and probably about 1915.

Though he liked him, Dad never credited his grandfather as having much practical knowledge or common sense. He told me several times that the man had actually come to America expecting to find gold nuggets in the streets. Though Dad helped put all three of his sisters through college and years later ordered me to follow suit, he never finished high school himself. He was always somewhat skeptical of the practical abilities of college graduates--including his Edinburgh-bred grandfather.

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It was also Dad's contention that, in family eye, his own father had committed a serious breach of familial etiquette by naming his first son "Robert." It was a right, he believed, that could only be owned by the oldest surviving son, in this case his Uncle Jim. Of course, Jim later went ahead and exercised that right by naming his first son "Robert." I was told that "real" Robert Hendersons had no middle name or initial. I've assumed this to be true; I have an antique attache' case/lap secretary purchased in Edinburgh, a beautiful mahogany-lined thing apparently owned by our great-grandfather. There's only two initials embossed in fading gold on the outside: RH.

None of this prevented my father, of course, from perpetuating this unethical misdeed or me from following suit. I mentioned all of this in a letter to Eleanor and she summarily dismissed the whole thing as irrelevant. She's right--real or not, when I'm gone, the Henderson watch, clock and lap secretary will go to my eldest son. A succession of Robert Hendersons with middle initials may well get them after that.

In closing, I have a question of you: what became of Robert Henderson, the oldest brother of of both our grandfathers? You have him down as born in 1870 and surviving to the age of 18. I remember Dad and Aunt Bess briefly discussing him a couple of times--she called him "Bob"--but neither seemed to know how he really ended up. There was some speculation he came West to work in some minefield (coal?) or another in B.C. and then died a victim of some plague or another like influenza or "consumption." I gathered he and his father had, had a falling out (hardly unusual for a father and his oldest heir and assign) which led him to leave home. But I would like to know where he's buried. Any information you have on this would be appreciated.

It was good hearing from you. Let me know if I can be of further help. And by all means contact me should you come south for any reason. Even if you only get as far south as Seattle we could still get together. I could probably also pull in Marsh and Gin.

Best regards,

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