

SEARCH FOR STEWART FAMILY MEMBERS

by

3.13.512 James Marion Stewart, Jr.

In the summer of 1992, Joan and I made our first trip to England and Scotland. We visited several castles and our guide emphasized the Stewart Clan and how influential they were in both countries. When we returned, I told Joan that I intended to find out as much as possible about my father's family.

You must realize that the only info my sister and I had was that my father was an only child. His parents died when he was very young and he was raised by an uncle. He also said that his father was an old horse and buggy doctor. My mother had died in 1971 and my father died in 1983. So I could get no help from them. In the early 1950's Joan and I took my parents to Greenville for a visit and my father said that his parents were buried in Graceland Cemetery when we passed it, but he never gave me his parents names. However, once he said that my sister was named after his mother, Pearl.

I did not know how to begin my research, so I attended genealogy meetings in Columbia and Florence to find out how to get information and how to get started.

December 1992 I contacted the Army to obtain his military records. My response was that all records stored in St Louis were destroyed by fire.

February 1993 I wrote the Census bureau asking for record research. I received a response stating that no record could be found with my fathers name of James Marion Stewart.

December 1993 I went to Greenville and searched the Library and courthouse records, but found nothing about my father.

January 1994 I contacted the Army again and was advised to contact the VA admin. office in Columbia.

The reference librarian in Florence, Penny Forrester, had performed genealogy research and knew of a Walter Stewart Family history. February 1994 I contacted Mary Rawlinson in Columbia giving her what info I had about my father. Mary said that this did not fit in with any member of the Walter Stewart Clan. I bought a family history book from her and studied it very thoroughly. I found a Ripley Clark Stewart married to Lula Pearl Cannon and they had a son James Manning Stewart born 10/25/1902 in Laurens, the same as my father. But James Manning was married to a Ethel Lybrand and they had a son, James Manning Stewart, Jr. I found nothing about a James Marion Stewart.

Mary had suggested that I go to Laurens and do research at the library and courthouse. She also gave me the name of a person in Florida who was doing research on a John Stewart. I contacted him with no response.

December 1994 I received a response from the VA Admin. with what they had of my father's records. In these records there was a letter giving the time that my father served in the Army and on this record it listed next of kin as R. C. Stewart living at 303 Glenn St., Newberry, SC in 1929.

October 1995 I wrote the Social Security Adm. for a copy of my father's Social Security application. During this time frame I would spend every free day that I had checking Census records at Florence library and any records that I could find at the Mormon library in Florence, with no results.

I decided to seek professional help and hired Mrs. Teresa Hicks, a genealogist in Columbia to do research for me. I sent her all the info that I had and gave her free reign to search. She sent me a report outlining every thing that I had told her and stated that she could find nothing about my father or his family.

November 1995 I wrote Laurens and Newberry school districts asking for school records. My response from both was they could find no record of my father attending school because I was using the name James Marion Stewart..

October 1996, I received a copy of my father's SS application, listing James Marion Stewart, father and Lula Pearl Cannon, mother. This really confused me as his army records listed R. C. Stewart, father, and SS appl. listed James Marion Stewart, father.

November I contacted DHEC looking for death certificates. No records were on file.

All during 1999 I kept going to Laurens, Newberry and the Mormon library trying to find anything that would help me clarify who my father was.

The Newberry Probate Judge gave me the name of a James R. Stewart in Greenville that had lived on Glenn Street. In June 2000 I wrote him and his response was that he had lived on Glenn Street, but had no knowledge of a R C Stewart or James Marion Stewart. I took a chance and wrote Walter Lawrence Stewart at the address in the family history asking about James Manning Stewart. I received a response from his son, John Calvin Stewart, stating that his father had died and that Manning had disappeared when he was very young and he did not know what had happened to Manning. The family had the Police and FBI searching for Manning, but could not find him. This was all he knew.

This same time I wrote Cades Baptist Church and Lake City Baptist Church where my parents were married and attended church. I received a response form LC Church showing where my parents marriage was listed.

About this time I was becoming discouraged. So November 2000, I contacted Boyd Bedenbaugh, a genealogist in Prosperity for him to research what info that I had.

7/10/2002 I received a response from Bedenbaugh telling about finding a Ripley Clark Stewart and Lula Pearl Cannon but nothing about James Marion Stewart.

7/15/2002 I gave him info about R C Stewart, living at 303 Glenn St and asked him to dig some more.

5/2003 I received a detailed report from Bedenbaugh telling about Ripley Clark Stewart living in Rockingham, NC. That he was killed by a train in 1939 and was married to Pearl Stewart Hamrick. 303 Glenn St was a vacant lot and owned by a textile company. Ripley had a son James Manning Stewart, but could find no info about him. His research asked a lot of questions that needed to be answered, but nothing about my father, James Marion Stewart.

2006 I received an e-mail from FTDNA telling the results that could be found out by taking a DNA test. I said that the only thing that I could lose would be the cost of the test if it proved nothing.

7/2006 I received the results from this test stating that I was related to a Bruce S. Stewart by 12 markers and a Charles B. Stewart by 25 markers, giving an e-mail address of mary@walterstewart.org. I immediately contacted Mary who was now Newton giving her the results and asking about Charles B. Stewart. She stated he was the Walter Stewart Clan Chief and her brother. I sent her all the info that I had accumulated over the years for her to help me solve this puzzle. She told me to get a copy of Manning's marriage license and compare the signature with the signature on my father's marriage license. This proved to be the same signature. She sent me pictures of Manning when he was young, pictures of him and his first wife and child and other family members. The picture of Manning when he was young was identical to the earliest picture that I had of my father. I sent copies to Mary for her comparison.

After study and comparison, Mary and other family members felt that James Manning Stewart and James Marion Stewart were the same person, that he had changed his name when he left his wife and child.

Ironically, the first document that I found where my father had used Marion as his middle name was on my birth certificate in 1932. On all previous documents he had used only his middle initial of M., even on his military records and his marriage license. I don't know why he had changed it from Manning at this time, unless he knew that he already had a son named Manning, Jr. and could not have two sons by the same name.

Mary wanted us to meet. So, 8/2006 Joan and I came to Greenville and met Mary and Dick Newton. The same day we met some of her children and her brother Charles Stewart as they were meeting to work on this reunion. We had a great visit.

Mary and Dick had gone to Laurens and met John Stewart who turned out to be my first cousin. She also told me about another cousin in a retirement home in Charlotte, Edna Dendy Littlejohn.

Joan and I visited John in Laurens and had a long and delightful visit and compared photos of his father and my father.

Joan and I visited Edna Littlejohn in Charlotte. As soon as she opened her door and before I could speak, she said, "You are a Stewart. I know because you can tell by the ears". She was a most remarkable person and we talked with each other by telephone approximately every other week until she died.

It was now time to tell my sister what I had found and get her reaction. Joan and I made a trip to Virginia carrying all my documentation to prove to her what I had found. She was really shocked and also mad at our father for not telling us about his life. But as time passed she became reconciled to the fact, and she and her husband are with us this weekend.

The only regrets that I have about this situation is that I did not get to know my grandparents, uncle and cousin while I was growing up. The past is gone and can't be changed. I am only glad that I was able to get to know some of my Stewart relatives.

That about sums up my 15 years of research. But before I stop, I would be remiss if I did not give my heartfelt thanks to Mary and Dick Newton. Without their help and hard work in tracking down this info, I would not be here this weekend. Thank you Mary and Dick, and I thank you for accepting us as members of the Walter Stewart Clan.

Thank you.