

May 13, 2000

Dear Tony,

You were just a phone call away and I had to find out if Dennis and I had an older brother. Well, I found that we do have an older brother. On the other hand, you have uncovered a 53-year-old sister and a 42-year-old brother. There is also one brother-in-law, two nephews, one niece, an aunt, seven first cousins and several second cousins. There are also other blood kin that if you wish, you can learn about. I know my telephone call startled you but time is so precious I have learned not to waste it. Though we were both nervous, I think it went rather well.

I have tried to remember things to tell you about our father. It is mainly from a child's point of view and is rather disjointed and may seem trivial to you. I shall give you what I remember now and will probably have more facts later. Oddly enough, a few weeks ago I had decided to visit dad's sister Gladys (she is 80 yrs old). I haven't seen her in years and I also wanted to know about the family. I still plan to visit her and I'll keep you informed. {Please forgive the incorrect grammar, southern slang, etc... this letter is from the heart and I'll not be worried with petty details}

Wayne Samuel Sheffer was born on March 19, 1919. He was the oldest son of Rufus Sheffer and Lottie Jenkins Sheffer and they lived on a farm in the Cherry Hill area of Robards, KY in Henderson County Kentucky. Our grandparents had 7 children but only three lived, dad 1919, Gladys 1920 and Raymond Elliot "Jack" 1936. One of the babies lived a few weeks before it died and from dad's description it was a textbook case of Rhesus factor. Grandmother's blood type was A negative and dad was A positive.

I remember dad saying that, as a kid out of school for the summer, he would run all over the farm wearing nothing but a pair of bib overalls---no shoes, shirt or even underwear. When he wasn't helping on the farm, he liked to hunt rabbits and go fishing.

Our father was 6 ft. 3 in. tall and weighed about 220 pounds. He had dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. He had long bones and large hands. He had great physical strength—I've heard men say of him that Wayne could handle anything that wasn't nailed down. I once saw him pick up a kitchen cooking stove and toss it on the back of a truck. He had an IQ of 136 but never went any further than completing high school. In high school he played center on the basketball team. Our father was ambidextrous—he usually wrote with his right hand, but could write equally as well with his left. Since you are an athlete I assume you are also well coordinated.

He had an easy-going disposition and was very kind. He enjoyed people and people also liked him. I think kindness is a people magnet, don't you? He never entered the "rat race". He wasn't an acquisitive person—didn't need to accumulate things. Most of us have our special books, paintings, knick-knacks, etc... that we cherish. He was content to have a roof over his head, food, transportation and good conversation with friends who visited all the time. When he died there were no special "trinkets" of his left behind for anyone to have as keepsakes. There had been a high school class ring and some military medals, but a thief broke into the house years ago and stole even those few things.

Dad worked hard. Two jobs for years—he farmed, corn and hogs, and he drove a gasoline truck and delivered gas to farmers. A few of the farmers had large mean dogs that terrorized people coming onto their land, but the dogs never bothered dad. It's been years since I remembered that and I still wonder why the brutes would just follow him around. He could repair most anything mechanical. After all, people on farms couldn't afford to call a repairman whenever something broke. It was the old adage of use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without. He used to buy old broken down farm tractors, repair them, use them for a season or two, and then sell them for a profit.

When dad got out of the military he got a GI loan and bought a small farm in Henderson County in the Robards area. In 1964 he sold the place and moved into the city of Henderson. He bought a service station where he sold gasoline and worked on automobiles. He had problems when people brought in small vehicles like Volkswagen bugs because he could hardly get his large hands into the small engines.

You should know something of the genetic history of the family. The Sheffer side of the family has a history of heart trouble though they are not obese people. Grandfather Rufus Sheffer died from a heart attack. The real family curse is through our grandmother Sheffer's family, the Jenkins. Diabetes. Our great grandparents, Jenkins side, both died of diabetes. Our grandmother died of the effects of diabetes. Dad's brother Jack had diabetes but died in 1990 from a hemorrhage in the medulla. Aunt Gladys is diabetic and my daughter, Gwyn, has juvenile diabetes.

Our father died on March 19, 1982. He fought colon cancer for two years. He was the first person in the family to have cancer. I think the years of contact with petroleum products was the contributing factor.

Enclosed are photographs of our dad. I have dated the backs of the photos. I never realized how few I had of him and those weren't very good. [You can see why I didn't give up my day job to become a photographer.] The first of June I shall be in Henderson and I plan to copy an 8x10 photo of our father in his military uniform. Also, there is a picture of dad's mother I'll send. None of us have a picture of grandfather Sheffer.



June 17, 2000

Dear Tony,

I was **happy to hear** from you so quickly. I was thrilled with the pictures and devoured your writings and history several times. They have become one of my precious possessions. By the way Big Bro., you are one handsome man!

You have done so much with your life and lived on your own terms. I am amazed at **all** you have accomplished and in awe of all the places you have been. I would love to see you swim. I can only imagine the determination and hard work it took to get to where you **are** in life. Our dad would have been so proud of you.

As you stated, I am going through emotional turmoil. The biggest is anger, and then there is sadness. Anger that I have been deprived of you all these years. Anger at the entire situation—knowing I cannot change the past. As you said what was, was. Thinking of how you feel and have felt in the past makes me angry and sad. I shall just have to deal with it. I have questions to ask you, but not now, sometime in the future.

It has occurred to me that you know absolutely nothing about me. It'll be rather difficult, but I shall try to give you some idea of the type of person I am. First, I am an extrovert and tend to chatter. Chattering seems to be one of those things females raised in southern USA tend toward. I prefer that people be honest with me and I try to be straightforward also, without hurting someone's feelings. No I am not saying I am Saint Pam.

I think of myself as a Renaissance woman in that I am interested in learning about everything. I have a degree in science but I also have a minor in literature. Even when I was young I knew that literature, humanities and art must be the check and balance of cold, analytical science. There is so much in this world to learn about and we each have **one** very short lifetime. I have read a theory that we shall continue to learn in the next world. I hope that is so and I would love to meet Leonardo da Vinci. There was a mind.

My job is in environmental science. I used to work for Kentucky Environmental Protection. The Dept. of Highways hired me to advise them on the management of waste, hazardous, solid, gasoline tanks, etc... and keep them out of trouble with the Federal agencies. I have to be tough as old boots. I work with men mostly and because I am first, a female, and second, not an engineer, they try to ignore me. There are still a lot of Neanderthals in the work place.

I am an artist. I do portraits in oils and am trying to build up a small business. My real love in painting is large religious works. I have enclosed a photo of one of them. The enclosed poem was written by my husband and inspired by the painting. I am currently trying to get a body of work together for a show. Unfortunately, some days I am exhausted when I get home from work and am too tired to paint.

*If you ever have any Competitions in the USA  
please let me know and I'll be there.*