

## A SHORT, SHORT STORY ABOUT AN OLD, OLD NOTEBOOK

A late evening phone call...a friendly voice...arrangements to meet...the romance begins: a cousin romance of excited chattering about grandparents, aunts, uncles....

In our fifties; face-to-face for the first time; so much to talk about; so little time. "Bye; let's get together again...."

Long after they're gone, I thumb through the pages of the loose-leaf notebook they loaned me. First cousins, once removed, had obviously spent years collecting information on their relatives (not all of them "my" relatives). My evaluation of their book: laborious labor of love.

I'm a writer and I aspire to publication of two family history books. I'm preparing my books in a late-20th-century method: computer and desktop publishing. However, I must give credit to nineteenth and twentieth century relatives that have preserved part of their heritage on scraps of paper, tucked into a Bible. Where would I be without their record of names?

I'm a compiler of SHOWALTER family history. At least two dozen people (some total strangers) have shared their data with me and their info may have come from two dozen sources. With my computer I am able to "file" information on each individual, "store" the data, "search" (for names), and "retrieve" (names and info). This two inch thick notebook of information promised to supply dates and/or spouses that I did not have.

As much as I love my computer (and refrigerated air conditioning in my car and home!) I want to be sensitive to the time and energy that went into preparation of this loose-leaf notebook. I want to know more about my forefathers; I'd like to insure that their names are preserved forever!

My grandparents, John and Ina Bird (Smith) Showalter, and six children left Oklahoma in 1920. In California, they found work in the orchards and orange packing houses. My early years were spent in and around packing houses but I was too young to understand the process of "grading" and "packing". Permit me, however, to draw an analogy between now and then: letters (and notebooks) come down the "conveyer belt", information is "graded", ultimately "packed" and eventually "marketed". The product is different: they handled oranges, I handle information. Times have changed: the small farms of my Pennsylvania and Virginia ancestors are gone; the orange groves of my youth have been replaced by subdivisions.

Handle enough information, grade enough fruit, and you weed out the inferior data, the culls. Somewhere along the line someone tried to hang our family on the wrong branch. Prior to perusal of the loose-leaf notebook, another cousin provided information regarding her extensive research of census and court records. She states: "Magdalena's Letters of Administration listed her childrens' names, one of whom was Noah. I feel that this definitely established Noah as the son of Abraham (son of Henry) born about 1791, and Magdalena (also know as Mary Magdalena RONK Showalter) born about 1792. They were married 12 Mar 1812 in Botetourt, VA."

In the loose-leaf notebook, an unmistakably old piece of paper (dated 1953) lists Noah Showalter, son of Abraham, with his wife and children. Noah's brothers, listed on the yellowed page, are identical to those listed by my cousin in her 1985 research.

Further, this charming bit of folklore is inscribed on the aged paper. "Abraham--wife cut 3rd set of teeth at age 85." I'm curious (aren't you?) about whether Magdalena Ronk Showalter's subsequent teeth were "normal". I wonder if any RONK / SHOWALTER researchers have additional information on this phenomenon.

This compiler of SHOWALTER / FRANTZ family history lives in the high desert north of Los Angeles. She will gladly exchange information on these two surnames and related families. Please write to Lorraine Frantz Edwards, 45365 Cedar Avenue #1, Lancaster, CA 93534-1972.