

Marie,

I was wondering, and perhaps you were, too, what it was about discovering your match to my grandson that was so intriguing and different. Beyond the allure of helping an eager and smart newbie, here is what I concluded is different:

If you look at my matches, and GedMatch is the best place to see them all, the most distant match I've actually ever found to me or **my** family (my side) by DNA was at the **73 cM** (centimorgan) level. I've chased lower-level matches over the years but haven't found a clear tie. [don't worry too much what a cM really is, because it is meaningless in absolute terms but very meaningful in relative terms. ~3600 cM is the max (you to your parents) and 0 is none. Anything over 7 (between 7 and 3600) is a 'match' to some degree.

With Sam and her family's side, the lowest 'found' match was **44 cM**.

With grandsons Jesse and Ely it was in the 20's, but **only** because I *found* them *as a result of* Sam or me **first**... So, considering that, the smallest needle I'd ever really found in the haystack was around 45 cM.

Then, out of the blue, you and your AncestryDNA came along... 3 things are 'unique' or new. My tree is open, deep, and I've spent hours making sure it is accurate. Your tree is the same. The other unique 'combination' is that both of our **trees are on Ancestry.com** and both you and Jesse had **Ancestry DNA** do your testing. Ancestry, with their combined DNA and Tree comparison algorithms, was able to draw a connection we might never have otherwise found. **At 15.8 cM yet!**

So, what's the big deal??

Most newbies have very, very few matches over 40 cM to begin with... For example, you have **only 3** (75, 45 and 42 cM) out of thousands. If I look back at my own start, and discount the folks I had test for specific intent, there is **no one under 100 who just popped up**.

My prevailing advice has been that DNA was of true value in confirming paper research but it never led me to a connection I wasn't already working on or looking for. A **15.8 cM** found match, however, is a big deal. A GAME-CHANGER.

I've studied your matches and Jesse's matches (those identified on Ancestry DNA) some more and find that they (AncestryDNA) are making match calls all the way down to **6-8 cMs**, where Ancestry.com trees exist and the connection can be substantiated by the trees. This is a HUGE advantage to folks with good trees who test at AncestryDNA and totally alters any advice I would otherwise give at present. People give Ancestry.com a bad rap over cost, but their vision is clearly paying off. This is a huge discriminator.

I have never 'published' a clear technical winner among the top 3 contenders (FTDNA, 23andMe, AncestryDNA), typically deferring to cost. Today that is different.

- **TEST with AncestryDNA**, even at full \$99 price, especially if you have a tree on Ancestry.com.
- **Use Ancestry.com** for your tree/research, especially if you have tested with AncestryDNA.
- **Upload to FTDNA** (free, but the \$19 upgrade and unlock is worth every penny; upload your GEDCOM, too)
- **Upload** to GedMatch (free, but the Tier 1 is worth it for experienced users)
- **Upload** to DNA.land (free; research oriented, limited matching, some unique reports)