

No
matter
how
outlandish
a story
may seem,
there is
always an
element
of truth
in it.

But if
the truth
is not
evident in
the story
itself,
take a
better look
at the
storyteller.

Even
if he is
your dad.

BY COLLEEN FITZPATRICK, PH.D.

WHEN JOHN "JAKE" HENDERSON GRAY died in his 70s in 1970, he left five children and a loving wife who had never questioned him about his true identity, yet had always wondered who he really was. The few accounts Jake gave of his early life seemed embellished, but where exactly did fact split from fiction? Had Jake really been a Navy pilot shot down over the English Channel during World War I? Had he really been photographed with Huey Long, wearing a swallowtail coat on the steps of the U.S. Capitol?

And then there was the big question: Why had Jake fled the United States in the 1920s and entered Australia under an assumed name?

One Man Two Names Three Families And Much Intrigue



Truths, as the Family Saw Them

There were fundamental characteristics about Jake that were genuine. He was great with animals. He once saved his crops from a flood by harvesting with a team of horses that had never been driven together. He knew a lot about the oil industry — he's said to have been the first to discover oil near Roma, today the largest oil producing area of Australia. And he did all of his own legal work.

So had he been a farmer? An oilman? An attorney? No one knew. Even his own family had never known the name he'd used in the United States, just that it was different from the one he went by in Australia. Thirty-two years after his death, Jake's daughter Cindi decided she'd had enough — she wanted to know the truth once and for all. She'd already exhausted all of the mainstream sources she could think of, so she turned to a psychic, believing he could offer nothing worse than more speculation, which was already a constant in Cindi's life.

But the psychic presented Cindi, who'd been born and raised in Australia, with something tangible: Cindi's father's original surname, the psychic told her, was Fitzpatrick. Cindi ran with the information, contacting me as an expert on Irish genealogy and group administrator for the Fitzpatrick DNA study.

I suggested she have her brother Lincoln submit a DNA sample to Relative Genetics (now DNA Ancestry <www.dna.ancestry.com>). We'd get the results and compare them to members of our Fitzpatrick DNA study.

Cindi's brother agreed to the test. But his results didn't match any of our Fitzpatricks, nor did they match any other results in the Relative Genetics DNA database or any other public DNA database we put the information into. DNA testing appeared to be yet another dead end.

Returning to Records

We turned back to traditional research routes. Over the next six years, Cindi shared facts (or rather, probable truths) about her father. Without knowing his real last name, however, our research still depended on anecdotes Jake had told the family, any or all of which could have been fabrications.

Jake had mentioned an older brother, Charles, with some disdain, saying his brother had not served in World War I because he stayed behind to run the family farm implement store. Jake told Cindi he had named her older sister, Teresa, after his mother. He showed Cindi a photograph of his father, Edward. And Cindi's birth certificate stated her father was from El Paso, Texas.

Cindi and I thoroughly researched each of these, along with any new leads. She once found a photo in a Navy yearbook of a pilot who looked just like her dad and who would have been about the same age. The pilot's name was John Henry Walsh, a name suspiciously similar to her father's John Henderson. Unfortunately, our research helped us follow Mr. Walsh to his grave in Rhode Island.

Across Oceans

Jake had never married Cindi's mother, Betty Rayner Hill, yet quoted their marriage date as "four fourteen forty-four." Cindi said Jake had problems remembering dates, but had an ear for rhyme and alliteration. This led Cindi to believe the birth date her father had given her — 14 April 1893 — in part on the assumption that her father had simply transferred his own birth month and day to that of a marriage that never happened. But it was simply an assumption, a hunch, not something of which she had actual proof.

At this point, here's what we thought we knew about the family:

timeline



Faking It

BY TANA L. PEDERSEN

IS IT THE MONEY? The fame? Or is it simply the thrill of getting away with something that leads ordinary people to lead double lives? See how — and why — some famous double lives were led through history.

1706

For more than three years, George Psalmanazar thrills Londoners with tales of his native Formosa. Cannibalism, polygamy, snake eating, human sacrifice; his stories have it all. He even publishes a tour guide about his country that flies off the shelves. Unfortunately it is all an elaborate ruse.



1777

Is he or isn't she? Throughout Chevalier d'Eon's career as a spy, diplomat, and dragoon captain, rumors swirl about his gender. Could he be a woman masquerading as a man? The London Stock Exchange even takes bets on the matter. D'Eon eventually petitions the French court to recognize him as a female, which it does. He lives the rest of his life as a woman.



Father — Edward
Mother — Teresa
Son — Charles
Daughter — Teresa

Son — Jake (John); place of birth: El Paso, Texas; birth date: 14 April 1893.

At the time, however, I couldn't get a genealogy search to link us to the results we wanted. Whenever I searched for a man from Texas with an older brother named Charles and parents Edward and Teresa, the results never seemed to point me to the right man.

DNA Returns

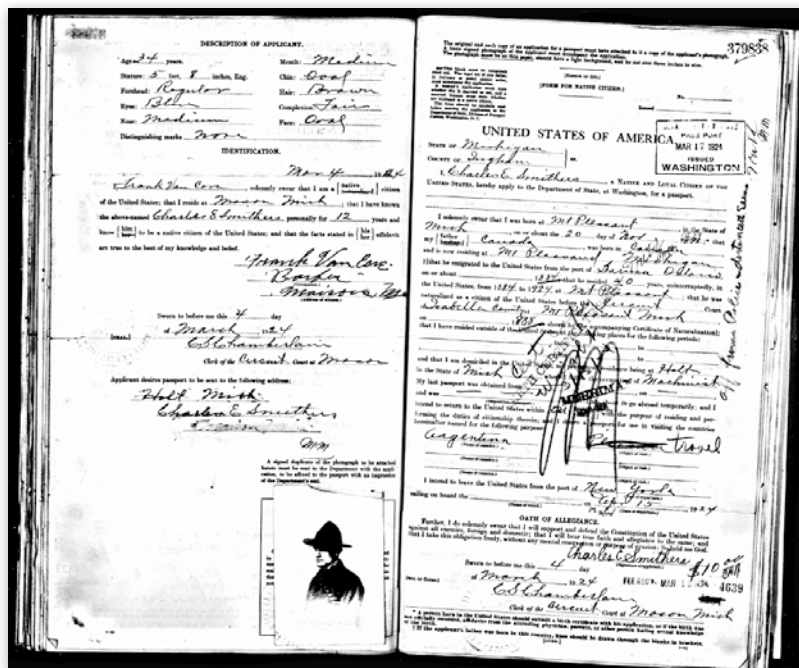
Then it happened: in late November of last year (2008), Cindi wrote me that her brother Lincoln had been notified of a DNA match by DNA Ancestry. His Y-DNA results were halfway between two Smithers, who were, themselves, only two markers apart. Lincoln was genetically "wedged" between them.

Smithers? That name triggered a memory in Cindi. She recalled seeing the name C. Smithers written in the margin of some notes that her mother had jotted down about Jake. Coupled with the DNA results, the surname Smithers gave us something new to try.

I spent the next two weeks combing through the 1900, 1910, and 1920 census records for a male C. Smithers born in the late 1880s to mid 1890s. I recorded each one in a spreadsheet, eliminating those who appeared in the 1930 U.S. census records (by then, Cindi's father was living in Australia). I searched World War I draft registration cards and other records, trying to narrow down my candidates further. Unfortunately, there were still too many C. Smithers left on my list, and none of them were from Texas with parents named Edward and Teresa.

So I changed the search to focus on Charles Smithers, presumably Jake's brother, and broadened my search to include the entire United States. I received more hits from census, military, and immigration and passenger records.

Because of the quantity of personal information offered, I dug into the "U.S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925," database at Ancestry.com. There were six Charles Smithers there. The most likely candidate was born 20 November 1889 in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. His application was for travel to Argentina and was dated 17 March 1924, approximately the same year that Cindi's father arrived in Australia.



WHOSE PASSPORT? This passport for Charles E. Smithers, Jake's brother, nearly threw researchers off the trail. But then the image and the dates started to make sense: what if this were actually associated with Jake's travel plans?

1788

Supporting two mistresses, five illegitimate children, and a gambling addiction can be expensive. So William Brodie turns to a life of crime. "Deacon Brodie" spends his days as an upstanding Scottish citizen installing cabinetry and locks in homes of the wealthy. But at night he returns to these same dwellings and robs them — an act for which he is subsequently hanged. Almost 100 years later, his duplicitous lifestyle inspires author Robert Louis Stevenson to write *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

1817

Outside Bristol, England, a confused foreigner wanders into town. She calls herself Princess Caraboo from the island of Javasu. Her exotic dress, cryptic language, and odd customs make her a darling of the local papers until a local woman recognizes her as a servant girl who'd previously boarded with her family.



1865

When Dr. James Barry graduates from the Edinburgh College of Medicine, he joins the British army. His innovative techniques and skilled surgeries soon catapult him to the top and his career takes him around the world to South Africa, Jamaica, Corfu, and Canada. Eventually he is named Inspector-General Surgeon to the British Army, the highest rank a military doctor can receive. It is only at his death that Dr. Barry is discovered to be a woman.



As I scrolled down to the bottom of the application I didn't dare breathe, thinking that this could be the end of decades of searching. But I was disappointed. The man in the passport photo did not look like Cindi's photo of Jake. More dashed hopes.

And this is where my research started to get the best of me — I was so involved in finding Jake Smithers that I momentarily forgot that my present search was for his brother. Ruling out this Charles Smithers simply because he didn't look like the picture of Cindi's dad would be a huge mistake — they were brothers, not one and the same.

So I used the information from Charles's passport application to find this Charles Smithers's family. I searched the

1900 and 1910 census records and found that Charles had a younger brother named James. Their parents were Edward and Teresa, and the family owned a farm implement store.

It all sounded very familiar. But I didn't dare get my hopes up, not yet.

I used the census information to search for James Smithers in the World War I database. Bingo: James William Smithers, born 14 April 1893. It was Jake. After six long years of research, I had found Cindi's dad. I sent her a quick e-mail (I couldn't find her phone number!) and hoped she would answer soon.

While I waited for Cindi's reply, I searched for more information. Vital record indexes at Ancestry.com and the site's New York, Canadian, and UK passenger lists, plus the Rootsweb site for Isabella County, Michigan, produced one exciting find after another. A FamilySearch.org record verified that James's mother was Teresa G. Henderson. This absolutely had to be Jake.

Phone. Finally.

A day later, Cindi called from Australia. Although we had researched her father together for six years, this was the first time I'd ever heard her voice.

We spoke as old friends for more than two hours. Cindi was determined to send for all the records she had ever hoped to find but could not obtain without knowing her dad's last name.

My own plan was based on James's/Jake's World

War I draft record, which stated that in 1917, he had a wife and a 9-month-old baby. I told Cindi I would search for any

MORE CLUES SURFACE. Searching for Jake with information Cindi already had wasn't working. But using the newfound information from Charles's passport led to this draft registration card and another chapter in Jake's life.

1917

Exotic dancer or scheming double agent? It's a plot straight out of a James Bond movie. The woman is Gertrud Margarete Zelle, better known as Mata Hari. During World War I her liaisons with high-ranking military officials and excursions across Europe bring her to the attention of several governments. Although she confesses to the British that she's working for France, the French government denies her claim and has her shot as a German spy.



1925

You've heard that a good salesman can sell snow to an Eskimo. How about the Eiffel Tower to a Frenchman? Posing as a government official, Victor Lustig convinces a scrap metal dealer that the city needs to junk the aging monument, *rapidement*. Cash in hand, Lustig departs for Vienna. When the dealer realizes his folly, he's too embarrassed to notify the police of the scam.

1944

One day you're an actor turned army soldier entertaining the British troops. The next you're the top-secret double for Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. Your job is to convince Germany that Montgomery is touring Africa and not planning a raid on northern France. To pull off the act, M. E. Clifton James quits smoking and drinking, emulates Montgomery's voice and mannerisms, and even wears a prosthetic finger.



My search didn't take long. Half an hour after hanging up with Cindi, I discovered one good fit: a Lucille Smithers in the 1920 census. She was listed as a widow, living in Lake Charles, Louisiana, with her 3-year-old son, Edward C. Smithers. Women often listed themselves as widows after a divorce or their husbands had left them, the boy was the right age — even “Edward” and “C.” had family precedents. Was this the wife and child mentioned in Jake’s World War I draft record?

I also discovered a James William Smithers listed in a more recent directory for Lake Charles. I took a chance and dialed the number, introduced myself and explained what I was doing. Chills ran down my spine when James told me that Edward Charles Smithers was his father and that, yes, Edward Charles had been raised by Lucille. But Lucille had

not been widowed. Her husband, James, had gone to Australia. From there, the family had lost track of him.

I was quickly put in touch with the Smithers family genealogist, Terry Smithers Tread-

WIFE, NO HUSBAND. Wife number one, Lucille Rusillon, is listed in the 1920 census as widowed. Son Edward also appears.



Rossellion Edward	Head	R	M	17	51	70	1864	2	7	2	Switzerland	Swiss
Ugher	Wife		M	10	49	70					Swiss	
Smithers Lucie	Daughter		F	17	25	40					Swiss	
Rossellion Agnes	Daughter		F	16	21	3					Swiss	
Erismette	Son		M	10	17	3					Swiss	
Smithers Edward C.	Grandchild		M	17	3	3					Swiss	
Bray James R.	Head	C	M	17	60	70	1859	2	1864		England	
Yedlith	Wife		F	17	46	70					England	
John R.	Son		M	16	17	3					England	
Marguerite	Daughter		F	16	13	3					England	

Lost Connection

E.C. Smithers, Jake's oldest child, never met his father, but once in the 1950s, it's believed that Jake tried to contact him. Late one night, E.C. received an operator-assisted call from Australia. The operator told him his father was on the line and wanted to speak to him. Then the phone went dead. Attempts at tracing the call were in vain. E.C. died a year later, in 1957, having never spoken to his dad.

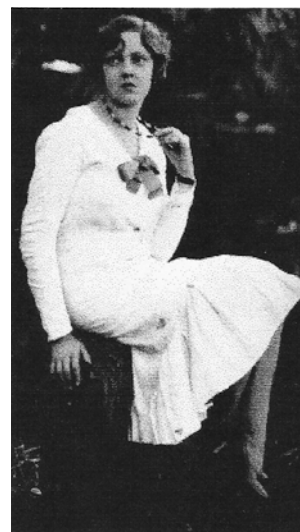
and Elaine (84), were still alive.

More Families

When you're dealing with a man who had at least three families, names are bound to become confusing. Keeping up with Jake, who had once been James and J.W., was rough. And not just for me.

John L. Smithers of Raleigh, North Carolina, is the son of Jake and his second wife, Lillian Lane. Before he received the news of Jake's family in Australia, John had been

searching for his father for more than 60 years. The search had never been easy. Jake had led a mysterious life, said John, apparently



WHAT DID LILLIAN KNOW?

Wife number two, Lillian Lane, may have known more about Jake's secrets than anyone. But if she did, she didn't share that information with children John L. or Elaine.

1959

How far would you go to walk in someone else's shoes? White journalist John Howard Griffin takes his investigation of race relations to extraordinary lengths. To prepare, Griffin spends days under ultraviolet light and ingests chemicals to darken his skin. He then spends six weeks traveling through the Deep South recording the experiences he has as a black man. His diary was later published as *Black Like Me*.



1960

A Canadian navy surgeon performs a tricky and successful chest surgery aboard ship. The only problem is Dr. Cyr is not a real doctor. And the press surrounding the incident flushes out his true identity — Ferdinand Demara — along with a few others. He's also known as school teacher Martin Godgart and prison guard Benjamin Jones, to name a few.

2004

When 23-year-old Oxford student Matt Richardson receives an invitation to give a series of lectures at Beijing University, he accepts, in spite of the fact that he's an engineering major and has no experience with economics, the subject he's to lecture about. Richardson fakes his way through the first day by reading from a textbook; when he realizes he's about to be busted, he takes a coffee break and flees the country. Turns out, the invitation was actually intended for Matthew P. Richardson, a business professor from New York University.



2006

Royal bastards don't always make news. Except when they take the royal family to court. Robert Brown, an accountant born in Kenya, claims to be the illegitimate offspring of Princess Margaret, sister to Queen Elizabeth II. His lawsuit seeks access to the will of the late princess and the Queen Mother. DNA tests that would settle the matter are refused.

working for an organization that required his whereabouts to remain secret. He would often disappear for weeks or months at a time without explanation. This no doubt contributed to the end of his first marriage, with Lucille (John's

mother, Lillian, ended her relationship with Jake for other reasons).

James William Smithers aka Jake Henderson Gray

Coupling my research with the decades of research by John Lane Smithers, we were able to construct an outline of Jake's life from his childhood in Michigan until his death in June 1970 in Sydney, Australia, though there are still plenty of holes in the life of our international man of mystery. Here's what we have:

Jake was born James William Smithers, in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, on

WHERE IT ALL STARTED: Long before he was Jake Henderson Gray, James William Smithers posed for this photo.

14 April 1893. He was the fourth of Edward and Teresa Henderson Smithers's six children. On 15 December 1915, Jake married Lucille Rusillon in Lake Charles, Louisiana. We have no idea how or why he landed in Louisiana. They had one son, Edward Charles (E.C.) Smithers,



Lucille's Life with Jake

Life was rarely predictable with Jake. His first wife, Lucille, described an incident during their 9-year relationship (1915–24) as follows. Note that during this marriage, Jake was Jim:

The worst time I had with Jim was when we left [Lake Charles] when he got out of the service. He wanted me to quit my job and go to meet him. He told me he was going to live in Denver, Colorado. I quit my job, bought a ticket for Denver. On the train over there, I was handed a telegram that told me to get off the train at Colorado Springs, which I did. He had an apartment and he said he had a job, but never told me what kind of job. We lived there about three months. I used to write my mother two and three times a week. I'd give the letters to Jim to mail for me and he never mailed one of them so that my folks didn't know where we were. After three months, I mailed one myself, then she knew where we were. Two or three days later, he came home with a secondhand car and told me we were leaving for Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

born in 1916, who was named after Jake's father.

Jake enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1917 while he was working in Colorado Springs. He became a landsman in the Quartermaster Corp in Great Lakes, Illinois, and eventually graduated from the Naval Aviation School at M.I.T. in 1918. He then accepted an appointment as ensign in the Naval Reserves in 1919. This is where we believe Jake's life starts to get exciting, although honestly it could have happened anywhere along the way.

Jake's marriage to Lucille lasted about nine years, with Lucille filing for divorce in 1924, after having essentially no contact with Jake for several years. Their son, E.C., never knew his father.

In about 1918, perhaps while at M.I.T., Jake met Lillian Lane. It's not clear if they were ever legally married, and we've never found a marriage license. By 1924, when Jake was trying to obtain a passport (Remember the passport I found for Charles? We later determined it was actually Jake who obtained the passport in his brother's name.), Lillian was included in his plans for an immediate departure from the United States.

Good Old-Fashioned Government Scandals

Stories of Jake's involvement in the Teapot Dome Scandal, the original U.S. oil scandal, had been part of the lore of

What Was Jake/James Up To?

Even Jake's personal letters are elusive, like this one from 1924 to his brother, Charles, sent when Jake was attempting to obtain a passport for his own use but in his brother's name. Note that Lillian was involved in his plans to leave the United States, but he was keeping some of his activities secret from her.

Received your letter this morning telling me that you had sent all the papers to Wash. And that they would be returned to you and then you would forward them to me as per address on letter received. Which is O.K. Just address letter with passports as follows: Miss Lillian Lane, 226 Baystate Road, Apartment No. 1.

I am also enclosing herewith two letters which please handle exactly as follows: go to Detroit, Michigan, a week from Saturday, that will be March 22nd. Get a money order for \$50 payable to Globe Special Delivery and be sure to sign your name R. Jones, address any place. Enclose the money order in letter addressed to Globe Special Delivery, San Francisco, California. Read the letter then you will understand. Then mail it as well as the letter addressed to the garage on a train going out of Detroit or Chicago.

This is very important to me. Then under no consideration have your name on either of the two letters. Do not worry about the passport for if you do your part Miss L. will tend to the balance in fine shape, however do not mail any personal letters to me mentioning anything else to her, just wait until you hear from me.

both the U.S. Smithers and Australian Gray families.

How was Jake connected? We're not entirely sure: Jake may have met one of the scheme's "bagmen," Ned Doheeny, while serving in the Navy — it appears their service in Pensacola, Florida, or at M.I.T. may have overlapped. Jake also spent time in Mexico in work that may have been linked to oil.

Or he may have met his contact to Teapot Dome in Colorado Springs, where he worked prior to entering the Navy. We've not yet been able to prove his involvement.

New Lands, New Life

According to passenger lists from Ancestry.co.uk, Henry M. Blackmer, a key player in Teapot Dome, sailed from St. John's, New Brunswick on the *Montrose*, arriving in Liverpool 23 February 1924, in an attempt to flee the country without testifying before Congress. Two months later, Jake sailed on the same ship, following the same route

CANADIAN PACIFIC									
NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ALIEN PASSENGERS.									
No.	Port of Origin	Name of Passenger	Address in Home Country	Rank or Profession	Age	Sex	Color of Hair	Color of Eyes	Color of Skin
1	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
2	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
3	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
4	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
5	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
6	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
7	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
8	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
9	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White
10	St. John's, N.B.	Robert	St. John's, N.B.	Shipyard	21	M	Black	Blue	White

STIRRING THE TEAPOT: Henry Blackmer, one of the key players in the Teapot Dome Scandal, and Jake took identical routes to flee America, although more evidence exists to link the pair.

to Liverpool. Lillian soon joined him.

During his several months in Europe, Jake wrote many letters to his brother, Charles, that reflect an abrupt change of lifestyle — Jake had come into a great deal of money.

For example, in a letter to Charles dated 18 May 1924, Jake wrote:

Just returned from Longchamp attending the races and enjoyed the day — had lunch at Café in the woods about half

Memories and Realizations

John L., the son of Jake and Lillian, discovered as a young adult that Jake had angered more than his share of important people. Unfortunately for John L., this realization came while hitchhiking in Kansas. Note that during this marriage, Jake went by the name J. W.

I was 18 or 19 years of age, based at an aerial gunners school in Great Bend, Kansas. I was late getting released from a detail, and when I arrived at the front gate, the bus had already left for Kansas City, Missouri. As I stepped out on the highway to hitch a ride, a beautiful Cadillac pulled up and a heavy-set man behind the wheel asked me, "Where are you going, son?"

I replied, "To Kansas City, Missouri."

"Get in. We'll let you out at a bus stop just out of town." The man driving was in his 60s and the man sitting beside him was in his 30s and probably at least 6 feet tall.

We started talking about hunting and fishing in Canada, especially trout, but I noticed the passenger didn't have anything to say. The driver asked me if I would like to go with him and I said I would love to. He asked my name and I responded, "John Lane Smithers."

The driver looked in his rearview mirror, and asked, "Your mother's name is Lillian?" I confirmed this thinking that I had found some family friends. Then he said, "And her father's name was John H. Lane?" I

replied, "Sure was."

The car pulled over to the side of the highway so fast it almost threw me out of the backseat. The driver turned to me. His face was very red and the veins in his neck were standing out like ropes and he shouted, "Get out! Get out!"

The man in the passenger seat said, "Son if you want to stay healthy you will get out."

I asked the driver, "What have I done?"

He said, "The next time you see your dad you tell him what has happened here."

I replied that I couldn't do that as my father was dead.

"Like hell he is," he said.

As they drove off I wrote down the license number. When I arrived in Kansas City, I went to the automobile registration office but they said that they could not give the information to me. As I walked out of the office, a policeman standing at the door told me that there was a lawyer who could help me. I went to the lawyer, who researched the license number while I waited.

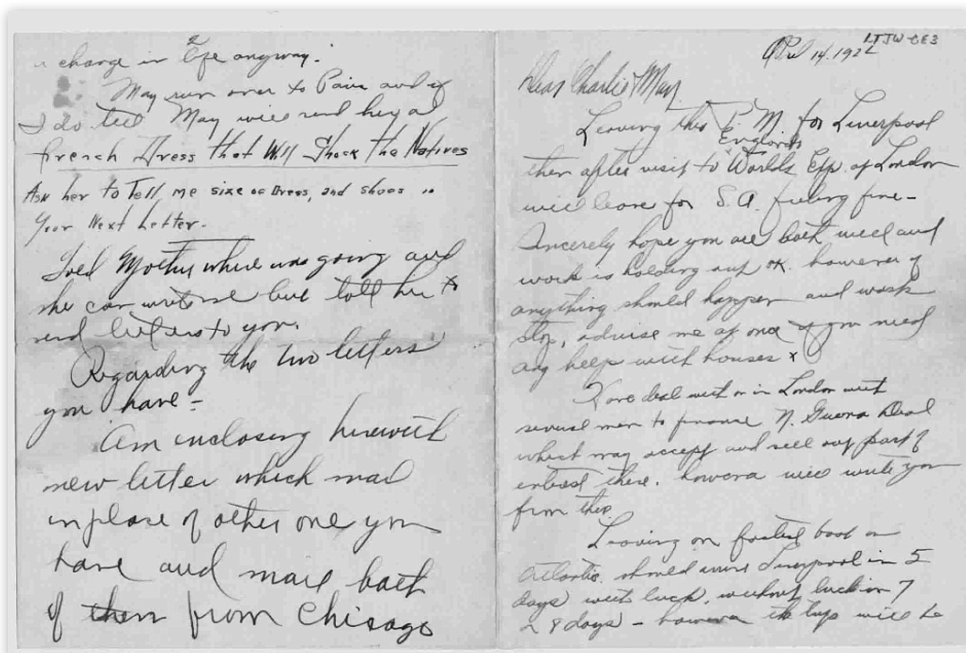
The name came back. The owner of the car was the same Harry F. Sinclair who had gone to prison for his activities in the Teapot Dome Scandal.

way there, cost about \$12 for two, one of the best places I have ever seen, then motored on to Longchamp. Good horses but not as good as we have on our best tracks ... Going to Dinner Dance at Ambassador, after my valet finishes trimming me up, is at present working on my feet as I write you, then a bath, and good rub, then dance until morning, then sleep a few hours and more of the same thing.

... [P]laying my game one has to spend so much daily expense something awful but when one is dead — they are dead for a long long time.

Jake and Lillian arrived in Sydney aboard the *Moldavia* on 24 Sept 1924. Their daughter, Elaine, was born there in February 1925. Lillian's father became ill shortly after this, so Lillian, pregnant with her second child, returned to the United States in July 1926 to care for him. During Lillian's stay, she gave birth to their son, John L., in August 1926.

Unfortunately, when Lillian returned to Australia later that year, she discovered Jake with another woman that the family story calls a "strawberry blonde." Shortly thereafter, Lillian returned to the United States with the children,



CRYPTIC NOTES: A few notes remain, like this one from Jake to his brother, Charles, instructing Charles on how to handle previously sent, secret, anonymous correspondence.

Elaine and John L., and never looked back.

By this time, James William Smithers had adopted the name Jake Henderson Gray. Sometime around 1942, he became acquainted with Betty Rayner Hill (no, she wasn't the strawberry blond), and together, they began Jake's third known family, the one he would settle down with for the rest of his life. His son Lincoln says, "Life with Dad was great, very loving, very unusual, often swinging between good fortune and tough times. He was always at home,

Teapot Dome Scandal

Teapot Dome, a geographic formation in Wyoming, is also the name applied to a scheme that implicated the Warren G. Harding administration in the noncompetitive lease of United States naval oil reserves to Harry Sinclair of Mammoth Oil (later Sinclair Oil) and Edward L. Doheny of Pan American Petroleum Company.

In exchange for the lease, Sinclair and Doheny gave interest-free loans (some say bribes) totaling \$4 million to Harding's Secretary of the Interior, Albert Fall. Some of the money for the loans came from the profits of the Continental Trading Company, a dummy corporation formed by Colorado Springs businessman Henry Blackmer and several oil tycoons, including Sinclair and James O'Neil of Prairie Oil and Gas.

When the Congressional investigation of the leases uncovered the money trail between the Continental Trading Company and Secretary Fall, Blackmer and O'Neil escaped to Europe to avoid testifying before

Congress. Doheny was eventually acquitted of bribery in a separate trial, while Henry Sinclair was fined \$100,000 for contempt of court and received a brief prison sentence for jury tampering. Secretary Fall was fined \$100,000 and sentenced to a year in prison.

According to a 5 March 1928 *Time* magazine article, \$800,000 of the profits of Continental Trading Company went to James E. O'Neil of Prairie Oil and Gas, who also fled to Europe. Blackmer received \$763,000, which was "in a Manhattan safety deposit box." Fall received \$233,000; \$34,000 went to the Republican National Committee to help pay down a deficit from the Harding campaign; and \$61,000 was given to Canadian attorney H. M. Osier, who "went through the motions necessary to form the Continental Trading Co." The total, notes *Time*, left more than \$1.1 million unaccounted for. Was any of that the source for Jake's newfound wealth?

<www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,880939-2,00.html>

BIRTH IN THE STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CHILD		FATHER		MOTHER		WITNESSES		EXAMINER	
Name and Surname	Sex	Name and Surname	Age	Name and Surname	Age	Name and Surname	Age	Name and Surname	Age
Elaine	F	Charles Edward Smithers	26	Lillian	26	D. P. Clement	26	April	1925
February 1925		30 years		30 years		Mr. B.		April 1925	
Perth		Perth		Perth		Perth		Perth	
Perth		Perth		Perth		Perth		Perth	

I certify that the above is a true copy of the particulars recorded in the Register kept in the Office of the Registrar General, Perth, Western Australia.

DATE 30 JAN 1950

REGISTRATION OFFICER

2008 www.jon-smithers.com

NEW ARRIVALS: James and Lillian's first child, Elaine, is born soon after they arrive in Australia; her birth certificate features her father's passport alias: Charles Edward Smithers.

never went to pubs or other such public places. Even though the family fortunes moved wildly, we were never left feeling vulnerable as Dad always made us feel secure, when in fact we possibly were not at the time."

"I know he greatly missed the USA, his family ties there and what he had left behind so long go," Lincoln says today. "He told me so in those very words numerous times when I was young, but never explained why. He said to me when I was 9 or 10 years old he was only ever going to take us 'back home' after he became seriously wealthy."

Mystery never stopped following Jake. The Australian police had a file on him — including his real name and place of birth. Back in the States, his son John L. was turned down for a job with the FBI. During the interview, the FBI representative told John L. to, "Go home and ask Lillian [John L.'s mother] for the truth."



CONTINENTS AWAY. In time, Australia proved agreeable for Jake. With Betty Rayner Hill (shown holding son Danny while son Jake looks on), he raised five children and lived a relatively quiet life.

"There are so many unusual things about [Dad]," Cindi recalls. "He could grow crops, raise stock, was very passionate about his breeding and training thoroughbreds. ... [My sister] Tess says that he was very literate and could touch type really well. That he always wore

shirts made of cream silk. ... His shoes were always hand made of goatskin. ... He made a lot of money here by selling a patent for \$250,000 in the early 1960s. The deal later turned nasty but that's another story, sounds like it may have been a 'sharp' deal that [Dad] pulled. ..."

What We Learned

I wish I could say that I learned everything, that I could write Jake's full story. I can't, although I'll keep trying to find out more. We do know John "Jake" Henderson Gray's name was

originally James William Smithers. We don't know why he changed it. And we still don't know who he really was.

And that brings us back to where we started, only now with new questions added: was Jake a wife deserter or a loving husband and father? Was he a con man or was he a guy who yearned for adventure? Was he a calculating, high-level spy who had to maintain a cover (yes, we've let our imaginations wander) or just a kid who happened to be in the wrong place at the right time to get caught up in a lot of, well, we're still not sure what?

Nevertheless our search for the real James/J.W./Jake Smithers/Gray has taught us a valuable lesson. No matter how outlandish a story may seem, odds are good that there's an element of truth in it. But if the truth is not evident in the story itself, take a better look at the storyteller. In this case, that means looking at a man with as many families and as many stories as he had identities.

COLLEEN FITZPATRICK, PH.D., author of *Clued In* (page 20), won a 2008 International Society of Family History Writers and Editors award for excellence in family history writing.

What Was He Up To?

If you're confused about Jake Henderson Gray's motivations, well, so are we. Thus far, we've entertained theories that he was some sort of spy, a petty grifter, an insatiable rambler, and/or a guy who got caught up in one of last century's political scandals and benefited handsomely. If you have your own theory — or proof — let us know. Visit us at Facebook <<http://companies.to/ancestrymagazine>> or at <www.ancestrymagazine.com> to post your comment online, or e-mail us at editor@ancestrymagazine.com to send responses that are too long (or stamped "Top Secret").

O Canada — and Australia and UK and U.S.

Ever think you might not need access to all of the Ancestry.com databases — both international and stateside? Then you aren't related to James William Smithers, Jake Henderson Gray, or possibly James Henderson Proctor. (Did we forget to mention him? Read on, you'll meet him, too.) The following images are just a sample of what he *may* have left behind in the form of electronic records accessible at Ancestry.com and a handful of international sites. Truth be told, we'd need at least the entire magazine to fit in the convoluted — and still growing — paper trail that could be linked to our international man of mystery.

Myself James Henderson Proctor and Lillian Annie Lane both of the City of Montreal in the Province of Quebec Canada, after the legal calling of the banns were married on August the nineteenth at the great Methodist Church of the Holy Trinity in the City of Montreal.

James H. Proctor.
Lillian A. Lane
Robert Burns.
Elizabeth Lucie

Did James and Lillian slip across the border to marry in Montreal in 1918 as James Henderson Proctor and Lillian Annie Lane? (Above; courtesy of the Ancestry.com Canadian collection.)

NO.	NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION
307	Gold	James	44	Male	Merchant
308	Gray	John	44	Male	Engineer
309	Hilditch	Carrie	35	Female	St. Longdale

In 1936, John L. Smithers met a man who offered to tell him more about his father. Was this man actually John "Jake" Henderson Gray? If so, records show a John Gray leaving Australia in time to meet John L. Smithers in Massachusetts. (Above; courtesy of the Ancestry.com Australian collection.)

NO.	NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION
305	Fleming	Mr. James Hamilton, Dublin	40	Male	Engineer
307	Fleming	Mr. George Hamilton, Nottingham	40	Male	Engineer
308	Gray	Mr. John Hamilton, London	44	Male	Engineer
309	Graham	Mr. Alexander, 44, 1st St. W. London	44	Male	Engineer

And a John Gray returning from America the next year. (Above; courtesy of the Ancestry.com UK collection.)

Reaction: Finding Out

IN A SENSE, she knew it all along.

"I knew he had some sort of secret," says Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Lucinda Franks, author of *My Father's Secret War*, on the discovery that her dad had been an American spy during World War II. But until the day she stumbled upon a Nazi uniform in the attic, she didn't know what that secret was.



"When I found the uniform, I was in horror," Franks admits. "I thought maybe he was a Nazi sympathizer. Or, because it was in my mother's belongings, I thought my mother had an affair with a Nazi."

Franks repeatedly asked her dad what it meant. "And over many years, I got the story that he had been a spy during World War II, during and afterwards. I got information from him and put it together with research at the National Archives," says Franks. She turned to his old war buddies, writing letters, asking for information. "Everyone," she notes, "was very circumspect and reluctant to talk about anything."

As she factored in her own memories, she realized, "Looking back at childhood, there were several games and things [Dad] did that are now explained by him being a spy. He was a wonderful father when I was a child, he played all sorts of games and assumed different identities to amuse me."

"One of the games was who could write a word the smallest. Sometimes he would let me win. You had to read the word with a magnifying glass," Franks continues. But it made sense — as a courier, her father would have carried messages written on tiny rice paper. Why? So he could swallow the message if needed.

"[Dad] grew remote when I became a teenager," says Franks, who at the time saw her dad as little more than a failure. He'd failed in his marriage with her mother, in his relationship with her, in other relationships. It was only after discovering his secret that she realized why he was the way he was. "He couldn't relate to adults because he didn't want them to ask any questions and find out," she says.

Eventually, through records and stories, her dad's claim checked out — he really had been a spy. He'd kept the information from her and her sister for years because that's the nature of the business — to keep secrets locked tight. And when she found that the stories of her dad as a spy were absolute, honest, and true? She reacted like any daughter would. "I learned he was a hero, I fell in love with him all over again," says Franks.

— JEANIE CROASMUN