

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Decades Later, DNA Test Reveals Resident Was Switched at Birth

By CIARA VARONE | Daily Sun Senior Writer

Eleanor Bligh told hospital staff she'd been given the wrong baby. They insisted she was mistaken. "In 1946, who is going to argue with a doctor?" said Pat "Gidget" Moscatello, the daughter she raised. Bligh never found out she was right. Seven decades later, a consumer DNA test confirmed her suspicions. Moscatello, of the Village of Charlotte, said it had become a recurring family joke that she was not biologically theirs.

"I got a kick out of it," she said. "I did not think I was switched." Moscatello's son thought otherwise. Though he loved his aunts and uncles, he shared that he did not believe she was related to them. She just looked and acted so different.

Three years ago, a cousin tried AncestryDNA and convinced Moscatello to do the same.

Results came back that she was Greek and Italian, not Irish like the rest of her family. And her cousin was not on Moscatello's list of familial connections.

She started wondering if there was more to her family's joke.

So Moscatello asked the brother she'd grown up with to take a test, which came back showing they were not related. Her sister, Barbara Brucato, did the same — no relation.

"I'm standing there in shock," she said, tearing up. "They still felt like my brother and sister, but I wasn't biologically connected. And now, who are my parents and how am I going to find them?"

The hospital where she was born in the Bronx no longer existed at that address. The only person on her Ancestry list

was a cousin she didn't know who lived in England.

A year passed. Then Brucato said she'd do some digging for a woman listed as a cousin on Moscatello's list.

She found her on Facebook and reached out to the woman, who said she had a cousin who might know something.

Moscatello called that cousin, Rosemarie Pennucci, and asked her what she knew.

While chatting, Pennucci said she had a sister, Jeanette Amalfitano, born Nov. 2, 1946, at St. Francis Hospital in the Bronx, just like Moscatello.

"I said, 'Rosemarie, I don't know how to tell you this, but there's a very good chance we could be sisters,'" Moscatello recalled.

They started sending each other pictures. Her son found Amalfitano on Facebook and pulled up pictures.

The resemblance to Bligh, the mother who had raised Moscatello, and Brucato, the sister she'd grown up with, was uncanny.

"There were no doubts," she said.

Pennucci said she would call Amalfitano to explain the situation. When Moscatello called Amalfitano, Amalfitano



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Jeanette Amalfitano, left, of Longwood, and Pat "Gidget" Moscatello, of the Village of Charlotte, were switched at birth. Amalfitano holds a photo of Moscatello's biological parents, Enrico and Frances Pennucci. Moscatello displays a photo of herself with the mother she was raised by, Eleanor Bligh, Amalfitano's biological mother.

shared that though she loved her family, she never felt like she belonged.

Amalfitano agreed to take a DNA test. Moscatello showed up as Pennucci's close family. Amalfitano was Brucato's.

Both sets of parents died before the discovery was made. But the women were able to connect with most of their biological siblings.

In 2016, they met up to celebrate their shared 70th birthday in Longwood, where Amalfitano lives.

Gaining two brothers and a sister was welcome news for Amalfitano, who had recently lost the brother she was raised with, Moscatello's biological brother.

"She never got to know him, and she was so much like him," Amalfitano said.

Amalfitano bonded instantly with Brucato, who

died a year after they found each other.

"To me, any time I had with my sister was time I wouldn't

have had," said Amalfitano. "It's sad it was only for a year, but I'm grateful for that year."

After a lifetime of feeling

different, Amalfitano said she feels complete.

"I guess that's why maybe I accepted it all so willingly," she said. "Maybe if I was rejected, it would be different. But I wasn't. I was welcomed with loving arms."

She still feels close to the sister she grew up with, and has also grown closer to Moscatello. They spent last Christmas together.

Both are trying to persuade Pennucci to move to Florida.

Neither Amalfitano nor Moscatello regret the twist of events that altered their lives forever.

The women crossed paths at numerous points in their lives with their biological families and each other without knowing — they were even in the same junior high class.

They think the mixup happened because of similarities in their parents' names. Moscatello was born to Enrico and Frances Pennucci, and Amalfitano to Eleanor and Francis Bligh.

"If it didn't happen the way it did, I wouldn't have met (my husband). I wouldn't have the two kids I have," Moscatello said.

"I always think this was divine intervention," Amalfitano agreed. "Why did we find out so late in life? Maybe that was meant to be."

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