



## Roots and Branches

By MIRIAM WEINER



### Digging Roots In A Dictionary

by Miriam Weiner

Family history research has led me to the usual places like libraries, government offices, old photographs and newly discovered relatives. Then there were the visits to cemeteries copying down old hard-to-read tombstone inscriptions. Old telephone books and city directories became constant companions for awhile.

By this time, nothing would have surprised me, so I thought. Then I discovered dictionaries -- not the usual ones with thousands of words and their meanings -- but biographical dictionaries covering a range from *Who's Who in World Jewry* to *A Biographical Dictionary of European Authors: 1000-1900*.

A few years ago, I was at wit's end trying to locate a family branch last known to be in Argentina. All usual approaches had been successful and I began to consider a "field trip". About that time, my friend, Steven W. Siegel, one of THE sources for unusual sources due to his work as the Archivist at the 92nd Street Y in New York and his genealogy expertise, sent me a listing from *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*.

There, where it had been for years, were the specifics for Adolfo Odnoposoff and his brother, Ricardo. The entries included date and place of birth, musical education and best of all, current residence.

In Ricardo's case, he had settled in Austria and it was relatively easy to then trace him through the Vienna telephone directory -- one of the few I had not consulted previously.

I was delighted to see that Adolfo had moved to Texas in 1975 becoming a Professor of Cello at North Texas State University, just outside Dallas. A quick inquiry of directory assistance provided a telephone number and address. A long letter and accompanying documentation were quickly dispatched and followed up with a telephone call about a week later.

It seems that both Adolfo and Ricardo, a violinist, had played many concerts in the Soviet Union, and on several occasions, they had been approached after the concert by other "Odnoposoffs" who were somehow related, but were not certain of the exact connection.

In subsequent trans-Atlantic telephone conversations with Ricardo, he mentioned an upcoming trip to the Soviet Union. I immediately sent him the names and addresses of several of our mutual "cousins" whom I had previously discovered through Soviet telephone books in the Library of Congress in Washington DC. I asked him to contact these cousins.

A couple of months later I received a long letter from Ricardo telling me about a family gathering in Moscow that was attended by several branches of our family, all related to one another, but not previously known to each other! One cousin had been working on our family tree for years and later sent it to me, drawn on cardboard and taped together in sections. It added 70 new names to this ever-growing family tree.

In his letter, Ricardo wrote that I was toasted in "absentia" for my efforts to discover and reunite the family. I immediately replied that I was available for his next trip to the U.S.S.R. and had a multitude of talents -- luggage handler, ticket holder, coffee fetcher -- whatever it took to be able to visit with my new family.

Adolfo was not to be outdone by Ricardo's input to this search for information. Adolfo's first letter to me included his own family tree compiled long ago by someone who shared our enthusiasm for family history. A notation at the end stated "the more distant relatives were from Priluki, Romny, Lubny". This was the connection I needed, since our family also originated in Priluki.

A second document from Ricardo was a family tree showing my direct ancestral line with a heading of: "Ciudad de Priluk - Provincia de Poltava". The heading confused me for a minute until I remembered that Adolfo had lived in Argentina and that these Spanish words meant "City of Priluk - Province of Poltava". It seems that after a concert some forty years ago in New York my mother's first cousin went backstage introduced himself and in the course of the conversation, proceeded to chart our entire family branch, which was recorded in Spanish by Adolfo.

Unfortunately, as is so often the case, we all waited too long to ask the right questions and there is no one left who can explain the exact relationship. It doesn't seem to matter to any of us how many "times removed" we are -- we know we are "cousins" and that is enough.

A Beginner's Guide (55 pages) on how to research your family history, which includes charts, list of archives and libraries, maps, bibliography, family group sheets and more, can be ordered from: Miriam Weiner, 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, NJ 07094.