

Chapter 77

Michael Strahan is my Distant Cousin

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Introduction

I have started using the Geni.com website to expand my knowledge of my family tree. A key feature of this website is its “World Family Tree”. Unlike Ancestry.com, where everyone has their own complete (or incomplete) family tree, Geni.com is having its users collaboratively build just a single family tree. On Ancestry.com, there can be one thousand or more duplicate entries for the same person – and these entries often have conflicting information. On Geni.com, there should only be one entry on the entire website for any given person. Individual users on Geni.com can add their ancestral lines until they connect with people already in the World Family Tree. And then their lines immediately become part of this enormous family tree. As of late February 2021, there are over 153 million individuals in the World Family Tree – see:

Profiles connected by Geni's World Family Tree:

153,636,241

<https://www.geni.com/worldfamilytree>

A number of my ancestral lines in the World Family Tree on Geni.com go back twenty or thirty generations into the past. For example, Charlemagne was my 32nd-great grandfather.

Michael Strahan and Finding Your Roots

My friend Rich Bressler knows of my interest in DNA and genealogy, and he recently mentioned how much he enjoys the television show ***Finding Your Roots***. This show, which is hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr., airs on PBS. Rich knows that I am descended from Charlemagne, and he had just watched an episode of ***Finding Your Roots*** that featured Michael Strahan, and they found that he also was descended from Charlemagne. Bressler suggested that I should figure out how Michael and I are related – he said that we might be 33rd cousins, since Charlemagne was my 32nd-great grandfather. Boy, was he wrong!

About Michael Strahan

Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia entry for Michael Strahan:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Strahan

Michael Anthony Strahan (Born November 21, 1971) is an American television personality, journalist and former professional football player who was a defensive end and spent his entire 15-year career with the New York Giants of the National Football League (NFL). Strahan set a record for the most sacks in a season in 2001, and helped the Giants win Super Bowl XLII over the New England Patriots in his final season in 2007. After retiring from the NFL, he became a media personality. He was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2014.

Strahan is a football analyst on Fox NFL Sunday, and co-host of ABC's *Good Morning America*. He co-hosted the syndicated daytime talk show *Live! with Kelly and Michael* with Kelly Ripa from 2012 to 2016, for which he won two Daytime Emmy Awards. In 2014, he became a regular contributor on *Good Morning America*. In 2016 the network announced that Strahan would be leaving *Live!* to join *GMA* full-time.



Michael Strahan

My Relationship with Michael Strahan

I went to Michael Strahan's entry in the World Family Tree on Geni.com – and I learned that indeed we are related:



I clicked on the “How are you related?” button, and after twenty seconds or so, the software on Geni.com had found the “Shortest Blood Relationship” between Michael Strahan and me:



Michael and I are 12th-cousins twice-removed. We both are descended from William Smith, Esq., of Honington¹ (1515-1552). William Smith was my 11th-great grandfather, and he was Michael Strahan's 13th-great grandfather. As an aside, I'm glad to see that I didn't have to go all the way back to Charlemagne to find out how Michael and I are related.

My ancestral line back to William Smith, Esq., goes through my Oakley and Darling ancestors, who lived in Fairfield County, Connecticut. The line continues back through my Jessup ancestors to John Jessup (1602-1638), who immigrated from Yorkshire, England, to Wethersfield, Hartford County, Connecticut.

Finding Your Roots

When the folks at ***Finding Your Roots*** started to investigate Michael Strahan's genealogy, they tracked him back to his second-great grandmother, a Black woman named Harriett Meade (born 1864), who lived in Jasper County, Texas. Here is her profile from Geni.com:



Harriett Meade/Mead

Gender: Female

Birth: March 01, 1864
Texas, United States

Immediate Family: Partner of [William Alfred Bishop](#)
Mother of [Creola Mead](#)

But Michael's DNA profile connected him to a White man named William Alfred Bishop (1852-1941), who also lived in Jasper County, Texas. In fact, based on census records, William lived several doors down the street from Harriett. Here is William's profile from Geni.com:

¹ Honington is located in Lincolnshire, approximately 40 miles north-east of Leicester.

William Alfred Bishop

Gender:	Male
Birth:	February 1852 Jasper, Texas, United States
Death:	March 09, 1941 (89) Jasper, Texas, United States
Immediate Family:	Son of John Allen Bishop and Dorcas Paulk Husband of Jane E. James and Mary Frances "Frank" Hardy Partner of Harriett Meade Father of Creola Mead Brother of Cassandra Elizabeth Bishop ; Abner Trope (Trupe) Bishop ; Milton Cager Bishop ; Tilman Denson Bishop ; Micajah Bishop and 4 others Half brother of William A Bishop

From a summary of the episode involving Michael Strahan,² it seems that Harriett had four children with her husband, and then he died, leaving her a widow. At that point, she went on to have four children fathered out of wedlock by her neighbor, William Bishop. And William Bishop was my relative!

Michael Strahan is descended from William Bishop and Harriett Meade through their daughter Creola Mead:

Creola Mead

Gender:	Female
Birth:	September 01, 1892 Jasper, Texas, United States
Immediate Family:	Daughter of William Alfred Bishop and Harriett Meade Wife of Jeredo Traylor Mother of James Curtis Traylor

Creola Mead was Michael Strahan's great-grandmother.

The connection from Michael Strahan back to William Bishop was based on DNA, while the connection from Michael back to Harriett Meade was made through genealogical records. And the census record established that William and Harriett lived in close physical proximity in Jasper County, Texas. What a great story!!

² <https://youtu.be/4Bx4gYjEQ8A>