

# Oakland Tribune

## Private eye helps reunite long-lost family members

Wins include helping Oakland woman, 45, find the father she never knew

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**Sunday, March 30, 2003** - OAKLAND -- Linda Chung wanted to fill a void in her life.

The 45-year-old Oakland resident had never met her father.

She had heard about two aunts, "Penny" and "Julia," who lived in San Diego. but she had little else to go on.

"I thought my father was deceased ... and my mother was uncomfortable with me trying to find him because she was only 14 when I was born in Oakland," said Chung.

On Feb. 22, however, Chung finally met her father -- 68-year old Louis Rankin Sr. of Stockton. "He said he had been trying to find me, too," Chung said. The family reunion took place in Pleasanton where there were plenty of tears and hugs.

The search had taken about a year after Chung went to Richard Harris, an East Oakland-based private investigator and owner of East Bay Detective Agency.

"It was great when they met because Linda also learned she had 16 brothers and sisters," said Harris, speaking from his office, where there are four other missing person files on his desk.

One case involves a woman in Bend, Ore. who is looking for her son.

"She hasn't seen him in 20 years. We think he might be here in Oakland or the Bay Area,' said Harris, who estimates he has reunited 300 to 400 people.

"These aren't criminal matters. Some people don't want to be located. This one woman told me to stay out of her business when I found her and told her a relative was looking for her."

Chung says her father left when she about two months old. "My mother, Jackie Jones, changed her name to Femi Adesanya, and now she lives in Kansas City, Mo. Now, she's happy that I finally met him because for me a void in my life has been filled."

Chung said she was placed up for adoption after she was born. Family members had told that her mother moved out of California when she was still in the Bay Area. Now the family doesn't want too much revealed about her past.

As one of 262 licensed private investigators in Alameda County, Harris has access to a data base of 2 billion pieces of information the general public cannot access.

He can find unlisted phone numbers, Social Security numbers, home and work addresses and other bits of information that he carefully pieces together.

Harris, 50, has been in law enforcement 10 years. He was a police cadet in San Francisco and also worked for the State Police before it merged with the California Highway Patrol in 1995.

He has been licensed for 14 years now. Investigators must have completed 6,000 hours of detective work before they can take a state exam. Harris had 6,200 hours when he took the test and passed it.

Much of his work involves persons charged with felonies -- robberies, drug dealing or aggravated assaults. He is assigned cases by Alameda County courts or private law firms when defendants need representation and investigations. Harris goes out to find facts and witnesses and takes photos that would be beneficial to the person charged.

He has handled a homicide cases but admits "I'm getting too much gray hair from that."

Harris said he is always getting new cases. "I just found two more people today. Linda's case took a long time," he said. "She never gave up. She just kept pushing me because for her this was the missing link in her life."