



April 2011 "Highlighted Adoption Reunion" Volume I Issue 1

Dear Chris, It's been several years since you helped me to find my birth mother, and an amazing journey thus far. Thought you might be interested in a recap: My adopted family was the most wonderful family anyone could ask for. Two parents who loved and cherished me, and made me aware of that on a daily basis.

A few years after they adopted me, they became pregnant with my little sister, so we were a family of four. I have always thought of my childhood as the happiest time of my life. When I became an adult, I realized I had a great fear of abandonment, and learned that it could possibly have been because I was given up at birth and remained in the hospital for five weeks, then placed in a foster home, where I stayed for 15 months, and then finally adopted. (I had some health issues that delayed the process). I guess those experiences leave an imprint of sorts, and I still have it. Sometimes, there is an insecurity that comes with being adopted, and some of us handle it better than others. But I also feel that I was so very lucky, from the day I was born, and am grateful for my many blessings.

Sadly for me, my adopted father died of a heart attack in 1975. In 1991, my adopted mother died of cancer. Before I lost them, I would never have gone looking for my birth mother. I wouldn't have hurt them in that way, even though they often offered to help me find her, if I was interested. I really wasn't. I was happy with the family I had. As I got older, however, a few things happened that caused me to change my mind about wanting to find her.

Firstly, my adopted parents could no longer be hurt. (Although it turned out that my adopted sister has always felt threatened by my interest in my birth family).

Secondly, as I got older and started developing health issues of my own, I wanted to know more about my heritage and genetics. But the catalyst was when a very dear friend of mine died estranged from his oldest daughter. I decided that my birth mother, if still alive, was approaching her mid-seventies and might not have all that much time left. I did not want her to die not knowing about me.

And I guess there was another factor, too.

When I was a teenager, I became pregnant. Weeks later, I had a miscarriage, so was never able to have that baby, but if I had, I probably would have given her up for adoption. Every year, I wonder what she would have been like, and what life would have been like with a child of my own (which I have never had). So I did not want my birth mother to die before she knew that I was adopted by a wonderful family, and all that they gave me and did for me. I wanted her to know that I appreciated the sacrifice she made for me, and that I felt she was courageous during a time that having a child out of wedlock was definitely a shameful thing. I wanted to thank her, and if that's all there was to it, and she didn't want to know me or we weren't going to have a further relationship, I was fine with that. But I wanted to make sure she didn't keep wondering about me or herself. That she knew she did the right thing by me, and that she could be proud that I was a good person with a good heart and that I had a wonderful and very happy life.

So I tried to find her myself. And I actually came very close! When I was adopted, my parents received a single page of information about my parents. Their ages, physical descriptions, education and ethnicity. About four years after my adopted mother died, I wrote to the adoption agency that placed me, asking if there was any medical information contained in my file (since my mother died of cancer it made me start thinking about that); and a very caring social worker wrote me a fabulous letter that provided me with as much information about my birth mother and my foster mother as she could legally give me. In this letter, I learned a bit more about my birth mother's family, and that she had an older sister. Next, I went to the 1930 Census, and started looking for a family that matched. I ended up going through every single page of the state where I was born, without being able to find a match. (It later turned out that my grandfather was here alone in 1930, and had left my grandmother and their first daughter back in Italy while he worked to make money to bring them to the United States). Anyway, I couldn't find them. So my husband suggested I hire someone to help me. We called several lawyers, but none

could help without more identifying information, in particular, a name, which I did not have. I went online to see if there was some other person or group who could help, and found Kinsolving Investigations. I engaged their services, and within three days, my mother was found. It was amazing to me, and took my breath away. Chris Lee was wonderful to deal with, and as a birth mother herself, and someone with lots of experience in the field of finding birth families, she offered to coach me before I made contact with my birth mother. We talked on the phone for some time, and I took pages of notes before I made that phone call. Her advice was invaluable and right on the mark. I called my birth mother and we talked for several hours. We laughed and cried and agreed to meet once she had time to digest the situation and also tell her other three children who did not know about me. We made one trip just to meet and visit with my mother. Several months later, we went back out and met the entire family at a family gathering. They were warm and welcoming and made me feel like a celebrity. It was an exceptional experience, and I'm so glad I did it. My birth family are all very good people, and I am proud to be a part of them. And my birth mother is a good woman and I care for her. But I hope I am not hurting anyone by saying that the last few years have gone by and I have gotten to know her and my half-siblings, I am so very glad I was adopted. She has a lot of good qualities, and it is fun to see that we have some of the same interests and predilections, but I don't believe she has the capacity to love and nurture that my adopted mother had. This may not be a fair assessment, because she is older now and her children are raised and gone. She also says she had a tough life. It doesn't really matter, because I'm not judging her, and since I went into this situation with no expectations whatever, I have not been disappointed.

My siblings are so unlike me, that it is apparent we were raised in a totally different way from each other. My sister and I tried to develop a relationship, but it just hasn't worked out, and my brothers are not really interested, I don't think. But my husband and I have become friends with my cousin and his wife (and are going on vacation with them) I accomplished what I set out to do, and feel that I did the right thing.

The first thing my mother said to me when I called her was "I wondered if I would ever hear from you".

It took courage of my own, and without my husband's support, I probably would not have taken that step. I have been generous with my mother, and shown her love and care, and continue to, in spite of my feelings. I would never hurt her, either. She deserves my respect, and we are working on the rest.

I have many friends who are adopted. None of them wishes to find their birth parents, and are surprised at me for doing that. They feel somehow disloyal to their adoptive parents, and I totally understand their feelings. For me, I was so grateful to the people who took me into their home and gave me everything they had, in spite of the fact that I was not biologically theirs. I would do anything for them and I loved them beyond. I miss them both terribly, and wish they were here so I could do for them what I am now doing for my biological mother.

But life moves on and things happen for a reason, and I just thank God every day for what I have and who I am and the love and luck I have been blessed with.

My mother never told my father about me, and she knows very little about him. I am now thinking about asking Chris to help me find him, but haven't decided. I would also love to find my foster mother. Again, I did some investigating of my own, and I think my father's no longer alive, which makes me sad. That is one of the reasons I took so long to look for my birth mother. The pain of losing my adopted mother is something I never wanted to experience again in my life. I did not want to meet and love my birth mother, only to lose her. But I decided it was worth it. And it was.

Thank YOU for helping to make it all happen! As I said in my letter, we haven't actually forged that close of a relationship, which is kind of sad, but I think it's ok. And when I wrote this (which I did quickly because I'm swamped and I worried if I put it off it would never get done), I worried that I might discourage or hurt someone. Like a birth mother. (Did I? YOU are a birth mother. How did this feel to you?) So please feel free to suggest some changes. My purpose is to be helpful, not hurtful. But I thought an honest assessment might be the most valuable. (And if you want to take out that paragraph about my adoptive friends not wanting to find their birth families, feel free. Maybe it's not necessary, even though it's true. One of my best friends just lost her adoptive mother, but still would never DREAM of looking for her birth mother. She is fiercely loyal, and I totally understand).

Anyway, yes, you and I have more work to do, I think. Maybe after the first of the year. To refresh your memory, a couple of years ago I sent you an obituary about who I thought might be my birth father, and you agreed, and thought that was him. But my birth mother and this other lady I found online (who was looking for a man of the same name and general description) both thought that was not him. I probably shouldn't have, but I wrote to the lady in the obituary (not right away, of course), and got no reply. Weirdly, one of the pall bearers is the son of one of my husband's ex business partners!! I wrote to them as well, and got no reply!!

But since I've met my mother, I realize a big piece of my puzzle is still missing, and am trying to decide if it's worth it to satisfy my curiosity. . So again, I do hope this letter will be a positive one for Kinsolving, but if not, please feel free to ask me to make changes. I don't want to hurt anybody or dissuade anybody by scaring them, if you know what I mean. I still think I did the right thing, and am glad for it. I also didn't mention that your fee was reasonable considering all you did.

Thank you again.