

## David Adams

I am now 53 and only 6 months ago contacted my natural mother. Unfortunately we have not been able to meet as at present I must remain a secret though we have spent some time on the phone talking. This is hardly surprising considering the situation and requires some significant degree of patience on both our parts. But I should explain how we arrived in this situation.

I was born in 1957 at the KGV Hospital for Mothers and Babies in Sydney. A rather difficult birth, both of us required follow up medical treatment, in my case a collapsed lung. After a couple of months in hospital I was taken home by my adoptive parents. With three younger siblings, all also adopted my upbringing was fairly normal, without too much trauma but a fair bit of drama. We all knew from an early age that we were 'special' because we were adopted but I don't think we had any real idea what that meant to anyone else but our adoptive parents.

My brother is quite different from me and I don't think we were ever really that close. My sisters were somewhat closer and we have always had more to do with each other. I'm certain one of my sisters was very affected by being adopted but until recently we have not really talked about how we really felt. Like many adopted kids we imagined our natural parents turning up out of the blue in some fairytale type of situation. That's one thing about adoption, you can reinvent yourself as many times as you like, but it's all fantasy.

Our parents have always been fairly open about the adoption but of course knew nothing of our history. Our mother spent a great deal of time trying to track down one of my sister's natural mothers many years ago without much success. Following her death I decided nine months ago to trace my natural mother. Our father has been very supportive of this venture so I have not had some of the concerns that many adoptees have in searching. My other sister and brother have not wanted to trace their birth parents. Both my brother and I married women who were also adopted. I think adoptees often hang around together as they understand each other a bit more than 'normal' people.

My search was actually quite fast and easy. After I had obtained my supply authority and my natural mother's marriage records it took me two hours to locate her using the white pages and the electoral office registration verification website. The usual letter was sent and in due course came her first phone call and immediately the acknowledgement "Yes, I am your mother."

My mother was a country girl, became pregnant at 14 and was sent to Bethesda in Sydney for the second half of her pregnancy. The workers at the mothers and babies home she remembers as supportive. The day after her 15th birthday she gave birth to me, there were complications for both of us and I was transferred to Camperdown Children's Hospital. My mother was told that I had not survived. Having a sad anniversary the day after your birthday for 53 years, which you can't acknowledge to anyone, must spoil things. When she returned home from Sydney the next few years were unpleasant, particularly the lack of support from family for the girl who had shamed them. While I haven't been told much about this period the deep hurt she feels is still so real when discussed.

I can't begin to imagine the shock of receiving a letter from a baby who hadn't survived. Due to her current family situation my natural mother has not been able to tell her family of my existence. Her current husband and my younger half brother and sister have no idea I exist and at present that must be how it stays. Rather frustrating when I can see my siblings on Facebook but can't contact them in case it blows my natural mother's cover. My concern is however for my natural mother's situation, in a small country town where no one can be told, there is no one whom she can turn to for help and she must keep everything secret as before, while at the same time trying to reassure me that she won't reject me.

More recently Community Services contacted me with my social and medical information. Not much there the social worker told me as it was a private adoption. In the back of my mind the thought 'so why are you ringing me?' There is one thing the social worker told me and then the bombshell 'your mother had another child who was also adopted'. My natural mother had not mentioned my younger

brother who was also born before she married her current husband at 20. So the questions start which I can't yet answer. Why didn't she tell me? Was she told he died as well? Do we share the same father, in which case is he a full blood brother, my only full blood sibling? How do I broach the subject? How do I reassure her I won't contact him and blow her cover prematurely? Do I need to tell her now?

Is it any wonder I don't know what to do about this, can't concentrate at times and am often preoccupied? Moving towards a reunion is dominating my life. How can I deal with this situation and those to come? There are more secrets to uncover including my natural father's name, possibly other half siblings and who knows what else.

Many friends and colleagues have been supportive. It's amazing how many people are adoptees, know an adoptee, are adoptive parents or have had some other contact with the adoption industry. Adoption permeates our society and affects so many people in various ways. Reading as much as possible about the different perspectives on adoption helps a bit. But there is still so much to deal with. This is no fairytale like on TV. It is an emotional rollercoaster, but one I need to stay on till the end, and then go around again!