

# Sue Bond

I was born in New Zealand in the 1960s, and adopted at birth by an English couple in their late forties. We travelled extensively between New Zealand, Australia and England before finally settling in Australia in the mid-1970s.

I was not told of my adoption until 1988, when I was half way through a supplementary term in obstetrics and gynaecology, in the last year of a medical degree, which was six years long in those days. My father told me then because I had just told my parents that I was leaving home to go live in the student quarters at the hospital. Our relationship was broken, had been broken for some time, and I could not go on with it.

I applied for my original birth certificate in 1994, and this told me not only my birthmother's name and birthplace and age, but also that she had named me. This gave me hope that I meant something to her, and that she might want to see me again. But something held me back from searching at that time.

It was not until my adoptive mother died in 2001 that I began that search. In 2002 I found my birthmother, and we had our reunion later that year. Suddenly I had a large family with brothers, a stepdad, grandmother, aunts, uncle, cousins, nieces, nephew. And I also found my birthfather in 2002, and another three siblings, but that relationship will take a little longer.

My adoptive father died in 2003. I never told him I had found and met my birthmother. It was not something I felt he would have welcomed, as he rarely spoke of my adoption, and became extremely upset when he did.

He had mental health problems and possibly a personality disorder. He was a RAF veteran, having served in WWII and been invalided out for severe psychological problems. He most probably suffered what we now call Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, paranoia and anxiety.

This made life difficult for him and for both my adoptive mother and myself. He had trouble keeping jobs, and we moved around constantly. I went to eight different primary schools in three different countries. His behaviour was controlling and manipulative towards both of us, and when I showed aptitude in high school, he insisted I aim for medicine as a career.

This was not a suitable vocation for me, but I did not go against my father's wishes. He could break me with silences and vituperative whispered conversations with my adoptive mother about how bad I was, and how ill I made him. He isolated my mother and me, so that we saw no other relatives and no friends.

I became depressed and developed anxiety whilst at university, attempting suicide in the second year. This was hidden, and I spoke to no one about it for years. My parents did not do anything about my obvious distress, and neither did I. Our household was full of secrets.

Before the reunion with my birthmother, we spoke on the phone. She wept, saying she had been afraid I would reject her because she had given me away. It never occurred to me to be angry towards her, because I had no idea what her circumstances had been. Like many women who were pregnant and unmarried in the past, she did not have a lot of choices. But she had hoped, right up until I was born, that somehow she could keep me.

When my dearest friend drove me up to the little country town where my birthmother lives, I rang as we got close so she knew to look out for us. We overshot the driveway, but came back and turned in. The image of my birthmother standing under the carport, waiting for me after thirty-seven years, is one that I will never forget. I think of her face as emanating light.

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