

Elaine Heeney

As an Adoptee I would like to offer my story which may help you.

I was born in 1935 at the Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne. My mother had been living at The St Joseph's Home for Mothers and Babies at Broadmeadows, Melbourne. For the next two years I continued to live there. In 1937 I with a small group of other children suffered an outbreak of Meningeal Meningococcus (?spelling) this was written up in AMJ about 1940. The only aftermath I suffered was a slight weakness in the Right Leg and life long Migraines. During my convalescence a young couple came to the Home to sign the papers for a baby boy. Somehow I found my way into the room where they were, I apparently followed the nun when she brought them a tea tray. I climbed onto the young man's knee and promptly fell asleep. When they heard I had been very ill they offered to give me a holiday, this was duly arranged and they went home without signing the adoption papers. Well I must have done a bit of Julius Caesar in me because I came, I saw and I conquered and ended up by being adopted.

Several attempts were made to get me a sister, one child had hysterics every time Dad, Grandpa or my Uncle came into the room, another kept hitting me and the third I can remember was claimed by her Maternal Grandmother at the last minute. Eventually Mum and Dad (my adoptive parents) adopted a baby boy in 1942. Dad had been called away on urgent war business so Mum and I took an empty pram out and collected my new brother, I can remember we stopped at the gate house and Mum carefully changed all his clothing leaving the Home's Clothes in a parcel at the Gate house, changing trains at Flinders St Station one of the wheels of the pram ceased and someone made the comment 'About austerity prams'. At school the following Monday I got into my first and only fisticuffs fight with a classmate because she said you get your baby brothers from hospital and they were only 2 weeks old I knew that you got them from the baby home and they were 6 months old. Our teacher separated us then phoned our mothers with a request to explain how we were both right. And this was when I learnt that I too was a special adopted child, my reaction must have really scared Mum because I burst out crying, when asked why it was for the poor little Mummy who never knew me!!!!!! Our next foray into the adoption area was with another little brother only this time I believe I was the initiating force behind the baby we eventually took home. We had gone into the nursery and one little baby was crying with great big sobs, I immediately went over and started to pat him and told my parents that this was the one we must take home because he needed me.

From the family point of view I had two wonderful parents, 3 grandparents and an Uncle, plus numerous cousins of my father 72 in all, although I only knew 20 on a personal level. Mum had a much smaller family of cousins but I knew all of them very well too. My Uncle married after the War and eventually I had 5 cousins. When I learnt that Red hair was inherited I went through a phase of looking at every redhaired woman and wondering IF, the most likely one was one of my mother's cousins, I got on very well with her, partly because she could hear what I said as she was profoundly deaf due to an illness. However I was never prepared to ask the question. In my 60's I found out she wasn't.

From the medical point of view the lack of family history has been a real stumbling block, especially when I ran into major Gynaecological problems, although I did have 4 live births of apparently healthy children despite 2 of them being difficult births. This presumption isn't quite correct as three of them have skeletal problems not severe but likely to cause problems as they age. The older daughter died as a result of an accident. I now have Osteoporosis.

Socially I had very little problems the odd comment I either ignored or responded with a curt comment, but when I told my mother-in-law I was pregnant I was shocked that she thought I should have an abortion because I didn't know my parentage. Her first question on being told of the births was "What colour is He/She?"

I believe that I have been able to assist a number of people considering adoption and a couple of adoptees and one lass who was considering relinquishing her baby.

I have now obtained my Birth Certificate and adoption record and left a message on my file that I could be contacted but as I was in my 60's I did not pursue finding any relatives, one of my sons thinks I should. The reason is I really loved my Mum and Dad I couldn't have had better although they were over protective at times. I am very grateful to my Mother to not have relinquished me earlier than 21/2 years after the birth means I think she was trying to find a way to care for me.