

Angel

February 1st 2005 is a date that changed my life. My daughter contacted me. Caryn Anne was the name I gave her when she was born on September 15th 1968; there was no alternative to adoption in that era. At the time of her birth I was 17 years old. No child, who is too young to vote, should have to make such a monumental, life altering, decision without guidance.

After leaving hospital I immediately regretted my decision and knew I had to try to reclaim my baby. The lady with whom I lived, (my mother had passed away when I was 14 and my father was not in a position to help me) went with me to approach Children's Services. Almost the moment we arrived it was pointed out to me how selfish and thoughtless I was. How could someone in my position expect to care for a child, especially a child who may require a lot of care? My daughter was born with a heart murmur. A couple had been coming to pick her up that day, or so I was told, this later proved to be untrue. I was made to feel that my daughter would only have a chance at a good life if I let go. This I did.

Over the next 36 years my life moved on. Marriage to a wonderful man, a loving son and two more beautiful daughters. Everything should have been perfect, it wasn't. Something was missing. Not a day passed without thoughts of my missing daughter, her birthday always a time of sad reflection. What might have been weighed heavily on my mind.

My husband came to visit me, as a friend, whilst I was in hospital, after having my daughter. The blessing from this was that there never had to be the explanations at a later date. My two younger daughters were told about their sister from an early age. My son was told as a teenager. We would, as a family, talk as if Caryn was just away for a while. She has always been part of our family. The girls had asked me to search for Caryn and went to the trouble of getting the forms to do so. Something held me back, I was scared. What if she didn't want to know me, worse still, what if she had died, could I live with either of these options? Thankfully, Caryn was looking for me.

I will never forget opening the letter from a real estate agent, expecting the usual spiel, only to dissolve into tears when I read the contents. My clever girl had found me with the assistance of a wonderful lady who worked in real estate in the area my husband and I lived at the time of our marriage. This lady, bless her heart, acted as go between to pass on email addresses and so on. Caryn, who was given a different name by her parents, lives in the USA. She has married a lovely man and has two beautiful little girls. All contact, to date, has been via email.

My girl had grown up thinking I had died of toxemia after her birth, and that her father had died in Vietnam. This is what her parents were told. She started to hear stories of people being told this to stop anyone searching for the birth parents. Caryn's Dad died when she was 16, so for a long time it was just her and her Mum. Upon her Mother's death she felt she could start looking, without feeling disloyal to her Mum, in case there was a family out there. Thank God she found us and we are overjoyed. I am hoping in the next year to be able to travel to the US to meet my darling girl and her family. In the meantime emails and photos are our lifeline to her.

The guilt I felt when I relinquished Caryn and also the guilt of not searching for her is still a presence in my life. If anyone reading this is thinking of searching for their child, please do it, you have nothing to lose and a whole world to gain.

Jenny