

My mother's story.

My mother found herself pregnant in 1947, to a married man who had said his marriage was over and he wanted to start a new life with her. She was 21 at the time, living with her parents in Sussex UK and doing her nurses training. When her parent found out they confronted him and asked his intentions, he said he would stay with his wife. Devastated my mother was sent to Scotland to have her baby at the Salvation Army (SA) unmarried mothers home in Edinburgh. Unknown to my mother, her mother's sisters found out about her situation and there was a terrible row between them and my mother's parents, them being told if the baby was brought home they would all be out of the family. My grandmother's mother had her eldest daughter out of wedlock and she had grown up with the stigma of being a "bastard" all her life maybe a reason for their anger.

My mother gave birth to a daughter and her parents went to visit. Her father wouldn't see the baby but her mother did. They still wouldn't give in and let her bring her home. My mother called her [REDACTED] and soon she was adopted by an older couple who were well off as they arrived in a nice car. They named her [REDACTED] and she spent several years growing up in Scotland then her father was given a posting in Swansea, Wales where he worked at BP as a chemist. My mother was helped by the home to continue her nurses training and lived in Scotland for 5 years where she met my father who was recovering from wounds he received during WW2. It was like a penance for her as although she loved my father she spent the next 13 years nursing him until his death in 1964. She brought me to Australia in 1965 for a better life.

My mother told me I had a sister in 1987 when I was 34 and [REDACTED] was 39. My first reaction was to find her. A lot of things fell into place for me regarding how my mother acted towards situations. My mother had spent some years working at KEMH in the Centennial ward which is where all the babies that were going for adoption went until they were ready to leave.

I was very lucky as I had help from the SA who found her in less than a year. She had known since she was 16 that she was adopted. Her relationship with her mother was cold but she was devoted to her father. Despite the differences with her mother she had a happy and healthy upbringing.

I made several trips to see her over the years and we were reasonably close. It was good to see how much alike we were. I found that [REDACTED] had a huge chip

on her shoulder because she was adopted, she once stated it wasn't fair that I got to stay with mum and she didn't and that she resented the fact but knew it wasn't my fault. Although she never met her grandparents she had a huge dislike for our grandfather because he was the one that said she couldn't live with them. I only found out in later years about the row between them and the rest of the family. I took [REDACTED] to meet different family members in the UK on my visits and they all made her so welcome. She only made the trip here once. Mum was so excited she came and wanted to introduce her to everyone but [REDACTED] felt she was on display and I had to tone things down a lot to keep the peace.

My mum had her biggest wish of being with her 3 children. [REDACTED] born 1948, I 1953 and our brother [REDACTED] born 1967 after she remarried here. I saw how much my mother had gone through in her life and how giving up her baby had affected her. For my sister she never had a loving relationship with her adopted mother and when she had children she wasn't as loving and caring as they needed. Her marriage ended when her sons were 4 and 2 and she left them with their father and stepmother while she made a new life. Their stepmother was very cold towards them and they hated living with her. Later, [REDACTED] remarried, the boys being older were able to go and live with her and were happier.

I went over to spend a few weeks with [REDACTED] in April 2019 as she had lung cancer and was in a hospice. I stayed at her house with her 2 sons. The younger son was having marriage problems and had moved into the house while he sorted things out. He told me so many stories about how his mother was. He couldn't understand why she didn't do things for them that other mothers did, like birthday dinners, visiting them, making them welcome when they visited, and how she could leave her 2 little boys.

I was very into my family history but I rarely mentioned anything to [REDACTED] as she was always so negative. In June 2019 my cousin [REDACTED] and I hosted our third family reunion in Sussex. After I went for my last visit to my sister in Wales. She asked how it went and I said really well then she snapped that she hadn't been invited. To me it felt like it was her way of spoiling the occasion for me, it was always hard talking about family even although so many had welcomed her. I had only been back here a day when she passed away, 19th June 2019. How different things could have been had [REDACTED] lived with her birth mother.