

I was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1967 at Elim in Hobart. My mother, \_\_\_\_\_ named me \_\_\_\_\_ SMYTH. \_\_\_\_\_ had just turned 19, was unmarried and from Victoria. After travelling here on a working holiday and becoming involved with a man much older than herself, \_\_\_\_\_ found herself alone and pregnant. I don't know how \_\_\_\_\_ found Elim but perhaps as \_\_\_\_\_ was also adopted, she knew to make enquiries about where she could go.

\_\_\_\_\_ did not tell her parents of her confinement. Whilst \_\_\_\_\_ did name my father in her paperwork, his name does not appear on my birth certificate. I have since been told that upon \_\_\_\_\_ telling my father that she was pregnant, he wanted nothing else to do with her.

My parents adopted me after \_\_\_\_\_ signed me over as a ward of the state and gave me up for adoption. I do not remember being told that I was adopted; I just knew. Everybody knew. My parents had limited information regarding \_\_\_\_\_ and this was also provided to me as I grew up. My parents were very loving and caring and we have a great relationship. I have an older sister and a younger sister neither of whom are adopted.

I grew up being told by my parents that I was special and very much loved. Out of all the babies that were available for adoption at the time I was the most beautiful and special and that was why they chose me. Unfortunately, even though I was told this, I grew up thinking to myself that I was not very special at all because if I was, maybe \_\_\_\_\_ would have kept me. I understand the social and economic environment in 1967 was vastly different to what it is today. I understand that unwed mothers were frowned upon and encouraged to give their babies up because "a baby needs a mother and a father". But I always thought in the back of my mind that if \_\_\_\_\_ really wanted me she would have kept me.

In 1993 I obtained all my adoption records after the legislation regarding identifying information in relation to adoptions was changed. I remember receiving the envelope and after picking it up from the post office I sat in the car for 20 minutes before I worked up the courage to open it. The information provided me a lot of details, far more than I had previously been aware of. I didn't realise it at the time but if I'd simply turned up on the doorstep of \_\_\_\_\_ address in Victoria, listed in the paperwork, I'd have found her immediately. However, at the time of getting the paperwork I was content to leave it at that.

I didn't feel any great sense of urgency to find \_\_\_\_\_ I'd registered with agencies such as Jigsaw and \_\_\_\_\_ had never registered to find me. Upon receiving my paperwork I was also told that \_\_\_\_\_ had not registered to find me. This reiterated my own belief that \_\_\_\_\_ didn't want me in 1967 and didn't want to know me now either. My life continued and I put the envelope away in a safe place, sometimes taking it out to go over the details again that I had already committed to memory.

But it gnawed at me. I wouldn't think about it for months at a time but it was always there. I wanted to know who \_\_\_\_\_ was. I wanted to know where my fair skin, blonde hair and blue eyes came from. I wanted to know why she gave me up for adoption.

By mid 2010 it had started to become a bit of a problem. I would try not to think about it but it wouldn't go away. With the support of my beloved husband, \_\_\_\_\_ I decided to try and find \_\_\_\_\_ I was worried about it and said at one stage "What if she has died and I don't get to meet her?" Even at the time of saying this I didn't really believe \_\_\_\_\_ would have passed away. She would only be in her early 60's.

It took \_\_\_\_\_ about 10 minutes on "google" to find \_\_\_\_\_ was listed on her husband's family tree. \_\_\_\_\_ was born in October 1948 and passed away a week after her 49<sup>th</sup> birthday in October 1997. I was devastated. I couldn't believe \_\_\_\_\_ had died 13 years ago. 49 was so young. The grief that hit me was overwhelming and took me by surprise. I felt that I had totally lost \_\_\_\_\_ again.

The computer told us that \_\_\_\_\_ had married in 1969 and gone on to have 3 sons in the early 1970's. I had 3 brothers I never even knew about it! However, the family tree also told us that \_\_\_\_\_ oldest son had passed away 3 weeks after her. My mind conjured up all sorts of things like they must have died as the result of some terrible accident. Her son was just 26 when he died. We decided to try and make contact with \_\_\_\_\_ husband in the hope of finding the answers to my questions.

We were able to make contact via email with the person responsible for submitting the family tree and within a couple of days had a response from \_\_\_\_\_ sister-in-law. We were fairly vague about why we wished to make contact with her brother but very quickly \_\_\_\_\_ husband rang \_\_\_\_\_ Without explaining exactly why he wanted to meet, made arrangements to travel to Victoria and meet \_\_\_\_\_ husband that week. This was met with no questions or suspicions and we began to think that \_\_\_\_\_ husband might know about me.

A couple of days later and before we were due to travel to Victoria, \_\_\_\_\_ husband rang \_\_\_\_\_ again. He asked "Is this about \_\_\_\_\_ answered that it was. \_\_\_\_\_ husband asked who \_\_\_\_\_ was to \_\_\_\_\_ told him that \_\_\_\_\_ was now Ruth and that I was his wife. With some details provided on the 'phone and upon meeting \_\_\_\_\_ husband in person several days later, we were able to answer most of the questions we had at that time.

\_\_\_\_\_ mother had become aware of her confinement as some documentation arrived at their home address. Upon seeing the details \_\_\_\_\_ mother flew to Hobart and went straight to Elim. \_\_\_\_\_ mother insisted on taking me home with them but was told it was too late as \_\_\_\_\_ had signed the paperwork.

I have concerns about the validity of the paperwork completed by [redacted] at Elim and that she was only 19 at the time of signing the paperwork.

[redacted] and her mum left Elim without me and travelled back to Victoria. Sometime later [redacted] met her husband and upon being proposed to by him, [redacted] told him what had happened in Tasmania. Her husband was fine with that and they married and had their 3 boys. When the youngest boy was about 13 they sat them all down and told my brothers that they had an older sister called [redacted] who had been given up for adoption. Some years later my youngest brother tried to find me but didn't really know where to start.

[redacted] and her husband divorced in about 1993. [redacted] died of cancer in 1997 with her eldest son also dying of cancer about 3 weeks later. Their ashes are scattered together in a special place and I was fortunate enough to travel there earlier this year and see where they are resting peacefully.

I have met my youngest brother and his family. They are lovely people and we remain in contact. I have a family and was not looking for another one when we decided to try and find [redacted] It is comforting to know who they are, where they are and some of family history. With the assistance of a group called "Vanish" in Victoria I have been able to obtain [redacted] adoption records. Although she was encouraged by her husband and sons to do this herself, [redacted] chose not to. [redacted] was also encouraged to find me. Again, she chose not to and I'm sure she had her reasons. I know from talking to [redacted] family that one of the reasons may have been that because her own mother had never tried to find [redacted] she obviously didn't want to know her, so [redacted] would do the same with thing me.

On my birthday last year I received a card from [redacted] husband. This was completely unexpected as he had never asked when my birthday was. He didn't need to ask as he always knew. [redacted] must have told him which means she remembered the day I was born. Again, I was overwhelmed with emotions. I had lived 43 years and always wondered if [redacted] had thought about me and it appears she did. I had no idea that [redacted] would tell her husband and children about me. That made me feel that perhaps I was special and she hadn't forgotten about me.

I received another birthday card from [redacted] husband this year. Again, it was a lovely card and very special to me. This year the card told me that [redacted] always had something missing in her life and her husband is sure it was me. [redacted] husband is a lovely man and I feel that he thinks of me as a daughter. If circumstances had been different I believe he would have been my step dad and raised me as his own with his sons.

For some reason, even though I'm adopted, it wasn't until recently that I became aware of the term forced adoption. I had no idea that mother's may have been pressured into giving up their babies. I always assumed that [redacted] didn't want me and wasn't able to keep me so she simply gave me up to people that did want me and were able to provide me with a

good life. However, I now believe that the circumstances of my adoption were not necessarily all above board. Unfortunately, [redacted] is no longer here to give her version of events.

The issues that I have are that [redacted] may not have been legally of age to sign the adoption paperwork as she was 19 and not 21 at the time; that the 30 day revocation period was not adhered to when [redacted] mother arrived at Elim and demanded to take her daughter and granddaughter home; that the staff at Elim were very much into telling girls such as [redacted] that she was bad person for getting herself into this situation in the first place and the only way of rectifying it was to give me up to decent people who could care for me; and that [redacted] may have been told that there was something physically wrong with me when in fact there wasn't.

Due to work commitments I was unable to attend the recent senate committee hearing in Hobart on 16/12/11. I have taken a great deal of interest in the hearings around the country and amongst other things, have downloaded a copy of the transcript from the hearing in Hobart. I feel that as [redacted] is no longer here that it was important to tell her story and wished to make this submission on her behalf.

I am hoping that as a result of the senate enquiry an official apology from all agencies involved in forced adoption practices within Australia is issued. I believe that the Salvation Army in Hobart have located some records from Elim recently and I wish to know whether any of these records relate to [redacted] and myself and if so, I wish to receive a copy of those records as I believe I am entitled to them. I also believe that the allocation of funding to assist people such as myself with counselling is necessary and should be provided.