

## **One of Life's Hardest Decisions**

I was a normal young teenager back in late 50's early sixties. I came from a rural area and went to Melbourne and did my Enrolled Nurse Training then decided to go to Sydney with a couple of girls to find work. We worked at Crown Street hospital for some time and then Garrawarra Hospital, at Waterfall. None of us at the time drank or smoked, or led particularly 'wild' lives.

Whilst I was working at Garrawarra Hospital and not long after having moved into a small flat with a nursing friend in Cronulla, I found myself pregnant. I didn't want to be with this guy, and vice versa, yet a termination didn't even come into it. I decided I would have the baby.

Eventually I had to give up work which meant I couldn't pay my half of the rent, but my friend supported me. When I contacted my mother and stepfather, mum said: "you can't come home pregnant - or with a baby - end of story!" My stepfather was a beautiful man, and I'm sure he was very hurt by my mother's rejection, but he lacked the backbone to stick up for me, and take on my mother.

I was sitting in this flat one day feeling very lonely, when there was a knock at the door, it was the guys mother (I will call her Mary) she said I couldn't live like that, she said I needed good food and no stress. She asked me to come and live with them.

So I moved in with Mary's family, which was very difficult - I am sure the husband and other siblings were not happy with me being there. Although I knew, and Mary knew the plan was to have my baby, and to put it up for adoption, her care and concern were our salvation. She was a godsend to me - god bless you in heaven, Mary!

Mary had a family friend who turned out to be an Obstetrician, so between them they managed to organize for me to go to a private hospital to have my baby. Back then, when unmarried girls had babies, it was usually in some dubious church homes, they were knocked out for the birth, and later told their babies had died. I considered myself to be blessed to know that my baby was alive. What was so very cruel was that, just like them I wasn't permitted to see my baby. The staff gave me a hit of something as the baby was being delivered, so I didn't even know if I'd had a boy or a girl.

One night I crept down to the nursery to see if I could find the baby which could have been mine, and a nurse yelled at me: "Get back to your room!" I have to say whilst I am writing this I have tears streaming down my face. How could they not even let you see or know the sex of your child?

I left the hospital went back home to my parents' home. When I got off the plane and my mother didn't even put her arm around me, and I was hurting so bad.

With nothing to hold me there, I left for Melbourne to do my general nurse training.

From the day I left that hospital I had a very bad crack in my heart and every year I bought a birthday card to a child and then an adult whom I didn't know was a female or male.

I won't go into how I found my son but I eventually met him when he was thirty years old. Since 1992 I have had contact with my son and since 2006 I have spent more time with him and his lovely wife. He has recently lost his adoptive parents and I am happy if I can fill a void. If I had had the chance to go home with him to my hometown, I would have been part of his life for fifty years. I have held that hurt and carried that secret for thirty years.

Yes, I have a beautiful son from my marriage and I am so happy I can go to my grave knowing he has an older brother now to look out for him.

I hope if any of our OWN friends were in this situation they could tell their story.

The final irony? The Obstetrician, who arranged the hospital and delivered my baby, was the one who adopted him.

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