

My perspective on this issue of forced adoption is from the point of view of a family adopting a child.

I would like to balance the picture on this issue as it can become muddied by people who take a stand on something which happened in their lives and they allowed it to color everything in their personal lives from then on.

My husband and I were desperate to start a family and it did not happen in four years. We were infertile and chose to adopt children. We were blessed with two boys and a girl child back in the early 1970's. In those days babies were available for adoption. The anticipation and joy that our adopted babies brought to us was amazing. They were part of the fabric of our life, and as a family we weathered the many difficulties we faced.

My husband's illness and death when the children were in their teens put enormous pressures on the family unit, but I am pleased to say we managed to forge a new relationship as a family through it all. Today my children are all parents themselves and bring their love and steadiness and industry to their families.

I realize that there were some instances of forced adoptions, because of family and social pressure, but I do not believe that our three babies were available because of pressure on the women who were their birth mothers.

Over the years we have met or corresponded with the mothers of two of the children. Their stories were that they decided that relinquishing the child was best for both mother and child at that time.

I am sure there would have been anguish on the part of the mother. Both mothers I had contact with said so, but they both wanted to know how their child had fared in life, considering the choice they had made many years ago. At this stage, one of the boys has contact with his birth family, one corresponded with the family for ten years then decided that was enough, and the other child has made no move to interact with his birth family.

We have had some funny instances with the children. At age five, my daughter ran around for a week saying: "I've got two mothers. I've got two mothers!" I was getting a bit fed up hearing this constant refrain, so I took her on my knee and said: "Who washes your clothes?" "Oh you!": she said. "Who cooks your tea?" "Oh, you!": she said. "Who takes you down to the bus for school each morning?" "Oh, you!": she said. "How many mothers do you have?": I asked. "Oh, one!": she giggled, and ran off to play, full of the joys of spring.

When one of the boys was about fourteen, he said he would just like to know what his mother looked like. He eventually met her when he was thirty seven. His half brothers look just like him, too.

As parents, we always said that the children were welcome to see their birth/adoption papers when they were eighteen, or earlier if they wanted to. And that we, as their

parents, would be happy for them to pursue this information if they wanted to. I was very pleased when, through legislation, it became easier for adoptees and their birth parents to find each other. What happened in our family was that two of their birth mothers and one birth father followed them up and found them... when my daughter was nineteen, and my son thirty seven.

Our children always knew that they were adopted... from an early age we spoke about it, we had story books about adoption, we knew other families who had adopted children. So as far as we could, we gave them an understanding of their journey in life. As they entered relationships themselves and coped with contact from their birth mothers, lots of aspects of their thoughts on being adopted showed in their acceptance or otherwise of how being adopted colored their lives.

I think, for our family it has been important being able to openly talk about being adopted, the reason for it, acceptance of it, and living with the thought that it is a fact of life for them.