

# Being Found & Forgiving

by Pat Owen

For twenty-nine years Christmas was a time of darkness and sadness. I gave birth to my first son on December 16, 1961 as an unwed mother. His father had abandoned us. I was left in disgrace, for “nice girls” didn’t have children under those conditions. My son was placed for adoption so he would have two parents, and so he could go to school with a proper birth certificate.

Later I married and had two more sons. Other children cannot fill the emptiness, the gaping hole left by the one lost. Although I had made peace with God and felt He had forgiven me, I had never forgiven myself.

At four o’clock on August 16, 1991, I received a phone call from a social worker at the agency where my first-born had been left. *Did I want to have contact with my son?* I thought I would explode! The child I had “thrown out with the bath water” was looking for *me?! Overwhelmed with happiness, and shocked, I laughed and cried at the same time. How could this child care? Why would he care? How could he care when I had given him away?!*

The weight of my guilt had left me thinking I wasn’t worthy for almost 30 years. Suddenly here was my son wanting contact. He wanted to be part of my life, and wanted me to be part of his.

Of course, I said ‘yes’. The social worker explained the process—an exchange of letters until she arranged a meeting in her office. My son, Scott, was more than the social worker bargained for, however. Once he learned I wanted contact (he was in Florida, I lived in Alabama, and the agency was in Iowa), the agency’s “policy” was history. Scott gave her his phone number and told her to have me call him. The social worker accepted my verbal waiver of confidentiality, and I called Scott with more joy and happiness than I’d felt about anything in my life.

That evening we spoke for the first time. I don’t really remember much of the conversation beyond its very beginning: ‘Scott, I’m your Mother’, and Scott replying - “*Can I call you ‘Mom’?*”

My sons accepted Scott initially because I am their Mother, and I have never tried to be perfect. They also

know how much I have always loved children, and how difficult it must have been to give up Scott. Too, they were secure about their places in my life. Today my three sons are the brothers every birth mother hopes to see beyond reunion. I have learned to ‘let go’ of that last vestige of fear of losing my younger sons. Giving them wings in the fullest sense, *was* difficult. It was Scott’s understanding of a birth mother’s issues that helped me to understand and let go of that fear.

We spent our first Thanksgiving together. Christmas has new meaning. I relish in the gay decorations; it is finally a time of joy, lightheartedness and celebration. I can look at the Manger and see the Christ child without the pain of looking for my own lost infant. Scott and I visit one another frequently; we’ve even taken a cruise together. My greater joy is having a beautiful, warm, loving daughter-in-law and my first two grandsons.

The rest of my family suspected there was another child, but decided to wait until I was ready to unveil the truth. My fellow teachers and friends have rejoiced with me, and the warmth of their feelings has been an added comfort. It’s interesting, now, to note how many of them come to me with their problems.

I have, at last, forgiven myself. It’s ridiculous to carry around something as useless as guilt. Scott said I had no reason to feel guilty. I feel free, at peace, filled with such great love I have to share it. My family and friends find the change in me remarkable, which is no more and no less than the total truth: I *am* happier, re-empowered and have regained that part of me lost 30 long years ago.

*What if?* I can’t and won’t look back and ask that. Today is too wonderful. Tomorrow, and the future beyond, are filled with the promise of my complete family with love in every direction. I’m content simply thanking God for each day with its blessings.

*Pat is interested in starting a support group in Dothan AL. For information, call 205/794-1753. Scott Under tells his story - In the next issue of PSN.*