

I was adopted in North Carolina in August 1970. My birthdate is August 10 and I was officially adopted in September 1970. From an early age, I knew I was adopted. My adopted mom was Japanese and I didn't look at all Japanese so there was no hiding the fact I wasn't her son.

I never really desired to search for my birth family during my childhood. I was raised in a very good home and was well taken care of. I think the only thing I wondered about was why...why did my mom give me up? Was I not good enough? Did she not want me? When I asked my adopted mom about any information she had on my birth mom, she told me my mom was very young when she had me and couldn't afford to take care of me and also didn't want me (I would later find out this was a lie). My adopted mom was very controlling and protective of me and would do just about anything to keep me. Later on life, I would resent her for this. I also believe that if I had even looked slightly like my adopted mom, she would have told me and others that I was her child!

So how did I find my birth family? Well that's quite the story. I actually had my mom's name as early as 2005 but because of being in the military and not really knowing where to begin, I really didn't pursue it. The state of North Carolina has sealed original birth certificates for adoptees so I had no access to my real birth certificate. The only way you can get it is through a court order and that's nearly impossible.

In 2015, I began reading more and more articles of people finding their birth families so I decided to give it a try. I joined a Facebook group for adult adoptees from North Carolina. I put in some basic info and almost immediately, I got my birth mom's name...the same name I had back in '05! Then about two hours later, I got info on my maternal aunt and got her Facebook profile. When I looked at it, I saw she listed an email account. I put together a two paragraph email and must have read it a thousand times. I told my wife that once I send this, there's no going back. My aunt sent back a response almost immediately saying she really didn't have much information but it was possible because she did remember my mom going away but she didn't know the reason. She told me she would contact some family friends who may know. About two weeks later, my aunt called and confirmed that this was indeed my birth mother. She also told me I had a sister which I had always wondered about and wanted! I was overjoyed! My Aunt told me she wanted to tell my sister Tracy about all this before I contacted her. Then in March 2015, my sister reached out to me via Facebook. We talked about a lot and then began talking everyday sometimes many times

a day. When we first talked on the phone, we talked for over three hours! It was like we had always been family!

I asked many questions about my mom to Tracy. She told me about my mom's stroke and her condition. I really wanted to meet my mom, but Tracy and I both felt it would be best to wait a while. I prayed a lot and even sent my mom Christmas gifts for Tracy to take to her.

Then right after Mother's Day 2015, Tracy called me and said it was time for me to meet my mom! We set up a date, June 7 to come down and meet her. My wife and son traveled with me to South Carolina and met Tracy and her husband. We went to the nursing home and I stayed out in the hallway while Tracy was in with my mom asking her if she remembered having me. Initially, my mom said she didn't know, then eventually told Tracy yes she did have to give a child up for adoption but didn't know whether it was a boy or girl. Tracy told her "well you had a boy and his name is Patrick and he wants to meet you." I came in the room and for the first time in my life looked my mom in the face! It was pure joy! I cried like a little baby. Tracy was crying too. We visited with my mom for over two hours. Before I left, my mom asked me when I was coming back and that she wanted to meet her grandson. The other thing that happened was that my mom and I spoke on the phone every day! And we still do! She tells me she loves me and I tell her I love her! She called me on my birthday last year and wished me a happy birthday for the first time in my life... I never thought I would ever hear her say those words to me!

Meeting my sister and my mom has changed my life in ways I never imagined! I knew going in there was a possibility my mom wouldn't want to meet me or want a relationship with me. It is a risk any time you go searching for your birth family, but for me it was worth it!

In closing I hope that this bill gets passed and that no adult adoptee has to go through this fight to get access to their original birth certificates. Had I had access to my original birth certificate I would not have to go through the hoops I did to find my birth family. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Patrick Hawes