

I had been sexually abused as a child and had always feared 'down there' was not going to be an option for any male to visit when we were courting. I did meet a very special person through Church. We attended Church twice a day and grew to love each other over the following years.

In 1967 I found myself pregnant and unmarried. I was 18 years old and my partner was moving to live in Queensland. We were not promiscuous in any way. I did not take the Contraceptive Pill. We had been together for 3 years

When I visited the Doctor for my first check-up he examined me and gave me a Pill and said if it worked I would lose the Fetus. It did not work. The Doctor at a later check-up advised me to have the baby Adopted out. After all I was too young to face the future raising a child on my own.

The parents of the Father of the child rang from Queensland and begged me to move up with them and they would convert the downstairs area of their Queenslander home for us both to live and raise the baby. My Mother said that was not at all possible and I was to give up the baby for Adoption as advised by the Doctor.

I was a disgrace to the family and to have an ILLEGITIMATE baby in those days was almost a Criminal Act. The shame I would bring to the Family.

I was placed under the care of a Social Worker at the Box Hill Community Hospital. I was probed by Medical Students each Month. Sometimes after the Examination I could barely walk from the pain from their probing internally.

NOT AT ANY STAGE WAS I TOLD THERE WAS ANY WELFARE SUPPORT FOR A SINGLE MOTHER.

As the Pregnancy progressed My Mother advised me to wear a Boned Corset. As I grew bigger, the corset threads were tightened with pressure down the opening in the back. This was to disguise the growing Baby Bump. Sometimes I felt I could barely breathe with the baby pressing on my lungs and ribs.

I continued to work wearing an oversized Uniform. Fashion was Caftans or Moo Moos. (1960's) during the week-end. BUT I remained at home when not at work for the remainder of the 5 months. Visitors would call in to see my parents. Dinner Parties were held at home. I would be asked to hide in my Mother's Wardrobe while Visitors were entertained. I was not to be seen. On my Birthday a Christmas Party was held at home for friends and relatives to enjoy. The baby was due any day. I remained in my bed throughout the whole evening. Story told to guests, I was unwell and too sick to join in. My Bladder was so painful wanting to urinate after a few hours; I almost passed out with the pain. The toilet could not be visited should someone see my bulging, pregnant stomach. I waited until everyone had gone home.

Two weeks after Christmas I started to go into Labor.

I was not prepared for what was ahead. I was dropped at the Reception Desk by my Mother who was then told to depart. "Place your Friendship ring on your wedding Finger and it will look as though you ARE married". After many questions and answers whilst have Contractions I was taken in a Wheel-chair to the Delivery area. I had a Brutal nurse shave my pubic hairs away and two enormous stainless steel jugs of warm water inserted into my Rectum. I had no idea what this was about. My first Bowel movement was when I went to have a shower. With terrifying fear and unable to move I vomited cried and continued to have copious bowel movements in the shower. All the

time hearing a screaming woman in child-birth. I was left alone (unmarried single Mother-to-Be) it appeared to be hours before I was finally placed on a trolley and taken to the Delivery Room. No-one spoke other than to tell me to place my two feet in stirrups preparing for the Birth. No-one told me my whole Secret Private Painful area was to be exposed to Medical staff and a Doctor I had never seen before.

I had a baby girl after hours of pain I had never felt before. Finally in the early hours of the morning a baby girl was born. She was placed by my right cheek. All looked perfect with her. I had numerous injections and was neatened up by quite a rough and heavy handed Doctor, taken to my room where I remained in a stupor for a whole day on my own in a private room lying in a pool of blood in the bed. I had NEVER seen so much blood in my life.

The next day I was placed in an eight-bed ward with other new Mothers. I was told this is what I will be faced with in the real outside World. I would have to get used to crying babies. When feeding time came around for hungry babies my curtains were drawn. It stopped the view BUT it did not stop the sounds My milk would flow and soak my nightdress. Visitors would arrive between 2pm and 3pm. I would be looked at scornfully and quiet whispers would be heard before my curtains would again be drawn. I WAS A SINGLE MOTHER WITH AN ILLEGITIMATE BABY

No-one visited me during my stay. It was a secret. My father visited me once I think it was that same day of the Birth. He told me it was over and I had the rest of my life to enjoy.

Whilst in Hospital I was not at any stage allowed out of my bed. I had to buzz for a Nurse. Only once was I taken by a Wheel-chair to a Salt Bath which was past the Nursery. The rest of the time I had to use a Bed pan. They were afraid I may see my Daughter and cause everyone an unnecessary fuss. Bed-Pans were used until the last day. If I did not have a Bowel movement I could not go home. A nurse walked me to the toilet, stood outside my door and repeatedly asked if I had had a motion. I lied and told her yes so I could get out of this uncaring, sterile, discriminating Hospital.

The day before my discharge a group of about 7 Medical Students entered the Ward, my curtains were drawn and my Night dress lifted. They were to view my Private parts and observe hemorrhoids around my Anus. Their faces revealed utter shock at what they saw. I was told nothing as they talked amongst themselves in whispers. This was humiliating.

On the day of Discharge the Social Worker came to my bed and showed me a Document to be signed. I could not leave until it was signed, Nothing was mentioned about 30 days from that time I could change my mind and keep her. At no stage was the Father's name required on any forms. There was a Father and he did exist. This puzzled me as to his anonymity. Why was he not required to be named?

I did not know what the form was about, only that my daughter HAD to be given a name. A name not used when and if I had any more children. I named her knowing if I was to be blessed with another daughter I would give her the same Initials. To this very day it gives me great satisfaction. I did have another daughter born on January 7. was born four years earlier on January 8.

A second cousin HAD to get married and she had a daughter one year after was born January 8. Every year when celebrated her Birthday I knew my would be celebrating hers Although her marriage did not last long she was supported with her child because she was not a single Mother.

Nothing was disgust about the 30 days after he Birth a Mother could reconsider the child being relinquished. This was never an option. I only found out months after her Birth.

For quite time after her Birth I vowed I would never have Sexual Relations again. The whole experience for me was terrifying. I did not take the Contraceptive Pill. I did not sleep around with men. I said Goodbye to my dearest and loving partner who was moved Interstate with his parents. How could I ever fall in love again?

Five years later my cousin adopted a little baby girl who was named \_\_\_\_\_, My Illegitimate daughter's name. Mine born on January 8 theirs born on Jan 28. The family was ecstatic there had not been a baby girl in their family for 75 years. I was to hold, cherish and feel warmth for this tiny little girl. It was hard. I HAD GIVEN MINE AWAY FOR ANOTHER TO DO THE SAME.

Twenty Five years later my daughter found me. She was very angry about the word on her Birth Certificate 'ILLEGITIMATE'. I explained that is how it was seen back then. I had a difficult time for years with her wanting to know and not understanding how a Mother could give up her baby. She had two quite older siblings, both boys. Her Mother lost a baby boy at a few Months. It was perfect for them to be granted and given a baby girl. THEY HAD LOST A BABY BOY. This would calm and settle any emotional feelings they may have had. A joy for them. I served a purpose, to make someone else a better parent at raising a child. I was single without Government support A hopeless case..An Impossibility situation only to be resolved by ADOPTION.

She informed me she had remained in the Hospital for six weeks. She had outgrown the crib in which she slept. I was told there was a loving family just waiting to take her home as theirs after she was born.

During many years of raising my other four children I have suffered BAD bouts of depression. Medicated, counseled for my sexual abuse as a child and the relinquishing of

I have been to a support group for Relinquishing Mothers in Richmond Melbourne. Many women in the group suffered unbelievable trauma and low self esteem due to their treatment dealt out to them in the times of shame and guilt towards UNWED MOTHERS. Many were unable to talk clearly due to their breaking down in various forms whilst reliving the trauma.

NOT AT ANY STAGE DID I RECEIVED ANY COUNSELLING, SUPPORT OR LEGAL ADVICE ON MY SIGNING THE ADOPTION PAPER. The Secrecy and manipulation of me to comply in ignorance to the Signing of Legal Documents was a denial of Information and Justice. I seek the Commonwealth and all States to formally apologize to Relinquishing Mothers, adopted persons and affected Families. As with The Stolen Generation Apology to Indigenous People, the time has come to Apologize to Women who were misinformed as to their rights of keeping their 'Out of Wedlock' babies.

NAME TO BE WITHHELD