

# Indiana Adoption Network News

*Building Connections for Adoptees & Their Families*

October 2016

First Edition; Volume 4



[www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org](http://www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org)

## From your President, Pam Kroskie

**Welcome fellow Adoptees and families! Happy October!**

First of all I would like to thank all of you that continue to write, call and send in your stories of reunion, sharing both the joys and issues that you are experiencing in searching. Each month I reflect back – we’ve been doing some surveys and I’ve learned so much from all of you! Sharing with friends and family is the way we find comfort in our search and reunion. We hope all of you will reach out to us at Indiana Adoption Network if you need any guidance or advice along the way.



Please feel free to personally contact me at [pamindianaadoptionnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:pamindianaadoptionnetwork@gmail.com)

**Pam**

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## **Featured Stories: A Sisters Weekend....35 years Later**

**by Laurie Aughe, Reunited Adoptee**

As an adoptee, I grew up always looking for someone who looked like me or acted like me, or anyone who might be looking for me in return. I had limited information in my closed adoption. The little I did have, I held on to with all my heart, trying to find any heritage. I knew my birthmother was about 30 when she ran away from Kentucky to Indianapolis to have me. She had two daughters, a 9 year old and 2 year old, whom she left with her mother in Kentucky. In Kentucky she was a teacher, here she worked as a cook. She had brown hair with lots of red in it, brown eyes, about 5’4” and olive toned skin. I was a product of a one night stand, and she did not know anything about him other than he was blond, blue eyes, and about 5’9”.

For years I searched. I put information out on countless number of search sites. I had no clue where to go or what to do. Eventually, someone told me to contact the adoption agency. I did around 2005. After months and months, my search specialist found her. My birthmother really didn’t offer any information, but said she would accept my pictures and letters in a plain

white envelope, but refused any further contact. For years, I sent letters and pictures with no reply.

In 2011, my mother in law bought me a DNA testing kit through Family Tree DNA for Christmas. I was so excited and couldn't wait to get information. When I finally got the results, I was overwhelmed with pages and pages of results. Nothing stood out, and the emails I sent out to some matches didn't have any promise. So, like most adoptees, I took a break. Then, for Christmas 2015, she extended that gift to the family finder. January 17, 2016, my results were in. I again, had pages and pages. Along my way, I matched with a cousin, who I had been working with and talking with about Indiana opening their original birth certificates, Pam Kroskie. Pam gave me some suggestions about my search.



January 22, 2016, I contacted a few higher matches, and I got a reply from a cousin. My emails were basic; I'm adopted, looking for any information. She asked if I minded sending a picture to see if there was any resemblance. The next afternoon, she replied again. She knew my birthmother. She knew exactly who my family was. She sent pictures, email addresses, names, ages, everything. Sadly she reported my birthmother passed away in October 2014. I had three beautiful sisters, not two, Samantha and Yvette who are older, and Courtney, younger. My cousin spoke with Yvette, and she was shocked. No one knew anything about me. My birthmother was a very private person, and kept me a secret.

After the shock wore off, I Facebook stalked each of them, compared our pictures, and tried to put myself in their shoes. I couldn't wait any longer, so I messaged one of them. We got a group message going and talked throughout the evening. In the morning, we started again. We all decided since we were two hours away from each other, we'd meet that day half way. It was the most amazing feeling. They wanted to meet me, they didn't dismiss me, and they cared. It was the longest hour drive for my family and me. After 35 years, I met my family that afternoon, and I cannot describe the feeling with that first hug and every hug since. The following weekend I went and stayed for my first ever sister weekend and gathering. I met many cousins, aunts, nieces, nephews, and my beautiful grandmother. I have learned so much and I have had many questions answered. I feel that hole in my heart is closing.

## Featured Stories:

### Knowing Who You Are

By Susan Bennett, Late Discovery Adoptee



Nearly eight years ago I learned that I was adopted. My world became searching and researching anything that had to do with adoption, all forms and from all vantage points. I learned as much as I could about where I came from while trying to understand why young women relinquish their babies.

I was lost and needed to find myself. Journaling turned into writing my

story which gave me peace and purpose. But there was no end to the pain of being deceived. Yes, there was a beginning, but no ending, just moving forward differently.

To the adoptee, adoption is a loss of their own biology, their own flesh and blood. When you have the late discovery experience, it can be much like the loss of a life, a family member, at the very least, life as you knew it. You don't get "over it" you carry it with you. Sure, you can set it down sometimes but unknowingly it's right back with you, part of you. I can never know the details of how I came to be in this world. I was told a story, a lie, about my own beginning. My perceived self was gone and I had an identity mountain to climb.

Just a few months after my discovery, I learned who my biological mother was and made contact with much of her family. (She passed away many years prior.) It was wonderful to hear the stories and have photos of a woman I look very much like. It helped beyond measure. But the identity of my biological father remained a mystery. No one remembered who he was. There was only a first name on the paperwork that my mother had filled out, and they couldn't even tell me what it was without his consent. All I could do was wonder: Was he still living? Did he ever think of me?

Years went by and I honestly felt that I would never know. I had done 23andme and Family Tree DNA testing and was active in their databases with no luck. I had tried it all from Classmates.com to Facebook groups. But then one day, someone I knew found their biological father via Ancestry.com (utilizing their DNA database.) Not long after that, another adoptee I knew found his dad. Then, a good friend of mine found her dad and encouraged me to try. It had been almost eight years, *why not?*

Christmastime 2015, Hayden (my son) gave me the gift of an Ancestry DNA kit. My hinting to family members worked perfectly. So, after much spit, my sample was sent off and my account activated.

After many weeks, my results were in: one connection. "Dstew," as a first cousin. Dstew didn't have a family tree that made sense and no other contact info other than through Ancestry, so I messaged on May 4th and waited. Checked my email and then rechecked Ancestry for any other connections. Dstew and I had a few common connections so I felt hopeful and emailed some of those folks. Checked my email and waited some more. Then I started clicking on different icons on the page and learned about our shared centimorgans.

*Holy crap*, with over 1700 centimorgans in common, we're either half siblings or I'm this person's grandmother. Yeah, I don't think I could be some adults grandmother. Onward!

May 13th, I got an email from Dina. She was "Dstew" and was managing the Ancestry account for her husband, Sean.

"I believe you and Sean may actually be brother and sister," she wrote and explained that he didn't grow up with his dad, wasn't even 100 percent sure who he was, etc. Dina gave me Sean's number and said that I could call him.

*OH. MY. GOD.* I read the email on my phone, walked into the kitchen where Mike was and blurted out, "I think I have a half-brother. I have his phone number. I think we have the same dad. Oh my God." I stood there, shocked, never thought I'd find who my dad was, never expected a half-brother. I think I said oh my God five more times while pacing around.

Mike, interrupted the OMG's, smiling at me he said, "Call him, just call him right now!"

*Okay, I'm going to call him right now, whoever he is, whatever he's like, I'm open, it'll be fine, calling, and shaking ...*

"This is Captain Stewart," the voice on the other end said with authority.

I thought, *Oh my God, my brother is a captain, "Captain Stewart!"* I told him who I was and we talked

for some time, about our supposed father, the man on his birth certificate and how we got connected and how we both received Ancestry kits at Christmas. After sharing email addresses and connecting via FB, we hung up. Actually, while standing so much taller, shoulders back, I hit "end call" and twirled around. Ha, I was *the shit!* With an enormous smile on my face, I strutted over to Mike and shared the news. What a great feeling that was to know! It is truly amazing how we can be connected to one another and learn who our family members are, all from a vial of spit! I had a brother that was kind, accomplished, and interested in helping me find out for sure if his father's name on his birth certificate was indeed my father as well.

My brain was on fire. I Googled Sean's father, *EEK he's probably my father!* With new found confidence via my brother, I wondered what or who I'd find as my father. Is he healthy and happy... and then I found him. It was his name and age as part of a link to an obituary.

It was a very well put together memorial page with many photos. I looked at every photo and then sent the link to Sean. I took a deep breath and decided whatever the truth is, it is and I'll be okay. I honestly felt that it was him and that my birth father was gone. I hoped Sean could find out from his mother.

I was shocked when Sean called back a short time later. He shared the obituary with his mother and she confirmed, that was indeed his father, Tommie Stewart. Sean never knew him; he and his mother never married. While I thought only of myself, another found biological parent deceased, it finally dawned on me that he just lost the dad he never met. It felt appropriate that us two half-siblings were there to confirm the passing of their father together. We were about two years too late in finding him. Sad.

No, I didn't get to meet my biological father (or mother, for that matter) but, now I know who the two young people were who created me: Tommie and Kathleen. I love knowing that, more than I can express. Of course, I hope to know Sean and his wife and maybe other family members one day.

Some have asked how finding dead people helps me? Honestly, it is huge. It helps a lot to know where I came from. It is priceless! Besides, we as people continually seek those who reflect us. I'm not identical to anyone, but I see some of me in Sean. We have a great deal in common, even though you wouldn't think so looking at the surface. I appreciate it all, our opposites and our similarities.

I'm reminded of a movie about Norman Lear. His thoughts and feelings on his life and career really struck a cord with me and maybe they will for you. "We are all just versions of each other," Norman says. So, I seek those versions of me that connect me to myself, further building my identity, climbing that mountain.

There's a documentary about Norman Lear, check out this trailer, [Just Another Version of You](#)

"My Dad," Chapter 14, in my book, [Late Discoveries, An Adoptee's Quest for Truth](#) can finally be re-written. I have the truth and hopefully one day I can learn more about him through extended family. Who knows, maybe meet more versions of myself along the way.

With much love, my wish is that one day we can all find our family connections.

*Susan Bennett has been a long time supporter of child welfare, especially for foster children. She and her family provided therapeutic foster care for over a decade.*

*Since her discovery, Susan has become an author ("Late Discoveries") and activist for adult adoptee rights. (For late discovery adoptees and family, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/latediscoveries/>)*

*In addition to serving on the board of directors for American Adoption Congress, Susan is also a member of her local support group, AZ Adoption Circle in Phoenix, AZ.*

Susan recently produced and participated in a documentary film project, "denied." (<http://www.vimeo.com/23412816>) and presented a workshop for LDA's at The Many Faces of Adoption conference in Orlando Florida.

To learn more about Late Discovery Adoptees, visit [www.latediscoveries.com](http://www.latediscoveries.com)  
For help and expanded resources, visit American Adoption Congress~ [www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)

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## Blog Talk Radio



Join our President, Pam Kroskie, where you can listen live or catch up to archived podcasts.

October's amazing guest was Michael Reagan, son of former President Ronald Reagan discussing his book, "Twice Adopted" as well as his latest book, "Lessons My Father Taught Me."

Listen in now at

[www.blogtalkradio.com/indianaadoptionnetworknews](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/indianaadoptionnetworknews)

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## SAVE THE DATE – Join us in Bloomington!

Mark your calendars now and save the date for IAN's Spring Conference, *Building Bridges*

**When?** – April 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

**Where?** – Monroe County Convention Center

302 S College Avenue, Bloomington, IN 47403

**Accommodations** – Courtyard by Marriott,

310 S College Avenue, Bloomington, IN 47403

Keep up-to-date on conference plans and our amazing line up of Key Notes and workshops by checking our website [www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org](http://www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org)



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## In the Next issue:

### November Feature Story

#### A Grandmothers Wish. Finding Brian

by Marcie J. Keithley

***"Marcie, I found your nephew."***

I distinctly remember those words when I received the call several weeks ago. That feeling you get when you have longed for something known to you but unknown. The dizzy feeling of excitement mixed with fear and hesitation. This was it. The call I had waited for had finally

arrived and just in time for his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on September 17<sup>th</sup>. The question was. **Would he want to meet his first family?**

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Want to be featured in an upcoming issue? Have a poem or short story you would like to share? Have a topic you would like us to write about? Send your interest to [marcieindianaadoptionnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:marcieindianaadoptionnetwork@gmail.com) **We're listening.**

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## Membership

Not a member of Indiana Adoption Network yet? Come on! What are you waiting for? You don't have to be a Hoosier to join us. There are tons of benefits to being a member – one is those who join now will receive their \$25 membership fee off the conference fee in April.

Stay plugged into what's happening and visit us today at [www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org](http://www.indianaadoptionnetwork.org)

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A special thank you to Ryan and Patrick for your generous gifts to Indiana Adoption Network! Your donations to our organization will continue to empower Adoptees and their families through educational workshops, conferences and seminars in 2017! Stay tuned for our unveiling of Keynotes and workshops in November! **We appreciate you!**

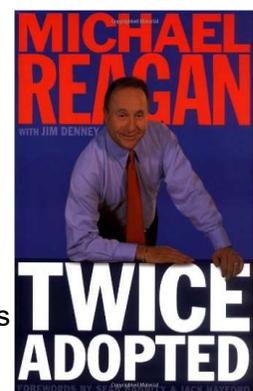
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## The Book Shelf: October Suggested Reading

**Twice Adopted: An Important Social Commentator Speaks to the Cultural Ailments Threatening America today.**

By Michael Reagan

Michael Reagan's life is much more than just an interesting story. It is a testimony of how Christ allowed him to find healing from many of the issues that confront our culture today, such as sexual abuse, divorce, loneliness, the feeling of rejection, and the belief that God does not care about us. Michael Reagan's first adoption gave him an identity, but he did not find his true identity until he found Christ. In this book, Mike Reagan shows how others can meet a God who loves them and who wants to embrace them and bring them healing, salvation, and meaning to life.



# NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Join us for a Special Edition of Indiana Adoption Network News in November for Adoption Awareness Month.

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**Pam Kroskie**  
President



**Marcie Keithley**  
Vice President



**Jennifer Fahlsing**  
Secretary



**Laurie Aughe**  
Membership

Indiana Adoption Network is committed to enhancing the lives of our Hoosier families that have been touched by Adoption with an emphasis on education and empowerment. We recognize and respect each individual, regardless of where they are in their Adoption walk and strive to provide solutions, resources and connections for Adoptees and their families.

**Follow Indiana Adoption Network on Facebook & Twitter @INADNET2018**

**“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today**

**and make a new ending.” ~ Maria Robinson**