

Karen Dixon's story of

Bernita



I never met my mother until I was 45 years old and only knew her for thirteen years. I was adopted as a child and spent a life long search for her. I found out I was adopted when I was 12 years old and made a vow that I would find my mother if it was the last thing that I ever did. After years of searching and a lot of dead ends, my vow to myself finally came true.

I will never forget the very first time my mother and I looked into each others face. To me she was beautiful. She was born to Fredell Deforest Taber and Elizabeth Marie Ball on June 4th 1927, in a small place called Fort Jones, California. Her father was a farmer and her mother was a mother to 9 other children. Bernita had a very hard life as a child. Her parents couldn't look after all the children so they put my mother and uncle in the care of an aunt and uncle. My mother was a hard worker as a child and when she was in her late teens she decided to go to Portland Oregon to go into the work force.

Once in Portland, my mother stayed with her oldest sister and family. One day when my aunt wasn't at home my uncle raped my mom and I was the result. When my mother discovered she was pregnant she went to her oldest bother and confided in him. He took her to my grandfather and together the three of them decided what to do. My mother went to a Maternity Home in Seattle Washington called The Bess Gilroy Home to have me. This was not a nice home for young mothers to be. My mother told me many horrible stories about this home.

When the mothers went into the home they were told to use false names but mine insisted on using her real name. Thank God for that or I would never have found her. A month before I was born my mother decided to keep me. This did not go over very well with Bess Gilroy. She was a baby black marketer and had walked the fine line of the law for years. Bess Gilroy had already sold me to my adopted parents and she was not going to back out of this. When I was born on December 7, 1947 she told my mother I had died at birth. My mother and grandfather demanded to see my body. Bess Gilroy showed my mother a baby's body but it wasn't me. From 1947 to 1992 my mother thought I was dead.

My mother was a trouper though. She got on with her life. She married a southern gentleman but that marriage didn't last long. After her divorce she went to San Francisco and worked for the Poseidon. There she met her second husband, Robert A. Jensen. They had a daughter together but she died at age eight from meningitis. My mother and step-father were devastated and it caused a rift in their marriage. My mother had now lost both of her daughters. Life was tough for her. She went into a very bad depression. She became bi-polar and it was very hard for her to accept what was dealt to her. After years of this she found herself pregnant again and my bother Allen Jensen was born. He was her pride and joy.

And then we found her. My husband wrote a short book about my search for my mother called Stolen at Birth and it's posted on www.op3n.com/stolen

When their daughter Marilyn had died, my step father blamed himself because he was the one who kept saying to wait and not take her to the hospital, that it was just the flu and would pass. When they finally got her there, it was too late. After that he refused to have Marilyn mentioned again and according to his mother he never mentioned Marilyn until he saw the picture of me that was sent to them by WARM. I guess my resemblance to Marilyn was so strong that he couldn't ignore it. He gradually started talking about Marilyn but by this time my mom had gone all those years with Marilyn's memory buried deep inside her and I think it was very difficult for her at those times when she would look at me and be reminded of Marilyn.

My mother was a very complex person and very hard to read. Becasue she was bi-polar, suffered from depression, was diabetic and very over weight, she was often over medicated which left her "spaced" out

at times. She told me the first day I met her that if all of a sudden she got silent and didn't respond to things that it wasn't me, that it was just the way she was. She seemed really glad to meet me and at times really showed it. Other times she was very cool and she really held back on her emotions. I think she put up a big barrier to protect herself from all things that could hurt her. There was only one time that she let her feelings really come out and that was when I got thrown from my horse and cracked my hip in three different places. That was the only time that I ever saw her cry and that was when I knew that she did love me.

It was very hard at times for both of us to find our spot with each other. I was a grandmother by the time we got together. We never had that bond that a mother and daughter have and we really had to work to get there. I was raised by another family and sometimes she would go very still when my adopted family was mentioned. One day I asked her what the problem was and she said that she was very angry that they had me as a baby and she didn't. On the other hand when she met my children and grandchildren she just beamed and was so proud that they also belonged to her. My aunts and uncles said that they had never seen her so happy as she was when we had found her.

I admired my mother. She was very kind and gentle. She accepted me and my family into her life without any conditions. I would like to think that our relationship helped her deal with all of her loses. She had a tough few years before she passed away. She was a trouper though right until the very end. She passed away on November 12, 2005.

I am so thankful that she and I had those few years together. I found a whole new family and so did she.

I love you Mom