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Erma Bombeck once said: *“There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.”* One recent Secret Sons & Daughters’ adoptee tale did a brilliant job of showing just that.

Writer Mary Sisco’s sense of humor (and love for all things retro TV) had us laughing out loud about things we know are tragic, and a little in awe of the ways she used satire to endure not only secrets and lies, but truth too. Her story, [An Adoptee Turns to Humor to Endure Secrets and Lies](#), wasn’t the only new take on the adoption experience.

New Hampshire writer [Larry Clow](#)’s piece left us pondering the blessings and challenges of Facebook. When it comes to adoption, social media’s big dog is a source of support, a place to connect ([like our page!](#)), a stealthy search resource for familial info and photos, and a potential source of pain. And yet, for all of the stories we’ve read thus far, even the most painful ones, there hasn’t been one person who said that the truth was not worth knowing.

In case you missed them, three new stories elicited several comments on the website: [Taylor Perry](#)’s reflection on shattered fantasies post reunion, Australian late-discovery adoptee, [Di Dunning](#)’s story, which showed that the pain of secrets long kept have no geographic boundaries, and [Karen Goldner](#)’s tale of struggling to find a sense of belonging in either of her families.

And speaking of comments, a fascinating discussion and debate is taking place in the comments section of [10 Questions to Ask When Searching for an Adoption Competent Therapist](#). Leslie Pate Mackinnon (whom I originally spoke with for the piece) recently responded to a question about her “bias,” and in doing so eloquently addressed the recommended standard of care in adoption today, why it’s important to stay a step ahead of pre-teens finding birth relatives on Facebook, and also included her thoughts on connection to one’s personal story vs. amputation from it. If the stories from our generation of adoptees have shown anything, it’s the high price many have paid for that amputation.

With that said, we let connection be our Mother’s Day inspiration this year and ran two stories in May that include what we like to think of as love letters—those initial correspondences that are often filled with hope and longing for connection.

Jason Clawson, in [California Adoptee Finds his First Mother](#), shares the letter he wrote after he found his birth mother, and I shared a letter that came from the opposite direction, the letter my birth mother sent after she found me, in this [post to ALL mothers](#).

While our “Adoptee Tales” are exclusively written by adult adoptees, between now and July 4th, we’d love to share more letters, especially those that speak to relationships with fathers of all stripes. If you’d like to submit a letter, click our [Submit Tale](#) form and put “Letter” in the title box.

Even if you don't have a letter to share, please subscribe (here on our sidebar) to receive the latest stories, and updates. And "Like" us on good 'ol [Facebook](#) and share your thoughts. Last week's question: "Instead of searching, were you found by a birth parent? And if so, what was that like?" generated a variety of interesting responses. Also on Facebook, you'll find a photo of Heather's BIG news. She gave birth to a not-so-secret daughter, Kyra, on May 21st. Kyra will be our assistant story reader in no time.

One Adoptee Tale writer recently described Secret Sons & Daughters as a "beautiful island of thoughtfulness, respect, and camaraderie." We aspire to live up to those words, and thank *you* for reading, commenting, and sharing these stories—we hope to hear your story soon.

Best wishes,

Christine & Heather

P.S. It's not all about Facebook, you can **follow us on Twitter too** [@adopteetales](#)

[Secrets in Review, Issue 3](#)

Since Secret Sons & Daughters launched two months ago, we have enjoyed connecting with adoptees through their powerful stories, comments and through our social media.

It's exciting to watch the voices of the adoptee community grow more candid and outspoken.

We are honored to have shared [adoptees' tales](#) about [searching](#), [reunion](#), and what it was like for those in their [40's or 50's to discover that they'd been adopted](#). We'd also love to hear stories about what it was like to reunite with your biological father. Have you experienced rejection from your families, and if so, how have you dealt with this hardship? Are you an adoption rights advocate? What event inspired you to work for open access in your state? Maybe you're an adoptee who'd prefer no contact at all— we'd like to share those stories, too.

We're happy to offer you writing ideas and editorial assistance. To learn more—read our [submission guidelines](#).

At Secret Sons & Daughters, we are passionate about helping adoptees connect, and hopeful that through our stories, we will create a groundswell of people to support original birth certificate access across the United States. Today, only eleven states ([see Discover Your Rights](#)) allow adoptees to have that access.

As noted in a [New Era for Ohio Adoptees Began Today](#), Ohio is soon to be the most recent state to join that [short list](#) to provide original birth certificate access to all adult adoptees.

The adoptive story collective holds power. We're seeing that stories beget more stories, from a writer who shared his search angel information to help another writer, to these comments that speak to what it's like to share an experience—

Amy, and adoptee, enthusiastically related to [Scott Baker's](#) inspirational reunion story when she said, *"I am in tears! I have looked for years on and off, but have recently started searching with all my heart. I have an emptiness inside that I can't explain compounded by the recent death of my adopted father. Please continue to share your story with as many groups as you can as it gives such extreme hope! I am in NY, and it seems when search angels hear that they seem to shy away a bit. Thank you so much for the wonderful story, you are very blessed!"*

Another reader and adoptee, Mary, summarized the potential healing effect of writing her story after reading [Paige Strickland's interview](#) on self-publishing a memoir: *"I like what Paige said about 'writing got a lot of "garbage" out of my system.' That's what is happening with me now as I just started my search at age 65. I didn't realize how much I had suppressed, and how it has affected my life...I didn't realize how many adoptees are out there, as I have never personally known anyone who admitted to being adopted...I felt odd about wanting to know who my family was, especially after the things I was told—like there was something wrong with me for being inquisitive. Thank you Paige, and all the [adoptees] and search angels out there— for freeing me and giving me the opportunity to know the real me."*

Many others supportively connected with our contributing authors. Here are the highlights from the past month:

[An Adoptee Comes Full Circle When He Finds His Birth Mother](#)—Adoptee, Scott Baker

[An Irish Adoptee Talks Adoption over Tea with Philomena Lee](#)—Adoptee, and Journalist with *The Irish Independent*, Catriona Palmer

[An Ohio Adoptee Finds Her Way Home to Herself](#)—Adoptee, Molly Murphy

[An Iowa Adoptee's Thoughts the Night Before He Meets His Birth Mother](#)—Adoptee, Dan Koerselman

[Paige Strickland, Author of "Akin to the Truth: A Memoir of Adoption and Identity," Speaks About Self-Publishing Her Book](#)—Cofounder of *Secret Sons & Daughters*, Heather Katz, interviewed adoptee, Paige Strickland.

[New York's Spence-Chapin's New Modern Family Center Offers Support for Adult Adoptees](#)—Cofounder of *Secret Sons & Daughters*, Christine Koubek, spoke with adoptee, [Misha Conaway](#), Outreach Manager, and [Dana Stallard](#), the center's Adoptee Services Coordinator about the center's opening.

[New Era for Ohio Adoptees Began Today](#)—Christine also spoke with Ms. Betsie Norris, the executive director of [Adoption Network Cleveland](#), and an adoptee whose father was partially responsible not only for Ohio's sealed records practice, but also for its reversal many years later.

Coming up next are new late-discovery adoptee tales, and stories of secret daughters finding their strength through difficult reunions. In addition, Christine will share the highlights of her recent trip to San Francisco where she met a few adoptee tale writers and many others who are making a difference in the lives of adoptees at the [American Adoption Congress Conference](#).

We've also reorganized our "News" section, which is now "Secret Talk." Within it, you'll find posts grouped under: [Words of Wisdom](#), [Legislation News](#), [Secrets in Review](#), and [Blog](#) posts (which are our thoughts on various adoption related topics).

Please be sure to subscribe (here on our sidebar) to receive the latest [Adoptee Tales](#) and updates. And like us on [Facebook](#) to connect with other adoptees— help us reach 600 "likes" this week.

Thank you for spreading the word about Secret Sons & Daughters. We hit over 20,000 views yesterday!

Best wishes,

Heather & Christine

Follow us on Twitter [@adopteetales](#)

[Secrets in Review, Issue 2](#)

Secret Sons & Daughters launched one month ago, and we've been deeply moved to see so many people connecting through stories.

Over the past few weeks, friends, family, and even a few reporters, have asked us: "Why? Why create something like Secret Sons & Daughters?" Usually we answer that (as we do on our ["About"](#) page) by talking about the estimated four million adoptees who have restricted access to their origins, ancestry, and in many cases, important medical histories that could help adoptees and their children; and we mention how we hope *Secret Sons & Daughters'* stories can help shine a light on that fact, and put a human face on those numbers.

But it's more than that, the reason why is something comments like these show best:

"You put into words what I have experienced my entire life. I was always

afraid to tell people that I was adopted. I am going to write something to add here...but I wanted to thank you for creating a site where adult adoptees can go to see that we're not alone!" -Molly

"I did learn one thing in life though, family does not have to be blood because my mom and dad loved my sister and I enough to take us in and raise us as their own with unconditional love. I feel if they told us [about our adoptions] from the start they may have thought we would not love them the same. Oh how wrong they were." -David

". . . a website where adopted people can share their stories of searching – or not searching – for their first families. Honest, untidy, raw, moving, the pieces I've read so far give me – a parent by adoption – more insight into the complex feelings of birth parents and of adoptees." -Amy, an adoptive mom who shared our link on Facebook.

Several stories are responsible for that feedback. [The Adoption Domino Effect](#), by Joanne Currao, was our second [Late Discovery](#) Tale, and it poignantly shows the impact secrecy in adoption can have on an adoptee and her children.

More than a thousand people read Joanne's story within its first 24 hours on our site. It stirred quite a response in the comments section that follows it. Many people wrote to say how much they related to her story and shared details of their own tales, whether they learned they were adopted at age 2, 17, 36, or older.

Joanne responded to each person and one response in particular beautifully captures what it was like for her to share her story: *"The more we speak up about it, the better it will be for all who come after us. I am glad that this story validated you. It is good for me to see that and to feel validated by all of you who read this as well. We are a soothing salve to each other."*

[Singing to Christine, An Adoptee's Song](#), written by Amy Christine Lukas, an adoptee/singer-songwriter, shows how her curiosity about whether her birth parents are "Somewhere out There," grew after the births of her children.

[Thanksgiving Day Reunion '95](#), was inspired by Daryn Watson's reunion with his birth mother.

[An Adult Adoptee's Dilemma: To Search or Not to Search](#), is my co-founder, Heather Katz's reflection on a question many adoptees face.

In addition, a few therapists weighed in on [10 Questions to Ask When Searching for an Adoption Competent Therapist](#) with opinions regarding open adoption. The questions were provided by adoption therapist, Leslie Pate Mackinnon, who recently appeared on Katie Couric's show as the "American [Philomena](#)." Leslie weighed in in the comments section as well, saying in part:

A child needs their story, in as much living color as possible, the good, the bad, and the ugly. In the best cases, the child actually

feels love emanating, is not merely told 'she loved you so much she gave you up.' The statement that adult adoptees often loathe. In the worst cases, the child can see for themselves why adoption was necessary and may be lucky enough to recognize at least a few good attributes of the person whose DNA they carry.

I encourage you to read her full comment at the end of that post. I wholeheartedly agree that adoptees should be entitled to their stories, especially as adults, and in whatever detail is possible.

Many thanks to four organizations for helping us spread the word about *Secret Sons & Daughters*. Each of them make a big difference in the lives of adoptees: [Donaldson Adoption Institute](#), [Adoption Network Cleveland](#), [C.A.S.E.](#)—the Center for Adoption Support and Education, and [St. Catherine's Center for Children](#) in Albany, New York.

I spent my first Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's in St. Catherine's care and I'm very touched and grateful for their [wonderful mention](#) of SS&D and our support and advocacy for open records, as well as for the work they do to help sustain families. Any other St. Catherine's adoptees out there?

We look forward to sharing three new Secret Son stories in the coming weeks and an Irish adoptee tale too. If you haven't done so already, be sure to subscribe (here on the sidebar) to receive the latest Tales and News, and please ["Like" us on Facebook](#). Many thanks for reading our tales. We hope to hear yours too!

All my best,

Christine

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[Secrets in Review, Issue 1](#)

The first two weeks brought more than 3,000 visitors to our adoption stories. Here are the highlights, and your comments, on Secret Sons & Daughters.

It has been an exciting initial two weeks at *Secret Sons & Daughters*. We are overjoyed to have virtually met more than 3,000 visitors through more than 7,100 page views.

The stories have sparked everything from comments on the movie [Philomena](#), to what it's like to find out everyone knew about your adoption—but you. The

benefits of DNA testing were mentioned, and we were quite moved by one mother's comment describing how she and her husband celebrate their daughter's birthday each year by honoring her birth mother.

In addition, an adoption counselor from Phoenix had this to say about our [10 Questions to Ask When Searching for an Adoption Competent Therapist](#) piece. The questions were provided by adoption therapist, Leslie Pate Mackinnon, who recently appeared on Katie Couric's show as the "American Philomena:"

I hope your list of questions will be widely circulated, as well as the information that there are specialists who work with adoption. Oftentimes I've had people come to me who were told by counselors who don't know adoption issues that 'they should be over this by now.' Adoption is a lifelong event, not an event that is short time focused.

And we were honored to receive this comment that summed up what we hope to do perhaps better than we could:

. . .appreciative for . . . websites and blogs like yours, that prompt a wider dialogue about loss, love, motherhood, abandonment, grieving, reunions, enduring connections and human rights.

These are some of our top stories that did just that:

[What it's Like to Be A Late Discovery Adoptee](#) – Texas Daughter, Darlene Coyne, learns at 52 that she'd been adopted as an infant

[The Philomena Effect](#)—An adoptee from the generation that kept quiet about adoption reflects on telling the truth

[Making Sense of Fantasy and Reality](#) – Divided loyalties, unforeseen consequences, joy, loss—California daughter, Kendra Crookston, discovers that reunions have many seasons

Lastly, there are our own SS&D Co-founder stories, which are somewhat opposite from one another:

[Sometimes a Reunion Gives an Adoptee New Secrets](#) – Heather Katz shares her journey in search of peace and equanimity

[An Adoptee's Portrait in Nature and Nurture](#) – After her reunion, Christine Koubek searches for a way to love two mothers

Many thanks to *Bethesda* magazine and [Montgomery Community Media](#) for their stories on our launch. You can find us in *Bethesda's* March issue, "People Watcher" column.

We're happy to report that we've also received a few new Adoptee Tales. [Thanksgiving Day Reunion '95](#), written by Secret Son Daryn Winter, was

published last Friday and we look forward to sharing the others in the coming weeks.

Most importantly, *thank you* for helping us spread the word about *Secret Sons & Daughters* throughout the adoption community. We look forward to hearing more of your thoughts and hope you'll consider sharing your own tale.