

# A FAMILY JOURNEY



JANICE (MORAN-IRVINE) ZEBRINSKI

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The happiest time of my life was spent in Damerham in the summer of 1993. That was the summer I found my biological family and discovered my heritage.

A Scottish couple adopted me when I was only an infant and I spent the first 22 years of my life living in the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. I was an only child and really missed having siblings. My adopted father died from a sudden heart attack a week after my sixth birthday. It was a dreadful shock to my mother and I and it certainly was a pivotal point in my life.

It was a difficult time for a single mother to raise her child as there were not as many social programs available in 1959. We had many hard times, but somehow, we always managed to overcome any adversities. My mother worked in a large hospital laundry to support us. I graduated from Grade 12 in June 1971 and got my first job as a clerk-typist for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. I worked in the grain industry until I got married and came to Thompson, Manitoba. My husband is an elementary school teacher and I am employed with the provincial government. We have been residents of Thompson for 22 years and we're both looking forward to retiring in 8 years to a milder climate.

Maybe it was a "mid-life crisis" or the sound of my "inner voice" but I knew deep inside I wanted to find my real biological family. I really needed to know my heritage. The first step was to register my name on the Manitoba Post-Adoption Registry in February 1993. I indicated that I wanted contact with any family members and within a month they presented me with a family profile. They reported that they were in contact with one of my siblings who indicated she wished to meet with me.

In May 1993, I had my first family reunion with my sister Caroline who was residing in the city of Winnipeg at this time. You can't imagine the emotions that build up inside of you and the nervous jitters you get prior to the actual meeting. It was the start of a two-year emotional roller-coaster ride of emotions. It was so exciting to meet everyone and so very sad when you had to leave them to return home. I still wish I could see my sisters more often. All your insecurities return to the surface with self-doubts. Questions like "Will my sister look like me?" "In what way?" "What will we talk about?" "What if she doesn't like me?" All those questions were inside of me and gradually they were all sorted out and put into proper perspective.

Caroline introduced me to my father's sister. I discovered that I had English ancestry on my mother's side and French/Cree Aboriginal ancestry on my father's side. I was deeply moved when I met my aboriginal aunt as she was the closest living link to my father, especially, as aboriginal people hold their elders in high esteem. She showed me photographs of my two brothers and my

father's grandparents. Slowly, the family circle began to unfold around me and it felt good.

I learned that my biological father, David Moran, was in the army during the Second World War and met a young English woman named Barbara Jerrard and married her in England. They had one daughter and immigrated to Canada. They settled in southern rural Manitoba and raised a family of 4 girls and 2 boys. Cancer claimed the life of Barbara's husband and she soon found herself a single parent with young children to support. I know my mother made the hardest decisions of her life when she chose to allow her children another chance at life and I'm so glad I had a chance to meet her.

I'm not really sure I can describe how I felt when I first met my mother in her home on High Street. I was certainly happy and excited to finally meet her and a little apprehensive as this was a new experience in my life. She did send me a few family photographs and everyone in them seemed to be quite happy. I talked to her on the telephone a few times before I met her and she sounded quite pleasant and easy going.

I'm so very happy and lucky to have met my mother and wished that she were not so ill on this very special occasion. She was so kind to me and had lots of stories to share. The last time I saw Barbara we talked of our spirituality and how happy she was to have seen me again. Deep down inside I knew that I would probably never have another chance to give her a hug but I was so glad we did share some time together.

My mother left me with some wonderful gifts! She gave me some wonderful sisters and

nephews and nieces, Barbara also gave me an extended family of three great brothers and another terrific sister, as well as all the aunts and uncles and cousins. What I discovered on my journey to Damerham was a family circle waiting for another family member to come home.



Janice (Moran-Irvine) Zebrinski  
Thompson, Manitoba, Canada