

## To The Reader

In 1978, when I found my birthmother, post-adoption reunions weren't awfully common and I was rather naive about them. But, thanks to maturity and luck, things went well. Because my own reunion had been so positive, a few years later I secretly found the birthmother of our daughter, Briana, and their reunion, too, was and continues to be extremely positive. In the intervening years, we have all built a strong, happy, extended family made up of individuals from both adoptive and birth relationships. What could be better for the adopted person?

Because of all the fear surrounding the idea of adoptive and birthfamilies meeting and becoming friends, I decided to recount our experiences in this book so as to encourage all members of the adoption triad who long to search but are afraid to do so.

All adoptees—whether they admit it or not—thirst after their roots, and should be upheld in their quest for answers, a quest that usually involves the life-changing event of reuniting with birthfamilies. *The Gift of Roots: Heartwarming Reunion Stories as Told to an Adoptive Mother* was written to help adoptees, birthparents, and especially adoptive parents to grasp their roles in this highly charged milestone.

My personal conviction is that the openness and supportive behavior of the adoptive parents plays strongly into, or is even predictive of, the success of any reunion between adoptee and birthparent/s and of their long-term relationship. The parents' welcoming manner, their respect and empathy for the birthparents, can certainly allay the pain, guilt, and anxiety birthparents usually bring to a reunion. If parents have a warm, understanding attitude, everyone, especially the adoptive parents themselves, will benefit; that is because, following a reunion with their birthfamily, most adoptees avow a stronger than ever bond with their adoptive parents.

In all reunions, dreams and reality must come face to face. Problems and disappointments are inevitable, and that's why all those who search need to approach a reunion with maturity and, above all, with realistic expectations. How do we gain those? By reading of others' experiences to prepare ourselves mentally for what could happen, whether it be happy or disappointing.

To set the stage for the reader, two of the nine stories in *The Gift of Roots* came from firsthand experience, while all the others were selected from the responses to advertisements I placed in three large city newspapers. I wrote the stories from my taped interviews, which were made over a period of ten years.

Adoption activists are working towards replacing the old sealed-records laws with new laws permitting accessed information. When adult adoptees have this accessibility to their original birth certificates, they will hold the key to discovering their roots: the names of their birthparents. Then they'll be able to search for them and be reunited.

But is leaping into the arms of unknown blood relatives always a good idea? The reality of the nine stories in this book and the final chapter, "Reunion Tips," will help to answer that question.

Most adoptees who experience reunions with birthfamilies, regardless of the outcome, are glad they searched and would do it again: they have at last found their place on humanity's genetic map.