

CHAPTER TEN

Karren and Jimmy were once again doing their sister/brother routine - fighting that is. They are fifteen now and although there is the usual family love between the two, the arguments are now getting much more volatile. During one such argument, Mon stepped in to try and put a halt to it.

“Stop arguing,” he said and then added, with tongue in cheek, “or I’ll turn you both over to the welfare and let them deal with you”.

A fired up Karren retorted, “That’s fine, but first tell us who our mothers are, before you do it!”.

Jimmy was staggered by this revelation and asked her, “What are you talking about?”.

Karren replied, “Of course, you don’t know, do you? We’re adopted!”.

“Is that right?”, he turned and asked his father.

Mon nodded and confirmed.

Devastated, Jimmy jumped up from the table, ran out of the house and climbed to the top of Observation Mountain, located right beside their home. It is a high and prominent, tree covered hill overlooking the Grand Forks downtown area. Instantly, Karren realized how cruel she had just been to her brother. To tell him in such a way was very spiteful, but this was how their arguments had progressed. Jimmy was up the mountain for hours and it was well past mid-night before he returned home.

It was more than seven years, before the subject of the adoption was spoken of again between the ‘twins’.

Later that year, Karren celebrated her sixteenth birthday on December 7th, the first time she had not shared it with Jimmy on August 25th. She stills remembers quite vividly that awful birthday cake that Jim, (as her brother was now calling himself) had baked for her. He’d spent hours trying to get it just right and he was very pleased with the finished result. It was covered with the

brightest turquoise icing Karren had ever seen, but unfortunately it had seeped into the cake. Karren and her girlfriend, Christine Sheppard, both ate the cake, pretending it was 'Oh so good' and not wanting to hurt his feelings after all the trouble he had gone through to bake it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Get over to your own side of the road", I shouted, startling Karren out of her thoughts. "The drivers here are just as bad as they are in our neck of the woods", I continued.

*A signpost came up on the horizon:
PALM SPRINGS - NEXT RIGHT.
We turned off the freeway and minutes later we were entering the fairyland city. There were twinkling lights on all the palm trees down the main street into town, called Palm Canyon Drive.*

We found a motel and then enjoyed a nice, light, chicken Caesar salad and a coffee, before hitting the sheets for a well-earned night's sleep.....

CHAPTER TWELVE

Three years down the road - to October 1966 and Karren marries Allen Houde, a Rock Creek, B.C. boy, who had recently returned home from an eighteen-month stay in Winnipeg, Manitoba. (Rock Creek is a tiny settlement about a one-hour drive west of Grand Forks). Mon was furious at Karren for wanting to marry Allen, because of his cultural background. He was Catholic, while the Almstroms were Protestant. The more he protested against the marriage, the more determined Karren became. Mon even threatened not to go to the wedding, but that didn't faze her and finally the threats were upheld. Mon didn't go! - and Karren went through with it in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with just Allen's parents as witnesses.

The marriage was in trouble almost from the start, but a son was born on September 16th, 1968, almost two years after the wedding. David was an adorable little boy, with jet-black hair with eyes to match. He was a mischievous little guy, full of fun and affection. Just over two years later, a daughter arrived for David to play with. Christine was a lovely girl, pretty and shy. But by the time she was seven months pregnant with Christine; her marriage to Allen was over. She had been living at that time in a very small village, called Midway, whose primary industry was a large sawmill. It is located on Highway 3, about a forty-five minute drive, west of Grand Forks. She packed her bags and returned to Grand Forks to start a new stage in her life.

For the next two years, she and the kids shared a home with Mon, who doted on his grandchildren and became their new father figure.

Some time later, a relationship with a Grand Forks resident, Frank Diepenbeck, intensified to the point where Karren, Mon and the children moved into his home on a farm on the outskirts of town, right on the U.S. border. For the next seven years, this turbulent relationship lasted. Andrea, Karren's third child was born on June 23rd, 1975. She was a happy little girl, always laughing and full of fun. But, the further into this relationship, the more the union between Karren and Frank became strained. His drinking was becoming a major problem and it was getting worse. He was a kind and gentle man without the bottle, but his moods changed drastically with every drop of booze.

It was about this time, that Karren started again with her questions to Mon about her adoption - who her mother was, where was she born - etc. No real answers were ever given, just stories or fabrications of the truth. For example, she was born in Seattle - and according to Mon, it was at the Virginia Mason Hospital. (This we found out at a later date, was not true). When Karren asked if it was possible to get the medical records from the hospital, Mon told her that was impossible, as the hospital had burned down many years ago. (This also was not true, as the hospital is still standing to this day).

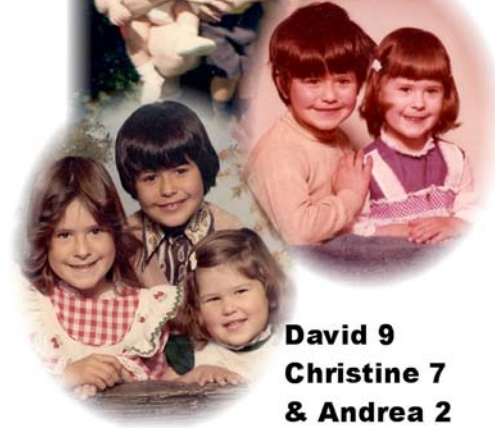
January 21st, 1977 was to become the darkest day in Karren's life. Mon passed away after a very lengthy battle with sclerosis of the liver. She had to make the tough decision to remove him from his life support system on the recommendation of his doctors. He then survived for many days without the system before succumbing, which was very hard on Karren. To watch him die was so emotional for her. She wondered whether she had made the right decision or not. Four days later he was buried at the Colville, Washington cemetery next to his sisters, Esther and Virginia.

Frank's drinking became worse and two years later; Karren made the decision to leave. With the children in tow, she moved from the farm and into an apartment in Grand Forks. Life now for the four of them became really tough. Karren had a job in a bookstore, but that didn't stop money from becoming extremely tight. But of course, in her usual determined manner, she made it through the difficult and trying times.

**Karren with
David 2 1/2 and
Christine 7 months**



**David 5 &
Christine 3**



**David 9
Christine 7
& Andrea 2**

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Karren was awakened by the sounds of sirens, as both police cars and ambulances raced past the motel, followed soon afterwards by the blare of a fire engine.

She thought, 'I wonder what the problem is?' and then dazedly turned over and returned to her sleep and dreams.....

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

One bright and sunny day, early in the spring of 1981, Karren was busy in the bookshop, chatting with her friend Bonnie, who worked in a store across the street. A silver coloured car went past the storefront. The man, who was driving it, wore a brown vest and had a brown cowboy hat on his head.

He looked very intriguing to Karren - so much so, that she exclaimed to Bonnie, "Gosh, did you see that guy? I'd sure like to meet him!".

Fifteen minutes later, this same man walked into the store. Bonnie excused herself and went back to her store, leaving Karren and this stranger alone. The two chatted awhile, discussing some of the books and also about astrology, which she had become quite interested in. She was a little surprised when this guy, who dressed himself like a cowboy, spoke with such a strong English accent and this intrigued her even more. They made plans to meet later that night and he picked up the books he had purchased and left the store.

Bonnie meantime, had been watching from across the street and when the stranger left, ran back to the bookstore.

“Did you like him?”, she asked.

Karren replied, “I sure did and guess what - he doesn’t know it yet, but that’s the next guy I’m going to marry!!!!!!”

Bonnie laughed and said, “well, does he have a name?”.

“It’s Peter,” she answered, “Peter Dixon”.

And that is how I walked into Karren’s life.

That evening, she found out that I came from a place just outside London, called Kingston-upon-Thames and that I had been in Canada since emigrating in 1967. Most of that time I had resided in the Greater Vancouver area. I revealed that I had two daughters, Samantha who was the eldest and Kimberly. She also discovered that I had worked as a ladies hairdresser for over thirteen years on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1971, I changed occupations to become a trainman and with promotion, a conductor on the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was in this capacity that I transferred to Grand Forks in October of 1980. A year earlier, I had taken a course in radio broadcasting and on arrival in Grand Forks, had procured a job as a morning news announcer on CKGF, the local radio station. This worked well, as my job with the railway didn’t start until 3pm each day.

Our relationship became stronger and we became really good friends. We would spend hours just talking over a good cup of coffee. It was during one of those ‘talking sessions’, that Karren first told me about her adoption and all the trials and tribulations that had happened to her on that subject. I sat fascinated, as she told me her story. I was really amazed when she showed me a photograph of her ‘adopted’ mother. The woman in the picture looked the spitting image of Karren, only older.



(This picture of Lois-Ann has always amazed me and many other people too, when told she is no blood relation to Karren - or is she?)

I encouraged her to try searching some more, so she wrote to the Washington Adoptees Rights Movement, (WARM for short) for information on their search procedures. When they mailed back the information, she was disappointed in the fact that it would cost so much to initiate a search for her mother. Once again it was put on the backburners and she reverted to her dreams of one-day seeing her quest fulfilled.

There were some good times that year between the two of us, however, I had only just received my divorce papers and to complicate matters even more, had just ended a relationship with another lady in the Greater Vancouver area. I was trying to put a lot of the hurt behind me and didn't want a permanent relationship with anyone. Consequently, these feelings got in the way of my relationship with Karren, although I really enjoyed her company and friendship.

April of 1982 saw my position with the railway abolished and so I had to transfer back to the coast in order to continue with the CPR. This move meant that I also had to quit my job at the radio station. Karren and I said our tearful farewells and I left not knowing whether I would ever return again.

Well, it didn't take me too long to realize that Karren meant a great deal more to me than just a friend! I missed her a lot and so I arranged to stay with her during my summer vacation. My youngest daughter, Kimberly who was 9 years old at the time, came with me to Grand Forks. It was during this time that I realized that I loved her. We made plans for the future and she and her three children came down to join me on the coast. That was September 28th and the next year, on June 11th, 1983 we were married at Whonnock, B.C.



Karren & Peter's wedding day on June 11th, 1983 at Whonnock, B.C.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Wednesday, March 18th, 1992

"It's seven o'clock, time to get going," I said, as I woke Karren from her dreams.

It was a wonderful sunny start to the day, as we prepared for the most important day in Karren's life. The day she had been waiting for 'forever', was finally here.

Palm Springs looked like a piece of paradise as we went out in search for breakfast. Later, with our stomachs full of eggs, bacon, biscuits and gravy, we re-started our journey towards Phoenix, Arizona. Actually, our final destination was going to be Sun City, a suburb of Phoenix, about a thirty-minute drive to the northwest.

Soon we were into the desert and inevitable miles and miles of barren wilderness was upon us. Karren closed her eyes.....

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Soon after we were married, Karren made her first positive step to locating her mother. She joined the B.C. branch of the Canadian Adoptees Rights Association; (CARA for short) and they gave her information and the literature on how to initiate the search.

First, she was to try to obtain her birth certificate from Washington State. When this duly arrived, she found that it was an amended document, showing her parents to be the Almstroms. There was supposed to be two identifying numbers on the certificate, but only one appeared, making a trace impossible from that point of view.

Step two - she went to the immigration offices in New Westminster, B.C., to obtain her immigration papers to prove that she was indeed a landed immigrant. She gave them the approximate date of entry, but when they had completed their search, it showed Karren as having her date of birth as August 25th, 1947, instead of December 7th, 1947. This of course, posed a problem, but in due course, she was able to convince them that she was indeed who she said she was and was handed the papers.

The next step was to write to the Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle, where she supposedly been born, to try and get the birth records. The reply came back with the information that, no girls had been born on December 7th, 1947 and further more, no Tabers were born at that time either. Taber of course, was one of the names she had seen on the documents hidden in her mother's dresser, following her dream conversation with Lois-Ann all those many years ago. Karren, for some unexplained reason, always assumed that Taber was her name and that Dale was Jim's.

Step number four, was to write to the various adoption agencies in the Seattle area, asking for non-identifying information on a Taber or Dale child. None was forth coming, but one agency did suggest that because Dale sounded like an Indian name, that she should check with the birth registry at the Puyallop Indian Reservation, maybe they could help. The returned letter suggested that Dale was indeed an Indian name and gave several names to write to in Alaska. Karren however, never did follow up on this, as she "knew" her name was Taber.

Karren had been going to the monthly meetings at CARA and had made friends with the president, a Linda McDonald. At one of those meetings, they were discussing the lack of information that had been obtained so far, when Linda suggested contacting a lady named Jane Belt at WARM, in Seattle. Apparently, Linda had

done some work for Jane in B.C. and felt that she was owed a favour. So Linda called and told her the story and Jane said she would take the case.

Next on Karren's list of things to do, was to make several trips to the public library in Vancouver. We sat for hours on end going through various telephone books from all over B.C. and the states of Washington, Oregon and California, looking for Tabers and getting their addresses and telephone numbers. We even got old books from the 1947/48 era and recorded that information.

Karren found a Taber living in the Vancouver, B.C. area and called him and arranged a meeting. She went to his home in Burnaby, but apart from having a daughter named, Karen Taber, he had no information to help us with our search. Everywhere we went now, we were looking in phone books to see if there were any Tabers in the area.

After some more investigating, we found out that a Mr. Richard Perry of Republic, Washington, had been Mon Almstrom's lawyer. So it was decided that a trip 'up country' was in order. We found the elderly Mr. Perry in his office and after the introductions, asked him for the information regarding the adoptions.

He said, "I can't furnish you with that information".

So Karren replied, falsely, "Well that's alright, I have my mother's name and I can get that information elsewhere".

To which he answered, "What name do you have?".

Karren of course said, "Taber".

Much to our surprise, instant action was taken.

Without another word to us, he picked up the telephone and called the courthouse and asked them to pull the Almstrom files. After several minutes had passed he ended the phone call and turned back to us. He then confirmed that Karren's name was indeed Taber and that Jim's was Dale. He then gave us further information

that neither 'twin' had been legally adopted until they were six years old. He supplied the file numbers, which at that time were sufficient to continue the search.

We then headed across the street to the courthouse to see if we could find the relinquishment papers. We were told that the 1952 and 1954 files were on hand, but unfortunately the 1953 papers, the ones we needed, had been sent to Seattle. This threw a monkey wrench into our plans, but it did not prove to be a big problem.

A phone call to Jane Belt and a visit by her to the archives produced the information we had been seeking. She called to say that she had found the 'relinquishment notices' for both Karren and Jimmy. She said they were in a tiny newspaper called, 'The Republic Miner'. She sent us photo copies of both. Karren's stated:

<p>REPUBLIC NEWS-MINER Republic, Washington Friday, May 29th, 1953</p> <p>SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION In the Superior Court of the State of Washington in and for the County of Ferry</p> <p>IN THE WELFARE OF MINOR GIRL TABER</p> <p>STATE OF WASHINGTON TO: Bernita Taber and To Whom It May Concern, Defendants:</p> <p>You and each of you are here- by summoned to appear within 60 days after the 15th day of May, 1953 and respond to the pe- tition of the petitioner filed here- in and file a copy of your respon- sive pleading with the Clerk of the Court above named, and in</p>	<p>case of your failure so to do, judgment will be rendered against you and each of you, ac- cording to the prayer of the peti- tion which has been filed with the Clerk of the above entitled Court.</p> <p>That the subject of this action is the right of care, custody and control or right whatever to the female child born to Bernita Ta- ber on December 7, 1947, at Se- attle, King County, Washington</p> <p>The object of the petition filed herein is to deprive Bernita Ta- ber of any right to female child born to Bernita Taber at Seattle King County, Washington, on De- cember 7, 1947, and for such fur- ther relief as the Court may seem fit and proper in the premises.</p> <p>(Seal) E. J. BLACK 5-15-53 Clerk of the Cour</p>
---	--

You can imagine the excitement.....; we now had Karren's mother's first name. It was Bernita!

Jimmy's notice of Relinquishment' was exactly the same as Karren's, with the exception that it had, 'Minor Boy Dale' and was addressed to Dorothy Ann Dale. The birth date was: August 25th, 1947.

We celebrated our success that night with a wonderful candle-lit dinner for two at our favourite little restaurant at Christine Lake.

Two days later, we returned to Republic, to see the residing Judge of Stevens & Ferry Counties, to see if we could get the records opened. We arrived at his chambers armed with all the information we had gathered, as well as documents, such as a 'letter of identity' from an Eli Popoff, a long time resident of Grand Forks. In it, he stated that he had known Karren for about fifteen years and that she was the adopted daughter of Mon and Lois-Ann Almstrom. He was also aware that the family had lived in the Grand Forks area for a large part of their lives and that Karren was born in 1947 in Washington State. He ended by stating: 'That from my knowledge of the feelings of Monroe Almstrom, I am sincerely of the opinion that his wishes would have been for the Superior Court of Washington in Ferry County, to open the records for his adopted daughter, Karren, as she was the one with whom he lived in his reclining years and she was the one who took care of him till the day of his final passing'. He duly signed this document, which was notarized by Winifred Mather, a Notary Public in Grand Forks.

We handed Judge Christianson, a written request I had drawn up, but although he was very co-operative, he wouldn't open the books for us. He did however agree to open them and look for himself, because Karren had such a lot of the necessary information, i.e., her mother's maiden names, the file number and final date of adoption. We sat there patiently watching him read over the records, that we were aching to see for ourselves. Then he proclaimed that we already had all the information that was in the file with the exception of 'where' Karren was born. He told us it was the Bess Gilroy Maternity Home in Seattle. Once again we were elated, as now another piece of the puzzle had been solved.

What a trip this had been!

We returned to the coast, called Jane Belt with the news and she told us she would do some investigating. Suddenly, our search came to a grinding halt. In her return phone call, she told us that the Bess Gilroy Home was no longer in operation and had been closed for many years. Even worse was the fact that all the records had been destroyed. She suggested now that our only option was to get a Court Order, to open the files, to that we agreed. There was one problem however, that once she had seen the files, she couldn't divulge any of the findings she would make.