

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

During the summer of 1988, we sold our house, which I had spent the last five years renovating and in October moved into our 'new' two year old home. This took away a lot of the stress of not getting anywhere with our search.

It was now at its quietest point. We had run out of ideas and had to rely on Jane to come up with something. At that year's Christmas break, we decided to take a trip to England and much of the next few months were busy planning for the trip. The excitement helped put the lack of success in finding Bernita, into the back of our minds.

Jane called, with what she called 'some small news'. She had traced a Bernita to a small apartment building in an 'unmentioned' city, at the time of Karren's birth. Apparently she lived there from 1946 through 1948 and had traveled to Seattle for a few months to stay at the Bess Gilroy home, during her confinement and birthing. Jane also traced the owner and manager of the apartments. His name was Johnson and was married and worked as a truck driver. This was, as Jane said, 'just small news', but to us, having not had any news for so long, it was enormous news. Once again our hopes went sky high, but of course, as always, that was another dead end and then our emotions were again derailed.

Shortly before we left on our anticipated trip, we received a letter from Jane. On this occasion, her spirits were obviously lifted, because she began with: "So excited with the new info". She wrote, "well, all this searching has finally paid off. I have found Bernita's birth date, place of birth, her parent's name and all five siblings. Now I am searching for a marriage certificate and a current name for Bernita". Her letter went on to say, "I have several people helping with this search, but I don't know how long it will take. At least now, we have something to work on other than an old address of an old obsolete

apartment”.

Obviously, the ‘small news’ of the man named Johnson etc., was not as dead as we had feared.

Jane went on to say, “This Bess Gilroy is something else”. She was going to undertake a nation-wide search, but as she put it, “.... Don’t get discouraged, as we now have an exact date of birth for Bernita and by the way, Bernita was a twin”. She closed her letter; “I can’t wait for this to end! You too, eh?”.

Jane also enclosed a very poor photocopy of Bess Gilroy, walking down a street with a small un-named child.



It was a marvelous letter, light, refreshing and just what the doctor ordered, especially just before our trip. Now we had something to come back to!!!!

Karren spent the next few weeks on a ‘high’, constantly dreaming of what the meeting with her mother would be like. And so it was, one day while at work. She was standing at her cash register, day dreaming, wondering what it would be like if her mother was to walk through her check-out while she was working. A lady came into her line-up. She rang through the customer’s purchases and took her Visa card. Karren’s eyes locked onto the card, when she read the woman’s name.

It was Bernita Dalby. (Dalby is a pseudonym).

Bernita!

Karren was floored and couldn't react, but was able to complete the transaction.

Finally, she managed to say to her, "How did you get the name Bernita, it's so unusual? The only other person I know with that name is my mother".

The woman answered that ".....Her father had named her after two nurses, one Bernice and one Anita". She then asked, "How did your mother get her name?"

Not knowing the answer, Karren replied, "Her father named her after a Spanish dancer he had met in Mexico". It was the first thing that had come into her mind.

Bernita then asked, "Where was your Mom born?"

Again she had to ad-lib, "California, then she moved up to Washington".

They exchanged a few more words and then she left, with Karren shaking in her boots. She rushed home at the completion of her shift and told me what had happened.

We decided that we should do some research on the 'Dalby' woman. Karren called her friend, Norah and told her of the day's events. She responded by saying that she knew a 'Dalby'. He was the local librarian. We then went to the phone books and looked up the Dalbys. We found that there were only a few of that name in there. So I made some calls! After a few little white lies, we found that Karren's 'Bernita Dalby' was surprisingly, the wife of the local librarian!!!

Success.

Next, the husband of one of Karren's work mates, was able to do a police check and identification on her. He found out that she was from Washington and that she held that State's driving license.

We called Jane with this exciting news and she replied that we have to get her birth date, so she could do a check.

The question was - how exactly are we going to get that information, without her knowing what we are doing? It was quite a problem.

It was then, a couple of days later, that I came up with another one of my 'scathingly, brilliant' ideas.

I phoned Bernita again, this time disguising my voice. "I am representing a local shopping mall," I began, "and we are giving away six colour televisions to promote local shopping". "Oh, yes", she replied.

I asked her, "Are you interested in winning a colour TV."

"Yes, I am".

I continued, explaining to her that there was one television set available for each of the following age groups. The twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties and the over seventies. If she had the correct birth date in her group, then she would be a winner.

She was interested in the contest and played along with me.

"Which group are you in?", I questioned.

She replied, "The sixties".

"And what is your birth date?"

"December 4th".

"OK. Just a second", I replied, pretending to check my files, before continuing. "Oh, dear. I am sorry, but unfortunately you're not a winner". I thanked her for playing and quickly closed the conversation.

Bingo! We now had her birth date!

Karren and her daughter, Andrea, were breaking themselves up with laughter at my phony voice, but the end result was achieved. We called Jane with our findings. But after all that hard work, she said the two birth dates did not match!

Once again, we were on our emotional roller coaster.

We went on our trip to England at the end of September 1989 and for five wonderful weeks, enjoyed the vacation of a lifetime. Karren's daughter, Andrea, along with my youngest daughter, Kimberly, was with us and the four of us were based just outside the city of Truro, in the county of Cornwall. We stayed with my brother, Brian and his wife, Anne and they showed us a good time. The highlight of the trip was a two-week tour of southern England, including several days in London. Karren and the girls got to see where I was from and a good part of my heritage, which Karren especially had always wanted to see. Although the Almstoms had given her 'a family', she never felt as though she had a real family tree. Seeing where I was from was important to her and made her wonder how Jane's search was going, on the other side of the Atlantic.



**Karren, Kimberly & Andrea
in England in 1989**

We returned from England at the end of October and made a call to Jane.

No news.

Christmas came on us and another call was made to Jane.

No news - just frustration.

The New Year came and went, as did Easter.

**More calls to Jane.
No news - more frustration.**

**Spring went rolling by and summer arrived.
No news - the frustration now was almost
unbearable.**

**Then, one Saturday evening in early August
came a phone call from Jane. Karren had just
returned home from work, when the call came
in.**

**Jane said that she had made contact with her
mother. Actually she had made the call to her
place and had spoken to an aunt. Jane said
something was wrong, but couldn't tell Karren
anything because of the Court Order.**

Karren asked, "Is my mother O.K.?"

"I can't tell you", Jane replied.

**Karren started to get mad. After all, all she
wanted to know was - Is she O.K.?**

**Jane was leading her to believe that something
was definitely wrong. Surely she could answer
that one question!**

**Karren was now crying. She begged Jane to tell
her something. Anything.**

"Is my mother dying?"

"Is she ill?"

"Has she been in an accident?"

**Questions, questions, but no answers were
being given.**

Karren was really mad by now.

She threw a tantrum and hung up the phone.

**'Why won't she answer one simple question,'
she asked herself, as the tears flowed down her
face. 'Surely she could have done that! Don't I
have any rights at all; everyone else can have
the information, except me'.**

**Just at that time, I arrived home from playing in
a cricket match in Vancouver.**

I couldn't have timed my entry any worse!

**I opened the door and my, "Hello, Honey", was
greeted, full blast by Karren's temper and**

frustrations. Her emotional outburst floored me and I decided that the best course of action was for me to exit - stage left - right now! I had to let her cool down some, before trying to make heads or tails of just what she ranting and raving about. I went out for dinner, steak and lasagna I remember, along with a couple of ice cold beers.

It was about an hour or so, before I returned home to find a much cooler and a calmed down, Karren. Tears were still flowing profusely down her face, but she was now able to talk rationally. As she related the phone conversation she had with Jane. I held her and tried to comfort her, but I knew it was going to take a lot more than that, to ease her mind.

Two days later, Jane called again. Karren apologized for the tantrum she had thrown and asked if there was any further news.

Jane said she had just ended a phone call with Bernita's husband, Bob, who told her that her mother had been in a diabetic coma, but was all right now. He had just returned from the hospital. During that conversation, she was told by Bob, that her mother never wanted to give her up at birth, but her father had insisted she go through with the adoption. He also told her, that Karren had five aunts and three uncles and that her mother was a twin. Bernita had one daughter, who had died in her youth, as well as one son. Jane continued, by saying that, Bernita's husband decided that further contact at this time was not possible, but left the door open for a meeting in the future.

This news calmed Karren down considerably, as she now knew that her mother was alive and that her medical problems were under control at the moment; and that was all that really mattered.

This was the last time we ever heard from Jane.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

We finally arrived at our motel in Sun City, registered and took our bags to our room. This was to be home for the next few days. However, as we climbed the steps to the first floor, the first thing that Karren spotted was the swimming pool. By now, she was extremely nervous and you could tell that the strain of the emotions was beginning to tell. She said, "I could really go for swim right now, to try and relax". I agreed with her.

While she was gone, I made the phone call to Bernita and Bob, to arrange the first ever meeting between mother and daughter.

With that accomplished, I then showered and changed and then waited for Karren to return to the motel room. She exclaimed, as she finally walked through the door, "I just swam and swam and swam. From one end to the other, back and forth, without stopping. I'm exhausted". The swim had done her good and for now anyway, she was relaxed.

As she made her way into the shower, she mentioned, that while she was swimming she was thinking of all the things that had gone on in the last couple of months.....

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Just before the end of December in 1991, almost a year and a half after our last contact with Jane, I received a phone call from a lady at WARM. She explained to me that Jane had quit her job and that we would be given a new investigator. Her name turned out to be Karen too, but of course, she only had one R in her name.

Karen called to introduce herself in the New Year and indicated that it shouldn't be too long in completing the search. She said that she had never seen a file as big as the one there on the Taber case. It had certainly taken much longer than any other she had known and she didn't know why there had been such a delay in the case. I was alone at home to receive that first call from Karen, and so I was again, a few weeks later. This time she told me that she had some very exciting news for Karren. I told her that she would be home very shortly and that I would return a call to her, when she arrived, so that she could get the news first-hand - not that Karen would have given me the news anyhow!

Karren returned home.
Quietly, I dialed Karen's number.
Then I called for Karren to pick up the phone.
I listened on the extension phone downstairs, as Karren received her news.

Karen had re-located Bernita and her husband. They had agreed to sign a consent form and were willing to exchange letters. Karen had received the first of these and read it over the phone. She then told us about the rest of the family, including the fact that she had a half-brother living in Vancouver, Washington. She also had a half-sister, but she had died at the age of eight.

Karren or myself spoke hardly a word, as we listened intently to this news. At the end of the phone call, we said our good-byes to Karen and

hung up the phones. I left the downstairs phone to go upstairs, while Karren did the reverse and we met in the middle of the staircase. We just stood there hugging, not saying a word and with tears streaming down our faces. The emotion of that moment was like nothing I had ever felt before. We stood there for what seemed an eternity, but in actuality, were probably only a few minutes.

Suddenly, the front door, which was adjacent to the stairs, opened. Andrea walked in. "What's the matter", Karren's daughter asked, "did you have a fight?". "No", came the reply from both of us in unison. We laughed and then recalled the phone conversation to her. What a day that was!!!!

During the next few weeks, many letters between Bernita and Karren were exchanged. They told each other little bits of information and swapped photographs. It was an exciting time; the anticipation of a new letter waiting in the mailbox was foremost in our mind everyday.

Both Karren and I had arranged to have a week's holiday during March. But the day before it was to begin, we still didn't know where or what we were going to do. We sat at the kitchen table, musing over different alternatives, like whale watching on the west coast of Vancouver Island or maybe taking a trip up the inside passage to Prince Rupert, near the Alaskan border. We even gave a trip to Hawaii or Mexico a thought, but we couldn't get flights to either one at such short notice. So finally, I turned to Karren and said, "is there anything or anywhere you'd really like to go?". "Sun City", she replied, "I'd really like to go to Sun City". "OK, I'll make the call".

I phoned and tried to reach Bob, Bernita's husband, as we were still not sure, just how well Bernita really was. Bob was not home, but

was expected within the hour. I said I would call back. During that evening, I called twice more, only to receive the same information as the first. I decided to call it quits for the night and try again in the morning.

Karren left for work early the next morning and I made my next call. Bob answered the phone and was more than agreeable to us coming down to Arizona for a few days. From what I could find out, Bernita had indeed been in hospital with a diabetic coma and had also suffered from depression, but was now in pretty good health. I even spoke with her for a few minutes. I told them I would get back to them in a couple of hours, to let them know what arrangements I had made. I didn't anticipate a problem, but then I didn't realize at that time, that it was spring break. My travel agent could get us on a flight to Phoenix out of Bellingham, Washington, but at a cost of \$895 - American Dollars - each, ouch! Then we tried to get a flight to Palm Springs, but that also was a no go. So finally, plan three was put into action, that being a flight out of Vancouver, BC to Los Angeles for \$345 Canadian, each. This was a much better deal. We would rent a car on arrival in LA and drive to Phoenix from there. I confirmed our flight and car rental, then called Bob back and gave him the information. He said he'd arrange the motel. So all was set. It was just a case of waiting for Tuesday to arrive.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

“What time are they arriving?”, Karren asked me.

“Three fifteen”, I replied.

What’s the time now?”.

“Ten past”.

We sat on the bed, not really talking much, just waiting in anticipation.

Everything was set.

The cameras were ready.

The plan was set.

Just the waiting remained.

Then they were there.

I sent Karren into the bathroom and closed the door as we had previously arranged. I wanted to capture that very first sighting of ‘mother meeting daughter for the very first time’ on video.

I went down to their car to greet them and tell them the plan. They agreed, then followed me up to our motel room.

Meanwhile, inside the bathroom, Karren is so nervous, that she doesn’t even want to come out.

I called out to her, “OK, honey, come on out and meet your mom”.

She plucked up the courage and slowly opened the door.....

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

As Karren opened the bathroom door and there right before her eyes - stood her mother!

The emotion of this first sighting was staggering. Bernita opened her arms to her daughter and they hugged and hugged. The tears were flowing down Karren's face as she sobbed in happiness.

Finally, Bernita said, "It's all right", as she consoled her daughter, as though she was a child.

"I've waited all my life for this", Karren replied. They stood there for many minutes, hugging, crying and laughing.

"Can't see much faces", I said, trying to part the two.

"We do have sound", Bob called out, referring to the fact that I was trying to video record the event.

They tried to wipe away their tears and moved to the center of the room.

Karren asked, "Is this Bob?".

"Yes, this is Bob"; we all replied, "come over and meet him".

Also there to meet us was Bob's Mother, Thelma.

It was time for more hugging and even more tears.

"You must have had a good, fast trip over here", Bob said.

"Fast as we could", Karren replied.

Everybody laughed, as the awkwardness of the moment, subsided.

"Were you nervous?", Karren asked her mother.

"No, not really," came the reply, "excited though".

Bob interjected, "Excited for days". There was more laughter.

For the next several minutes, there was a lot of small talk, as everyone got to know each other a little better. We all sat on the bed as we exchanged photographs and swapped stories.



Karren's first meeting with her mom, Bernita and her husband, Bob Jensen.

Time drifted by and by now it was late afternoon. We were all beginning to get hungry and it was decided that we should all go to a Chinese restaurant, not too far from the motel, for dinner. We had a delightful meal and enjoyed each other's company, immensely. During the meal, Bob suggested that while we were in Arizona, we should do some sightseeing. He mentioned the Grand Canyon; Montezuma's Castle, Sedona, Phoenix and even the London Bridge at Lake Havasu and the Nevada gambling town of Laughlin. Over the next few days, Bernita and Bob showed us all of these places and so much more, as they treated us royally. These were wonderful days as all the time, we were getting to know each other better and better.

One evening at their motor home, after another day of sightseeing, it was decided that a phone call to Allen, (Bernita and Bob's son, Karren's half brother) was in order.

Bernita dialed his number and then after several minutes of conversation, she said to him, "I'd like you to speak to Karren now".

She handed the phone to her daughter.
“Hello Allen, this Karren”, she began.
It was a wonderful conversation, as they
struggled through to awkwardness of this first
contact. They ended by saying that they should
meet in the very near future.

Our last day together was at Laughlin. We had
breakfast, then said our good-byes, as they
returned to Sun City. We in turn had a long drive
ahead of us, back to Los Angeles, to catch a late
afternoon flight back to Vancouver.

We’d had a marvelous few days together - it was
Karren’s dream come true. A dream that began
so many years ago, and now finally, after all of
those emotional ups and downs, it was over.

Several weeks later, Karren called Allen to
arrange for us all to meet each other that
weekend in Vancouver, Washington.

We left late Saturday afternoon and stopped for
the night at a Tacoma motel. The next morning,
bright and early, we were on our way for the first
ever meeting between brother and sister.

We found their house and I went in to introduce
myself, leaving Karren in the car. I wanted to
video record the meeting, like I did between
Karren and her mom. All was agreed.

Karren came in to meet her brother. Once again
the emotions ran high. We were introduced to his
wife, Lisa as well as their two sons, Eric and
Aaron and their daughter, Melody.

Photographs were exchanged, as were many
stories. We told them of our meeting with Bernita
and Bob and showed them the video of that
meeting. Then they took us to see their parent’s
home, which was in a tiny place named, Amboy,
about a thirty-mile drive away. Bernita and Bob

were still in Sun City at this time. We saw many photographs of Karren's relatives for the first time, including those of her grandmother.



Karren & Allen's first meeting

Later, Allen and Lisa took us for our first meal in a Mongolian restaurant. It was great, as was the company. Unfortunately, the visit was far too short and before we knew it, we were on our way back home.

The family was now back together, after being torn apart so many years before. There was Bernita and Bob.
Allen and Lisa.
Eric, Aaron and Melody.
And now, Karren was part of the family as well.

She walks around with a beaming smile and is the walking advertisement for happiness. She has had long talks with her mom and has already mapped out a family tree, with lots of help from Bob. She has found out that her grandparents have unfortunately, all passed away, but has seen lots of photographs to see what her family looked like. Her grandfather, Bernita's father, was Fredell DeForest Taber, who died in 1959 at the age of 77, while her grandmother, Bernita's mother, was Marie Elizabeth Ball, who died in 1980, at the age of 86. She was told stories and tales of the family, which includes Bernita's five sisters - Wilma, Francis, Alice, Laura and Sue - and her three brothers - Fred, Fredell and John. But she never did have a twin!

Bernita had left her home in Scott Valley, Northern California, at the age of eighteen to work in Oakland, California. At twenty, she had found herself pregnant and with her father's help, had moved to Seattle to have the baby. Bess Gilroy of course then robbed them of their mother/daughter relationship, when she told her that her baby had died. Bernita returned home to stay with her parents while she recuperated. Several months later, she met and married a Southerner from South Carolina. This marriage didn't work out and she moved back to Oakland, where she found work at The Presidio. It was there that she met Bob Jensen. After an eight-month romance, they were married in Reno, Nevada on March 14th, 1952. Just over two years later, their daughter, Marilyn was born. Tragically however, when she was only seven and half years old, she died from meningitis. Several years later, on August 10th, 1964, their son, Allen was born.

During one of these many 'mother/daughter chats', the real truth of Bernita's pregnancy came to light.

It happened during the spring of 1947, when Bernita was staying in Portland, Oregon with Wilma, her eldest sister and her husband, John Frazer and their children. It seems as though this John Frazer became more than just a little amorous with Bernita one day.

He ended up raping her.

Karren was outraged at the thought.

Not only had John Frazer raped her mother, but also she had arrived in this world as the result of that rape.

Karren's head was spinning with this news, because now she suddenly realized that she had a birth father!

His name was John Frazer.

She said his name over and over again to herself. But then, almost before she could digest this news, she learned that he had died many years ago.

Now her emotions were really being pulled in many different directions. There was the elation of discovering her father, but then there was the learning that he was a rapist and finally, and worst of all, he was dead. She wanted to ask more, but the emotions were too high. She would save that for a later date.

However, the one date that will be forever etched in her mind, will be:

Wednesday, March 18th, 1992.

The day she was finally re-united with her mother.

It was the day when her dream of long ago, came true, when she stated:

**“IF IT’S THE LAST THING I EVER DO,
I WILL FIND MY MOTHER!”**