

My Search for My Birth Parents

First, let me go over some background information. I have known that I was adopted since as early as I can remember. As I was growing up I remember finding an announcement of my adoption by Glenn and Opal Brown, who I will refer to as Dad and Mom, since they were the only parents I knew until I was in my 40's. This announcement was not of that much interest to me since I already knew I was adopted.

My father died in September of 1968, and I remember that sometime during the following year, while I was living at home during my first year of teaching, something came up about adoption and my mother asked me if I wanted to know who my birth parents were. Not wanting to hurt her feelings, I told her I really didn't care and the subject was dropped.

My mother died in January of 1993 and at that time I did start thinking about trying to find out who my birth parents were. At that time, DNA was not an option, since it was expensive and basically only used by law enforcement to identify suspects. I considered trying to find my original birth certificate, since the birth certificate that I had said that Glenn and Opal were my parents. Since I was then living in Racine, Wisconsin, I was not sure how I would go about that because it would probably involve spending a few days in Topeka, Kansas where I was born, and I didn't even know if Kansas allowed adopted children to view their original birth certificate.

The following summer, in 1994, I traveled to Topeka to pick up some furniture that we had put in storage after my mother died because my son, Brian, who was getting married, could use it in his first apartment until Brian and Kim could afford to get their own furniture. Since on my way from Topeka to Decatur, Illinois, where I was going to drop the furniture off, I would be only about 30 miles from Lexington, Missouri, where my cousin, Joanne Norris Gadt, and her husband, Jimmy, lived, I decided to stop and visit with them for an hour or so. During the visit I told Joanne and Jimmy that I was thinking about seeing if I could get a copy of my original birth certificate. In response to that, Joanne said, "If you do get a copy it will only have my name on it as your

mother, but will not have a name for your father.” This took me by surprise, and I didn’t know how to respond; so I just said okay and changed the subject.

A few months later I received a letter from Joanne explaining how my adoption had come about. Joanne had found herself unmarried and pregnant in 1946. As was the custom for unwed mothers at that time, when she began to show she was sent to an unwed mothers’ home in Topeka where her mother’s sister, Opal, lived. When Joanne decided to put the baby up for adoption, Opal said that the baby was a Barger, so Glenn and she would adopt me to keep me in the Barger family. So I was adopted by my birth mother’s aunt on her mother’s side of the family.

This brought a lot of things from my childhood into focus. I remember, as a young child, that every summer I would go to Missouri and spend a week or so with Joanne and Jimmy, go fishing with Joanne’s mother, Gladys Barger Norris, and probably spend a few days with my grandmother, Jennie Patton Barger. Occasionally my brother, Roger, who was a year and a half older than me, would come along, but many times it was just me. Also, I remember Joanne, who was 19 years older than me, seemed to like to make sure I behaved myself.

During the next 18 years I tried a couple of times to talk to Joanne about my birth father, but she refused to give me a name or any information about him or my conception.

In 2012 I decided to do a Y-DNA test with Family DNA. This is a test that follows the male line only. The results would only be males who, in some way, were related to my birth father. The 12 results I got back from that test did not show any close relationships. I did notice that, of the 6 different surnames listed, the most common one was Brady. It showed up 6 times.

Then in 2014, I decided to expand my search and sent my DNA off to Ancestry DNA. I was now looking for the surname Brady to possibly be on my birth father’s side but Brady did not show up. There was a couple of Norris and Barger distant relations, but they would be on my birth mother’s side.

My wife, Cindy, had tested with 23 & Me, mainly for the genetic medical results that they were providing at the time. In 2016 she convinced me that I should add 23 & Me to places I had tested, so I sent my DNA off to them. Again, I was looking for something that would be on my birth father's side, possibly with a surname of Brady. However, there were no Bradys showing up at that time. I was contacted by some distant relations which proved to be from my birth mother's side of the family. Then in late 2017, a Missy Joplin showed up on my list as a 1st cousin, and she listed Brady as a related surname. Being a first cousin meant that one of her uncles was my birth father.

I sent Missy a message explaining who I was and giving her a little background on my search. I included a list of the Bradys that had shown up on my Family Tree Y-DNA results and asked if she had any uncles with the last name of Brady who might have been around Richmond, Missouri (where my birth mother lived at the time) in late 1945. They actually lived in Orrick, Missouri. She sent me a message back with some general information, such as her mother's maiden name, which was Brady and the fact that her mother had 6 older brothers who were born and raised around the Richmond/Orrick area. There was only one of the names that I had sent her that might have matched a relative she knew but the middle name was different.

With this information, my wife got on [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and starting doing some searching. She was able to locate a census report from 1940 for Orrick that listed the entire Brady family along with their ages. From that we were able to calculate the approximate ages of the Brady brothers in 1945. There were two brothers that attracted my attention due to their ages. One was John Brady who would have been 23 in 1945 (the time of my conception), and the other was William Brady who would have been 19. My wife then proceeded to find obituaries for the two of them which listed their children. Armed with this information, she searched on Facebook and found a possible daughter of each of them.

While continuing my conversations with Missy (my first cousin) and her mother (my biological aunt), I also sent messages on Facebook to Joann Battagler and Cindelu

Brady Crosby. Missy mother informed me that she remembered that John had come home from the Army around August 1945, but she thought that William did not get out of the Navy until around August of 1946.

I did not hear back from Joann Battagler, but Cindelú did get back to me right away. She was interested in helping me, and we exchanged information back and forth. Cindelú was willing to take a DNA test, but thought it would be a waste of money since she was of the opinion that John, not her father, William, was the most likely to be my birth father. She didn't think her dad, William, got home from the Navy until later in 1946. Cindelú contacted Joann for me, but she was out of town at the time, and wanted to wait until she got home and had time to think before agreeing to do a DNA test.

While waiting for Joann Battagler to get home, I received another message from Cindelú saying that her brother had shown her a transcript of her dad's military service record showing he was home on leave in October of 1945, so she would go ahead and do the DNA test if I sent it to her. After sending her the 23 & Me test kit all we could do was wait.

About 6 weeks later I received a text from her while watching TV one evening. It read "Welcome to the family, brother." Thus I now know who my birth mother AND birth father are. Since both are now deceased, I will never know the situation around my conception, but based on the fact that William was only home on leave in October 1945 and did not return back home until August of 1946, he probably never knew that he had a son by Joanne Norris. I also wonder if Joanne possibly never knew his full name, since Sue does not remember her brother William ever going with a Joanne Norris.

In October of 2018, while in Springfield, Missouri, I got to meet with my half-sister, Cindelú, my aunt Sue and my 1st cousin, Missy, along with several other relatives from my birth father's side of the family at a family reunion. They were all very welcoming and we had a great time visiting and getting to know each other. I still have two half brothers that I hope to be able to meet in the coming year.