

BIRTH FATHER **& OTHER BIRTH PARENT or RELATIVE SEARCHES**

One of the most common requests that **Parent Finders** receives is for assistance with a search for an absent birth father or mother (not necessarily an adoption situation). The reasons for the absence of this parent are many. The parents may be divorced; The mother may have been deserted by the father or vice versa; Family may have forced a separation; The mother may have given up the baby for adoption and never seen or heard from the father again; One of the parents may have been married to someone else; One parent may choose not to have any contact with the other parent.

Often the searcher's mother is the only person who knows who the father is. She may be unwilling to give out any information about him. The reasons for this can be many. But they are most often based on personal feelings of hurt, anger or shame. The mother may have been in a very difficult situation and for reasons which she alone knows, may be very unwilling to reveal any information about the birth father. She may be afraid of her family's bad opinion of her. Great understanding should be shown by the searcher if any relevant facts are to be learned.

If the father and mother were married, it may be possible to get a copy of the marriage certificate if you are a child of that marriage. Such a certificate may show the name of the father's father. If the mother will not reveal even the father's name, that information may sometimes be found by interviewing members of the family who were around at the time of the birth. Someone may remember the man she was dating, where he came from or lived, where he worked or where she met him. Did her best friend double-date with them? Are there any old photos? Before anyone is approached however, it should be very clear whether they knew about the birth or not. Care must be taken not to infringe on the mother's right to privacy. If this birth is a secret, it is the mother's right to tell people, NOT the searcher's.

Sometimes the 'name' is all the mother will reveal. It may be necessary to ask relatives or friends for more information. One should reassure these relatives or friends that this should not be viewed as "going behind the birth mother's back", or their loyalty to her will be strained.

The following information is of the kind that is necessary if a search for the person is to be undertaken:

- Last known address (even the town)
- Age, Date of Birth, Appearance
- Occupation, Where did they meet? Mutual friends?
- Other family members, Brothers, Sisters, His father's occupation
- Did B/F know about the birth? Circumstances around separation
- Has there been any communication through the years?
- Where did he go to school?
- Did birth mother ever go to his parent's home? Can she remember where it was?
- Was he in the Military? Rank? Regiment?

It is necessary to be very methodical and organized when a search is undertaken. A 3-ring binder and careful note-taking is imperative. One does not want to go over the same search territory twice. It may be necessary to spend a lot of time at the public library looking at old city directories and phone books. It may mean interviewing family members. It may mean searching cemetery lists. It is NOT a good idea to phone everyone with the same last name in the phone book. This will only irritate people and the 'wrong' questions may get asked of the 'right' person. That person may be alienated forever. Wait to make contact until there is a 101% certainty that you have found the right person. Advice on how to make an appropriate approach is very necessary. **Parent Finders** can help with experience and information and a soft shoulder.

Sometimes it is a good idea to hire professional search help. **Parent Finders** can recommend people. This will cost you money. The amount will depend on the amount of work required. These searches can be VERY time-consuming and few professionals work for "free", so be prepared. Allow for at least 10-20 hours of research. It may be that the person cannot be found, especially if the only information available is a name like "Bill" who drove a truck. A search cannot be done with only that much information! Some people are never found.

If the birth mother has been found through an adoption search and she is reluctant to reveal the birth father's name, she may have told the Social Services years before. In some provinces (not Ontario) it may be possible to make a search request through the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They will sometimes do a search for a birth father, or if the birth mother is deceased or if there are some special circumstances such as a medical situation involved.

Sometimes the mother is more than willing to help find a missing birth father. She just cannot remember much about him. With the help of an experienced searcher it may be possible to find out more. Join **Parent Finders** for more advice and information.

