

## “Finding Lala” Part I

I was born April 1948 in Wilmington, New Hanover, North Carolina into a family with an older half-sister Bettie Anne, by three and a half years. My father worked for a construction company that needed him to move for his job. Bettie Anne and I stayed with our mother at her parents' home with five other children. Three of the five were in their teens. While our father was finding suitable accommodations for our family, in the new town, he came to suspect infidelity of our mother. He filed for a divorce, and because he was not the father of Bettie Anne, he surrendered his parental rights to avoid child support. He convinced our mother to do the same. Our mom thought her parents would be able to adopt us. This was not to be.

In March 1950, one month shy of my 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Bettie Anne and I were taken from our grandparents home, by the Department of Social Services New Hanover County, North Carolina, where we had been living with our mother, following the separation of our parents. Sometime between March and May 1950 Bettie Anne and I were separated. I believe that her father and his wife adopted her. Also, at some point I was transferred to Department of Social Services Craven County, North Carolina.

While in a hospital in New Bern, Craven, North Carolina for a through physical and mental examinations required by the state, I first saw my future dad. He and his wife being unable to have children were interested in adopting. One Saturday while golfing with a doctor friend that mentioned a little boy at his hospital which was a ward of the state. This boy has captured the affection of the staff and they did not want to see me returned to be a ward of the state. My future dad arranged with the doctor to meet me. As they entered the ward where I was playing, and when I saw him, I said “Daddy, Daddy” and held out my arms to be picked up. He turned to the doctor and commented that he was not leaving without me.

In May 1950 I was placed in my future parents' care at Cherry Point, Craven, North Carolina. While with my new family I would occasionally ask “where is **Lala**?” Believing that I must be asking about a sister, they inquired if there was a sister? Yes, there is an older sister that had been adopted by another family. My new parents were furious that they had permitted us to be separated. But there was no changing the situation. I continued to ask about **Lala** occasionally until I was about nine years old. All the while believing I wanted my sister.

In July 1950 we moved to Santa Ana, Orange, California, as my dad was a USMC fighter pilot. He had flown in WWII in the Pacific from the USS Bunker Hill and earned the title of Ace. He also flew during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Our route to California from North Carolina was up the east coast to Maine. This was to introduce me to the maternal side of family. While in California we were visited three times, in home, by a caseworker from the California Department of Social Services that favorably reported back to Department of Social Services Craven County, North Carolina.

The Final Order of Adoption was issued July 1951 by the Superior Court of Craven County, North Carolina. My adopted parents divorced in 1953 and my dad was awarded

custody as he was in a better position to provide for me. In 1955 my dad remarried, and unfortunately, I and my new mom never got along very well. Since then I have lived what I believe to be a somewhat remarkable life.

Having the opportunity for new experiences by moving around the country as the needs of the USMC dictated. I spent 1½ years, while my dad was stationed Unaccompanied Overseas, with my paternal grandparents on a ranch near Blanco, Blanco, Texas. I attended Columbia Military Academy for eighth through eleventh grades. After high school I spent twenty-seven years in the USCG and retired as a Chief Petty Officer. Drove a school bus for five years and worked construction during the summers. After which I worked for the US Department of Veterans Affairs as the Office Manager at the Kenai Vet Center. Retiring in 2015 to become a Snowbird.

I Married in 1972, had a son Eric in 1975 then divorced in 1979. In 1986 I married Barbara. We have two children, Danielle, and Brian. In 1990 I adopted her son Brett. As a family we were active in Scouts and Four H for many years. We are so immensely proud of the adults our children have become.

Over the years I wondered about my biological family, but never pursued searching to find out. I was content with the family I knew, one sister and five brothers. Curiosity finally swayed me in the Fall 2014, so I submitted an Ancestry DNA test. Over the next few years, I received many notifications of DNA matches. Most of them being 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> cousins, sometimes 1, 2 or 3 times removed. While visiting other genealogy web sites I realized I could upload my DNA packet from Ancestry DNA to them, and they would match me with others in their databases. I also hired an attorney in 2017 to have my records unsealed. He was partially successful. I received a redacted copy of my records from Craven County, North Carolina in April 2019

NOTE about DNA; a child has the possibility of receiving up to 3,000 centimorgans (cM's) from their parents. One of my half-sisters and an aunt did the Ancestry DNA test and we are a close family match with over 1,500 cM's between us.