

## **How Could Five Words Pencilled in a Margin Be So Catastrophic?: Anne McEnroe**

February 3, 2015 is imprinted on my psyche as the *day all the branches fell off my family tree!* Instead of the happy extended family I had always known, suddenly there was a blank.

A Pandora's Box was created in 1964 when my 16 year old sister had her out-of-wedlock baby daughter adopted. She spent the next 50 years trying to track her daughter down but found dead ends at every turn, until the Australian Adoption Laws opened up in 2000. Then the long lost daughter found my sister. Amid much rejoicing my sister phoned me to ask if I knew what a pencilled notation on the adoption papers meant. It read 'Mother adopted but they don't think she knows.' I told her it must be a mistake but I would check with our brother, the eldest sibling.

An audible gasp and a mumbled '.. Secret ... Mum and Dad ... promise! I'll send you an email,' was the incredible response from my beloved big brother. The email duly arrived, and I was astounded to learn that our sister was actually adopted. When I phoned to confirm this shocking news to her, she casually said that she was not bothered. She would find out who her parents were when she died. She was quite happy with the ones she had and with 16 great grandchildren and counting, she felt she had enough relatives anyway!

My naivety in the security of what I always thought of as my full birth certificate, and my similarity to my adored dad in looks and temperament, were now rudely shattered. At the end of my brother's email, the awful realisation dawned that I too was adopted!

I could not identify with my sister's attitude to the situation. I felt my identity had flown out the window.

In an amazing turn of events, my adoptive cousin, in tracing the family name of McLean, found a 3G paternal Grandfather (adopted family) came from a little village called St Cuthberts in Leith in Scotland. My new found paternal family name is McLennan, the family emanating from this exact same little village. *Astoundingly it appears I am related to both my fathers!*

The branches may have fallen from my grafted tree, but a promising new branch is starting to bud on an old well established tree trunk ...