

Mother's Letters
...and mine

By

Joyce Davis

“Congratulations on your research and book on a most important subject that every parent must read.”

--With love, Dr. Terry Cole-Whittaker Bestselling
author of

What You Think of Me is None of My Business

Introduction:

It was a Norman Rockwell sort of life...for a time.

Harry Holt, an Oregon farmer, went to Korea and saw the need for an adoption agency. Mother had a need for more children. When the Holts and mother got together fireworks happened. It was a time of joy, of gratitude, of happy Christmases, of picnics, of first grades and second and thirds, until disaster struck.

Flowers on the cover, for Mom. Zinnias, an old fashioned flower in my way of thinking, they remind me of her.

Here's to you mom.

Letter 1

Oregon, 2013

Dear Mom,

Remember, Mom, how you cried when the angel Clarence got his wings in the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*? I saw, too, how your hand went to your heart when George Bailey saw that his life wasn't a waste after all.

We all love an underdog. And we love it when they eventually win.

I am sure you never dreamed, as you sat at your kitchen table those many years ago pouring out your heart on paper, that you had anything to impart to the world. Now forty-six years later I am giving you your wings—at least wings in the sense of releasing your letters to the wind.

“Why did God give me all these children if this was to happen?” you asked when you discovered you had cancer.

“Because, you were to launch them,” I said.

And launch them you did. They have strength of character because of you. They have fortitude, and ability to withstand the storms of life because you gave them the tools to do so.

Can you see from your place in the cosmos what happened to the family? I wonder about that, about what happens on the other side. I wonder how a soul can be happy if they see their family in heartache. Perhaps you do not see heartache, but instead see the magnificent soul who rises, like a Phoenix, from the ashes.

You wrote the letters between the years of 1956 and 1967. The agency kept the letters all those years, and after your death they sent them to my step-dad. Because you aren't here to give permission to publish your letters, I am acting in your behalf. All the children, save one, gave their permission to use their real names.

In reading your letters I saw into your soul, a place I had never glimpsed before. I was astounded how honest you were and how grateful you were for your heart's desire—the children you adopted, and eventually your natural-born son. I know those letters were a private secret sharing between you and Grandma Holt, yet I feel they ought to be read by anyone who has loved a child or been loved by one.

We had secrets between us, yes. Your secret was that I was a love child. I instinctively knew you “had” to marry my father. In those days the stigma of an unwed mother was too great to bear. We didn't speak of it until I thanked you shortly before your death. Actually you never spoke of it. It wasn't until I read the Holt Letters that I knew the date, seven months before I was born, that you married my father. You were only sixteen. Years of shame followed, yet I am grateful you had me. How can my conception be shameful? I am blessed.

What follows are your letters exactly as you wrote them to “Grandma” Bertha Holt and the Holt

Adoption Agency. I typed them, and added a few letters of my own. The reason? There was a secret that needs telling. It was a secret, I'm sure, you never knew.

Love always,

Joyce

Letter 2

September 20, 1956

Florence Willett Route 4
The Dalles, Oregon

Mr. Holt,

After reading tonight's newspaper, I was determined to write to you. I had been told that you had quit taking names of couples interested in the babies of Korea, so I had sort of forgotten about it until tonight. The way the article read, you are still looking for foster homes for the babies.

I don't know what I am supposed to say, except that my husband and I have thought about this and talked about it since you brought your own babies back, but I wasn't sure what I should do about it so didn't do anything. Now if your daughter

is going back again as the paper said, and if you are still looking for homes, we are more than just curiously interested. Our home is open and needing some little ones very badly.

Am I supposed to tell you anything about us? We are Mr. and Mrs. Mike Willett. We are of modest circumstances. We are 35 years old. I have one daughter who is 18, and although we've hoped and prayed for years, we have no babies of our own. None has been forthcoming.

We are Christians and belong to the Evangelical United Brethren Church here in The Dalles. I am told that you know of one couple here in our church. They have known my husband for years and could tell you a little about us. They are friends with our family doctor, who in turn are friends of ours and I'm sure would give you references for us if such are needed. It is through them that I have heard so much of what you are doing. I've many questions I'd like to ask and don't know if I should ask them here or not. For instance, do we have any choice as to the age of the child or

whether it would be a boy or girl? Mainly do we have a chance of getting one or more?

My husband asked how many I was going to ask for. I think we'd both be willing to take two if possible. Right now, our house is not big enough for more than that, and I'm not sure our income is either. If we have a choice, I think it would be for a boy although as far as I am concerned that wouldn't matter. But I would like as young a child as possible. My arms are just not full of babies. When I asked our daughter which to ask for, a boy or girl, she said, "Both."

So you see we would all welcome a child or children into our home and with the help of God to do our very best by it.

I know no more to say at this time. I guess from here on it is up to you. I'm praying about this and have faith that if we are supposed to do this it will work out, if not well, the Lord has other plans for us. We've had our name in at an adoption agency for a couple of years but have heard nothing from them.

Oh, I didn't tell you we live on a small farm,
a wonderful place for children, and my husband
works for the Union Pacific Railroad.

This all sounds wrong on paper, but I hope
I've said all I need to say. We'll be hoping to hear
from you.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Mike Willett

Letter 3

December 1956

Mr. & Mrs. Milo Willett Route 4

The Dalles, Oregon

Holt Adoption Program Creswell, Oregon

Dear Mr. Holt,

We received your letter dated December 30 today.

We certainly are still interested in the adoption of a Korean orphan.

You mentioned the fact that you haven't heard from us. I thought we were doing you a favor. We have been devouring any information we find in the newspaper, etc. but have not written for we realize it must be a chore answering the hundreds of inquiries you get from anxious prospective parents. I had decided to wait until after Christmas then write to see if we could find out anything.

I have appreciated so much the letters written by both you and Mrs. Holt while you were in Korea. It made us feel we were not forgotten. Also we have the privilege of sharing a little in it, if only in our prayers. They have been and still are with you.

We are, of course, very anxious to hear something definitely in our favor, but very truthfully have been waiting for our Lord to bring us to your mind again. Have no idea how you go about it, deciding I mean, who and where, etc. As you are depending on Him in all, so are we asking to send one or two children to us if it be His will for us.

Thank you so much for writing.

Very Sincerely,

Florence and Mike Willett

Letter 4

January 14, 1957

Florence Willett Route 4

The Dalles, Oregon

Dear Mr. Holt,

I know nothing more to do than to be completely honest about this since the subject was brought up in your letter and since I've stated on the card that we have a 19 year old daughter and my husband and I were married in 1945.

I didn't think about it making a difference, but my husband and I were both divorced before we met each other. As to the reasons, I can only stand on Matthew 19.9 which says, "Except it be for fornication," which happens to be exactly the case in both instances. We were not then Christians.

We accepted the Lord together in Nov 1949. Of this I am sure. We were called and I am sure that the Lord has forgiven us. It is something which bothered me for a long time and I've prayed about it more than I usually admit, but my Bible continues to assure me that God is gracious and that there is no sin that He does not forgive. I've wondered how He can forgive such as me, but I know that He has and can only say, "What manner of love is this?" and be eternally grateful.

My husband and I do not have any children. Our daughter is mine from my former marriage although we hardly ever think of it anymore. We've prayed for babies but they just don't come. As for those babies we'd so like to have, I've also prayed and thought about this I guess since the first time I heard of you and I've though perhaps this is what we are supposed to do. Perhaps it's why we've had none of our own. But are we to be rejected now because of mistakes of the past?

As you say in your letter that this is the Lord's work. I know we want them but whether we

are to have these particular children I can only leave to the Lord. As I said I've thought about it a long time and then finally said, "Okay, I'll do something about it and you do the rest." So I wrote to you. Now more than ever I can only say if this is what we are supposed to do we'll get them. I guess whether or not you think we are worthy will also depend on you and the Lord again. It seems that just everything depends on Him doesn't it?

I wanted to tell you also that I'm going to be praying that if your letter reaches people who are not "born again Christians" that it will cause someone to think on these things.

I have been working with young people the last few years. I am the Counselor for our Youth Fellowship and teach Sunday School Class of Jr. High girls and have personal contact with children who reflect their parent's attitudes and think that if they know about Him that's all that matters.

I'm making this much longer than I intended and I'm sorry but I felt I should explain the situation. My husband and I have made our

mistakes but now we are on the right road. We'll make it because we have Christ walking with us.

Also if you are interested our daughter is one of the best Christian young ladies I know of and I'm not bragging just stating a fact. I think anyone will tell you that who knows us. The older people of the church think she's sort of special and she is an inspiration to the younger girls too. I know I work with them. She's just dating and all the church is interested. Mike said the other day, "If Joyce ever decides to get married we'll have to call a counsel of administration meeting to get everybody's permission." She is our pride and joy.

Now I've done all I know to do and as I have said the rest is up to the Lord. So leaving things in His hands I'll close.

Florence Willett Mrs. Milo Willett