

FOREWORD

A powerful, gripping read! *Finding Mother After Five Decades* is the emotional journey of the author to locate her mother who abandoned her when she was only two years old. This book held my attention and kept me wanting to know why her mother left and where she went. As the author unraveled the impact of mental illness on her mother's life, I felt compassion for the author, her mother, and siblings. This captivating book left me eager to read the next book in the *Finding Mother Series*.

Reading this story also offers hope to people in search of their parents.

~ **Dr. Theresa Torres, Professor of Sociology**
University of Missouri–Kansas City

PREFACE

When I estimated that my mother would be close to eighty years old, I nearly gave up all hope that I might see her again. *In Finding Mother after Five Decades*, I share specific details about my tedious journey of searching unsuccessfully, giving up, then finally finding my mother after forty-nine years.

INTRODUCTION

When my mother left in 1969, I was two years old, and when I finally found her in 2018, I was fifty-one years old.

Forty-nine years, that is how long it took me to see her face again. However, I like to refer to the timing as five decades because it was so close to the fifty-year mark.



This worn out folder represents every effort, challenge, and failure I endured in my very long and tedious search for my long-lost mother until the final success of reuniting with her. In this folder are birth certificates, birth records, marriage record requests, private detective reports, letters I sent, social security information, and the list goes on.

I finally found my mother on March 2, 2018. Just over a year later, on July 1, 2019, I began sorting through these items, placing them in chronological order, so that I could eventually lay out for you every hardship and obstacle I had to overcome in order to hug my mother one more time.

My first recollection of my mother was when I was two. I was too little to realize fully what was going on, but I vividly remember the day she left my siblings and me in the care of our father.

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Over the years, this lack of motherly care was something that was constantly on my mind. Whenever I had the chance, I tried to get as much information as I could from my father, the person who knew her better than anyone.

When I finally came of age, it took me thirty-three years to find the mother I was yearning for.

Even as I was filling this folder up, I never truly believed the day would come when I would actually see my mother again. Now, it feels amazing to be telling the world how I have finally found her when, more than once, my hopes were crushed and I thought it would never happen for me.

Chapter 1

BEFORE MOTHER LEFT

She has to be somewhere! That is what I used to exclaim, frustrated when my mother seemed to have vanished into thin air and all of my search efforts were coming up null.

Why did she have to leave?

Why *my* mother?

Why do I have to endure such a devastating heartache?

Most importantly, why can't I find her?

Those were the thoughts and questions that lingered in my mind over the years, as the trail of my mother's whereabouts was getting colder with each passing day.

Even though I was only two years old when she left in 1969, I can recall with vivid details of numerous events that took place at that time.

One of the most heartbreaking memories I have is this one: My mother picking me up in her arms and walking out of the back door of our rental house. She walked, across the very tall, uncut grass to the back area of the lawn, lay face down in the grass and cried her heart out. I lay beside her and cried with her. At the time,

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I did not understand why she was so miserable that she would sob so heavily in front of her little girl.

I only remember feeling heartbroken for her.

I felt her pain so very deeply.

It was like her pain was my pain and I hurt terribly for her that day.

I later learned that my father had called the authorities to have her picked up and taken, against her will, to a mental hospital.

So, during that moment of weeping in the grass, she knew she was about to be separated from her family.

It seemed as though my father had been insensitive to his wife's illness. But, I guess if she was posing a threat to herself and others, my father may have felt he was doing something good.

Here is a less heartbreaking, yet deeply hurtful, memory: I was in the car with my family, when my father and mother began to argue. I was no more than one or two years old, but I remember feeling like my father's voice was loud and abusive and my mother was quiet and hurt from the dispute.

It felt like the argument was not fair because my father was louder, stronger, and angrier, while my mother seemed weak and unable to defend herself.

During this particular quarrel, my mother took me in her arms, got out of the car, slammed the door, and walked away with

me. I do not remember if my father had demanded her to get out or if it was her choice. I only remember her getting out of the car.

While I do not recall anything that happened after that, my oldest sister, Carla often expressed her surprise about how my mother and I made it home before *they* did even though they were in the car and my mother had left walking.

When I really look back, my time with my mother was a painful one. Although I have always remembered both good and bad, the bad was ugly. I heard stories about my mother's mental illness causing her to experience episodes, which resulted in her harming my siblings and me. Overall, my father and mother had a strained relationship. They both endured an enormous amount of pain, resulting in the breakup of our family.

Growing up, I blamed my father for my mother's emotional state. I felt like his physical abuse caused her to leave us.

Over the years, my brother Jerome tried to explain to me that our mother really *did* have a serious mental illness and our father was not to blame for that.

"You don't understand, Grace. Our mother was not the sane person you think she was," Jerome used to say.

He remembered it better than *I* did because he was the oldest of the six children and I was the baby. He explained to me