



Gail Beck, 38, of Vancouver, has been searching for her daughter who was adopted by a couple who lives somewhere in Halton. The Scottish adopting father works at a manufacturing company. Here, Mrs. Beck stands beside a portrait depicting one of her daughter's great relatives. Family background is just one of the many things Mrs. Beck would like to share with her daughter. (Photo submitted)

Birth mother pines for long-lost daughter

By LISA RUTLEDGE
the Herald

There is pride and pain every Oct. 2 for Gail Beck, a 38-year-old Vancouver woman. Yesterday was her daughter's birthday, however, they have never met.

For eight years Mrs. Beck has been searching for her daughter, taken away after birth.

Mrs. Beck, pregnant at 16, was shipped from Vancouver to a Salvation Army home for unwed mothers in Toronto and knows her daughter was adopted by a couple who lives somewhere in Halton.

Every year for eight years Mrs. Beck advertises in Halton newspapers appealing to anyone who believes she may be her 22-year-old daughter.

Mrs. Beck, who is in the process of obtaining a private investigator's licence, has learned that her daughter was adopted by a Scottish man and his English wife. She knows the man works for a Halton manufacturing company and hopes the family still lives in the region.

For two years Mrs. Beck searched microfilms of newspaper adoption and baby arrival advertisement. But she came up with nothing.

She knows her baby's birth name was Debbie Theresa McRae but Mrs. Beck was never allowed to see the baby.

The baby was born at least two months premature and weighed only four pounds, two ounces, said Mrs. Beck, and was kept in Sick Children's Hospital for a month.

After the birth, Mrs. Beck stayed with family friends in Oakville and then travelled back to Vancouver.

As the co-ordinator of a support group for mothers whose babies were taken from them at young ages, Mrs. Beck realizes she did have a choice. At 16, Mrs. Beck was told she had to give the baby up for adoption or she would be put out on the streets to fend for herself. Now she realizes there were support methods such as mothers allowance and welfare that could have helped her keep her child.

Her baby was placed into the new family on Nov. 19, 1968.

The past 22 years have been a mixture of grief and hope, explained Mrs. Beck. It's like a death in one respect but on the other hand you can hope a mother and daughter can find one another.

Blaming adoption protection regulations, which prevent her from obtaining information leading to her daughter, Mrs. Beck said it's not fair. Even those who are in jail get to see their children, she said.

Compaign Canadian adoptions to those in New Zealand, Mrs. Beck said Canada should do the same by opening their files.

She believes that once an adopted child becomes an adult he or she deserves the opportunity to discover family background. Mrs. Beck did learn that the adopting family indicated the child would be told about the adoption when she reached adulthood. However, the parents may not have wanted her to contact her mother, she said.

Just recently Mrs. Beck battled her fears of rejection and told her 11-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son about their sister. "My 11-year-old just flipped out and said she has always hoped she had a sister," said Mrs. Beck. She quoted her son as saying, "We'll just have to find her, mom." Shocked by their enthusiasm she said "I thought they would have thought I was a horrible person but I couldn't have asked them to accept it any better."

An avid bagpipe player, Mrs. Beck said she wouldn't want to disrupt her daughter's life but wants to be there to answer any questions about medical background or about the father.

She would also be there to reassure her daughter that she was not unloved. "I loved her right from day one and I enjoyed her every minute she was inside of me," said Mrs. Beck. "I missed all the years she was growing up. I just want to contact her and see how she's doing."

If her daughter did call she admitted she wouldn't know what to do. Only once has the situation occurred in which a response was

almost the real thing. Several years ago a girl with the same birth date responded to one of Mrs. Beck's advertisements but it turned out they weren't related. So touched by the girl's desire to reach her mother, Mrs. Beck recalls saying "I wish I was your mother."

Anyone who could provide Mrs. Beck with information that may lead her to her daughter can call collect at 1-604-574-3175. Her address is 17349 58th Avenue, Surrey, British Columbia, V3S 1K9.

Expense misconceptions drive away volunteers

Misconceptions about extra expenses may be driving away potential volunteers from ride programs, believes Linda Berry, a Halton volunteer ride co-ordinator.

Mrs. Berry is one of a four-person committee searching for reasons why Georgetown and Milton are having tremendous difficulty in finding volunteer drivers.

By anticipating some concerns of potential volunteers, such as extra insurance levies or the cost of gas used during trips, Mrs. Berry hopes to answer questions and alleviate concerns.

"People are afraid to volunteer," Mrs. Berry said, adding that "they're afraid it will cost extra money." In fact, volunteer drivers are reimbursed about 25 cents per kilometre, she explained.

Extra insurance costs shouldn't be of concern because volunteer drivers are not transporting people as a job, Mrs. Berry assured. "It won't even take up that much time," she said. People don't realize it only takes a half hour commitment once a month, she stated.

Some drivers don't investigate to see if their insurance company will require extra payment, said Paul Armstrong of Paul C. Armstrong Insurance Brokers Limited in Georgetown.

If a driver is being paid directly by the person being transported then an insurance company may charge extra, Mr. Armstrong explained. Since volunteer drivers are paid indirectly by a service, for the most part, there are no extra insurance costs, he said.

However, Mr. Armstrong stressed that those considering becoming volunteer drivers should contact their insurance companies and inform their agent of the circumstances. "It's not a big pro-

blem," Mr. Armstrong said. It's a problem conjured up in people's minds and they haven't bothered to check out the situations, he said.

There may be fewer people willing to become volunteer drivers because "people are a lot busier than they used to be," said Mrs. Berry. Receiving few responses from appeals and advertisements, Mrs. Berry said another explanation is that people are afraid they will have to dig into their own pockets. "They just can't afford it." But they are reimbursed, she said.

Drivers are needed for a Georgetown volunteer ride program, which won't require out-of-town rides and operates a few times a week during daylight hours. Community services such as the Children's Aid, Cancer Society, Red Cross plus child and parent programs also are in need of volunteer transportation.

Anyone with inquiries about volunteer driver programs can contact Linda Berry at the volunteer centre at 877-3219.

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