

Many years have passed  
my life has been full  
I treasure my memories &  
value my life

I am very much loved.

I have much to be grateful for.

Although this was a troubled &  
emotional time for me, it is  
little compared to the abusive  
& lonely life suffered by  
my mother.

Gracious & gentle, a young woman  
in a harsh environment in an  
unlighted era. Her physical,  
emotional, psychological &  
social needs were denied.

Informed choice & equality  
of human rights were absent!

Isolated in a country property  
own only child and, a non  
preferred gender, my mother & I  
experienced cruelty & abuse  
from the beginning. In the  
early years disrespect was  
common & tears & fear were  
ever present.

In a grade by myself, my primary education took place in a small country school.

Unprepared for boarding school I experienced aggression & discrimination

However, it was with absolute joy I commenced my tertiary studies in Koralba.

I belonged, I was accepted, I found my place & I excelled. I always endeavoured to do well.

During my studies I met my boyfriend, who became the father of our child. I found acceptance, safety & love. This was a time of joyful innocence.

Uninformed in contraception, conception & pregnancy, I was unaware of the changes to my body, until I became repeatedly physically ill & a friend gently told me I was 'preggy'

My boyfriend and I spoke about my pregnancy, but he unfortunately could not tell his parents. It would bring shame and disgrace to himself & his family

His parents had instructed him, "never to bring any pregnant girls home."

alone, in fear, I told my parents. They were distressed and ashamed of me.

Without medical treatment & with limited nutrition I struggled. This was my fault.

My mother's responsibility was never considered or discussed. My future was organized without discussion.

I was taken to Hartnett House in Melbourne: home for unmarried mothers. The home was run by two nursing sisters, one of whom was Mrs. Edridge. They were gentle & concerned.

A secure brick building with bars & wire on small windows. Accommodation for approximately twenty girls ranging from thirteen to twenty-one years. Individual cubical accommodation & comfortable lounge & dining area. Larger rooms formed the hospital area where care was given to the babies waiting adoption. All the girls were required to feed the babies. This was the first time I ever held a baby. Emotionally this was a struggle.

I was placed in a single room not long after I arrived. I stayed alone for three to four weeks. It was thought I was unwell.

The girls were permitted an afternoon walk to the park or the shopping strip just one afternoon per week. No visitors or phone calls.

We were safe and cared for with kindness. I was never told that I had any rights or given any choices. Information was taken about me but the father of my child was no required for background details. It was considered, unnecessary.

I was never prepared for the stages of labor or anything to do with the delivery. I was told "when your water broke, you would go to hospital."

In due course, I was driven quickly to Faulstich Private Hospital. I endured the increasingly painful waves of contractions. In the evening Dr Hartnett prepared for the delivery. No one spoke.

I remember giving birth to my child. The doctor asked the nurse to "take that out of here."

I asked if I had a boy or a girl but I was ignored.

There were no comforting words to acknowledge the birth.

My recovery in hospital was lonely & painful. I do not recall being examined by a doctor but two nurses were minimally comforting.

I asked many times about my baby but had to wait until my mother came to visit, before I was told I had given birth to a little girl.

I did not receive any information which would prepare me for appropriate self care after leaving hospital.

The onset of lactation & its management. The changes when menstruation returned & the need to see a doctor to ensure the return to good health.

Discomfort & embarrassment could have been avoided if anyone had cared.

Returning home carefully in order to avoid causing any embarrassment, I was quickly helped to my room. My father was curious to find I was there.

In a short time I became unwell with unmanageable pain. Returning to the doctor I was diagnosed with an extensive infection. I could not walk. This seemed like further punishment for my shameful behavior.

After several weeks I was required to attend the signing of adoption papers.

On that day, after I had signed the documents, I was permitted to see & hold my baby.

She was so beautiful.

This moment remains with me forever.

Why was I considered an unsuitable mother?

Why were we told that we were doing the best thing for the child.?

I returned to study. Life held many different challenges. There was no support network.

Sadly I lost my child & my parents lost their only grandchild.

I share my experience willingly with gratitude for this opportunity