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Synchronicity

The Sparks of Reunion

By LaVonne Stiffler

Eyes glisten with laughter or tears. Mouths drop open, perhaps uttering, "Wow!" Hands are thrown up in amazement. You know the feeling, if you have ever experienced an awesome "coincidence." Carl Jung coined a word for a coincidence that is subjectively meaningful to the participants: "synchronicity."

As a result of my study of synchronicity in reunion stories of 70 families (including my own), I continue to receive goosebump-raising anecdotes from people who have read my book. These incidents spark flashes of light in the otherwise shadowy and convoluted journey through separation by closed adoption, search, and post-reunion relationships.

An adoptive mother excitedly told me what they discovered after her 25-year-old daughter's reunion with her birth mother. (They had received no background information at the time of placement.) "The only foreign country our daughter has visited is Bolivia, choosing it from several for a college summer ministry trip! Her birth mother grew up in Bolivia with missionary parents. Before finding her mother, whose name turned out to be Jean, she married a man named Gene." For all parts of the triad, this and many other surprises of connection seem very significant. The self-esteem of the birth mother, Jean, is burgeoning through the knowledge that her daughter sought her and that their life paths were similar. She had previously never married (she has since), hoping she would be easier to find someday, and had never had other children. The welcoming adoptive parents see the hand of God in intertwined lives. The adopted daughter, who this year gave birth to her own daughter, feels she has an authentic foundation on which to build and grins as she tells about it.

Some of my favorite synchronicity stories include those of two adopted females who, before any contact, drew accurate pictures of their birth mothers' homes: one an exterior view, the other a particular room. I know a birth father and daughter who at reunion were flabbergasted to learn that she had moved from the Midwest to live within a few blocks of him in California. Both of them work in the film business and at one point she wanted to rent an apartment in his complex, though she could not afford it.

It is not uncommon to hear of an extrasensory "knowledge" that a birth relative is in crisis or has died. Siblings report that they "always knew" a brother or sister existed, and after reunion find that they and their separated sibling have made identical purchases, pursued similar hobbies, or given their children the same names. Birth mothers tell me of dreams that revealed their children's names. There are artists who sculpt or paint identical figures. We have all heard about family members who began their search at the same time.

Categories Of Synchronicity
The kinds of information regarded by reunited birth families as highly meaningful correspondences of space, time, and circumstance during the years of their separation fall into these general categories:

- Place or location — intersection in residence, migration, vacation, or search;
- Timing of search activity — inquiries or action at the same time;
- Dreams or intuition — accurate information (visual, auditory, or intuitive) marked in the mind as a young child or adult;
- Family time — major life events at the same age or date;
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- Names — one or multiple matches in family names;
- Memory — life choices with a possible memory component: genetic, prenatal, or preseparation;
- Genetic architecture — idiosyncracies, occupation, religiosity, education, grooming, mating, collecting, hobbies, handwriting, voice, language, etc.

Go Figure!
As frightened teenage parents, Sarah and Alex lost their baby boy to closed adoption in 1960 and in a few months went in different directions. Through paths that included other spouses, children, and divorce, they made an unexpected reconnection. They dated once again, married in 1990, and resolved to break through every obstacle to find their son. After a two-year search, they found him, a handsome young man, named Steve by his adoptive parents, in a city of 500,000. They say their reunion was a remarkable thrill in itself, but that the surrounding circumstances leave them astonished.

Steve and his wife unknowingly purchased and were living in the very house in which his paternal great-grandparents had raised a large family! A great-aunt living next door attended the christening celebration of Steve's new son, never imagining they were related. Steve's mother says through tears of confident joy, "I know God loves us. This is something much more than coincidence!"

Who Can Explain It?
"Miracles do not happen in contradiction to nature, but only in contradiction to what we know of nature" (Augustine).

One suggestion is that magnetite crystals discovered in 1992 in the human brain (and known to be present in the tissues of certain migratory animals) may serve as a kind of biological "homing" compass, permanently sensitive to the earth's geomagnetic fields.

If that seems preposterous, what about the pre- and perinatal research of Thomas R. Verny, David B. Chamberlain, David Cheek, Anthony DeCasper, and others? Their studies show that intrauterine memory is early and complex. We now find it easy to accept that a human records and remembers music, stories, language, names, activities, emotions, and places known prenatally. More surprising is that, under hypnosis, visual descriptions of clothing, colors, and events that could only have been seen on "the outside" are recovered.

Genetic and cellular memory are mind-boggling concepts. If memory is holographic and cellularly stored, it is conceivable that a mother and child retain lifelong memories of each other. Some say this is why unnaturally separated mother and child will always be in search of the "missing piece."

Meaning-Making
To an uninvolved observer, a coincidence story may seem contrived or trivial, as when an adopted daughter and her birth mother, geographically distant, each breaks a front tooth in a bicycle accident the same year.

Why is the finding of such a synchronicity subjectively meaningful to a reunited pair? There are various reasons. Primarily, the connections validate the individual: There is someone else in the world designed a lot like me who was aware of my existence. I am OK after all.

For a person who encounters rejection or death at the end of a search, synchronicities take on additional importance. If there is to be no continuing relationship, these tidbits may be all one has. Whether perceived as negative or positive, the truth gives freedom to integrate and make choices.

Closed adoption practice told us, "You must get on with your life and pretend other family members do not exist and are not longing for you. You must never ask questions about their names, location, activities, or welfare; even if you do, no one will give you the answers. There is no need for you to know such things as dates of marriage, childbirth, death, and onset of medical problems. You will survive without opportunity to express love, to understand your genetic idiosyncracies, and to confirm your history and your selfhood." I believe the adoption-separated genetic family system has such a need for information (either consciously or unconsciously) that the transcendent Creator, or the laws of the universe, or the human mind makes a supernatural or anomalistic psychological attempt to fill it.

Do not be surprised when such sparks of "knowing" light your way during search and relationship-weaving, giving backward glimpses of connection in the tapestry of a hazy past. Whether you are an adopted person, adoptive parent, or birth parent—I am smiling just to think of what you may discover.

LaVonne Stiffler, DPhil, NCC, is a reunited birth mother who writes and trains in search/reunion issues, communication, and sibling relationships. Her book, Synchronicity and Reunion: The Genetic Connection of Adoptees and Birthparents has an 11-page bibliography. LaVonne lives in Conroe, TX and invites e-mail (103605.2754@compuserve.com).