



# Broken record

SAM JONES HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR TWO DECADES FOR THE SON SHE GAVE UP. HE'D BEEN SEARCHING TOO. THE PROBLEM? A GLITCH IN PAPERWORK



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n her 50th birthday in 2009, Sam Jones blew out the candles and wished for the same thing she'd been wishing for the past two decades: to find the son she had given up for adoption more than three decades earlier.

The following year, Jones' birthday present came early. The phone rang while she was watching TV with her younger son, Michael, then 16. When the female voice on the other end asked if she was speaking to the same Sam Jones who had given birth to a baby boy 33 years earlier in a Toronto hospital, Jones says the room started to spin.

"Turns out it was my son's wife. He had actually found me!"

Fifteen years prior, the year her son turned 18, Jones had registered with Ontario's Adoption Disclosure Register hoping he would do the same. As years passed and nothing happened, Jones wondered if her son didn't know he was adopted — or knew and hated her. "Or worse, was maybe dead." Not a day went by without her thinking about him — and wondering.

What Jones didn't know was that her son was looking for her. With encouragement from his adoptive mother, Jamie Low had been searching for years, but there was a serious roadblock: At the time of his adoption, someone had copied the wrong name for his birth mother on the paperwork, which meant Low spent more than a decade looking for the wrong woman.

When the Ontario government opened its adoption records in 2009 in response to new legislation, Low was finally able to get a copy of his original birth certificate. He was irritated to realize he'd spent years chasing a ghost. When he finally got a lead on his birth mom's location, barely 45 minutes away from his own home in Toronto, he asked his wife to make the call.

JULIA BRECKENREID

BY KATHY DOBSON



After establishing she was speaking to the correct Sam Jones, Low's wife passed him the phone. When he said hello, Jones asked a simple question: "What took you so long?"

Jones asked if they could add each other on Facebook. "He told me I'd be looking at a profile picture of a six-foot-one bald guy with tattoos, which I found funny because, for some reason, that didn't surprise me." Jones says she saw the resemblance immediately. "It's strange...when you have a child out there somewhere, you look at people and wonder, If I passed him in the street would there be something to make me take a second look? Would I have known him?"

A week later, Jones and Low met face to face. "The first time I saw him I was so nervous, I'm lucky I didn't pass out," Jones admits. "I remember being afraid to look at him at first and kind of averted my eyes until he got inside the door. It was weird." When she got the nerve to actually meet his gaze, Jones was pleased to see Low shared her distinctive eyes. "I do make pretty babies," she says with a grin.

Seconds later, they had their arms around each other. Once they were able to let go, Low handed Jones a bouquet of flowers. Within the hour, Low asked if he could call her Mom, something Jones hadn't even allowed herself to hope for. "I had been afraid of disappointing him. That made me nervous. Even how I looked. I was afraid he'd ask questions and I'd give stupid answers," she admits. "Although one of the first things he said to me on the phone was that he didn't blame me or harbour any resentment, I'd been preparing for that for 33 years...so it was hard to take his word."

Low had always known his birth mom was a teen when he was born and, if anything, felt only sympathy

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about what a difficult time she must have had. Jones admits it was a terrible period in her young life. She recalls the intense pain of labour and how hard it had been to wake up alone in a hospital room after a C-section. "The nurses at the hospital told me it would be easier," explains Jones, "if I just didn't see him at all. If I never held him."

A kind case worker, who seemed to take pity on the despondent teen, quietly passed Jones a Polaroid of her newborn son. Along with a yellow knitted baby blanket, a gift from Jones' grandmother, the single photograph would be the only tangible proof that she had ever given birth and provided the only link to her son.

Two months after reuniting with her son, Jones decided to get involved with what she calls "adoptee issues." Concerned there may be others like her who don't realize someone is looking for them, Jones joined two online support groups, Origins Canada and the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers (CCNM), a lobby group whose mandate is to be a voice for mothers who have given up children in Canada for adoption.

After posting her own story on [ccnm-mothers.ca](http://ccnm-mothers.ca), Jones began hearing from adoptees desperate to connect with their birth mothers. Now intimately familiar with Canada's adoption laws and administrative requirements, she's able to offer advice and has played a role in reuniting half a

dozen adoptees with their birth mothers. "I'd say that five out of six have resulted in incredible stories: Everyone is thrilled, several have met in person and are on the way to establishing family relationships, and the others have firm plans to meet soon," says Jones. In only one case, the parent eventually decided he didn't want to reconnect with his birth child. But even then, "the son did find many siblings and has travelled from Ohio to Newfoundland to spend time with one brother."

In another case, Jones' involvement with the CCNM led her to help a New Yorker discover his Canadian roots. Brian Comeau, who was given up at birth and adopted when he was three, had been searching for his birth parents for more than 12 years when he decided to join the CCNM. "I came across the website by chance and wasn't sure I belonged because it's mostly for mothers," he explains. "But in the end, it was where I was connected with perhaps the most important person in my life: Sam Jones. It was Sam who coached me and quite frankly did the majority of the work, helping me take the right steps in obtaining my mother's identity."

Jones admits to shedding a few tears after Comeau sent her photos of his Canadian passport and of him fishing on his stepdad's scallop boat in Nova Scotia on New Year's Day. "How could I not be absolutely thrilled for him?"

As for her own reunion, Jones says part of her always felt things would work out. "People like to call it a 'reconnection,' but I believe the connection was never really broken," she says.

"The genetic bond, the prenatal familiarity — no amount of time or distance can break that. Regardless of what we've done, where we've been or who's been in our lives, we have always been mother and child." **M**