

I WAS ABANDONED IN A PHONE BOX

Penny Young was left in a shopping bag as a new-born baby in a London phone box.

Now 34, she longs to meet the mother who dumped her?

Written by: Angela Carless, UK

Mum dumped me in a phone box

Penny was just two hours old when she was found in a carrier bag in north London. Three decades later she's desperate to find the woman who abandoned her...

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Every year on her birthday Penny Young spends the day lost in thought wondering about her mother. Not the devoted mum Yvonne, 69, she grew up with after being adopted as a baby. But the real mum who gave birth to her and then abandoned her in a telephone box in Holloway, North London.

Penny was just hours old when she was found by a little girl in a tartan shopping bag on the cold stone floor of a phone kiosk on 28 March 1971. She was wrapped in pajama bottoms, a mini skirt and two towels.

The only clue to who had abandoned her was the handful of long, blonde hair baby Penny gripped tightly in her little hand.

Although two women - one in her 20s, the other in her 40s - had been spotted with the tartan bag earlier that day, they never answered a police appeal to come forward.

I was taken to the Whittington Hospital, London where I was named Emma Jean Esther after the nurses who cared for me, says Penny, an office worker. But I've never known any real names of my birth family. I've never met any blood relatives. My past has always been a mystery.

Penny, who lives in south-east London, was adopted by the Young family at five-months-old and grew up in a huge old mansion in the Lake District which was renovated by her adoptive father Geoff, who recently died aged 73.

When I was a little girl Mum had told me this story about how she went to a shop with racks of babies and chose me, says Penny. It made me feel so special and it was only at 13 she told me that I had been an abandoned baby - a foundling. It came up in conversation one day when I said I wondered who my real father was.

I was fascinated and quite pleased I had been left in a phone box which gave me shelter. I believe I must have grabbed my mum's long blonde hair as she placed me on the floor. I'm glad I know what colouring she was and wonder if she was a Scandinavian au pair.

When Penny was adopted her name was changed to Penelope Anne Young. She always loved children and after leaving school at 17, she became a nanny.

Working with babies made me feel very maternal, says Penny. I wondered how anyone could leave an innocent child and whenever I saw a story about an abandoned baby I would always cry.

At 23 Penny became engaged to Andy, 29, a coffee importer. They planned to start a family as soon as they married. But they never got that far. After two years of being with Andy, Penny met Caroline, 30, a project manager, through mutual friends. It was love at first sight.

Being with Andy never did feel right, says Penny. He was more like a friend than a partner. There was no passion, I wasn't really in love with him. I thought it was because he was the wrong man, not because he was the wrong gender. But it was only when I met Caroline in March 1997 that I realized what true love was.

I was at a birthday party when she walked in and that was it. I was so tongue-tied, I couldn't even speak to her, I could not believe how I was feeling.

Caroline felt it too. Even though I'd had many boyfriends, I've always known that I was gay, she says. When I met Penny it knocked me for six. Though I knew she was engaged, she didn't seem to be in love with her fiancée. I didn't feel as if I was breaking anything up.?

Over the next few weeks Penny and Caroline met again through friends. As they became closer, Penny ended her engagement and she and Caroline have now been a couple for eight years. They would love to have a family together.

Having been adopted I know what a wonderful thing it is to give a child a loving home and Caroline and I could do that. But because I was abandoned and have no blood relatives, I am desperate to have a baby myself. I want to know what it feels like to be pregnant, to give birth and to keep my child. Ideally, I'd like to be able to adopt and have a child myself via donor insemination. It's not so easy in a gay relationship.

But I do desperately want to be a mum somehow. I used to feel special because I was chosen by my adoptive mum rather than because I was left by my birth mother, adds Penny.

But as I get older, I am more affected by being left part, then by being picked. I've never felt angry about being abandoned. I have just felt very sorry for my real mum and worried for her. She must have been desperate to leave me.

I'd love to get to know her, my birth-father and brothers and sisters too. There's a missing link I want to solve before having my own kids. If I don't succeed, at least I will have tried.

There must be someone out there who knows something. If I ever find my natural mum, I just want to hug her and tell her I love her. Then I would cry my eyes out. I forgive her for leaving me, I just want her to come back?

**For information on Abandoned Individuals or more stories like these,
please visit The Keall Foundation.**

www.keallfoundation.com

Also note that Ms. Angela Carless always seeks UK foundlings for future stories.

**Please contact Janet Keall at media@keallfoundation.com or 604-786-8581
to connect with Angela. Serious interest only, please.**