

I was born August 21, 1973 in Little Rock, Arkansas. My name at birth was Amanda. I was released from the hospital into foster care in Marion, Arkansas (near Memphis). On October 31, 1973 my parents got the call telling them there was a little girl available that they might be interested in. They went to Little Rock the next day to see a picture and to decide if they wanted to proceed. At that meeting with DHS they told them they didn't want to see any identifying information to protect everyone. My parents drove to Marion on November 6, 1973 to pick up their daughter - not much time to prepare! My dad had hurt his back and couldn't hold me, but it's documented that he knew I was the one for them.

I was raised in Searcy, Arkansas as Kelley Jean Spurlock, an only child. I often questioned my parents as to why they wouldn't get a brother or sister for me. I'm told I often questioned why I didn't look like my mom, which was difficult for my mom. However, I don't remember a time where I did not know that I was adopted.

Fast forward to 1995, I met my husband at Harding University and we had set a date for May 20, 1995. I decided at that time to request my non-identifying information to see if there were any glaring health problems that I should be aware of. There was a delay in the processing of my request, my wedding day came and went. We moved to Dallas, Texas after college. I received a piece of forwarded certified mail in September of 1996.

What I read next made me even more thankful for my parents who chose to adopt me. My biological mother was reportedly 19 or 20 years old. She had graduated from high school and wanted to serve in the armed forces. It had some light information about her - she liked to swim, was a baptist, worked as a store clerk. She had a heart murmur and wore glasses, nothing serious - great. Move to her family - she had a sister and two brothers. Her dad died at age 45 from either a heart attack or gunshot wounds - WHAT?! It continued with her mother who died at age 39 from stab wounds. I quickly learned that my maternal grandparents didn't live long enough to have much medical history. Very little was said about my biological father except that he was also adopted, was 6'4" and in prison for unknown reasons. At this point, I was very proud of my mother because she got out of this awful situation - all kinds of stories going through my mind, including "Did my father stab my grandmother and was now in prison?"! Again, this confirmed that I was in the right place. I had great respect that she gave me a better life. I only hoped that achieved the goals that she wanted.

The big question for most of my adult life has been if I had siblings. I was raised as an only child, but wanted to know what it felt like to have brothers or sisters! After I reached my 30th birthday, birthdays started getting very emotional for me. Every year I reflected on whether or not my biological mother thinks about me or even remembers. There were usually tears. By this time I have two children of my own, who look like me! Something I have never experienced before. Add to the mix a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis at age 28. While this has been and still is managed well, I worry about my children and their future. Around this time, my curiosity has peaked. I do not want to find my parents, but I desperately want to find out if I have siblings. My job takes me out of town occasionally. When I travel alone, I find myself online looking through

adoption registries just to see what is out there. I put my name out there with interest in locating brothers or sisters.

Jump forward to the fall of 2012. I get the strangest e-mail from a lady named Nancy on my lunch hour. She wanted to know if I was sure about my birth date. Yes, I think. . . Nancy's sister had a baby in the same hospital, but on July 7th. Am I really a month and a half closer to 40 than I thought?! We exchange pictures. Oh my goodness, I kind of look like this lady. I could really see myself in her daughter Tracee! Do I have a sister?! Nancy had worked with a search angel trying to help locate her niece. . .or nephew. Her sister thought she had a girl, but remembers a nurse telling her she had a boy. At this point, Nancy had researched and ordered a DNA kit, which I agreed to take. Unfortunately, her source didn't recommend an autosomal kit. After the kit arrived, I swabbed my cheek and mailed it off. Oh, did I mention the potential birth mother was in the Army?! While waiting on the results, I noticed on Facebook a new friend of Nancy's named Chancy, a man. Some of the comments gave me a pretty big hint that they thought he might be her nephew. I asked Nancy what was going on, she explained that her sister could have had twins! What?! Not just a sister, but a twin brother?! This was getting exciting. After adding another kit to our comparison, Chancy and I became friends. We were even comparing our junior high pictures, and could see similarities. This was all between Thanksgiving & Christmas, 2012. Every day, I am checking the website for results.

I had another trip scheduled for work. It was January 2013 and had just arrived in my hotel room, alone. The results were in. Chancy was a match and I was not. The tears came and came and came. To this day, I am very close to Nancy, Tracee, and Nancy's sister Tammy. I still haven't communicated with the sister who could have been my biological mother. In my efforts to research the ways the DNA test MUST be wrong, I discovered the world of autosomal DNA. The one test offered by www.23andme.com was especially intriguing because it not only would give me my medical information, but could also tell me what my heritage was! I've never been able to say that my ancestors were from England, until now.

I ordered my first kit from 23 and me. When I first got my results, I was in awe! I had over 900 pages of cousins! Cousins who shared genetics with me! I connected with a few, but couldn't answer any of their questions, because I was adopted. I did have this one intriguing match who appeared to be a first or second cousin, or somewhere in between. This was a man, but that is all I knew because he was a private match. Talk about frustrating! It taunted me every time I would log in! I continued to get matches and would always invite them to share genomes. I learned about the group DNA Adoption on Yahoo and requested to join. I just watched for awhile and then decided to take their advice and transfer my raw data to www.ftdna.com This was another testing company which allowed you to upload your results for a discounted price. I was hooked. While waiting on those results, I kept reading that you should "fish in all 3 ponds" if you can! Well, why not?! It's just another \$100! So I order the test kit from Ancestry DNA.

So I get a match on 23andme who is an adoptee. She shared genomes right away and we messaged back and forth. Her name was Amy. I encouraged Amy to join the Yahoo group that I was learning so much from! Her response? I'm already on there! We laughed and then it became our mission to see how we were connected. By the way, we are still working on that.

I get my Ancestry DNA results and have a 2nd cousin match! Her name is Melissa and she lives in New York City. I can tell from her trees that she is a fan of genealogy, but I see no Arkansas connections. We e-mailed back and forth, but she couldn't figure out a connection. I was determined. . .this was so close, and I knew her name!

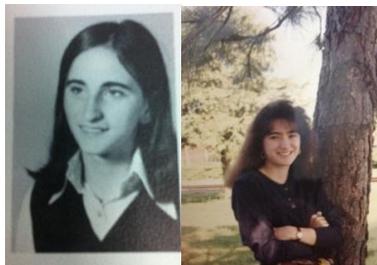
August 21, 2013 arrives. My 40th birthday. I made it ALMOST all day without having a breakdown! Almost. I received a message on Facebook from a friend who used to work with my mother. She told me that my mom was suspicious that I was looking for biological family members. What have I done? The tears start coming and they don't stop until my eyes are swollen shut. I knew I had to talk to my mom. My biggest fear has been hurting my parents. My loving parents who have given me a wonderful life, my life. If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't have grown up here, gone to Harding and met my husband. If I hadn't met my husband, I wouldn't have my amazing kids! It was time. I went to bed and woke up with the post breakdown headache and swollen eyes. I went to work, which is about a mile from my parent's house. My plan was to go at lunch because I couldn't cry on my lunch hour - I had to go back to work! I realized I had never shown her my non-identifying information. All this time, I had been working with Diane sorting through all of my DNA relatives. We had identified lots of common relatives, but WAY back in time. I called my mom and asked if she was at home, and could I come over. She was. My heart was racing, but I drove to their house.

I told her I knew she was suspicious that I was looking. I told her I was not looking for new parents, just curious about where I came from. She totally understood. It was one of the best conversations I can remember having. She was shocked at the information I had about my past. We started talking about that visit to DHS, the one where they didn't want to see any identifying information. She remembered that my name was not crossed out on one document, it had my name. I said, "Amanda, right?" She answered, "Yes, Amanda Brock". . .I had a last name! Where had this been all my life? We continued our visit and I went back to work, without tears!

The group on DNA adoption had suggested I request new non-identifying information as sometimes they are interpreted differently, and can sometimes provide additional clues. I did this and was told I should have it before September, that was Diane's goal. To figure everything out before the new info arrived! I had a meeting when I got back, but quickly texted Diane that I had new information. My last name! I went to my meeting, came back to my office 45 minutes later with several missed calls and text messages from Diane. She and Marianne (queen of Google) had found my biological family! After some confusion between the two sisters, we learned that my biological mother was Kathryn Carey Brock. She passed away in June, 1996. It was very surreal at first and then it hit me that weekend. I had to mourn the fact that I would never meet her. But

she was a ghost, in the sense that I couldn't find ANYTHING online about her. No obituary, no stories, no picture. I needed a picture.

Meet search angel Stephanie! Stephanie lived about 30 minutes from the little town Kathryn grew up in. She offered to drive to the high school to see what she could find. I think Stephanie talked to everyone in the town of Blytheville, Arkansas! And then I get a text with a picture of my mother's senior picture. It was like looking in a mirror. Seeing this picture gave me closure. I knew I wouldn't meet her, but I also knew I looked like someone.



Kathryn (went by Katy) did enlist in the Army and did very well. Katy did NOT have any other children. I heard initially that she died from a heart attack at 42 years old, eye opening. I now have a cardiologist and a diagnosis of a healthy heart. I would later learn that she was in a terrible auto accident in Germany, which she did recover from, but suffered from congestive heart failure which ultimately took her life.

The week after all of this happened, I logged into my 23andme account. Guess what. .my mystery 1st-2nd cousin had accepted my sharing request! He apologized because he doesn't get on very often. His wife gave him the test as a gift. He, by the way, is the uncle of my Ancestry match, Melissa! He knew I was in Arkansas. He was in Ohio. He remembered one uncle that he had who had moved to Fort Smith, Arkansas with his wife. They had 3 sons (Frank, Robert & Marvin Russell), but he also remembered that he left his wife and 3 boys and returned to Ohio somewhere around 1950. I started researching this family. The youngest of the 3 was about 5 years too old to be the right age, but Katy could have lied, or not even known. I dig a little further and find he has three daughters and a son. Two of which live 20 minutes from me! Could I have four siblings?!

I finally make contact with one of the daughters, Elaine. These four children were from three different mothers. She told me anything was possible. Elaine agreed to meet me. After we talked, she agreed to a DNA test. And now the waiting begins.



When the results finally came in, we were not sisters. But we WERE related. Somewhere between a 1st & 2nd cousin. Hmm...here we go. Elaine told me that her dad had 2 brothers, one died at 10 years old and the other was still living. He was about 5 or 6 years older than her dad! This didn't fit, but you never know. His name is Frank, but he goes by Spyder. Spyder is a former Orange County, California Hell's Angels President. Motorcycle royalty was in my future! Something just didn't feel right.

January 2014 - I realize I haven't gotten that non-identifying information which I was supposed to receive by September! I called to check and it had been put in the wrong pile. Of course it had, why wouldn't it happen to me? She assured me I would be the next on her list. She kept her promise and I got my updated information. No big changes, but she did have more details. I learned that my maternal grandfather did in fact die from both complications of gunshot wounds (robbed at gunpoint) and a heart attack. My maternal grandmother, had a tragic death. She was stabbed multiple times in her St. Louis, Missouri apartment and left for dead. Both deaths were before I was born. It still said my biological father was adopted and confirmed the age.

Marvin & Spyder weren't adopted. I sent my new information to Diane & Marianne. The Google queen started researching some of the clues about why my biological father was in prison! While some big newspapers are not archived online, for some reason The Blytheville Courier is! She first found an article that fit, except he couldn't have dated my mother for the length of time my information stated because he had been in prison before. He was also deceased. Marianne is the one who discovered Katy had passed and she was feeling terrible about this. Something just didn't fit. We kept searching the Blytheville Courier and I found an article that did fit. The time fit, April 1973, the charges weren't as frightening as the first. Whew! Marianne took the name, Bruce Gann, and ran with it. She found something on the Topix website where old classmates were wondering whatever happened to him. Someone mentioned that he was adopted! Ding Ding!

After more research, we learned he had a sister, Marla, also adopted who had used a search angel and found her biological family. I felt like this might be the right avenue for contact. I e-mailed Marla and basically told her I thought I might be related to her brother, Bruce. She immediately replied with, "OMG - I have tried to get him to post his information, but he won't! How do you think you are related?". I asked if I could call her. She had NO idea he had a child. In fact, they didn't think he could! He loved her kids. After all of this sunk in, she called me back. Their mom is still living and just knew he would have told them. I sent my information along with pictures. Marla immediately recognized Katy. She was grateful I contacted her because he is very emotional. She was going to break the news to Bruce.

He came to her house on Saturday. She texted me when he arrived and I was a nervous wreck! There were tears, lots of tears. He said he dated Katy, she told him she was pregnant, but he didn't believe her. . .He called me the next day, which was very emotional. He wanted to make sure I was happy. He agreed to a DNA test to

confirm. The test was ordered on January 11, 2014. When they received the test back at Family Tree DNA, the projected date for completion was April 3rd, yes APRIL 3rd. Patience is not a strength of mine. We have talked a few times on the phone, but I didn't want to meet until we knew for sure.

Friday, February 28th. I receive an e-mail from Family Tree DNA that my results are ready. I log in to Bruce's kit, and he has a parent-child match with me, Kelley Burton. Surreal. He also has my cousin Elaine as a possible niece. . .AND Amy as a 2nd-3rd cousin! You don't know this, but Amy & I have tried to find out how we are connected through what seems like every match at every company!



My daughter Kamryn/Bruce

To take this a step further, Bruce never searched for his biological family. Through DNA, I know his father was also Francis Russell and he is a half-brother of Marvin & Spyder. I have his paternal tree built because of the encouragement of those in this group. Amy is related to Bruce through his mother and we are close to finally figuring out our connection.

Bruce has never had children of his own. I remain an only child in all three families.

My advice:

- * Don't give up
- * Get your non-identifying information
- * Test with all 3 companies
- * Absorb all you can from these amazing search angels
- * Don't be afraid to work!