

Chapter Twenty-Two: Francis and Who?

***August 10, 1988. Alexander Maxim Lamoureux, born at Methodist Hospital, Peoria, IL.
January 22, 1990. Samantha Rose Lamoureux born at Methodist Hospital, Peoria, IL.***

February, 1990. 3207 N. Biltmore Ave. Peoria IL.

“Hi Mom. Of course, I can talk to you for a minute. In fact, I can talk with you as long as you want. No Cheryl’s not here, she’s at work. I’m watching Alex and ignoring a basketball game that I don’t really care about on TV. Gawd I hate the *Bulls*. What’s up?”

“Edward, I received a call from a woman in Hartford Connecticut and after speaking with her for some time I’m convinced that she is your birth mother. If you want I can tell you what she said to me and what she told me about her and about you. But I don’t want to upset you; she didn’t want to bother you so I’ll not say a word if you prefer.”

“Wow. Well, since finding out about her name before the wedding, I’ve wondered a little bit more about her than I did before. Go ahead and tell me what she said to you. Before you do though, are you okay with it? Is this upsetting to you?”

“Oh no, we had a wonderful talk. I was so happy that she contacted me first so that I could talk with her. In fact, am going to call her and talk with her again as soon as we hang up. She was *so* happy to find you and to find out that you are alright and that you’ve had a good life. We cried on the phone but we are both very happy over it.”

“Okay then if it’s okay with you it’s ok with me. Shoot Luke.”

“Well, you know that her name is Claudette. She said that she has been looking for you since the late 60s. She’s 53 years old now. She told me that your father was 10 years older than her and that she worked in his father’s shop. She said that she was 17 years old when

you were born and that she was sent to a home for unwed mothers for almost two years. She said that she didn't sign the adoption papers; her mother signed her name for her. She also said that she gave birth to nine children after you were adopted, had a divorce and raised some of the children by herself. Her former husband has passed away. She told me that her mother is still living. Claudette told me that she has Crohn's disease but that she doesn't think that you would get it, especially if you haven't already had symptoms. She lives in Enfield Connecticut and she gave me her address and phone number."

"Hang on and I'll get something to write with so you can give me those. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Ok. Got it. Nine half-siblings! Nine! Jesus, I kind of don't know what to say."

"Well that proves there is a first time for everything! And don't curse."

"Opps, ok. When you talk with her again please tell her that I will write to her. I think it's best that we keep to letters until I can wrap my head around this. That's quite a news blast Evangeline. Are you sure you're okay with this?"

"Oh yes. It's really fine with me. I know that you love me and that you loved your Dad."

"Yup. Okay, thanks for the call and hang in there with this. I'll talk with Cheryl when she gets home from work and will probably call you back in the next couple of days. Maybe I'll have a better idea what to say about this then. You can tell Claudette that I'm glad to hear from her and that I'll write to her soon. Thanks for the call Mom. And don't forget how much I love you. Ok, talk to you soon. Bye now."

Nine half-siblings. *Holy shit!*

Birth medical report, 9-11-53

Not long after moving to Peoria, I let Ann Raney know that we'd arrived and nailed down the details of her current situation. She was living in Chicago with her husband; they'd both been in school at the University of Chicago; he for a Ph. D. while Ann finished an M.A. She had planned to work on a Ph. D., then decided to go into private counseling practice instead. Toward the end of their degree work, both got jobs. Ann began a career in the counseling profession; her husband was a fund-raiser.

After Cheryl and I settled into housing and jobs, during the years in Peoria before we began having children, I made a couple of trips to Chicago to see Ann and her husband. Ann did a whale of a job explaining the odd circumstances, because her husband took me in as a friend and treated me kindly. Ann and I made explicit and repeated explanations to our spouses that we had never engaged in sexual intercourse and that we now had no romantic intentions toward each other. Ann and I felt the need to be friends but if anything about the situation bothered either of our spouses, they should speak up and we'd break off our contact immediately. That information and pledge appeared to assure both spouses and neither was concerned; both felt secure in their

marriages. Eventually, Ann and her husband came to Peoria for a weekend visit and the four of us had a nice time chatting, playing board games, and taking in the Peoria sights. Over the years, I made infrequent trips north to visit my friends.

I contacted Ann after Mom's call and asked her if she'd be willing to serve as a go-between for communication from Claudette. I suggested that I'd give Ann's name and address to Claudette; Claudette and I would send mail to Ann who would send Claudette's letters to me. She'd send my letters to Claudette after repackaging them with her return address instead of mine. This procedure worked to conceal my location. This all took place before the Internet provided easy modes of discovery about people and places. Ann expressed great surprise over the contact from my birth mother and was more than willing to serve in this special role. I maintained the indirect channel for a little over six months, after which, I called Claudette, apologized for the extra trouble, and gave her my address and phone number.

March 27, 1990

Mrs. Claudette Cyr
9 E. Thistle Lane
Enfield, Conn. 06082

Dear Claudette,

I hope that this letter finds you well.

As mom told you, I have known that I was adopted for as long as I can remember. When I was a very young boy I could hardly wait until I turned 18. I had been told that was the age at which I could return to Hartford and find out about my parents. I'm not sure when I stopped feeling that I should pursue that information. But by the time I reached high school, I realized that my boyhood plans were no longer as important to me as they once had been.

From adolescence, I fully appreciated that my parents were Roger and Evangeline Lamoureux and searching for my "real" mother and father might not accomplish much. I lost interest in my biological parents because I already knew all I needed to know about

loving parents. Further I did not know that you cared to find me—there was an equally good chance that my birth was something that you wanted to put behind you. Had you decided that one “mistake” was enough and gone on to build a life without recognition of past circumstances, my entry would have been quite intrusive. The fact that you have found me, then, is momentous, but problematic.

When Mom and Dad adopted me, they were promised that this would not occur. Although no one could control all the relevant factors, the state and the church made an agreement with them that their rights to privacy and parenthood would not be compromised in the future. That compact has been modified by your action. As you know my father is dead. However, Evangeline lives half-a-country apart from me and I’m unable to fully assess the effect this contact has had upon her. I’m concerned for her and protective of her.

I have asked her to not serve as a go-between for you in contact with me. I do not want her involved in this matter other than as I speak with her about it. I would very much appreciate your help in this. Simply put, I will not further risk her feelings over this. Please do not contact her again unless she specifically asks you to do so.

As for me, the realization that my birth mother is alive and well and that I have step-siblings is an awesome thing. Given the information mom relayed, I believe your intentions to be constructive. I am, however, not sure what either of us has to gain from contact with each other. I already have a mother and a mother-in-law, both of whom provide motherly and grandmotherly influences in our lives. You have nine children and six grandchildren—taken together they must generate loads of responsibility. I was raised as an only child; a fact which has good and bad sides but which I have long ago gotten used to. The thought of nine genetically similar others is quite mind-boggling. However, genetics does not provide material for “getting to know one another”— only life history does that.

In short, I do not know where I want our contact to lead. But I’m sure that I’m not headed toward a “family reunion” of the sort the popular press might find interesting. As mom mentioned to you, we are not very well off financially (she also mentioned that as something which you and I may share in common). My faculty position is relatively secure but, at this early point in my career, not financially rewarding. We barely make ends meet. Extensive travel and/or phone usage is simply out of the question as we don’t have the funds.

In this instance, however, I think the shortcomings are fortunate as they may prevent us both from hasty action. My preference is that we use the mail as the best venue for our contact—this form of communication will give me much needed time to consider and adjust. Further I may be able to provide you with all that you need. We can exchange information and pictures, if you like. I prefer the knowledge of my exact whereabouts remain protected at this time. You may address mail to me in care of the return address listed (on the envelope and the inserted card). Please do not contact me through mom or attempt to locate me.

I hope that you find this offer acceptable. I know that this letter might read as somewhat “harsh.” Please don’t misunderstand that as a sign of disrespect or disliking. I

never had negative feelings toward you nor toward your having to give me up for adoption. Now that I learned that you have long been interested in my well-being, I'm very aware of how bad you must've felt (and perhaps, continue to feel) about giving me up.

Allow me to close by commenting as to that aspect: If you feel guilty over letting me go, or worried that I did not benefit from your decision, or uncertain as to how it all worked out—perish the thoughts. I was raised by two of the most wonderful people in the world. I have had a blessed life. You gave me a healthy start and a strong constitution and your giving me up for adoption was the best thing that ever happened to me and to two of the people I love best in life. I'm sure you were a wonderful mother to your nine children. Know that you were also a wonderful mother to me through actions which, though difficult for you, served me well.

Peace

Edward Lee I am yours

April 8, 1990

Dear Edward,

I received your letter last week and words can never express how wonderful it is to hear that you have had a good life. I thank God for letting me live long enough to hear from you that you have had a happy and productive life. These years were long and painful worrying that you might have been mistreated or abused. Now I can finally put my fears to rest. I thank your parents for being good to you.

Edward, I realize that it may not be important to know the reasons why you were put up for adoption. I have to tell you in order to put all those painful years behind me. What matters is I never wanted to “give you up.” I was just a young girl of 16. At the time, children were not allowed to make their own decisions. Those decisions are made for me. When I found myself pregnant with you, I was shoved away into a convent for 18 long months. (The nine months I was pregnant and nine more months after you were born.) I was never even allowed to read the adoption papers. They told me to sign the papers and that I would be given time to make up my mind because my mother had not signed them yet. Right after I signed the papers the adoption service told me that my mom had signed them two weeks prior. My whole life I have never known what those papers contained in them. I have not forgiven my Mom for pulling a dirty trick like that on me, and I probably never will. At least now, the pain I endured was not in vain. I can go on with my life feeling good for you.

Edward, my searching for you was not meant to cause any of you pain or problems. I meant no harm, and I apologize if I did cause harm. When I was given three names, I think I went into shock. It was as if God was here in my house telling me, “now you have his name, go find him”. I did not know if you are Roger or Edward; Evangeline

was my only link to you. I know that it must've been a great shock to her on the phone, and again, I apologize to her for my hasty actions.

You never have to worry about my trying to locate you. Your life is yours, my life is mine. I will not keep in touch with your Mom, as you asked, unless she would want to do so. What I feel for you in my heart can never be erased through adoption. I had you and I love you. Your little face will always remain in my memory. And as an adult, you are a very handsome man.

I will always be grateful to your Mom for telling me the truth on the phone. She could've turned me away and my search for you would have been never ending.

As you know, I do have a large family and yes, I am quite busy. All my children are very happy that at long last I can be happy for you. Now if I speak of you and cry, they will be tears of joy.

Edward, I agree with you. I also know that the mail is the best way for us to keep in touch. Maybe there will be a day in our futures when we will want to visit with each other.

I want to thank you for the pictures. You have a beautiful family. Take care of them and yourself. You'll always be in my heart. True, I have five sons, but you will always be my first-born.

In closing, if I may ask a favor of you—could you send some pictures of yourself as a baby and your teen years?

May God take care of you and your family. I wish you well.

Claudette

PS. I will send a photo of myself in the near future.

This is not the first image, of herself, that Claudette sent. Rather, it is the picture of her that I have that is closest to her age at my birth. It's not really very close—sixteen years and nine children later. Yet, just look at her. Marie Claudette Beaulieu Cyr, circa. 1969



After less than a year of limited, tag-team-contact with Claudette, I cancelled the constraints and began normal communication including mail to our home and phone calls. That I had nothing to be concerned about over her contact became clear. We exchanged letters, talked on the phone, and I sent pictures of my youth and news about our growing, young, family. Claudette sent details about her many children and grandchildren as well as a few images.

I began looking for a way to visit Connecticut so that I could meet her and, perhaps, some of the family members. Given that our budget was stretched to the limit most of the time, I was not sanguine as to how the trip could happen. Soon, however, a modus operandi emerged. It was a little hinky, but was legal despite not being totally ethical. Normally, I don't cut morality corners; in this case, I was highly motivated.

Although my professional life at Bradley was, generally, moving in the right direction, I dipped in and out of job searches through 2010. At one point, during the fall of 1997, I decided to use the job search process as a way to meet Claudette and other family members. I applied for a job as an assistant professor (I was then still an untenured assistant professor at Bradley) in the Department of Communication at Central Connecticut State University. CCSU is in New Britain, just over 10 miles from Hartford (where many Cyr/Beaulieu family members lived) and 30 miles from Claudette's residence in Enfield. I was qualified for the job, although its focus was far from the "center" of my expertise. The job was the sort that one might apply for if wanting to "bail" from current employment. I did not. Nevertheless, I successfully navigated the preliminary application steps and was invited for an on-campus interview. This meant that CCSU paid airfare, hotel, and meal costs for the trip.

The interview went smoothly enough. It was pretty quickly apparent to all parties that, although I was a solid candidate for the job, I was not a perfect fit for their needs. I left campus, after my interview day, with the pretty clear sense that I would not be offered the job. However, throughout the process, Cheryl and I strongly considered taking the job if offered. The chance to spend time with my birth mother and half-siblings had its appeal. Further, our children were old enough that we felt exposing them to east-coast history and lifestyle could result in strongly

positive experiences for their upbringing. We were neither relieved nor pleased when I was not chosen. In that sense, the application had not been totally false. I might well have taken the job had it been offered. It was not offered, leaving us neither a decision nor move to make. The dual-purpose trip, however, produced an auspicious outcome, family-wise.

After completing my interview day, Renée and her then husband Steven Bordeau fetched me from campus and provided transportation to, and orientation for, the evening's activities. Renée is my youngest birth-sibling; she was thirty to my forty-four in 1997. She is also my closest socio-cultural match across both birth families and twelve half-siblings. Renée is an Army veteran, is college and graduate school educated, and is professionally trained as a dietician. All of my other birth-siblings are blue-collar workers. While Steve and I connected over sports talk, Renée eased me into the "reunion" planned for the evening. They took me to a classic Italian Pizza & Sandwich shop for a snack, drove me around the area a bit and prepared me with names and relationships for the people that I'd meet that evening.

The event took place at the "New Deal," a restaurant that was then at 631 S. Quaker Lane in West Hartford. There was, of course, more than a little social and culture shock ready-at-hand. After all, the bad penny, lost over four decades back, was returning and no one knew quite what to make of it. Given the over-all size of the Cyr/Beaulieu family, the fact that a relatively modest number showed up was a relief. My hands were full sorting out names of, and feelings about, the nine birth family members who attended; more would have been over-whelming.

My birth mother, Claudette Cyr, was joined by two of her sisters and their mates. Renée (and husband Steve) and I were joined by one of our brothers (and his wife) and one of our sisters.

The evening was emotionally engaging, challenging, fulfilling, fun, memorable; it easily validated my decision to make the trip. Without much common-ground and virtually no familiarity, there were lots of introductions, clarifications, and descriptions of family details. Meeting Claudette, my birth mother, was of course, the highlight; adding three siblings was icing on the cake. One episode stands out in particular relief.



*Claudette
Cyr, fall
1987*

Not long after sharing introduction, hugs, and handshakes all around, we sat down at a long, rectangular table, for dinner. I kept Renée at my side as she was eager to provide clarifications and fill-in as needed. Even before the breadsticks hit the table, I was faced with a “meaning-dilemma.” Our sister was sitting on our side, toward the other end of the table. I looked up to see her having a full-scale cry. Being the outsider, I did not feel comfortable moving down to ask her “what’s wrong?” Instead, I tapped Renée on the arm, motioned with my head toward the sobbing woman at the other end of the table, a quizzical look on my face. Renée replied:

“oh, there’s a story for that. Every night when we were little, while Ma put us to bed, she would tell us that ‘you have an older brother and someday we will find him.’ And so, our sister is letting a little of that out; she’s sometimes the most emotional one in the family.”

At that point, my plan to keep a dry eye was busted.

From time to time, I asked Claudette for information about my birth father. She seemed unwilling and/or unable to provide specifics.

Dear Ed & family,

Hope this letter finds you in good health. Thank you for the Crohn's article. I will show it to my doctor.

Ed I'm sorry to tell you this, but I don't know anything about your paternal history. I never knew much about your father or his family. That was a very traumatic time for me. The only good thing that came out of it is you. It is still very painful for me to even think about it. Maybe someday, I will be able to tell you about it. All I know is that I was 16 and he was 26. It was a very short and failed romance.

***November 20, 1992. Kate Victoria Lamoureux born at St. Francis Medical Center, Peoria, IL.
January 23, 1996. Nicole Marie Lamoureux born at St. Francis Medical Center, Peoria, IL.***

Throughout our time in Peoria, I experienced periodic, unwanted and negative, health symptoms. I stayed in good physical condition by way of a moderate exercise program that included running, weight lifting, golf, and basketball. Although two on-court incidents damaged my back such that I gave up basketball in late 2002, I was able to continue the rest of a regular exercise program. Nevertheless, I sometimes felt as though something about my cardio-vascular system was amiss. I once went to the emergency room thinking that I was having a heart attack. Triage and testing surmised that I was merely dehydrated and perhaps needed more rest than I was getting. Throughout 2004 and 2005, I perceived an increase in negative events and I pursued cardiac testing and a variety of physical exams, all of which returned "negative" and did not account for my symptoms. Our family doctor began to question my mental health. Years later, I received a pacemaker for a cardio-electrical issue. Nothing wrong with my head; more on that later.

As my health concerns mounted, I decided that I should try to learn about my birth father so that I could ascertain information about his health history. Since Claudette would not help in

this endeavor, I posted information to online genealogy lists related to her maiden and my given last name, Beaulieu. After a few months of futility, I received a phone call from Claudette; she was very upset.

“Edward I want you to take down those inquiries about your birth father from the Internet. One of my granddaughters confronted me wanting to know why I would not tell you about your father. I don’t want my family having to deal with those questions, especially not my grandchildren.”

“Well Claudette you’ve refused to provide the information and although I told you that I respect your decision on that matter you not telling me does not prevent me from looking for the information from other sources. I have had a lot of health trouble and I need to know about his health history and I can’t find that out unless I can locate him.”

“All right. I will tell you his name but you have to promise to take those questions down.”

“Absolutely I’ll be happy to.”

“His name is Lars Swan. I don’t know anything about how to find him or really anything else that would help you. I’ve looked for him and haven’t been able to find him.”

And so, I began searching for Lars Swan on the early-and-not-yet-very-helpful-Internet. Months of unsuccessful efforts produced no viable leads or results. While I was searching genealogical lists for the Swan family and for families from Hartford, Connecticut, I came across a person whose contributions to the genealogy lists appeared to *provide* information by answering questions rather than seeking information via inquiries. I wrote electronic mail to this person and asked about their online proclivities. Karen O’Maxfield, wrote back:

Date: Sun, 06 Nov 2005
From Karen O’Maxfield
To: Ed Lamoureux

We are also Hartford natives who are highly interested in, and involved in, researching the history of this city, its people and its culture. Although not genealogy/history researchers by profession, both my husband and I are members of various historical societies with access to records unavailable to the general public. In addition to personal and family research, we respond to research requests, which typically come in through our website.

We can't promise that any research for which you hire us to perform will result in volumes of information, but we will check all resources available to us (including records on file at the Connecticut State Library, the City of Hartford Vital Records Division, and Hartford-related electronic text available online only with paid subscription) and report back the findings. Should the initial 2-hour research suggest strongly that there is more information to be found, we will advise accordingly.

Please don't hesitate to contact us should you need more information.

Karen O'Maxfield

Date: Sun, 06 Nov 2005
From: Ed Lamoureux
To: Karen O'Maxfield

Dear Studio O'Maxfield,

I'm trying to locate a man named Lars Swan. He was (roughly) 26 years old in 1952 and lived in Hartford CT, working at his family's jewelry store, Swans. Not sure if Lars was his given or nickname.

Any help would be appreciated. This is a legitimate, though personal, request. You are welcome to call me at my office or home if you have questions about my inquiry.

Edward Lee Lamoureux, Ph. D.

Date: Sun, 06 Nov 2005
From: Karen O'Maxfield
To: Ed Lamoureux

Mr. Lamoureux:

We would be happy to research this individual for you. Our research fee is \$25 per hour (2-hour minimum) and consists of combing through vital records, newspapers (if applicable) and other genealogical resources to determine any information forthcoming from these resources. We furnish to you a text summary of information found and photocopies of obituaries, published articles and/or ads, if applicable.

Should you have interest, send a deposit in the amount of \$50 along with as much information on the individual you already have, and the type of information desired to:

Karen O'Maxfield
209 Fairfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114-2205

I decided to pursue this lead, so sent \$50 with a request engaging Karen's services in a search for my biological father. Her response was not quick.

Date: May 25, 2006
From: Karen O'Maxfield
To: Ed Lamoureux

Hello Ed,

I've searched through the Hartford area city directories for the years 1950-1961 as well as the CT Death Index 1949-2001, CT Marriage Index 1959-2001, 1930 census and archived issues of The Hartford Courant (the area's largest / only newspaper). I have not been able to substantiate the existence of a Swan's Jewelry store during the 1950s - early 1960s, nor of any family named Swan(n) with a Lars or Larson or Larsen.

I also visited Raymond Jewelers and asked about this. The woman there—daughter of the original owners—remembered speaking to you and reiterated to me that her mother indicated that she does recall a jewelry store by that name but nothing else.

This woman—the daughter—had also checked back to early city directories and found no business by that name.

HOWEVER

When I was looking through the listings of the Hartford City Directory for the year 1954, my eye caught on a listing for a Lars A. Swahn who was employed at The Swan Tool & Machine Co. on Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford. There is also an Albin J. Swahn, who may have owned the company and who—at least—must be related to Lars since they share the same home address in the year 1954.

This Lars Swahn was married to a Leona, who shows up in the 1950 and 1954 directories. The name Gertrude shows up as the spouse in the 1959 directory. Those three years are the only ones that I printed out. The Social Security Death Index shows that Lars Swahn was born on 6 January 1924 and died on 14 November 1970 at the age of 46.

At this point, I have done as much as I can for the \$50 amount agreed upon. If you feel the pursuit is worth it, there may be other things that will shed some light upon the situation such as the death certificate and obituary of this individual. However, if you feel that this Lars Swahn is not your biological father, or if you feel that you have enough information, that's fine.

I will be traveling in the near future and will not have the opportunity to do any further research before July.

Please let me know what you'd like to do.

Karen O'Maxfield

I thanked Karen for her excellent work and re-focused my Internet search on Lars Swahn (spelled with a closing “h”) and *The Swan Tool & Machine Co.* on Bartholomew Avenue. I quickly discovered that *Swahn Engraving* now exists in Hartford. I sent email to the “contact us” address listed at the business and received a response from the wife of the owner of the business. Kathleen Milazzo Swahn suggested that I should contact a woman named Margaret Eddy; she was Lars Swahn’s sister.

Date: May 31, 2006
From: Margaret Swahn Eddy
To: Ed Lamoureux
Subject: Lars A. Swahn/my brother

Dear Ed,

Bryan called me and forwarded your correspondence concerning your inquiry about Lars, my brother. I tried calling your home last evening but you were out. When I saw your picture, it was Lars looking back at me, especially his eyes. There is so much to tell you about him and his family and I’ll be glad to write you any information you would like to know. However, I would really like to talk with you first if at all possible. I will try calling you again this evening.

Sincerely,
Margaret Swahn Eddy

Date: May 31, 2006
From: Bryan Lars Swahn
To: Ed Lamoureux

Ed, I’m glad you were able to connect with Margaret, I felt she would be the best one to tell you about all she could regarding Lars. My Father had passed away only hours after my 13th Birthday, in fact he was taking me bird hunting that Saturday morning. . . Heidi is my sister who is . . . in a group home not far from us . . . Steve and I are very close, despite having 10 years difference in age and different Birth mothers. I would have contacted you first but again felt that Margaret was best for you to be in touch with. I will call you soon so we can talk more, have a little league game to get to.

Sincerely, Bryan Lars Swahn

Date: June 5, 2006
From: Margret Swahn Eddy
To: Ed Lamoureux

Your dad was drafted in January 1943 when he turned 19. He was deferred to June so he could graduate. He was sworn in in Hartford with his best buddy, Kenny Gigl. I don't know when he was medically discharged but an educated guess would be 1945.

Lars married Bryan's mother, Gertrude Calhoun, on September 25, 1954. Bryan Lars was born on November 13, 1957. Heidi Lara was born in July 1961. She was 9 weeks early and had to be resuscitated three times during her first week of life. As a result, she is profoundly retarded and has been institutionalized since she was 18 months old.

Lars worked for my dad until the shop was liquidated in 1963. He and one of the other owner's sons, Gunnar Wennerberg, then started their own business. . . Lars passed away on November 14, 1970 from a heart attack.

Ed, you would have liked your dad. He was kind, had a great sense of humor, never lost his temper and was liked by everyone who knew him.

Fondly,
Margret

And so, the veils covering my paternal mysteries began to lift. I eventually learned a significant amount of information about Lars' side of the family, mostly by way of email and phone calls with my Aunt Margret. Lars Swahn was born in Vassa Finland, son to Johan Albin Swahn and Alli Maria Wuorinen Swahn. They Vassa is in a region where Swedish-speaking Finns mix with "Finnish-Finns": Johan and Alli grew up on each side of that equation; both Finnish but one (Johan) with a stronger Swedish background than the other. No shit. I'm a French, Swedish-Finn!



Alli, Lars and Johan in Finland
circa 1924

Margret, ten years younger than Lars and born in Hartford, is his only sibling. Lars came to this country, from Finland, when he was 6. The family owned and operated *The Swan Tool &*

Machine Co. on Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford; that's where Lars met Claudette. She was 16 years old (roughly, the same age as Lars' sister) and worked in the plant.

Lars went into the service to war (WW II) directly out of high school, at 19, serving in the Amazon and up-and-down the Florida coast in the Navy. Recall that the man who adopted me, my father Roger Lamoureux, did not sail to the Amazon but he *did* travel up-and-down the Florida coast during his post-war east-coast-duty. Lars got sick and received a medical discharge; his illness eventually led to TB that caused the loss of a lung.

Lars was between marriages when I was conceived. Lars divorced his first wife, Leona (McKinney) Swahn, in July of 1952. They had one son, Steven. Steve is the only half-sibling (of twelve off-spring from both sides, combined) who is older than me. I was conceived in mid-December 1952. Lars then married Gertrude Calhoun on September 25, 1954. Gertrude and Lars had two children: Bryan Lars was born in November 1957 and Heidi Lara was born in July 1961.

Lars worked for his father, Albin, at *Swan Tool & Machine*, until the shop was liquidated in 1963. Note the Americanized spelling: No wonder Claudette didn't give me the correct spelling for Lars' surname: She worked and met him at ***SWAN Tool & Machine***, not *Swahn Tool*. Eventually, Lars and one of the other owner's sons, Gunnar Wennerberg, started their own business. Lars passed away on November 14, 1970 of a sudden heart attack at age 46 (note: Pacemaker = good thing). Other than the heart attack, his family thought him healthy at the time of his death, notwithstanding his earlier illnesses.

Date: June 22, 2009
From: Marie Cyr
Subject: Lars
To: Ed Lamoureux

HI ED

Now I know for sure that I have mental telepathy. I went to bed last nite thinking about the way I found you. And that will be in my mind till the day I leave this world.

I had been looking for you for years and years searching every phone book that I could get my hands on. The only thing that stopped me from finding your dad was that I had the wrong spelling of his name. I always thought that it was spelled as the machine shop which was SWAN TOOL. PLUS I DID NOT KNOW THAT YOUR DAD PASSED AWAY SO SOON AFTER YOU WERE BORN.

I saw him one time after I left that home. I was walking home from the stores. A car pulled up near my house and stopped. I turned around to see who it was. It was your dad. At first, I did not recognize him. His face was all swollen. He must have been on steroids for his illness. I did not know he was ill.

He said to me "Boy a lot of things happened in the past year and a half didn't it?" I just said it sure did and walked away. I never saw him again. I never told him about you. He must have known that he got me pregnant. I always wondered how he knew that I was out of that school. He must have been watching for me. I feel bad that I didn't tell him about you. I always want you to know that I love you when you were in me, I loved you when you were born, and I will always love you. And I did love your dad.

The place I was at was called *The House of Good Shepherd*. That place was not just for pregnant girls. It was for any girl that got in trouble, skipping school, runaways.

I know from communicating with her, and stories sibling Renee has shared, that Claudette was deeply damaged by losing me. She went on to have 9 children without having adequate means of support after all—chasing the one she lost? But what I don't know are the effects of my losing her. I was an infant put out to foster around ten or eleven months, adopted at fourteen months. What did I make of laying in my mother's loving lap one hour once a week, of her leaving me in the nursery between, of never feeling her again? Evangeline did everything she could so that I would feel loved; we were virtually attached at the hip for a decade. But infant trauma, forever unprocessed. What did it mean to my being me or to special?

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