

[00:00:01.140] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to The Adoption and Connection podcast where we share resources by and for adoptive and foster moms. I'm Lisa Qualls.

[00:00:09.060] - Melissa Corkum

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it and we're here for you.

[00:00:14.160] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, friends. Welcome to Episode 129 of The Adoption Connection podcast. You know that we highly value hearing all parts of the adoption triad, and we love presenting a diversity of voices. And today we have a very remarkable and unique interview that Melissa does with our guest, Ed di Gangi, who is an adoptee who did not search for his birth family until he was almost 70. And I honestly enjoyed this interview so very much, and I think you are going to also. Melissa, can you tell us more about Ed?

[00:00:54.850] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so Ed was adopted at birth in New York City. He's an only child and really didn't second guess his adoption story. He didn't have a lot of questions as an adoptee until he was in his late sixties. I don't want to give away too much of it here because he does such a fantastic job of telling it. He and his wife, Linda, live in Hillsborough, North Carolina, and they have one son, James. So without further ado, I'm going to let Ed tell his story.

[00:01:32.040] - Melissa Corkum

Ed, welcome to The Adoption Connection podcast. It's so good to have you here.

[00:01:36.000] - Ed di Gangi

Melissa, thank you so much for inviting me to join you.

[00:01:38.760] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so we often highlight stories of folks from all sides of the adoption constellation triad as it were. And you reached out to us with really just an incredible story, and you're an adoptee yourself, and so I'm really excited to kind of let our listeners in on your story.

[00:01:58.800] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, I am a baby scoop era adoptee. I'm approaching my seventy third birthday now, and I was brought home from the hospital by my adoptive parents at a day old. So, you know, this goes back to 1948 and the story begins there.

[00:02:15.420] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and we, we don't, there aren't many adoptees I think in your generation who are sharing their stories. And I think that's really important because so much has certainly changed in the landscape of adoption over the last few decades.

[00:02:32.610] - Ed di Gangi

Oh I agree with you totally. And I think that was an era of secrecy sometimes just because it was a shameful type of thing, other times because the baby doesn't need to know and he'll be fine. And it was done with all good intentions. You know, today, I think the the adoption landscape is far more wide open with open adoption and the discussion and the and the adoptee knowing his roots.

[00:02:59.190] - Melissa Corkum

Do you remember when you first realized you were adopted or how long did that take? Because like you just mentioned, we weren't having as many of these open conversations. And of course, you were a white baby adopted into a white family. And so there was no reason, like in my case, you know, I was a Korean baby adopted to two white parents. So at some point in time, someone was going to notice. So what do you remember about your adoption story?

[00:03:25.800] - Ed di Gangi

You know, I've been trying to put it into sequence. There are probably three events, two of them I'm sort of juggling, which was the first. I remember at the time, wanting to go out and play with my friends and my adoptive mother, making what seemed to me a rather awkward and clumsy statement about, well, if somebody says, you know, you're not ours, it doesn't matter. Don't worry about it.

[00:03:50.970] - Melissa Corkum

Now, that must have felt kind of like, huh, why would she say that?

[00:03:54.810] - Ed di Gangi

Exactly. I sort of pondered it for a minute and then I did what most kids did. I said, "Can I go out and play now?" And just, it was in the back of my mind and I remember it today. The other piece was when I was seven years old, we went to Europe. And we were in Paris and my parents and I, you know, because we were traveling all together, went to an orphanage in Paris, and when I asked what are we going to an orphanage for, it's well, we're thinking, wouldn't it be nice for you to have a sister? And so, you know, that gave me a little pause for thought and it was, I was also thinking I kind of like my life just the way it is. I don't need a sister, but yeah. So those two kind of laid the groundwork. And then some, some time I'm thinking before my teens, my parents had a fireproof metal box in which they kept important papers and such. And I think one day when they were out, I was curious about what got kept in there. And I started going through it and opened up an envelope in my mother's folder and and there were two documents in it. One was my amended birth certificate. I, I was adopted in New York and New York City and it read Certificate of Birth by Adoption. And the second was a much longer document that I didn't fully understand, but I kind of looked and there was a there was a signature at the bottom with the name that I didn't recognize. And I yeah, I folded them up, put them back and and honestly, never, never asked a question, never said a thing, and rather took the approach that if my parents were not talking about this, I shouldn't talk about it either.

[00:05:36.950] - Melissa Corkum

Oh, that's so interesting. There's no way I could have kept quiet about the whole thing.

[00:05:41.270] - Ed di Gangi

I think that's the difference between men and women, too. I was just talking with with some with another man who's had a kind of a similar adoption path as myself. And his, his attitude was, when you give a man a TV dinner and a television set and everything is good.

[00:06:00.410] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so interesting. So, you know, even though you weren't talking about it, did you think about that discovery often or were you able to put the pieces together? Like, do you remember having this realization of, like, I am adopted and like were there other, you know, did that start a domino effect of other questions?

[00:06:19.760] - Ed di Gangi

Well, you know, I think it's, it would be hard to say that there were no questions. You know, certainly I'm thinking, OK, that name on the paper must be the woman who gave up for adoption, but I can tell you over the course of my childhood, my adulthood, I rarely, rarely gave any thought to who she might be. I have made the natural stereotypical assumption that she was a high school girl who went out, stayed out too late one night, and a couple of months later realized she was pregnant. And that's what I worked with periodically, I would think about it, and, you know, there were one or two times when I said, "Who would possibly give up a kid like me?"

[00:07:01.250] - Melissa Corkum

Well, good for you.

[00:07:02.310] - Ed di Gangi

But, you know, beyond that, I, I rarely thought about it. And I can tell you, I never, never, never thought about who my father might be.

[00:07:11.570] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so interesting. I, I can resonate with that, actually. I don't think a lot about my birth mom, but I can say for sure that, other side of the equation, I mean clearly there was a birth father, but for whatever reason, you know, that that crosses my mind even less. Do you ever feel like or did you ever feel like growing up as a child, did you ever struggle with a sense of belonging or identity? Was there ever this like this nagging feeling even before you knew that something wasn't quite didn't the pieces didn't quite fit or or there was some other, you know, identity of, you know, something is different between me and my parents?

[00:07:54.440] - Ed di Gangi

Well, you know, as I grew and got older, I got to be six feet tall. Both of my parents were five foot two.

[00:08:02.030] - Melissa Corkum

OK.

[00:08:02.930] - Ed di Gangi

So, you know, that was that was a question. I'd periodically ask, how come I'm so tall and you're so short. And you and my mom would always say, well, look at Uncle Tommy and look at your cousin Greg. And I accepted that even, even when I knew or had learned that I was adopted, I still, you know, in my in my naivete, I kept on kept on believing that.

[00:08:24.800] - Melissa Corkum

To your credit, I'm just barely five feet tall and my husband is only about five four and our oldest child by birth, you know, so we have six kids, four of them are adopted, two we actually, they shared genes with us and he's five foot ten and still growing. And we always look at him and we think, good night. Like, how did that happen?

[00:08:48.290] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, but my my my adoptive parents backgrounds, my father was Sicilian, my mother was Ukrainian, and both of them came from very loving families. But I can honestly tell you guys, as loving and as embracing as my Sicilian side of the family was, we always had a sense of otherness there. I just, there was not a total fit on my mother's side, I clicked much better with Ukrainian people or felt much more comfortable there. And maybe it was a difference in people, maybe was a difference in when I learned what my ethnicity was, is there was a lot of Eastern European background in my, in my DNA.

[00:09:34.890] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so interesting. Now, was your adoption public to your extended family and kind of you were the only one who didn't know or was there a lot of secrecy around how you would even come to be in the family?

[00:09:45.600] - Ed di Gangi

No, you know, it's very interesting. When I wrote my book, well, prior to writing the book, yeah, I'd always thought, well, if I ask people about it, they're going to think I wasn't grateful. And I know that's a that's a common stereotype. You know, I was I would have been fine asking my parents if it was important. And I think they would have been very cooperative in, in explaining and even helping the search, but after they they were deceased, my father died in the nineteen seventies, my mother in the nineteen eighties, so I didn't start this until twenty seventeen. So it was certainly a long period. I had a cousin who I decided to ask just to confirm some details that I had already found in my search. And, I finally called up one day and said, what do you know about my adoption? And we had never said that word before. And yes, she never battered an eyelash. She told me what she knew. And when I, when my book was published, I had a number of cousins who read the part that said I, you know, it was never talked about at home, and I didn't realize until. They sort of apologized and said, oh, we all knew, we should have told you. So, you know, it's that was the only one in the dark, I guess.

[00:11:04.890] - Melissa Corkum

Oh, goodness. Was that realization hard for you to know that everyone knew and you didn't?

[00:11:09.880] - Ed di Gangi

You know, it's been so many years, I, I don't think so. You know, and both of the cousins said I knew, but my mother said, don't say anything. The other cousin said, well, gee, I always knew that, but my father said, that's something we shouldn't talk about. So I don't think they were intentionally withholding anything, they assumed that I, you know, I knew everything that was suddenly in that book.

[00:11:35.460] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, yeah. OK, so the book, so talk about the book because I'll tell you, you know, we get sent quite a few books here at The Adoption Connection. And I wish I, you know, it was my job to read them all, and one day I'll get to all of them slowly but surely. But I was captivated by your book and I don't know if it was just a me thing, because as you're about to share with us, your mother was not just the the high school girl who went out set out a little too late. It was, it was not a stereotypical story at all. And she was connected to the ice skating world. And I grew up just idolizing ice skaters. I was the girl who watched Kristi Yamaguchi win the gold in the nineties. I was following all the, you know, the national championships, the world championships, all the things. And so I think there was something about your mom story that just really drew me in. So if you're listening to this and thinking about whether or not you're going to read Ed's book, just know that I may have a slightly biased opinion because I was so fascinated by the ice skating part of the story.

[00:12:41.160] - Ed di Gangi

But I think it's a good story, you know, and it's it's been very well received. I began to write the book in twenty seventeen when I finally went back to that big metal box, took out the envelope, took out the adoption decree, which is what I learned that that longer document was, and found the name at the bottom that I didn't recognize. And I went to the library, sat down with ancestry.com. Typed in the name and as many, I'm sure have already discovered, a bunch of information came flowing out and the first thing that it came across was a visa application dated not even a year after I was born for travel between Miami, Florida and Rio de Janeiro, and it was written Portuguese. What I could make out was the name that matched her street address, which was maybe a 15 minute bus ride from where I grew up, and her, her profession listed as an artist. And I had no clue what kind of artist we kind of conjectured over, my wife and I. The other piece that was kind of earth shaking at the moment was attached to that visa application was a picture. And it was the first picture that I got to see of my mother and it was, you know, I kind of looked all around to see, is anybody else watching this? Because it was kind of a personal thing that suddenly emerged. And she was very, very serious looking and solemn. And I, I just on social media, probably in the past few days, I posted that picture again, saying it was the only picture I've seen of her. And I've seen many where she was so serious and solemn, and I wondered what she was thinking at that moment. But I went through a discovery process helped by many people, some antiques dealers in Atlanta, Georgia, in particular, who had purchased a box of memorabilia that happened to be my birth mother's several years prior. And when I finally traced them down, they posted a blog with some pictures and some documents and they explained the circumstances that they had no clue who the woman was, but it was a glamorous period and she looked like she was an interesting person. So when I traced them down, I was exploring a possible relationship. Do you still have these things? And yes, they did, but we'll have to call you back. I'm busy, busy right now. So, you know, I sat by the phone, I sat by the phone, probably about seven days and "busy right now" turned out longer than I expected it to be. So I finally messaged again and this time said, I believe that's my mother, would you please call me? And probably within five minutes the phone rang and, and the woman said, oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I got busy and I forgot, you need to come here right now.

[00:15:46.540] - Lisa Qualls

Hey, friends, we're jumping into the middle of this episode because we're really excited to share with you about the Insight Virtual Conference, which is happening on April 29th and 30th. This two day intensive will help parents gain a practical understanding of your child's trauma, change your approach, and build healing, connection, and trust. You'll have the chance to learn from amazing world renowned speakers such as Dr. Ivor Chasnoff, Deborah Gray, Jamie Finn, Lahia Cushman, Melissa and me, Jeff Noble, Dr. Laura Anderson, and Mike and Kristin Barry.

[00:16:23.530] - Melissa Corkum

Also, if you register through the link we're about to share with you, you will get exclusive free access to our new webinar, *Creating a Safety Plan for your Family*. This is a training that we wish we had had before we were in the midst of crisis or even just had big challenging behaviors with our kids. So you can join us at the INSIGHT conference and get free access to that webinar at the [adoptionconnection.com/insight](http://adoptionconnection.com/insight). Now back to the episode.

[00:17:00.770] - Ed di Gangi

And the woman said, oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I got busy and I forgot, you need to come here right now. So, you know, we're sitting in North Carolina. She's in Georgia. But within a week or a week later, we're on the road on the way to Atlanta. And and she and her husband bestowed upon us this big carton of very personal memorabilia, all sorts of photographs and press clippings and things like that. And it turned out that my mother had been a prominent performer with the big ice shows in the nineteen forties and the nineteen fifties. She skated with Ice Follies and then she spent five years with Holiday on Ice. She toured South America, she toured Europe, and I think the impressive part, though, was she left home at the age of 17. And she had been discovered while an amateur skater in a in a show that was promoting the sale of war bonds. And as soon as she finished school, she left home, she traveled across the country by train alone to join an ice skating troupe in Vancouver, British Columbia. And for five years, her career was on the constant ascent. She had a couple of different partners and she joined Ice Follies in nineteen forty seven. And Ice Follies summered over in San Francisco every year. While she was in San Francisco, we later determined I was conceived in August of nineteen forty seven. She had what was a summer romance with somebody from out in, out in San Francisco. And after she left in September, you know, they performed in Los Angeles and then took the train all the way to Chicago. And, and I surmised someplace between Los Angeles and Chicago, she said, this is more than this is more than motion sickness that's bothering me and returned to New York secretly in January to manage her pregnancy. And to make a very difficult decision as far as what she was going to do with, as a single mother, with a very big career and, you know, a fatherless baby. And, you know, she was kind of shepherded by her oldest sister and her sister's husband. They were the only ones who knew. And she kind of came to the decision on her own and, and so as fate would have it, I was I was adopted right after birth and held up the connections there were kind of interesting in themselves.

[00:19:43.950] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, it is a fascinating story and you do a fabulous job of laying it all out in the book. Why 2017? What, what struck you then to break out that metal box and send you down this rabbit trail of discovery about who your birth mom was?

[00:20:00.180] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, you know, I'm asked that a lot, and I can't point to one thing, but my wife's parents both had had moved to North Carolina to be close to us in the year before and and both of them arrived in compromised health. Not too long after their arrival, my wife's mom passed away and in January of twenty seventeen, her dad passed away. And we were up in New Jersey where they had come from to to enter his ashes. And nearby was the cemetery where my adoptive mother's family was all buried. And we were, we were visiting there and I was standing over my grandparents grave thinking that I should really know more about them and what their roots are. And that tied also, and they came from Ukraine. That tied also to a book which I had read and was was reading again, which I think for the third time called *The Lost* by an author named Daniel Mendelsohn and it was his search for six relatives who perished in the Holocaust. And it's a magical book, it really is. Or at least it gripped me and he just told about his search. And because he had a big literary contract and a very significant name, he traveled all over the world looking for people who had known his, his relatives and might have some idea of what what ultimately had happened to them. And it just sort of caught my imagination. So I I came home and my first stop was the library. As I said, my first attempt was looking at my adoptive grandparents. And when I start to see how easily the information came, it sort of clicked with me and said, OK, if you're ever going to do this. Yeah, today's the day.

[00:21:54.900] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, yeah. So fascinating. And I mean, and what are the odds, really, that you would come across someone who had so much of your mom's belongings and you were able to piece together from that

so much of her story and and even connect, I believe, to some half siblings, right?

[00:22:13.110] - Ed di Gangi

I have. It was a remarkable coincidence to find that person who had purchased those items, probably given the nature of her business. I had expected she probably had had pieced it out and then sold everything, but she was still sitting on it. So, yeah, that certainly led me down the path to knowing who my mother had been, and I did locate siblings. I had located a paternal well, let me take a step back. I located a maternal half brother and I took quite some time to make contact with him, and I learned later that he had been in a rather calamitous fire which had left him injured. And he had been in and out of, or in the hospital. And then rehab for almost twenty eight months. And when I finally reached him, we talked and his question was, OK, tell me what kind of kin are we? And I explained to him and he said, OK, got to go now. He said, but I'll call you tomorrow. And he was sort of like the antiques dealer. He didn't call tomorrow, so I waited a few weeks and reached out again and again, well, "tell me what kind of kin we are." And I explained again, and then he sort of changed the conversation, then a couple of months later, we wound up going to visit. If he wasn't sure what kind of kin we were, he was still very either curious or trusting because they said well, we want, we'd like to come down to visit. He said, sure, come on. So we did travel back to Georgia, took him out to dinner, and on the ride back to his apartment in the car, he said, OK, tell me what kind of kin we are. And so did the deep breath and explain one more time. He said, I don't know how that can be. He said, he said, my my momma and my daddy were together all that time. And even if it was true, my momma would have told me. And I'm saying nah, think so. And I knew when his parent's, you know, career paths coincided with several years after I was born. I explained to him, I said I was born in August of nineteen forty seven and I was conceived in August of forty seven in San Francisco. Your mother was skating with the Ice Follies and they were in August in San Francisco in August of forty seven. So he took a deep breath and we get back to the apartment. He went into one of the rooms and came back with a big roll of posters and they were for Ice Capades and he said, well I'll show you. He said my mom and my daddy were together and he, he took the one for nineteen forty five and rolled it out and had all the performers names and there's his daddy's name, but he sort of went down and mama wasn't there. So he rolled that one up, took out forty six and fairly well assured that she'd be there. And again, she was not. And I said, Ted, before you roll out the next one, I said, she's not going to be there. But he rolled it out and he looked and daddy was there, mama was not. So he kind of rolled them back up, took him back in the other room, came back with a big photograph album. And it turned out my mother was a meticulous person in terms of, of capturing her career versus, you know, versus snapshots. And this was an album full of little three by three, you know, brownie snapshots. You're too young to remember brownies, but

[00:25:41.670] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I had enough of a photography career to appreciate that, yeah.

[00:25:44.940] - Ed di Gangi

Just little black and white photographs and all of them marked with where did it come from and when was it taken? And she started in nineteen forty three I think when she was in, in Cincinnati skating. And so he was flipping pages and as he got to the, to nineteen forty six, I said, Ted, when you turn there I said you may very well find San Francisco in nineteen forty seven. He said well, said, I don't know. He said my momma would have told me. And he flipped the page and there in the midst of this page of black and white snapshots was one color snapshot, and I used it on the cover of my book and I don't know how well this shows up here but yeah this is my birth mother and the top of it says August nineteen forty seven, San Francisco, California. And he kind of looked at it and at that point, he just folded up the book and took it back into the other room and came back with a couple of beers. And we just talked about other stuff. And the next day we sort of revisited the, the entire discussion and, and I had brought a copy photocopy of my adoption decree. And I said, Ted, I understand I don't want anything from you, don't want anything from, you know, from our late mother. I said, I just want to connect and I'd like to learn whatever I can. And so I brought this, you know, and this is, this is a document that basically said your mother placed me for adoption with my parents, these signatures of my parents, these signatures of their, this signature is their attorney and I trust from what I've seen that this signature is your mother's. And he kind of looked at it and just folded it back up and handed it back to me and said, you keep it. I said, it's a photostat. It doesn't have any real legal value at this

point. So we finished our visit. We went home, and during the middle of the week he called me and we talked and he said, well, I took my, took that piece of paper you gave me down to the rehab facility where he had been a patient or been a resident. I said, Ok, I said, what'd you do with it? So I showed it so and so he's the, he's the administrator. OK, I said, what did he say? And he said, well, he looked at it and he asked me, is that your mother's signature? And there's a long pause, well, what did you say? He said, well, yeah, I did. I told my him it was momma's signature. So what did he say? He said, Ted, if that's your mother's signature, it looks like you've got yourself a brother.

[00:28:25.685] - Melissa Corkum

\*laughter\*

[00:28:26.630] - Ed di Gangi

And from that day on, he's. Yeah, he's been as good as gold. He's nice. He's been very communicative. He's been very accepting. And I sort of feel like I was, maybe this discovery was all put in place by, you know, the fact that he really has a very, very small universe right now. And I think adding a brother to it probably was a, you know, was a blessing. On the paternal side I, even before I started my search, or thought about starting my search. I sent in a DNA sample at Christmas of twenty sixteen, and that was purely just to learn my ethnicity. As I said, I had always identified as Sicilian and Ukrainian. And yeah, that was fine. So, you know, it took forever to come back and I suppose it was their holiday rush. I kept on getting, you know, "Thanks for your patience. We're really busy but your results will be back soon." In May I got the results back and then I found out that I was fifty percent Eastern European, twenty five to thirty percent Ashkenazi Jews, so again, Eastern European. And then a mix of Northern European and Great Britain. So I went to the to the list of relatives. And there was one close relationship, which I believe was identified at the time as a as a first cousin and I didn't recognize the name from my mother's side, and I knew all the names pretty much by that point. So I looked and I, you know, it turned out that not only was was this person active on ancestry, but he was he was a Jehovah's Witness and had an extensive family tree. And when I looked at it, I found out that he had six aunts and one uncle. And I said, well, he's my cousin. That uncle has to be my father. So I contacted him, I sent him an email, and contrary to the lady with the with the box in Georgia, he's back, back to me in 10 minutes. And he said, this is fabulous. He said, I'm really, I'm really excited, and what you're thinking is probably true. He said, give me some time to kind of digest this, and about 15 minutes later, I got another email from them saying that, you know, given the amount of DNA, I think actually we may be half brothers. Because looking at the relationships, you said your mother was in San Francisco when you were conceived, that one uncle never left Texas, and he said, furthermore, looking at your DNA, you know, he said unless your mother had a significant portion of the Jewish DNA, my uncle had none. But he said, but I'm twenty five percent Jewish through my father, and as it turned out, he was my half brother and, you know, his father was our father. And he, this is a person who never left San Francisco. He happened at the time, he had ties, by the way, to Ice Follies. You know, he had friends there. So it would have been a natural, a natural point of connection for me and my birth mother.

[00:31:50.220] - Melissa Corkum

So fascinating that you were able to put all of those pieces together, really in relatively short order. Like I said, all the details of what you were able to put together in, in the book are just really incredible. Was it scary for you reaching out to people who are connected to your birth parents and wondering about that sense of belonging? And obviously you shared your story with Ted and there was a lot of back and forth because, really, I mean, I mean, these revelations about adoption don't just affect us as adoptees because there's, there's so many pieces to the puzzle. There's so many people that are connected. But so what was that experience like, of like wondering, you know, will they accept me or reject me? Where you kind of beyond needing that piece?

[00:32:38.280] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, you know, it's 70 years old. I figured I'd gone for a long time not knowing. And I found that if I found out that they were not comfortable, I think I would have quietly backed away and left it at that, knowing what I had found out at that point. I think the one piece that would have been very troubling and, you know, sadly, my my birth mother was deceased at that point was if she was still alive and she had said, no, I don't want that, that contact. But that, that wasn't the case. So that the flipside of

that is, if I have a regret through this process, is that I didn't have the opportunity to meet her and didn't have the opportunity to, to say you made a difficult decision. And the decision turned out the best as far as I'm concerned.

[00:33:27.750] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I, thank you for sharing that perspective because we've talked about that here on the adoption connection is that each adoptee really does have a unique story, a unique perspective, a unique way of processing. And there are adoptees who really struggle with their birth parents or birth mom's decision to make that. They feel like it was, started a journey of a lot of questions and grief and loss. They struggle to find that sense of belonging. But then there are others who look at it and think, it wasn't so bad or, you know, I enjoyed my life, you know, as, with my adoptive parents, I, I understand on some cognitive level why that was such a hard decision or why she would have made that decision. And so I just appreciate your voice in the conversation and, and to say, you know, this is just the way, this is the way it went for me. And and again, because I think there aren't as many adoptees sharing what this experience is like from your perspective, which was I didn't even know it was adopted for so long, right. And then kind of coming into, to such a kind of a massive discovery and then, you know, kind of dropping that bombshell on half brothers and all of these things. It's, it really is remarkable.

[00:34:49.920] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah that, as I said, the paternal half brother could not have been more embracing. You know, his, his mom was a little concerned at first. And then she did the the mathematics and realized that she and her husband connected after I was conceived and I had the pleasure of meeting her and she was again with, in a story with so much generosity from other people, she wanted to meet me and she sat me down, she said, sit down here. I want to tell you about your father. You deserve to know. And, you know, it was not all roses and sweet things. He was kind of a punctual and compulsive man, and she was his third of five wives. So you can imagine that her her story may have been a little bit influenced. But even by my half brother, early on said, I don't know who your adoptive parents were, but you did better with them than you would have with my father.

[00:35:51.940] - Melissa Corkum

Hmm. So interesting.

[00:35:51.940] - Ed di Gangi

And, which is that's a, that's a sad thing to hear from somebody, but I give them all sorts of credit for the honesty.

[00:35:59.970] - Melissa Corkum

I know you've been a little bit more active in the adoption community as you've written the book as you started to get it out there into the community. Your experience was shaped by a time and a culture that was so different than what we are currently experiencing. What would you say to either, one, adoptees currently who may be struggling with some sense of belonging or some sense of knowing or wanting to put together some of the pieces that you were able to, and or to adoptive parents who are just doing their, their very best to try to help their kids find some sense of healing and belonging. Do you have pearly words of wisdom for for either of those or both.

[00:36:51.330] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, I do get asked that, and it's kind of the same answer as, as I get asked about how do you write a book? And I guess the single word is "start." You know, I think you need to confront this situation and to the, to the degree that you're able. Take a deep breath and make yourself comfortable with it and I realize that's easier said than done in many circumstances, but I think to adoptive parents, if you know, if this hasn't been a discussion item, you know, I think it should be. With DNA out there now, with consumer DNA testing, there are no secrets anymore. And it really is ultimately a matter of time. I think to, to adoptees, if they feel like there have been secrets kept from them, I think probably, again, acknowledge the fact that, that it may hurt you, but also try to think in terms of why is it being kept a secret or why has it been kept secret? And going back to my era and as you said, there aren't a whole lot of us around or a lot of us communing, communicating stories. You know, people were instructed



to do that. You know, my, my mother was instructed to right up until I was two, to hold me and say you're a wonderful adopted baby and I love you. You know, I didn't start really understanding anything until I guess I was three because I don't recall any of that. So, you know, I think it's, you know, so for the older folks, you know, give it some understanding. And a lot of I think they're probably older adoptees who, who unfortunately don't have their parents and maybe not any want to ask, but but take a step back and say why? Why was it kept secret? And I think, you know, it's if there's anyone around who knows, start asking questions because inevitably you're going to want to know where they come from. And I'd like to learn something about it. As I mentioned earlier, I had that one cousin who I said, tell me about my adoption. And she told me two different things. She said, number one, your mother was an ice skater. And that was at a time when I was still fussing with, did I really find the right person? And so that confirmed that I had. And then later on she said, well, you were named after so and so. He arranged your adoption. And that tied two pieces. That tied my birth mother together with my adoptive parents because it was somebody that, that my mother's family knew and it was somebody that my adoptive parents knew.

[00:39:31.480] - Melissa Corkum

And I think what you said all the way back at the beginning was, no one was talking about it. So even though you had discovered, made this discovery on your own, it felt like you knew intuitively no one wanted really to talk about it. It didn't feel like it was open for discussion, and we hear that a lot. We hear that advice given a lot in the adoption community to adoptive parents, which is we as adoptive parents have to take the lead in providing these open spaces for communication because our kids are following our lead. And so we're not talking about it because we assume they're not talking about it, right. And then it kind of perpetuates the secrecy when someone has to break the silence and it can feel very uncomfortable.

[00:40:13.090] - Ed di Gangi

Yeah, as I said, DNA or not, there's just no secrets anymore. You know, if it's not a DNA revelation, it's going to be somebody, you know, in the course of conversation, saying something that's going to get questioned, and I, I don't think there's any shame in talking about it from from either side of the of that coin. It's certainly as adoptee's, it's our life. We have a right to know. And from the standpoint of adoptive parents, there's certainly no shame in having, having the need or the desire to to adopt children.

[00:40:53.430] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. Well, Ed, I am really thankful for your time today, joining us on the podcast for the time you took to put the story together and putting it out there in the world, I think stories are so important and how we kind of make sense of and of all of the complexities that are all the pieces of adoption. And so I appreciate your contribution to that conversation for sure.

[00:41:19.730] - Ed di Gangi

I appreciate your inviting me to talk about it. Thank you.

[00:41:27.780] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I hope you all found that to be as fascinating as I did. When I listen to this interview, I thought, this is one of the more interesting stories I've heard in a long time. And the fact that he discovered his mother was a prominent figure skater, I mean, that is unique. And Melissa will share some resources for you, but you can actually see some footage of her skating yourself.

[00:41:54.540] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and I got to visit on a Friday afternoon, and he was just so delightful. I was just so fascinated because I talked to him for hours. I thought he was well spoken, and I appreciated his view on his adoption story because like we have said, there are so many views, and, you know, he comes from an era of adoption that a lot of us have not been able to really explore. We will have links to Ed's website and his book. His book is called *The Gift Best Given*. And I did have a chance to read it. We talked a little bit about it in the interview. It is a great story. And then Ed's website is [digangiauthor.com](http://digangiauthor.com), so if you'd like to see a little bit more, we'll also put a really fun YouTube link in the show notes where, like Lisa mentioned, you can see Ed's birth mother skating in a movie she was in. So fun. I really enjoyed

watching that as well. So all of those things will be in the show notes at [theadoptionconnection.com/129](http://theadoptionconnection.com/129).

[00:43:06.000] - Lisa Qualls

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:43:13.650] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening, we love having you. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes. It will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:43:23.820] - Lisa Qualls

And remember, until next week, you're a good mom, doing good work, and we're here for you.

[00:43:30.990] - Melissa Corkum

The music for the podcast is called New Day and was created by Lee Rosevere.