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Monday, March 17, 1997

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Hugs, tears, mark reunion for birth mother, daughter

DonnaMarie Powers got a hug from her mother Friday, the first one in 35 years.

Powers, of Hoopeston, was reunited Friday with her birth mother, Garnett Porter of Walkerton, Ind.

The two met at K & G's Family Restaurant. Powers, armed with 35 silk roses, arrived nearly an hour before she was scheduled to meet her mother. "I wasn't this nervous when I was getting married," she said, lighting a cigarette.

While Powers was pacing, Porter was driving from northern Indiana - and crying. "There were a lot of tears on the way down here," she said.

The reunion ended Powers 18-year search for the woman who gave her life.

In 1962, Porter, who lived in the Danville area, had no intention of parting with her infant daughter. When Powers' father was killed, Porter, who had a three-year-

old son, realized she could not take proper care of two children. Deciding her daughter would be better off with another family, Porter gave up her parental rights and Powers, then 10 months old, was adopted by a Hoopeston couple.

Powers wishes to keep the identity of her adoptive parents private. "I don't want to hurt them," she said.

Powers said her adoptive parents changed her name, which she later changed when she learned that Donna was her birth name. Powers was unaware that her given middle name was Jean and took Marie as a second name after a beloved adoptive aunt.

During her teen years, Powers' relationship with her adoptive parents became strained. She ran away from

See REUNION on other side

Reunion continued from other side

Briefly

Music Booster winners

Winners in the Hoopeston Area Music Booster calendar drawing are: March 17, Helen Custer, Hoopeston; March 18, Georgia and Mike Boose, Hoopeston; March 19, Heritage FS, Wellington, donated back; March 20, Doug Langley, Ludlow; March 21, Ferol White, Hoopeston.

Multi Agency van, activity schedule

This week's schedule for the Hoopeston Multi Agency senior van is: Monday, Hoopeston shuttle; Tuesday, Rossville shuttle; Wednesday, Danville; Thursday, Hoopeston shuttle; Friday, Danville.

To make reservations or for more information, call the Multi Agency at (217) 283-5544.

Activities at the center include: Monday, ladies bridge,

noon; Thursday, men's coffee, 9:30 a.m., men's euchre, 12:30 p.m.

Pizza to bring smiles

The Rossville Women of Today are selling Pizza Hut fundraiser cards, good at Watseka, Hoopeston, Paxton, Gibson City and Monticello Pizza Huts.

Cards cost \$10 and, with the purchase of any pizza at manu price, allow the cardholder to receive a size smaller pizza of equal or less toppings free.

Cards are available from any RWT member or by calling Barb at (217) 748-6489 or Kim at (217) 386-2453.

Proceeds from the sale are going to Operation Smile, a nonprofit volunteer medical services organization providing reconstructive surgery and related health care to needy children in the U.S. and in developing

St. Pat's balloon

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home several times, including one trip to Canada. ~~Eventually, Powers said, her parents broke contact with her.~~

Powers does not believe those problems were caused because she was adopted, but admits the fact that she was adopted posed other problems. "I think like any member of the adoption triad (adopted children, birth parents and adoptive parents) I had my own issues to deal with," she said. "It's a roots thing."

While Powers was having problems with her adoptive family, Porter married and had three sons. Knowing her child was adopted by a Hoopeston couple, Porter would sometimes come to Hoopeston and park at the restaurant next door to their home, hoping to catch a glimpse of her daughter.

Having promised the adoptive parents she would not search for her daughter, Porter wrote yearly letters to her daughter, but never mailed them. "On the day I signed the adoption papers, I made a promise I wouldn't disrupt her life," Porter said. When Powers didn't contact her after her 18th birthday, "I thought she was happy, that she had made a life for herself," Porter said

Porter's mother tried to keep contact with Powers, sending birthday cards to the girl, but after a few years, the cards were returned unopened.

Although Porter promised not to look for her daughter, Powers made no such promise and, as soon as she was legally able, began looking, not for her mother, but for her older brother. "I didn't have much to go on," she said. "I had a name and a birth date, but I didn't know if either of them was right."

Powers signed up with various registries for adoptees. At one point, she thought she found her birth mother, only to learn the woman was not who she was looking for. "You don't know how heart-wrenching that is," she said. "It was like I could see it there, I could almost touch it. If I touched it with my fingers, it would roll away, it was that close.

Despite the pain, Powers continued looking, searching newspapers for birth announcements from the time she was born. It was a birth announcement in the Danville Commercial-News that allowed Powers to reach her mother last week.

Three announcements matched the time frame of Powers' birth and her gender. Powers left a message with the first family, who did not return her call. The second family did not meet the criteria. "On the third one, I hit,"

she said. "I knew it was a match because when I started asking questions, there was silence on the other end."

Powers had reached a cousin, who in turn contacted Powers' birth grandmother, who called Porter."All this happened within four or five hours," Powers said. The two have talked every day since the initial call. Powers has also met one of her brothers and talked to the other two by phone.

Although both women were happy to find each other, Porter was afraid that she would lose her daughter again.

Proposed changes in Illinois state laws needed to aid adoptee searches:mother, daughter

A Hoopeston woman's search for her birth mother could have been made easier if proposed changes in the Illinois adoption law had been in place.

DonnaMarie Powers, who met her birth mother Friday, said her search could have been completed years ago if those in the adoption triad had access to the same identifying information about themselves that other parents and children have.

That information includes the birth name, any name changes, surname, maiden surname and given name of parents, sex, birth date, birthplace for the child and parents, registration number from the birth certificate, available Social Security numbers, last know address

"Last night I lay in bed thinking 'what if she's going to get me down there and tell me she doesn't want to have anything to do with me,'" she said. "I don't think I could've taken that."

Powers quickly pointed out that would not happen. "She made a choice that she thought was best at the time," Powers said. "I believe it's understandable. It took a lot for her to do what she did."

Both women admit it will take time to build a relationship.

and telephone number.

Changes in the law, which would provide that information, are pending in the Illinois House and Senate.

Along with that information, the proposal would allow adopted children over 18 access to all court records, adoption agency records and all information, photos and letters provided by birth parents and birth relatives that are intended for the adopted child.

Both women believe such information could have reunited them sooner.

"I think there should be somebody, a middleman, to contact the other person," Porter said. If the other person does not want contact, the middleman could give that

"This is a piece of my life that's been missing for 35 years," Porter said. "We have to start out as friends."

Neither woman has expectations of what their relationship will be. "I expect honesty," Powers said. "I'm not putting any other expectation on this.

"I'm just glad it had a happy ending," Powers said. "It's not an ending, it's a beginning," her mother corrected.

information to the searching person, she said.

Sealed records "are very unfair," she added. "(DonnaMarie) could have found me years ago. I'm not getting any younger and there are so many years we've missed.

Powers agrees. "I didn't have anything to go on," she said, adding most searches are initiated by the adopted child. "I wish everyone would write to their legislators to get this law changed. You don't know what it's like not to have access to things everyone else takes for granted.

Powers also suggested that adopted children and birth parents enter their information into state registries designed to reunite children with their birth parents. "A



Police News



No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 11:02 a.m. Saturday in the 200 block of East Main.

Police said Susan N. Ryder, 625 E. Maple, in a 1994 Ford van, backed from a parking space into a

1993 Ford Thunder driven by Linda S. Brown, 712 E. Main. Brown was stopped in traffic, police said.

Elaine Abbott, 317 Front St., reported Saturday that her 1988 Ford pickup truck was taken from her home. The truck was later found abandoned at mile

Obituaries

LEWIS - Roy L. "Lib" Lewis, 73, of Hoopeston, died at 12:30 a.m. Saturday, March 15, 1997, at Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital. Funeral services will be at 3 p.m. Tuesday at the Hamilton-Orr Funeral Home. Burial will be in Floral Hill Cemetery. Visitation will be 1-3 p.m. Tuesday at the funeral home. Memorials may be made to a charity

of the donor's choice.

Weather



Mostly cloudy, warmer today. High in the mid 50s. Tonight, chance of rain. Low in the mid 30s. Tomorrow, chance of rain, cooler. High near 44, low near 36.

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