

Report from the Search Room

I am writing about the reunion of Jim and his half-sisters and their daughters, eight all told who met here at our home on Friday 22 August. As we laughed, hugged and kissed and finally sat down for lunch it was like old home week. It was happiness and uproar with love and laughter for the whole three days of their time here with us. We meshed together as if we'd known one another for years. The new link with his family at last made Jim feel whole after feeling like a nobody for years; he said he could go on now until 90 years at least. Grace, 14 September 2008

In 1928 Jim was placed into the care of the state of Victoria under the 'Infant Life Protection Act' when he was just two years of age; he was never legally adopted as this placement occurred prior to the 1929 Adoption Act. He lived very happily with his foster family and when he was 27 his foster mother revealed to him his true identity and his birth name. Jim immediately applied to the WA Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages (BDM) and received in 1954 his birth certificate which revealed his birth mother's full name.

Over the years, Jim had employed many researchers to look for Alma, his birth mother and her relatives but without success until he came to VANISH in September 2007. It was essential to start at the beginning and to establish the true identity of his birth mother. A search of WA BDM Indexes found there had been two birth registrations for Alma, one in 1908 in the surname of her own mother and another, six years later in the surname of her step-father who had adopted Alma prior to his departure for the Great War. The search was made more difficult by the fact that Alma's own mother became a war widow in 1916 and then remarried twice; and she and Alma had the same surname(s) and the same given names but in the reverse order.

A variety of Australia wide genealogical resources/public records were used such as electoral rolls, defence service records, newspaper death notices and BDM Indexes until a number of Jim's living relatives had been identified and located. Then with the assistance of WA post-adoption agency that acted as an intermediary, Jim's male cousins were contacted and welcomed him into their family. He learnt Alma had married and had

had two daughters but she had passed away in the 1987. So excited were Joyce and Shirley, Jim's two half sisters at discovering they had a half-brother that they and their daughters flew to Victoria to meet him and to celebrate Jim and Grace's 50 wedding anniversary – see above. Fifty five years is a long time but for Jim now in his mid-80s it has certainly been worthwhile.

Andrea, Liz, Mary P and Mary R