



Chapter Two

Game Plan

"Andre Dawson has a bruised knee and is listed as day-to-day. Aren't we all?"

— Vin Scully

So what do the events of Milwaukee have to do with today? They pretty much determined my life. Does that make me a weak person or is this just reality? I vote for the latter. There appears to be a truth out there independent of our perspective. Reality sets limits—we cannot do anything we set our minds to. And we function best when we recognize those limits. It is not mind over matter, or matter over mind. Life lies somewhere in between. That is how we must approach adoption.

Relevant here is the relationship between time and healing. Physical and mental realms do not follow the same rules. Physical occupies time and space. Mental takes up neither—subtraction and addition weigh nothing and the theory of relatively has no duration. That time heals all wounds applies only to injuries which resolve independent of consciousness, such as fractures and lacerations; but not to mental trauma. Time cannot heal mental trauma because that trauma does not live in time. It lives in associations. It is affected only by other thoughts, without which there is no change. An experience blocked from awareness feels like it just happened when finally allowed into consciousness.

The adoption community quarrels over the issue of trauma in adoption. Those in power insist there is no trauma; some adoptees and birthparents, in an indolent revolution, disagree. At issue is not truth, but control. Some people refuse to see problems—that saves them from pain. Some people refuse to move past problems—that saves them from grief. There are faults on both sides, but there is also a truth out there that can get lost in the

polemics. The tactics of this disagreement are adversarial not cooperative, so we get heat but not light. The question is whether adoption entails trauma or not. For those who answer no, stop here. For those who answer yes, this book might interest you.

Mike Ditka speaks for the naysayers when he claims, “Those who live in the past die in the past. The past is for cowards” That is pretty harsh, but then so is pro football. Perhaps having more time to reflect, William Faulkner concludes, “The past is not over, it is not even past”, and George Santayana states, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. Coach Ditka is no dummy, but his game is football, not truth. So I am going to side with the philosophers here. They might be stodgy, but they probably gave the issue more thought. The bottom line here is that the past is important to everyone.

The business of adoption sees the experience as win/win. (But then they sell a product.) Starting from that premise, logic then demands that they fault the adoptee if he does not appreciate the situation—since everyone acted in good faith. So the adoptee goes from unwanted (is there any other way to explain relinquishment) to unwanted and ungrateful. Apparently he is expected to cease functioning as a center of judgment and initiative and simply do as instructed. Loss of sovereignty becomes the price for redemption. That is why Stanley Andersen could tell me that my life before they purchased me was none of my business. Perhaps he could have thrown some colored beads in on the deal.

Actions speak louder than words, and my birthmother did not keep me. That says something. Should it not be worthy of consideration, and in fact given more weight than her explanation, which would be, after all, only words? I would have to be inert not to see an issue here. Society is not blinded by the need to glorify adoption. They see it as second best. No mother gives away her children to adoption because she views it a better system in which to raise her children.

The trauma debate distracts people who perceive problems from ever addressing those problems. It institutes an endless regress. I see no advantage in further argument with those of a different persuasion. They control no regulatory permits necessary for me to proceed with my life. We share no projects. So I choose to walk down my path of reflection, and they can push forward on their highway to happiness.

But first, I have one comment: How people respond to an event is frequently more important than the event itself. Such was the case with my relinquishment. The lies did more damage than the separation. Life is more about how we play our hand than about the cards we are dealt. The lies forced me play the wrong cards. That was not living, it was servitude. But it was how the adoption was handled that caused the problem, not adoption per se.

Problems in adoption:

1. Mothers typically do not give their children away. Doing so does not help the child's self-esteem.
2. People typically try to spin the adoption into happy, which compromises truth and hence trust.
3. There is a loss of what could have been for all members of the triad. This loss requires grief for repair, and grief is viewed unfavorably in our society. In addition, "what could have been" is always idealized.
4. Adoptees lose information useful for charting life projects.
5. Adoptees experience biological differences which makes it more difficult to find common perspectives.
6. If building a self on pretend, the adoptee senses the instability. Self confidence suffers.
7. Current therapies often compound the difficulties.

My purpose for this book:

1. I want to say hello and goodbye to the boy from Milwaukee. Much of his nature was buried under expectations. This book offers him a narrative and a requiem as compensation.

2. We shall explore what part of our past is fixed and what might be negotiable. This will include a look at post-traumatic stress disorder.
3. I intend to address the concept of “self”. It has become an all-purpose term today and hence serves no-purpose. The area needs organization.
4. I hope to project the past and present into the future. This will draw heavily on William Ernest Hocking’s philosophy for social cooperation. We all must take our best shot at offering a contribution to the world. This shall be my attempt to do so.
5. Finally, I cannot hide behind saying goodbye only to the child. This book is, in part, a requiem to me as well. I just hope to be around to hear it.

That is the game plan.