



SHAWN
THOMPSON

On the trail full of pain and rewards

CONSIDER THE SITUATION OF TWO babies born out of wedlock at the time of the Second World War. The woman gives up one of the babies for adoption, the girl, at eight days old, and never sees her again.

The second baby, a boy, she keeps and raises. But she tells him he's an orphan sent from England to Canada during the war. The boy grows up not knowing that the woman caring for him is his mother. As far as he knows, he's adopted. He becomes an OPP officer and now has an adopted child of his own.

Meanwhile, the sister he doesn't know he has, grows up not knowing her natural mother, her father or her brother. She marries the same year he does. They both have two children of their own, born the same year, and adopt another child, again in the same year.

The father of the brother and sister, whom the mother didn't acknowledge to the son, is an accountant. He eventually married a woman who died in Puerto Rico and he himself was cremated in Florida, never having seen his son or daughter.

But then one day the mother gets a call. It's her daughter. Because of the daughter's insatiable curiosity and dogged ability to track down facts, she has found her mother. That insatiable curiosity is one of the driving forces of her personality. Whenever she senses a mystery, she wants it solved, and she worked until this one was solved.

However, her mother won't see her.

The daughter also learned about her brother, but only 10 years later did she decide to contact him. They now have some contact, but not much. The brother has a striking physical resemblance to his sister's son.

Finally, the daughter sent a friend to her elderly mother's door with a box of cookies. They hoped that the friend will be able to change the mother's mind.

But it turned out that her mother had died six months before.

That might have left the daughter at an unresolved point in her life. And yet she's doing something about the troubled resolution of her own history by helping others.

The woman is Sharon Chianelli. She's a private investigator living in Bath who specializes in tracking down the addresses of the natural parents of adopted children.

For 14 years she has been doing this, after a career as a bank teller and a bookkeeper, which parallels the career of a father she never knew. And almost all of her cases – including that of her adopted daughter – have a friendlier resolution than her own.

After all this, she says, "It's very rewarding to know who you are."



SHARON CHIANELLI: Curious