

'Reunited with my long-lost family after 70 years!'

Pam Styles (79) had spent her life searching for her dad's side of the family – until one letter changed it all...

By Danielle Lett

From the very beginning, I'd always had an unconventional life. Born in Middlesex in 1945, I was adopted by my grandparents and grew up believing they were my parents.

The girl I grew up with, Rachael, I believed to be my sister. It wasn't until I was 12 that someone told me she was actually my mother!

I never knew my dad, and Rachael, or Ray Ray as we called her, never spoke about him.

"What can you tell me about dad?" I'd ask. But she always changed the subject.

Then one day I found a letter from mum that revealed my dad's name. "He's called Clyde Shaws and he's American," I gasped.

Even though there wasn't much more information, or even a photo, knowing his name was a start.

Over the years, I often wondered what happened between him and mum, but I daren't ask. I put it at the back of my mind and eventually started my own family.

At 21, I met and married my husband Ray. Together, we had four children, Darren (56), Grant (54), Glen (45), and Gemma (44).

Over the years, I told them about my elusive father and they were keen to find out more.

"All I really want is a photo of him," I'd tell them.

Darren and my best friend Gilly both tried throughout the years, but with no internet they had no luck.

In 2012 Gemma tried to find Clyde online but her search yielded a dead end.

Until one day in 2015, she rang me with news that changed my life. 'Mum, you won't believe this,' she exclaimed.

"What is it love?" I asked.

"Me and Neil (her husband) have found your dad!" she replied.

I felt my heart stop.

"Are you sure?" I replied.

"I thought I'd have another go trying to find him and Neil had the brilliant idea to change his surname from 'Shaws' to 'Shores',

and there he was on a war memorial website," she said.

I felt myself choke up.

"My goodness. After all of these years," I quietly said.

"He's from Georgia, and all the dates line up. There's a photo of him too and he looks just like you. I'll send it to you," she said.

Gemma messaged me the photo that showed him in his later years and I couldn't believe it.

"Wow. I feel a connection right away, just looking at him," I said, stunned. I finally had the photo I'd longed for.

"Unfortunately, I did some more research and found his obituary. Clyde passed away in 2011," Gemma added.

'All I really want is a photo of him'

Pam went to visit her sisters after finding out about them

Pam, her daughter Gemma and her family went to visit their newfound family in America

weeks with my new-found family, where I got to know them, as well as finding out more about my dad. They took me to Clyde's grave and showed us around Tallahassee. I even met my dad's wife who calls me her stepdaughter. It was incredible.

A year later, Gemma, Neil, and their son Freddie visited Vickie and her family.

When Gemma came to visit me after her trip, she had something for me. "Vickie said to give this to you," she said as she handed me a bag. It was a folded, framed American flag that had been draped over Clyde's coffin. "They wanted you to have it, to remember Clyde," she said.

"Oh love, I can't believe they gave this to me," I quietly said.

I hung it up in my dining room, where it has pride of place.

In 2022, I had a stroke so I haven't been able to visit or speak to Vickie as much as I'd like, but Gemma, Neil and Freddie are hoping to make the trip again to see our long-lost family.

I was lucky to finally find my dad – but

I was especially blessed to find my sisters.

My heart sank. I put the phone down and searched for his obituary myself. But as I scrolled down, I found something incredible.

"Ray, come look. It says here Clyde had three daughters. That means I've got half-sisters," I said.

"That's amazing," he replied. "Hey, what if I find them on Facebook and message them. What's the worst that can happen?" he suggested.

"That's a great idea," I smiled.

Shortly after Ray messaged one of the sisters, Vickie, she replied and Ray rang her.

"What's she said?" I asked.

"She says she's shocked but not hugely surprised. Apparently something was mentioned in the family years ago, and before Clyde died he said there might be someone looking for him in England. They're happy I got in touch," he said.

I was relieved. During the following weeks, I chatted to Vickie over the phone for hours at a time as we got to know each other. It was like we'd always been close.



"Me and Ray might visit them in Tallahassee," I told Gemma over the phone one day.

"Wow mum, I'm so happy for you," she replied.

A year later, Ray and I made our way to Florida so I could finally meet my sisters Vickie, Kay, and Connie.

When we arrived, they were waiting for us at their front door with a sign that said 'Sisters found 2015'.

I ran towards them and we hugged.

"I can't believe I have sisters," I said as we embraced.

"We've been

dying to meet you," Vickie said.

Me and Ray spent two

'I feel a connection right away'

Vickie gave Pam Clyde's framed burial flag

Pam's dad Clyde was an American stationed in the UK