

Adopted brothers meet 35 years down the road

By Jenny Coyle

Michael McArron opened his front door one morning, and when his eyes rested on the face of the stranger standing there, he felt he was looking into a mirror.

He found himself looking hard at his 37-year-old brother — a brother he hadn't even known existed a week before.

"I wasn't going to believe he was my brother until I saw him," McArron said. "I figured that once I saw him, then I'd know for sure."

"Well, when I saw him standing there at the door, there was no question about him being my brother. It was like looking in a mirror."

And so, for the first time, the brothers embraced.

The 35-year-old McArron had known since he was an infant that he was adopted, but until Terry Kaplan of Daly City tracked him down in Dunsmuir, McArron didn't know he had a brother.

Kaplan had called him out of the blue that week to arrange the visit.

It was during that visit that McArron learned about his mother's life, and that she had died just two months before his brother's long search led him to her home three years ago.

Instead, by chance, Kaplan found his mother's brother at her house.

The uncle told Kaplan how narrowly he had missed seeing the mother he had last seen when he was only two years old.

He also told Kaplan that she had given up two boys for adoption — and that's when the search for McArron began.

Kaplan learned that he and his younger brother were both born in San Francisco. They had the same mother — Margaret Newman — but different fathers.

They're still not sure of the reasons, but Margaret Newman decided not to keep her sons, and so they were adopted out through the Children's Home Society in Oakland.



They've been brothers all their lives, but this photo was taken in January — the first time Michael McArron, left, and Terry Kaplan, seated next to him, ever met. "We have the same eyes, the same smile, the same mannerisms, and my wife said our earlobes even wiggle the same when we smile," McArron said. They spent the afternoon getting to know each other, and then Kaplan returned to his home in Daly City.

At the age of two, Kaplan was adopted by a couple in San Francisco. That's where he was raised.

McArron, as an infant, was taken home to McCloud by Jim and Louise McArron.

"I always knew I was adopted, and I knew my real mother's name, but I didn't know I had a brother," McArron said.

"Terry hired a private detective to track me down. I'm not sure how the detective went about it, but they came close to finding me about a year ago, and somehow lost track of me again," he said.

Then, about four months ago, McArron got a phone call from a man who said he was calling to renew his VISA card.

"He asked me all these questions about my name, address, whether

I had children. I thought it was kinds of strange because I've never even had a VISA card," he said.

He put it out of his mind, but was told by Kaplan later that the call was from the private detective.

The detective gave Kaplan the final word that he had found his brother — and then it was up to him.

He called McArron on January 16th.

"Hullo?" McArron answered the phone.

"Is this Michael McArron?" Kaplan asked.

"Yeah."

"Are you sitting down?"

"Yeah, I'm sitting down. Why?" McArron asked.

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"Write this number down in case we get disconnected," Kaplan said, and McArron did.

Then Kaplan asked, if anyone had ever informed McArron that he might be adopted.

"Yeah, I'm adopted," he answered.

"What's your real mother's name?"

"Margaret Newman," answered McArron.

"Well, I'm your brother," Kaplan said.

"I was shocked," McArron remembers. "I didn't even know I had a brother so it was strange to sit there and talk with him. It was great, too."

"Later in the conversation Terry asked me if I was going bald. I just laughed and told him I got him there," McArron said.

After the phone call, he wasn't sure whether he should tell his mother, Louise, in McCloud that Kaplan had called.

"I finally decided that she'd been open with me all these years, so I called her. She was really happy," he said.

Kaplan, who owns a 40-lane bowling alley in Daly City, visited his brother a few days after he called.

Until Kaplan arrived, McArron was in a daze. He'd lie awake at night wondering what his brother would look like and what kind of person he was.

Finally the day came, and McArron answered the knock at the door.

"When I got eye to eye with him there was no doubt in my mind he was my brother," he said.

"We have the same eyes, the same smile, the same mannerisms, and my wife said our earlobes even wiggle the same when we laugh," McArron said.

They spent the afternoon getting to know each other a bit, discussed their backgrounds, talked about the future.

McArron was amused to learn that they both drive Toyota pickup trucks, enjoy chardonnay wine with dinner, and have been divorced once.

Kaplan brought all kinds of things for his brother to see — a rough sketch of their family tree, a picture of Margaret Newman when she was 18 years old, and another taken shortly before she died.

He had a picture of a group of 20 or so people all gathered at a barbecue. McArron was told the group included his aunts, uncles, cousins.

"I was the only one they hadn't found," McArron said. "Now that family is complete."



Photo by Jenny Coyle

A rough-sketch family tree, pictures of relatives, and other memorabilia were in a package Michael McArron's brother brought to him when they met for the first time in January. McArron is shown above holding a picture of his real mother when she was 18. The picture was taken in San Francisco.

Kaplan and McArron also pulled out their baby pictures.

"They're exactly alike. We both had snow white hair and blue eyes."

McArron learned he was German.

"I can't grow a beard, and I don't have much hair on my chest or arms and legs, so I always figured I was Scandinavian. But I'm German," he said.

He found out about his medical history, and that he has a cousin in Redding who used to live in Dunsmuir.

"I'm glad I know all these things. If you're adopted then there are these questions you've got in your mind, and you think they'll never be answered all your life."

"Then — boom — all in one day you have answers to those questions that have been in the back of your mind forever."

As for the personalities of the brothers themselves, McArron said they've both had their

"radical" days, but aside from that they're pretty different.

Kaplan's hobbies and interests lie in the city.

"You can tell in his face that he hasn't had an easy life. He does now, but I can't imagine what it would be like to grow up on the steets like he did."

"I'm country," McArron continued. "I grew up in McCloud so I'm into fishing, hunting, skiing. I'm sure he'll be up here to visit because he said those are things he always wanted to learn."

And, of course, McArron has already planned a trip to San Francisco. Kaplan says there's an uncle who may have information about McArron's real father.

He wants to see Kaplan's home and meet relatives.

He also wants to visit his mother's grave.

"Terry asked an uncle if our mother ever regretted giving her sons up for adoption," said McArron.

"She said yes, that she had regretted it all of her life."