



September 26, 2018

### ***A FAMILY STORY***

It was a joyous reunion.

The adventure began in a sad way, when her mother handed her a scrap of paper shortly before she died. On the paper were two names. Pointing to the name *Joan Dayton*, her mother said, "This was your name when you were born." And pointing to the name *Athena*, "That is the name of your mother."

Natalie Garland has always known that she had been adopted. She grew up in a happy home in Gardner, MA. She loved her adopted parents, Roger and Florence Smith, and her brothers Neil and David. Hers was a happy childhood, but she always wondered about her other family. Still, she went on with her life.

Natalie graduated from Wheelock College with a major in Education. While in college, at a combined chorus concert, she met her husband, David, a Bowdoin man. They married and became members of the Hills Church in 1962. Their three sons, Dwight, Ted, and Peter, were raised in the Hills Church Sunday School. For many years, Natalie sang in the choir and served on the music committee. She also led the successful effort to raise funds to install the lovely Noack Organ in Wallace Chapel. And for ten years she served as church secretary, where she enjoyed the duty of typing sermons for The Reverend Craig Adams. David also served in many capacities, including a term as chair of the Prudential Committee and years as leader of the Men's Breakfasts.

Natalie taught in the Wellesley Public Schools for 30 years.

When son Ted's, wife, Mary, who was an accomplished Ancestry.com researcher, reported that she had traced the Garland family back to the 1500's, this gave Natalie an idea. Perhaps Mary could find out about her birth family. So she gave Mary the information on the scrap of paper, and Mary was on the case!

Within ten days, Mary had found an obituary photo of Natalie's mother, Athena. It bore a striking resemblance to Natalie! But when asked about arranging a meeting with relatives she might have, Natalie paused. She was satisfied with her life now. David's health was not good, so she had enough on her plate.

Years went by. David died in 2015. And then, out of the blue, as a result of an entry made by Mary, aka QueenMaryG, and a responding entry spotted by Dwight's wife, Suzanne, a letter came from Athena's grandson asking about Natalie's birth and offering information on her birth family. By this time, Natalie was ready for a meeting. One thing led to another, and a meeting was set for June 9, 2018, at North Hill, where Natalie met her natural sister, Joan (age 80), and her brother, Ron (age 77), for the very first time.

When the siblings came together, it was love at first sight. It was indeed a joyous day.

Joyous, that is, except that Mary, without whose skill and dedication the meeting would never have occurred, was not there. Mary, dear Mary, while in apparent good health, had died suddenly a few

months earlier. Mary is remembered with love by all who knew her, and especially by her Mother-in-Law, Natalie, whose heart is filled with gratitude for the precious gift of a family that Mary found.

By *Elizabeth Robertson*