

Some Old Ways Can Change, Part II

Sandy eventually learned that his parents were brought up in a “rural farming community” [in Duplin County] and had been high school sweethearts. The pregnancy occurred their senior year. Their respective parents were against their marrying and determined that the baby would be put up for adoption.

Through the persistence of Sandy, the Counselor spoke twice in one day with his father, who was 68 and lived out of state but still owned the farm where he was brought up. Sandy’s original “family,” via his natural father, gave him two half-sisters (38 and 37), and two half-brothers (20 and 15), and he had two uncles and an aunt still in North Carolina.

After certain legalities were attended to, the meeting was imminent. The problem was that his father wanted them to meet at Washington Duke Inn on the Duke University campus. Well, if you know much about North Carolina, you surely know of one of this country’s major SPORTS RIVALRIES. His father received his undergraduate and law degrees [and I received my bachelor’s degree!] at Duke and had donated \$10 million, the largest single gift in the institution’s history, to renovate its subsequently renamed Goodson Law Library. Sandy received his undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Obviously, they were father and son—Sandy told the Counselor to tell him that he would drive four hours to Mt. Olive and be there at 7 a.m. but that meeting him on the campus of Duke University “was not going to happen!”

However, second thoughts came quickly to Sandy. His father had searched for him three times starting in the 1970’s and had hired an attorney to help as recently as 2007. He planned to take out full-page advertisements in the ten largest newspapers in North Carolina for Sandy’s 50 birthday (September 2009) in an effort to find him. He did not know that North Carolina’s adoption laws changed in 2006. The upshot? Father and son met April 16, 2009, at the Washington Duke Inn. Sandy has now “suffered through more basketball games



than [he] care[s] to remember at [Duke’s] Cameron Indoor Stadium.”

Some weeks later came the meeting of mother and son at the CHS Greensboro office. She brought her 1959 high school yearbook.

Sandy sees both parents four-five times a year and is in touch with other family members. His mother lives in Fayetteville (NC); his father, in Princeton (NJ). Sandy speaks with some frequency on behalf of The Children’s Home Society, to which he remains profoundly grateful.

But was he invited to Fran’s birthday party just because his birth parents had the same kind of Wayne County-Duplin County links? Not exactly, although he says that Janet Ward invited him to talk about Duplin County. Sandy’s adoptive family lived, as Fran does, in Concord, NC. He and Janet Ward attended the 5th-12th grades together. Fran taught him Composition I and II. His father met Janet Ward and mailed Sandy an article about her. Fran hosted a (funereal) Visitation for Pam McWhorter’s mother in Concord; the McWhorter family was also friends with Sandy’s adoptive family. After about an hour into the Visitation, he told Janet Ward that his father (Mike Goodson) thought they might be related and asked if her mother had any connections with Duplin County. Janet Ward was ecstatic when he mentioned that Gladys Goodson was his grandmother. She interrupted her mother in the living room, and Fran responded, “This better be important.” But she was equally impressed and quickly “connected the Goodson dots.”

Fran’s father (Jack Ward, who was my husband’s uncle) died when she was 2. Fran’s mother remarried (Elmer Goodson) when Fran was 6. Although he was technically

her stepfather, Elmer Goodson was “Daddy” to her. Sandy’s grandfather, John Goodson, and Elmer Goodson were first cousins. Today, Fran’s homeplace remains separated from Mt. Olive by seven and a half miles of farmland; the house of Sandy’s grandparents is still separated from Fran’s homeplace by three miles of farmland.

Fran and Janet Ward gave Sandy needed and welcome information about John Goodson and, especially, his wife, Gladys, who was Sandy’s grandmother and died in 1999. She was a wonderful Sunday school teacher and “a special Southern lady.” In turn, Sandy introduced them to the Goodson Reunion, which he had at that time attended twice. From then until her death (7/2/2017), Fran went to those reunions.

But one more coincidence must be shared. Accompanying my husband and me to Fran’s birthday were R. D. and Glenda Stroud. Like Emory, R. D. was adopted but in a different way. Before he started to school, his mother died, and his father could not care for him. One day, he took him on a walk. When a big black car pulled up, R. D.’s father told him to “get in. You are going with those two ladies. Be good.” The women were sisters; one had recently adopted Emory and had urged her sister to take in R. D.

R. D. also has a connection with Sandy, whose birth parents were in his high school graduating class. Sandy’s mother was reputedly the prettiest girl in the group.

Sandy says that “Not much has changed in 57 years except for the paved roads” in the area where his parents and Fran grew up. Fortunately, some of the old ways have.

Having learned about all this, my husband Emory is still not interested in pursuing his birth parents. But he immediately contributed to the Children’s Home Society.

Dr. Lynn Veach Sadler, of Burlington’s The Village at Brookwood, a former college president, is widely published in academics and creative writing and works as a writer and an editor.

EDITOR

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Michael Fiocco is another public servant up for re-election who deserves to be returned to office. He has the boundless energy a former UNC varsity athlete and the mental capacity to match. He is a professional planner, which is a nice set of skills to have when the Town is facing current and long term growth pressure. And his skills have been augmented by a work effort that is second to none. Mr. Fiocco rarely takes a night off. He attends meetings on behalf of the Town and its citizens religiously, which ensures that the Town has a strong policy making voice at the table nearly every day of the week. He is creative, thoughtful and pragmatic, without being just a policy wonk. He sparks interest on the board and brings new ideas. At meetings he comes prepared with his red pen, a series of questions and reasoned solutions to move fair and good public policy forward.

He understands what it is like to own a business as he is a principal in his firm and the owner with his wife of a wonderful rare sanctuary and unique bookstore in Chapel Hill called Flyleaf Books.

But you need not take my word for it.

Just ask local business owners like Greg and Maria Lewis, former Town Board Member Beth Turner or the chair and vice chair of Pittsboro’s Additional Elements Committee Jim Nass and Doug Emmons respectively. They will give you a no nonsense account and endorsement of Commissioner Fiocco.

In short, Commissioner Fiocco is the type of local public servant that every town needs and should keep in service as long as they are willing to serve.

He has the experience, plenty of institutional wisdom, loads of energy and ability to do the job well. What more could be needed?

On November 7th, please return Michael Fiocco to office.

—Virginia J. Penley



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