

Acknowledgments

*Thank you to my family and friends
for all of their love and support ~
Especially Jayne Rhodes*

*A Special Thank You
To
Steven Cohn
whom without his constant energy and talent,
this book would never have come to fruition*

Foreword

by the author's daughter

*A few years ago, my mother told me she was planning on writing a book and asked me how I felt about it because I would be a large part of the story. When she first told me the idea, I honestly thought she would never make the time or have the energy to do it; and even if she did, what could possibly inspire her to achieve such a feat? Now, I know exactly what it was that kept her inspired, because it's exactly what she has taught me my entire life. . . . that people, moments, and even hardships can make us want to achieve things, but deep down what inspires us the most is our own life. She taught me that life is enough to make us want to do anything, that there is no more of a reason to want to fulfill our dreams. And as you will read, *Life* has not only made my mom accomplish her dream, but I am sure at the same time, it has given her a huge incentive to keep going, to keep believing, to keep being inspired. And I am so glad that she has found an inspiration, much as I have found with her as an example. And with that, there is a purpose for everything in life.*

*~ Holly,
March 6, 2006*

About Christine...

by the author's spiritual mentor and friend

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I share with you my knowledge of Christine. I have known Chris for about ten years and have observed her spiritual growth and been a recipient of her many talents.

Her bright eyes, pleasant appearance, and personality are like Spring: displaying a blossoming smile, dancing eyes, and creative skills. Expressions of her strong beliefs and generosity will enhance each person's experience with Chris. Her ability as a poetress and creator of labyrinths is like Summer: warming, relaxing, and inviting (to submerge oneself in deep inner thought).

Christine's talents seem almost unlimited. Her creative skills are like Christmas morning opening up hidden treasures, bringing sheer delight to the receiver. Her poetry, dancing, and beading, to name a few, have brought much happiness.

So, to me, Chris is an all-season gal, and I am proud and grateful to call her a special friend and spiritual sister. I wish her well with her book and I am sure you will enjoy walking with her through her life, which she is sharing.

-- Ellie Fristensky

Preface

by the author

From what I understand, many people get an itch
to write a book sometime in their fifties.

An itch would not describe the case with me.

It's not that I had never thought
about the possibility of writing a book,
it was that it just seemed like something
I couldn't do or would never do.

This book was written
thanks to the guidance of the universal forces,
those from beyond and those on this earth.

Every word was Divinely guided
and each sentence was a joy.

Although it took a lot of dedication and time,
I never felt stressed, stuck, or confused during the process.

It was as if Spirit was guiding each step as I wrote
and brought the book into completion.

If I needed help or another opinion from someone,
that person would be there to assist me.

Once the Force gave me the insight
as to what the book should be about,
I knew that it was important for me to write it.

My intention was to reach those on this earth
working with abandonment issues,
and not just children who are adopted.

I wanted to touch those
who feel isolated, depressed, or unworthy of living.

I had those feelings too in my life,
and at the time,
prayed that someone, or something somewhere
would help me.

So this is my personal hope and intent
in writing this book:

to reach those who are disheartened,
and to let them know that they are not alone.

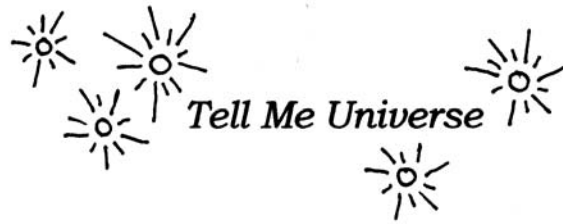
If I touch one person with my story,
my life will be touched too.

Introduction

Kathy Jane Segur, Christine Diane Higgins, Christine Guardiano... Yes, to all of these names I will answer. Yet what answers did they hold for me in my life? Did I have loving parents to bring me up? Yes, but they were not able to help me find my own self-worth. That was my job as an adopted child: to find out where I belonged on this planet.

As a young child, I felt worthless, good-for-nothing, as they might say. No confidence, no strength, no power within myself to make my life seem worthwhile. How could I feel this way, you might ask, when my adopted parents loved me so much and gave me everything they could?

It was my purpose here on earth to work through this rejection and feeling of abandonment. This I learned as I grew spiritually with the one hand that held onto mine and never let go: God's hand. It was always with me, even when I felt he was so far away. He helped me find the strength I needed to make something of my life and myself. He saw me through finding my mother dead, yet very much alive in the face of my reincarnated daughter. He gave me great understanding beyond my wildest dreams. Read my story and my struggle for identity as an adopted child. Find out how I was able to find confidence and a spiritual awakening. I pray that this book will touch the lives of many who are searching, not only for their families, but also for a completeness that has been missing in their lives for maybe a long time.



*Tell me Universe
Who we are
Why have we come here
From afar?
What is our purpose?
Our reason for life?
And why do we endure
So much strife?*

*We're born into love
We're born into grace
And then life seems to give us
That slap in the face.
We want to escape
For we do not know
That we've chosen this life
From so long ago.*

*We planed all of it
Down to its core
Our soul knows its purpose
Though our minds say ~ No More!*

If only we accept

*And understand
That God is here for us
It's all part of the plan*

*To experience life
From A until Z
And come back again
If really need be
For if we are open
And willing to trust
All of life's Joy and Blessings
Will be placed upon us*

*For God wants us to be happy
Free of life's ills
But this is our choice
For we all have free wills*

Chapter One

Looking back on my life, at the age of 55, I realize that it has been a world of growth, hardship, joy, love and pain. It has been a journey that I would never change, even though there were times I wanted to lock myself away from the world and end my existence.

Very often, as a child, there were times that I hated life, afraid to live fully. The weight of life often bore down on me like a heavy load, too much to carry. The overwhelming desperation of wanting to escape from the stress of the world and the pressures of life often made me just want to take an easy way out, and that easy way was to end it and be with love again in God's arms.

As a child gradually becoming aware of life, I had an uncommon longing for inner peace; and, like *few* people my age, I often felt the weight of the un-childlike world on my tiny shoulders. It was hard to breathe.

Happiness was of utmost importance to me, and I prayed for happiness—or what I thought it was—every day. I explicitly wished that I could live in my own perfect world, a place that somehow I could create for myself, a place where I would feel totally loved, complete, fearless, and whole. My small body, my child's mind, and my little heart yearned for something to fill an oversized—but unexplained—void that felt very real inside me.

At the time, I did not totally understand these feelings, but, looking back as I pen these words and feel the energy of who I was then, I realize now that, just before being that child, I had come from a place of ultimate love and peace (many religions name that state-of-being

Heaven); I can feel that place as I write; and in this moment, I consciously recognize, in a way that my young *soul* knew, but my young *mind* did not grasp, that the longing I felt as that sad child—was a Universal connection or desire within me to go back to that tranquil place, that place where I could feel complete.

In my own home—the place that two exceptionally loving people made for me—I was homesick. I longed to return to the prior place, of which I felt no longer a part, but which I remembered on a *sub-* or *super-*conscious level. In my *conscious* world, I felt lost and alone.

Just as a blind man trusts his seeing-eye-dog to guide him, I gradually learned to count on *my parents* to guide me along life's path. Trust in my parents was a wonderful thing, but taken to the extreme to which children often take such trust, it did not teach me how to stand on my own or to be responsible for my own life. Over time, this caused great pain.

My parents *transferred* some of the trust I had placed in them by telling me that *God* takes care of all people who give themselves over to Him. I liked hearing this. When they said it, a small part of me felt that I already knew it. I instantly loved the *idea* that God would protect and take care of me wherever I went. I really thought that God might be there, in the depths of my soul. On some level, my soul knew that I was loved by God. But, in the stark day-to-day reality of my physical world and in my mental torment, there I was, at the age of 5, feeling *alone*, even among people who loved me: I could not see God; I could not feel Him. I could not hear Him. *Where had he gone?!!!* How was I to find Him? Why had He, the Everything, abandoned me? I so desperately wanted to trust what my parents had told me—that He was there. But without proof, I found this so hard to do.

I think most of us hope that we can make a difference in this world, at least in some small way, during our lifetimes. As a child, I continually felt as if I never would.

You see, my parents smothered me with their love, protecting me and giving me all that they could. Included in that were lessons distinguishing right from wrong, lessons which were drilled into me in an endless array of variations, so that I would not forget. My parents taught me many things: manners, how to be kind to others, and how to be a lady. And since I was told far more often when I was doing *wrong* than right, I began to think I could *never* please them or be the perfect little girl they were looking for. I strived to do good in their eyes, hoping from the depth of my being to get their approval, hoping to feel like I made a difference, but even in the rare instances that I heard “You did a good job,” there was always that “BUT, if you did this instead...” or “You could have done better.”

It was April 1997 when my own daughter Holly called, down on her luck. She was 22 years old. She and her husband were living in Potsdam, NY, a small town not far from Canada; the two were trying to make a life for themselves by running their own business. Their business was not doing well. They had begun to acquire a large debt, and they tried working extra jobs to make ends meet. Holly was calling to ask my husband and me if she could come home and stay with us for a while. She did not know what else to do, and felt that she and her husband had done everything they could do to survive in Potsdam. She hoped that by coming home, they could start a new life for themselves, as long as we were willing to give them a chance.

Holly’s call sent a myriad of emotions running through me. I wanted to help my daughter and her husband, but

at the same time, I was taught by my parents that once a couple is married, they stayed together and did what they could on their own. “Tough Love” was my parents’ belief, and they had taught me to believe that too. After all, I knew my parents’ own difficult background, how hard they had had it, and what they expected of me. For years, I had watched them overcome obstacles in their lives, always keeping their emotions and feelings strictly to themselves. And, although in many ways I was a weak and shy little girl who smothered her true feelings until I was in my 40’s, my parents’ example of strength and Tough Love ultimately helped make me the strong person I am now.

I continually heard, as I grew up, how much joy and love a child could bring, and therefore I always envisioned myself as an eventual parent; I wanted some day to be one.

Until moments like this one in 1997—a phone call for help from afar and from across generations—I never knew what that really meant, or how intense your love could be for your own child. When I finally *was* blessed with children, I understood the words “a love that passes all understanding”—how a parent would die for her children, and pray at times for her children’s pain to go away... always remembering that it is each child’s choices and each child’s destiny to fulfill his or her *own* joy and happiness; each child’s life path was God’s journey into His light.

I did not know my birth-parents; I was adopted. My mother and father, through the act of adopting, had found a space in their hearts to take into their lives more than one child. They wanted to give my brother and me a chance for a loving life, which otherwise, we might not have had.

Mom grew up on the west coast of Canada with two sisters and one brother. It was a very different kind of life. Her father owned a general store, and all of his children—including my mom—had to work there at some point during their lives, to help the family make ends meet. My mom's family was well-known by everyone in the community; the family reputation was important to their business. I often wondered if this could have been one of the reasons my mom did not like to share much of herself (word can travel fast in a small town). This is not to say that she did not have a wild side. There were times that she got into trouble, and I bet she often had to deal with how her actions appeared to her neighbors.

It was during World War II, my mom went to her friend Gladys's house for a party. Some of the soldiers who were stationed in Alaska were going to be there, and my mom's friend couldn't wait to introduce them to her. As the men arrived at Gladys's home, Gladys introduced them to my mom one at a time. One of the men, described later in family stories as "very attractive with dark black wavy hair, a beautiful smile, and loving eyes," slipped on the small entrance rug and fell flat on his face. He turned out to be the man that my mom would marry. She would tell my brother and me this story repeatedly as we grew up, saying that such was how our dad had fallen for her.

At 19 years old, a scared and young girl, my mom left home for the first time to travel across North America to New York... to marry a man she barely knew. The two lived in New Rochelle, north of New York City, for a stint in a small apartment with my dad's parents, and were lucky to save money to move to Levittown, Long Island into a beautiful new home. My dad's parents were also able to get a house in Levittown, just down the block. After a few years of having lived together in close

quarters in New Rochelle, offspring and in-laws all knew that they got along pretty well.

Since my dad had been a photographer in the armed services, he was able to find a job working for a newspaper in Manhattan called *The Sun*. His workdays were very long, starting early in the morning. Each day, he made the cumbersome trip into and out of 'the city'.

Life is never easy when you are young, married, and starting out on your own, and it certainly wasn't for my parents. But, they made many friends in the neighborhood that helped lift their spirits. They would enjoy taking turns at each other's homes, sharing the little wealth that they had by hosting an occasional dinner or party. The neighbors and my parents-to-be also belonged to the same Lutheran church, and two different couples from the area eventually became my brother's godparents and mine.

Years went by, and most of my parents' friends started having children. My parents wanted a child too, but they seemed to be having no luck. After seeing a doctor and having some tests, they found out that it was my father who was the cause of my mother's non-conception. Still wanting children, they decided to try and adopt. This young couple found that the process of adoption and intense questioning were more involved than they had ever expected. They hoped that it would not take long for the agency to find a child for them, but months and months went by. After three long *years* of waiting, the telephone finally rang, and the woman on the other end told this woman and this man that she felt that her organization had found the perfect little fifteen-month-old girl for them. My mom was so excited when she first saw me, she couldn't help but pick me up and hold me, even though she was told not to. The agency

said that it did not want to cause any immediate attachments. Sadly, the man and the woman were not allowed to take me home and had to leave me behind. It was one of the hardest things that my parents ever had to do. Although I remember very little about this time in my life, I have relived this moment many times through my mother's and father's loving stories.

Finally the day came for me to come home. There was so much excitement in the neighborhood. Everyone knew how long my parents had been waiting. There were pictures galore, of course, since my dad was a photographer. Every moment of my life was captured, and there were lots of firsts to take since I did not walk or feed myself. My parents had much to teach me even though I wasn't a newborn. It wasn't long before they were blessed with another adopted child, this time a little boy who was two years younger than I was.

I was quickly taught how to get along with my adopted brother, and my mom made sure that I was involved in helping take care of him. He was a handful, between chewing through the bottom of the playpen, crawling out the window into the snow when he was suppose to be napping, getting up early before my mom was awake to try his hand in some cooking, and melting the plastic seat covers my mom had just replaced. And it didn't end there. One day, he was out and picked up a neighbor's milk bottle, which slipped out of his hands and broke. He found this so exciting that he proceeded to visit the rest of our neighbors' houses that morning, breaking their milk bottles too. My poor mother spent the rest of the day cleaning up the messes that he had left behind. Another time, little brother turned our water hose on and managed to lasso it into the window of our neighbor's house. These types of activities were more 'the rule' than 'the exception to the rule' for my younger sibling, growing

up...and beyond. He kept up this level and variety of mischievousness most of his young life, never giving my poor mom a break. She was lucky that I was such a well-behaved child because my brother and his shenanigans demanded a lot of her time, and kept my mother constantly on her toes.

My mother was a strong woman and had to handle a lot by herself since my father was rarely at home. My mother's friends could never understand how she did it.

With all the attention that my *brother* needed, and the strain that it put on my mother, *I* committed—at a young age—to trying to make my mother's life easier by doing everything *I* could *right*. As I mentioned, growing up, I often heard the words “You did a good job,” along with its mandatory (seemingly conjoined) twin daggers “BUT, if you did this instead...” and (or) “you could have done better.” I remember one year in school working hard at one of the few subjects I was good at: “Art.” We were drawing the human body that year, and for those of you who are artists, you know that the human body is one of the hardest things to draw and make life-like. I had done a drawing of a sailor, and I was so proud of it. I couldn't wait to get home and show my mom and dad. I showed it to my mom first, since my dad worked late and could see it later. As it turned out, my mom looked at the picture and told me how nice it was, and then proceeded to explain the different things I could do to make it look better, ending with, “well, you know it really is very good since I can't draw at all.” Now, some people might say “well that wasn't so bad,” but I wanted her to say four simple words: “What a good job.” Instead I got a critique on how my picture could be improved.

I never did show the drawing to my dad, who was the artist in the family, in fear that he too would take apart

my work. I felt down and depressed. I had thought that I could at *least draw*.

Maybe I was insecure. Where did that feeling come from? Even at that young age, it came from hearing over and over again “But” in most everything I did...and would do for years into my future. There was a guilt I would feel if I ever did anything wrong, for I wanted my parents to love me, treasure me, appreciate me, and most of all I wanted their compassion and attention.

One might ask, with all of the general fortune I experienced as a child, if I was spoiled. Well maybe I was a little, especially by my dad who would often enter the house from work bearing pretty and exciting gifts, but that didn't seem to displace or lessen the recurring—even growing—feeling and fear of abandonment that lived inside me, rearing its ugly head every step of the way, at even the hint of an opportunity to do so.

With it all, I knew, as I mentioned before, that my *parents* had never had it easy. I had heard their stories over and over again, like most of us do. Why did my parents tell me those stories so many times? Was it because they wanted me to respect them, live my life to their standards, or was it an underlying prayer for me to have a better life than they had?

Bouncing across the convoluted landscape of space-time, I too, have continually wanted my children to have a better life than mine. At one point, I wanted them to have a nice home, decent money, and as few hardships as possible.

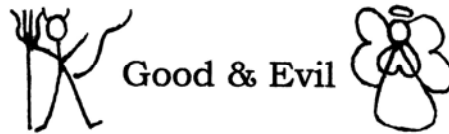
I didn't know how much I was kidding myself at the time.

I believe now that we are our children's parents, and our job is to bring them up to be the best human beings they can be, but it is their own life. We may want them to have all the best that life can offer; we may want to protect them, and save them from ever being hurt. I have learned that we cannot do that. We can only guide them; for they have chosen to come to this planet to learn their own lessons and make a life for themselves, whether, it feels good or bad. A flood of awareness fills me: we did not choose our children; they chose us. Therefore, it is their destiny that must be fulfilled. We truly, as parents, don't have too much to say about that, for the play of their lives is all in God's hands. To me, it gradually has become clear: only God knows what is best for our children, because our children are really His children, children of the Universe; just as we ourselves are also His children.

~

Flash forward/back to April 1997. Holly on the phone. Time has stopped. The moment is boundless. Finally, my husband and I respond: We tell our daughter and her husband that they can come stay with us for a short while. Even though we deeply want them to make it on their own, I am not ready in this moment to let go and watch them fall on their faces. There would be a few adjustments for us all to make since Holly had been gone for a few years. Our house wasn't very big, and she and her husband would have to move whatever they had into her small bedroom. How would we all get along, I wondered? Would we fight all the time? What would happen to our privacy? I kept reflecting back on my life and how my mother had helped me when I was almost in

Holly's position. Yes, I knew it would be hard. But it was only for a short while, I reminded myself, and we would somehow get through it. God had already become a big part of my life, and had helped me cope with my divorce from my first husband who had beaten me. I had learned I could get through anything.



*Lucifer, Lucifer
The devil's your name?
You try and divert us?
It's all part of your game.
But your name really means
Light-Bearer--and so
We can see past the evil
And into your glow*

*For you are an angel
With a hell of a job
To show us life's balance
And help the poor slob
Who thinks that your evil
Is poised to destroy
All of life on this Earth
For each girl and boy*

*Yet God reins on high
And with Love shows his plan
He wants all off us
To truly understand
The difference between
What is bad... and what's good
For without Mr. Devil
All might be mis-understood*

*So I thank you Lucifer
For the balance you give
So I can appreciate
God's light, love... and live
For without all life's contrasts
For me to perceive
I might not fully appreciate
All God's gifts I receive*