

September 19, 2013

HUFFPOST GAY VOICES

Seeking My Anonymous Sperm-Donor Father

Posted: 09/18/2013 11:51 pm

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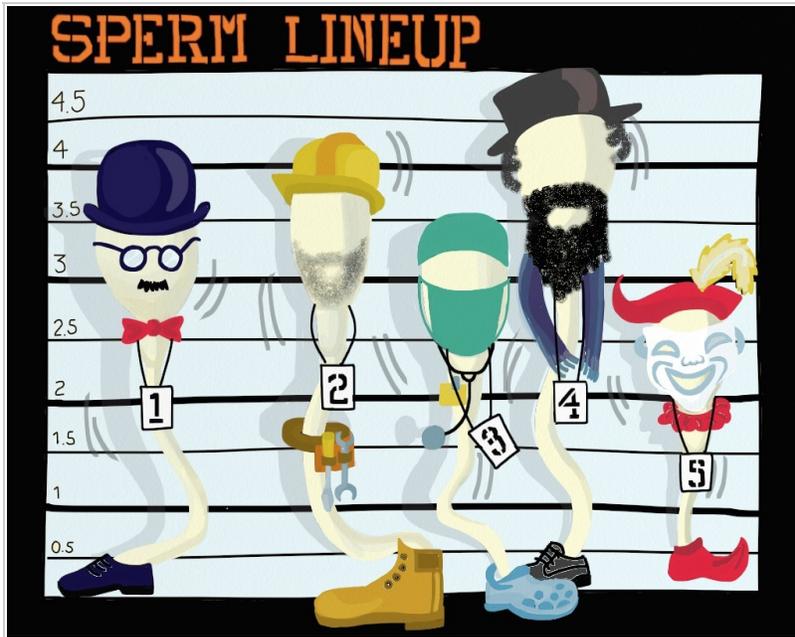


Illustration by Leah Rubin-Cadrain (@leahaviva)

I did once seek out my biological father.

A front-page article had hit *The New York Times*, and I was suddenly spammed by 6,000 well-meaning friends emailing me about DonorSiblingRegistry.com, a website that helps people track down sperm-donor fathers and potential siblings.

Back when I was conceived, my moms chose to keep their sperm donor anonymous, in both directions, feeling that doing so best protected the family they were starting, in particular R's position as the non-biological mother.

Nowadays there are scores of people reeling in their genetic line on the fishing wire of the Internet, trying to fill in the gaps of parental choices (sound as they may have been).

I was intrigued. Suddenly my natural interest in finding my father intersected with the tools to maybe do so. After all, 6,000 friends spamming your inbox about a new website can't be wrong!

I knew that my window of opportunity was closing with each year. My sperm-donor father, if he hadn't already been hit by a falling piano or bitten by a venomous snake while hiking, could well be dying of more natural causes.

I was also propelled by a haunting scene: an image of my grandchildren, sitting out in front of me on an old person's shaggy carpet, asking, "So, did you, like, make any effort whatsoever to find your dad?" And my disappointing response: "Well, listen, I was busy. Never got around to it. Here, have a cookie and leave me alone." I would imagine the grandkids, all three of them, repulsed by me and my laziness. I had made not one iota of effort not so much to bring them a genetic match of a great-grandfather but at least to make my own life story exciting by way of a *Maurry*-style dad hunt: paternity tests, cussing, muffin tops, everything. I thought maybe I owed them this.

I signed up for the website and put in lots of details about myself and the exceedingly minimal info I had on my donor father and the fertility clinic and hospital that my moms had used.

I then rather ashamedly told my parents that I was interested in doing this search. This brought up embarrassment for me and initial discomfort for R, who had spent the parenting portion of her life building a parental identity from scratch, not as a biological mother, not as a father, but as a "co-mother," as she was called on my school forms. I would cross out "father" and write "co-mother," and suddenly my emergency contact form would be as political as a burning flag.

We talked candidly about how this search should in no way threaten us as a family, and about how my desire to at least casually attempt to find my father was something I needed to do for myself and certainly not as an act of destruction or rebellion.

Despite their initial apprehension, my parents soon rallied around this project (as is their custom with projects of mine). It seemed also that my moms had had their own latent curiosity about this mystical sperm donor, and that I was giving them permission to air it.

The search quickly yielded a sweet, nerdy man, a member of MENSA, whose donation timeline and basic background (Jew) fit mine.

If you can believe this, my family and I actually sat down with him at a brunch place in Greenwich Village called Jane. We liked him. We talked about all sorts of things while silently puzzling over his forehead, his nose, his shoulders, to see if, as a man, I might be him.

He was so nebbishy, the sort of guy who practically begs to be shoved into a locker. He kind of seemed like he needed a family.

The *Maury* moment came when he agreed to a paternity test. The days waiting for the results were fraught and exciting. When the results came and he turned out to be just some guy, I realized how deeply entrenched we'd all become in this fantasy. I had let myself believe that this itch could be quickly scratched, failing to see it for what it was: a needle in a haystack and, more specifically, a needle that, very likely, actively didn't want to be found.

But on the heels of defeat, I felt peaceful. I had tried. Now my grandkids could shove it. I had made one nominal attempt, and it had been a rather gargantuan expenditure of emotional energy for my moms and me. I had wrestled with the sense that by taking the bait to go on this search, I was delegitimizing my family. Admitting collectively that we were curious, all three of us, was a weight off my shoulders.

Read more about growing up and being a grownup with two moms at two-and-a-half-women.tumblr.com.

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James E Taylor
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Yeah, but did you keep in contact with the guy who obviously needed a family?

I love your line about telling the grandkids to "shove it!"

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