



Source: Geoff Elliott, 'Bush's new tack to resell Iraq war', *The Australian online*, 22/03/06.

Tags: [crime](#), [death](#), [child/parent](#), [evidence](#), [sex](#)
Writer/s: [Frazer Ward](#)

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My mother hadn't worried about a birth certificate for me, until I was turning thirteen and due to start high school in Coffs Harbour. She was a massage therapist, and we'd moved up and down the coast, up as far as Townsville and back, basically following the tourists, and, I realized later, staying where there was a lot of turnover of service industry types. Doing shiatsu and so on, my mother would tap into the New Age-y corner of wherever it was, and I'd be plonked down in the local Montessori or Steiner school, whose headmistress Mum had always just gotten to know. Or a public school where they were used to an itinerant population, and maybe a little inattentive about every little bureaucratic detail. Mum had had an inheritance from a friend when I was a baby—really it was for me, she'd explained eventually—and she'd dealt with it wisely, so we were able to be pretty free-wheeling. I spent my childhood beside a series of beaches, which was idyllic, really, but we moved a lot for reasons I didn't understand until later, which upset me sometimes, because I didn't get to make a lot of friends as a child. Mum was always there, and looking back, it must have been rough for her: she didn't get to make a lot of friends, either, and if there were many boyfriends, I didn't see them. But Mum realized that I probably needed some stability through puberty and high school, and I'd need some better documents if I ever needed a passport. After the bombings in Darwin, security had gotten much tighter, and it turned out that we probably handled it just in time, because I was all legit by the time the identity card came in.

It's a little harder than you might think to retrofit a paper trail, but once Mum settled on Coffs she set to work, and by the time school started that year I was quite official. Not that I cared, at the time. Stella Harvey, Mum had always called me: she liked the name because of Polly Jean Harvey, she said, and when she started it she'd had some idea that it would look better for the daughter of a single mother to have the supposed man's name. This turned out to have complicated things a bit, when it came to entering me fully into the bureaucratic world, but she managed. Mum could go on about astrology and chi and feng shui and energy transfers with the best of them, but when I was sixteen, and she started to tell me what had really happened, I got it into my head for a while that she had fucked some bloke at the records office to get the papers. I think it was just me, and my own anxieties about sex (which I hadn't even had, yet), but we were tense for a while. In the end, she admitted that the New Age-y stuff

was a disguise, but she'd so adapted the language to her own internal code that she couldn't sound the word 'Piscean,' or whatever, without thinking I understood. Sometimes I think when she talked about energy transfers, she actually meant financial transactions. Poor thing. Because of me, she'd really lived a double life.

See, Mum wasn't my biological mother. She'd rescued me, when I was a baby, from my real parents. My mother Debbie was just lost and pathetic, when she had me, I think. I've seen the old TV footage Mum had kept tapes of, for when I was ready, and she comes across as drunken, stupid and shrill. But she was good-looking enough, if you could see past the booze and the too-much make-up and the ugly, expensive clothes, and the truth is I probably look just like her. Which has taken some getting used to, over the past few years. My father was called Bill Crabb. If you're old enough, you might remember him, the American whose wig got pulled off by a vengeful mother at his trial: he'd sexually abused more young girls than they could ever pin on him. Really young girls. He'd been murdered in jail. That would've been good for me and Mum, because the cops had pretty much assumed that Bill must have killed me, but apparently the whole thing was so awful it brought Debbie back to earth. Sobered up, calmed down, better dressed, and still rich, she'd reappeared six months after the trial and launched her own media campaign to find me. Rescued was still kidnapped, officially, which meant that Mum and I had to move around even faster than normal for a little while. I suppose Debbie eventually came around to the prevailing view, but by then she'd started the Stella Foundation, if you can believe it, providing medical and legal support for abused children, and become quite the media saint. I don't know if I'll ever be able to work out exactly how I feel about this, whether it's a bitter or a comical irony, whether I should be furious or feel she's redeemed herself. But my hair is always dyed and cut, and I know what 'Piscean' or 'double Gemini' means, now.

Mum died right before I finished my massage therapy certificate. Not that I really needed it: I'd learned more from her than I knew. I have money, now, I move around, it's not a bad life, and somewhere along the way I picked up from her how to stand in shadow in broad daylight. I'm observant, and every now and then the Stella Foundation gets an anonymous call, and a name is named.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Frazer Ward with thanks to Mira Cuturilo.