

[http://www.mcguire.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123153281.](http://www.mcguire.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123153281)

Happy to be called the 'birth mother's husband'

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol

U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center Public Affairs

JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, N.J. -- In all of my 40 years of living, I've been called a lot of things. Over the past 10 years, however, I've had one title only a few people hold - the "birth mother's husband."

I was referred to as the "birth mother's husband" this past April while attending a wedding for my wife Bobbi's "birth" daughter, Chrystal Chartier-Wittenmyer. The reference normally comes whenever she introduces my wife: "This is my birth mother....," and then me: "This is my birth mother's..." You get the idea.

All that said, however, Chrystal has a very special place in our family.

About 10 years ago, in December 1999, she made contact with my wife and our family with the words, "Hello, my name is Chrystal Chartier, and I think you're my birth mother."

We had just returned from a family shopping trip and were listening to our telephone messages. I had to catch Bobbi from collapsing when she heard Chrystal's voice on our answering machine. Tears were rolling down her cheeks as she listened.

I know Bobbi was relieved, and I was, too, because for her "one day" had finally come.

In the same month that Chrystal called us, our families met up in my hometown of Wakefield, Mich. That city was sort of a midway point for both of us. We were living at Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D., while Chrystal and her family were in Marquette, Mich.

That first meeting included Chrystal, her parents Ryan and Jackie Chartier, her sister Michelle and my family. It was a storybook event. In our family, we called it the "meeting of the millennium."

I learned a lot about Chrystal and how similar she is to my wife. The way everyone got along, conversed and enjoyed each other's company was as if we'd known each other all along. For me, it was seeing things come to fruition.

Just before Bobbi and I were married in 1992, she told me she gave up a baby for adoption in 1981. That baby was Chrystal. She told me all the reasons behind it, and looking back I appreciate her honesty for having told me such a personal thing. It only made me love her more for bringing me further into her circle of trust.

After Bobbi and I were married, we worked on building our family, which has grown over the past 17 years. With the marriage, I immediately gained an incredible daughter, Holly. Then Bobbi and I had three more children - daughters Ivy and Macy and son Jackson.

Thanks to Holly, we have also been grandparents for 11 years, with two beautiful granddaughters in Lyla and Alison. So, adding Chrystal and her family has followed the theme of "the more, the merrier."

Since that first meeting, we've met with Chrystal and her family off and on as often as we could, considering my military assignments and distances we've had to cover. It's been an absolute pleasure and all-around blessing to know Chrystal, her mother, father and sister.

Chrystal's inclusion in our family continues to tell me something. In mid-May, on the day I was notified I was selected for promotion to master sergeant in the Air Force, Chrystal called my wife to let her know she was expecting a baby. Her news made my great day even greater.

My father taught me long ago that if someone becomes a part of your family, they are family forever. For Chrystal, that is no different. Although she is not my daughter by birth, she holds a place in my family as if she were.

Nowadays, I carry the titles of husband, son, brother, uncle, dad and grandpa. I'm proud of all of them, but the label "birth mother's husband" is extra special because of Chrystal and the joy she brings to our lives.