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Oceans Apart: A Voyage of International Adoption

An almost fatal bout of small pox. A sobbing farewell to her mother at Saigon's Tan Son Nhat International Airport. A traumatic flight to the United States with adoptive parents. An abusive childhood filled with neglect and emotional turmoil. Yet, despite these agonizing upheavals, within the lonely child lives an unwavering quest for survival.

Is this the fictitious plot of a best-selling novel? "Certainly not," says Mary Mustard Reed, author of *Oceans Apart: A Voyage of International Adoption*. "This is the uncensored story of my fight to overcome and triumph as one of the first Vietnamese children-if not the first-to be adopted in the USA in 1964."

Beaten and forced to grow up on her own, the author dramatically details every aspect of her harrowing journey from barefoot toddler living in an unfurnished one-room hut to adopted daughter of a nasty, heartless woman-Margaret Mustard, who, from day one, never tried to hide her hatred for Mary.

"Festering in Margaret's mind," says Ms. Reed, "was the belief that her husband, Sam, agreed to the adoption because of his 'special fondness' for my young, beautiful mother, Yvonne." Filled with jealousy, Margaret used physical and mental violence to vent her anger, forcing young Mary to negate her Vietnamese legacy.

"This is a big issue in international adoptions," says Ms. Reed. "The United States handles over 20,000 foreign adoptions a year. I felt it was necessary to write *Oceans Apart* as a cautionary vehicle to inform parents of the importance of accepting the cultural heritage of their adopted children by encouraging them to keep who they are intact."

Ms. Reed also chronicles the turbulent life of her birth mother, with whom she shares many astounding parallels. *Oceans Apart: A Voyage of International Adoption* is a testament to the courage, tenacity and determination of these two phenomenal women. "It is indisputable proof," says Mary, "that dreams do come true, even though I had a long, obstructed path to follow before the American dream was mine."

Oceans Apart: A Voyage of International Adoption is also a tribute to the Red Cross, an instrumental force in reuniting Ms. Reed and her birth mother after twenty-nine years. Both believed each other to have been killed in deadly bombing in Saigon during the Vietnam War. "There is no limit to my gratitude for this amazing organization," Ms. Reed says.

Mary Mustard Reed, a graduate of California State University, Northridge, is a mother, a successful career woman in the pharmaceutical industry, and a children's rights advocate. She is also part of a volunteer medical team working with organizations in her home country through Project Vietnam (www.projectvietnam.org).

(Oceans Apart: A Voyage of International Adoption by Mary Mustard Reed;

ISBN: [097993270X](https://www.isbn-international.org/product/097993270X); \$18.95; 272 pages; softcover; JKD ENTERPRISE)

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