

Famous People Who Were Fostered

As diverse as this list is, we find both saints and sinners. But we have to agree that they all are household names. These are men and women from the last one hundred years (with one exception). I wonder if, when we go back into previous centuries, mothers and fathers were dying younger or unable to care for their children because of commonplace accidents and untreatable disease and infections and therefore children were perhaps fostered more frequently, at least for short periods.

Here are fifteen individuals I discovered were fostered. I hope their stories encourage you.

Jim Daly

(Focus on the Family host)

When his mother died of cancer when Jim was nine, Jim had already been abandoned by his father several years earlier. He was placed into foster care. Later, his older brothers when they grew old enough could care for him. Eventually his father came back and Jim lived with him, but then his father died of alcoholism before Jim completed high school.

John Lennon

(Beatles musician)

Fostering a relative is a common type of foster care and so valuable. When John was born, his father was away at war. John was eighteen months old when he returned, and when he divorced John's mother Julia. As he grew, John's behavior got wilder. Julia's solution was to ask her sister Mimi and her husband to foster John. John stayed with them for most of his childhood, with his mother visiting regularly and he visiting her and her new family. His aunt Mimi did not approve of John's music and it was actually his mother who bought John his first guitar.

Marilyn Monroe

(singer and actress)

Norma Jeane Mortenson (aka Norma Jeane Baker) was born to a single mother and never knew her father. At the age of eight, when her mother was declared legally insane, Norma was first sent to a family friend (Grace McKee) for a year until that woman lost her job and took her to the Los Angeles Orphans Home where the little girl spent two years. Stories say that while there, she was sent in and out of several foster families. After that, a family friend fostered her for four years. She then was able to go back to Grace McKee for another few months, then to another family member.

James Dean

(actor)

Dean's mother died when he was nine while his family was living in Santa Monica, California. His father sent him to Fairmount, Indiana to be raised by James' aunt and uncle on their farm. He rarely saw his father again. After breaking pole vaulting records in high school, James moved away to college in California when he was eighteen. He did live again briefly with his father there in Santa Monica while at college.

Willie Nelson

(musician and actor)

Willie and his older sister Bobbie were raised by their grandparents in Abbot, Texas. Their mother had simply walked out and their father left them to his parents when Willie was a few days old. Willie's grandparents were musicians who taught music and led the Methodist choir. They bought Willie his first guitar when he was six and he wrote his first song soon after. They taught his sister to play the piano.

Coco Chanel

(fashion designer)

Coco's was born Gabrielle Bonheur in France to an unwed mother, although her parents did marry the year after her birth. At age twelve, her mother died and her father sent her and her sisters to live in a convent. She lived in Aubazine and her six years there were characterized by a lot of sewing.

Cher

(musician and actress)

Cher's birth name was Cherilyn Sarkisian. Her parents separated before Cher was born. Cher's mother Georgia was actually on the table at the back-alley abortionist's when she realized she couldn't go through with an abortion. Since she didn't abort, and that was Georgia's mother's condition to her continuing living with her, Georgia went back to her husband.

They were very poor. So poor that they relinquished Cherilyn to a Catholic orphanage. When they returned a couple of weeks later with the boarding fee, they were told they should just have their daughter adopted out because Georgia was an "unfit mother." They had to fight for about six months to get their baby daughter back.

Tom Monaghan

(founder of Domino's Pizza)

When he was born, Tom's family lived in a farmhouse that his father had built. Their water came from the stream until later when they could afford a pump. Tom's father died on Christmas Eve when Tom was four years old.

His mother could not support them, and started nursing school. While there, she put Tom and his younger brother into foster care and after about a year of that, into the St. Joseph Home for Boys. Tom lived there for over six years. His mother finished school, started a nursing job and was able to reclaim her sons. Tom was in sixth grade. But he had become unruly and was again sent to a foster home and from there attended St. Francis High School. He lived on and off with his mother, with his behavior becoming so frustrating to his mother, that she had him sent to a juvenile detention home. His aunt and uncle had him released into their custody and he finally finished high school while living with them.

Lawrence J. Ellison

(founder of Oracle)

Lawrence was born in New York to an unwed mother. She gave him to her aunt and uncle when he was a few months old and Larry had become so ill, she realized she could not care for him. He was raised by his adoptive parents in a middle-class Jewish neighborhood of Chicago and learned he was adopted when he was twelve years old. He never met his biological father. He met his biological mother when he was forty-eight. His adopted father was from Crimea and took his new last name from his point-of-entry—Ellis Island.

Gene Siskel

(movie critic)

Gene was born in Chicago to Nathan and Ida Siskel, Russian Jewish immigrants. They both died before he turned nine years old. He and his siblings moved to be raised by his mother's relatives—his Uncle Joseph and Aunt Mae, in Glencoe, Illinois, stepped up to raise him. From their house in Glencoe, Illinois, he was within walking distance to the theater and he took fine advantage of that.

Demetrius Jackson

(basketball star)

Demetrius (very correctly) does not speak publicly about why, but he and his siblings were removed from his mother's home when he was twelve. He was sent into foster care. His first foster family booted him out. The second had several other children and it was uncomfortable there for him. Demetrius had a friend in middle school who was also on the basketball team with him. Demetrius would spend a lot of time at Michael's home and Michael asked his parents if his

friend could come live with them. Demetrius' new adoptive home felt very comfortable and loving.

Kid President—Robby Novak

(youtube star)

Robby and his big sister were in the foster system, and when Robby was just a baby, they were both adopted by the Novaks. Starting when he was eight years old, his brother-in-law Brad helped him make his Kid President videos which encourage others to make a difference.

Billy Sunday

(baseball player and evangelist)

Billy was born in 1862 and at five weeks old he lost his father to the Civil War. His struggling mother moved with her children into her parents' home, but when Billy was ten years old, she had to send him and his brother to the Soldiers Orphans Home. Stories say that it was here that he "discovered his athletic talents."

William Wilberforce

(British member of Parliament who lead the movement to abolish slavery)

When William was eight or nine, his father had died and his mother was ill. She sent him to London to live with his aunt and uncle. It was while living with them that he was taken to church and began following Jesus Christ. It was in their home that he met John Newton, listening to him for hours speak of Jesus and of the horrors of the slave trade (Newton himself having once been a slave trader).

Francis Chan

(pastor, author, and evangelist)

Francis's mother died giving birth to him, her third child. They named Francis after the city of his birth, San Francisco. His father sent him to his Buddhist grandmother in Hong Kong, where he stayed for the first five years of his life. After returning to the United States, his father died of cancer when he was twelve and he lived with a grandmother and other relatives.

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