

SURROGATE by Karen Fund, Reviewed by Ken Fuchsman

History and psychology have led to innovative situations with dramatic emotional ramifications. If in the past a woman wanted to be a mother, her options were limited. She could become pregnant and carry the baby to term, she could adopt, become a step mother. Technology has dramatically expanded these alternatives. These days a woman's eggs could be frozen, she could receive donor eggs, go for intrauterine insemination (IUI), in vitro fertilization (IVF), ovulation induction (OI) or have a surrogate carry a child inseminated by a male of her choice, often her husband or partner.

What follows are the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of a woman who eventually chose a surrogate to carry a child she would mother. They are recounted in Karen L. Fund's *Surrogate: How a Woman Named Sandra Made Me a Mother* (International Psychoanalytic Books). This is a rich story with many dimensions and emotional downs and ups. As well as Karen Fund's narrative, there are also contributions from her husband, psychoanalyst and historian David James Fisher, the surrogate Sandra, and one of the two children Sandra carried for Karen and Jim, as Karen calls him. The book is also an account of the 60s generation as it goes from youth to mid-life.

According to David James Fisher's biographical account, Karen was born in 1947 in Riverdale, New York and grew up in Englewood, New Jersey. She was one of 78.3 million baby boom children born in the U.S. between 1946 and 1964. Her family was affluent. Her father was a venture capitalist, a World War II marine, in college he played football at the University of Alabama. As well as raising Karen and an older sister Thea, Karen's mom was an interior designer.

Karen came into late adolescence as radical politics and cultural radicalism were flourishing. She learned to play the bass guitar, played in a rock band called the Jagged Edge that appeared at the famous Night Owl Cafe in Greenwich Village. The music that most appealed to her were Dylan, the Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, among others. Her group accompanied Donovan in 1966 in Los Angeles. In politics, she participated in anti-war demonstrations in New York and Washington D.C., and was actually arrested for improperly getting into the Nixon White House. Karen was also drawn to the revival of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The feminist figures that she admired were more centrist than separatists, and this includes journalist and activist Gloria Steinem, and Congresswoman Bella Abzug.

Many American sons and daughters born like Karen during the baby boom were active in the counterculture, leftist politics, and the sexual revolution.

To prevent becoming pregnant, Karen initially took the newly popular birth control pills, but found the side effects unpalatable. Looking for an alternative, she followed her doctor's advice that the Copper 7 Dalcon Shield IUD was safe and would alleviate her problems. She had the IUD put in her. As did many, her periods were extremely heavy, and she had cramps. Her doctor assured her this was all a normal occurrence. But the problems continued. Eventually the doctor did an X-Ray and discovered the IUD was not in the cervix as thought but had entered the wall of Karen's uterus. It was upside down. As Karen writes, "years later I was to learn that the entire time the IUD was in my body, it was undetectably scarring the inside of my fallopian to the point where nothing again would ever pass through them....an egg would never be able to move down the normal way." But it was years and years before this diagnosis was made. Karen would go through many failed attempts to become pregnant before this disability was actually found out.

Before finding out what was wrong with the IUD in her body, she had abandoned the unruly world of rock music and entered journalism in 1973. She became a founder of a trade periodical for film and video, called *Millimeter*. In 1978, she met and fell in love with Jim Fisher. A few years later she became a sales person for the relatively new *L. A. Weekly*, which covered music, film, and other arts in the Los Angeles region. Not long afterward she was promoted to associate publisher. Karen had found a niche for herself, as she became a sales person with a magic touch. She and her staff brought in a great deal of revenue into the paper. Her career path was becoming set. Again, as with many in the 60s generation as she moved into her late twenties and early thirties she found a fulfilling career path for herself, one that tapped resources and talents that she had not previously explored.

She and Jim married. Karen now wanted to fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming a mother. She and Jim tried right away to have a baby. But after a year of these efforts when she was 35 and she had not gotten pregnant, she went to a doctor. After blood tests, one hypothesis was that the environment of her vagina was not receptive to her husband's sperm. But it turned out that was a false conjecture. Next, to help her conceive, Karen was given hormones. A side effect for her was constant depression, as well her gums were puffy and bleeding. Furthermore, she did not get pregnant. The next method was to have Jim's sperm inseminated into

her. That also did not result in conception. Finally, a laparoscopy was performed. It showed that the way the IUD had landed left sufficient scar tissue.

Surgery was performed to remove scar tissue, and hopefully there would be a window where she could conceive before the tissue grew back. But again, she did not become pregnant. Karen eventually recognized that she had “become one of the thousands of women who were permanently sterilized from the Copper 7 Dalcon Shield” IUD.

Emotionally dealing with this recognition was a trial. She says that in work and life “I was nothing if not tenacious.” Now she was unable to get pregnant. She felt a “sadness and growing bitterness” and looked for alternatives. Private adoption seemed like an option. In addition to the expense of paying an adoption attorney and installing a separate phone line, Karen felt both humiliated and manipulative. She and Jim decided against adoption.

That left surrogacy, which was legal in California, and therefore in Los Angeles, where they lived. Karen and Jim soon learned of Nina Kellogg, a psychologist in private practice who arranged surrogate adoptions. Connecting to Dr. Kellogg turned out to be excellent for them. Kellogg would screen women who wished to be surrogates to make sure they had the proper character and motivation. An interview with a potential surrogate, named Llana was arranged. Anticipation of this encounter awakened anxiety in Karen. She says, “I was beyond sick” full of “apocalyptic dread and fear.” She felt that she could be “judged whether I was worthy or not worthy....I didn’t talk to anybody about it.” The meeting went well, they were honest and open with each other. Llana explained she had always easily gotten pregnant. Later that night, she agreed to try to carry the baby and then have it the child be raised by Karen and Jim.

This was not just a business arrangement. A friendly relationship developed between Llana, Karen, and Jim. Still, given a highly publicized instance where a surrogate decided to keep the child, after the baby was born, Karen initially had worry that a surrogate might decide to that to her and Jim. Still, they went ahead, and Jim started to give sperm so that Llana could be inseminated and conceive. Llana became pregnant. As Karen writes, the “joy was indescribable.” But then Llana miscarried. Karen was devastated. She writes, “it was like God saying to me, ‘don’t even think about it. Don’t even play with the idea because you will never have a child.’” After three or four months, the process of trying to have a baby. Again, Llana got pregnant, but again things went awry, and the baby was lost. Llana had lost her second fallopian tube. This process with Llana had gone

on for two years. Though Llana would not be a surrogate, Jim, Llana, and Karen remained in contact. A child had not resulted, but a precious connection had been formed.

Karen described herself as tenacious. There was also another side to Karen in addition to her tenacity. After the two years with Llana, as she writes, “a part of me had died and I had given up.” She had “reached the point of despair.” When Nina said she had another possible surrogate, Karen said to her husband that maybe they should stop. But Jim touched the part of her that still had hope. Jim and Karen returned Nina’s call.

The psychologist described the new candidate, Sandra, as a married woman with three children, and added how solid and remarkable she found Sandra to be. A meeting was scheduled. In anticipation, Karen’s anxiety was reawakened. “I didn’t know if I could live through any more crushing blows...I felt fear, and in a strange way, scared for my life.” When the meeting began, Karen was struck by Sandra’s radiance. Her and her husband, Chip, married as teenagers, and after their third child was born Chip had a vasectomy. Sandra also talked about the centrality of their Christian faith. Jim and Karen shared their experience with Llana.

Sandra later that night affirmed that she would wish to be a surrogate for Karen and Jim. Sandra did become pregnant. Karen though was afraid that Sandra would change her mind. Fearful of Sandra miscarrying, during the first trimester, Karen could not sleep. During the second trimester, at a doctors’ visit with Sandra, Chip, Jim, and Karen present, a sonogram showed the tiny fetus. Karen cried on Sandra’s shoulder. As the pregnancy unfolded, Karen remained concerned that Sandra would wish to keep the baby. Even though Karen believed Sandra was solid in her wish to have Karen and Jim have the baby once born. Eventually, Sandra went into the hospital to give birth. With Karen, Jim, and Chip present, Sandra had the ordeals that childbirth can bring to a pregnant woman, and then the frequent miracle, a child was born, a boy. The doctor came over to Karen and said “Would the mother like to come and cut the cord?” She did so. When Karen first got to hold her son, she went directly to Sandra and put the baby between her and Sandra on the bed. Karen could not stop saying Sandra’s name and Karen could not stop crying. Right afterwards, she went over to Jim with their child.

The date of the birth was February 7, 1991. They named the baby Benjamin David. The following Mother’s Day, Sandra called Karen and Jim and said being a surrogate was one of the happiest experiences of her life, and then added would Karen and Jim like a sibling for Benjamin. They did and on August 16, 1993,

Chloe Bess was born. Jim and Karen's family with a son and daughter was now complete. Karen's narrative ends.

This is immediately followed by Jim's essay, then writes an essay "Karen L. Fund In Context." I have already borrowed from this paper in describing Karen's life in the early part of my account. I now resume the story. The year after Benjamin was born, Karen's career continued to flourish. As functioning Chairperson of the *L. A. Weekly Board*, she negotiated a contract that sold the Los Angeles paper to New York's legendary *Village Voice*. As a mother, Dr. Fisher writes that Karen "transmitted to the children her sense of compassion, sympathy...and learning how to relate to others in a sensitive and not self-centered way." She wanted them to "be self-aware, and function as responsible citizens and members of the community."

Something else happened. In late 1999, Karen fund found she had Hepatitis C, a serious disease. She had various treatments, including the ordeal of chemotherapy, and in the last four years of her life developed auto-immune diseases that on some days were agonizing. Characteristically, Karen remained courageous. She passed away at the age of 65 on November 28, 2012. As Jim Fisher writes, "Karen lived and died with a generosity of spirit that was exceptional." Her life lives on with her husband and her two children. Benjamin David celebrated his 31st birthday earlier in February, and Chloe Bess is now 28.

The psycho-emotional paths of those active in 60's movements are like a rainbow. There are many colors. Karen L. Fund's life contains many such hues. As a 1958-1963 TV series about the metropolis of New York City proclaimed, there are eight million stories in the Naked City. The same is true for baby boomers. Each drama is revealing of our protean selves, the many twists and turns in the richness and complexities of life. Choices are made with deep ramifications. Many, like Karen Fund, wish to carry on the life trail of humans, to become a parent. If this transpires, one generation nurtures another, and that continues on and on as the arc of the life of Homo sapiens unfolds.

If an American Caucasian married female came to adulthood in 1800, she would likely have had 7 children. A century later in 1900 that Caucasian wife would have averaged about half of that, 3.56 children. In 2000, it would be 2.05. Karen Fund came into the childbearing years closer to the millennium. Given the innovations in medicine and technology, she both paid the price for the birth control method she tried, and newer advances allowed her to fulfill her hopes of being a mother. Not only once, but twice.

Karen has many legacies, but among them are a son and daughter. This was so important for her, and finding a way to become a parent led her down many unexpected roads. She had many burdens to bear before her dreams came true. While there are 8 million stories in the Naked City, Karen's is one of 78.3 million baby boom tales. As with the others, hers is a rich story worth telling.

May Karen rest in peace. May her and Jim's children find fulfilling life paths.