

## Mafia Birds and Other Family Planning Strategies

by Ruth Anne Wood

The first two lines of the playground song rings true:

*“First comes love,  
then comes marriage,  
then comes baby  
in a baby carriage!”*

But for Mary and I, our baby didn't come as planned. Instead we become grandparents at the ripe age of 34 and Mary 37. We skipped the child rearing, adoption, infertility treatments and foster care and went straight to becoming grandparents! Mary rarely fits the mold. She learned to walk before she learned to crawl, practiced flying a hang glider before getting her drivers license. Why would kids be any different?

As much as I wanted our own children, the stars dealt us a different hand. Mary cooked up a scheme to raise a sum of money that equaled a nest egg for all the foreseeable expenses from conception to college graduation. Together Mary and I calculated a conservative sum that rationed for having a baby, yearly family trips, medical expenses, summer camp and a growing trust fund.

Mary felt the pain of other families struggling to have or afford a family, and her \$100K baby crowd-funding plan was hatched over her last failed pregnancy test. Then we witnessed the cosmic joke as her keen planning magnificently backfired. Using a bit of Mary's daily video theatrics and my initial two page website MyBabyFunding.com I posted this big thermometer icon with 96.5F on the top and in less than two weeks our little site collected over \$100,000 on our 50/50 shared crowd funding sites! The project continued to explode another 31 days besting our goal by a factor of 30. Baby fever raised over 3 million and the Reilly family banked 1 million dollars after taxes, fees and expenses. I'll never forget how my Mary stated with dreamy conviction in her eye during our Caribbean vacation, “Jack, my love, why don't we coast into our golden years of grand-parenthood a little earlier and skip the whole parenting thing. Someone else can raise our chicks and we can reap the rewards of adoring grand kids.” She was turning into a science channel Mafia brown-headed cowbirds hatching grandbabies in a stranger's nest.

Before I had time to talk some sense into my bride she had placed this Craigslist ad after our tongue and cheek discussion. That's my impulsive Mary, God love her:

“WANTED: Couple looking for: Healthy, Well adjusted, Loving family, With kids, Happy home and an Income of \$100K+. If you would enjoy and openly appreciate fun, generous youthful grandparents in their 30's to share monthly

meals, go on family trips, help out occasionally with homework, after school activities, Skype once a week and receive kids birthday and Christmas cards with modest checks, please contact us. Must have at least one son and one daughter between the ages of 4-12. For the right family we'll move 10 minutes drive from you. Family without pets preferred."

When irate funders found out that we never went through with having a baby two years after the 3 million dollar campaign, Peter J. Michaels Esquire offered us legal council. Peter told us adopting a family was different from sending donations to some village in Botswana. Then separate from each other Ben and Carol Johnson found Mary's ad the same day and took it as a sign. They held a family meeting with their 6, 8 and 12 year old that afternoon.

Mary and I instantly fell in love with our new son and daughter Ben(41) and Carol(43) at our first meeting at Chili's Grill & Bar and couldn't get enough of our yummy grand kids, Kimie(6), Mathew(8) and Sasha(12). The kids slid into their roles the quickest calling us Ma Mom and Pop Pop. Carol and Ben soon called us Mom and Dad. Now we couldn't imagine going to Disney World, camping in the Adirondacks and the Reilly's shore house at Nelson Beach in Historic Plymouth Harbor without them!

It wasn't part of the stipulation, but today marks another mile stone in our adoption story. Carol and Ben surprised us that the Johnson's have legally taken our Reilly name! MyBabyFunding.com continues to thrive and has plans to be added to the NY Stock exchange. P.S. Both my daughter Carol and my wife Mary are expecting!