

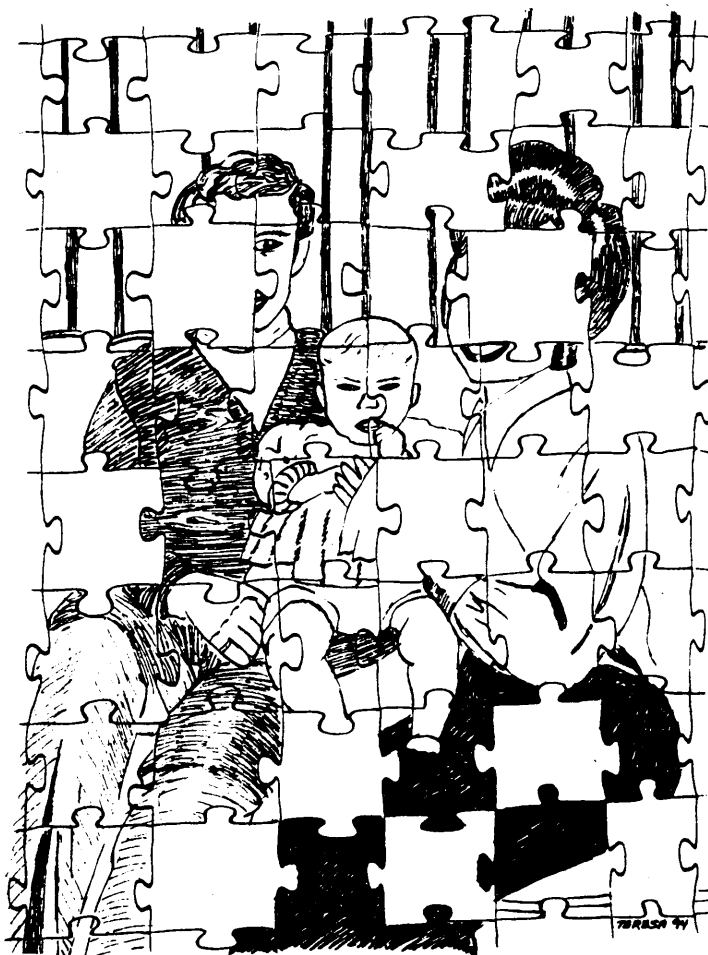
ADOPTION CIRCLES

CANADA'S POST-ADOPTION QUARTERLY

ISSUE 10 SPRING 1994 \$3.00

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ADOPTION CIRCLES
ISSUE #10 SPRING 1994

Publisher
**FORGET ME NOT FAMILY
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WHO WE ARE:

THE FORGET ME NOT FAMILY SOCIETY is a Provincially registered non-profit Society and a Registered Charitable Society with the Federal Government. Tax receipts are issued for donations to our Society.

Our Society was formed for education, consultation, peer counselling and to offer support to all those touched by adoption: adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents and concerned professionals.

Our only source of income for the Society is through membership fees, fundraising and donations. This money goes directly towards printing, postage, telephone rental and office equipment and supplies.

WHAT WE OFFER:

Experience shows that at various times in life, the issues and concerns of adoption need to be addressed. We provide our members with opportunities to gain further understanding of adoption issues.

- Educational workshops on post adoption issues for all members of the adoption circle and concerned professionals.

- An annual "Let's Talk About Reunions" conference to address a variety of post adoption issues.

- Referrals to support groups for birth parents, adult adoptees, family members or interested friends and relatives of triad members.

OUR MANDATE:

To encourage and develop a recognition of the benefits of family preservation and openness in adoption practice.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER:

Adoption Circles is published quarterly and is available by subscription to our Society. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in adoption and post adoption issues.

Comments and contributions are always welcome. Please mail submissions to our P.O. Box number or FAX to (604) 530-2160.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

As this newsletter goes to print, plans for our first annual "Let's Talk About Reunions" Conference on March 5 & 6, 1994 at the Sheraton Guildford in Surrey, B.C. are being finalized. We are looking forward to the conference and joining with our guest facilitators who include B.J. Lifton, Michelle McColm, Arden Henley, Sharon Jinkerson, Ken Derby and Sharon Gove.

We of the executive, are very pleased with the public interest generated towards the upcoming conference. Membership to our society is on the rise and we would like to thank everyone for their support. It is people like you who put a human face to post adoption issues.

This issue of *Adoption Circles*, brings stories from two reunited birth mothers, an adoptive mother's challenge, and a dramatic insight into the journey of one woman's desperate search for her birth family. Part two of Nancy Verrier's interview concludes with this issue and candidly explores some core concerns for adoption.

We found Teresa Spring's creative artwork, which depicts the missing pieces of a puzzle, so common in the triad, appropriate for the cover of this Spring issue. Teresa's poetry has also been featured in our Winter '93 issue. We love receiving art, poetry, stories etc., to feature in our newsletters. Please keep them coming ... we learn from sharing our experiences and by keeping the lines of communication open to all.

The last year has been a fascinating one for our society, from the late night radio talk shows, to the support groups, the workshops, the social work retraining programs, the round table discussions on open records with the Ministry of Social Services, the B.C. Adoption Network meetings, the telephone calls and all the letters. Through it all, we have seen an awakening towards the real issues that surround adoption and reunion. Best of all, the shroud of secrecy is disappearing, enabling those who have suffered in one way or another, to begin their healing process.

We also acknowledge the media such as television, radio and news articles which help to enlighten the public on many post adoption issues that we, in the adoption circle face. One very publicized case that we have been following is the long court battle between Teena Sawan, birth mother and Faye and Jim Tearoe, adoptive parents of Teena's son, David.

The Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear Teena's arguments to allow her custody of her son. The case was "Dismissed With Costs", thereby allowing the adoptive parents custody of the child.

In cases like this, it is ironic that a judicial system passes judgement based solely on fact. When it comes to "in the best interest of the child", how could any system make a decision on such an emotional issue, without any emotion? Our hearts go out to Teena Sawan for her deep and profound loss, to the Tearoe's for the fulfilment of their dreams, and most of all to David, who has to live with this legacy. We only hope that he has the strength and conviction to understand the decision made in his best interest.

We wish to send words of encouragement to Allison Anderson, our elected President of the Forget Me Not Family Society, who has been unable to be actively involved with us during the past few months. To allow Allison some peace of mind, the executive has appointed Sandi Blackie as Acting President until the end of this term.

Our annual general meeting will take place on Saturday, April 9, 1994 at the New Westminster Public Library from 1 to 5 pm. Please plan to attend to vote for your new executive. Nomination forms are available by calling our office at (604) 530-2160. - LC

LETTERS

More Research Required

Editor,

I received Adoption Circles and I am impressed with the neat presentation of the material. Also, the content was well presented. I thought your interview with Nancy Verrier was well done, easy to read and understand. Lee Crawford's article was very interesting and hits the nail on the head, based on my experience in Child Welfare. Congratulations are in order for the well presented material.

I am sending a donation to your society, in memory of Clair's effort for the "triad".

I read the statistics from the Adoption Registry and noted that there were a substantial group who seemed to have refused to go through with a contact. Clair was always curious about this group, it bothered her, this I know from our discussions. She wondered why the academics had not picked this up for research. You might suggest to a School of Social Work student, to take this up as a project for a thesis.

Robert J. Marcus
Richmond, B.C.

Editor's Note: Clair Marcus is the author of Who Is My Mother? and Adopted: A Canadian Search Guide. Clair passed away in 1992.

BBS For Adoption Support

Editor,

I have just recently signed up as a member, thank you for sending me the latest newsletter of Adoption Circles. I enjoyed it immensely and it seems to be getting larger, too. I am a reunited adoptee, and as you must know, there is little out there to read about reunions, so I enjoy anything I can get my hands on!

It may be of interest to your readers to know of my husband's computer bulletin board service (BBS) which offers free of charge, an international adoption support group where people can read and write messages. Maria and Derek's BBS is available 24 hours a day at (604) 682-0624. All that is required to access the system is a modem.

Maria Bailey
Vancouver, B.C.

Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

*Don't be fooled by me.
Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask, a thousand masks.
masks that I'm afraid to take off,
and none of them is me.
Pretending is an art that's second nature with me,
but don't be fooled.
For God's sake don't be fooled.
I give you the impression that I'm secure,
that all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well
as without
that confidence is my name and coolness my game,
that the water's calm and I'm in command,
and that I need no one.
But don't believe me.
My surface may seem smooth but my surface is my mask,
ever-varying and ever-concealing.
Beneath lies no complacency.
Beneath lies confusion and fear and aloneness.
But I hide this. I don't want anybody to know it.
I panic at the thought of my weakness and fear
being exposed.
That's why I frantically create a mask to hide behind,
a nonchalant sophisticated facade.*

*to help me pretend.
to shield me from the glance that knows.
But such a glance is precisely my salvation.
My only hope and I know it.
That it, if it's followed by acceptance,
if it's fooled by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me from myself,
from my own self-built prison walls,
from the barriers I so painstakingly erect.
It's the only thing that will assure me of what I can't
assure myself,
that I'm really worth something.*

Author Unknown

To Birth Mother,

**He's 13 today
And still such a joy
Thank you for loaning us
Your precious boy.**

Personal Ad, January 17/94, Vancouver Sun

THEY TOLD ME I'D FORGET

Dear Adoptee,

We are meeting again after many years of being apart. You are an adult now and I am no longer a teenager. We probably both have had our share of pain in our lives over the years. You, because you felt rejected and abandoned by your original mother and I, because I was convinced that I could not raise you on my own.

The person you are meeting now is much older and wiser than the scared teenager who sat in a social worker's office so many years ago. You are meeting someone who has asked herself over and over, how she could have done that? I wasn't even allowed to see you, hold you or even say goodbye to you. I was told I was going to "forget". Afterwards, I was told to "get on with my life". It must be hard for you to understand how alone and afraid I was. I am no longer afraid of the authority figures or the system. I was influenced by them, as well as by a birth father who was not willing to help me raise you, and by a society who looked down on single mothers.

When I was pregnant with you, I always thought that someone would come to me and say, "It's OK, I'll help you and you can keep your baby". But no one came. The only encouragement I received was to place you for adoption, not to keep you. They told me I'd "forget". They told me to keep it a secret and not to talk about it and it would all go away.

They told me everything was over and done with now...so get on with living; the past was just the past. They never told me about the pain of not knowing where you were or if you were all right. They never told me that I would spend Mother's Day without my child (or that someone else would celebrate it with my child). They never told me about the emptiness that overcame me every Christmas while I watched other mothers take their children to see Santa.

I never forgot when your birthday was. The month before your actual birthday was always the hardest for me. The very memory of your birth has always been with me. But I never got to hold you, see you or touch your face...instead, you were taken away. I can't remember signing the papers after that, I was numb, I cried a lot and went into a deep depression.

Now, we have connected once again. It is so wonderful to see you and to know that you are OK. The blanks are beginning to fill in of the years gone by. Sometimes it's painful for me to realize that I have already missed many important parts of your life. I have finally completed my circle. It is a beginning ... it is only what we choose to make it.

They told me I'd forget. They were wrong.

Your Birth Mother

A SINCERE THANK YOU

By Shannon Leslie

I have always resisted putting down on paper what I am about to share. Many times over the years, I have wanted to thank you for the gift of your child but the time never seemed quite right.

Most evenings I scan, with detachment, the "Information Wanted" and "Personals" columns of the paper to see if you have started a search for him. But every year on his birthday and at Christmas, heart pounding, I wonder if words from your heart will be there wishing him well. One year recently I came a hair's breadth away from inserting an ad myself to let you know his progress, how he fills our lives with joy and laughter and now the growing pains of adolescence. In the end, the day came and went and I did nothing.

But this year has been very different, a challenge emotionally and physically. It has been the worst year and the best year of my life.

In that last three months, I have become the caregiver of two senior. My formerly active mom, blinded by a rare and insidious form of uterine cancer, has become a member of our household. Each morning we both muster our strength for the challenges ahead and somehow continue to survive.

My grandma, cognitively impaired by a parathyroid condition, is not the same sweet person who used to spoil me with flaky apple turnovers. She calls daily from the care facility demanding more and more of me. There is little left to give.

Why am I telling you this? Because in the last three months, my life has been hell. And yet somehow I sense it can never compare to what you felt when you signed those papers relinquishing your baby.

Did you go through the motions of your day like a robot? I frequently find myself doing rather than being. Filling the

space with tasks means I don't have to feel the pain, to face the reality, to accept that my mom will die too soon. And that we have much unfinished business that will stay unfinished.

I have wondered about so many things over the years and wanted to reassure you that you are not forgotten. Has anyone ever praised your courage? Or acknowledged your fear? My family and friends have been there to help me up when I stumble. Their words and deeds make the load easier to carry.

I have never doubted, since my mom's diagnosis in mid-September, the rough nature of the journey which we, unwillingly, have taken. But I know also that I will make it through this war, battle-scarred but surviving, winning. Winning because our journey is teaching me patience, pride at accomplishing one task in a day, the courage to face unspeakable and secret fears, acceptance of the inevitable, and wisdom. Every time I start to dwell on my pain, I remember what yours might have been, perhaps still is.

And so this year, more than any other, I humbly submit my recent circumstances have given me some appreciation of your loss so many years ago. Some day I hope to embrace you, look into your face (perhaps a mirror of my son's) and thank you for your selfless gift. Your decision to choose other parents for your child was not done quickly nor easily, I imagine. Know that he is well-loved, by his father and I, as you are.

After all these years of silence, please accept my most sincere and heartfelt thanks, and my wish for a peaceful and loving holiday season.

Shannon Leslie lives in Delta, B.C. Reprinted from the Vancouver Sun, Dec 11/93, with author's permission.

MOHAWK FUND RAISING PROGRAM

The Forget Me Not Family Society is participating in a fund raising program through Mohawk Oil. Mohawk has a special program, through its credit card system that will assist our non-profit organization to raise funds over and above what we now raise.

The Society encourages its members and families and supporters to apply for special Mohawk credit cards. Up to 2% of credit purchases will go towards our Society. Card applications will be available at our "Let's Talk About Reunions" conference on March 5 and 6, 1994 at the Sheraton Inn Guildford, Surrey, B.C. Please support us!

BEWARE OF BIRTH PARENT FRAUD

It has been reported in Ontario, that an older couple who masqueraded as birth parents, responded to newspaper ads seeking birth parents. Several adoptees have been lied to by this couple and some have even given them money and gifts, thinking that their search was successful. It is likely that this fraudulent couple will show up in Western Canada, if not already, to continue with their crime.

Searchers, please be aware if you are contacted in such a way. It is best to work with a qualified search consultant who can assist you with your search.

THE "MISSING PIECE"

By Sandra Blackie

I never kept it a secret, the fact that I gave birth to a son in 1968 and placed him for adoption...but after a while I quit talking about it because it was easier than to try to explain to others the pain and guilt I had. But as I walked down that road called "life", I met someone, who listened and understood and never judged me. Her name is Nadine Leslie Brown, my dear friend of eighteen years. Nadine is an adoptee who was placed for adoption in 1955 after she was born. She is a part of the adoption circle like I am which added dimension to our friendship as well as being a Canadian woman married to a "Kiwi" (New Zealander).

Our lives have crossed at different times in various parts of the world. Our times together have brought memories of laughter and of our children who were born around the same time. So it was with great joy when we learned that Nadine and her husband Barry and family were moving to Vancouver from New Zealand back in June of 1992. Not once in those first few weeks would I have ever dreamed that the events that would take place over the coming months would change our lives forever...

It started with a phone call from Lethbridge, Alberta on July 14, 1992 at 5 pm. It was my mother with one urgent question, "When was your baby born?". I knew instantly that she was referring to my son born July 11, 1968. "Listen to this ad from the Lethbridge Herald", she said. "BRETT WADE born July 11, 1968 seeks birth mother or relative. Thanks for life. Reply to Lethbridge Herald."

My heart stopped and the tears started. It was him...it was my son. I couldn't believe it and I couldn't stop crying. My dream came true. He wanted to find me. I named him Brett Wade so we would find each other and it was really starting to happen. My son and I were reunited at the Vancouver Airport, 24 years and 8 days since we were separated. Part of my heart was no longer missing.

Twice, I had tried to tell Nadine my incredible news but at both times, there were strangers present and I couldn't bring myself to say anything because I was not ready to tell other people just yet.

Before I had my opportunity for a private moment with Nadine, another event took place. She had been hospitalized for a routine exploratory surgery and then was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She underwent a complete hysterectomy, but they were unable to get all of the cancer. Two days after her surgery, I finally had some time to speak with Nadine - to pledge my help to her and to also tell her about my reunion with my son.

Nadine was thrilled. Over the next few days, we spent hours talking about our lives. She questioned about starting a search for her own biological family but first she had chemotherapy to get through. In the meantime, she wrote to the Alberta government for non-identifying information about her birth parents. She thought about approaching her

adoptive mother, Gean, for more information but found that there was a strong loyalty issue to deal with. How could she ever question the women who raised her about the women who gave her life? Who would ever guess that Nadine would never get to ask Gean about her history. Her adoptive mother passed away a few weeks later, her death very sudden and unexpected.

In the months to come, I tried to be there for Nadine as someone to lean on, to talk to and to keep her company through her full day chemo sessions. It wasn't just myself, we had a team...her husband Barry, her 3 children Melanie, Chad and Brandon, and close friends Dawn, Marion, Vallia, Janet, Joyce and Wendy. All of us had been profoundly touched by this sweet kind woman and we felt that everything was so unfair.

The non-identifying information arrived from Alberta. It gave us all something to talk about and it gave Nadine a lift. She was born Elaine Connor on January 11, 1955 in Edmonton, Alberta at Misericordia Hospital to a 42 yr. old widow who had 4 other children. Those children were 2 boys, 19 and 21 yrs. old and 2 girls, 9 and 11 yrs. old. It wasn't much, but it was a great beginning. She always knew she had a birth name, something that most adoptees don't know or have when beginning to search.

Barry and Nadine began to check libraries and phone books, directories, newspapers and even original adoption papers for more information. Nadine soon became overwhelmed with the magnitude of the work required for the search for her roots. She had no idea where to go, what to do or who to ask. Above all, she didn't have the energy after months of chemotherapy and the cancer was still growing.

Soon a decision was made to sell their house and liquidate their assets in order to move the Brown family to New Zealand. It was Nadine's wish for her children to be back among their childhood friends where they will be able to find the compassion and emotional support they will need in the future.

The search for Nadine's birth family had faded into the background until a quiet moment last August in her room at the Cancer Centre. It was the closest call yet! She had been rushed in by ambulance two days earlier because of haemorrhaging and falling blood pressure. There, I held her hand and tried to reassure her, amazed at her resilience and dumbfounded at my own inability to help her. Was there anything that I could do? "Will you help me find my family? I've gone as far as I can go. I don't know what to do next and I don't have the energy anymore. I know you understand how I feel about this. I would just like to know who I look like and where I came from. For my kids...I'm just afraid that they will never be able to find out anything if I don't do something now...", said Nadine.

I took over Nadine's search not knowing the first thing

about doing it, but I was so happy that I could finally do something to help her. The first few days I muddled through the information they had gathered in order to formulate a plan of attack. I started with the Henderson directories and phone books from Edmonton. Halfway through that process, I attended a workshop where I met Gloria, a reunited adoptee and reunited birth mother who put me in touch with Helen, a remarkable woman from Edmonton who had assisted Gloria in her search. Helen agreed to help me and quickly became my angel. She found information for me and boosted my morale whenever I lost momentum.

Nadine had contacted Parent Finders in Edmonton and was registered with them as well as being assigned to a searcher. Nothing was happening there, but no one understood the urgency. I contacted Nadine's searcher, Joy, and made her aware of the time element. Joy offered to speak on Nadine's behalf to the Post Adoption Registry. We then asked Nadine to write a letter to the Registry with her own story. We followed with a letter from her doctor that verified her advanced ovarian cancer. Joy visited the office in Edmonton, and left with the distinct impression that the right amount of pressure would give us some information.

My fax machine proved to be the best communication tool I had. I used it to send my written concerns and questions to the government, the registry and to my "angel" Helen. Answers came back within hours rather than days or weeks. Time was my biggest obstacle. From the directories, I compiled a list of all the "Connors" in Alberta and decided to write letters to all of them. The letters related the facts that I had and asked for help in any way. I also kept up my barrage to Social Services and the Post Adoption Registry by fax and phone which proved to be worthwhile. The head of the Registry finally agreed to submit a ministerial order directly to the Minister of Social Services to have Nadine's adoption records opened. Knowing that the opening would take some time, I continued with my letters to the "Connors" and shifted through the information from Helen.

We looked for a widow named Connor. Surprisingly, we found a Mrs. Margaret Connor who lived in Edmonton in 1955...the year Nadine was born. Going back through the directories, we discovered that Mrs. Connor's husband, Fredrick Maurice had died in 1953. We also found his death certificate, but it didn't reveal much about Nadine's roots. Helen checked obituaries without any positive results. We then started to check marriages, school records and other directories in other provinces.

I phoned the Post Adoption Registry again and to my surprise they said the ministerial order was signed and Nadine's adoption records were opened with the proviso that the Ministry and Social Services perform the search. Nadine was thrilled! It was hard for her to believe that after 38 years she was finally going to know about her history. Maybe even before they left for New Zealand, because they had already booked the tickets to leave on October 16, 1993 which was 3 weeks away! I kept digging...maybe I missed something...something that would be the piece to finish the

puzzle.

I was starting to receive replies from the "Connors" and was truly touched by the compassion, understanding and honest offers to help. Over the next few weeks, I came to realize that I had hit a wall and couldn't go any further. With deep sadness, we went to the Brown's farewell breakfast at the Vancouver Airport. The search was the big topic of conversation. I told Nadine that I felt bad that I couldn't do more, but she said it didn't matter, because I found more than she ever thought possible and that our friendship was far more important to her. How do you say goodbye to someone you know you'll never see again? With tears, we hugged and said goodbye without anymore words. We couldn't change anything...life and death is reality.

It took a few days to get back on track, after we saw Nadine and Barry off. The sadness was overwhelming as Dawn and I spent hours trying to work through our feelings and frustrations. I started telling her all of the details of the search and I showed her the information that Helen continued to send to me. Then came an amazing turn of events...I received a phone call from David Staples of the Edmonton Journal. One of their staff photographers, Sean Connors showed him the letter he received from me and he wanted to help. He thought that an article in the Journal would give Nadine's story some exposure, so someone could help or come forward. I was elated, but I needed an OK from Nadine first. She approved, and David interviewed her by phone and the article appeared in the paper. That article brought forth Merrill, a realtor, who read the article and called to offer his help. His investigative skills and personal connections in Edmonton were an asset to the search.

Meanwhile, interesting developments were taking place at the Post Adoption Registry. I had contact with Nadia, a searcher from the Registry, almost daily. On November 17, 1993, Nadia sent me a fax from the Director of the Post Adoption Registry that contained Nadine's mother's maiden name, birthdate and last known address! I was in a state of shock...before I knew it I was sitting at my kitchen table crying...the irony was, this woman was the same Margaret Connor we had found in the directories some weeks ago!

We checked every form of public record in order to locate her, but that proved to be unsuccessful. I had a gut feeling that she possibly moved from Alberta to the West Coast. After much contemplation, I decided to take Nadine's story to the media. Reporter, Archibald Rollo, from the Vancouver Sun ran an article and once again people responded with offers to help.

This search became an obsession to me. I was so close, I knew it, I couldn't sleep. I kept reviewing the clues over and over in my head trying to find the missing piece. Helen found a card of thanks published in the Edmonton Journal dated October 19, 1953 that gave us more leads. The hospital, funeral home, doctor and military service were yet to be investigated. Merrill was busy checking old school

continued on next page

records near the area of the address and found two girls, ages 9 and 11, named Linda and Mary Connor. I was positive that they were Nadine's sisters. We then applied to Vital Statistics for birth certificates which could take up to thirty days.

Nadine was so excited with all the new developments. But we had to be realistic and prepared with the eventual outcome. There was a good chance that the birth mother or siblings were deceased. We spoke about some worst case scenarios in order to be prepared for disappointment. I believed it was time to slow down a bit, and Nadine agreed. She now knew more than she had ever dreamed of knowing.

On December 10, 1993, I arrived home to find the most significant fax from Merrill. He found an article in one of the Edmonton Journal's October or November 1953 papers that read "Son of Pioneer Dies". It was about Fredrick Maurice Connor, husband of Margaret Connor, Stepfather of Linda, Mary and Gerald Wright of Calgary, and Murray Wright of Saskatoon. He also sent me telephone numbers that lead me to Gerald Wright. It took me a while to get the courage to call Gerald. He lives in the Lower Mainland and I hoped that he would link me to Murray, Linda and Mary. I had only one chance and I had to make it work.

I called Gerald and he said that he remembered his mother's pregnancy with Nadine back in the Fall of 1954! Through him, I was able to contact Murray, Mary, Linda and eventually, Margaret. Murray said that he had no knowledge

of Nadine, but Linda and Mary had vivid memories of their mother's pregnancy. In fact, the sisters had dreams of caring for the baby although it was never discussed within the family. Nadine had been a 38 year "secret" that the sisters always wondered about.

When I contacted Margaret Connor (who was now 81 yrs. old), I said that I had a very dear friend who was born on January 11, 1955 to Margaret Connor in Edmonton, Alberta. I also mentioned Nadine's health status, Margaret's own birthdate, names and birthdates of her four children and her unmarried name. She replied, "That's my birthdate...those are my children but I am not the woman you are looking for. I want this to stop here and now".

Nadine has since been joyfully reunited with her sisters. The pain of her mother's denial is something that she bears in silence. She doesn't understand why, but she respects Margaret's right to privacy.

Nadine has good days and then there are days when she can't even talk on the phone. I can't predict the future, but I am deeply satisfied to know that I played a part in finding her history that is rightfully her's. My friend Nadine is not a secret and I will remember her, all of my life.

Sandra Blackie is a reunited birth mother, a reunion advocate and Acting President of the Forget Me Not Family Society.

MY REUNION

By Monica M. Bunton

April 12, 1971 - a day of ultimate love and devastating grief. That's the day I gave birth to Shane Douglas, a beautiful 7 lb. 13 oz. son. The beauty of his innocent little face was etched in my memory, there for me and only me to bring to the surface the million times I've needed him. The hospital would not allow me to hold him and untold nights I cried myself to sleep for my emptiness.

I never forgot him (as if one can forget their flesh and blood) and over the years worried if he was all right and if he was happy. The abundance of reunion stories in the media now, particularly one I saw in early Spring of '92, basically got me thinking - what if my birth son were to find me, how would I react? So I believe, to some degree, that I had some emotional preparedness for what was about to happen to me.

My birth son was raised in Abbotsford by two wonderful and very supportive people, to who I owe so much to. Colin, as they named him, started his search in 1991, with Parent Finders. He received non-identifying information (which differed from the Social Services information given to his adoptive parents at the time) and then registered with B.C.'s Adoption Reunion Passive Registry. When the "Active" registry came into effect in January 1992, he applied for an

active search. He also placed an ad in The Province on his birthday in 1992. Unbeknownst to him, I now lived in another province.

July 27, 1992 I received "The Letter" from Family and Social Services in Vancouver that informed me that my birth son wished contact with me and if I wanted contact with him? Does the fact that I called back in ten minutes with my positive response give any indication as to how excited I was about the whole thing?

Two days later I called Vancouver and spoke with my son. Boy, did we talk ... over two and a half hours worth! At the end of our conversation, we both expressed a deep desire to meet each other. August 15, 1992, Colin, drove to Lethbridge, Alberta from Vancouver. I was lingering around the front yard as he pulled into the driveway and I'll never forget the impact of that moment for as long as I live. He's tall, dark and handsome and I instantly felt a mother's pride in seeing the fine young man that he's become. My arms went out to him and I finally, after 21 years, got to hold my "baby". The five of us, my husband (whom I never kept the "secret" from), my fifteen year old daughter, thirteen year old son, Colin and I spent a glorious week getting to know

one another.

If I could start my reunion over again, I would not do a single thing differently! Except perhaps to suspend time. Our reunion is a year and a half old now. I've met his adoptive parents, brother, sister, grand parents and numerous other family members and have been made to feel very welcome. I admire them all for their support in this reunion. Colin and I share the same facial shape, jaw line, dark brown hair, sense of humour and love of sports. We also discovered that we

share favourite types of food. I'll never forget the first time we went to the corner store to pick up some snacks. We both love red licorice and pretzels! Maybe I ate a lot of those when I was pregnant!

I'm glad my son searched for me. I felt guilty that I didn't search for him, but was led to believe that I had no right to. Colin has given me the greatest gift, the opportunity to re-enter his life and to get to know him. He is a very welcome addition to our family!

AN INTERVIEW WITH NANCY VERRIER

PART TWO by Kathryn Vea

This concludes our interview with Nancy Verrier that took place in Lafayette, California on September 12, 1993. She is the author of the book *The Primal Wound*. Please refer to our Books By Mail section for order information.

Q: Your belief is that the natural evolution of bonding by post-natal separation from the biological mother is indelibly imprinted upon the unconscious minds of babies, thus causing the Primal Wound?

A: My definition of the Primal Wound is the trauma of separation from the mother, which interrupts the bonding that should have just been a continuation from pre to post-natal life. It's not going to change that primal wound to have the mother separate from the child later. I think that the baby would be better off being with the mother for as long as possible because a lot of things happen right at birth, that helps the baby feel secure in the bond with her. The longer the mother is with the baby, the better it is for the baby. The trauma will happen anyway if she separates, but the baby can be further along in the evolution of its development which will be an advantage.

Q: A very important fact that you mentioned in this book, is that society has certain misconceptions regarding adoption and how to separate a child from their birth mother. But indeed, it forgets that the adoptee was there. Why is this overlooked?

A: I think it's still overlooked today in a lot of ways. Babies are not given the credit that all of their senses are working. Nothing is ever lost in the psyche or in the body cells. It's often thought that somehow, if a baby can't say anything, he/she can't know what is happening. Many babies can go into shock or just go numb. That's the sense of being lost or of all hope being gone of the mother ever coming back.

Q: In a way it's like the sexual abuse survivor, they set up one part of their brain to not remember.

A: That's right. The same can apply to adoptees, that is, they can suffer a trauma, and then suffer from post traumatic stress disorders. We need to look at our society and stop and think about what's being done to our children,

in order to know why they are responding in certain ways. To take a baby away from its mother is not normal. Many birth mothers and adoptees experience denial or numbness.

Q: You say that babies bond in utero for the 40 weeks of gestation. In your experience, who would deny this?

A: Well, one Mother's Day, I read an article by a psychologist who said the birth bond is non-existent and it's only something that people talk about to make mothers who put their kids in daycare feel guilty. Half way through the article, she then admits that she's never been a mother. I thought, why was she even talking about this? Because she couldn't see it on some kind of graph? I know that a birth bond exists. There are a lot of people who are in denial about the birth bond. The denial is more convenient rather than taking responsibility for the fact that children are devastated upon separation.

Q: Why do reunited birth mothers find it so hard to deal with the part of their child's life that they missed? For example, looking at pictures of their child through the growing up years.

A: That's because all this time, she has created the denial that this child was actually a baby, or even grew up. Society really appreciates it if you go along with that denial. You aren't as big of a problem if you go along with society. But, if you talk about it long enough, you're considered pathological.

Q: Why is abandonment a major issue?

A: When a baby is separated from its mother for any reason, it feels abandoned. The reason that adoptees say they need to find their birth mother, to find their sense of self is that they not only feel that the mother was lost, but also part of themselves was lost. Abandonment is just simply, "going away". When adults feel they are going to be abandoned, it is different because they can't be left helpless, to die. A baby can actually die from being abandoned.

Q: Will you differentiate between attachment and bonding?

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A: I think the key is security and safety. Most children attach to their caregivers because it is necessary to do so, to be taken care of. They need that person so much that they become very attached to that person. It's a dependent relationship. The baby who is not separated from the mother feels very secure about him/herself and doesn't anticipate anything terrible or dreadful happening to them. That's bonding. It's falling in love with your baby and the baby responding to that. A baby who has been separated once from its mother, whether it's because of an incubator or adoption, can never feel that security.

Q: So someone like Jessica DeBoer will have a difficult time adjusting.

A: She already did. One of the things that people don't understand about that case is that this is the second time she has been devastated by separation. The first time, she was so tiny, that people didn't notice. It was perhaps even more devastating because she was still so much a part of her birth mother.

Q: The idea of searching to reconnect with a birth mother is filled with conflict and anxiety. It should not be regarded as pathological, but as healthy. Could it take a while for society to get used to that theory?

A: I think that some talk shows who televise reunions have a good effect in general, on society. When people see the emotion, they can feel that there's something there. It can be mysterious and mystical because the audience sees it as two strangers meeting. It may be hard for some people to have any idea of what it feels like to not know your relatives. But I think everyone has to stop polarizing around the two mothers and realize that the adoptee is in the position of trying to please both mothers, as well as trying to do what's right for themselves. The most positive reunions are ones which the adoptive mother and the birth mother feel that they want to do what is best for the child.

Q: How many adoptees have you met who say they have no interest in searching for their birth relatives?

A: The ones I meet say that because they're unsure. I say it's fine and that's the way it is. It's hard to believe them because it doesn't make sense, even logically. Who wouldn't be interested in the people who gave birth to them and all the things that go along with it? They may be afraid. Fear drives a lot of people and can even paralyze them.

Q: Many birth mothers were told that they would forget. You also hear of many adoptees being told that they shouldn't search. Why the negativity?

A: People need to be educated in this area. Ignorance is what got us into this pickle in the first place. I certainly didn't know as an adopting parent that my child was in pain when we adopted her. I did not know that because I wasn't told. I don't believe the social workers at time knew either. They probably didn't acknowledge the fact that babies knew their mothers at birth. Now, there's hardly any question to the fact. Also, there has always been a denial towards the

importance of birth fathers. I've haven't heard of too many children who say that they're glad that they don't have a father in their life. They need to know who those two parents are.

Q: The loss of a birth mother can erode the values of basic trust in an adoptee. How can adoptive parents overcome this?

A: It's very difficult. The best thing that adoptive parents can do is to validate the child's feelings. The child needs to feel that someone understands his pain. If a child can't handle certain feelings, they may do what we call projective identification, where they sort of inject the parents with those feelings. This can make the parent feel angry, confused and aggressive in a matter of minutes. Instead of flying off the handle, the parent can say "I'm beginning to feel angry, I'm wondering if you're angry too". When the parent can name the feeling and own it, this can help the child own it for themselves, too. If for example, a child says, "I really miss my real Mom", rather than the adoptive parent saying, "I'm your real Mom" or "She didn't want you and I came to rescue you", it's better to say, "Yes, you must miss her a lot", and let it go at that. The child's feelings are validated and he feels understood.

Q: You believe that adoption should serve children who need parents, not childless couples who seek children. What kind of feedback do you receive from this statement?

A: Not many people disagree with me. In fact, no one has ever argued with me about that point. My book has surprised some readers because it pushed some sensitive buttons.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

ADOPTION REGISTRY OF B.C. UPDATE

By Ken Derby

Reunion Registry Statistics From Oct 2/91 to Jan 31/94.

Total Applications Received	5521
Total Database*	6834
Searches Completed	2530
Reunions Completed	1570
<i>Other outcomes of active searches:</i>	
Subject of search deceased	186
Subject of search refused contact	271
<i>Other Services:</i>	
Matches on the passive database	255
Non-identifying information reports	842
Counselling request filled	506

* Includes all files opened since Oct/92 and files transferred from the former Passive Registry for which no new applications have been received.

Books By Mail

The following books are available from the **Forget Me Not Family Society**. To order, please make cheques payable to: **Kathryn Vea**, and mail to Forget Me Not Family Society, P.O. Box 61526 Brookwood P.O., Langley, B.C. V3A 8C8. Prices include GST.

The Adoption Triangle by Arthur Soroksy. Reuben Pannor & Annette Baran. Sealed or open records: how they affect adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents. \$14+ shipping.

Birthbond by Judith Gediman & Linda P. Brown. Reunions between birth parents & adoptees - and what happens after. \$19.50 + shipping.

Lost & Found - The Adoption Experience by Betty J. Lifton. A classic exploration of the psychology of the adopted. \$16 + shipping.

The Other Mother by Carol Schaefer. A birth mother's true story of her love for her child that she gave up for adoption. \$18 + shipping.

Stories of Adoption by Eric Blau. Photographic images & personal reflections of adoptees, birth parents & adoptive parents. \$23+ shipping.

The Primal Wound - by Nancy N. Verrier. Clarifies the effects of separation from the birth mother on adoptees. \$24 + shipping.

Adoption Reunions - by Michelle McColm. A book for adoptees, birth parents and adoptive families. \$18.50+shipping.

Torn From The Heart - by Louise Jurgen. Amazing true story of a birth mother's search for her lost daughter. \$19.25+shipping.

Please add \$2.50 shipping charge for first book & \$.75 for each additional book.

The following books are available from Morning Side Publishing, (604)652-6248. To order please make cheques payable to Morning Side Publishing, and mail to P.O. Box 21071, Saanichton, R.P.O., Saanichton, B.C. V0S 1P0. Prices include GST.

Adoptee Trauma - by Heather Carlini. A counselling guide for Adoptees. \$16.95+shipping.

Birth Mother Trauma - by Heather Carlini. A counselling guide for Birth Mothers. \$15.95+shipping.

Please add \$2.50 shipping charge for first book & \$.50 for each additional book.

LEAN ON ME Telephone Support List

Reunited Birthmothers:

Monica Bunton	(403) 327-7525
Anne Christianson	(604) 888-1720
Sue Finley	(604) 888-0920
Nicole Quittenton	(604) 731-0605
Connie Short	(604) 534-9456

Searching Birthmothers:

Mary Reynolds	(604) 534-2851
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Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie	(604) 530-9017
Sue Travis	(604) 534-2477
Lisa Chan	(604) 599-5137

Reunited with Birth Father:

Sandra Pudsey	(604) 534-4993
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Reunited with Siblings:

Janis Wegrich (birthparents deceased)	(604) 856-2215
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Denied Reunion Adoptees:

Liz Goadby	(604) 574-7223
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Adoptees:

Peter Burnett	(604) 589-8123
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Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer	(604) 988-5281
North Shore Family Services	

Send your name and telephone number if you wish to be included on the LEAN ON ME Telephone Support List. Out of town numbers are always welcome.

ANNOUNCEMENT

**Forget Me Not Family Society's
Annual General Meeting**

will take place on

Saturday, April 9, 1994

1 pm to 5 pm

New Westminster Public Library

Please send letters to the editor, reunion stories, news and information on community events to: Adoption Circles, c/o Forget Me Not Family Society, Box 61526 Brookwood P.O., Langley, B.C. V3A 8C8 Canada.