

ADOPTION CIRCLES

CANADA'S POST-ADOPTION QUARTERLY

ISSUE 12 FALL 1994 \$3.00

Inside...

EDITOR'S MESSAGE 2

POETRY 4

Approaching "Therapy" and
Examining Images of God,
Authority & Power 5
by Debora Sky

NO HAPPY ENDING 8
by Debbie Anne Bate

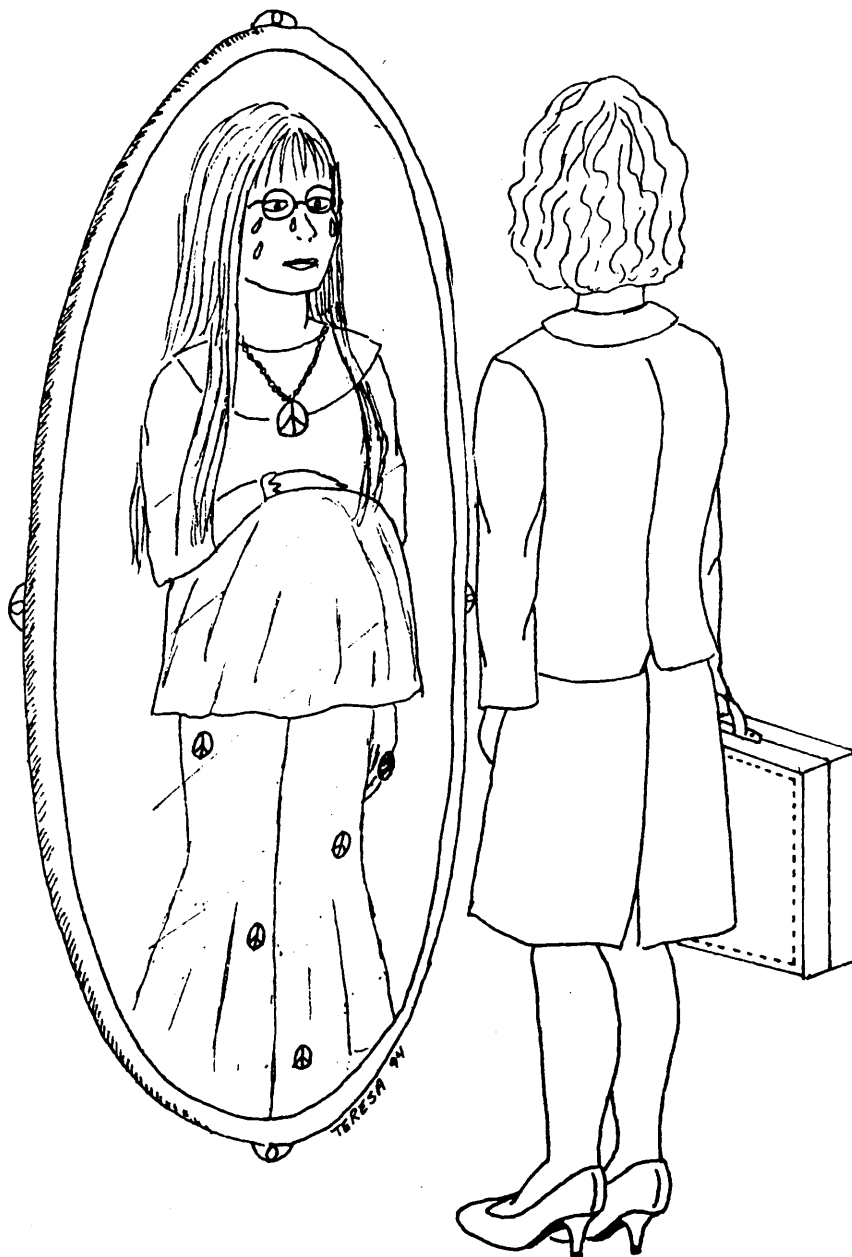
BOOK REVIEW:
The Dance of Deception 9
by Debora Sky

MEDIAFILE 10

F.Y.I. 10
*Update from Adoption Registry
of B.C. by Ken Derby*

LEAN ON ME LIST 11

MAIL ORDER 11



ADOPTION CIRCLES
ISSUE #12 FALL 1994

Publisher
**FORGET ME NOT FAMILY
SOCIETY**

President
SANDI BLACKIE

Vice-President
CECELIA REEKIE

Secretary/Treasurer
GAIL DAVIES

Directors at Large
**PENNY BUSH
NANCY KATO
JIM McNEIL
BONNIE MILNE
CATHERINE MOORE
DAVE MORCH
GINNY PAULSEN
NICOLE QUITTENTON
ELSA WEINSTEIN
PATRICIA WILKINSON**

Executive Director
KATHRYN VEA

Editor
DEBORA SKY

Layout & Design
LISA CHAN

Cover Illustration
TERESA SPRING

Adoption Circles is published quarterly by Forget Me Not Family Society, a non-profit organization. Membership is \$24 per year. Send cheque to Box 61526, Brookwood Post Office, Langley, BC V3A 8C8 Canada. (604) 530-2160. US residents send US funds. All rights reserved. No part(s) may be reproduced in any form without the consent of the author or the society. Content is author's opinion and may not reflect Forget Me Not Family Society's position. Send editorials and letters to the Editor or FAX to (604) 530-2160.

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 or FAX to (604) 530-2160.

EDITOR'S NOTES

No Happy Ending, this month's story by Debbie Anne Bate, brings to the surface many questions regarding the adoption circle and how to complete it.

Who Me, Angry? was the very apt title of one of four presentations by BJ Lifton at the last Forget-Me-Not conference (tapes are still available by mail order through the society). Anger is a powerful emotion, and a source of as many liberation movements as there are obstacles in the way of full personal agency. Anger is an emotion too easily ignored in a world of "supposed to's." I often ignored the underlying feeling of anger thinking that I had to "just accept" that a piece of paper (a legal adoption order, for instance) which made my origins, in the human sense, a mystery to me, was "for the best, after all."

There is something about Debbie Anne's story which is disturbing. I had a sense that the anticipation of meeting her mother, only to be told by a government agent on the other end of the phone line that the mother did not want to meet her was somehow reinforcing a feeling of life being unfair. How many times can a person be rejected before they get angry about how powerless they seem to be.

Social workers and other government appear, from the standpoint of the adoptee, to be the keepers of information. I found it somewhat disconcerting that process of uncovering and discovery was not more fully in the hands of Debbie Anne. As a journalist, I know how liberating it was to go through the process of making the necessary connections and eventually finding my first mother. At the time, the B.C. government had just opened the reunion registry in Vancouver, and I almost went that route.

There are many assumptions within the apparent need for a keeper of such information to control the search process. These assumptions, as I see them, are a) by withholding information and controlling the process someone, somewhere, is being protected and b) that because the birth mother was "assured of anonymity" in the past, the state or the province has the inherent responsibility to now be the arbiter of information, control the search process, and give the birth mother the right to a veto over contact. This, however, leaves the adoptee who is an adult, powerless. A whole world of information and connection which is and always has been available to the person who is non-adopted and has no legal authority or means of obtaining information.

Let's address the last point, first. Many adults have opened doors for themselves without the assistance of the registries which have sprung up across Canada in the past few years. I am not saying that the registries don't have their place or that the people who staff them, whether or not they are social workers, are not doing the best job possible. What I am saying, is that we are living in a world where the horse is already out of the barn when it comes to the control of information, and many, many people have "unassisted" reunion stories to tell. There are people who do not like this - witness the woman who was "caught" in a sting operation in New York by a public official who took his job as the arbiter of information a little too seriously.

My heart goes out to Debbie Anne Bate, for if my mother had been contacted by a social worker representing "the state," likely as not her first inclination would have been to say "no thank you - not on your life."

Why? I think the answer has something to do with the fact that many women who gave birth to a child when they were young and very vulnerable have such sad stories to tell about the way they were treated by clergy, by social workers, and by close family members. Many young women were made to feel they had done something wrong and then internalized that conviction. This conviction can sometimes mean certain doors in their hearts are shut tight. It can take untold courage to face long suppressed memories of a sideways glance from someone who might have been a friend - of baby pictures cut out from catalogues, arriving in the mail with no return address (something that happened to my mother). Even now, I can feel the lump in my throat as I recall her telling me, which was the first time she had told anyone, of such acts of unkindness.

I have since come to realize that adoption is, indeed, a "women's issue" as Michelle McCole also shared with us during the FMN conference last year. It is a "women's issue" because the world is not made up of "good women" and "bad women" as the press and advertisers would have us believe. I still get such a chuckle out of advertisers who really have not yet understood that women have grey matter and are beginning to decode the messages which are so blatant, they're funny, or would be, if I were not so convinced certain messages erode a woman's sense of self-agency - of her ability to discover who she is for herself without the "help" of the imagery advertisers like to perpetuate. The source of my favourite chuckle are the advertisements for blue jeans and beer in which a young wild thing who is flamboyant and seductive usually takes centre stage. One night, I was struck by the irony in the fact that only ten minutes had passed and the young wild thing whose body had been writhing and contorting to don a pair of tight jeans - was suddenly somehow transformed. The image on the screen had changed, as had the accompanying storyline. This time, an attractive woman, a few years older, and apparently content, was up to her elbows in the bubbliest and purest of soap suds. She seemed so - well - happy. And, I had to ask myself, right on the spot, what exactly was being suggested by such imagery. Women I feel, are perhaps justifiably angry, about the limitations of such imagery, perpetrated by a culture which has not been especially kind to them.

As for the need for protection and who is being protected by the withholding of information - my answer to this is no one - except for the man who was my father. In a way, the structure which is in place, bureaucratically speaking, ultimately protected him - for it had long ago preyed upon the woman who was my mother at the point in her life in which she was most vulnerable.

There was a wonderful documentary on PBS recently called "Dialogues with Mad Women" - conversations with women who were so poorly served by the psychiatric approach to the human heart and soul that they were labelled "crazy" rather than being given the opportunity to reckon with the confusing images they faced. (ie. God is not black and female, but is a white, male authority who is watching you and knows everything).

The image of "the bad woman" vs. "the good woman" is crazy-making stuff. In my own quest for self, I have encountered both of these stereotypes, and rejecting both, I now choose to identify instead with someone who is passionate, powerful, and free. 'til next time...

--Deborah Sky

ONE

*To feel whole...
mind, body & soul*

*passenger thru life
as woman and wife*

*But part of me
difficult to see*

*fractured and incomplete
with memories bittersweet*

*Pain that was suppressed
feelings that weren't expressed*

*'Til someone young and brave
rescued me from that mental grave*

*The circle - now complete
no longer memories bittersweet.*

*Just happiness in getting to know
that a relationship will grow.*

*No more secrecy and mystery
no broken branches on the family tree.*

*You're more precious with each rising sun
because of you...I now am one.*

REUNION

*Early April 12th of 1971
gave birth to a beautiful son.*

*Left the hospital with impressions of his face
and left a part of me that no one could re-
place.*

*You grew up with a father and a mother
how could you want (yet you sought) knowledge
of another.*

*Knowing that out there some place
was that...phantom face.*

*You set out upon the searching path.
but not out of anger or wrath.*

*There must have been moments of reflection
wondering if you'd face rejection.*

*But Colin you mean more to me than you'll ever
know
and all those years, your memory inside of me,
continued to grow.*

*And on this your 23rd Birthday
I'd just like to say...*

*It thrills me to hear your voice on the phone
no longer strangers travelling thru life alone.*

*Still a yearning of my heart
that we didn't live so far apart..*

*But I'm happier now than I've ever been SON
and I'll always thank you for our reunion.*

*by Monica M. Bunton
written April 12, 1994*

Approaching "therapy" and examining images of god, authority and power

by Debora Sky

One of the reasons for the existence of the FMN Society, is to explore adoption and the reunion process and assist those involved in the adoption circle to come to a satisfactory resolution. We, of the executive, feel that the number of professionals who are equipped to assist members of the adoption circle and who understand the reunion process - is somewhat limited. Publications such as this one, plus the conferences, seminars and workshops, that the FMN Society has organized, are helping to cultivate understanding. In this issue of Adoption Circles, I am happy to share with you some of the thoughts and feelings I uncovered as I went through my own reunion process - an experience which is still happening, by the way. The greatest gift, in all of this, has been a newly evolved sense of empowerment, and I am happy to share my process of discovery with you.

In this process, I have had to embrace images of god that are feminine, which I refer to in the following narrative as the Great Mother. In my own thinking, the Great Mother is a force which is greater than the shortfalls or gaps we may have known with our own mothers or caregivers, and I note that Thomas Moore also explores this idea in his remarkable book - *Care of the Soul*.

For the person who is adopted and who seeks assistance from a family therapist or other professional, the most profound barrier to cultivating a relationship with the selected professional lay in the fact that most people and, therefore, most therapists, have been part of a family context where biological relatedness is a "given." In such a context, certain experiences are so intrinsic, familiar, and ordinary that they are seldom given much thought. It is my view that hidden within the familiar and the ordinary is a portal which has been hidden from the view and understanding of those individuals whose lives began in a mythical place called The Cabbage Patch. But within The Cabbage Patch, there is a doorway: a potential point of re-entry to the world of the Great Mother whose greatness has been diminished by the long shadow of the patriarch.

Someone who first named (for me) one of the effects of growing up in an environment where biological relatedness was a mystery was family therapist Arden Henley. He uses the word "shapeless" to describe the missing colour and detail in the personality and frequently the experience of those individuals in their 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, who face a peculiar challenge - integrating missing pieces of themselves uncovered in the reunion process. As Australian family therapist Josie McSkimming suggests: "The emotional process of reunion is complex and demanding, creating often painful opportunities for growth for

those directly involved and professional challenges for therapists."

Penny Callan Partridge, M.S.W. author of *Being Adopted*, and founder of the Adoption Forum in Philadelphia, observes that adoptees experience certain kinds of "invisibility" as they are growing up and on into their adult years likely as a result of receiving much less feedback than non-adoptees about their physical appearance. Consider that the moment a child is born, families, where biological relatedness is intact, begin to speculate about the babe's physical appearance. Frequent comments and anecdotes link the child with a host of progenitors. Partridge (see *Adoption Circles*, Issue 8 Fall 1993) suggests that such stories strengthen a child's sense of "connectedness" to the world around. I would suggest that such seemingly innocuous moments go some distance toward strengthening the very foundation of a young child's sense of security and belonging.

In fact, growing up in an interrupted context of one's hereditary or first family may significantly strengthen and nourish a child's sense of rootedness in ways that are so simple, they are elusive and fleeting - especially for the adoptee. This is one of the constituents of the barrier I have suggested exists in communicating the adoptee experience to those who have known only biological relatedness. The kind of mirroring

available to the non-adoptee, whose identity is constantly reaffirmed by family stories, is a significant factor in the development of self-concept, Partridge points out. "Adoptive families cannot provide adoptees with the kind of mirroring that comes from constantly being able to see and take in what others look like who have similar features, colouring, and so on . . . the only way the adoptive family can make any pretence of supplying this is by denying the fact of adoption itself."

In other words, even the linking that occurs in the adoptive environment is based on denial - denial of the biological context in which the child was conceived. Because of this denial, comparing the looks of the adopted child with an adoptive family member, even where a likeness may exist, can have a hollow ring. In some cases, denial of the biological context of origins may be confusing. (I am reminded of a friend who is

"I was not aware of the extent my feelings of extreme isolation until I was asked to explain what being adopted was like to a 12-year old boy."

continued on next page

native, who was raised in an environment of blond hair and blue eyes, and who could see clearly from looking in the mirror that he/she was different. This "difference" was minimized and often denied, however). All of this explains the limited opportunities for mirroring in the adoptive environment where the physical appearance of the child can be a constant "unwelcome reminder of those other parents" whose looks the child undoubtedly combines in some way. (Partridge) Limited opportunities for mirroring, lead to an experience of invisibility, or as Arden Henley suggests - shapelessness.

So anecdotal stories linking the child with its progenitors may be withheld in the adoptive environment because the subject is an awkward one for adoptive parents. And in the old adoption story, where social workers were "the agents of social control and promoters of secrecy and shame" (McSkimming) adoptive parents were nudged toward the "as if born to" concept, creating confusion for the adoptee. The concept is illusory and begs examination; for it eclipses the fact of biological origins: that a man and woman engaged in an act of intimacy and a child was conceived. (The man and woman who conceived the child were also shapeless in the old adoption story. They were of no particular racial or ethnic mix because their identities were concealed behind legal documents).

Many therapists assume their adopted clients have abandonment issues to resolve in some way. Much more challenging, I think, is the reunification of a complete story of origins, sans the cloak and dagger hijinks around the subject of conception and birth. Less obvious than abandonment, and therefore more potentially troublesome, are feelings of extreme isolation as a result of estrangement from the context of biological relatedness - a context that all the rest of the world seems to be part of. I have slowly come to understand how estrangement from the biological context of origins has affected me. I have felt not so much abandoned as stranded; denied access to this continuum others so take for granted. I have felt, intensely, like an outsider: a mere observer of the phenomenon of origins. Though the technocrats are meddling with techniques once-removed for creating a new and sentient being, entry to this continuum is still, for the most part "embodied" by a man and a woman who are engaged in what is, after all, a trans-cultural fact of life. What a revelation this can be to the person who is adopted. For in the old adoption story, where the simple fact of biological origins is neatly eclipsed, sequestered behind legal documents, and concealed from view and understanding; those concerned had lives which began some time later - in a strange place called The Cabbage Patch.

I was not aware of the extent my feelings of extreme isolation until I was asked to explain what being adopted was like to a 12-year old boy. Before our meeting, I gave some thought as to how to bridge the decades between us and communicate with the youth at his level. How could I portray what being adopted was like, experientially, to a 12-year-old? There was a factor of developmental delay to consider; this boy was somewhat younger than 12, functionally. What

came home to me along with the cream, when I hopped on my bicycle one day and made a quick trip to the store, was a short story entitled *The Missing Door to the Grocery Store*. And what came home to me in the writing was the extent of my own feelings of isolation.

As I began to explore isolation I found that isolation was related to many layers of extraordinary tension around the biological context of origins. Though my connection with this event was vaporous, sometime, somewhere, a man and a woman had engaged in an act of intimacy in which I was conceived. Though my birth was meant to be a natural segue, a celebrated point of entry to this world, it was far from that. It was, instead, a managed event. A man and a woman DID engage in an act of intimacy, a child WAS conceived, nine months DID pass, and a child WAS born - but an external "authority" intervened and rewrote the script. Narrative therapists, who are accustomed to questioning themselves and who are very much open to inquiry and explore issues of power and control, make no bones about referring to social workers and other government agents as "the agents of social control." So, in my life with two distinct parts or stories, an agent of social control intervened - and edited the script. In other words, my story was adjusted and altered to fit widely held norms and mores of the dominant culture. I have discovered that related to extraordinary tension I felt around the subject of origins was an intense anger at the apparent power of "the state" to intervene - and to manage and alter MY STORY.

In a recent court case in Canada known as *Sawan vs. Tearoe*, a young Cree woman is fighting to have her son returned to her. She says she notified the agency involved that she wanted her son back within days of signing the paperwork. Several newspaper articles described her son as Jordan, whose "state-assigned identity" in keeping with a recent ruling by the B.C. Court of Appeal, is David Tearoe. (The ruling favours the adoptive parents, for the moment. As I understand it, the case is being appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada). I agree also with family therapist Wally McKenzie (New Zealand) who has noted that a person will be situated within a particular set of cultures and subcultures, at all times. One of the subcultures within which I have been situated is the very subculture at issue in the *Sawan vs. Tearoe* court case. That subculture involves intervention by an external authority with the power to extinguish one identity, insist upon and authorize the assumption of another - a "state-assigned identity." I also agree that "self-authorship cannot be given by others, but it can be taken away by the overwhelming nature of authoritarian group structures." (McKenzie).

Within the old adoption story there is a haunting echo of the story of devastation of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Enormous pressure to conform to social conditioning was foisted upon the native population to be sure. A concentrated effort was made to extinguish native cultural identity. In this case (and perhaps it always holds) that the agents of social control acted on behalf of the controlling patriarch and widely held views. Native families were destroyed, their

children apprehended. Enshrined in the long shadow of the patriarch is the requirement of conformity to social conditioning.

In the old adoption story, there were also two main stereotypes. There were "the good women" while on the other hand there were "the bad women." When suggesting that these stereotypes only exist in the old adoption story, care must be taken, for according to the beer and blue jean commercials of the dominant culture, young women are still sultry seductresses before they marry. But within ten minutes a remarkable transformation occurs when the woman in the dishpan fairly gloats over her soapsuds. Only after the banns have been read, does she become as sunny and bubbly, and wholesome and pure, as the dishsoap she uses. The implied message is sadly in keeping with double-minded views of women that are entrenched in our society. It is a baleful story of duplicity which has kept women separate and scrapping. It is my view that this story of duplicity has served patriarchy and its gods for too long - which is why an image of god as The Great Mother has been so important to me. For under patriarchy, a young woman who was often confused and friendless, turned to an agent of social control for redemption. She may have been a bad woman - once. But now that she's been humiliated (which is simply another word for shamed) she knows better. She can still be a good woman; as long as she hands over any expectation of self-authorship to an external "authority." Grateful for a second chance, she can put her "misconception" behind her, though it is at last becoming obvious to many professionals that the idea that a woman can forget about a child she carried for nine months, and put the experience behind her, is the biggest misconception of all. So duly conditioned, the mother is eligible to resume a normal life. Normal means consummating a church-sanctioned, state-certified union. (And all advertising is, of course, aimed to this end).

Now that it is also becoming obvious that there are thousands of men and women who were conceived outside the model of a church-sanctioned, state-certified union - I feel it is time to unpack the word "illegitimate" and see it for what it is not. Invisibility and shapelessness may be implied, but only as far as the views of the dominant culture are concerned. "The dominant culture" is undergoing unusual and painful shifts, anyway, as individuals are exploring new definitions of family and community.

I am reminded that the native tradition affords the greatest respect to the Great Mother. In my view the Great Mother is like a foreign power, which strong and intact, cannot be controlled or exploited. It is a curious thing to me, that in our collective history, we have so many examples of how the frightened patriarch seeks to control or colonize that which seems mysterious and alien.

To me it is so healthy and healing that respect for the Great Mother includes respect for the natural world, and as I watch a brood of ducks swimming effortlessly in the canal near my home, it occurs to me that there is no such thing as a bastard offspring in the natural world. Only in the world of racial and ethnic oneupmanship does trouble apparently

begin.

Perhaps there is one advantage to the missing colour and detail in the experience of the adoptee who has not been strongly aligned with a hereditary family or ethnic group. For when a person's sense of self or identity is fastened at that level, he or she can sometimes become intransigent and bullish, and there can be a tendency to build fences to try and keep out the rest of the world.

But I would hasten to add that despite this one possible advantage, the challenges to identity consolidation for the person who is adopted and undertakes a reunion process should not to be taken lightly. For one's entire sense of self can be undermined in a way that is fraught with the potential for serious inner conflict. What does it mean, for instance, to the gentleman in his 60's who only now has learned that his mother and father were Metis people from the central part of Canada? Yet his adoptive parents withheld this information - for many reasons of their own. This gentleman needs skillful assistance, as such new information can have a profoundly disorienting effect. Not only does this new piece of information involve a sudden challenge to his identity that last week was intact, there are painful realities to face in embracing the legacy of prejudice toward aboriginal peoples.

I agree with those who say of the reunion process: "Go Slow," for the cabbage patch is not a pretty place - and this should not be forgotten. The cabbage patch has been a repository for all the stories about ourselves, as human beings, we simply could not bear at the time. There are many, many stories of intolerance and prejudice toward people of other ethnic groups and minorities. There are stories of rape, and stories of incest. The cabbage patch is not a place for the faint of heart.

For all our sophistication as human beings, technological or otherwise, I think of other stories that friends have told me - conception stories, for instance, where a woman has become pregnant despite the most vigilant use of available modern contraceptive methods. Whatever it is that remains unpredictable about the feminine, despite our best efforts to control it, is an aspect of the Great Mother in my view.

I was interested in a news item the other day, about a study conducted by two British doctors who had "discovered" that given the tools to understand the feminine cycle and monitor it consciously, a group of Asian women were able to exercise birth control with a thoroughness equal to that achieved using the birth control pill. It was yet another example to me that intact and strong, the Great Mother has all the tools she needs for self-authorship right at hand.

How ironic that two British doctors should make such an astonishing discovery.

Debora Sky is a reunited adoptee, journalist and the Editor of this newsletter. She resides in 100 Mile House, B.C.

No Happy Ending

by Debbie Anne Bate

A young woman turns to the Registry, and is disappointed...

I am 23, and have spent many long hours dreaming of the day I finally meet her: the woman who gave me birth. She must want to meet me, I thought. She must miss me and think about me all the time! I spent many, many hours thinking these thoughts.

Just less than three months ago, I found out that this wasn't necessarily so.

All my life I have struggled with being adopted, like many adoptees I am sure. Even more so in my case, I believe, because my two adoptive brothers and even my adoptive father never really accepted me and never let me forget I did not belong. My adoptive parents separated when I was 7 years old, and my adoptive father was anything but loving towards me. To this day, we do not speak. I always thought, "how unfair - I did not ask for this!" I have since learned over and over again about life, about the unfairness and about the masses of other pains it holds.

All those years growing up, I fantasized about the family I could have had, and I guess this is where I may have put too much faith into finding this family. On my 18th birthday, my adoptive mother and I put announcements in The Province and The Sun newspapers, and I prayed my birth mother would see them and find me. Not a single letter came to my mailbox. The next year I wrote for information from the B.C. Adoption Reunion Registry. I immediately put my name on the Passive Registry, and I waited . . .

At the same time I registered, I requested my non-identifying background information. Over a year later, I received it and was overjoyed! I finally knew something about where I came from. Not much, but a little. I also learned that I have a half-sister on my mother's side and

three siblings on my father's side and grandparents and uncles and aunts and an entire family that belongs to me! I wanted, right then and there, to know these people. To be able to see them and see myself in them. I had dozens and dozens of questions racing through my mind - and then I had none. I didn't know what I would ever ask - there was so much emotion and confusion and excitement. I couldn't help but think every day about that registry and when the day would come that my birth mother would register her name.

It's been three years since then, and I have a big fat folder filled with poems and articles and papers and letters and personal thoughts - everything about my adoption is in this folder. I poured over it one day and decided to go even further. I put together the \$250 needed for the active search and took as many books out of the library as I could find and started flipping through them. I kept a diary of my search, called "My Journey," and wrote in it every night. I tried to think of as many possible outcomes as I could, to try to prepare myself for what was about to come hurtling into my life.

The Registry had a pre-reunion group that I was only too grateful to attend. There I met several birth mothers and I couldn't help but imagine that my birth mother wanted to find me as much as these birth mothers wanted to find their sons and daughters. I shared their tears and knew that soon I would find my birth mother and we would be crying, perhaps in that very room, over so many years lost.

Only a week after that group, I was called by the Registry. "We have found your birth mother," they said. I couldn't believe it. They knew who she was! They were mailing her a letter that moment! I couldn't focus on anything else or think about anything else. I gave the woman on the phone

as much information about me as I could, in hopes that she could relay that information to my birth mother and she would be as happy and excited to meet me and know who I am. I waited and waited, wanting to call the Agency every day. But I waited for a week. Then I called the Agency, just to see . . . "Unfortunately," the woman on the other end of the line said . . . I started to cry. "Unfortunately, your birth mother does not want to be contacted."

I dropped the phone and cried and cried. I was lucky not to have been alone. I hung up the phone until I could speak (barely) but I wanted to know everything that was said by my birth mother to the Agency. I called back and was told that my birth mother had never told her other daughter or her current husband or her parents or her brother or my birth father or anyone! She kept my birth a complete secret for all these years, and decided she did not want to reopen that door she closed 23 years ago.

The next few weeks were so hard. Nobody could understand how severe this pain was . . . and still is. All my friends and family wanted to say the right things, but nothing could help me at this time.

I close my adoption file and "My Journey" and put them away. I couldn't even stand to look at them. I still can't read through "My Journey" as hard as I try to - I can't even open the front cover.

I have found The Forget-Me-Not Society and seek support wherever I can, bit it in writing letters to private agencies and my MLA, attending support groups, talking to other affected by the adoption circle, taking books out of the library, studying past cases in history and the Adoption Act, watching reunions on television - anything to help me to understand, if only a little bit, and to gain knowledge of my right and the fact that I am not alone.

At the time in my life when I felt the loneliest and most rejected, I have been reminded yet again that life is not fair. But then as the old adage goes "who says life is fair?"

Life can still be lived - fair or not - and silver linings can be found. I will always hold on to my faith. The faith I once reproached myself for having. I will always search for my natural family, and I will never let that go.

I always believed that the happy ending to my story would be meeting this family and becoming part of it, in some way. So at this time in my life, there really is no happy ending . . . yet . . . but as I've heard and recently learned, this is not the end of the book anyway, but the end of a chapter. And My Journey continues. □

Book Review: The Dance Of Deception

by Debora Sky

Harriet Goldhor Lerner's most recent book *The Dance of Deception*, hit the book stores only a few months ago. It is now available in paperback. Her thoughts about the difference between privacy and secrecy have particular application to the adoption circle.

"Secrets forge boundaries, create bonds, isolate, connect, and estrange. Secrets produce coalitions, triangles, insiders and outsiders. Keeping a secret can make us feel powerful, superior, special and loyal - or anxious, burdened, guilty and ashamed. Secrets can serve the most loving or malevolent of intentions. We may keep secrets about matters that are trivial or lethal, but there is no one who has not guarded secrets - their own and others - or who has not been affected by the secrets of others . . .

Privacy and secrecy have so many layers of nuance and meaning in private and public life that no single definition could adequately define either concept or distinguish between them in all instances. Both terms are invoked to defend concealment. As I see it, however, privacy shifts into secrecy when an act of deliberate concealment or hiding has a significant impact on the relationship process. Secrecy, as I define it here, is deliberate concealment **THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.**"

Deliberate concealment has made a difference in the lives of multitudes of people who have been denied access to the biological continuum of which they are a part.

Is it surprising that a publication ban on the adoptee's story of origins is being lifted at the same time as silence is no longer the only province of a woman who has been abused. I am so relieved that we no longer live in an era when withholding pain and hurt, in order to deal with it, is at last becoming history. □

MEDIAFILE

ARTICLES, MOVIES, DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT ADOPTION OR ADOPTION-RELATED MATTERS

**Adoption is a love that can bear two mothers,* was the heading of an article seen in the Vancouver Sun (August 20) by Tatiana Easton, a Vancouver writer. She speaks of her beloved friends' adopted daughter and her reunited birthmother and the paths they chose to take. "If the path chosen is not single parenthood then the choice becomes abortion or adoption. Either choice brings risk, the possibility of guilt, the certainty of emptiness," she states. Ms. Easton reflects on the wedding of her deceased friends' adopted daughter with her birth mother beside her at the bridal table. After hearing the birth mothers' story and already knowing her beloved friends' legacy of love, she writes "How can an outsider know anything about the love that must have suffused the hearts and minds of that beautiful bride and her two mothers?"

** Special Thanks to Robert Marcus,* for your generous financial donation to the Forget Me Not Family Society. Robert, your continuing support for our society is greatly appreciated.

** The Opening Address at the Adoption Council of Canada Conference,* in Calgary (May 27-28/94) by Ken Watson of the Chicago Child Care Society included the following:

5 Adoption Myths

1. Adoption is a perfect solution to 3 of Society's most vexing problems.
2. An adopted child can as fully belong to an adoptive family as a child born to that family.
3. Adoption is a one time legal event.
4. A healthy child and a good adoptive adoptive family assures that an adoption will cause no complication in the lives of those involved.
5. Adoption should or can be kept a secret.

Basic Rules for Working with Children

1. Be honest.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Be direct.
4. Be caring.
5. Use bite size pieces.
6. Never make promises. ☐

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Support Groups For birthmothers, adoptees, and adoptive parents

Cloverdale

The second Wednesday of each month, a support group meets at Cloverdale Public Library, 5642 - 176A Street. For more information contact Cecelia Reekie at 530-9017.

New Westminster

The second Tuesday of each month, a support group meets at New Westminster Public Library, 716 - 6th Avenue, from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information contact Nancy Kato at 525-8383.

North Vancouver

The third Wednesday of each month, a support group meets at Sea Cove Community Secondary School. As the location may change, contact Kathryn Moore at 929-6309, for more information.

ADOPTION REGISTRY OF B.C. UPDATE By Ken Derby

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

Total Applications Recieved	6500
Total Database*	8775
Searches Completed	3185
Reunions Completed	2316
<i>Other outcomes of active searches:</i>	
Subject of search deceased	215
Subject of search refused contact	318
<i>Other Services:</i>	
Matches on the passive database	352
Non-identifying information reports	1432

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

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
 Betty Coutts
 (100 Mile House) (604) 395-4969

Searching Birthmothers:

Mary Reynolds (604) 534-2851

Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (604) 530-9017
 Sue Travis (604) 534-2477

Reunited with Birth Father:

Sandra Pudsey (604) 534-4993

Reunited with Siblings:

Janis Wegrich (604) 856-2215
 (birthparents deceased)

Denied Reunion Adoptees:

Liz Goadby (604) 574-7223

Adoptive Parent of Reunited Adoptee:

Sue McBeatch (604) 538-8301

Adoptive Parent:

Elsa Weinstein (604) 876-4543

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.

Mail Order

The following books and products are available from the Society. Please make cheques payable to **Forget Me Not Family Society** and mail to Forget Me Not Family Society, P.O. Box 61526 Brookwood P.O., Langley, B.C. V3A 8C8. All prices include GST.

The Adoption Triangle by Arthur Sorosky, Reuben Pannor, & Annette Baran. Sealed or open records, how they affect all members of the adoption circle. \$14.00 plus shipping

Adoption Reunions by Michelle McColm. This book is the most comprehensive reunion guide to date. A sensitive and compassionate book about the reunion process for adoptees, birthparents and adoptive families. Michelle is Canadian and this book deals with Canadian laws and practices. \$18.50 plus shipping.

Journey of the Adopted Self - A Quest for Wholeness by B.J. Lifton. A brilliant contribution to the work of healing in adoption. Valid for all members of the adoption circle and professionals. Hardcover. \$30.50 plus \$3.50 shipping.

Lost & Found - The Adoption Experience by B.J. Lifton is a sensitive literary journey through the emotional labyrinth of the adoption experience. Written for adoptees, adoptive families and birthparents. \$18.00 plus shipping.

The Other Mother by Carol Schaefer. A wonderful book written with poignancy, tenderness, depth and honesty. A remarkable portrayal of what it is really like to relinquish a child for adoption. \$18.50 plus shipping.

Torn from the Heart by Louise Jurgens. A terrific book, warm, intimate and full of love, describing an inner journey of courage in a birthmother's search for her child. \$19.50 plus shipping.

Other than B.J. Lifton's new book, shipping charges are \$2.50 for the first book and \$.75 for each additional book.

T-SHIRTS! GET YOURS NOW!



Society T-Shirts with the Forget Me Not Family Society Logo screened on the front are available in top quality 100% cotton. Please state size M/L/XL. Colour: white only (logo is black). \$14.95 ea. + \$1.50 Shipping.

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.