

ADOPTION CIRCLES

CANADA'S POST-ADOPTION QUARTERLY

ISSUE 15 SUMMER 1995 \$3.00

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ADOPTION CIRCLES
ISSUE #15 SUMMER 1995

Publisher
**FORGET ME NOT FAMILY
SOCIETY**

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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 office or FAX to (604) 581-0550.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello to all our members. We have had our Annual General Meeting and have been working on some ideas that you will see in this issue. Please fill out our questionnaire insert in this newsletter so that we can be assured we are heading in the right direction for you.

We are already working on the Conference for 1996, which has been tentatively booked for March 3 and 4, 1996. We will be hosting this conference with the Adoptive Parents Association of British Columbia. We feel that this will be a wonderful weekend which will deal with adoption reunion issues as well as issues pertaining to adoptive parents. We hope by doing this we can bring the Adoption Circle together and be able to learn from each other. The conference will be held at the same location ie, the Sheraton Landmark Hotel in Vancouver. We are asking for proposals and we would like to have them all in by the end of July. You can mail proposals to the office, fax me at 530-7625 or E-mail me at cansoft@haven.uniserve.com. Registration will be limited this year, so watch for the registration form so you can get in as early as possible.

I would also like to let you know that I am sitting on the Adoption Advisory and Consultation Committee as an individual member of the adoption community. This is a very interesting committee with many different people with very diverse issues. We will be working with the provincial government in upcoming adoption reform issues. Please see the Adoption Advisory & Consultation Committee article for more information.

I wish each of you a wonderful summer and we will speak to you in the fall. If you have any concerns or questions please call the office.

--Cecelia Reekie

EDITOR'S NOTES

Since our last newsletter, a rare but special type of adoption has taken place in my life, and now it is my "other" adoption story.

In 1988, the year I graduated from high school my adoptive mom remarried. Though we were off to a rocky start, John, my new dad became there for me in a way fathers were supposed to be. Growing up with divorced parents, I never had that close and special father/daughter relationship with my adoptive father. John always hung in there, always cared and always treated me like his own daughter. Over the years I began to realize how much he truly loved me!

Last summer, a tragic and overwhelmingly painful time came to our family when we lost a very special young man in our lives. John's son, my stepbrother Greg, aged 27, was killed instantly in a car crash. If there was any hope to come out of our loss, it was that it made us realize how family is so important and that when you feel something in your heart, when you want to do something - you have to do it. Life is too short to put things off any longer. Over the years, so many times John would hug me and tell me how proud he was to have me as his daughter. I didn't know that over those years, John wanted to "officially" become my dad - not my step-dad. Last year, John and I decided to adopt each other and just a few months ago the adoption was completed and I am now "officially" Debbie Ann Pratt.

The close relationship we have is something I dreamed of while I grew up and now my dream is finally true! I was also able to have a choice in one of the most important events of my life, adoption.

Many times while I was growing up, I thought of adoption as being a negative experience, because of the secrecy and the lack of control felt as being part of the adoption circle. With my new adoption experience, I realize how the ritual of the adoption process can be very positive. With so many changes coming forth in the approach to adoption issues, and with our strength to fight for openness in adoption and for whatever else it is that we believe in - we can go so far, learn so much and be everything and everyone we want to be. I sincerely wish every member of the adoption circle the very best and hope you all are able to grow with the telling and experience of "your" adoption story. --Debbie Pratt

PLEASE NOTE...

The Forget Me Not Family Society has a **NEW mailing address effective immediately**, which is:

**Forget Me Not Family Society
#209 - 1575 Best Street
White Rock, British Columbia, CANADA
V4B 5K1**

Our phone number remains the same. You can also fax us newsletter stories, ideas and letters, along with book/tape orders etc.

**phone: (604) 581-0550
fax: (604) 530-7625**

It is important that you make note of this address change immediately in order that we may be sure to receive your mail. Our members' input is very valuable to our Society.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING UPDATE

The AGM was held on April 22 at the New Westminster Public Library. We are pleased to announce the following executive for the 1995-1996 year:

President:	Cecelia Reekie
Vice President:	Nancy Kato
Secretary-Treasurer:	Gail Davies
Directors-At-Large:	Catherine Moore Jim McNeil Ginny Paulsen Elsa Weinstein

Our heartfelt thanks to Dave Morch and all he has contributed during the past few years.

Our goals and objectives remain the same; however, we would appreciate your assistance in completing the enclosed questionnaire. Our wish is to provide the services that you, the membership, really want and need.

NEWS RELEASE

A recent news release dated March 28, 1995, has indicated a significant change in procedure in the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, which may affect you.

That news release is as follows:

COMMISSIONER ORDERS ADOPTION RECORDS RELEASED

Victoria Information and Privacy Commissioner David Flaherty has ordered the Ministry of Social Services to disclose adoption records to an adoptee. Flaherty ruled that the applicant was entitled to information on his adoption records that did not identify particulars about the applicant's birth parents.

In a written inquiry, the Ministry of Social Services stated that the records could not be disclosed since the "confidentiality provisions of the Adoption Act override the right of access in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act." The records included correspondence to the Ministry from the applicant's birth parents as well as home studies and court records.

The applicant argued that there was nothing in the Adoption Act that prohibited the release of information which did not identify his birth parents, specifically "original birth registrations, orders, judgements, decrees, medical history sheets, reports and adoption orders."

The Commissioner found that the Adoption Act did not restrict or prohibit the release of so-called "non-identifying" personal information. "I have considerable sympathy with arguments made by the applicant on why adoptees want and need access to their adoption records. It is hard to think about the 'best interest of the child', the concept believed to underlie the Adoption Act, and not be inclined to disclose more information to adoptees about themselves than has previously been done."

For more information contact:

P.E. (Pamela) Smith

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Fourth Floor, 1675 Douglas Street

Victoria, British Columbia

V8V 1X4

Ph: (604) 387-5629

Fx: (604) 387-1696

pesmith@galaxy.gov.bc.ca

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO LONGER will the Adoption Reunion Registry be fulfilling requests by adoptees for non-identifying background information. The procedure now is to write to:

Ministry of Social Services, Information and Privacy Division, 110 - 333 Quebec Street, Victoria, British Columbia, V8V 1X4. PHONE: (604) 387-0820 and specifically request access to personal adoption information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. What you will receive is a photocopy of your actual adoption file, with identifying particulars blanked out.

The Ministry will require a photocopy of government picture ID which can be sent with your initial request, or it will be requested later in writing. The Ministry has 30 days to respond to your written request. After you receive your file, which you will be notified to pick up in person from a Ministry office closest to your home address, you will have 30 days to file an appeal for review if you are not satisfied with the severance of information of your file in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Adoption Act. These facts will be explained to you in correspondence from the Ministry.

This is a new procedure and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Ministry of Social Services, Information and Privacy Division.

NEWS RELEASE

The following news release put out by the Ministry of Social Services on June 21, 1995, addresses the introduction of the new Adoption Act and will likely affect many Forget Me Not Family Society members. That news release is as follows:

NEW ADOPTION ACT INTRODUCED

VICTORIA - The new Adoption Act tabled in the legislature today will better protect the best interests of the child and balance the rights of all parties to adoption, said Social Services Minister Joy MacPhail.

"This legislation responds to long-standing public demands to replace a 38-year-old act," said MacPhail. "The previous act dates from 1957, and no longer reflects society's view of the complex relationships among children, birth mothers and fathers, adoptive parents and extended families. The members of this wider adoption circle require better protection, more options and greater access to information.

"We are indeed indebted to all the agencies, groups and individuals who provided their views to the adoption review panel," said MacPhail. "We have benefitted from the input of thousands of British Columbians who took the time to consider these serious issues."

"We listened to people whose lives are deeply affected by adoption, and we recognized the need to balance the interests of all parties in the adoption process," said Comox MLA Margaret Lord, who led the review panel.

The new act makes a number of improvements over the existing legislation, including:

- . Thorough, fair assessments of prospective adoptive parents will be mandatory across the province before children can be placed either through the ministry or a licensed adoption agency.
- . Birth mothers will have greater access to information to help them choose the right alternatives for themselves and their children. They will be able to make more informed decisions and may arrange with adoptive parents for the possible ongoing sharing of information or contact with the child.
- . Birth fathers who want to be involved in planning for their children can make their interest known through a birth fathers' registry.
- . Children will have a greater say in any adoption arrangements. Under the new act, the views of children aged between seven and 11 years must be considered; from age 12 onward, children are asked for their consent to the adoption.
- . Adoptive parents will benefit from regulations which ensure home assessments are undertaken quickly and fairly. They will have full access to all available medical and personal information about their child. International adoptions will meet both provincial standards and those of the Hague convention on international adoptions.
- . In keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, barriers which discriminate against common-law couples or any two adults applying jointly will be removed. In all cases, the courts will grant an adoption order only when it is judged to be in the best interests of the child.
- . When an aboriginal child is to be adopted, the ministry or licensed agency will, upon approval of the birth parents, notify the child's community and consult with them about planning. In addition, the courts may recognize aboriginal-custom adoptions.
- . Adult adoptees and birth parents will have access to identifying information and services to assist with search and reunions.
- . Birth parents and adoptees who wish to continue to maintain their privacy, as under the current act, may register a disclosure veto. This prohibits the release of identifying information. Birth parents and adoptees who simply wish to have no contact may register a no contact declaration.

A national campaign prior to proclamation of the act will ensure that adult adoptees and their birth parents are informed of the new access to information initiatives, and will have time to file disclosure vetoes or no contact declarations if they so wish.

Over the last three years, an average of 50 infants and 110 special needs children were placed annually for adoption by the Ministry of Social Services. On average, a further 195 children per year were placed through private agents and agencies.

Legacy of an Adopted Child

Once there were two women
who never knew each other
One you do not remember
the other you call Mother
Two different lives
shaped to make yours one
One became your guiding star
the other became your sun
The first gave you life
the second taught you to live in it
The first gave you a need for love
the second was there to give it
One gave you a nationality
the other gave you a name
One gave you a seed of talent
the other gave you an aim
One gave you emotions
the other calmed your fears
One saw your first sweet smile
the other dried your tears
One gave you up
it was all that she could do
The other prayed for a child
and God led her straight to you
And now you ask me
through your tears
The age old question
through the years
Heredity or environment
which are you the product of
Neither, my darling
just two kinds of love

- Anonymous

DETERMINATION - Life does not require us to be the biggest or the best, it asks only that we try

PERSEVERANCE - The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will

SERENITY - In the race to be better or best, do not miss the joy of being

The Reunion

In days of old, girls were more afraid
Fewer choices was the price they paid
Nice girls were worried about their name
When having a child unwed caused shame
So many a time they had no option
but to give the baby up for adoption.
Now times are better, things are good
The girls can work and choose motherhood
Not all the girls might make that choice
But at least they now have a voice.
They'll never miss their child's years
Wake up at night full of tears
It's hard, no question, either way
But nonetheless, I have to say
To have your baby and be its mother
Is the choice I'd make and no other.
For living years not knowing your child
Can make you crazy, drive you wild
But after years of so much grief
There is a God, you get relief.
From the adoption reunion, a letter
Comes to tell you life will be better
Your daughter has been looking here
You pray she likes you but never fear
She's so happy about her own life
Her family helped her with the strife
Soon you'll meet her face to face
You just ask her to name the place.
Years of hurt, pain and blame
You know you'll never feel the same
Her words are kind and full of cheer
Now your daughter is really here!
To top it off, she has a girl
Your head is spinning in a whirl
Now you can think about no other
For you are also a grandmother!

- Gloria Blakney Leonard

ARTICLE

ADOPTION ADVISORY & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Project Coordinator - Margaret Staar (Phone/Fax: 530-0082)

Committee Chair - Lex Reynolds (Phone: 381-5353)

Co-Chair - Sharon Jinkerson (Phone: 873-1833)

June 8/95 - TO THOSE CONCERNED WITH ADOPTION REFORM

As you may already know, the ADOPTION ADVISORY & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE (AACC) is a committee of adoption triangle and adoption community representatives, initially established in January/95 with the support of a grant from the Law Foundation to the Adoption Parents' Association of B.C. We are circulating notices to those who might have an interest in the government's proposed adoption reform to inform them of our objectives and activities, and to continue developing a relationship of consultation and partnership with as many segments of the adoption community as possible.

The PRIMARY OBJECTIVE of the AACC is to facilitate an ongoing effective partnership between B.C.'s adoption community and the government, so as to increase the likelihood that adoption legislation, policy and practice will be reformed and will continue to be developed in accordance with the needs of all members of the adoption circle. The current members of the AACC are virtually all drawn from the adoption circle and include:

CECELIA REEKIE, SUE BLANCK, HEATHER NIESEN, VIC TWEEDY, JOAN VANSTONE, ANN WELWOOD, DANA BRYNELSON, SHARON JINKERSON, JIM KELLY, BRENDA KNIGHT, JAN LUTKE, DON MARK, LEX REYNOLDS, AUDREY SCAMMELL, MURRAY WARREN, BRAD WATSON, LORNE WELWOOD AND MICHAEL WHITFIELD.

The AACC is now beginning consultation, research, communication and advocacy activities. Committee members come from diverse backgrounds of experience and culture, and in our information-gathering and sharing, we will continue to strive to be representative and inclusive of all aspects of the adoption community. You can help us do this, and also help increase the chances of progressive adoption reform happening NOW. Please contact us, to confirm your desire to receive our information, and to discuss sharing your experience and positions with us, as we work together for adoption reform.

CALL OR FAX MARGARET STAAR AT 530-0082 TO REACH THE AACC!

Inside, Looking out at Adoption

by Kathryn Wells

My life has mostly been a search for a safer and stronger sense of self. Although I inherited an extroverted and fairly optimistic personality, I only really began to feel safe within my own life after I began to practise Buddhism.

I was adopted six weeks after I was born. My adoptive family lived in West Vancouver on a small island. My first memories are of sitting in a rock pool, enjoying the sun and watching my family on the beach below me. When I was 6 years old, my best girlfriend explained to me that she came from her mother's tummy. I told her that she must be wrong because I knew that I came from a very nice hospital where children were born. My confidence, however, soon was shaken when I discovered that all of the other friends I had came from their mother's tummies, too. I was an adopted child.

I grew up to face some common family situations. When I was 9 years old, my adoptive parents separated. When I was 11, my adoptive father died of liver failure due to chronic alcoholism. My adoptive mother raised me on her own and succeeded in putting herself through university to become a high school teacher. I began to cook and clean at age 10 and did my best to be a very good girl. Imagine the insecurities that children of divorced parents face, coupled with the fear of rejection felt by an adopted child! To save my psyche from having to deal with so much fear about my own status, and so much sadness at losing my adoptive father, I became very good at excelling in everything I did. My relationship with my mother became more like that of two adult friends than a mother-daughter relationship. I conveniently bypassed the teenage stage and threw myself into my schoolwork and into ballet lessons.

By the time I was 16, I showed a lot of talent in ballet and my adoptive mother took out a loan to enable me to go to the best school in England to start a three year pre-professional program. I eventually became a professional ballet dancer and lived in Europe for 8 years. Sometimes adoptees see themselves as living in a "make-believe" world. I would say that applied to me because I found the idea of role-playing natural and somewhat comforting. I felt I had kind of faked my role in my family too.

When I was 25 years old I returned to Canada to join a ballet company in Montreal. It was at this time that I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I learned about the concepts eagerly. I loved the idea of "true self." You can imagine that one of my basic needs was to answer

this question. I had no idea where I came from or why I had the interests I had, why my eyes were green, who my ancestors were or where I wanted to go in the future. I had no politics except that I knew I should have the right to know my own history.

I began to hope for love, which to me was being connected to a family. I guess I was in need of more mothering. Everyone in my family assumed I was living a glamorous life as a ballet dancer. In fact, I was confused and often cried because I felt so terribly alone. One Christmas Eve I spent by myself was particularly painful. I felt that my life was so empty.

As I began to practise Buddhism more consistently, I learned to appreciate my problems as chances for growth. I learned to appreciate my family. I liked the idea that each individual was "precious" and that every person's life was the result of a myriad of causes and effects from the distant past. I began to understand that I had family "karma" and that the only way I could change my unhappiness was through my own actions towards others.

I quit dancing at the age of 27 and eventually put myself through university. I earned an Honours B.A. degree in anthropology and went on to complete an M.A. in dance ethnology in Hawaii. I returned to my hometown, Vancouver, and have worked for the CBC in the Music Library for the past 5 years.

In 1988, I began a search for my birth family with information that had been given to me in 1978 by the adoption services in British Columbia. I acted very much like a private detective. I put pieces of information together and gradually a picture of my father was formed. Although adoption services could not give me a definitive answer, I felt I had the right man.

Then, while holidaying with me in Mexico, my adoptive mother became very ill with pneumonia. At the small hospital where she was taken, I was told she might not survive the night. This news sent fear through me. I was facing a life and death situation for the first time in my life.

That night I believe I saw into the true nature of my relationship with my adoptive mother. I felt stronger than ever before. I was thankful that I practised Buddhism and that I had so many dear friends who would chant for me and my mother. I was confident that no matter what the outcome, I would protect my mother in life as in death. There was no

need of ego at that moment. I gave my heart and soul to her. Fortunately, my mother recovered and has enjoyed good health since then.

Where my birthmother was concerned, I still knew next to nothing. In 1988 an Adoption Registry was opened in British Columbia. Both parties had to register for a reunion to take place. I had evidence that my birthfather had died of leukaemia at the age of 49, so I could only hope that my birthmother might register.

I felt that everyone should be able to benefit from new adoption laws and not just a few people who could afford the information illegally. A year later in January 1992, the provincial government changed the law and would guarantee to find an adoptee's birthmother and/or birthfather, and also connect all parties with counselling therapists. My prayers were answered.

About this time my life was more stable. I had met a wonderful man I wanted to marry. One week before the wedding, I got a phone call from an adoption counselor who said he was about to call my birthmother. As soon as he had spoken with my birthmother he called me back. My birthmother was turning 70 this year and she was delighted to have this reunion. He said she cried and said it was a "miracle." My birthmother sent me her best wishes. What a special wedding gift for me!

My birthmother and I began exchanging letters and photographs. She lives in Hamilton, Ontario. She told me about my birthfather and I discovered that I had been correct about who he was. I also found out that I have two half-sisters and three half-brothers, not to mention aunts, uncles, cousins and a grandmother still living.

My birthfather died in 1978. But fortunately in August I met his children in Vancouver. This meeting was amazing for me. Imagine sitting with people who look like you and who want to be part of your life simply because you exist. My half-brothers and half-sister graciously told me about their dad, and as we were talking they said that it was clear to them that I was his daughter. My mannerisms were just like his.

In addition, they told me that my father taught physical education and music in an elementary school in North Vancouver. They said it was a shame that he had never met me because he would have been so proud of my accomplishments in ballet. He had put his son and daughter in ballet classes and was upset when his daughter quit her lessons at age 14.

In November I flew to Toronto and spent a week visiting with my birthmother and her family. They took me into their hearts as did my father's children but no one can describe what it feels like to meet your mother for only the second time in your life. I had always had a memory image of my mother and I walking in the forest together, and the first thing she confirmed for me was that she used to take long walks in the forest during her pregnancy. We compared our physical traits and gazed at one another for a long time. It defies description. We both agree on that. I received a card from my birthmother after we had met and I had returned to Vancouver. She wrote, "There are no words to tell you how happy you have made me. I am with you, without words, all the time, and now we have memories. I know you know how I feel."

All my fears of bringing up painful memories for her were dispelled when I saw her face. She is a survivor. She loves life. She is forgiving and gentle in spirit and she has her own strong faith as a Presbyterian. We both expressed our joy at having such good fortune to be able to meet and get to know one another. We expected to cry and we did as we began to feel safer around each other. We hugged a lot as we told each other our separate stories.

My birthmother married later in life as I did. She was fortunate to marry a man she had always loved. He is retired from the Presbyterian ministry but still active as a published historian. Now when I think of my birthmother's face, I feel tears in my eyes because we live so far apart, but when we said goodbye this time, we told each other it was a new beginning, not an end.

I have a great gift from this experience. I am married with two step-children, ages 6 and 8. I hope my experience of adoption will enable me to deeply encourage my husband's children who may one day be full of questions about their own circumstances in life. I hope they will be able to grow up with more confidence in the world around them than I had and that they will be able to develop a strong sense of self so that they can enjoy their lives to the fullest. They ask me such interesting questions about life. I always use Buddhist concepts to answer because they make the most sense.

The reason I have such confidence in my Buddhist practice is that there is such a strong focus on the integrity and individuality of the person as well as a deep understanding of the interrelatedness of people and their environment. My hope is that all of us can truly uncover what makes us suffer and live our lives to the fullest every day. □

**"Imagine sitting
with people who
look like you
and who want
to be part of
your life simply
because you
exist."**

MEDIAFILE

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

* *"She cries uncle, finds relative"* was the heading of an article in The Sunday Province (June 4) written by Wendy McLellan, after an interesting reunion between Joy Ward, adopted as a child, and her cousin, Graham Inkster. Joy, 43, who lives in Langley, was flipping through The Province one day when she spotted a familiar face - one that looked a lot like one of her uncles, only younger. Joy contacted an organization listed in the newspaper article and found out that the man she saw was in fact a cousin of hers whom she had never before met. They met for the first time on June 2nd.

Joy, a native Indian, was adopted as a baby by a non-native couple and did find her birthmother in Vernon several years ago, but the reunion was not a positive one. After that experience Joy started looking into her heritage and realized she was one of the lucky ones. She began tracing the rest of her family, including grandparents and brothers and sisters, and now that she has found her cousin, Graham, he assures her he will "help her fill in the gaps."

* *"Lesbians can apply to adopt partners' kids"* headed this Canadian Press article in The Province on May 25th with respect to a recent Ontario judge ruling that lesbians should be able to apply to adopt their partners' children, saying a "secure and loving home" is more important than the sexual orientation of the parents.

Judge James Nevins stated, "The suggestion that it might not ever be in the best interests of these children to be raised by loving, caring and committed parents, who might happen to be lesbian or gay, is nothing short of ludicrous."

* *The highly publicized "Baby Richard" case in the U.S.* has come to somewhat of an end recently as reported in the media on May 1st under a most disturbing headline, "One Family Despairs, Another Delights as Tug-of-Love Uproots Adopted Boy." For those following the tragic case, "Baby Richard" was the boy at the centre of a four-year custody battle in Schaumburg, Illinois. Richard was adopted as an infant while his biological father Otakar Kirchner was told that his child was dead. Kirchner has been fighting for his son since learning the truth when the child was only 57 days old. Kirchner and Richard's birthmother, Daniela have since remarried and live near Chicago.

State Supreme Court granted Otakar Kirchner custody in January of this year, ruling the adoption illegal

because he was told his child was dead. After several suggestions on ways to make easier the transition from Richard's adoptive home to his biological home, Otakar's lawyers demanded the boy to be turned over immediately as no agreement could be had. Richard's new life with a mom who gave him away at birth and a dad he'd never met, began on April 30.

* *Another recent story in the media is that of Helmut Andreas Sass, 34, a local adoptee* who fought the system to have legal access to his birth documents. The government was denying Sass the non-identifying documents, arguing that confidentiality provisions in the Adoption Act took precedence over his right to information. Sass won a precedent-setting decision when B.C. Privacy Commissioner David Flaherty ordered a government registry to release non-identifying copies of Sass's original birth documents. "It seems to me to be moving in the right direction, and it's one I support," said Minister of Social Services, Joy MacPhail.

(Please see the related article in this newsletter for more information.)

* *"Reunion with father gave a sense of connection"* appropriately headed this article in the May 26th Vancouver Sun newspaper written as an autobiographical article by Gerry Greenstone living in Surrey. Greenstone writes of being born in Dublin, Ireland where his parents were separated soon after his birth. His mother took him to England where she remarried and eventually the family sailed to Canada. Greenstone last saw his father at the age of five and over the years there was no contact.

It was only after Greenstone's mother died that he felt free to learn about his father and began his search. A telephone reunion took place, but in search of a physical meeting, Greenstone knew he had to go to Ireland.

Upon his arrival to Ireland, Greenstone was reunited with his father on a train platform, knowing the moment he saw him, that it must be his father. Father and son and Greenstone's newly found family spent the next few days together, but the time did eventually come to say goodbye. Greenstone says in his story, "Although it didn't make up for a lifetime of absence, meeting my father gave me a sense of connection to him. And I was glad I could take away some memories of his life."

"The 125 Most Asked Questions About Adoption (and the Answers)"

Author: Paul Baldwin

by: Ginny Paulsen

The 125 Most Asked Questions About Adoption can be purchased from Duthies bookstore for \$16.95, but I do not personally recommend that anyone rush out to buy it. It can also be borrowed from the public library system for free, which is closer to what it is worth. It does have some value in that it provides yet another perspective on adoption issues.

While reading through the book, I had to ask myself: Who is this Paul Baldwin and what does he know about adoption? I could not find any evidence of credibility. Does he possess any degrees? Is he an Adoptive Parent? Is he an Adopted person or a Birthfather? The only personal information that I could find on him was that he was from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He claims his information is drawn from "the latest available facts and figures from dozens of organizations, as well as speaking directly to parents and children from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances."

As an Adopted Adult, I was particularly offended by Question #120, and his response to a 14 year old girl who asks "Who am I, really?"

"Q. I am a fourteen-year-old adopted girl who wants to know who my real parents are. I love my adoptive parents a lot, but my real parents are part of me too. My adoptive parents don't see it that way. They say they are my "real" parents and there is no way to find out who gave birth to me, anyway. How old do I have to be to legally find out who my birth parents are?

A. You are at an age when children, adopted or not, are naturally trying to figure out who they are as people, and it is fairly common for an adopted child to feel that part of the answer lies in knowing who his or her

biological parents were. But you are probably hurting your parents' feelings by using the term "real parents." Look at it the other way around. How would you like it if your adoptive parents said you weren't their real daughter? You will have to wait until you are 18 (and in some states 21) before you can request that your name be put on a registry that might lead to finding your biological parents. But they won't be listed unless they want to find you too, which is not something you should count on. And by the time you are 18 or older, you may not be interested anymore yourself - which is often the case."

It is frightening that someone who writes an information book on adoption issues can be so insensitive and failing in his inability to validate the feelings of a 14 year old girl who is questioning her identity and confronting many of the issues that adoption presents. To add to the guilt and conflicting loyalties that an adoptee feels is irresponsible and insensitive. Mr. Baldwin also suggests that many birthmothers "simply cut themselves a very good deal." I think of all the incredible women that I have met who are birthmothers, and find it hard to think of them as cutting themselves a good deal. One positive aspect of this book is that he does advocate honesty and openness in telling a child that he/she is adopted. However, it would appear that this book is intended as a guide for adoptive parents and designed to protect their feelings and image, rather than to enhance their understanding of their adopted child.

Perhaps the most frightening part of "The 125 Most Asked Questions About Adoption" is that it was not written in the 1950's or 1960's as the attitude might suggest, rather it was published in 1993! However, it does serve as a reminder that even in today's society such attitudes still exist and current legislation, which is badly in need of reform, reinforces that attitude. □

Request for Research: ADOPTees WANTED FOR INTERVIEWING

I would like to contact adults or teens who would be willing to give me information about their life as an adopted person. I am writing a book for young adoptees and I would love to hear your story, particularly if it is unusual, or if you had any problems growing up as an adoptee.

Male adoptees who are willing to talk are particularly hard to find, so if you are one, please give me an opportunity to talk to you. I am an adoptive mother of two and you may find that I can fill in some gaps for you as we talk. I will keep all information confidential, and if your story is used, I will change names and other identifying details to protect the identity of the families concerned. PLEASE CALL MAUREEN AT 448-1260.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support Groups For birthparents, adoptees, and adoptive parents

Denied Reunion Support Group for Adoptees

Beginning September 13/95 the Adoption Reunion Registry will offer an ongoing, bi-weekly support group for adoptees who have experienced a refusal at the end of their search. The group will meet at the Registry's office at 202 - 1600 W 6th Ave., Vancouver at 7:30 pm to 9 pm., every other Wednesday. Participants do not need to register in advance. For further information call Marg Harrington at 736-7917.

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 530-9982.

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 in North Vancouver. For more information, contact Catherine Moore at 929-0546.

Vancouver

The fourth Tuesday of each month, a support group meets in Vancouver. For more information contact Ginny Paulsen at 875-8720.

Quesnel

The first Tuesday of each month, a support group meets at the Community Services Building. Contact Sharon Stevens at 992-9087 in Quesnel.

LEAN ON ME TELEPHONE SUPPORT LIST

Reunited Birthparents:

Monica Bunton (403) 327-7525
Ethel Drake - Kamloops (604) 374-8042
Christine Gurin (604) 985-2096
Nicole Quittenton (604) 731-0605
Connie Short (604) 534-9456
Betty Coutts
(100 Mile House) (604) 395-4969

Searching Birthparents:

Mary Reynolds (604) 534-2851
Lois Tworowski
(Regina, Sask.) (306) 522-2756

Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (604) 530-9982
E-Mail: cansoft@haven.uniserve.com
Ginny Paulsen (604) 875-8720
Sharon Stevens - Quesnel (604) 992-9087
E-Mail: sstevens@family.island.net
Sue Travis (604) 534-2477

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
Michael-Sue Goldblatt (604) 921-6425

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.

REUNION REGISTRY UPDATE

By Marg Harrington, Registrar
Adoption Reunion Registry

Reunion Registry Statistics From Oct 2/91 to May 31/95.

Total Database*	9399
Searches Completed	3484
Reunions Completed	2480
- Active	2308
- Passive	422
Subject of search deceased	271
Subject of search refused contact	399
Non-identifying information reports	2022

* Database consists of Active and Passive Registries as well as requests for non-identifying information..

QUESTIONNAIRE

In the past year, we at the Forget Me Not Family Society (Adoption Circles) have concentrated our energy and effort in three main areas:

- . Annual Conference
- . Adoption Circles Newsletter
- . Development & Improvement of Support Groups

This year we plan to continue our efforts in each of these areas and hope to expand into other areas of interest to our members. In order to meet your needs and to follow directions of relevance and interest to you, our members, we ask that you take a few minutes to read and respond to the following questions.

1. The following have been suggested as avenues the Society might pursue in the future. Please rate each according to how important you think it is on a scale of 1 - 5, with "1" being the **most** important and "5" being the **least** important.

- _____ fundraising
- _____ political activism
- _____ education
- _____ developing a lending library
- _____ member's socials
- _____ workshops

Four different workshops are planned for this fall - please indicate which issues/subjects you would like to see addressed:

over

2. If you have any suggestions for directions for the Society this year ahead and in the future, please write them here:

3. Are you interested in volunteering your time and talent so that the Society can expand in new directions?

_____ YES _____ NO

If YES, what area(s) are you interested in becoming involved in?

If you wish to be contacted as a volunteer, please fill in your name, address and/or telephone number below:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Please return this questionnaire to us at your earliest convenience, Thank you.

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, #209 - 1575 Best Street, White Rock, B.C., CANADA V4B 5K1. All prices include GST.

A Coloring Book for Grown-Up Adopted Children. \$8.00 plus \$1.50 shipping.

Nobody's Baby by Susan Moses. A book of poetry. \$6.00 plus \$1.00 shipping.

Dear Mom, I Found My Birthmother by Susan Moses. \$5.00 plus \$1.00 shipping.

Reader's Guide to Books on Post-Adoption by Heather Carlini. \$4.95 plus \$1.00 shipping.

Birth Mother Trauma by Heather Carlini. \$15.00 plus \$2.50 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, birth parents and adoptive families. This book deals with Canadian laws and practices. \$18.50 plus \$2.50 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 \$2.50 shipping.

Finding Family by Rick Ouston. Very compelling for adoption circle members. A great search & reunion book which Rick has dedicated to All The Secret Mothers. \$16.00 plus \$2.50 shipping.

Shipping charges are \$2.50 for the first book and \$.75 for each additional book, unless otherwise noted.

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.

WORKSHOP AUDIO CASSETTES

Professionally recorded at the
Forget Me Not Family Society
"A Time To Heal"
3rd Post-Adoption Conference

The following audio cassettes of conference workshops are available from the Society. To order, please contact our office. Tapes are \$6 each (includes GST & Shipping).

Opening Ceremonies

Healing Through Grief and Loss in Adoption - Lee Crawford

Healing Adoptive Parents - Nancy Verrier

Victims No More: A Guide to Adoptee Healing - Nancy Verrier

The Maternity Home Experience - Carol Schaefer

Empathy and Respect: Healing Through Communications - Lisa Dunlop-Beldam

Self Esteem in the Adoption Triad - Alisia Dunlop

My Story: A Time for Sharing, Healing and Moving On - Ted Myers

Birthmother Trauma and Counselling - Kathy Lewis

Healing, Learning and Moving Toward a Different Kind of Adoption - Michaela-Sue Goldblatt

Secret Lives: The Unspoken Truths About Adoption - Lorna Millard

Personal Wellness for Birthparents: Coming Out and Looking Ahead - Julie Briesse

Circles Within Circles - Lorne and Anne Welwood

A Successful Reunion Story - Catherine Moore, Alisia Dunlop and David Summers

Closing Ceremonies

Workshop audio cassettes from the 1994 conference are still available. Contact our office for a list.

A REMINDER...

To all Forget Me Not Family Society Members, please don't forget to inform our office of any change in *your* mailing address so that we can keep our mailing list current.

Please send letters to the editor, reunion stories, news and information on community events to: Adoption Circles, c/o Forget Me Not Family Society, #209 - 1575 Best Street, White Rock B.C., CANADA V4B 5K1 or fax (604) 530-7625. The Forget Me Not Family Society reserves the right to edit all material submitted on the basis of space, relevance and suitability. Please note that material published in this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Forget Me Not Family Society or its Editors.