

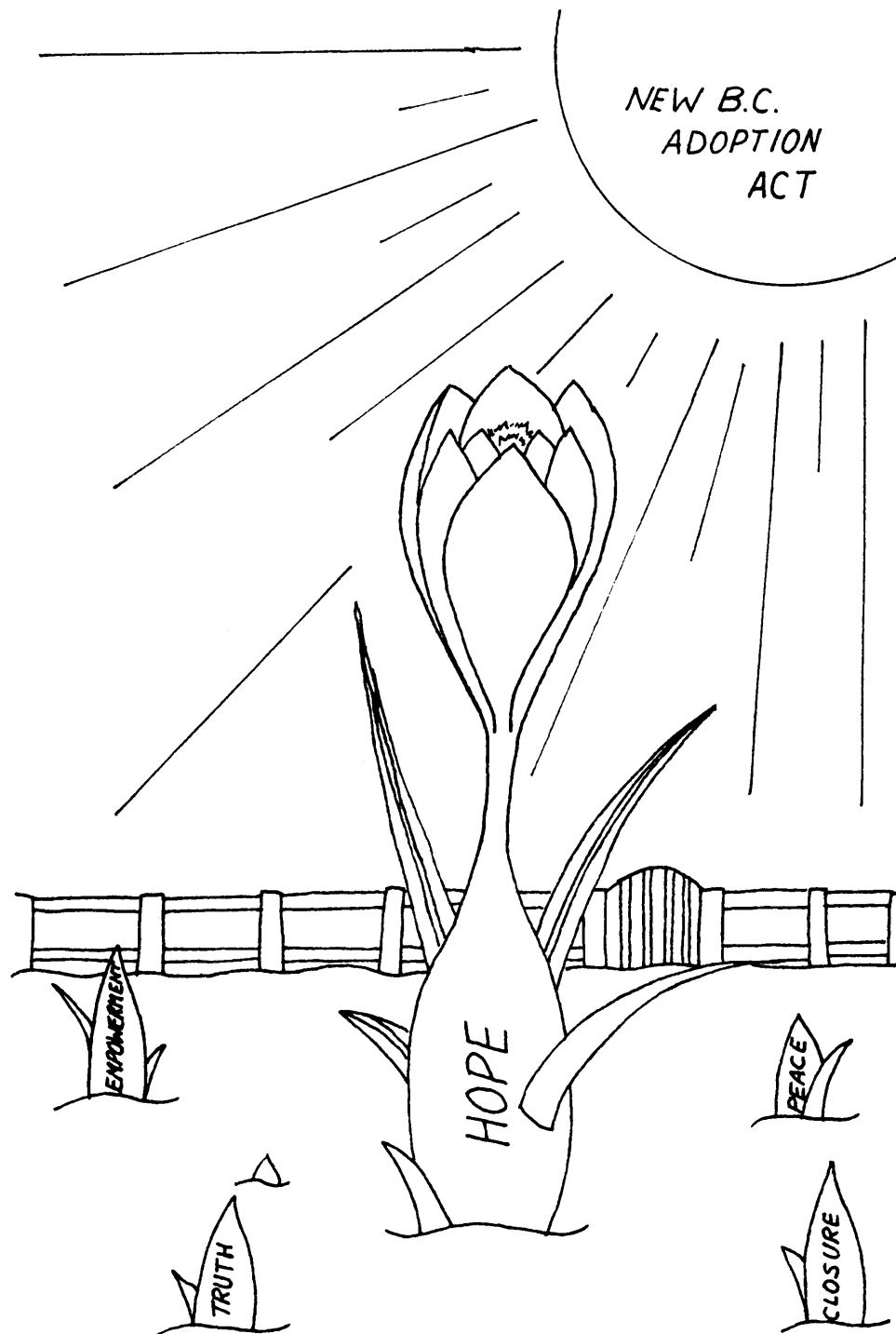
ADOPTION CIRCLES

CANADA'S POST-ADOPTION QUARTERLY

ISSUE 18 SPRING 1996 \$3.00

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ADOPTION CIRCLES
ISSUE #18 SPRING 1996

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) 532-7625.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we will be holding our Annual General Meeting on April 17 at the New Westminster Public Library and we invite all members to attend. I thank all of the 1995/1996 Board Members for their time and dedication that they have given to our organization. To list a few of our accomplishments, we have a successful newsletter thanks to Debbie Pratt and Lisa Chan Couling, we had a great conference, we launched a home page on the world wide web thanks to Jim Kelly, and also had the opportunity to attend other conferences which enabled us to network with many other organizations throughout Canada and the United States. I would like to acknowledge the amount of volunteer time that each Board Member gives and we hope that some of you will remain on the Board for next year. We also hope that we will see some new faces at the Annual General Meeting and on the Board of Directors for 1996/1997.

Conference Feedback:

We received from the delegates at the conference some comments about some issues that I would like to address. The Landmark hotel was chosen for our conference as being the most suitable for location as well as price. We believe that when we are inviting presenters from across Canada and the U.S., a central and convenient location within Vancouver was important. We were also guaranteed that no other meetings or organizations were to share the hotel with us, thereby allowing us privacy while dealing with extremely emotional issues.

Here are just a few comments returned to us from your evaluations: very positive; inclusive; a great idea; good to have a mix of issues and people presented; very good chance to really connect with all members of the adoption circle; the two organizations didn't mix well within workshops; great to be on Robson Street; we need more workshops on birth father issues; all facilities were easily accessible and spacious although a little hot and stuffy; food was great; great location; it helped me continue my healing journey; the networking was fabulous; the presenters were too; great selection of workshops; location is central and enjoyable.

Many thanks to the conference committee, we've truly become friends and I look forward to working with each of you in some capacity in the future. To the presenters and all the volunteers who gave so much of their time, this conference would not have succeeded without each and everyone of you. I truly appreciate all of your time and effort. Thank you!

--Cecelia Reekie

EDITOR'S NOTES

HAPPY SPRING everybody!! I hope many of you were able to attend this year's Annual Adoption Conference held at the Landmark Hotel in early March. I thought the conference was a resounding success as it seems to grow better every year.

So much has been going on in my own personal adoption journey that the conference couldn't have come at a better time. The most important thing I learned at the conference was told to me by more than one - adoption is not an event, but a process... How accurate!

And now with that knowledge I continue to move along in my "adoption process". Learning more and more every day, about myself and others, growing spiritually...

This spring, besides my customary ritual of thoroughly cleaning out cupboards and closets, I thought I would also really work on organizing my "self", my emotions and my thoughts so that I may close off yet another chapter of my journey to start afresh with another. The process of growth and discovery continues and through every single "event" remember how, as individuals, it is within our own power, to weave those "events" together ... to build upon what we already know and what we learn every day. --Debbie Pratt, Editor

THANK YOU ...

Our recent conference, "Working Together: The Future of Adoption" was a resounding success and we would like to express our gratitude for everyone who participated in putting on our largest conference yet. It was a real pleasure to host the conference this year with the Adoptive Parents' Association of B.C. - thank you Deirdre Marconato, Jennifer Hillman and Cheryl Tautorus. Thanks also to the other members of the Conference Committee - Cecelia Reekie, Ginny Paulsen and Bonnie Milne.

We had over 450 delegates from across North America attend over 40 workshops. In addition, we offered a half day workshop on the Friday afternoon for professionals in the adoption field, facilitated by Bob Creasy and Ann Tasko. To all our guest speakers and workshop facilitators, we could not have done it without you! We hope your weekend was as insightful to you as it was to us. Special thanks to the UBC School for Counselling Psychology, our many volunteers and the staff of the Landmark Hotel.

We were very pleased to have the Honourable Joy McPhail in attendance at our opening ceremonies. We applaud her support and efforts in continuing to update and change the Adoption Act in B.C. Many thanks to our other keynote speakers; Lorne Wellwood, Dr. Michael Sobol, Dr. John Pullyblank and Ted Meyers. Lee Crawford was unable to join us and we wish her the very best to a speedy recovery - we miss you!

To all our 1996 Conference attendees, thank you for joining us and coming out in support of The Forget Me Not Family Society. Your participation and continued involvement is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to seeing you all next year for our 5th Annual Conference. --The Forget Me Not Family Society

NOTICE OF MEETING

THE FORGET ME NOT FAMILY SOCIETY WILL BE HOLDING THEIR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON:

DATE: SATURDAY, April 27, 1996

TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon - Meeting
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Social

PLACE: New Westminster Public Library (Auditorium)
716 - 6th Avenue
New Westminster, B.C.

PHONE: 521-8874

We look forward to seeing you there!

SEARCHING FOR THE INVISIBLE MAN

by Teresa Spring

A couple of years ago I shared with *Adoption Circles* the story of how I learned about my adoption and connected with the family of my birthfather Robert. I think it's time to share the second part of the story.

Though I did not learn of my adoption until I was 19, I always knew my birthmother, Vicky, because she was a close relative of my adoptive mother, Cecilia. What I was not told at 19, however, was that Cecilia was in fact Vicky's birthmother. I learned this quite by accident the following year while pursuing my hobby of genealogical research.

When word got back to Cecilia that I had been poking around in dark corners, she told me the story of her pregnancy in 1933 at the age of 17. Her family could not afford to move or send her to "visit relatives" and she bore the full brunt of wagging neighbourhood tongues. I could tell she still felt the pain clearly. Her shame was so powerful that the day she told me her secret was also the day she first revealed it to my Dad, her husband of 25 years. Despite the fears she had carried for years, Dad stood by her as she shared her story with me. Cecilia passed away in 1984, never having spoken of it again, and having made me swear that I would not tell Vicky.

After the death of my birthfather, Robert, in 1992 and my awakening of the drive to connect with his relatives, I was bothered by the fact that I had never asked Cecilia about Vicky's birthfather -- my grandfather. I went to my aunt with questions, but by this time she did not remember much other than that he was a teenage boy, a schoolmate of Cecilia's in Calgary.

There is a strong family resemblance among Vicky, myself, and Vicky's two other children, which follows

through to my own children's generation. Some of our strongest features did not seem to come from Cecilia's parents and other ancestors, of whom I had many pictures. I felt that Vicky's father must have passed along some very strong genes. From my observations, I put together a mental picture of what he may have looked like. Still, that wasn't enough. I doubted that I would ever have been able to find that "invisible man" in my background, but I had a strong need to try.

After a few months of dead ends, a cousin of Cecilia's, who still lived in Calgary, ended up providing my first breakthrough -- he was pretty sure he remembered the young man's name. (We'll call him Glen.) Cecilia's cousin also told me he had worked with Glen, in 1942 at the Calgary Iron Works.

From past experience, I knew what I needed at this point was a *Henderson's City Directory* for Calgary (these directories list occupations as well as names & addresses). However, the Vancouver Public Library had only the more recent directories. I wrote to the Alberta Genealogical Society and they sent me the name of a researcher, Myrna Waldroff, with whom I worked closely over the summer of 1993 to put together my puzzle.

Myrna searched the 1942 directory and found a listing for Glen, employed at the Calgary Iron Works. Sharp-eyed Myrna also noticed another entry with the same last name and address. On the assumption that this was likely Glen's father, she followed this entry back to 1917 through 1955.

Since I knew the name of the school that Cecilia and Glen had attended, I wrote to the Calgary School Board, hoping for a yearbook picture to put a face to Glen. To my surprise, the School Board sent me copies of microfilmed school records which contained Glen's full name and ad-

dress, his father's name (which confirmed that the 1917-1955 record found by Myrna was indeed Glen's father), his birthdate, and other school records including his High School grades! What a treasure! The only thing that could have made it better was a yearbook picture.

The next step I took was to phone the Calgary cemeteries, giving the name of Glen's father and asking if they had a burial record in that name. In this way, I quickly obtained my great-grandfather's date of death from which Myrna was able to find his newspaper obituary. According to the obituary, at the time of his father's death in 1976, Glen was living on Vancouver Island. A quick check of the current phone book told me that he was still there!

This information was too much! I had started my quest with just the desire to put a name and, if possible, a face to the "invisible man", not to disrupt the life of a flesh and blood human being who, by this point, would be in his late 70's. However, I remained aware that all my research was based on the memory of one person. What if that memory was wrong? I was becoming attached to Glen and his family. What if I was bonding with the wrong family?

By this time I had learned the names of Glen's grandparents and located their burial records as well. This is what led me to my next breakthrough. In October 1993 I ran Glen's grandfather's name through the computer at the LDS (Mormon) Church Family History Centre in Burnaby and it came up with a match, providing the name of a woman in Calgary who was also researching the line. I put a letter in the mail to her that day, outlining my story and asking her if she could provide me with a picture of Glen.

This sweet lady, Jackie, wrote back immediately, sending pictures of Glen's grandparents and even GREAT-grandparents! Jackie did not know Glen personally or have pictures of him, but she had taken the liberty of phoning another relative, Ken, who kept in touch with Glen and was quite willing to help. I fired a letter off to Ken. On New Year's Day, 1995, I got a phone call from Ken who told me a number of things about Glen and his early life that provided clues that I really was researching the right man. Ken also encouraged me to write to Glen, saying that he was

a very open and approachable person, had never had any other children, and would probably be interested in hearing from me.

Even more encouraging, Ken told me that he had a few pictures of Glen taken on a family outing in 1930. He had just run across these pictures a few months earlier and had debated whether or not he should throw them out. Fortunately for me he had kept them and said that he would send them to me.

Thus began the longest few months I had ever lived through! It was not until the summer that the pictures finally arrived. (Ken hadn't been able to find them and had feared he had actually thrown them out.) They were a revelation. My theory about the strong genes was proven correct, because in these pictures of Glen at age 14, three years before he became my grandfather, I could swear that I was looking at pictures of my birth brother at the same age! I showed them to my husband, my children, and my aunt, and they all agreed that this could not possibly be anyone other than Vicky's father.

In March of 1995, with this proof positive in hand, I wrote a letter to Glen for his birthday (which is the same as Vicky's). I told him my story with the names and dates, assuring him that I was sensitive to his situation and that if he wished to keep the past in the past, I wouldn't continue to bother him. I just wanted him to have the opportunity to have answers to any "wondering" he may have had over the years about Vicky. I had the letter double-registered. He received it, but has not replied.

This story does not have the kind of happy ending we might like it to have, but we in the adoption world must know by now that not all stories come to the kind of closure we see in the TV movies. I have kept my promise and am leaving Glen alone with the life he has built over the course of what is now 80 years. I have had two adoptive grandfathers whom I loved dearly, I have connected with many warm and helpful birth relatives, and right now that's enough happy ending for me. That, and the pictures which finally allow myself and my children to see ourselves mirrored in the face of our former "invisible man". □

"From my observations, I put together a mental picture of what he may have looked like. Still, that wasn't enough. I doubted that I would ever have been able to find that "invisible man" in my my background, but I had a strong need to try."

MOTHER'S DAY POEM

(Mom, I'm thinking of You)

If I could wish for one thing, it would be...
to find my birthmother and my family.
I want to find her to let her know,
that I love her and need her and want to show,

That I dreamt of, thought of, and needed so much,
to see her face and feel her touch.
I've searched long enough, so now is the time,
I want to tell her that now I am fine.

I've lost time of the tiresome days
that I've searched for her in such endless ways.
Of all the things that I've come to do,
I know in my heart that she needs me too.

One day, Mom, together we'll stand, I'll look in your eyes
and hold your face in my hands.
If I could tell you one thing, it would be...
I LOVE YOU, Mom!

- Poem by Kim Greckol
April 1995

*To see a world in a grain of sand
and a heaven in a wildflower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.*

INSPIRATIONS

DETERMINATION The race is not
always to the swift... but to those who keep on
running.

COURAGE Do not follow where the path may
lead... Go instead where there is no path and leave a
trail.

VISION Nothing happens unless first a dream.

NEWSBITS

BANNER OF LOST IDENTITIES...

The Banner of Lost Identities, put together by Monica Bunton, was on display at the recent Annual Adoption Conference at The Landmark Hotel in downtown Vancouver. Monica constructed the banner to recognize those identities lost through adoption. The banner wasn't as big as we would have hoped, but we have decided to continue adding on to the banner and displaying it at the next annual adoption conference by the Forget Me Not Family Society. If you are interested, send your square of plain fabric (4.5" x 4.5") to Monica, any time, with your lost identity and birthdate if you wish pencilled on the fabric. Monica will then go over your writing with a fabric pen and join it to the banner.

Monica Bunton
#4 - 1343 Scenic Drive South
Lethbridge, ALBERTA
T1K 1M3
phone: (403) 327-9201

KATHY LEWIS' PARENT & CHILD PIN....

If you were unable to locate Kathy Lewis and her "parent & child" pin at the recent Annual Conference, they may still be available by writing to Kathy in Alberta. The pins

are \$5.00 plus \$1.00 S&H. Please write to Kathy at the address below to order or for more ordering information.

Kathy M. Lewis
146 Laval Court
Lethbridge, ALBERTA
T1K 4G3

CONFERENCE TAPES AVAILABLE...

The FMNFS has for sale conference cassette tapes from the 1996 Adoption Conference as well as some tapes left over from our previous annual conferences (1993, 1994 and 1995). To order your cassette tapes or for more information, contact the Society.

CANADIAN LIVING MAGAZINE ARTICLE (APRIL 1996)...

Check out our own Cecelia Reekie, President of Forget Me Not Family Society, and her recent article in the April '96 issue of *Canadian Living Magazine*. Cecelia's story is told along with the stories of three other adoption reunions under the heading "Together at Last: Four joyful stories of lost relatives found. Is an adoption reunion in your future?"

Door Opens Wide heads a recent adoption-related "Stall Story" by The Province's Bob Stall, published in March of this year. The story is about a man, Bill Sullivan, and his daughter, Laurie Johnston who have finally been reunited after being separated for 21 years.

We first heard Laurie's story in February when she made public her search in a Province news article. It was the help of Province readers who helped bring the pair back together at long last.

With the publishing of a 40-year old picture of Laurie's father, friends of Bill Sullivan recognized the picture and called Laurie in Ontario. Bill called a Province reporter to say he was the searched-for man in the story.

Father and daughter had a tearful telephone reunion and soon after, Laurie flew out to B.C. to surprise her father - he was not expecting her to visit so soon. When Bill opened his front door, he recognized Laurie immediately, he felt the years drop away and his life come together.

Irish Moms Tell How Babies Were Lost to U.S. In Dublin, Ireland, Irish adoption agencies are being inundated with inquiries after recent revelations that more than 2,000 "illegitimate" Irish children were sent to America for adoption in the 1950s and 1960s.

Some adoptions were apparently organized by convents without the knowledge of parents who had placed their children there for safekeeping, and some adoptions may

have involved cash payments to the convents.

According to the national archives, more than 2,000 children were sent to the U.S. as babies or toddlers between 1948 and 1962 because they were "illegitimate." The vast majority of those adoptions - about 110 a year - were arranged by priests and nuns who sent photographs to American families looking for Irish babies and organized couriers to take the babies to the U.S.

Some children have returned to Ireland and traced their mothers. Sister Sarto, of the Sacred Heart Adoption Society in Cork, Ireland said mothers were never forced to give up their babies and said she has so far arranged up to 40 reunions.

Together At Last, the story just recently published in the April 1996 issue of *Canadian Living Magazine* is the story of four adoption reunions that worked.

The magazine is on the shelves now and contains four personal accounts of reunion.

- . Mother and Daughter Reunited
- . Brothers Meet
- . Birth Mother Meets Adoptive Mother
- . Birth Father Meets Daughter

The last story "Birth Father Meets Daughter" is of our own Cecelia Reekie, adopted as a baby, who first met her birth father, Cecile Paul, in 1988.

UPCOMING EVENTS

18th Annual International Conference April 25 - 28, 1996

The American Adoption Congress is holding their 18th Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. Some of the featured speakers include Canada locals: James P. Kelly, Adoptee, Vancouver, BC, Colin T. Roberts, Adoptee, Victoria, BC, Joan Vanstone, National Director-Parent Finders, Adoptee, Vancouver, BC, Betty Jean Lifton, PhD, Writer, Psychologist, Adoptee, New York, NY, Elizabeth Karry, MSW, Social Worker, Grand Bend, ON, Jean Haase, MSW, Social Worker, University Hospital, London, ON.

Some of the special events include a Sunday tour of Washington, DC, a Triad Art Exhibit, Poetry Readings and a Legislative Session. Features of the conference include Continuing Education Credits, Book and Exhibit Tables and Thursday Evening Groups.

RADISSON PLAZA LORD BALTIMORE
The Heart of Downtown Baltimore
Baltimore, MARYLAND

FOR MORE INFO: Gayle Beckstead or AAC Registrar, 1000 Connecticut Ave, NW, 2180 Clover Street, Suite 9, Simi Valley, CA 93065, Washington, DC 20036. (714) 434-7635
- American Adoption Congress

Tranquil Shores - Birthparent Workshop and Retreat May 3 - 5, 1996

Weekend retreats for birthparents are held by Julie Briese (a birthmother) of Tranquil Shores, during the spring, summer and fall in the scenic mountain town of Revelstoke. The retreats begin on the Friday evening and conclude on the Sunday morning.

The retreat will focus on:

- . opportunity for birthparents to share their stories in a supportive environment
- . exploring how this experience has affected personal wellness
- . providing an opportunity to talk about reunion
- . promoting healing

WINTERGREEN INN
BED & BREAKFAST
Revelstoke, BRITISH COLUMBIA

FOR MORE INFO: Tranquil Shores, c/o Julie Briese, Box 3097, Revelstoke, BRITISH COLUMBIA V0E 2S0, (604) 837-4664

- Julie Briese, Tranquil Shores

The 7th National Adoption Conference May 23 - 25, 1996

The purpose of this conference is to present the *Many Voices* of the adoption experience. It will provide an opportunity for all parties to adoption to share their experiences and to hear the experiences of other members of the adoption community.

From the conference pamphlet, this conference is for those in adoption who wish to expand their knowledge and share their experiences. Cecelia Reekie and Nancy Kato from Forget Me Not will be presenting a workshop on post reunion issues.

There will be more than 40 workshops. Topics to be addressed include:

- . Search & Reunion Techniques
- . Birth Family Concerns
- . Adoptee Development & Healing
- . Pre-Adoption Placement Information
- . Professional Concerns/Child Welfare

HOWARD JOHNSON DOWNTOWN
PLAZA HOTEL
475 Yonge Street
Toronto, ONTARIO

FOR MORE INFO: Conference '96, c/o Adoption Council of Ontario, 3216 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ONTARIO M4N 2L2, (416) 924-0611 (call collect), FAX: (613) 742-0977

- Adoption Council of Canada and Adoption Council of Ontario

WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE? ...

Recently it was pointed out by a Forget Me Not Family Society member and *Adoption Circles* reader, that B.J. Lifton's latest book on adoption, Journey of the Adopted Self: A Quest For Wholeness, included in the last few pages a list entitled "Periodicals" providing names & addresses of organizations providing newsletters and other written resources relating to adoption.

We were able to obtain details on these resources and will provide as much information as we can, writing about them in upcoming issues of *Adoption Circles*. Thank you reader for your idea - we are always pleased to hear our readers' ideas and comments. - Editor

Adopted Child

Monthly Newsletter (approx. 4 pages)

Annual Subscription \$22 (U.S. funds); 2-year Subscription \$40 (U.S. funds)

*Back issues are available

ADOPTED CHILD

P.O. Box 9362

Moscow, Idaho 83843

Adopted Child, in publication since 1981, leads the way in factual and sensitive reporting of recent developments in adoption, child development practices and philosophy, research updates, and case studies. Over the years, the

monthly newsletter has earned a national reputation as a trusted resource for adoption counselling and education.

The Adopted Child organization also offers for purchase, books, audio tapes, and even "best of" collections of back issues. An excellent newsletter!

People Searching News

Quarterly Magazine

Yearly Subscription \$18 (in the U.S.); \$27 (in Canada); \$32 (foreign) - (all in U.S. funds only)

PEOPLE SEARCHING NEWS

P.O. Box 100444

Palm Bay, Florida 32910-0444

The only magazine in North America published exclusively for adoptees, birth family members, agencies and professionals... and an increasing number of adoptive parents!

The magazine is made up of information, articles and stories with focus on:

- . regular features
- . birth parent issues
- . adoptee issues
- . feature articles
- . support group focus
- . activism & reform

Q & A COLUMN

Q: I have recently been advised by the Adoption Reunion Registry that my birth mother has been found, following an active search. I was really excited but when I told my parents, they seemed to be very threatened. They always appeared to be supportive, but now I don't know. I'm afraid to talk to them anymore about what's going on - what do I do? - Scared

A: Dear Scared: It sounds like you are feeling the struggle of loyalties though they need not conflict between your birthparent and your adoptive parents. It is understandable that you feel some sort of anxiety that your parents may be "jealous" or "afraid" of your reunion. This is normal, but it does not mean that your parents are feeling this. A good idea here is to keep the lines of communication open and honest. Feel free to talk to your parents about how YOU are feeling and ask them to honestly tell you how they are feeling. If you don't feel comfortable talking to your parents about this issue, write them a note. It would be a good idea to let them know that you are embarking on a personal journey of growth and discovery, that you need their love and support, that you want to share your journey with them and ask them, will they help you. The relationships you have with your family should not be a matter of either/or, but of both/and.

The following appeared in the January 29, 1996 **Dear Abby** Advice column.

MAY I EXPOSE SECRET?

DEAR ABBY: How do you feel about family secrets?

Almost 20 years ago, when I was 14, I was told that my mom had given up a child for adoption. She was 15 and unmarried at the time. Dad blabbed it to my older sister many years ago. Mom and Dad have been divorced for 20 years. She doesn't know that my brother and sister and I know.

Mom and I are very close, and I would like to talk to her about it but I don't want to hurt her or invade her privacy. I know it must have been a very painful experience for her, because she has kept it buried for more than 40 years and I know she'd be furious if she knew Dad had betrayed her by telling my sister. On the other hand, I think it might be good for Mom to talk about it - it could be very healing for her. She constantly bemoans the fact that she isn't a grandma - yet for all we know, she could very well be.

On a more selfish note, the thought that I could have another sister somewhere intrigues me and I'd like to track her down. Abby, I'm killing myself over this. Part of me says, "Mind your own business," and another part says, "It IS your business."

What do you think? Should I open this can of worms, or let Mom keep her secret?

ABOUT TO BURST

DEARABOUTTOBURST: I see no reason not to tell your mother that you know her "deep, dark secret." What she experienced more than 40 years ago is no longer the cause for shame that it was in the early '50s. Perhaps she would like to find the child she gave up. Or ... maybe she knows where her "child" is. The decision should be hers.

Ann Landers differs in opinion from sister Dear Abby

Ann Landers' "advice" column recently stated, "Now that sealed records can be opened, fewer children will be adopted." This is an obvious misconception about the effect of open adoption records. Fear and shame are not meant to be a byproduct of the battle for open records. Information about genetics, ancestry, roots, family & medical information should be a right of adoptees. Choice is what open records will provide. Choice, for those who need to know... Unfortunately, Ann does not feel the same way. One reader of her column had this to say:

Dear Ann,

While you have helped many people over the years, I believe your opposition to adoptees searching for their birthparents runs counter to much of your own advice over the years. Your columns have advised time and again the importance of early detection and prevention of serious illness. Genetic predispositions for Huntington's disease, Alzheimer's, breast cancer and other illnesses are today well understood, but adopted citizens are denied access to modern medical information which might indicate their risk and assist in prevention. How can there be no "moral justification" for opening closed adoption records when adoptees are at risk of diseases which were undiscovered at the time they

were born?

The initial motivation for "closed records" adoptions was an America that heaped shame and guilt upon unwed motherhood. Like it or not, such births are now commonplace, and women whose strength and maturity led them to give their children up for a better life in an adoptive family are to be viewed with respect. Perpetuating "closed records" reinforces the atmosphere of shame and guilt, breaks the spirit of birthmothers and urges them to their own closed-records adoption. The perpetuation of unnecessary shame and guilt runs counter to the spirit of your column.

By reading your column for many years, I have learned how damaging the "family secrets" of alcoholism, sexual, and domestic abuse can be. When parents teach a child to bury the secret of family dysfunction and show a "perfect" face to the world, they damage the bond of trust and love which holds a family together.

To deny adoptees their right to know their birthparents is to foster the "family secret" of the adopted child's background. When the child comes of age to ask about their birthparents, the answer is "you cannot know that - now resume your life as if nothing has happened."

Like the "family secrets" of dysfunctional families, the "secret" of the adoptee's background damages the relationship between parent and child when the parent actively or passively participates in keeping this secret from the child. Your endorsement of maintaining this secret runs counter to your years of advice and I sincerely believe that it's time to rethink your position on this issue, Ann.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Alberti, Jr.

(the above has been edited for space and clarity)

1996 ADOPTION CONFERENCE WORKSHOP REVIEWS

The 1996 Conference held in downtown Vancouver this past March, was another success! What I invariably had trouble with though, was choosing which workshops to attend since. There were several I wanted to be a part of in each time slot, however (being that I am not divisible) I shaved my choices down to just one at a time and found the workshops I did attend to be beneficial and enlightening. Below are my personal reviews of the two workshops in particular that I remember most vividly...

Disappointing Outcomes of Reunion by Lise Tessier

In short, my own story is that my birthmother has denied me reunion (more than once) through the Adoption Reunion Registry, by letter and over the phone. (Persistent, I am!). The obvious disappointment is that I have longed to know this woman, all my life, my biological mother. This is regardless that she has said to me, point blank, this in no way makes her anything but a stranger to me.

Workshop facilitator Lise Tessier is a counsellor with the ARR and though we know each other, my review of her workshop has nothing to do with personal bias. I genuinely

enjoyed the workshop and learned a lot.

I have had several one on one meetings with Lise, helping me to deal with and work through the disappointing outcome of my own attempted reunion, but at the conference, being with so many others who share similar experiences, was both safe and reassuring. There's something about feeling "related to". I felt as though I could have turned to the person beside me, told my story and been supported. I also found solace in listening to the stories of others and offering a shoulder and a quiet ear to really hear about their grief through their own losses.

About the workshop format itself, I found it to be structured and well organized. As a group we were able to follow Lise through her talk with the help of overhead projector slides. She walked us through the steps of loss and grief that accompany such disappointments and shared with us, that loss through adoption is for real and must be acknowledged as such in order to deal with the loss.

Several points Lise made were eye-opening for me. She spoke of six stages of grief and reactions to loss and I saw myself again moving through all of these stages. Denial.

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Anger. Bargaining. Depression. Physical symptoms. Acceptance. She also spoke with us about steps to recovery with exploration into our feelings and eventually - getting the power back!

It is comforting to feel that we are not alone - that we never have to be alone. There will always be someone out there who has been there before and can offer a helping hand.

What was the most reassuring for me was that over and over again I was able to stop and realize "This is normal - I'm in that stage right now!". Congratulations, Lise, on a workshop well done.

Sharing our Stories: An Interactive Workshop For Adoptees by Bob Creasy

Ups and downs are expected during the weekend of the conference - that I cannot deny. During Bob Creasy's workshop for adoptees, I was in a down. However, I did leave the workshop learning something new and understanding just a little bit better how different all stories and reunions are.

Bob had us sit in a circle, which was conducive to interaction among us. Allowing us to face one another as we spoke. Introductions throughout the group did take up a lot of time, but I suppose it's hard to say who you are and where you are in the adoption process in just a few sentences.

I found the discussion, though heated at moments, another affirmation of the commonality of emotions gone through - growing up adopted. Time and time again the group members reassured each other how not to feel alone. How we can all understand each other.

This was the first I had met Bob Creasy, though his name had always been familiar to me. I found his insight and compassion to be endearing and genuine. I look forward to another of his workshops or groups in the future.

With interaction I was able to experience reactions and caring and questions. Though still somewhat "down" towards the end of the workshop and maybe even a little exhausted, I did leave feeling accepted and cared for - and safe.

Some words of wisdom from Bob, that I feel can't be repeated enough - adoption (and/or reunion) is not just an event, but a process... And all processes deserve just a little patience. □

REUNION REGISTRY UPDATE

By Marg Harrington, Registrar
Adoption Reunion Registry Statistics
October 2, 1991 to March 31, 1996

Total Database*	10543
Searches Completed	4057
Reunions Completed	
- Active	2702
- Passive	521
Subject of search deceased	346
Subject of search refused contact	474

* Database consists of Active and Passive Registries.

LEAN ON ME TELEPHONE SUPPORT LIST

Adoptee:

Lena Rose - Squamish (604) 892-8411

Adoptive Parent of Reunited Adoptee:

Sue McBeath (604) 538-8301

Adoptive Parent:

Elsa Weinstein (604) 876-4543

Denied Reunion Adoptee:

Liz Goadby (604) 574-7223

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@fmlyrsch.org

Sue Travis (604) 534-2477

Reunited with Siblings:

Janis Wegrich (604) 856-2215

(birthparents deceased)

Reunited Birthparents:

Monica Bunton (403) 327-9201

Betty Coutts (604) 395-4969

- 100 Mile House

Ethel Drake - Kamloops (604) 374-8042

Christine Gurin (604) 985-2096

Nicole Quittenton (604) 731-0605

Connie Short (604) 534-9456

Linda Smith (604) 467-4123

Reunited Birthparent & Adoptive Parent:

Sally Arnold (604) 468-5579

- Nanaimo/Parksville area

Searching Birthparents:

Mary Reynolds (604) 534-2851

Lois Tworowski (306) 522-2756

- Regina, Sask.

Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer (604) 988-5281

North Shore Family Services

Lee Crawford (604) 266-4123

Michaelae-Sue Goldblatt (604) 921-6425

John Thomas (604) 327-9201

This is a peer support service. Please send your name and telephone number if you wish to be included on the LEAN ON ME Telephone Support List.

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.

Nobody's Baby by Susan Moses. A book of poetry. \$6 + S/H.

Dear Mom, I Found My Birthmother by Susan Moses. \$5 + S/H.

Reader's Guide to Books on Post-Adoption by Heather Carlini. \$4.95 + S/H.

Adoption Reunions by Michelle McColm. A sensitive and compassionate book about the reunion process for adoptees, birth parents and adoptive families under Canadian laws and practices. \$19 + S/H.

The Other Mother by Carol Schaefer. Written with poignancy, tenderness, depth and honesty. A portrayal of what it is really like to relinquish a child for adoption. \$19 + S/H.

Finding Family by Rick Ouston. A great search & reunion book which Rick has dedicated to All The Secret Mothers. \$16 + S/H.

The Primal Wound by Nancy Verrier. Clarifies the effect of separation for birth mothers & adoptees. \$25 + S/H.

Journey of the Adopted Self; A Quest for Wholeness by Betty Jean Lifton. An excellent, well-written book and resource for adoptees and those in the adoption circle who wish to understand the journey of the adoptee, the challenges and their lifelong quest for wholeness. \$20 + S/H.

Lost and Found by Betty Jean Lifton. A sensitive literary journey through the emotional labyrinth of the adoption experience. Written for adoptees, adoptive families & birth parents. \$19 + S/H.

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

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) 532-7625. 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.

WORKSHOP AUDIO CASSETTES

Professionally recorded at the

**4th Annual Canadian Conference
on Adoption - 1996**

"Working Together: The Future For Adoption"

**The Forget Me Not Family Society
and
Adoptive Parents Association of
British Columbia**

Audio cassettes of conference workshops are available for the Society for the 1996 conference as well as the conferences of 1993, 1994 and 1995. If you wish to have a complete list of available cassettes, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

Adoption Circles
c/o Debbie Pratt
#306 - 838 Agnes Street
New Westminster, B.C.
V3M 6R3

To place your order, please contact the office of the Society. Tapes are \$6 (includes GST & S/H). Please be advised that there is a possibility some of the tapes may not have a desirable sound quality. This would most likely be due to group interaction in some of the workshops. If you are not satisfied with the sound quality of your ordered tape, please return it to the Society for a full refund.

SUPPORT GROUPS

New Westminster

The second Tuesday of each month, 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 Tuesday of each month. For more information, contact Catherine Moore at 929-0546.

Vancouver

The fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information contact Ginny Paulsen at 875-8720.

Quesnel

The first Tuesday of each month. Contact Sharon Stevens at 992-9087 in Quesnel, or Email sstevens@fmlyrsch.org.

Adoption Reunion Registry

Post Reunion & Refusal Support Groups
202-1600 West 6th Ave, Vancouver

Two groups, post reunion and adoptees who experience refusal at the end of a search will meet monthly. For dates and information please call 736-7917, or toll free at 1-800-665-1899.