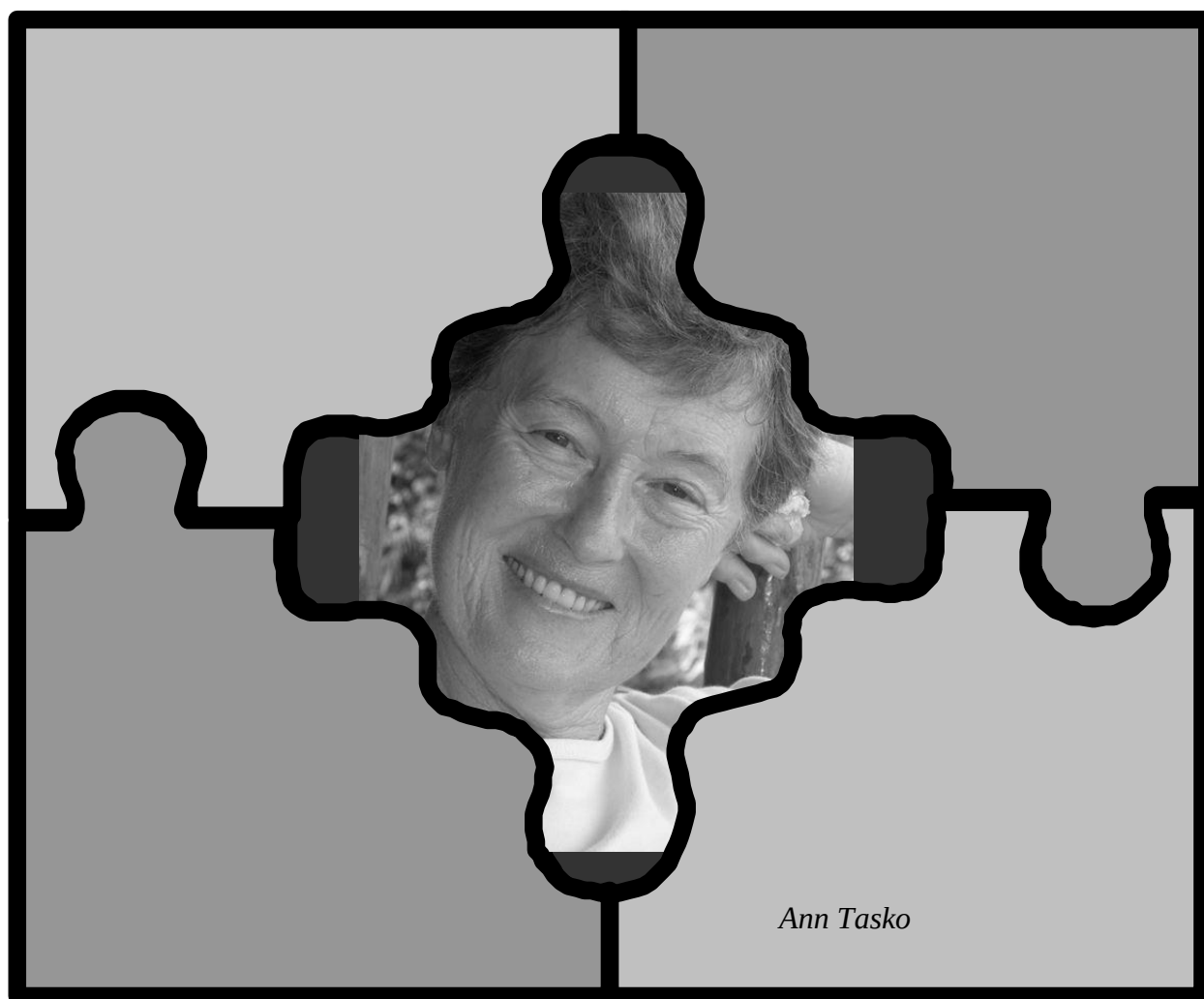


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

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Ann Tasko

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ADOPTION CIRCLES

**FALL 2007
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FORGET ME NOT FACTS:

Forget Me Not Family Society is a provincially registered, non-profit society and a federally registered charity. Tax receipts are issued for donations to our Society. Charity #88908-4869-RR0001. Our Society was formed for education, consultation, peer counseling and to offer support to all those touched by adoption: adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals. Our only source of income is through membership fees, fundraising, and donations. These funds go directly towards printing, postage, telephone, 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 through:

- Conducting a monthly support group in New Westminster and in Surrey
- Bi-monthly Internet "chat" support group
- Individual peer support
- Resource library
- Referrals to professionals and other service groups
- Speakers Bureau to educate groups on post-adoption issues
- Quarterly Newsletter

OUR MANDATE:

- To encourage and develop a recognition of the benefits of family preservation and openness in adoption practice.
- To establish and operate a Post Adoption Resource Centre providing education, consultation, counseling and support to those touched by adoption: adoptees, birthparents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals.
- To provide community education programs, panel presentations and workshops on post adoption issues for any members of the community who wish to learn more about adoption and reunion issues.

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 forward to the Editor at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca



"Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn whatever state I am in, therein to be content."

~Helen Keller, US blind & deaf educator (1880 - 1968)

President's Message Nancy Kato

Going to work in the dark, coming home in the dark, the dark days of winter! Arrrgghhhh!! But through these dreary times, there are magnificent moments of lightness - the sparkling snow all around us that dulls the noise of the city and you can revel in the silence around you. The brilliance of January's full moon - it was blinding at 6:00 in the morning as I dragged my tired body off to work. The poking through of crocuses that will be showing their colourful heads very soon now. And the anticipation of spring - the days ARE getting longer and this darkness shall soon be behind us.

In this issue we look at the darker side of our adoption reunion journey. There are a myriad of stories out there about black market babies, forging signatures on relinquishment papers, the secrecy of being adopted or having given up a child, the inability to find out your roots, the hidden angst of genetic sexual attraction, abuse, and more. These are our realities and we should not shy away from the things that make us uncomfortable. Through knowledge, we gain the confidence to try and create change - to bring light to the "dark side". These things are not easy to hear, or read, yet we must allow the story tellers to say their piece and to share their experiences - it is the way they need to work on dispelling the crushing darkness of their lives. Our empathy, acknowledgement and compassion will bring lightness and comfort.

Through every hard event or issue, there is an opportunity to learn from our experiences, whether they are good or not so good. Even though the darkness can sometimes permeate your very soul, you can take comfort, if you want to, from those that are willing to listen, to guide, to share. There is "light at the end of the tunnel" - we just need to be patient, to question, to speak out loud, to ask for what we need, and, most importantly, to look for the light. There is no question that darkness can be comforting (I love the nights and how the darkness can envelope you, and the stillness) - there are no distractions - you can think better, you can see better. But we can't live in the dark - humans are social animals and are meant to be with others, and there is so much in the world for us to grasp on to and see and enjoy! The darkness may never go away but together we can diminish the weightiness of it, and work toward the lightness of our spirit.

Till next time,
Nancy Kato

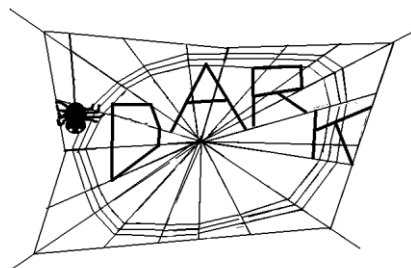
“The Dark Side” of adoption- our focus for this edition of Adoption Circles seems to fit with the short, dark days of winter. Reviewing the submissions for this issue, there is a thread that ties all the unsavoury aspects of adoption together: when a person with relative power and control abuses the trust they’ve been given to care for another who is physically or emotionally vulnerable. Whether we consider the bartering for babies on the black market, or the boundaries crossed by the grandparent, parent or more mature sibling that has become sexually involved with his or her family member; these situations arguably all involve breach of trust by people in a position of relative power. Abuse of power and trust can wreak devastation and trauma to individuals and to entire families.



Walters' Web
Sandra Walters

The black market involves adults determined to get a child no matter the cost, the questionable ethics of paying others to illegally secure infants, and the lack of concern by all the adults for the best interests of the child. Adults are prepared to secure a child for sale through coercion of birth parents and with no regard for the vital information that the child may need as he grows older. A black market “adoptee”, like author and psychologist Joe Soll, will never be able to find his birth family nor even know the actual day of his birth because adoption ‘records’ are often complete fiction. We include in this edition of Adoption Circles a review of the fiction novel co-written by Joe Soll, called “Evil Exchange”, which gives a glimpse into the lives of those whose occupation is the buying and selling of vulnerable human beings.

The phenomenon that was mentioned most by our readers as being from the “dark side” of adoption, however, is genetic sexual/ sensual attraction, or “GSA”. In finding out more about “GSA”, I listened to an archived program from The Adoption Show Internet broadcast that discussed this topic. (To listen to past programs, please check out www.theadoptionshow.com, and click on “Past Shows” from the main menu, and you will be able to scroll through the many shows prior to November 2007 for free). The well-known author and adoption psychologist, Nancy Verrier, was interviewed by the program host,



Michelle Edmunds, on the topic of GSA. According to Nancy Verrier, strong sensual feelings are natural to the experience of babies and their mothers. In the normal and natural holding and touching which follows birth, sensual or sexual-like feelings are aroused in both mother and child. As further explained in Nancy Verrier’s book, “The Primal Wound”, the “unnatural” occurs when the child is removed from his or her mother and these feelings are suddenly brought to an abrupt and premature end, or are never fully experienced outside the mother’s womb.

The initial meeting period of an adoption reunion is unique in that it often causes the parties to regress to the time of the adoption, according to Verrier. The adoptee may become infantile, for example, and the mother often feels and acts like a 15-year-old, or the age at which she was separated from her child. A huge gap is sometimes created between the person’s chronological age and his or her “emotional age”. Those sensual/ sexual feelings can be incredibly strong in the “honeymoon” stage of reunion and there can be a real temptation to act upon them. It feels like a sexual interaction is the only way that one can get close enough with the other person. These feelings can also occur between a mother and a daughter and, in Verrier’s view, this does not mean that one has suddenly become a lesbian. It simply means that one is re-experiencing those early sensual feelings one had at the beginning of life, before that untimely separation cut them short. With the adoptee meeting a sibling, it may be the first time ever being in the company of another who looks and possibly acts just like them. There can be an equally strong narcissist-like attraction to the mirror image of one’s self. With both types of attraction, in Nancy Verrier’s opinion, those strong feelings will subside if the parties maintain appropriate boundaries for the initial reunion period. The complications occur when the parties act on the sexual or sensual attraction.

Verrier acknowledged that these initial feelings are common and that they can be incredibly strong. However, she insisted that they must not be acted upon. She believes that it is up to the “adult” in the relationship, or the person who has not regressed, to establish and maintain the boundary. To engage in sexual intercourse with an emotional child is no more acceptable than it would have been when the person was chronologically a child. It is a betrayal of trust. When these feelings arise, Verrier recommends that the parties talk about them and not feel guilty about them, but discuss the importance of boundaries to protect the future of their relationship. It was Nancy Verrier’s opinion that if the parties act on this sexual attraction, it will most likely backfire someday and all the work of processing the reunion may come apart at the seams.

After listening to the analysis of these situations by Nancy Verrier, I then spoke on the telephone to Esther, a woman living in Ontario, who agreed to be interviewed about her first-hand experience with GSA in her family. Esther surrendered her first-born son in 1967 and later went on to marry her son’s father. A year later, Esther had a daughter who she raised with her husband. She still held on to the hope of someday finding her son and, in 1989, registered with the Children’s Aid Society (“CAS”), and then began a long wait. It was twelve years before Esther had a call from the social worker at the CAS to say that her son had also registered, there had been a “match”. She exchanged letters with her son, with the social worker acting as intermediary. When asked whether she had been given any information at that time about the phenomenon of “GSA”, Esther says she later realized there had been a sheet of paper in the materials that the social worker provided which mentioned genetic sexual attraction, but it wasn’t something that anyone brought to her attention or that she thought about at all.

Eventually, Esther was able to talk to her son on the telephone. They had a great discussion and Esther discovered her son had had a positive experience in his adoptive family and that he was married with children of his own. He was also curious about his sister and wanted to speak with his full sibling, so Esther gave him her telephone number. As it turned out, Esther’s son and daughter had a reunion before she had a chance to meet her son. Esther’s daughter was traveling at the time for her work and she and her brother ended up in the same city. Esther suspects that her children started an intimate sexual relationship from their first meeting. When Esther finally met with her son, in 2002, she said she saw the flirtatious, sexual behaviour between her son and daughter, but she was in denial. She thought she must have been imagining the behaviours because she could not believe that either her son or her daughter would allow this to happen. Her daughter was also married at the time with children of her own. However, after only two weeks of having met, Esther’s daughter visited her brother’s house and his wife caught them behaving intimately.

The love affair between her children soon became undeniable to Esther and she educated herself about GSA through the Internet. One site she found useful is: www.geneticsexualattraction.com, where she connected with the originator of the site, Barb Gonyo, and received some helpful support. Still, Esther says, her increased knowledge did not take away the pain that this relationship caused her and the family. At one point, Esther confronted her daughter, but her daughter denied being intimate with her brother and would not talk to Esther after this. Esther said her daughter acted like she hated her. Three months after reuniting with her brother, Esther’s daughter separated from her husband. A year later, Esther’s son also left his spouse.

Esther says she experienced immense grief through this experience. She was trying to develop a relationship with her son after 12 years of hoping and wishing for a reunion, and it was almost like her own daughter was taking away her opportunity for a healthy, open relationship with her son. Before the reunion, Esther had been quite close to her daughter, and now that relationship was seriously damaged too! Esther started seeing a counsellor, but when she brought up the relationship between her daughter and son, the counsellor thought Esther must have been imagining it, and did not believe her. Esther admits that she got into self mutilation, through cutting herself, in an attempt to release the terrible emotional pain she was experiencing. At times, she found herself wishing she were dead. She thought about confronting her children again, but was so afraid of completely losing contact with her son. She felt a second loss would have completely devastated her.

In desperation, Esther ended up talking to her son’s adoptive mother about what was going on. It confirmed suspicions that the adoptive mother was also having. The adoptive mother confronted her son who did not deny the relationship with his sister. He promised his adoptive mother that he would end it. Although he gave his word to his adoptive mother, Esther says whenever her son is in town he still basically lives with his sister. They both have children and Esther wonders how they manage to keep the real nature of their relationship from them, or whether they can. Esther says that it is very scary how her children became so obsessed with each other that they appear to have no concern for the “collateral damage” of pain and suffering caused to those around them. And the damage, according to Esther, is almost insurmountable. Although Esther says she is “...a great believer in forgiveness”, she shares that “...forgiveness does not take the pain away from the betrayal and loss of trust there has been with both my son and daughter.”

Esther wants to make sure that this doesn’t happen to others. She tells her story so that others will know that GSA is real and that it needs to be talked about. The strong feelings need to be acknowledged and then the requirement for firm boundaries communicated. According to Nancy Verrier’s approach, even though Esther’s son was the older sibling in chronological age, as an adoptee he would be the one likely to regress during the initial stages of reunion. He was vulnerable and it appears that the onus would be on Esther’s daughter to be the adult and to adhere to boundaries no matter how strong the attraction to her brother. Esther would do things differently if she had another chance. In hindsight, she would have tried to maintain more control over the sequence of the reunion, insisting on meeting her son first, before her daughter. Unfortunately, the damage has been done in Esther’s family, and she can only hope for eventual healing and reconciliation for herself. But, she also hopes that her story will be a wake-up call to others embarking on the search and reunion quest. AC

POETRY

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Do you remember when I spoke to you,
before you were ever born?
It was the only time we had together,
before they made me leave you,
For what I thought was a lifetime to ever mourn.
Life went on for you and I,
we went our separate ways.
I never ever forgot you
and buried you deep inside.
I was told your life would be better without me,
and never let myself dream for one moment,
that they had ever lied.
Although you said you had a wonderful life,
with perfect strangers who loved and cared for you dearly.
It wasn't the life you should have had,
with the biological family you are related to.
It was a lifetime of separate lives for me and you.
Now that we are together again,
after 32 years,
my heart is forever filled with love for you,
through a lifetime of built-up tears.
Forever In My Heart...your Mother.

By Peggy Rogers 2007

The Question

Who am I? Your mother
Denied my child
Blood
Flesh and bone of me

I remember you always
Child of my body, heart and soul
I remember you always
Although you were taken beyond my reach

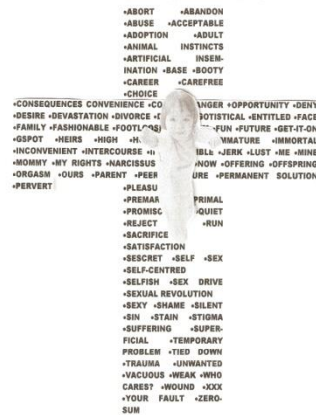
I never forget
The pain of exclusion
The pain of surrender
The pain of separation

Always remember
I loved you
Still love you
Will love you forever

Sandra Jarvie © 2007



Best Interests?



Sadona

WHY DO YOU DENY ME?

By Evelyn Morin

Why do you say that you can't be my mother?
You're connected to me through my soul like no other
You gave me my life and I thank you so much
I long for the day when our spirits will touch.

I've missed having you in my world every day
So many years have been slipping away
Open your heart and let me come in
So we can heal the hurt that's within.

Give me a chance, open the door
God only knows what He has in store
It could be a blessing, so great and so wild
Bringing back closure to mother and child.

I know that you're scared and I feel it too
But nevertheless, I will always love you.
You were the woman they chased under cover
But here in my world, you're my beautiful mother.

Focus on The Dark Side

Searching for Truth

By Sonya S., Adoptee



At first I was placed in a foster home, but I was never legally adopted out so I went to live at my grandparents' house from 6 months of age. I was raised by my grandparents but I

was told that they were my mom and dad, and that I had two sisters. My childhood was very difficult as I was physically and sexually abused. When both my grandmother and grandfather were home, I WAS SAFE. This wasn't very often because they worked shift work: one would be on nights and the other on day shift.

When I was alone with my grandfather I was bribed into doing sexual acts. He forced himself on to me. We did have a good relationship so long as he kept his hands off me. When my grandmother was alone with me, I could never do anything right and I was given the wooden spoon almost every time. A couple of times I had to pack my suitcase because my grandmother said I was being shipped off to a foster home. I would cry and cry, and eventually she would tell me that she would let me stay.

Once I got older, the sexual abuse turned into sexual comments. I was getting pretty good at tuning it out. My grandmother passed away when I was 15 years old. I was so afraid to stay in the house alone because my grandmother used to say that she would haunt me when she died. I had anxiety attacks. This is when I found out that my oldest "sister" was actually my mother. I was working at my aunt's place of work when someone asked me how my mother was and I said that she died. The person's response was, "Monika is dead?!"

Then I went home and confronted my grandfather and he then told me that Monika was my mother at age 16. I since then asked my mother who my father was. My mother would say she doesn't remember, or she remembers him being married with two kids, or that he was in jail, that he was a tall French Iroquois Indian, and his first name was "George". That was

when I was about 18 years old. She always said she didn't remember my father's last name, only that it sounded like "Benoit".

So I searched for years for a 'George Benoit'... nothing! I gave up for quite a few years because my long form birth certificate showed nothing. No documents had a clue to his identity. I contacted Children and Family Services back when I was about 20 years old, and they only gave me the non-identifying information. I searched again when I was in my 30's, with no results. I need to tell you that when I separated from my first husband back when I was 30 years old, my whole family disowned me including my mother. My ex-husband would take my kids to my grandfather's house and I was going crazy because I wondered if he would abuse my children and my ex might not see the signs. I fought hard to keep my ex from bringing the kids to my grandfather's house- they had to see the kids when I was present, and of course that never happened. My ex and I now have a really good relationship and my kids do not see my side of the family, because they refuse to deal with me.

The fact that I brought out the sexual abuse my grandfather did make it all that much worse. My mother refused to help me find my father or give me any information about him. She says that he should not know an evil and mean person like myself, and that she has no love for me it is only hate, resentment and anger she feels for me. She will have nothing to do with my children or me; she blames me for not having a relationship with her grandchildren. So I tried many times to write her and plead with her to find my father. I have an inherited heart condition that can be fatal if not treated. It is called Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM). This is only an inherited condition and it does not come from my mother's side.

Then last November I came across a document that I used to search for my father back ten years ago. It was mixed into things that it should not have been in, and then I just knew it was time to search again. I hired a private investigator that cost me \$500.00, with no results. My mother still would not have any part in providing information, so I served her with court papers, which also included the Children and Family Services. My mother finally gave up the information before it went to trial.

So once I got my father's correct name I went onto Facebook and e-mailed everyone with his last name. I was blocked twice because that is considered mass mailing or something to that effect. So I waited two weeks and tried again. There were 160 names to get to. I was blocked again. I had sent emails to 100

people and the response I got was “No, sorry, can’t help you.” Until one day, a person who I now know to be my niece said, “That is my grandfather!” Then all the doors opened wide. I then found my older sister, who led me to my brother, then my sister in Toronto, and then I found my younger brother and sister- a total of three sisters and two brothers. My father and two sisters and two brothers live in Calgary and Edmonton. I have uncles and a cousin who live in BC.

Everyone was accepting, happy to hear that they have a new sibling. My sister in Toronto is very excited- we are getting really close. It’s almost like our souls are connected, it is wonderful. Tammy and I both have this genetic heart defect, but we are scheduled for a genetic test in Toronto. Just to make sure, I need to know for sure. After I called to try and tell my mother that I found my father, she sent me yet another nasty note telling me that she hates me and no longer has any love for me. I am not to contact her ever again and I better get a DNA test.

“I had sent emails to 100 people and the response I got was “No, sorry, can’t help you.” “

I have encountered some other problems now. At first, my father (George) remembered things and was very happy to know about me, but now he is saying he never knew my mother and that I may not be his. I told him that I would pay for a DNA test, and he was on board with it. Then I applied for a free kit online and spoke to his nurse. He is in hospital with pneumonia for the last two weeks since he had been living out of his van and got really sick. He chooses life on the streets and he gambles his pension

away. His social worker said that they are finding him a place to stay a nursing home so he will have a fixed address. It has been great talking to him every day since he has been in hospital, because he only has a pay-as-you-go phone, so if he spends his money he has no phone. This past week has been hard on me because now he is trying to say that I am not his and he does not remember my mother.

Speaking with the nurse, she was willing to give him a swab, and help him fill out the envelope for the DNA test. My father cannot read or write, so she approached him and asked him and

now he is refusing to do the test because he does not want to deal with it right now. He refused to talk to me as well. I guess I am bringing up memories he’d rather forget. Money is tight, so for me to pay for this test is a lot for me, but it would be worth my peace of mind to know. I still have that genetics test booked in Toronto- that test is free to people with HCM. My sister has already done the test, so they are going to match me to her to see if I carry the same gene as her- the gene that caused our heart defect. She is the only one that has this gene, and if I carry it as well, I won’t need DNA between me and my sister, but I still would like to have it between me and my father.

My dad called me recently and he was in much better spirits. He thanked me for calling his brother Roy. They have not spoken in 40 years- he was so happy. He also saw his son, Brian, after nine years and that was my doing as well. Even if he proves not to be my father, at least I made him happy and mended some wounds. He is now willing to see his doctor and see what needs to be done regarding the DNA. I know he is my father, because what are the odds of my sister Tammy and myself looking for the same man and having the same genetic heart condition? If this does prove to be a mistake, I will be heartbroken, and will have to search again, but my heart is telling me that I have finally found my family- I am whole!

It is really hard for me to remember any good times because the bad times seem to outweigh the good. I have now dealt with it. I have chosen to forgive and give it to God because holding all this anger and hurt was hurting me. I don’t blame my mother anymore for how she treats me and how she feels. If she went through what I did, or even worse, she has blocked it away and I am just a constant reminder. I just hope one day that God will help her open her heart and deal with her past and learn to love herself and maybe, just maybe, me.

I have a different approach on life. I am better off without them- I have broken the cycle, and my children are safe. It was one of the hardest things I had to do, walk away from my marriage, my family. I am now more confident and look at it as I am strong and it has made me who I am today: a wonderful mother and wife and a really good person, even though some of my family think otherwise. I have plans to go and visit my family this summer in Calgary, and finally meet my father. Boy it is expensive! I guess I will have to drive down with four kids- I will be stressed! I just need to know the truth. The truth has a way of coming out and I can’t wait until it does.

Adoption Truth

By Dan Carson

I consider the dark side of adoption to be the system itself. Having had the luxury of being raised by a cynical, neo-pragmatist adoptive father, has given me the ability to see adoption for what it was... a solution. Make no mistake, adoption has nothing what so ever to do with the welfare of children, but rather it is a solution to a costly social problem.

Prior to the 1940’s, there was a vast network of orphanages that warehoused unwanted children. Orphanages have their shortcomings - they are expensive to build/maintain and difficult to manage. As the 1940’s progressed, the number of unwanted children grew at an alarming rate. Soon, the existing facilities were at capacity and a solution had to be found. The

options included: build more facilities, introduce foster care, provide support for unwed mothers, and place children in other people's homes (adoption). So naturally they chose the most cost-effective - adoption.

The one lesson learned from orphanages is that older children are rarely adopted. They needed a way to increase the number of adoptions, so the government promoted adoption as a cure for infertility. Convince an infertile couple that adoption is the cure, and they will not only readily take in someone else's child, but they will do it for free. A system was put in place that would make adoption as appealing as possible. To do this, a child's identity must be erased – there could be no information about, or contact with, the biological family. None of this benefits the child but is solely for addressing the concerns of the prospective parents and facilitating the placement of children. Really, you can't tell me that they didn't know that medical histories were important. This was all done to make it appear to

adoptive parents that if you raise them as your own, they will become a perfect replacement for the one(s) you could not have.

Begrudgingly, I have to give the government credit as adoption was the perfect solution to a complex problem of unwanted children. It was: easy to administer, required some up-front investment in infrastructure, no liability, low overhead and minimal staffing requirements. I am willing to bet that the inflation adjusted cost of the entire adoption program over the last fifty year period is less than just one year of foster care. Economics was the primary driving force behind adoption, not welfare of the children.

No wonder adoptees are so "well adjusted". I just wonder how many of us had to die needlessly because we were denied our proper medical histories? To me, this has all the hallmarks of a conspiracy, doesn't it?

The Devaluation of Motherhood

Robert Allan Hafetz

The purpose of motherhood is to teach hope, trust, and love to her child. This relationship between infant and mother is core to the process that humanizes us. We know that when this relationship is damaged or disrupted fundamental emotional problems will be created for both mother and child. In adoption we fail to recognize this primal nature and purpose of motherhood as evidenced by the name we give it. Adoption is not the beginning of the process, it's the second chapter. Before there is an adoption, there is a separation. In order to create a new family an existing one is divided.

The term adoption denies the existence of the mother child bond and assumes that mothers are simply interchangeable. The primal relationship between first mother and child cannot be duplicated by a new mother. Adoption creates a facsimile. Who among us would consider that the loss of a loved one can be resolved by the introduction of a new loved one? If a spouse dies can one remarry and wipe away the grief? Can the pain of grief be ended by replacing that loss with another person? Adoption as it is practiced today, makes the assumption that mothers are simply interchangeable and there is nothing unique about her relationship with her child. Any mother will do and the child won't know or care. Experience teaches us that this is not the truth.

There is no relationship in all of nature that approaches the primal intimacy of a mother and her child. When a child is born it has no sense of self. It shares its reality with the mother. In the beginning, there is virtually a single mother child being, emotionally and spiritually bound. Adoption separates them before they can naturally grow apart creating in them both the pain of grief and the desire to find one another later in life. By what moral sensitivity does the state or any institution stand between a mother and her child, in adulthood, keeping the knowledge of their names a state secret? What gives anyone the right to say two adults so intimately bound cannot know one another again? That right belongs only to them. If we are truly interchangeable then our uniqueness means nothing. We may as well all have the same name or no name at all. Adoption can work if we respect the relationship of the mother and her child who make it possible.

Adoption can only work as long as we respect, and not fear the primal bond between mother and child. Only then can an adopted child accept love, only then can a mother express her love. There is no place for fear and secrecy in the adoption process.

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GSA

by Carol Kisnics

I had an adoptee from St Catherine's, Ontario who called me and ask me if I could find her mother. To make a long story short, her mother had died but she had seven more siblings...full siblings at that. We eventually reunited five of them; two remaining children I couldn't find.

The oldest boy and the youngest girl met and fell in love with each other. They had an intimate relationship going on for a few months. The boy was already married; had a wife and children. On the side, he was with his sister as much as he

could be. He became so ridden with guilt at what he was doing that he hanged himself.

The adoptee that I helped, kept in touch with me off and on. When her brother killed himself, she called me and told me what had happened. I did tell her about GSA before her reunion with her siblings and explained to her what it was and how one could be sexually attracted to siblings or fathers/ mothers.

UNDERSTANDING REJECTION IN ADOPTION REUNIONS

by Heather Carlini, C.M.Ht.

Having worked in post-adoption counseling for twenty years now, I have seen both adoptees and natural mothers experience rejection at the end of a long search (for each other). Nothing is more devastating ... it is like a vexation of the Soul. I believe that the mother and child have a Soul Contract on a spiritual level, a subconscious yearning to meet each other so they can heal the pain of separation.

Unfortunately, these healing journeys are not always done together, in which case, both adoptee and natural mother must then finish their healing journeys alone. However, if an adoptee does find his or her natural mother, she is not always prepared for this happening and may go into shock, followed by a state of fear. This reaction on her part will come across as "rejection" to the adoptee. What has happened is that for that moment, the younger fragmented self that was buried deep inside her has reawakened. This is the part of her that holds the fear.

As a young woman she may have been coerced into adoption by past cultural attitudes towards children born to unwed mothers. Since there was no support system such as we have today, she believed she had to do what others insisted was best for her baby. She relinquished the child in spite of her misgivings and need to nurture it. To live with this decision of separation and cope with the emotional pain in her psyche, she buried the pain within herself and fragmented this part of her from her outward personality. To hide the truth from both herself and those around her, she took on a façade. For example, she may have maintained a personality as a people-pleaser, which would gain her acceptance and approval from others. However, convinced she was unworthy of keeping her child and never having known where her child was, the fragmented side of her personality remained in a state of fear, anger, sadness, unworthiness, guilt and shame. These feelings

can remain locked up in the subconscious mind and on a cellular level for years, unless she finds some way to heal.

In many such cases, the natural mother feels this psychosomatic body pain on anniversary dates such as her child's birthday. Sadness, depression and anger rise into her conscious mind, but it is unlikely she knows what is causing these emotions unless

she is consciously able to acknowledge her hidden pain. If her relinquished child suddenly calls her years later, the fragmented self within her brings all the cellular memories to the surface. Unexpectedly, she is reliving the surrender of her baby. Hearing the adoptee's voice suddenly reawakens this alternate reality. Every cell in her body is recognizing that familiar emotional chemistry from the past trauma. As each emotion has its own chemistry code, those same emotions she experienced at the time of relinquishment are now surfacing and the pain and fear are overwhelming her. The emotions of sadness, anger, unworthiness, guilt and shame are all awake and she goes into momentary turmoil.



In some natural mothers the first emotion to awaken is fear and this is what the adoptee sees as rejection. Unfortunately, he/she does not understand that the natural mother is re-experiencing the abstract feelings that are left over from the disenfranchised grief that she was never permitted to handle in the past. For that moment she feels like that young woman of years ago when she felt herself unworthy of being able to respond to a call from her child. She may also fear that the adoptee is going to be very angry with her for the relinquishing him or her as a baby when it was at their most vulnerable stage in life. She searches her memory banks for a reference point that will tell her how to handle this situation in the present, but she can't find one. As a result she may experience one of three types of symptoms.

The first may be hyper arousal in which the lower emotions of anger, fear, guilt and shame are felt to the extreme. These are the emotions she experienced when she had to surrender her baby, that were locked into her body cells and are now reawakened. She may then go through a stage of intrusive symptoms in which she needs to tell the story over and over to anyone who will listen, looking for validation and support. The truth is finally out and it has become "real". The third symptom is constriction which makes her feel powerless so that she goes into a state of surrender, shutting down all her emotions. These three stages are classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Most natural mothers experience them to some degree when faced with reunions. These symptoms will oscillate from one to the other until she finds a way to heal her inner pain.

In essence, rejection isn't always what it seems. It is really about the fear the natural mother is experiencing along with the other hidden emotions from the past that she was never given permission to heal. In some cases the natural mother may regress to a state in which she is living out of the emotions of the fragmented younger self. If you wonder why some natural mothers react so harshly while others are delighted with the idea of a reunion, the source of the problem lies in the ways she coped over the years with her loss and whether or not she was able to talk about it with others. If she allowed herself to discuss the past and had read books on adoption issues she will be delighted with the idea of a reunion. But if she locked away the pain so deeply within herself, she may have created a mental block that parallels amnesia. When the memories of the relinquishment resurface, she begins to experience the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. (PTSD). Her outward behavior now represents a negative overreaction to what should have been a joyous event. The adoptee should be prepared not to judge her for her initial reaction, which appears as a rejection.

"If you wonder why some natural mothers react so harshly while others are delighted with the idea of a reunion, the source of the problem lies in the ways she coped over the years with her loss and whether or not she was able to talk about it with others."

The natural mother needs time to find support and validation for her trauma. To accomplish this she may require counseling that will help her manage her feelings towards a reunion before it is attempted. It would be advisable for her to copy down the adoptee's phone number and/or address, enabling her to contact him/her once she has regained her composure and knows how she wants to handle the reunion. The natural mother's initial reaction to reunion is an abstract of mixed messages clouded by fear. She should be encouraged not to turn away from her child.

The pain and insecurity she feels will disappear with time and acknowledgement of the grief. If the reunion cannot be accomplished successfully, she must at least go on to heal her own trauma that the adoption has caused her over the years.

I believe we need to heal adoption issues on four levels the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical levels with the guidance of a qualified counselor. Once these issues are healed, the final process of forgiveness will take her out of

the past and into the present moment. If both mother and child can reach the point of forgiving the past, they can develop a healthy relationship and leave the past behind. Trying to intellectualize and make sense of what happened to them in the past is counterproductive to their growth in the moment. It is better that they let go of the pain and allow compassion to enter their hearts, leaving the lower emotions in the past.

Heather Carlini, is a Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist and a member of the National Association of Transpersonal Psychology. She is the director of the Carlini Institute for Therapy, Research and Transpersonal Education in British Columbia, Canada. She presently trains Certified Adoption Reunion Counselors (ARC) all over the world. Heather's twenty years of in-depth research on the psychological problems that arise through adoption led her to specialize in post-adoption issues. The results of her work are two internationally recognized books on adoption, "Birth Mother Trauma" and "Adoptee Trauma." Heather can be reached at heathercarlini@shaw.ca.

Familial Attraction: Creating Awareness on the Unspoken Subject of Genetic Sexual Attraction

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We see it in the paper; two people having married only to find out they are genetically related because they were separated at birth, due to adoption. When it comes to reuniting with family separated by adoption, making the decision to do so can be personally risky for both sides. Those who have experienced the reunion process are very familiar with the roller-coaster ride

of joys and sorrows (similarities and differences discovered by both parties) that occur in reunion. The one piece that is most confusing or puzzling, and is commonly reported by those in reunion, is that of genetic sexual attraction or GSA. If there are laws against having sexual relations with immediate blood relatives and the issue is tabooed by society, then why isn't there any awareness created, for those involved, to understand

the emotions surrounding the complex and delicate issue of GSA? It is because not everyone believes GSA to be a “real” phenomenon? Perhaps there is no simple answer, however ignoring the issue certainly does not create any awareness and leaves those who experience it alone to cope with the complex emotions.

GSA is an area that is so deeply rooted in secrecy that people who have reunited rarely discussed it. Sometimes those touched by it, don’t want to admit it, because of fear or shame and/or often times feel as though they are the only ones it has ever happened to. GSA is an attraction between two people who have been separated, all their lives, and all the emotions of the loss sometimes can turn into a sexual relationship. No one in the adoption community or who comes into a reunion contemplates that they will be attracted to their own mother, father, brother, or sister and/or vice versa. It is important to emphasize that if it does happen, the end result is not a “they lived happily ever after” ending because someone gets hurt, in the end, if the attraction turns into a sexual relationship.

What is GSA all about then?

For those who have reunited, we all know that reunions are most often highly-charged emotional events that carry great expectations and hopes into the relationship. It is easy to observe why the experience is often compared with falling in love or what some will refer to as the “honeymoon phase”.

In reunions for adoptees, for example, Carlini (2006) emphasized that they often feel the connection with the same family energy. Adoptees in reunion, cannot explain this feeling because they have been so used to feeling “alone” or “different” within their adoptive families (or a sense like a piece of the puzzle is missing); that when they find their natural families, this same family energy is often confusing, yet feels complete to them simultaneously. The same could be said for mothers as

well - - a sense that the puzzle is completed and hopefully an end to the devastating pain and anguish they faced for so many years. In addition, GSA happens throughout nature and is universal, as we all know from our science classes that “like” energies attract “like” energies. Human species have a sense of kinship or “tribunal energy” that is discovered for the first time upon entering reunion. Sometimes this “tribunal energy”, that those separated by adoption feel, is often mistaken as a “love attraction”, resulting in perhaps a sexual relationship. Through clinical observation of reunions, those who have experienced GSA have often

“GSA is a common response to reunion and those aware of this response should not feel ashamed or fearful of their feelings”

disclosed a sense of feeling regressed. For example, some mothers experiencing GSA indicated that upon meeting their sons, for the first time, they were flooded with memories of their former partners and felt like “that little girl again” - - their sons were often a splitting image of their former partners. This is not to say that only mothers experience GSA, but anyone in reunion can

feel regressed or brought back to the point of reference when separation occurred. Are there any other reasons for this phenomenon? Below are some other reasons, but they are not exclusive because we each have our own individual responses to how we handle different situations, so to is our own experiences in reunion.



Some Reasons for GSA

GSA is a common response to reunion and those aware of this response should not feel ashamed or fearful of their feelings. Rather, they should be aware of their emotions and the repercussions if their emotions are acted upon (i.e. legal repercussions). Apart from the “tribunal energy” discussed above, some other reasons are:

- (i) **Similar Characteristics** – A similar genetic makeup can result in similar temperament, appearance, and other areas known in all natural families. Similar characteristics that are not mirrored back in the other, until one has reunited.
- (ii) **Inability to say “No” and a Sense of Guilt** – Mothers/fathers may find it frequently difficult to say “no” to anything adoptees may ask of them in fear of adoptees seeing it as another form of rejection. Adoptees, on the other hand, fear that they may never see their mothers/fathers again if they do not please them. In essence, a relationship based on guilt.
- (iii) **Pheromones** – It has been studied that on a subconscious level the smell of one’s own family may be recognizable and can cause an actual physical reaction. This is especially predictable for adoptees separated at birth from their natural mothers and families.

What can one do if he/she is experiencing GSA? The first step is to realize that one is not alone and that GSA is more common than one believes it to be.

What to Do About GSA

Even though this topic is very sensitive to discuss, becoming aware of it and confronting it is better than doing nothing at all about it - - and ending up getting hurt in the end. Some suggestions:

- strong feelings/emotions of attraction are not abnormal given the nature of the situation/separation;
- recognize the “honeymoon phase” of the initial excitement for what it is (first rush and thrill of reunion and the biological love for the family - similarities);
- remember that relationships take time to develop, especially for those relationships separated by adoption. Time in getting to know someone does settle the relationship in its proper context;
- discuss it with others whom you can confide in who have experienced reunion;
- find a support group whose facilitator is comfortable discussing the topic;
- seek professional counseling/coaching from an experienced adoption reunion coach/counselor to sort out feelings of confusion, etc.

Reference: Carlini, H. (2006). *Adoption Reunion Coach Cause: Adoptee Trauma & Recovery*. British Columbia, Canada: Morning Side Publishing.

About the Author: *Christine M. Gatzke, M.Ed., CCC, CPAC/ARC, EFT-ADV*, is a bilingual clinical psychotherapist in private practice in Saskatchewan, providing individual, family/couple, group, career coaching/coaching, and life coaching via face-to-face and telephonically. Obtaining her

Masters Degree in Coaching from the *University of Ottawa*, she received post-graduate training in Gestalt Psychotherapy via the *Gestalt Institute of Ottawa*. Through the *Carlini Institute*, Christine is certified as a post-adoption, adoption reunion coach/coach. Christine is also trained in various complementary therapies, such as, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Holographic Reiki & Therapeutic Touch™, etc.

In addition, Christine provides adoption support groups in person, as well as virtually (commencing in the near future). As both a researcher and an international/national speaker, she offers general workshops/seminars and gives lectures on request on a variety of topics including post-adoption issues. *Kindly note, that Christine does provide a 15-min free consultation. Look for Christine's upcoming free monthly e-newsletter on a variety of topics, including post-adoption issues, etc.* If you are interested in receiving the e-newsletter, email her with the word “subscribe” in the subject line - personal information is kept in the strictest confidence. Or for more information: visit her Website at www.clc-apathtohealing.ca or email: christine.lachaine@clc-apathtohealing or call: (306) 352-4069.

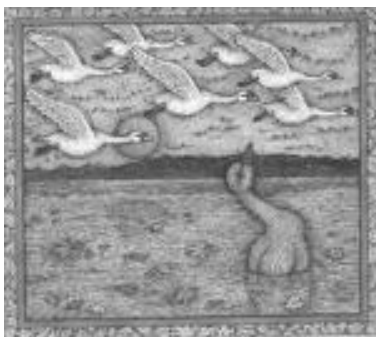
Adoptee as Ugly Duckling

By Raymond O. Ensminger

(Quotations in capital letters are from Hans Christian Anderson- English text by Anne Stewart, *The Ugly Duckling*, New York; Greenwillow Books, ND)

“I want to know who I look like.” When adoptees say that the issue of physical appearance is an important part of search and reunion with birth families, some of us (especially non-adoptees) think that is trivial, unimportant. Sometimes adoptees are embarrassed to acknowledge the importance of physical appearance because they are sensitive to the judgment (albeit sometimes subtle) of others.

Physical appearance, looking like someone is not trivial. In fact “looking like” is very important, perhaps symbolic of something at the core of our being and identity. The birth of a child elicits many comments and searching eyes to find family characteristics and resemblances. Is not this, in part, a ritual of inclusion and incorporation into a family? By the way, when we misunderstood what adoption was all about, we emphasized the importance of matching for physical characteristics, I think as a way to deny that adoption is



different (not less than, but different). I would note that there are much better rituals which can help adoptive families incorporate adoptees into their families.

“Being different”, “looking different” has alienating and excluding features. “Different” is often interpreted to mean “bad”. The ugly duckling was sad and felt rejected not because he was ugly but because he was different. HE’S TERRIBLY BIG FOR A DUCKLING... NONE OF THE OTHERS LOOKED LIKE THAT. PERHAPS HE IS A TURKEY.

Mother Duck tried to convince herself otherwise by saying, HE PADDLES QUITE BEAUTIFULLY AND HE HOLDS HIMSELF VERY STRAIGHT. HE MUST BE MINE. AND, IN FACT, HE’S QUITE HANDSOME IF YOU LOOK AT HIM PROPERLY.

I THINK HIS LOOKS WILL IMPROVE WHEN HE’S OLDER. IT’S JUST THAT HE WAS IN THE EGG TOO LONG AND HE’S NOW A BIT OUT OF SHAPE.

THE POOR DUCKLING DIDN’T KNOW WHAT TO DO OR WHERE TO GO. AND HE WAS SAD BECAUSE HE WAS

SO UGLY AND EVERYBODY LAUGHED AT HIM. James, an adoptee, said, "My children just thought that I was an orphan. People would say my daughter looks like me. I wondered who do I look like? I always wondered."

AT LAST, THE UGLY DUCKLING DECIDED TO RUN AWAY. On the morning of her fifteenth birthday Amanda unwrapped her last present, looked down, started to cry, and said, "I can't stand it any longer. I've just got to find my birth parents."

ONE EVENING WHEN THERE WAS A GLORIOUS SUNSET, A FLOCK OF BEAUTIFUL LARGE BIRDS CAME OUT FROM THE UNDERGROWTH. THE DUCKLING HAD NEVER SEEN SUCH EXQUISITE CREATURES BEFORE. THEY WERE BRILLIANT WHITE AND HAD LONG, SUPPLE NECKS... THE DUCKLING THOUGHT THEY WERE THE MOST WONDERFUL CREATURES HE HAD EVER SEEN.

HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE BIRDS WERE CALLED OR WHERE THEY WERE FLYING TO, BUT FROM THAT MOMENT HE LOVED THEM MORE THAT HE HAD LOVED ANYTHING EVER BEFORE.

Later the ugly duckling swam across the lake towards the swans. LOOKING DOWN INTO THE CLEAR WATER HE SAW HIS REFLECTION. HE WASN'T A CLUMSY, UGLY, DIRTY-GREY BIRD ANY LONGER- HE WAS A SWAN!

THE OTHER SWANS SWAM AROUND THE YOUNG SWAN AND NUZZLED HIM WITH THEIR BEAKS. He was accepted, he felt "a part of." After a reunion, many adoptees and birth parents say, "It seems like we have known each other all of our lives."

HE WAS SO HAPPY HE COULD HARDLY BEAR IT. After meeting her birth father Amanda said, "I'm the happiest kid in the whole wide world. You know, Mom, that feeling I had inside of me, I talked about the need but I didn't know what it was, that feeling is gone."

NEVER DID I DREAM SUCH HAPPINESS WHEN I WAS AN UGLY DUCKLING. Thus ends the fairy tale. But...

We know that this is only the beginning of developing a relationship with "the Swans." And probably because he feels more secure in his identity, he will have a better relationship with "the Ducks." You see, he doesn't have to pretend any longer. He knows.

An adoptee states, "The reunion with my birth family helped me feel more complete. Previously whenever I was with other people and someone looked at me, I wondered if they knew who I was, because I didn't. It was something that always bothered me. Now I know who I am. HE WASN'T A CLUMSY, UGLY DIRTY-GREY BIRD ANY LONGER—HE WAS A SWAN!

Reprinted with permission of the author, first published in CUB Communicator, 1988.

DISCLOSURE VETOES: Should they be supported in some situations?

My mother was the victim of date rape and became pregnant with me. She did not care any less for me; it just meant that there were some obstacles to overcome in our reunion.

She was scared to meet me. In fact, the night before we met, she dreamed that I turned into my father. She was scared that I might hurt her in some way. When we did meet, she held herself back from much physical contact. She could not avoid it altogether- the desire for showing affection with me was too strong.

Eventually, the pull to love overcame the fear of me being like my father. I suppose it helped that I



me

looked like her too, and not like him. Our relationship grew and through it she was able to heal the past hurts from both my conception and that of my brother who was also given up for adoption. She also came to realize that her relationship with my brother's father was abusive and she had to deal with that.

How many birth moms would not say that they were "raped", but still felt that they had no choice in having sex with the father of the child that they gave up for adoption? Is that any different? The emotions from that relationship also need to be dealt with when there is a reunion. But I believe that dealing with any "baggage" from the circumstances of becoming pregnant and giving up a child will be painful and may even be traumatic, but it is also tremendously healing at the same time. In my opinion, there should be no disclosure vetoes, not even when the pregnancy occurred as the result of a rape. *An adoptee.*

Book Review: Evil Exchange

by Lori Paris and Joe Soll,

Reviewed by Marnie Tetz



Evil **E**xchange, by Lori Paris and Joe Soll, is a fast moving fictional account of some of the horrors that can

take place in adoption. Lori and Joe have managed to weave a tangled web that is filled with mystery, suspense, truth, and laced it with humor. Those of us who have been affected by adoption, will find their fictional account of black market baby selling disturbing and sad. We will understand the feelings and thoughts of the main character, Todd Walters, as he makes the decision to finally search for his first mother. The emotions that are described are those that have been felt one time or another by all of us searching adoptees, who are honest with ourselves. The need to know whom our mother is, the need to know the

true story of what happened, and that fear of what we may find. Without being 'preachy', the reader also learns the need for support and preparation for those of us embarking on this journey.

The reader will learn how a Black Market baby selling ring works, the money involved is staggering, and the lengths those criminal minds will go to disturbing.

Even though 'Evil Exchange' can be a quick read, I found myself having to put it down, because of the emotions it brought up for me. I recommend it as a refreshingly truthful, though fictionalized account of how twisted life is for those adopted.

MOVIE Review- JUNO

By Wendy Rowney



The movie *Juno* is an amusing and cleverly presented tale of a teenage girl who becomes pregnant one afternoon while bored and hanging out with her (male) best friend, makes the decision to relinquish their child to adoption, and

grows up in the process. In the newspaper, she finds a couple who want to adopt, announces her plans to her parents, and sets up a meeting with the potential adoptive parents at which she announces that she wants a closed adoption. During the rest of the movie, she deals with the trials of pregnancy, her developing relationship with the couple planning to raise the baby, and her deepening feelings for the baby's father. It's a sweet, funny look at adolescence and an absolutely unrealistic take on adoption.

lose a child to adoption and go about their life "as if nothing has happened." WE KNOW that the film ends before the reality of the depth of loss has hit the main character, Juno, but do audiences seeing it? Is the permanent separation of mothers and their children ever a subject suitable for comedy? Apparently many think so given the success of this film. We need to voice our objections to the message it's sending to young people and society. If we don't, no one will.

- * Find the email address for your local newspapers
- * Find the word length required for your paper – usually no more than 200-250
- * Compose a letter KEEPING WITHIN THE REQUIRED LENGTH.
- * Check Origins-USA tips for letter writing
<<http://www.originsusa.memberlodge.org/Default.aspx?pageId=71854>>
- * Add your personal experience!
- * Mention Origins-USA.org as being opposed to the film's message and a resource for mothers who have lost children to adoption or who are considering it.
- * Be sure to include your name, address and phone number.
- * Let us know if your letter is published – send us a copy or a link

February 13, 2008- JUNO Action Alert: Letter Writing Campaign

Juno, a fictional comedy, has been nominated for four Oscars, has received awards from The Writers Guild and The British Film Awards for best original screenplay....AND people are taking it seriously!

Origins-USA is opposed to the message it sends that one can

Mirah Riben
PR/Membership Chair, Origins-USA.org

Announcements



VICTORIA FOUNDATION GRANT:

We have received a generous special grant from the BC Adoption and

Permanency Trust Fund to prepare and present a continuing education course for those impacted by adoption. The course will offer self-help tools for participants as they prepare for both the search and for the reunion. We will proceed with research and writing for this course in the near future in an effort to have the materials prepared by June 2008. The New Westminster continuing education program has recommended presentation of the course in the Fall of this year. Thanks to this grant, we will be in a position to more effectively reach out to the community.

FALL WORKSHOP: We would like to host another weekend with Joe SOLL the weekend of **October 24- 26, 2008** and ask that anyone interested in attending express your interest to Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca, with suggestions for topics you would like to have Joe Soll discuss.

WRITERS WANTED: Adoption Circles is created by volunteers who have their own adoption stories and who feel a commitment to help others. If you have some original writing relating to adoption that you would like to submit for publication, please forward it to the Editor at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca.

The deadlines and focus of the Newsletter are as follows:

EDITION FOCUS DEADLINE
DISTRIBUTION

Spring	Male Perspective	Apr 8/08	May 13
Summer	Spirituality	Jul 8/08	Aug 29
Fall	Celebrity	Oct 14/08	Nov 11
Winter	Youth	Jan 12/09	Feb 10

(**Thank you to all who have forwarded contributions, which may appear in this edition, or in an upcoming edition.)

TOUCHED BY ADOPTION-

CALENDAR & CARDS: The 'Touched By Adoption' 2008 Calendar is available for purchase. To view the calendar, as

well as a collection of greetings cards for those involved in adoption.

please visit Patrick McMahon's Website: <http://members.cox.net/patrickm/enter.html>

The ideas, thoughts and feelings of those touched by adoption are unique and often difficult to express. Each member of the triad: adopted person, first parent, and adoptive parent, as well as their families and friends experience many joys and challenges. It is Patrick McMahon's stated intent as a photographer, writer, and adopted person to portray some of these concepts in the words and images created for this calendar. A portion of proceeds is donated to adoption education and reform organizations.

PUB NIGHT: Don't miss our third annual Pub Night on **Friday APRIL 4, 2008**. Please mark it in your calendar NOW. This year is EXTRA special as we'll be celebrating our 15th anniversary since the Society's incorporation.

Please pull out your photos of past events and send these and any memories of the Forget Me Not Society from years gone by via e-mail to Cecelia Reekie at: cecelia_r@telus.net. We will be putting together a display to show our rich history and involvement with adoption search and reunion in British Columbia for the past 15 years. And there will be lots of great prizes to be won, old friends to visit, cake to be eaten, and music to be danced to...hope to see you there!

BOOK CLEARANCE!!! The following books are being offered for sale for a limited time at **50% OFF** the original price. Please act soon to get that book you've always been meaning to read.

Send an e-mail to Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca or call her at: 604-535-4434 to obtain your discounted book in support of the Society.

TWICE BORN, BJ Lifton
\$15... \$7.50

OUTER SEARCH INNER JOURNEY,

PF Dodds \$20... \$10.00

LOST AND FOUND, BJ Lifton
\$19... \$9.50

YESTERDAY THEY TOOK MY
BABY, Ben Wicks \$15... \$7.50

TORN FROM THE HEART,
Louise Jurgens \$18... \$9.00

TOUCHED BY ADOPTION,
Blair Matthews \$15... \$7.50
THE OTHER MOTHER, Carol Shaefer
\$19... \$9.50

REUNION, THE SEARCH FOR MY
BIRTH FAMILY, M. Allen
\$25... \$12.50

LYLE FINDS HIS MOTHER,
Bernard Weber \$9... \$4.50
FINDING FAMILY, Rick Ousten
\$16... \$8.00

STORIES OF ADOPTION, Eric Blau
\$25... \$12.50

ADOPTION REUNION,
Michelle McCole \$19... \$9.50

New Group Chat: Forget Me Not, Adoption Circles- The Forget Me Not Family Society now has an MSN group. This group can be found at: forgetmenotadoptioncircles@groups.msn.com. Our chat will be held on alternating Wednesday evenings at 8 p.m. Pacific time. Please e-mail Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca for information on joining, or any other questions (the chat is not limited to Forget Me Not Family Society members). This is a private group that does require approval to join.

AMERICAN ADOPTION

CONGRESS (AAC) CONFERENCE:

Adoption in the Global Community: Redefining Kinship in the 21st Century. The 29th Annual Conference will be held on March 26-29, 2008 at the Portland Downtown Waterfront Marriott in Portland, Oregon. Check out the Website for more information, or to register: www.americanadoptioncongress.org

Continued on last page

Personality Profile



Profile: Ann Tasko, M.A., R.C.C. is a counselor in Victoria, B.C. and a member of our “Lean on Me” list.



1) How have you personally been impacted by adoption?

My father was killed in WW2. My mother re-married and I was told at four years of age that her new husband didn't want my seven-year old brother and me. My paternal grandmother officially adopted us and at that time there was no such thing as open adoption - it

was considered to be too psychologically confusing to allow further contact between natural parents and their children. So my mother rather mysteriously completely disappeared off the face of my little world. Although my brother had little time for my mother, I did feel very connected and subsequently very disconnected. It was something I learned to handle by myself, as no one in my father's family had anything very nice to say about her. And so I grew up in a slightly different "family" - my grandmother, my unmarried adult working aunt still living at home with her mother, my brother and myself. I could write a book on this whole subject, being classified as a "war orphan" and the feelings of shame that went with that. How is it that small children can take on such feelings from being fatherless in our culture?

I did some secret detective work myself to locate my mother and managed to hit the jackpot in the London telephone directory when I was thirty-four years old, with three small children of my own. She visited Canada twice shortly after that and I have to admit to feelings of disappointment - it was not terribly exciting for me. Although I was raised in an emotional vacuum, I did understand straightforward communication and this proved to be difficult with my mother. I continued the relationship through letter writing for some time but eventually this petered out.

A few years back, I compiled a list of all the memories of living with my mother that I had consciously kept alive as a little girl and wrote a long letter to her. Not only did I want to see if she

remembered any of these memories (my brother doesn't even remember the dog we had!) but I also wanted to let her know that I harboured no bad feelings about her decision to give us up. Her step-daughter phoned from England a week or so later to say how touched she was by my letter, but unfortunately it had arrived two days after my mother died.

This is a long answer to the question, but when I think about it, it seems as if my whole life has been impacted deeply by adoption. I believe I am a stronger, wiser person because of it. Notwithstanding the obvious losses I have had to deal with all along, my mother's decision to relinquish us both back in 1947 surely impacted my life journey - causing me to become more reflective, thoughtful, independent (to a fault?!) and empathic.

2)When/ Why did you get involved in the adoption field?

Having experienced a reunion with my mother in 1978, I felt qualified, as a counselor in private practice in 1991, to become involved with Family Services of Greater Victoria and I was somewhat passionate about the whole field. When it became possible at that time for people to have an active search done for their biological parent/child, the Agency was able to offer six individual counseling sessions to those who experienced difficulties. In addition, I was contracted to run workshops for reunited biological parents and their children and these workshops sometimes also included the adoptive parents.

3) What (adoption-related) issues/ organizations have you been involved with?

Although my personal experience did not include genetic (sexual) attraction (GA), a number of my clients who had been referred by Family Services of Greater Vancouver were experiencing this extremely traumatic and at-the-time-unheard-of phenomenon. Even back then, the people with whom I spoke despised that term. They insisted it was not necessarily "sexual" and wanted that term dropped (the feelings and behaviour can

range from a general sense of attraction - a light touch - to a sexual relationship - the important part being that all these relationships started with a spark of some sort). Out of respect to them, I am myself referring to it as "GA".

Falling in love with your baby/parent is a natural event; this did not feel any different to begin with. It was only as the relationship progressed, the feelings became deeper and added to that was the natural tendency to want to touch. Add a few hormones to the mix and suddenly there became two very confused people. Some of these couples were brave enough to speak up as part of a panel discussion when we held the TRIAD Adoption Conferences at the Landmark Hotel in Vancouver in the 90's. I have always admired their courage. Subsequently, I have met with numerous individuals and couples who have felt just as confused and traumatized. Since the initial wave of reunions seems to have passed in British Columbia, I do not hear of it so often anymore, although occasionally I do.

The whole topic of GA became hotly debated amongst professionals. Some people took the position that it was morally, legally and ethically wrong and merely listening to it was in some way promoting it. In my view, this only compounded the shame and agony experienced by the individuals who were already tortured by their predicament.

Curiously, even when people had heard about it (for example, we covered it at the workshops I held), they proclaimed how glad they were to have heard about it, but knew it was nothing that would ever happen to them. But sometimes this did not turn out to be the case - forewarned was not forearmed. The arena of feelings is indeed unpredictable and quite illogical sometimes.

In addition to the foregoing, I have also run my own support groups for adoptees, biological parents and adoptive parents. Although I haven't actively sought to do this lately, working in the adoption field stands out by far as my most favourite focus area of my practice and I am so grateful to my clients for all that I have learned through them...

4) What do you see as the current issues of most concern in the adoption field?

I think international adoptions, open adoptions and adoptions by gay/lesbian couples are all topical. For parents adopting from out of the country, there are often unknown obstacles to deal with later on, e.g. as a teenager, the child is dealing with identity (add to this cultural) identity. I realize there may be similar problems with adopting a child from a different racial/cultural group within Canada - but often it is impossible to retrieve any information whatsoever. Possible problems later on may include ADD, ADHD and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, for example. Whilst it is very commendable and heartwarming that prospective parents are willing to reach out and share their homes and lives, and nobody would want to put a stop to that, at the same time there needs to be as much information as possible available in an attempt to reduce the headaches and heartaches of the teenage years, which is often when the problems begin to emerge.

A couple I know combined an international adoption with open adoption; this was not without some very challenging hurdles for several years since the natural parents ended up coming to Canada. But many of those obstacles have been resolved and all is well.

The lesson learned here about open adoption is that it is something that needs to be monitored closely. Exposing a child to a potentially dangerous situation (e.g. alcohol, drugs or abuse or any kind) in the name of "open adoption" is unacceptable. Whilst from a personal perspective, I certainly experienced all the curiosity in the world wondering who my mother was, as an adult I can appreciate why back then the "old-fashioned" powers that were legislated no-contact post-adoption policy. I believe in my particular case, no contact was for the better, but this obviously would not always be the case.

What a difficult situation to monitor! In my opinion, there need to be safeguards in place to protect adoptees from potentially negative relationships with natural parents (a big responsibility for social workers) and at the same time access to open adoptions if this is considered beneficial to all parties. It takes very mature and motivated adoptive and biological parents to handle open adoptions and when this is possible, all parties stand to enrich their lives. □

LEAN ON ME

Telephone/ E-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (cecelia_r@telus.net) (604) 857-2125
 Betty Anderson (bettboop@telus.net) (604) 531-4074
 Dan Carson
 (ariete_132@hotmail.com) (604) 557-0230
 Kimberley-Ann Jandl – Abbotsford
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca) (604) 852-9663
 Leanne-Neighbour – Kamloops
 (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca) (250) 374-0990
 Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca) (604) 535-4434
 Sandra Walters
 (walters.sandra@shaw.ca) (778) 994-2845

Reunited with Siblings:

Michael Hodgson
 (tiggerboots@telus.net) (604) 524-3686

Reunited Birth Parents:

Nancy Kato (katosan@telus.net) (604) 777-2920
 Susan Wiesendahl
 (susanwiesendahl@yahoo.ca) (604) 275-3243
 Alice McKinnon - Chilliwack
 (alicemck@telus.net) (604) 858-9970
 John Post - Castlegar
 (250) 365-5991
 Diane Herbert - Abbotsford
 (dalendi@shaw.ca) (604) 870-1821

Searching Step-Adoptee:

Edith Archibald
 (earchibald@shaw.ca) (604) 583-7792

Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer, MSW, RSW, (250) 758-1275
 Counselor and Consultant in Adoption
 (judyarcher@shaw.ca)
 Lee Crawford, M.Ed. R.C.C. (604) 875-9957
 (leecrawford@shaw.ca)
 John Thomas - Quesnel (250) 992-5688
 Christine M. Gatzke, M.Ed., CPAC/ARC
 Psychotherapist (306) 352-4069
 (christine.lachaine@clc-apathtohealing.ca)

Genetic Attraction:

Anne Tasko, M.A. R.C.C. (250) 721-5995
 (anntasko@shaw.ca)

This is a peer support service.
 Please contact our office if you wish to be included on the
LEAN ON ME Telephone / Email Support List.

SUPPORT GROUPS



Abbotsford Hope Services hosts a support group for new birth mothers. The group meets bi-weekly in either Abbotsford or Langley. Please contact Hope for more information by telephone: 1-800-916-4673 or e-mail: hopesupport@shaw.ca

Nanaimo Family Life Association has a support group for adoptees. For details, contact Stephen Cochran at: 250-754-3331.

New Westminster The Forget Me Not Family Society holds a support group for birthparents and adopted adults. We meet the second Tuesday of each month at the New Westminster Public Library, 716- 6th Avenue, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. For more information, contact Nancy Kato at: 604-777-2920; or e-mail at: katosan@telus.net

Surrey The Forget Me Not Family Society holds a support group for adopted adults. We NOW meet the third THURSDAY of each month in a meeting room in the lower level of St. Andrew's-Newton Presbyterian Church at 7147 – 124th Street, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. For more information, contact Sandra Walters at: (778) 994-2845 or e-mail at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca

Vancouver Sunrise Family Services Society offers a birth mother support group meeting the last Thursday of the month 7:00 PM. For further information, call Marg Harrington by phone at: 604-984-2488 or by e-mail: marg@sunriseadoption.com. Additional details on the website at: www.sunriseadoption.com

Vancouver facilitated by Lee Crawford. Meetings will be held on the 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.. As seating is limited, please call and tell Lee if you plan to attend the group. Lee can be reached at 604-875-9957. Meetings will take place at 659A Moberley Road, False Creek, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 4B2

Victoria The B.C. Chapter of Origins meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Emily Carr Library- 3500 Blanshard Street. A support group for natural mothers (all mothers separated from children by adoption), with adopted persons and spouses, etc. welcome. Please e-mail Bryony to get on the 'contact list' if you are interested in attending at: bryony8@pacificcoast.net or see www.originscanada.org for more information.

Update from COAR

Here we go again...

On December 10, 2007 the Ontario government introduced yet another adoption disclosure bill. This new bill, Bill 12, allows adopted adults and their birth parents to apply for identifying information about each other. It also allows them to file a disclosure veto. Watching the introduction of the new bill was bittersweet; we are saddened that the old bill died but we are thrilled that the majority of Ontario adoptees and birth parents will be able to access information should this bill become law. We have been waiting since 1927 and we now feel that the information is finally within our grasp.

In many ways, Bill 12 is an improvement over its predecessor. This bill is more straightforward and does not complicate the information sharing with applications to review boards and rules stating that CASs must check for past abuse before information is released. In this bill, adults will apply for information and they will either receive it or they will not.

While none of us are happy with the “not” option, the government had no choice but to introduce a disclosure veto once they made the decision not to appeal Judge Belobaba’s ruling that it was unconstitutional to release information without providing the other party with a means to veto its release.

What does the bill actually allow?

* Adopted adults (18 and older) can apply for a copy of their original birth registration and adoption order.

* Birth parents of adult adoptees (once the adoptee is at least 19 years old) can apply for the information contained in the original birth registration, the amended birth registration, and the adoption order. (Names of the adoptive parents will be removed.)

* Adopted adults and birth parents can file a contact preference form indicating how they would like to be contacted.

* Adult adoptees and their birth parents can file a contact veto which will allow the disclosure of information but prohibit contact.

Announcements – continued from page 15

* The entire bill will come up for review within 5 years of it becoming law.

Different from the last bill is the introduction of disclosure veto.

* Adopted adults and their birth parents can file a disclosure veto. When they do so they will be requested to provide medical and social family information and be provided with the opportunity to explain why they are filing the veto. The veto will expire with the death of the person who filed it.

* The good news is that only people involved with an adoption that was finalized before September 1, 2008 will be able to file the disclosure veto. All subsequent adoptions will be open once the adoptee reaches adulthood!

We have been told that adoptees and some birth relatives will still be able to apply for non-identifying information and will also be able to place their names on a match-based registry. The government will conduct searches only in the case of severe medical problems.

Bill 12 passed through first reading without any real friction. We anticipate that the other two readings and the committee hearings will be equally friendly. The government has assured us that they want to see Bill 12 become law very quickly. While their definition of quickly may not be the same as that of the adoption community, we do believe that they will move the bill through and over all of the legislative hoops as soon as they can.

Here in Ontario we are thrilled that we will at long last be joining BC, Newfoundland, and Alberta as provinces that allow adult adoptees and their birth parents access to information. The government has recognized our right to apply for information about ourselves and that is an enormous step forward. In another few years we know that society and the government will be ready to recognize our right to receive it.

Wendy Rowney
Coalition for Open Adoption Records

ANDREW MAHON FOUNDATION GRANT: We have received a grant to improve our Website and work has already begun! We want to make the Website even easier to use, with more relevant information. The sections that will be added include an upcoming events calendar, a photo gallery, survey questions, video message, and a Members Only area. A database will be created of articles, stories, and poems published in past issues of the Newsletter, so if you object to your written submission being made available on the internet, please immediately notify the Editor at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca. Thank you.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND MOVIE: Please plan on attending the Forget Me Not Society AGM on Saturday, April 26th. It will be held in the Public Library Auditorium located at 716- 6th Avenue in New Westminster, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon for all members in good standing. Following the meeting, we will have a light lunch and watch an adoption-related movie (TBA) for the cost of \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Popcorn and stimulating conversation also included. Please RSVP to Nancy Kato at: nancy.kato@icbc.com.

COMMUNITY FORUM: The Forget Me Not Family Society will be presenting a two-hour continuing education class on Preparing for Adoption Search and Reunion. Please support the Society by attending at the New West Secondary School (Room 133B) on Thursday, February 28, 2008 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Please visit the website at: <http://www.sd40.bc.ca/sbo/ContEducation/5%20free> for more information and call to register at: 604-517-6345. We need a minimum number of participants to ensure that the class is not cancelled. See you there!

To place a sponsorship ad, please call: 604-777-2920. Business card size available for \$40. Please note that advertising is limited to members of the Society, which reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the proposed ad to the purpose of our publication.

Membership to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** includes:

- ✓ Subscription to **ADOPTION CIRCLES**, a quarterly publication
- ✓ Reduction in workshop fees
- ✓ Information on books and support groups

Name: _____

Address _____

City/Province/State _____

Postal/Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Birth Parent _____ Adoptee _____ Adoptive Parent _____ Sibling _____ Reunited _____

Prospective Adoptive Parent _____ Adoption Professional _____ Other _____



Individual membership is \$25.00 per year. Corporate membership is \$60.00 per year. Please send cheque payable to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** to:
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