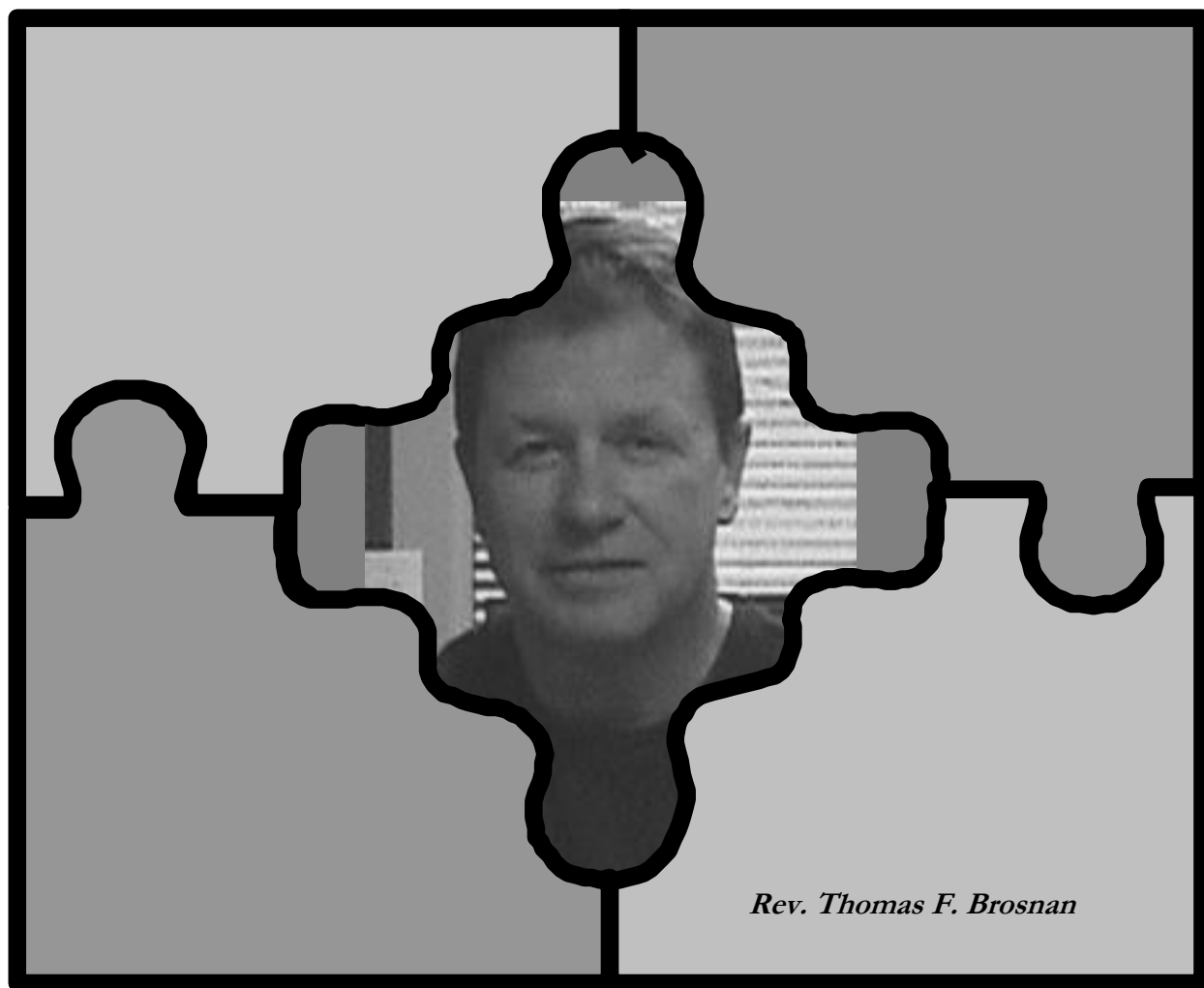


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue 48 Fall 2008 \$3.50



Rev. Thomas F. Brosnan

Spirituality

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ADOPTION CIRCLES

FALL 2008
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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 monthly support groups 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



"We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey."

- Stephen Covey

President's Message Nancy Kato

Wow! - did you have a chance to get out and see the colours of Fall this year? They were magnificent, weren't they? Even on those drab rainy days, I loved driving down the hill to my home and gazing at the beautiful maple trees - brilliant reds, oranges and yellow. And I loved walking along the street and kicking my way through the fallen leaves. Brisk days, mild days, wet days, sunny days - a beautiful time of year for me.

I got to thinking the other day, after receiving an email from a list I'm on. The woman said, "...in Hawaii, people talk about 'Ohana'." Apparently, in the movie Lilo and Stitch, we learn that "ohana" means family; family, in turn, means no one gets left behind or forgotten. It means belonging to a community, be that family, friends or colleagues, and taking care of each other. However, one cannot belong to "ohana" without also accepting "kuliana" which means 'responsibility'. If we want to truly belong we must accept the responsibility that goes with it. The responsibility not just for ourselves to work for the good of the whole community, but also to care for each other's well being and the well being of the places in which we find ourselves. To nurture and guide the young or inexperienced, to be good role models, to teach them good lessons and keep them on the right path.

How does "ohana" apply in our sphere of adoption? We were left behind (but never forgotten), so how do we, in our quest for family or reunification, recapture "ohana"? How do we get back A sense of belonging and responsibility to that family? We each have a role to play in

the success of our relationships and it can often be hard to remember to care for the well being of the other, for the good of the community. It is difficult to nurture and guide others when we are striving to understand where we fit. There is very little that is stronger than the sense of family, however we create family, and we need to remember to accept "kuliana". We cannot take "ohana" for granted even when we are confused. The reunion journey is long, and the lessons we learn are often difficult, but in the end we will find our "ohana" - it just may not be where you thought it was.

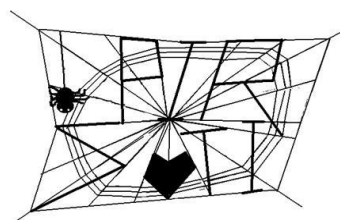
We hope you enjoy this issue as we look at spirituality. I often find, in my quest for peace and contentment, more questions. Just when I think I've got it all figured out, someone poses another point of view, or I have this awe inspiring moment as I kick through the leaves of my life and look around at the colours of the world around me. Maybe we're not supposed to know it all, perhaps it is all about the quest(ions).

Nancy

We're finishing 2008 with a focus on "Spirituality" in this issue of **Adoption Circles**. We had many submissions for our topic, so I intend to keep my comments brief and give more space to our readers to share their thoughts. As you will see from the various articles, there are many interpretations as to how one's spirituality/ religion/ faith informs our view of adoption search and reunion. It is important to stress that the material published in this Newsletter, including my article, does not necessarily reflect the views of the Forget Me Not Family Society. As editor of the Newsletter, I believe strongly in free speech and letting people share their own opinions and perspectives, whether I agree with them, or vehemently disagree. Opening our minds to a different point of view, in my opinion, can often give us new understanding and compassion and a true appreciation for the benefits of diversity. And it is always open to us to write a letter or article expressing a different opinion.



Walters' Web
Sandra Walters



I believe that healing for an individual, an adoptee or birth parent in the case of adoption, can only be fully realized through spiritual healing. Looking back to 2005, I discussed adoptees and denial in my Walters' Web article and shared this about my own personal perspective: *"Ultimately, I believe we have a parent in heaven who has seen the pain of all the adoptees throughout time. He has counted and collected all our tears. When we ask Him, he brings the people into our lives that we need to help us heal from the wounds which we as small, dependant and innocent children did not bring upon ourselves."*

To explore this approach to healing, I am now working through a recovery workbook called "The 12 Steps- A Way Out: A Spiritual Process for Healing". Some may be familiar with the 12-Step program which has as unique features a belief that "...a Power greater than ourselves" can restore us to wholeness, as well as acknowledgements that:

- we have committed wrongs/ have shortcomings;
- we desire to change; and,
- we need to be willing to make amends to those we have harmed as a result of our actions. I have a distinct opinion about how this applies to biological parents, especially since attending the Workshop on Expectations as presented recently by Joe Soll.

In his Workshop, Joe Soll asked us to express our feelings as freely as possible since many of us have not had an opportunity to do this throughout our lives with respect to how adoption has impacted us. Many mothers repeatedly expressed regret over her decision to place her child for adoption. However, Joe Soll holds the view that women had no choice- that given the woman's experiences and knowledge to that point and her circumstances at the time, there was no other option available to her. Based on my own personal experience and insight, I do not agree with this view. I, too, was in a crisis pregnancy situation (in my 20's) and was asked by my doctor if I wanted to parent the child beginning to form in my body. I, like many natural mothers, thought that I was not prepared to parent, but I opted for an abortion rather than placing the child for adoption. No matter how difficult it may have been at that time for me to say "yes" to parenting my child, I know in my heart that it was still my choice. Although the pressures to make one choice or another may be more or less depending on her family situation, her culture, or the historical societal conditions, it is still the woman's choice. In my view, an excruciatingly difficult decision is nonetheless a decision- the question is how much we are willing to risk, or sacrifice.

Like many natural mothers, I have gone through incredible grief, guilt and shame for the decision I made. After all, at least my own biological mother gave me a chance at life. And grief

over choosing an abortion is also one we are told to ignore and deny. It's supposed to be simple, it's "no big deal", we made the "right decision", and we should just "get over it" and "get on with our lives,"... sound familiar? But, what if we begin to come to terms with the magnitude of what we have done? What if we wonder about the child we might have parented? What if people will not acknowledge the reason for our deep sadness? We may want to blame someone else for the decision we made, or maybe just "society" for pressuring us into it. We can try, and I have, but it will ultimately give us no solace. In my experience, denying that this was our decision also forecloses the opportunity for our complete healing.

The more effective approach, in my opinion, is to take responsibility for our decision and to seek forgiveness. In the

words of the 12-step program, to "...be willing to make amends to those we have harmed as a result of our actions". In the case of abortion, that may be to ask our Higher Power for forgiveness, and our child in Heaven, and perhaps offer an explanation to the father. He may not have been consulted in our decision about the fate of someone who would have also been his child. For natural mothers, there is an opportunity for great additional healing if the adoptee grants her forgiveness in this lifetime. Taking full responsibility for my actions, asking for forgiveness, and feeling truly forgiven is the only way I have personally healed the gaping wound of abortion. This was accomplished in the context of a supportive healing retreat. To me, these are crucial steps in healing for a woman who has lost her child- as a result of abortion or adoption.

Coincidence or Fate? By Evelyn Morin

I believed for 30 years that my son had been adopted by a childless couple "out west" somewhere. This was the explanation given to me by my parents and their lawyer in 1964 when I was 17 years old. I never had any reason to doubt that they weren't being totally honest with me and I trusted completely in this explanation. My son was born in Ontario, so "out west" to me meant anywhere west of Ontario. The thought of ever searching for him never entered my mind. Where would I possibly begin to look? I had no name and no location. It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Fast forward 30 years.

My daughter overheard a telephone conversation I had with my brother's wife, where I had just discovered that she had chosen to share this long buried secret with my younger sister. I was furious, as I had moved miles away to protect this secret forever. She had betrayed my trust and forced me to talk about something that I had not spoken of in 30 years. Unbeknownst to me, my daughter was standing outside her room listening to my entire conversation but never mentioned it at all for the next six months. Then one day, out of the blue, she asked me, "...so, what did you have? A boy or a girl?" I was shocked at her question and wondered where it came from. She shared that she had indeed been eavesdropping on my conversation six months previously and had pondered during that time about what to do.

Without telling me what her intention was, she managed to get the name of my parents' lawyer from me. After my daughter threatened to ask my mother for the information, I gave her his name. I never believed for a moment that, if he was still in business 30 years later, he would give her any information due to lawyer/ client confidentiality. I was wrong!

My daughter sent the lawyer a letter, without my knowledge, which he forwarded to my son's adoptive mother- again, without my knowledge. She had included her return telephone number. The adoptive mother gave my son the information and told him that his sister was looking for him. Within ten minutes he was on the phone with my daughter. And so, our son was instantly found!

When we began to compare notes, I found out that my son had NOT been adopted by a couple "out west", but had in fact been adopted by a husband and wife doctor team who had both worked with my mother at the local hospital. They knew her and she knew them. They wanted a baby; she wanted to give one away. The deal was sealed. They got my son; I got a pack of lies.

It turned out that my son lived in the same city in which his father and I were raised. We used to drive past his house almost every week to our favourite Chinese Restaurant for years until we left town in 1975.

~Coincidence or fate?

Had I known this information, I wonder if I would have gone looking for him on his 18th birthday? I truly don't know. I believe the fear of rejection might have stopped me, but that is something I will never know since the truth had died so many years before.

As it turned out, my son and I both enrolled in the real estate course in exactly the same month of the exact same year, in 1986. We were both sitting in the same classes in two different cities. We obtained our license at the exact same time. ~Coincidence or fate?

When he was found, he was employed with a national realtor in a city of dozens of realtors. His mentor was none other than my first boyfriend, the same boyfriend I had broken up with for my son's father; the same guy who would have sworn on a stack of Bibles that I was never pregnant. I went to great lengths to hide that fact from anyone, especially him, as I didn't feel he ever had any reason to know the truth about my loss to adoption. He was not my son's father. What were the chances that these two would actually be working together 30 years later? My secret was blown! ~Coincidence or fate?

Our son also frequented and favoured our Chinese Restaurant and, like us, loved their egg rolls and would feast on them, from the time of early childhood. We may have unknowingly been there at the same time. ~Coincidence or fate?

Of my four children, he is the one who is just like me! He is also the only one who looks like me. We both love Elvis (the other three do not), we both love music, laughing, and joking. We both start projects we never complete, being all excited in the beginning only to quickly lose all interest. We find humour in the serious attitudes of the rest of the family and spend most of our time laughing together. We are like clones! ~Coincidence or fate?

Three years ago, he attended our second son's wedding and fell in love with one of the bridesmaids who also happened to be my daughter-in-law's business partner. Two years ago, he moved to my city and the two were married. Today he lives less than two kilometers away and I see him almost every day. We are sure making up for lost time. It feels like he's never been away.

~Coincidence or fate?



POETRY

*"Poetry heals the wounds reason creates."
~Novalis, aka Fritz von Hadenburg*

Love from your Mother

By Evelyn Morin

In the beginning you lived under my heart
Nine months later they ripped us apart
They took you from me and gave you away
I'll never forget that torturous day.

They gave you to strangers who couldn't conceive
And you then became their own "make-believe"
They stroked out the names I had given to you
Convincing themselves you were "as born to"

These people you call your mom and your dad
I've lived with this knowledge for years feeling sad
It shouldn't have happened, it just wasn't fair
So many years later I finally dare

To reach out to find you and help make us whole
Laying out all I have, my love and my soul
I just want to know you, to see you are fine
And finally find closure for pain that's been mine

For years I refused to suffer defeat
Awaiting the day we would finally meet
I've longed for the time I could so gently touch
That beautiful face I've been missing so much

Reunion, the wonder of mother and child
There's nothing quite like it, so wondrous, so wild
I've prayed for this day, my best dream come true
To finally share that I've always loved you

So take a small step and open the door
You may be surprised and find you want more
More time with the woman who's loved you for years
I just want to meet you and calm all your fears

Take heart, my dear child, in all that you do
Remember forever, I've always loved you.

Gone... by Gail Davies (at the age of 16)

Gone the days of sweet innocent youth
For now you are sitting in the booth
Of life ahead
And in its stead
A new world unfurled, as in an ancient melody
Which tells of what might be
But look, look ahead and you will see
A way to think and to be
Whatever your dreams may see.

Letter From My Heart

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Billhartz



This is a letter from my heart
To mothers and fathers of daughters
To mothers and fathers of sons
To daughters and to sons

I am your baby, your grandchild
I am the small, invisible one
Unplanned, unexpected
Who will, someday, look like you ... :-)

This letter is from my heart
To my grandmothers and grandfathers
To my mother, and to my father
Listen to me ... please, hear me

I belong to you
I am of you
You are my people
I am your child

Be at peace with my conception
Be accepting of my birth
Honor my mother and my father
Welcome me. Bring me home.

Because, I belong to you
I am of you
You are my people
And I ... I am your child!

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Focus on Spirituality

“SPIRITUALITY”, By Marianne Auger

spirituality, a new age blanket word



S for religion or a true description of our personal essence. The adage, “in good spirits”, would indicate that some unseen part of us is happy, content and alive. It cannot be touched, yet can touch ourselves and others in most profound ways. Meeting someone who is “in touch” with his or her spirituality can be empowering and overwhelming at the same time. They tend to bring forth things in ourselves we may not have wondered about before.

A healthy spirituality can lead to many wonderful things with minimal effort. The “art of living right” comes straight from our spirituality. This does not mean the accumulation of wealth and possessions; this just means that we are contributing to our world in a positive, healthy and empowering way. We put positive thought and intention out there for all to see with the intention that it will be passed on. Think about those around you who seem to live carefree and always seem to have good things happen to them. Do they have an inside source or are they choosing to live in a way that supports good things happening to them? I would tend to think they must be doing something right; maybe it is how they are living and thinking!

You do not need money or any special talent to empower spirituality around you, just a desire to have all be well and thriving around you. Negative beget negative and positive beget positive—which road you choose in each moment will determine what comes back to you. Most issues in life are trivial and not even worth a mention, yet our minds take those items and make a choice right then and there on how to react or deal with things. The mind forgets sometimes, makes the choice, only to dampen the spirit with negativity. A healthy spirituality will not forsake us for another, it will be with us always as long as we continually support it and let it grow.

How can one improve their own personal spirituality? Well, it can be as simple as a smile and kind word to someone in strife or as complex as physically cleaning up your community. How people empower and bolster their personal spirituality is up to the individual. How we support healthy spirituality around us is by being the best we can be, choosing the positive over the negative and just basically being selfless. It only takes a moment to smile and assist another person, yet that gesture will go on and on.

More and more we hear about random acts of kindness, communities gathering and healing on a whole, global awareness of

what works and what does not work and more and more individuals who are striving to empower proactive roles in government and society. We can all make a difference on an individual level by being proactive in our own lives and communities. It all starts within us, living by the old adage of ‘do unto others, as we would have done unto ourselves’. Living in this way can be fulfilling and rewarding.

Now what does all of this have to do with adoption, searching and reunions you may ask? Well, as a biological mother of two who has been reunited and now lives with their wish of no contact at this time, I have a choice here. I can be upset and sad and angry about my situation or I can make the most of it. I choose to make the most of it. I rejoice in knowing that my children are alive, well, and striving to be their own persons. I hold both these children in my heart with unconditional love and peace. I thank the powers that be for the opportunities I have had in meeting my children and also live in a positive mode believing all things happen in their own time. My healthy spirituality gets me through even the toughest of times with all things in life that can be thrown my way.

As a person who also assists individuals in locating their biological relations, I see how positive spirituality can assist with the searches: the connecting and the aftermath of the reunion no matter what transpires. I have just completed my 100th search/ reunion and with each case my spirit soars and grows. I have found a personal link or item within each search that reminds me of my life, and that keeps my spirit connected. Each search touches me in a way that empowers my own personal spirituality that, in turn, has me spreading this out to those I touch with my words, actions and help. Sometimes all it takes is a positive word and support to get someone to see they have more to rejoice about than to be saddened with.

It can and will snowball eventually and more and more people will start to live right and empower themselves and those around them in choosing the positive over the negative. Even in our darkest moments our spirituality can pick us up, brush us off, and push us to just progress forward the best way we can. We can see how proactivity has helped change the adoption laws in many provinces in Canada. Could this be that we have come to realize that part of who we are is the spirit we carry of our parentage, that our essences is not just the stuff inside our bodies, yet all that we have within ourselves spiritually also?

I have heard so many times from people that finding their family filled that dark spot on their heart; this is the spirit within us healing and ultimately supporting healthy spirituality. It is all attainable; it can work wonders and create miracles. It can be the difference between rejoicing or sinking into a well of self-pity and regret.

-continued on next page

Each time we start a project or pick up our search we have the inner power to have things be different than the last time. By quelling our frustrations, shelving the ‘what if’s’, and allowing ourselves to go with the flow of information, we can all be

successful in our endeavors and goals. Although the outcome sometimes does not match what you felt it would be, the outcome is there and you can love it or hate it, just know what you will get back with either choice.

Every day as I face another day of physical challenge because of my health, I rejoice in the fact that I got out of bed. I thank the universe for what I am able to do, and I make a choice. I once

coined a phrase that I have come to live by each day as a mini credo. I share it with you now in closing as it expresses my choice each day in a way that has made sense to many. Each day I remind myself that:

"I am the master of my destiny and the maestro of my misery and only I can choose which one I will be today".

Discovering the Special Advantage of Being Adopted

By George Robinson

Ideas surrounding personal identity have been fought over and challenged throughout modern Western history. Adopted persons have had a long-term special interest in these ideas and we may finally have inadvertently been given a dubious advantage in the current global perspective on lost identity. During the previous couple of centuries, there was little place for personal identity as reflected in the works of Spinoza, Hegel and Marx, for whom the individual was, more or less, an irrelevance. However, at the same time, the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard championed the prominence of the individual as the essential component of society. Until recently, there have been these separate societies operating simultaneously using either of the two opposing views.

Now, in the words of Canada's Marshall McLuhan: "Today (1966), the instantaneous world of electric information media involves all of us, all at once. Like primitives, we now live in a global village of our own making, a simultaneous happening" McLuhan also changed his views on this with time: "I used to talk about the global village; I now speak of it more properly as the global theatre. Every kid is now concerned with acting. Doing his thing

outside and raising a ruckus in a quest for identity. He has lost his identity."

As adopted people we might be tempted to say "...suck it up sister." But, since we've been there and back again, we tend to be more sensitive to others who are experiencing any kind of identity problems. Hey! Hold on second here! What's happened? I thought us kids in adoptionland were all waiting to get the information on our taken identity. What happened to equal rights with other children and our objective to be finally be included completely in our society? Now this! Instead of us being included, everyone in our society now has the opportunity of being excluded just like us! Oh, the irony of it all!

I guess we will have to be content and accept the fact that we are among the best prepared for the future now. What a way to get an advantage! We are some of the only people in our society that have had an identity, lost it and, with luck, have regained it. This process has prepared us for today, and for what the rest of society is now going to experience even more in the future.

VIEWS on NEWS

RUMBLINGS IN QUEBEC? Quebec's Opposition wants to make it easier for adopted children to find their biological parents. The Action Democratique du Quebec tabled a motion a few months ago that would give adopted children the right to information about their family roots. Under the proposed legislation, biological parents will no longer be able to simply refuse having their personal details handed out. They would have to prove there are "serious motives" for keeping their identity from their children. The ADQ's Bill 397 also calls for adopted children to have access to their parent's medical records. "When you go to the doctor, they ask you the question: is there any history, for example, of cancer or other illnesses in your family," said Eric Laporte, the ADQ's social services critic. "Adopted children can't answer those questions because they don't know their family history." (From the Canadian Press)

A.I. ADOPTEE RIGHTS? Olivia Pratten, a 26-year-old broadcast journalist now based in New York, is engaged in a public fight at the B.C. Supreme Court to find out about her biological father. "Not knowing my biological roots is a big loss for me and is something I've had to grieve," she says in an e-mail. "I just want to know where I came from so that I can know my place on the human tree." Pratten was born in 1982 after her

mother visited a Vancouver fertility doctor. Her parents back their daughter in her court battle to keep B.C. donor records from being destroyed after six years.

The Court issued a temporary injunction on October 28th ordering all fertility doctors to keep their donor records. The proposed class-action lawsuit names the attorney general of B.C. as discriminating against people born of sperm or egg donation because provincial law now gives adoptees the right to learn about their biological parents. The discrepancy also violates the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights, argues Victoria lawyer Sean Hern, who is co-counsel in the case. The province has not yet filed a response and has no comment on the case.

As far as Hern knows, this is the only such class-action suit in the world and would extend to anyone conceived in B.C. as a result of donated sperm or eggs. He has already had calls from people who want to be included. Other countries, including Sweden and the United Kingdom, have rescinded donor anonymity without lawsuits. Nobody knows how many people born of donor gametes there are. Estimates range from 4,000 to 40,000 for Canada. (By Katherine Dedyna, Canwest News Service, Victoria Times Colonist)

Reflections on Joe Soll Workshop

Held October 24 – 26, 2008



Another Weekend with Joe Soll

By Marnie Tetz

Where do I begin to describe the weekend that I spent at the workshop the Forget Me Not Family Society hosted, “Reunions and Expectations... and what to do about them” with Joe Soll? Driving into New Westminster for the workshop on Saturday morning, Pat Benatar was blasting out “Hit Me with Your Best Shot” on the radio and that made me think...yeah, how perfect. I was wanting Joe to hit all of us with his ‘best shot’. I was wanting him to challenge all of us to be strong and to be able to reach inside of ourselves for what we needed to get out, in order to continue on the next step of our adoption healing.

Once again a group of us, whose lives had been affected by adoption, had gathered to learn how we can deal with the expectations that we didn’t know we had about our reunion stories. We were going to cry and laugh, and sometimes both at the same time. As Nancy Kato said, “...we were with enlightened witnesses... loving witnesses”, we were safe to share our thoughts and yes, Mr. Soll, our feelings.

One of Joe’s goals was to teach us that we needn’t be afraid of our emotions; that we need to be able to acknowledge our feelings of pain and loss and of anger. It’s okay to experience our feelings, and know that we won’t die from them. We also need to learn that we aren’t responsible for the feelings of others.

One of the fears that was very common amongst us was that if we started to cry, if we allowed ourselves to do so, we may never stop. Because of that fear many times we don’t want to feel our pain or acknowledge our sadness at our loss of our mother or child. At times when we are asked how we feel we will think for a moment and then respond...“I don’t know.” That response means that we have quit thinking, we don’t want to think, and we don’t want to acknowledge the feelings we are having. Time and time again Joe would remind us about our wounded inner child that each of us has.

What we need to do is reach inside ourselves, talk out loud in our heads, and acknowledge that little person we all have inside. For those adopted, we need to find our 7 year old, and for mothers, the connection needs to be made with the age she was at the loss of her child. We need to make that connection, so that we can help our

‘little one’ heal. We need to let our inner child know that we are them as an adult, and that they are safe with us. Our inner child knows how we feel, they know what happened back then, they have the memory. We need to reassure them that they can always trust us as their adult self, and that we will always be there for them. Between the two, the healing begins: a true team is formed.

Joe taught us about how reunions can go astray because of the fears we have. Seeing the family we missed out on, or the child that we didn’t get to raise can, for some, be too much to bear. Sadly, the fear is so great that a pull back occurs. The pull back can be short lived, or it can last for years...sometimes forever. What we need to do is to learn that the pull back isn’t about us, it’s about the fears and pain our mother or child is feeling. The feelings being so great that it’s easier to throw the wall back up, and retreat to the safe place of denial... the safe place where what is real doesn’t exist. Where we can once again blot out the painful feelings.

Joe taught us about our anger, and what we can do with it to make it constructive rather than destructive. We can make anger lists, we can weight those feelings of anger from one to a million, if need be, in order to help see what is making us feel the anger that we do. We can become physical with our anger... clean the house, go for a good long walk...get that anger out in a positive and constructive way, channel it to help us and not hurt us or those around us. When we learn how to do this, we no longer need to be afraid of the anger.

“If we can change how we think, we can change how we feel.” Those are the words that Joe Soll repeated several times over the course of our weekend. If we can throw out words in our vocabulary such as ‘rejection’, we will be able to change how we look at reactions we are met with in our reunion. We can’t be rejected. We may not receive the acceptance that we were hoping for, but knowing that it’s not a rejection of us, knowing that it’s not personal can help us turn our thoughts around. If we change the thought that the lack of acceptance or lack of acknowledgement is about the experience of our ‘found’ person, we won’t feel the hurt and the anger. Or, if we do experience those feelings, we will be able to ‘think’ our way to a clearer understanding of what is going on.

Joe and Nancy believe (as do I) that when we don’t know the whole story of what went on when we were born, or if our mothers don’t know what kind of lives we have had, that it’s better to have positive thoughts, take a positive spin than to take that dark and narrow road of negativity. If we don’t know why our person isn’t responding, it’s best to think that they may just not yet be ready, rather than to make up what we don’t know for sure. Why cause ourselves all of that unnecessary grief if we can possibly help it? “If we change how we think, we can change how we feel.”

As hard as it is, we need to try to empathize with our people, try to not be judgmental, because we have not walked in their shoes. This was another of Joe’s messages that kept being repeated: the need for empathy and compassion, not judgment. The need for those adopted to learn from mothers. To read about them, and learn what it was like for them. It’s also necessary for mothers to learn about what life has been like for those adopted, not knowing where they came from, or why they are as they are. Our mother’s

need to know that we weren't blank slates, that we have always carried parts of them in our genetic make-up. Just as they have carried us in their hearts.

Finally, we learned how much music is a part of our emotional well being. We had the chance to hear a couple of our adopted participants take a short break, and entertain us with their musical abilities on the piano. Dawn Wolaschuck mentioned how the Beatle's song "Nowhere Man" has always meant so much to her, as

well as how the words from "My Heart Will Go On" sung by Celine Dion.

There was a lot of crying, a lot of laughing, separately and then all together and, as Dawn said, "...laughing and crying are both a part of life". We thank Joe Soll for once again, coming to New Westminster. And we thank all of those brave souls who chose to take the time and share their courage and bravery so that we are able to take these next steps in our reunion journey of healing



FINDING D'ARCY

By Solveig Nordwall

I ended up at the reunion weekend because my ancient computer was giving me grief again. Determined to clear out some of the sludge, I went into Bookmarks to delete a long list of unused sites. Right click, Delete, right click, delete...and then I came to Adoption Circles, and there was sudden silence. Dithering. Then, because I don't like giving in to fear, I plunged ahead and began an email to Marnie Tetz. Couldn't stop writing- bawling my eyes out all the while. Worried that the email was too long. Hovered over Send for a while, and then did.

Marnie, bless you, you answered right away with compassion and support, which got me crying all over again. The upshot was the reunion weekend.

I lost D'Arcy on October 26, 1965 at Grace Hospital in Vancouver. Those were cruel times for those of us who "got busted" doing the deed. There were Homes for Unwed Mothers, like Maywood, where we hid from accusing eyes and waited grimly for labour and birth with no hope of ever even touching our newborns. By the time our nine months were up, most of us didn't even want to. We had detached so effectively that it was just one more final thing we had to get past.

After D'Arcy's birth, I was shown where he lay in the nursery in his little bed. I nodded once, turned my back and walked away.

I've been condemning myself for that coldness ever since. I thought I was a stone cold b----, obviously not fit for motherhood, obviously just as bad as they said I was.

I've been searching since 1981 with no results, and have finally decided to initiate an active search while I'm still here in Canada. The weekend workshop seemed to be the obvious first step. Saturday began by being interesting, then morphed into something else, something way more difficult. I got knowledge I really hadn't wanted to hear and felt a deep inescapable tectonic shift happening in this "cold, unfeeling" heart. On Sunday, which I almost didn't attend because of transportation issues (thank you, Nickie – if you hadn't offered to go out of your way to pick me up I would have snuck out the back door, so to speak), the inner quake broke the dam, and 43 years of grief poured out. I couldn't cry deeply enough, I couldn't breathe, and it would have brought me literally to my knees if Kimberley (blessings upon you, my friend!) hadn't held me up. By the time the storm front had passed and I staggered back into the room, the stone cold b---- was gone for good.

I have been changed and altered permanently: the wound open to bleed freely, and hopefully, eventually to heal (although I still have my doubts about that). At least I can stop condemning myself for not feeling...

Now when I cry at home by myself, I imagine picking him up from his little bed in the hospital, holding him to my breast, nursing him, loving him, loving him – all the love my second son, Jesse, got full bore.

D'Arcy, I don't know if we'll ever meet, but I fervently hope we do. If we do, I don't know how you'll see me or what you'll say,

Reunions and Expectations & What to Do About Them By Catherine Moore

Joe Soll's weekend workshop "Reunions and Expectations and What to Do About Them" was a hands-on approach to understanding and preparing for the complexity of an adoption reunion. The majority of the participants were looking for ideas to help overcome challenges they are experiencing in their ongoing reunion relationships. Joe Soll's philosophy is clearly reflected in his therapeutic approaches, and while it may seem deceptively simple, the actual practice is not what I would describe as easy. The results, however, seemed remarkably effective. I think most participants went home with some useful tools that could be practiced immediately as well as with some ideas to savour at their leisure.

Joe Soll believes that adoption is a trauma. Considerable neonatal research and anecdotal evidence support this conclusion. He postulates that it is an event that, for all intents and purposes, is as traumatic and irrevocable a loss as death. It differs from a death only in the reaction that others have towards it. The loss experienced by birth mothers and adoptees is denied or minimized within their community and in society at large: "You'll forget all about it", "What do babies know?" "You should be grateful". This collective denial and consequent derailment of the grieving process creates havoc in the psyche of those who have experienced loss through adoption.

According to Joe, the first step in healing and moving past our pain requires that we face our denied feelings: bring them from the shadows and allow ourselves to experience them honestly. Only through direct access to our feelings can we make conscious the unconscious drives that control us. Sounds simple, doesn't it? So

but I hope you don't hate me. If you don't hate me, but still don't want me particularly, I hope you will want to meet your younger brother, because he wants very much to meet you. I want to know if I'm a grandmother, though you may not want me in their lives.

Regardless of the outcome, you are now in my heart's inner circle, where you should have been since the day you were born. I can only hope and pray that you were loved truly and well by your new parents. That you have a home you still love to visit, that your children, if you have any, have a loving relationship with their grandparents, that there was no violence or abuse, no cold shoulders, no harsh discipline. I can tell you this: I would not have been much of a mother, as explosive violence was passed on to me as a way of life. It's not now, but then...yikes!

I've always assumed that it was true what they told me, that your parents were good people, much like your father (who you were named after) and me, so the fit would be as good as possible. After the weekend, I'm less sure of that. After the weekend Workshop, I have fears I didn't have before. After the weekend, I see this as a long road ahead, not just a quick reunion. So many more tears to shed, so many more insights that bring pain as well as light- so far to go.

And helpless, useless rage at a society that could sanction that kind of traumatic separation as the best solution for both mother and child.~

why are we not all walking around full of peace and self-acceptance?

To do such a thing requires that a person set aside time and space with an enlightened witness and "...cry until there are no more tears left to cry". This was the introduction to the first stage of healing. Some of the participants felt safe enough in the presence of the group to allow their deepest feelings to emerge using "I feel because..." statements. Contrary to their fears, the end result was not annihilating, but rather, cathartic. Joe was sure to check that no one left the sessions feeling unsafe.

Joe has pragmatic recommendations about how to facilitate the expression of other feelings common to the adoption experience such as anger, shame, guilt and fear. He advocates learning how to do inner-child work, practicing anger management, replacing blame with compassion, using affirmations, informing yourself through reading, finding a helpful counselor/ therapist, attending support groups: all can help transform your inner landscape, and prepare you for the second stage of healing.

Joe is adamant that until the first stage of healing - that of the self - is embarked on, there is little possibility of creating a satisfying reunion. And even if self-healing has been done, there is no guarantee that the reunion will be all you hoped for. Just as unconscious feelings are likely to prevent us from personal healing, unconscious expectations are likely to be an impediment to a successful reunion. As with the first stage of healing, it is critical in the second stage to make the unconscious visible, to see the truth that lies in our hearts and minds before we seek reunion.

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One of the more obvious of these hidden truths is identifying what we hope to gain from the reunion. In many cases, each party is hoping to give to or get from their "other" what was impossible at

the appropriate time and so they attempt to do so when it is no longer appropriate. This requires that we set limits for ourselves and for the "other/s". Time and space are necessary for processing, even if it means putting other needs on hold temporarily.

It is common for a "honeymoon" state of perfection to characterize the early part of a reunion relationship, but at some point it will almost certainly end. It need not mark the end of the relationship however. It is hard to accept that we may not be to our "other" what they might have hoped and vice versa. Can you identify what emotions are getting in the way if things aren't going as you hope? Do a check and see what comes up. Go back to self-healing; care for yourself and the rest will take care of itself.

Learning to communicate effectively is a challenge. It is made even more difficult if we are not aware of the unconscious needs that may be undermining our efforts in reunion. Learning to understand the "language" of others is a skill that translates to all relationships in your life, especially to those we hold dearest to our hearts. Empathy and understanding go a long way towards easing the pain for everyone involved.

Expect that all parties may regress emotionally to the time at which trauma occurred. Seek help when it is needed. Be aware that "rejection"* is an emotional withdrawal in response to pain, and need not be taken personally. You may discover a rewarding connection in the form of someone related to your "other". Or it may be that patience is required. Don't give up hope for a positive outcome.

STUDY: Long-Term Outcomes of Adoption Reunions

What happens after reunion? I mean after the honeymoon is over and life goes on... In B.C, the Adoption Reunion Registry has been reuniting families since 1991. In this province alone there have been seventeen years of reunion experience. I was in that first wave of reunions and want to know how it has been for others? I think we have a lot of valuable information that needs to be shared within the adoption community and beyond, for our mutual benefit and for those who come after.

I am researching a book on the topic and could really use your collective wisdom. If you could take a few minutes to email me your answers to some or all of these questions or make comments about your situation I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you in advance for your generosity. I have a Website: www.adoptionreunion.ca and will post these questions on it; in the meantime I can be reached at katiesue@shaw.ca

1. What are the circumstances of your reunion - how long has it been, which family members have you met, who found who...?
2. What does your reunion look like now? Close, distant, nonexistent? What do you wish it was like?
3. What have been the positives/ negatives of the experience for you?
4. In retrospect, what, if anything, would you do differently?
5. What advice would you give to those searching or about to have a reunion?
6. What changes would you like to see made to the current adoption system?

Thank you for your contribution, it is much appreciated!

Catherine Moore

The Church Without a Name

By Heather Albrecht

I have chosen to share with you my experience being associated with a religion that is very secretive and has no name attached to it. From my personal experience growing up with adoptive parents who came to support this religion, I can attest to how many of its practices are very isolating. For an adoptee, this can add a whole extra layer of problems to deal with as we often already feel like an outsider to our own family.

Finally, beware of intermediaries, they may have their own agenda and even if their intent is good, much damage can result. Trust your own feelings, set your own pace and agenda - only you can know what is the 'right' thing for you at any given time.

If you have been led to believe that reunion is a panacea for adoption pain, then you have been misled. However, reunion does offer a huge potential for healing. More importantly, whatever you invest in healing and preparing yourself for a reunion will pay enormous dividends in attaining inner peace and contentment.

I highly recommend reading Joe Soll's book titled Adoption Healing: A Path To Recovery (2000, Baltimore, MD, Gateway Press) which is a more detailed and expansive coverage of the same topics presented over the weekend. The book can be ordered on-line through Chapters/ Indigo.

(* author's note: the word "rejection" is in quotation marks to honour Joe's designation of its special status. He argues that rejection is not a feeling, but instead is a thought. At a philosophical level I don't disagree with that- perception is reality- but functionally, I just can't agree. I believe that rejection is an experience with a very particular constellation of feelings attached and that semantics will not change the reality of the impact that it has on people. This is especially true for adoptees who almost without exception battle issues around rejection. To not acknowledge that is to invalidate very painful feelings that are a fundamental part of adoption reality.)

There is some controversy as to this religion's beginnings; however, some researchers say it started around 1879 and that a man by the name of William Irvine was the founder. Irvine, along with others, was believed to have gone on an experimental mission to Scotland using the Bible's instructions to use the disciples as their guide. This meant they were supposed to totally rely on God to meet their needs, without any prearranged financial support. Irvine believed that they proved this method worked so he left the

Faith Mission and went on to develop his own ministry. The numbers of volunteer members who abandoned their homes and gave away their possessions grew. The group does not have an official name, but is often referred to as the “go-go preachers”, “two-by-two’s” or “The No Name Church”.

There are only two ways that one would hear about this sect: either through a notice about a public meeting being held, or through contact by one of its members. The group meets in the members’ homes twice a week for about an hour, and there is also a meeting of two of the smaller groups (a “Union Meeting”) on the first Sunday of each month. Members attending the meeting look to God to speak through them to the others in attendance. There is no set format to the meeting, but each person has a part in prayer and testimony, based on what the member has personally read and meditated upon during the week. Each person takes his or her turn when moved to do so.

There are also public meetings that are referred to as “Gospel Meetings” at which the ministers speak. The meetings are held in rented buildings, usually halls or community centres. Then there is a Convention that can last from one to four days at which there can be anywhere from 20 to 70 ministers present, and anywhere from 60 to 2,000 members. The ministers typically stay in the homes of the members, about 2 to 4 days at a time. There is a Biblical reference to holding the meetings in homes and public buildings, as church buildings are seen as made by man and are of Satan, and the “church” is rather considered the people.



This Sect believes that they are the only true faith, they believe in the Holy Spirit as their guide and source of power. You cannot gain entry to eternity unless you obtain salvation through their ministry. “Eternity” is another name used for Heaven. You can only receive salvation by worshipping and having fellowship with His own “sent ones”. Another way they believe salvation can be attained is by showing it by the life they live. This group sees those who are not members of this Secret Sect as having no hope beyond the grave.

The members consider those who were once a part of this group and have left as going to a “lost eternity”. This is referred to as hell. It is believe that those who have gone against the sect will have a lot to answer for unless they return and repent of their deeds. Members have absolute faith in the system, they believe the ministers are sent from God and, therefore, are never wrong. The ministers have the authority over the members and the members must obey. A person looking at this faith might not see the

restricted ways and the members do not because they are blinded to it. It is only when they have found out by their own reading and searching for answers or through an experience of some sort that they realize the ways in which this Sect controls its members.

There are many things that this group encourages their members to stay away from. They are opposed to the celebration of holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and birthdays. They do not want their members to celebrate in any way what other people do, as this only draws attention to the individual. They also frown upon women wearing jewelry or make-up or men’s apparel. I used to wear pants under my skirts. When I insisted on wearing pants to work on the farm, my parents demanded that I take the pants off as soon as I came into the house from chores. All the women have long hair and wear it up in some sort of bun. Men are mostly clean-shaven, but if they had a beard it was to be well kept. The only acceptable jewelry for men or women is watches and wedding bands.

This Sect is also opposed to any church literature, other than the Bible. Children are allowed to read books and listen to music, but these are all kept within the church belief system. If a person did not go along with the system, they would be confronted. In some cases, they would be asked to have no part in the system until they repented and followed the system completely. Essentially, worldly fads are seen as producing wrong influences and trouble- to keep away from this will gain members a better reward in Heaven.

The other thing that the Sect discourages is for a member to take another to court. A marriage commissioner or a Justice of the Peace usually conducts marriages since the ministers are not licensed. They are usually held in homes. Should one be sued, they are encouraged, if possible, to settle out of court. I have known some to have gone to court and the members of the group are not prepared to act in a business-like manner. They also turn a deaf ear to problems inside the group in spite of what may be true.

Most people inside the group are unaware of the pitfalls because they have been born into it and know nothing else. Some are too blind to see it any other way than as right, and some are too afraid of what might happen (speaking of eternity) if they leave. Some leave on their own accord, such as was the case with me, and others are ex-communicated. Members are encouraged to throw out any written correspondence for fear that they get into the “wrong hands”. The “wrong hands” are people such as ex-members who have resentments and want to cause discord, or these get into the public eye. However, material was kept and ended up on the various Internet sites nonetheless.

To keep the members, there are many tactics that are used. The major one is fear and making one feel guilty or ashamed. In my case, when I was dating my husband, they encouraged me to bring him to meetings. I got him to attend one. They came to me later as they said they were curious as to his impressions. They then produced an article written by a member about her negative experience leaving the group and marrying a non-member, hoping that by reading this would cause me to leave him and to seek a mate inside the group. Perhaps a better way of describing this is that they put a person into a guilt trip. If you have seen the tactics and are on to them, this wouldn’t affect you as much as it did me. Most members stay within the group because of fear and knowing nothing else. Therefore, most become people-pleasers. They have a low self-image, isolate themselves from the enjoyment of life, and their views are greatly influenced by the religious system.

They usually show that they are happy, but that is just the outside image. For me, I went around telling people I was 'fine' when really I was most unhappy. Some suffer from health problems such as depression or fatigue syndrome. Perhaps the lack of belonging, or always having to fit in (obeying), or being someone you really are not, becomes too much of a burden to carry.

Of course, many of these points can be said of other religions, but with this particular group the emphasis is on image. The only way to achieve eternity is inside the group and following this ministry. The ministers are often the main ones having health problems since they are made to be the examples for the members. They have no home and stay with members, take on various family issues, and the results are emotional stress and discouragement. Often a minister will prefer a certain home to another and will stay longer. Yes, there are cliques. Some ministers won't go to certain homes. In the case of my parents, they became acquainted with various families and from what they saw, they decided to pattern their home lifestyle according to these other families. My parents were the only ones of their family involved with this group. They tried to reach the ideal image of family life, rather than what was realistic and practical.

A prime example of the problems this creates was a family that I have known for many years. The parents were great people. They would have meetings in their home and the ministers came and went. They adopted two children- a boy and a girl who would now be in their 30's. As a result of the restrictions on their lives, the children chose a poor environment and made bad choices with whom they associated for friends. They got involved with drugs and now both live in an institution. I have heard that it is a very sad picture. This could happen to anyone, but I want to point out that people who have been restricted in such manners as this are inclined to make poor decisions and choose bad environments of this sort, and how sad it is. I could have been one myself, missing so much freedom to make my own decisions when I was younger.

When a person leaves this group for whatever reason or circumstance, as I did, you are cut off. They may try to keep in touch only for one purpose: to bring you back. Once they realize you won't have anything more to do with them, then there is no more contact. The only thing that may happen from time to time is that you run into them at a shopping mall. They'll openly tell you how they miss you, but it's another tactic. Some have left for years and for some reason, after all those years, return. I have often wondered why and I guess it is because of fear and perhaps security for Heaven.

I want to close this article with these two sources from books I've recently read. The first is taken from a book entitled, "The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse", by David Johnson and Jeff Van Vonderen. They define this very Sect, in my opinion, when they say that "...spiritual abuse can occur when a leader uses his/ her spiritual position to control or dominate another person. It often involves overriding the feelings and opinions of another, without regard to what will result in the other person's state of living, emotions or spiritual well being. In this application, power is used to bolster the position or needs of a leader over and above one who comes to them in need." When the doctrine becomes the dominant

feature, used by ministers as a power control mechanism to support a particular way of life, then it is referred to as cult-based. Such is the case with this particular religion. Actually it is similar to Amish or Mennonite traditions, trying to follow a particular set of scriptural teachings the best way they know how. It is only when one uses this to control another person's ideas that the abuse occurs. Therefore, the idea of our own understanding is the better method. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't share our beliefs with another, but when we dominate our ideas over another's, this could be the result they refer to in the book. This is what this group is doing.

In the book "Coming Home to Self" by Nancy Verrier, the author suggests that adoptees have the tendency to think often as a child rather than as an adult. She states her reason for this as "...neither of you had control over what happened and you both need to stop trying to find the 'key' to how you could have made it different. You can't- it's over. If you are dwelling on past wrongs, it can hold you a prisoner to the past and paralyze you because the past cannot be relived or redone. Remaining paralyzed in past negative emotions can inhibit forgiveness and keep relations in limbo." In other words, we need to focus on what triggered us in making us feel the way we do. If we can be aware of our thinking pattern in what's making us feel this way, then we are on the road to recovery.

Nancy Verrier mentions ways that this can be done and has given various ways this procedure can be accomplished. She indicates that this takes time and practice and perseverance, and won't come overnight. She also states that often adopted adults stay in this paralyzed state because it's their comfort zone and it is safe. However, she points out that staying here will produce improper reactions where we may want to act out, similar to a child in a temper tantrum. We are adults acting like children. There are steps that can be taken and the first is recognizing the child within that is being paralyzed and the second is putting other thinking patterns into our minds. This will help us to move forward and find out who we really are. It is much easier to stay in the comfort zone, but staying can also cause us to not find ourselves as the real person- the adult.

I feel that I really haven't scratched the surface about what it was like being involved with this Secret Sect. One just has to be a part to know, and even then many aren't aware of the power it has over them. They are so used to the teachings that they are blinded by doctrines of lifestyle. Had I not been made to search for myself and find more, I would have remained unhappy. For many, it's not a bad system for someone who wants some form of belief. If you want something more than what is offered, then my advice is to look elsewhere and forget about what others might think or say. One does not totally get away from what they have been used to for so many years, but we can and have the right to change our thinking if it's what we want. All it takes is time and effort. I hope this has made a few pieces of my life clearer to those of you who know me. For others, I hope you get some personal advice into looking at religious belief systems in a much different way and what it should be for us as an individual other than a leader influencing his ideas onto others.

Personality Profile



Rev. Thomas F. Brosnan

Born in 1953, Tom Brosnan was adopted by John and Gertrude through the Catholic Home Bureau of New York. In 1981, with dispensation from the impediment of illegitimacy, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Brooklyn. Father Brosnan served fourteen years with the Korean Catholic community of St. Paul Chong Ha-sang Church in Flushing, New York, and is currently pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Bayside, New York. In 1985, he searched and was reunited with his birthparents, Catherine and Erich, and his six half-siblings. At that time, his birthmother revealed that she had named him "Thomas", after her brother—a Jesuit priest.

As an international speaker and writer, Father Brosnan has advocated for adopted persons who seek the same civil rights as their non-adopted peers- access to their original birth certificates. Featured as one of twenty-four stories about adoption in "Sacred Connections" (Running Press, 2000), Father Brosnan understands the search for origins as a religious experience, a pilgrimage of self-knowledge, a holy endeavor. In September 2001, Father Brosnan received the "Angels in Adoption Award" presented by the Congress of the United States. In 1999, he received the "Baran & Pannor Award" for outstanding contributions in open adoption, recognizing his courage and persistence in promoting ethical standards in adoption practice. Father Brosnan has often presented on the injustice of sealed records in adoption practice, and the inalienable right of all to know the truth of their origins. He believes that the needs of the children, not those of adults, should dictate how we seek to practice adoption.



I. How have you personally been impacted by adoption?

I was born at Misericordia Hospital in Manhattan and placed in foster care in Queens for six months until I was adopted in 1953 from the Catholic Home Bureau, a social service organization of the Archdiocese of New York. I then lived with and was raised by my adoptive parents in my grandparents' home in Brooklyn, New York.

My parents never told me I was adopted until I was twelve though the adoption agency had encouraged adoptive parents to tell their adopted child about their adoption from the start. It was the insistence of my seventh grade teacher that pushed my parents to tell me. My perception however is that I somehow knew I was adopted even before they told me. I would later discover that, in fact, everyone knew I was adopted except me. That is always hard to take since it obviously reinforces with utter clarity the fact (which no amount of love can assuage) that the adopted person is always in some sense an outsider.

After my parents told me about my adoption (an afternoon I remember vividly – because of their extreme discomfort), we never discussed adoption again until I became an adult. Adoption was the proverbial elephant in the living room. The word adoption was carefully avoided – but adoption was the very air we breathed.

I left my parents' home when I turned seventeen and was accepted into the Xaverian Brothers – a Catholic Religious

teaching order of men. I eventually left the order, returned to my parents' home for a few years and then entered the seminary for the Diocese of Brooklyn to study for the priesthood. I was ordained a Catholic priest in 1981 under the old Code of Canon Law which required me to obtain a dispensation from the impediment of illegitimacy in order to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders [the new Code of Canon Law has dropped that impediment].

When I was thirty years old I was sent by my bishop to study Korean language and culture in Seoul, Korea in order to return and work with Korean Catholics in Queens, New York. I would study in Korea over the course of six years, but the first few months of my study were the most difficult as I was experiencing *culture shock* and feeling very isolated and alone. At that point I realized that, in fact, these feelings were nothing new – I had always felt different, alone, isolated on some level. I attributed these feelings to my experience of adoption and decided that, upon my return home, I would search for my birth mother. Upon returning to America, I did just that, and was able to find my birthmother within a few months.

My birth mother told me she did not expect nor want to be found -- but she never denied me. After she had given birth to me she married (a man not my father) and had six other children. It took my mother a year before she told her other children about my existence and my desire to meet them (her husband had already died). Once we were all reunited, my mother would invite me to all family events and functions. I knew my mother for ten years until her death; I am still in contact with my brother and sisters who all live in the Baltimore area.

I once met the man my mother identified as my father but he has consistently denied paternity. He refuses, however, to take a DNA test. There is a possibility that he is right and another man (who died last year) might be my father. I have still not resolved this issue which, to varying degrees, continues to haunt me.

Talk about adoption does not often allow for a discussion of that other side of the coin -- the experience of relinquishment. While adoption may be a blessing for an adoptee -- and sometimes the greatest of blessings -- adoption is always based on the experience of loss -- the loss of one's original family.

I believe the act of relinquishment (however effected) is, for the adopted person, a deep wound which can never be fully assuaged and continues to have repercussions throughout the adoptee's life. (I believe this is true even though the act of relinquishment in an adoptee's life often precedes the acquisition of language. I believe certain memories are not dependent on language acquisition; that we human beings can and do carry memory in other ways outside or beyond language-related memory).

The trauma of relinquishment seems to impact the adopted person's relationships especially regarding trust and intimacy issues.

Adoption can be a positive way to form a family. The adoptive family is not inherently better or worse than a biologically-formed family -- but it is different, and that difference needs to be acknowledged by all members of that family in order for that family to grow as a unit bound by trust and acceptance.

II. When/Why did you get involved in the adoption field?

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

I was never professionally involved in adoption. That is, I am not an adoption professional, but have been very involved in the *adoption reform movement* for the past fifteen years. Some twenty years ago I first joined **ALMA** (Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association) where I met the founder, Florence

Fisher. Florence helped me understand that I had a right to search for my original family. She opened my eyes to the many injustices that the closed adoption system fostered. She helped me understand that I was not suffering from some sort of pathology because I wanted to know where I came from and she helped me deal with the guilt I was feeling in relation to my adoptive parents in initiating my search. Florence and **ALMA** helped me immensely in my search.

After I found my family I continued to attend **ALMA** as well as join other adoption reform organizations like the **American Adoption Congress** (I served on the AAC Board of Directors for one term). I have been a member of various organizations over the years. I still serve on the advisory board of Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao's **Center for Family Connections** in Cambridge, MA. I have made numerous presentations over the past ten years to various groups and conferences regarding issues of identity and search, of belonging and not belonging -- and how these issues are, at heart, spiritual in nature. [Refer to last page of AC News Letter for publications and presentations.)

IV. What do you see as the current issues of most concern in the adoption field?

- For the adopted person: the right to an original birth certificate and identifying information. Though open adoption has become more and more common, the issue of access to original birth certificates remains a crucial, unresolved issue for those of us adopted into the closed adoption system.
- For those conceived by anonymous donor: the current situation regarding identity issues for those conceived by anonymous sperm or egg donor seems no different from the closed adoption nightmare of the past.
- Single parent adoption
- Gay parent adoption
- Education of prospective adoptive parents: especially involving inter-country adoption

Commemoration of All Souls -- November 2, 2008

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS by T.F. Brosnan



All Souls' Day (November 2nd) and Election Day (November 4th); and if this election year is anything like

The dead are always making their way into the lives of the living, whether through prayer or veneration of ancestors, belief in ghosts or acts of memory. Death and the after-life are usually subjects found within the domain of religion but even atheists sometimes pay attention. This year there's close proximity between

previous ones, the reality of life-after-death might once again be proved true as hardened politicians acknowledge that, in certain quarters of the body politic, the dead actually vote -- and, sometimes, more than once.

The Feast of All Souls, together with its pagan antecedents like Halloween, focuses our attention on the fascinating and disturbing subject of death and our imaginings of what ensues afterward. For Catholics, that imagining has morphed into a phenomenon called Purgatory. Most non-Catholics, and even many Catholics, aren't too convinced about Purgatory (especially after the pope put the kibosh on Limbo). Everyone,

though, seems intrigued by death and what might or might not lie beyond. For me the best argument for the premise of Purgatory has not been any learned treatise from some notable theologian but, oddly, two films: the little known 1998 film by Kore-eda Hirokazu, **After Life** and M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 **The Sixth Sense** – both definite *worth-sees* in any movie aficionado's repertoire. Without giving away too much, let's just say the underlying theme of both films is one of *unfinished business*. And *unfinished business* is precisely what's at the heart of the doctrine of Purgatory.

Unfortunately the popular imagination has focused on Purgatory as a "place of punishment" for past sins which we must suffer before entering the divine presence. Overlooked, in this focus on sin, is the most important premise that belies Purgatory – that it is inhabited by the already-redeemed; and the suffering they endure is not a punishment per se, but a purification for glory and a preparation for joy. In **The Sixth Sense**, Bruce Willis' suffering doesn't come from any personal moral failure but, rather, from his inability to perceive the truth. When he finally comes to his senses, and can accept the truth, his *unfinished business* is resolved and he can move on to where he is meant to be.

The idea that Purgatory and its inhabitants are good (holy) and not evil (gravely sinful) first came to me years ago when I went searching for my birthmother. When I discovered her surname was the most common name of all -- *Jones*, I despaired of ever finding her. The only lead I had was that she had been baptized in a Catholic church with the unusual name: *the Church of the Holy Souls in Purgatory*. Because the name was so unique it did not take me long to obtain her baptismal certificate with the record of where she had married. I found her in two days.

Because I had long been attuned to think of the souls in purgatory as sinners, the fact that they should be designated as holy was confusing at first. But, of course, they must be holy because they are already saved – they simply haven't realized it yet, they still need to come to their senses. Our prayers, we believe, help them do just that. And they in turn can intercede for us, offering up their "suffering" for us. Perhaps some of them were doing just that for me as I searched to find out where I came from – a journey I think which mirrors Purgatory itself, where coming to your senses means discovering who you are, where you came from and, most importantly, where you are meant to be

Announcements

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

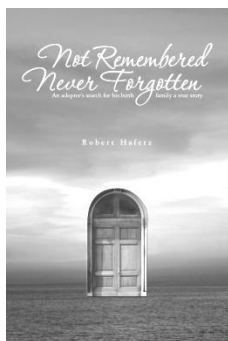
The Forget Me Not Family Society would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:
-Rachel B. of Camrose, Alberta
-Marianne B. from Edmonton, Alberta
-Shirley R. all the way from Olney, Illinois
-Wendy G. in Okotoks, Alberta
-Bernadette R. of Ashcroft, B.C.
-Karen J. from Waterford, Connecticut
Thank you for joining the Forget Me Not family!

NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE!:

If it has been a while since you visited our Website, please have another look- www.adoptioncircles.net. Our new web designer, Narius Dastur, has made our site more user-friendly and jazzed it up a bit. We've also added more content and information to keep you current with the Forget Me Not Society. We will be adding 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.

Not Remembered Never Forgotten is more than a life story about adoption. It's an affirmation of the strength and permanence of the bond that connects a mother and the child she has given birth to. It stands in opposition to the belief

that an infant can't create everlasting memories of it's first mother and it chronicles the journey a man will take to find her again no matter how far away she is or how much time has passed. It's a window into the thoughts and feelings of a male adoptee. Most of all, *Not Remembered Never Forgotten* is a story of hope overcoming the impossible.



By
Robert Allan Hafetz
Now available on Amazon.com

CALENDAR & CARDS:

The Touched By Adoption 2009 Calendar, as well as a selection of greeting cards are available for purchase. Please visit my Website: <http://www.patrickmc.com> to view them. 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 my intent as a photographer, writer, and adopted person to portray some of these concepts in the words and images created for this calendar and these cards. A portion of proceeds is donated to adoption education and reform organizations. Purchases can now be made with Paypal, MC, Visa, American Express, Discover, and Bank Cards, check, or money order. Patrick McMahon
San Diego, CA
619.865.6943

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
Winter	Celebrity	Jan. 13, 2009/ Feb. 10, 2009
Spring	Youth	April 14, 2009/ May 12, 2009
Summer	Sexuality	July 14, 2009/ Aug. 25, 2009
Fall	Disabilities	Oct.13, 2009/ Nov. 10,2009

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
 Counsellor 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 / E-mail 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 birth parents 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 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. We break for the summer. 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 are held on the 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.. As seating is limited, please call and let Lee know 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.

Open Records in Ontario?

By Marnie Tetz

Recently I received an email with a link: www.adoptioninfo.ca. Upon clicking on the link it opened to a poster explaining about adoption records becoming open in Ontario June 1, 2009. Great news for those of us whose lives have been affected by adoption. The word needs to get out to all of those who aren't aware, and who were born in Ontario. What I found really disturbing about what this poster said was in bold letters- it was telling the readers: **"If you were involved in an adoption in Ontario, you need to know about an important change to your information and privacy rights."**

What is also in bold letters is:

"...you should file a disclosure veto before June 1, 2009."

Also on this poster you are able to share this link with others, or click for more details. When you do so one of your options in Adoptioninfo, this will take you to a page that contains a short video that is telling you that you have the right to your privacy, that you need to know that you can sign a disclosure veto, or a no-contact veto. The page also explains that as of September of 2008 disclosure vetoes can be put into place to cover that 'gap' time, to ensure that those that want no contact have had their chance to file the disclosure veto before records become open June 1, 2009.

The Ontario government is letting its citizens, as well as the rest of Canada, know that adoption records will be open in June of 2009. However, this form of advertising isn't letting people know in a positive way that this is happening. It's letting those know that

their privacy will be invaded if they don't get those vetoes filed soon. It makes me feel sad, that after all of the hard work that has gone into making open records a reality, that the government is still choosing to use scare tactics; to put a negative spin on those adopted finding out who and where they come from, and natural parents finding out if their child is alright.~

And an additional comment from reader, George Robinson:

The anger really never goes away completely does it? It does get a little easier to contain the blood pressure now though - when we went to vote in the Catholic High School here in Trenton (Ontario) recently, there was a notice on the bulletin board to "Consider Adoption" if you were a pregnant teen. I couldn't let that go by, so I had an interview with the school counselor (including, by accident, a visiting priest deeply involved in abortion issues etc.) and was able to get them to put up my poster that said "Consider Keeping Your Child" as an alternative. I also told her about the CCNM in Ontario that could help young pregnant women with the legal requirements for getting everyone involved into the legal picture first and foremost. Anyway, I was able to do all that without an increase in blood pressure...so I guess that advocacy can now be used to lower blood pressure in the long run :-)

MARCUS, Robert John

After 84 years, Robert John Marcus died on June 10, 2008. Bob was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba and was predeceased in 1992 by his wife, Claire. Bob graduated with a BSW (University of Manitoba) and a MSW (Virginia Commonwealth University) and worked in social work while in the U.S. In 1956, he moved back to Canada and worked for Children's Aid Societies in Winnipeg, Portage La Prairie, and Vancouver, and as Director of Social Work for the Vancouver General Hospital until his retirement in 1988. While at Vancouver General he was the recipient of the Silver Jubilee medal struck in honour of the 25th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II. The award of this Medal is an expression of the worth and devoted service rendered by the recipient, and esteem held by his associates at the hospital. Bob was a loyal member of the Forget Me Not Family Society from the Society's beginnings in the 1990's until his passing. His wife, Claire, was active in the adoption reform movement and served on the board of the American Adoption Congress.

The following are excerpts from a paper presented by Claire Marcus at the World Congress in Mental Health in Salzburg, Austria on July 9, 1979.

Rights of Children Separated from their Origins and Placed for Adoption

by Claire Marcus, APR, adoptee, and author of *Adopted? A Canadian Guide for Adopted Adults in Search of Origins* (International Self-Counsel Press Ltd., May 1979)

...In recent years, adults around the world have become vocal about their right to knowledge of their biological origins, from which they were separated in infancy or early childhood. While

the problem is expressed in youth and adulthood, it is properly a matter of children's rights.

Legislation in countries such as Great Britain, Finland, and Israel protects the adopted person's right to knowledge of origins. Elsewhere, while legislation is said to be in the child's best interests, it does not protect this need and is designed to hide origins behind a curtain of secrecy. The adopted person is thus denied full citizenship rights.

The "as if born to" concept of such law encourages adopting parents to view the child as belonging to them, without life or history prior to placement. The Royal Commission on Family Law in B.C. recognized in 1975 that for many adopting parents the significance of the concept goes beyond legal interpretation to include social and biological implications. This misconception, the adopting parents' sense of inadequacy and incompleteness because of infertility, the developing child's needs, and various external stresses gather to create special problems for the adopted person and the adopting parents.

...Problems were recognized by social agencies some years ago, although not the adoptee's need to know of origins. That was considered a sign of maladjustment. Innumerable studies were mounted to improve on and perfect the adoption process while not altering the basic "as if born to" concept. It was thought that a neater fit through better matching, pre-adoption services, and the "chosen child" story would prevent difficulties in adoption. Meanwhile, the natural parent was all but forgotten. Due to the adoptee activist movement and some recent studies, birth parents now are speaking up about their need for more information about the welfare of relinquished offspring. They want to be able to add

new information, such as updated medical history, to the adoption files. They want to be reassured in later years that their offspring actually are in good homes, as promised.

Many birth parents are saying the law is protecting them more than they wish and have joined in the movement for reform. It is clear that the birth mother especially suffers a good deal following relinquishment and continues to rear her child in fantasy. While the relationship between the adopting parents and the adoptee is stronger than that between the birth parents and the adoptee, studies show that birth parents are the least threatened by reunion contact, which allows them to resolve feelings about relinquishment. In one study, 82% of encountered birth parents were positive and accepting. Often one meeting is enough to dispel the mystery, concerns and guilt. For adopting parents, however, the idea of reunion with origins is upsetting. The same study showed only 36% of adopting parents were able to handle reunion without being threatened and hurt by the procedure. More aware adoption parents coming on the scene in the future ought to be better prepared for this.

Studies show that 90% of adoptees do very well after having learned who their birth parents are and having had the opportunity to meet them. Searching is not undertaken lightly and usually follows a long period of concern with the mystery of origins. The spur often is a meaningful life event such as marriage, the birth of a child, or the death of one or the other adopting parent. A definite pattern has been observed regarding search.

...

Stage One: The first stage of search is an internal process that can begin early in childhood, is intensified during puberty and teen years, or in adulthood. It is a time of wondering and self-evaluation; one's sense of identity being shaken by the knowledge of shadowy parental figures "out there somewhere" about whom little is known. Sometimes nothing is known. By this time the adoptee no longer asks questions, having perceived that questions upset the adopting parents, that one is expected to feel grateful and satisfied. While the family romance of fantasy parents is normal in youth to most people, for the adopted person it is not a fantasy. There really are two unidentified other parents, who come to absorb much mental energy. There can be concern as to whether rejection by these people has to do with some fault of one's own, or whether there is something wrong with them. That impression sometimes is given by adopting parents and the adoptee feels it a reflection on him.

There is this brooding then, along with efforts to banish the matter from the mind; the sudden thought on seeing a bus filled with strangers that any one of them could be a relative; the worry that one might have inherited some disease that could be passed on to children; a whole series of questions that nag and haunt the adopted person.

Stage Two: The second stage is an active search carried out with zeal, creativity, and often with a sense of guilt.

...Some in mid-life do not feel emotionally free to search so long as living adoptive parents object, and thus find themselves in a terrible dilemma. Some prefer to live with a fantasy and delay proceeding to stage two. Even those who search relentlessly realize with apprehension the right of biological relatives to have contact only with those whom they wish to see. ...Searching can

take up a person's days, weeks, month, or years, depending on the initial information available, the progress of search, and the adoptee's readiness to actually discover origins.

...

Stage Three: The third stage involves making contact with the found relatives, who can be one or more parents, siblings, or others. While the search can be a methodical process of detective work, making contact involves emotion, tact, and a great deal of courage.

...Making contact is important to the adoptee for many reasons. One is the lack of mirroring- the never having seen anyone who looks like you. Another is the need to identify these unknown parents in space and time as real people. As well, often only the birth parents can actually verify the relationship.

...How people handle the reunion varies with different people. I suspect they handle it the way they would any other major life event. ...There are few people with whom one can talk about it freely. Sometimes least of all with one's spouse or immediate family who may be feeling temporarily left out and somewhat resentful of the time and energy that has gone into the search.

Stage Four: Following reunion, more work faces the adoptee and the found people. The excitement of reunion is bound to simmer down and an adjustment period begins. After the tremendous concentration and ups and downs of searching, there is exhaustion and often some depression. New information about oneself and one's ancestors must be absorbed into the self-picture. There may be nothing more than the meeting and some pictures to expect, or a kind of courtship may be underway between the adoptee and found relatives- a time in which they are getting to know one another and to understand one another.

...I have been asked whether most adopted adults who search are disturbed individuals. Well, probably we all are disturbed at some point about our status and that is why we search for our origins. But I would like to suggest that the search is a healthy sign of having come to grips with the fact of adoption, of having two kinds of parents, and of trying to understand and absorb all of this into one's total identity. It is an effort to gain a sense of historical continuity, to normalize one's life, and to maintain mental health. Those who choose not to know may be less introspective or too deeply wounded. For one way or another, we all feel wounded. And we suspect, rightly so it turns out, that our biological parents could not have completely forgotten about us and that they too might wish to heal their wounds. It is simply unfinished business to which we attend.

The need to know is being recognized as universal. Dr. E. Lipinski, President-elect of the Canadian Psychiatric Association has said that in his experience adopted people "...almost invariably want to know where they came from. In the existentialist sense, the past is as important to them as where they are heading in the future."

Perhaps that is why, despite restrictive laws and public attitudes, adoptees and birth relatives are working out their own solutions and finding their way through a veil of secrecy to bridge the void and pain of separation from origins.

Continued from page 16, Personality Profile: Rev. Thomas F. Brosnan

Publications/ Presentations:

- *Ethics in Adoption*- presentation 2004.
- *Through a Priest's Adopted Eyes*- Keynote address 2004. Published in *Adopting for Tomorrow*, December 2004.
- *The Effect of Secrecy and Openness on Psyche & Spirit*- presentation 2003.
- *In Search of a Verb*- presentation 2003.
- *Adoption and the Missionary Position*- Keynote address 2003.
- *An Adoptee's Eye on the I*- Keynote address 2002.
- *The Spirituality of Adoption*- Keynote address 2002.
- *Real Parents: Adoptive Parents as Architects of Family*- Keynote address 2002.
- *It's Better When Children Aren't Possessed*- presentation 2001.
- *Adoptees at the Movies*- Keynote address 2001.
- *Father Tom Brosnan*- in **Sacred Connections, Stories of Adoption**, by Mary Ann Koenig, Philadelphia: Running Press, 2000.
- *The Religious and Spiritual Aspects of the Adoption Experience*- Keynote address 2000.
- *I Am Who I Am*- Keynote address 1998.
- *Strengthening Families*- Keynote address 1996. Published in **Searching for a Piece of My Soul** by Tammy L. Kling. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1998.
- *Coming of Age: Toward a Spirituality of Adoption*- Keynote address 1996.
- *The Spirituality of Adoption*- presentation 1995.
- *The Spirituality of Adoption*- *Pact Press*, Fall 1995.
- *Religion and Adoption*- *Adoption Therapist* Fall 1994.

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.

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