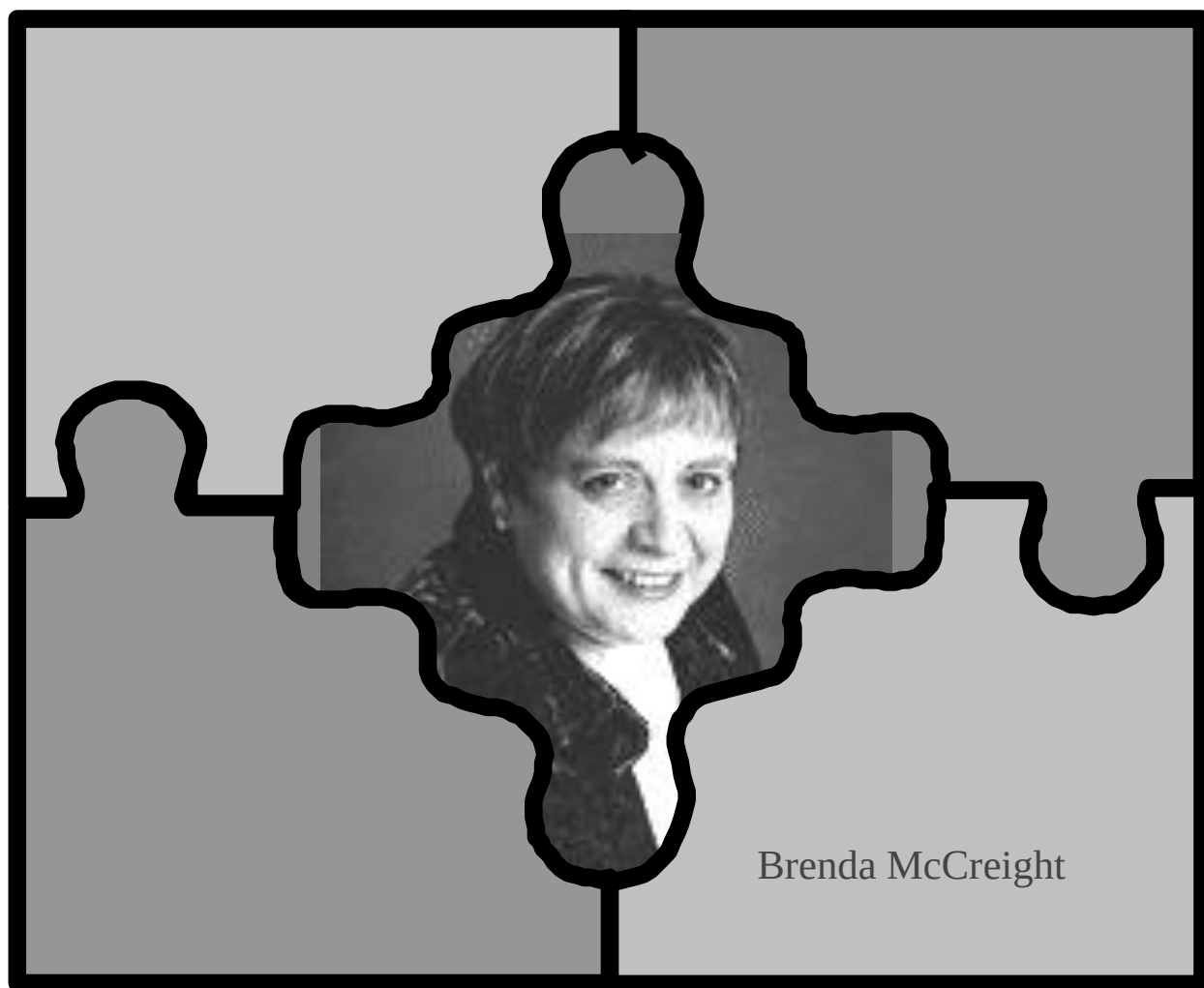


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue 50 Summer 2009 \$3.50



Brenda McCreight

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ADOPTION CIRCLES

**Summer 2009
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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



President's Message Nancy Kato

I hope everyone has had an opportunity to get out there and enjoy this great summer we've had. There's been lots of sunshine and lots of things to do. Although it is my busiest time of the year and I don't get time off, I was able to get out there once a week for a short game of golf. I'm not very good at it, but I like the social interaction and getting outside. Golf - it's somewhat analogous to life. Things happen in life and the golf course that you have no control over nor can you influence. We get angry and shout "that's not fair!". But then whoever said life was fair? Things happen all the time that aren't due to our own actions. In golf, you can hit a great drive and then flub the short shot. Or hit a really great putt that hits the rim of the cup and rolls off. Or get a hole in one (like I did this year) and lose a ball to the water on the next shot. It's how you react to these things that is the measure of you as a golfer, and how you let the game affect your enjoyment of the next shot and the entire round. Most people seem to enjoy the challenges offered by this game, and life. Golf/ life are emotional tests - we don't know the layout of the land and it constantly changes. If we try to demand fairness, we are sure to be disappointed. The secret is to enjoy it for what it is, and what it gives you. Do your best. Smell the flowers along the way. Soak in the scenery and enjoy the people you meet along the way, the personal challenges, and those great moments. And try not to take yourself too seriously.

We look at youth this issue and some of us more mature folks can smile as we remember what it was like to enter the game of life. There is so much we could teach them, but we also acknowledge they have to learn things in their own way and in their own time. Conversely, there is much we can learn from youth. Young birth parents today do not have to deal with the stigma that many of us had to deal with. Yet I believe that the loss associated with relinquishing one's child to adoption will come back to haunt them (time will tell). I don't know too many young adoptees but I see ads for support groups for adopted youth and assume the issues of adoption that impact our adult adoptees...
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are the same for our young adoptees. The way youth deal with them might be different, but the underlying issues for adoptees young and old are likely the same. The best that we can do is to open our minds and our ears and listen intently to what each of us has to say. It's important. And being heard allows us to start healingly.

Nancy Kato

Youth is the focus for this summer issue of Adoption Circles. It seems fitting that during a season of revival for many of us, as we carve out time for recreation in the summer months, we turn our thoughts to youth, the time of life between childhood and maturity. This summer, I had the pleasure of spending time on a lake in the interior of the province with my younger brother, and he always makes me feel much younger than my years. He's an active outdoorsman, and he finds a way to gently encourage everyone around him to push their limits. I lost myself to swimming and laughing, during our family picnic on an deserted shore, and eventually wound up waterskiing like I was in my 20's.



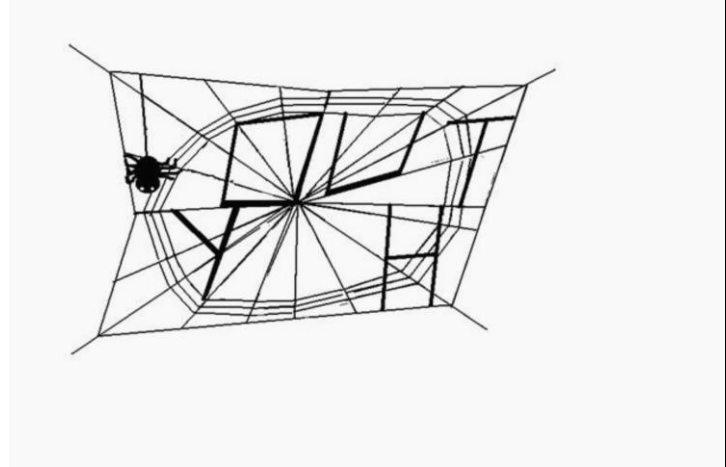
Walters' Web
Sandra Walters

I also had the opportunity to go 30 years back into the past with a visit to my high school, where I also boarded for grades 11 and 12. Although I hadn't returned since I graduated in 1979, being on the school grounds brought back a flood of memories. I pictured myself, as a sheltered 16-year-old, being put on an airplane to southern France and told to find my way by train to a small town in central Europe. Having only limited travel experience within Canada to that point, it was surely a watchful guardian angel who got me to the school in one piece. I now appreciate how close it came to being a very different ending to my journey.

As an adult going back, I could appreciate the beauty of the country and town of the school's location, and the fantastic opportunity it presented for learning about different languages and culture. As a teenage adoptee sent away to boarding school, it confirmed for me what I knew as a young child: I came into this world alone and I will ultimately face death alone, and I need to fend for myself as best I can on this journey in-between.

My summer reading helped me understand the incredible pressures that we can face as children and youth in the families in which we grow up. Especially, I would argue, when the family includes an adopted child. In *Adult Children: The Secrets of Dysfunctional Families*, John & Linda Friel set out a model of family dynamics that emphasizes how inter-related and inter-dependent the members of a family are.

They describe the family system as having both a structure and functions. The structure of a family is made up of the individual members of the family, including parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and possibly others. The family structure also includes the boundaries and relationships among and between family members. An analogy is made to a mobile that hangs from the ceiling.



The essential qualities of the mobile for the analogy purpose is that it hangs with all its parts suspended in perfect balance and harmony. If you move one individual element of the mobile, the energy will be transmitted to the whole mobile, even if it may be subtle and hardly noticeable. Eventually, the mobile will return to the position in which it was designed to hang.



So, in the dysfunctional family analogy, if one member gets "bumped" (e.g. acts out in a public way), everyone else does whatever it takes to get him or her back into place. The individual members will see the person who acted inappropriately as the problem and seek to "fix" him or her so that they can all get back into the previous "balance". But in most cases, according to the authors, when one member of the system is showing a problem in adjustment, it means that there are relationship and boundary problems that ALL of the other members are also experiencing. The dysfunctional family is characterized by group denial that anyone else has a problem, and a belief that the family would be fine if it weren't for its one misbehaving member.

~continued next page

In a healthy family, on the other hand, the people ultimately responsible for the workings of the family system (the parents) would accept that all the family members are inter-connected, they would seek to identify the relationship or boundary problems, and would make some healthy changes to improve the family dynamics. The problem is owned as the family's and solved as a group (possibly with family counseling), not pinned on one of its members.

Each healthy family also has several functions that it serves in meeting family member's needs. Some of those described by the authors are:

- 1) maintenance functions- where basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter are met; when we are hungry, someone feeds us.
- 2) safety, warmth and nurturance functions- in a healthy system family members care for each other, provide appropriate affection, laugh and cry together, and protect each other from harm;
- 3) love and belonging function- the family should provide a sense of communion, of belonging to a group or unit, of being loved and included.
- 4) autonomy or separateness encouraged- a healthy family will allow its members to be mostly self-determining; children can decide for themselves what they like and don't like about the world.
- 5) self esteem or a sense of worth promoted- a healthy family will let each person find and have a sense of personal value, dignity and worth.

As a flower needs sunlight, soil and water to grow up and bloom, the authors say that children need these functions filled in their families to emerge as adults who have a healthy sense of interdependence. As adults who grew up in dysfunctional families, we will constantly seek to fill up the empty parts inside us that were never met while we were growing up. It is the external search for our unmet needs, the authors say, that can lead many of us into addictive lifestyles.

A further analogy that is used is a cup. When we're born, say the authors, our cup is empty. The goal, as we grow up, is to get our cup filled. In a healthy family, one gets her cup filled almost to the top and then she can go out into the world and meet others whose cups are almost full. If we come from a dysfunctional family, however, our cups did not get filled. It may only be 1/8th filled by the time we are an adult. To maintain an illusion (to ourselves and the world) that our cup is full, we rely on outside agents, such as addictive relationships, alcohol and drugs, work, exercise, television, food, sex, spending, gambling, cults, etc. and we will gravitate towards others whose cups did not get filled.

The authors present the theory that in the dysfunctional family, instead of being fulfilled by all members of the family, the family functions get designated to a certain member. For example, the maintenance function will get performed by "The Doer". The Doer makes sure everyone's fed, dresses the kids, pays the bill, does the laundry, drives the kids to their activities. The Doer does a lot for the family, but that's all she has the time or energy to do. The self-esteem function will be performed by "The Hero" who goes to university and becomes an internationally-known professional, but who secretly feels terrible because another family member died of alcoholism. The Hero carries the family banner for the public to see. The "Scapegoat", on the other hand, gets to act out all the family's dysfunction and take the heat. He gets drug addicted or gets in trouble with the law, he's the "black sheep", and the personal price he pays is obvious. The family, however, can maintain that if it weren't for the scapegoat member, they'd be a healthy family. It is the fact that family members get stuck and kept in these roles (and many others described) that shows the family is dysfunctional.

So many of these explanations provided me with understanding about my own family and, I suspect, the families of other adoptees. "The Hero" and "The Scapegoat" seemed a perfect description to the "good adoptee" and the "bad adoptee" roles many of us fall into (get pegged into...) growing up, as noted by many adoption specialists. And I could see how an adoptive family would have challenges in filling the function of promoting self-esteem and self worth in its members.

If most people start life with an empty cup, how does the cup look for an unwanted child? Many people argue, in the context of the abortion debate, that there is nothing worse in this world than an unwanted child. Even if life starts at conception, they would say, it is better to terminate that life than to have it born to parents who don't want it. In discussing the symptoms of trauma in adoptees, author Nancy Verrier points out that some adoptees even "...call themselves the 'walking aborted'." (*Coming Home to Self*, page. 16) From this perspective, of adoptees and others, the adoptee's cup may not just start empty, but also with a large hole in it.

And how about the parents' cups who have tried for years to produce a child and possibly endured humiliating fertility treatments or painful miscarriages and finally settled for adopting someone else's unwanted child? If they've come from extremely healthy families of origin, I suppose those adults will have full cups. They will talk through the physical/ emotional pain together as a couple, likely with professional counseling, and reach a level of peace and acceptance of these experiences prior to taking on the daunting responsibility for an adopted child. But if their cups have not been filled growing up, it seems the trap has been set when they adopt a child with a seemingly bottomless cup. Even if the child's cup somehow gets patched, his parents may not be capable of helping him fill it.

This book's analysis allowed me to see my family of origin as dysfunctional- something I have persistently denied. And denial is also a huge feature of dysfunctional families according to John and Linda Friel, and, "...the more pain we feel, the thicker the denial gets" (p. 105). When I could also appreciate the dysfunction of my single mother's family of origin, and how her cup was barely filled when she was growing up, I felt more compassion for her than anger. She was simply not capable of ensuring more than the most basic of needs were met in our family (...food, clothing and shelter). These 'maintenance' needs were met abundantly, to the exclusion of most else.

I could also see how I've tried, at different times of my life, to compensate for my almost-empty cup through addictive behaviours. My faith has provided the needed patch to my cup, and allowed me to start having needs met in healthy ways. This book also impressed upon me how important it is, as a parent, to ensuring my own family's needs are being met by and for us all, and not by any one of us assuming an exclusive role. Just recognizing how highly interdependent and connected we are in each of our family systems, stresses how critical it is that we each strive for emotional and psychological health, for our own benefit and also for the overall health of our families.

AC

If you would like to read previous Walters' Web articles, please follow the link from the Forget Me Not Website at: www.adoptioncircles.net, or visit me at: www.waltersweb.webs.com.



Poetry

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

"CCNM"

**Canadian Council of Natural Mothers
By Evelyn Morin**

Carry the message to Queen's Park and others
The time has now come to break open the seal
In order for all their own truths to reveal
The mothers who've spent many years in their plight
Searching for crumbs to bring closure in sight
Open the Records that lead to our daughters
Our mothers, our sons, and also our fathers
We all have the right to know who we are
The powers that be have no rights from afar
Elected officials must play by the rules
And stop treating mothers and children as fools
Adoption was evil, ripping families apart
Taking babies which grew under their mother's heart
It's time to reverse the mistakes of the past
And bring about closure for all now, at last.
Open Adoption Records Now!

MOM

By Sarah Walters

My mom is a flowing peaceful river
The quiet river keeps flowing through
every smooth rock,
Still beautiful and peaceful

Her family of little fishes glowing love
Stays with her forever
The river takes care of every single fish
Big or small

The river never stops moving quietly
In the woods against the slippery smooth rocks

The light smooth texture flows slowly
down the woods
The sun shines against her
and she glows a shimmery blue

Mostly Go By Sadona (2009)

She's the one from whom I came
Gave me life, breathe, a name
She was my universe, dark and warm
Until that winter day 'me' was born.

But mothers come and mothers go
There's not much else that I know
But people come and people go,
And after all, they mostly go.

She's the one to whom 'me' was sent
Having cried so hard, my body spent
She squeezed me tight to prove her worth
Despite the years of miscarried birth.

But parents come and parents go
There's not much else that I know
But people come and people go,
And after all, they mostly go.

They're the pillars of my adopted kin
Older and wiser, and 'good in their skin'
They wouldn't pretend we were the same
As the biological issue who carry the flame.

And grandparents come and they go,
There's not much else that I know
But people come and people go,
And after all, they mostly go.

Copies of me in looks and deeds,
Created from my inward seeds.
A face reflects back, making me smile
Their looming departure a personal trial.

But children come and children go
There's not much else that I know
But people come and people go,
And after all, they mostly go.
Mostly go.

Focus on Youth

How To Raise An Adopted Child

By Kerry Porth, Adoptee and Adoptive Parent



1. If your primary motivation in adopting a child is to *rescue* them, don't bother, some other nice people will adopt her and raise her as their own child, not their project.
 2. Don't tell your adopted child a fairy tale about where she came from. Stories about *choosing* your child come with a heavy price ... we return defective items to stores every day.
3. Don't tell your adopted child that you chose her because she smiled at you ... she'll have to smile for the rest of her life.
4. Don't tell your adopted child that she is *special* because she was chosen. Nobody else thinks that an abandoned child is special, just that nobody wanted her.
5. Don't say "your mother made an adoption plan for you". Tell the truth, someone made a mistake and placing the child in the care of the government for potential adoption was making the best of a really bad decision.
6. Never, ever, introduce your adopted child to others as "my adopted son/daughter". She's your daughter ... does it really matter how she came to be part of your family?
7. If someone introduces their adopted child to you as their adopted son/daughter, don't exclaim "Oh! You're so lucky that your parents took you in!" It wasn't luck Every child deserves a family.
8. Don't tell an adopted child that she must be very good to her parents to thank them ... that is an unsupportable burden.
9. Do tell your adopted child, and tell her often, how much her behaviour is like yours. Children need to feel like they belong.
10. If your adoptive child is depressed or struggling emotionally, get her the help she deserves regardless of how that might reflect on you.
11. Don't tell your adoptive child that "you must get that from your real mother" when she behaves in a way you are unhappy with ... it is highly likely that you bear some responsibility for that behaviour.
12. Don't call an adoptive child's biological parents her "real" or "natural" parents ... that describes your family as "unreal" and "unnatural".

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13. Acknowledge the fact that your adoptive child experienced a profound loss mere moments after her birth. The loss of a parent, at any

age, is devastating and has life-long impacts ... don't pretend it didn't happen.

14. Support your child to find their biological parents if that is what she wants to do. Don't pay lip service to the idea and then punish her when she does find them.
15. If you're going to expose your child to stories about orphans and orphanages, make sure you contextualize them. Those stories are terrifying to adopted children when out of context.

16. If you have two adopted children of opposite sexes, don't assume that because they are not biologically related that they will start having sex with one another during puberty ... you've raised them as brother and sister and it is predictable that they will continue to behave as such.
17. When your adopted child struggles as an adult, don't write her off as a failed experiment

Wondering About Being The Child I Wasn't

By Marnie Tetz

When I first found out what the topic for this issue of Adoptions Circles was, I thought, well I've got nothing to write about, I'm old, how can I write about youth? A friend of mine had said, "Are you still being treated like a child 30 years after reunion?" I thought, well no, I don't think so, but I did say to her that maybe she should write her thoughts on that. Her comment gave way to the questions: "Do your family members treat you like a child even though you are well into mid-life or beyond? Have you found yourself acting like a child or a teenager in response to stressful situations? Have you thought about how your experiences with adoption may have affected how you see yourself, or how others see you?"

Looking at these questions made me think, well yes at times it seemed like I was being treated as a child, not by family members, but by those that held my information (the government of Alberta prior to the records opening in November of 2004). The way they would say, no we can't tell you who you really are... and it doesn't matter anyway... Does it?? You have had a good life, why do you need to know where you came from? You are as if 'born to' isn't that good enough? It seemed like I was being treated like a pesky child who wanted an extra cookie when I had already had my share. Did I???

And... sigh... yes... I know that when there has been a stressful situation that I've reacted/ responded as a child. A tired cranky child. Maybe it's because adoption affected how I see myself, and maybe how others see me. How do I see myself? Differently now than I once did. Before I had started all of this reunion stuff, I wasn't the most self-confident person in the world, I would never speak up for myself, and if I did I didn't do it in the most appropriate manner, refer to the first sentence in this paragraph. I would react to a situation that was stressful, and not respond to it as an adult. I didn't think that my opinions had much value, why would someone listen to me? That sounds like an adoptee making that statement... what value do I have? what do I know? what am I worth?... my inner child saying my mum didn't love me enough to keep me, why would anyone else love me?... or think that my opinions are of value?? So the reaction would be one of anger, coming from the small child that was and is still inside of me. I had to learn how to react/ respond as an adult, not as a child.

How did others see me? Well, not sure on that, mostly I don't think I was seen, I was invisible hiding because I really didn't have much self worth. If I told someone I was adopted, they might think it was interesting, I think mostly they would think... wasn't I lucky to be able to have a good home and good life, wasn't I lucky to have been saved from an orphanage? That's

about as much as someone who hasn't had any connection with adoption can think. Once my reunion was progressing they saw an obsessed person who was very intense about all of this adoption stuff. Like a child with a new toy. On the surface that's almost what it is like, having a new toy... having these new people in your life, that you know will love you and accept you right away. Just like that shiny new toy that may need batteries, or needs to be plugged in first, it's not what it appears to be... something that will work right away. Reunion usually isn't what it first appears to be either. We are dealing with new people, strangers, and we expect them to be who we want them to be. We don't know that we have that expectation at first, we just think it will be what we want it to be. That's where the obsession comes in, and the intenseness that others

would have seen in me. Almost like someone with a new 'WII' that they can't leave alone.

Something that I do wonder about since we are on the topic of youth in adoption, is who would I have been if I hadn't been adopted? Who would 'Faye Jorgenson' have been? Would she have been the same girl as I was, the same woman I now am? That's the sad part, about adoption, we don't know who we could have been. I know that I'm a good person, that I do have a good life, that I had loving parents and a pretty alright sister growing up... yep, that's you Wendy !!! That I have a great family that my husband and I have raised. Still as an adopted adult, I can't help but wonder who I might have been if my mother had been allowed to keep me, and who would she have been if she had been allowed to be my mother.



'Orphan' Movie Protest Gets Some Results

By J. Amy Newman, Burnaby, BC Canada

July 9, 2009

Warner Bros. recently removed an offending statement about adoptees from Orphan movie promotional materials after an outcry from the adoption community. The original trailer included the tag-line: "It must be hard to love an adopted child as much as your own," which has now been removed.

Members of the Adoption community spoke out quickly and effectively, with phone calls, emails and letters to the producers and distributors of the film. I first heard about the trailer and proposed protest on May 21, 2009 through the FMNFS grapevine and by May 28 changes were being made by Warner Bros.

Elyse Flack, National Director of Stars of David International, described her impression of the original trailer:

"There is a horror slasher film being released July 24 (Orphan) about a family who adopts an older girl who is not what she appears to be. Warnings about her go unheeded until it is too late for everyone. The film is being promoted now (<http://orphan-movie.warnerbros.com>) and the adoption message being sent is extremely negative. There is actually a

line in the trailer that says it must be hard to love an adopted child as much as your own. Without having seen the movie or read the script, it is hard to know if the entire movie is sending a ghastly adoption message, but the trailer certainly leads us to believe it is. This feeds the notion that older adoptees are very troubled and you should beware.... that's not an image any of us want the general public to have of our kids. It plays into people's deepest fears."

A member of the AdoptionCanada yahoo group wrote: "...I have watched the trailer and it appears to me that the movie does send a disturbing message. Having adopted a 13 year old myself I hope that she will not see this movie or have anyone treat her badly because of this movie."

Facebook Orphan Movie Boycott

After viewing the movie trailer the adoption community began sending out emails, posting on online bulletin boards, discussing the film and expressing emotions from displeasure to disgust and outrage. There were at least five Facebook groups promoting an Orphan movie boycott, the largest being I am Boycotting Warner Bros.' "Orphan" Movie,

created by Bethann Buddenbaum (Indianapolis, IN), with 4,216 members as of July 9 and still growing.

The Facebook boycott group grew to over 1,000 within a few days and discussion has been lively. Roy Smalley, an early participant of the largest group, pointed out that, "This is a B horror film based on a stupid premise. Chances are that if it's ignored, it will flop after two weeks in the theatres and dwindle away into obscurity, to wind up in the bargain bin of the local video shop in a couple of years and be picked over while people look for a movie they REALLY want to pay two bucks for. But if you start protesting at the top of your lungs, and the national media pick up on it, it turns into free coast-to-coast advertising." (Facebook, I am Boycotting Warner Bros.' "Orphan" Movie Discussion Board Topic: Effects of a Boycott?)

Warner Bros. Responds

On May 28 Bethann Buddenbaum, creator of the Facebook group, had a phone conversation with Scott Rowe, Sr., Vice President of Corporate Communication at Warner Bros., who assured her that the offending statement "It must be hard to love an adopted child as much as your own" has been removed from all future trailers. However, it was too late to prevent it from being used during the previews of the horror film *Drag Me to Hell*, which opened early in June. She noted that because the film is Rated-R, it will only be shown as a trailer for other Rated-R films.

"The producers and distributor took your concerns to heart and have made the changes in the public-facing marketing materials that we had hoped."

Scott mentioned that Warner Bros. employees get death threats for things as trivial as changing the release date of the new *Harry Potter* film. "Yet, the adoption community, who are protecting their children and who have every right to be angry, has been nothing but respectful," he said.

Boycott Continues

"The power of the internet and all of the listservs that we all belong to took our message to China and back," said Elyse Flack. "Thousands of people told their feelings and concerns about this movie. We were unable to stop the release of this film because of the massive amounts of money and power behind it. So we needed to be satisfied that we were thought to be

considerate and non violent in our manner yet powerful enough in numbers to show the Warner Bros people we were offended big time, which resulted in them having the time and the ability to change the trailer, admitting their insensitivity.

We continue to this day to implore the adoption community to avoid this movie and to tell others about its subject so that they will not go to see it either. I have begun to see the trailer on our network television stations here and it has been running in theaters for nearly a month already."

Although Warner Bros. implied that the trailer will only be shown on television after 10 p.m. (i.e. not during times when young children would be expected to watch), it is being aired much earlier. Bethann commented, "I only wish I could get them to stop showing the trailer during the day and prime time."

Devil's Child?

Apparently there is a hook to the film that ultimately removes the child/ orphan stigma. Let me guess - a supernatural entity, the devil's child? Won't some viewers still be left with the impression that there is something wrong with orphans and adoptees?

Personally, I'm not a fan of horror films and wouldn't attend this anyway, boycott or not. However, I'm very impressed by the efforts of the community and the effectiveness of the protest. Amazed that Warner Bros. admitted they were wrong and changed the wording of the trailer. Communicating firmly, passionately and reasonably with the people who have the power to do something about it, works - especially if they fear losing profits! You have a voice - use it. Orphan trailer: <http://orphan-movie.warnerbros.com>

Stars of David International is an all volunteer adoption support group for families who identify with the Jewish faith, and has chapters across the United States. They are holding the Midwest Adoption Conference on Sunday, November 1, 2009 at Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois. See www.starsofdavid.org and www.midwestadoption.org

Amy Newman serves on the Board of Directors of FMNFS and is the owner of Newman Research Services www.nrsfind.com

"Special", "Chosen" and "Lucky"

By Joe Soll, LCSW, DAPA,

(Author of 'Adoption Healing... A Path to Recovery', and co-author of 'Evil Exchange' and 'Fatal Flight')

How many times do we adoptees hear those three words?

They are presumably said with all good intentions; what goes on inside us when we hear them?

If I am special, do I have to follow the rules?

If I am chosen, did I come from a baby supermarket? Why did they pick me?

If I am lucky, what makes me so?

If I am special, why was I available to be chosen?

If I was chosen, did someone unchoose me first?

If I am lucky, why do I hurt so much inside?

If I am special, why does it not feel good when I hear it?

If I am chosen, who were the other contestants?

If am lucky, does that mean my first family was "bad" in some way?

Each time someone says either of those words, it is a reminder that we are adopted. The intent is to make us feel good, not hurt, not think about our natural mothers. Yet each time we hear these words, how can we not on some level think of where we came from? It's like telling us to not think of pink elephants. Each time we hear the words it causes us internal pain. We may not be conscious of it, but it has to be there.

The reason why we adoptees do so much day-dreaming (which to the uninformed mental health professionals looks like ADD) is because we are constantly (at least unconsciously) trying to figure it all out. Who and why are the biggest

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unanswered questions and our minds struggle to understand what no one can or will tell us.

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There are phobic and counter-phobic reactions to pain and fear. The phobic adoptee tells no one they are adopted. The counterphobe flaunts being adopted, tells others how special she or he is.

S
P
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C
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A
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In reality, the loss of our mothers at birth was a trauma of the highest order that is worse than the horrors of war (Anna Freud). Each time we hear those three words, that trauma is stirred up. When we are separated from our mothers we experience their death. There is no difference in losing a mother to death or adoption. Mommy is here, mommy is gone. Poof! Death as far as the infant's experience goes.

C
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If we are special, does that mean it is good to lose a mom?

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U
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If we are chosen, does that mean our parents took us from our mothers on purpose?

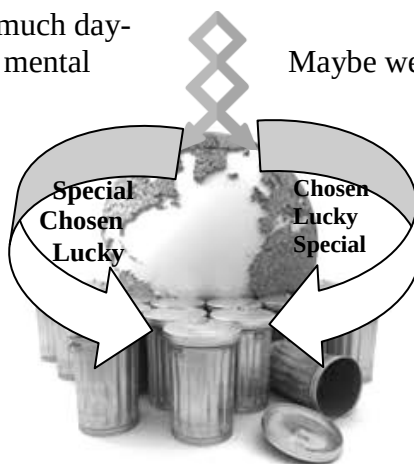
S
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If we are lucky, does that mean we are lucky our mothers are dead for us?

I like to throw away words that hurt, like the "R" word... 'Rejection'.

Maybe we should throw these three words away as well.

Spread the word: throw out "S", "C" and "L" because they are not what they say they are.



Adoptees at the Movies- Part II

By Father Tom Brosnan

(Part I of the article in the Spring edition of the Newsletter concluded with the statement: "Movies move us to remember, so that we might heal.")

Loss and reunion themes in movies do that for me. Remember that old classic, "Come Back Little Sheba", with Shirley Booth and Burt Lancaster? Burt Lancaster is "Doc", a recovering alcoholic married to Shirley Booth, "Lola". They are childless. Everyday Lola goes out on the front porch and calls for her missing dog "Little Sheba", but the dog never comes. Meanwhile, a young co-ed rents a room in their house, reminding Lola and Doc of the child that was either miscarried or relinquished. Also reminding Doc of other things and he ends up drinking again. In a drunken rage he calls the young co-ed a slut and a tramp, "...just like Lola", he says. We get the idea that Doc had to marry Lola- though there is no child. I first saw "Come Back Little Sheba" when I was 14 years old on a New Year's Eve, alone at home. I couldn't stop sobbing though I didn't consciously know why- mourning my own lost Little Shebas which I couldn't yet name or identify. It was one of the best and most memorable New Years' Eves I ever had.

Another scene from a more recent movie about loss and reunion: Stephen Spielberg's "Empire of the Sun". In this plot, a young British boy is separated from his parents while living in Shanghai at the outbreak of WWII. He spends the war in a Japanese POW camp. It's a coming-of-age story but some deeper strands touch on issues surrounding loss and, to my mind, extraordinary montage of recognition at the very end of the movie. After the war has ended, British children are brought together in order to be reclaimed, so to speak, by parents who feared them dead. The boy in "Empire of the Sun" is placed in the middle of a group of other separated children and the eager parents are released to find their children. He is obviously traumatized. He stares straight ahead, he never blinks. The camera focuses on his face and eyes. His father passes him by, not recognizing him after four years. Then his mother passes him, but returns. She calls his name, but he makes no response, just stares ahead. She studies his features and knows, as only a mother can, that is her son. She embraces him, clutching him as the camera explores the boy's unmoved eyes-- always the eyes. Finally, his brow unfurrows and he begins to blink and then the eyes peacefully close. He is home again, at his mother's breast. At last, he is at rest.

This one scene reminds me of many things. It reminds me of how exhausted I felt when I did my search and how, even now, some fifteen years later, I have managed to procrastinate tying up loose ends concerning my birth father. Perhaps I dread the emotional drain that would leave my catatonic. ...The scene also clarified something that always

bothered me about what people pray at funerals. They say: "Eternal rest grant unto them"- meaning the dead. Maybe heaven is a rest of sorts when the odyssey is over and you can rest assured in someone's loving embrace.

Here's an example of what one seemingly simple scene does for me. ...I have so many 'favourite movies of all times', but "Cinema Paradiso" is definitely one of them. It's the story of a small boy in a Sicilian village. His father dies in the war and he finds a 'father' in the projectionist at the town cinema. It's about many things, this movie, but a lot of it is about leaving home and returning-- about loss and reunion. The boy grows into a young man and is about to go to Rome to find himself. The projectionist, now blind, has the last word with him on the train platform. He grabs him and pulls his ear close to his mouth. "Leave here", the old man who loves him so much tells him, "And don't ever come back." He does just that, becoming a famous movie director. He supports his mother through the years, but never returns though it would have been very easy to do so. The old projectionist eventually dies and his mother calls her son to tell him. His sister says 'why bother, you know he'll never come?' "For him", his mother says, referring to the old movie projectionist, "...he'll come." The next scene is what gets to me. The camera is focused on the mother sitting in a rocking chair, crocheting. The camera slowly zooms in on just her hands and the rhythm of the movement of back and forth, over and around. We hear in the background a car pull up to the front of the house, the hands stop moving, the door to the car slams shut, the mother stands and begins to run to the door, but a piece of the yarn is caught on her dress and the camera continues to focus on the unraveling thread from the spindle. And then, suddenly, it stops and we know without seeing it actually happen, without hearing a word spoken, that mother and son have embraced after many, many years apart.

Why is it that it still makes me cry, even writing about it? Mother- son reunited, perhaps. Or, the idea of coming home after an adventure. Dorothy returning to Kansas after Oz: "There's no place like home". Is it the fact that we know he's returning essentially for his unofficial adoptive father, not for his mother who has always been jealous of the old projectionist? Is it the spinning, the unraveling, the idea that life is a tapestry of sorts which doesn't make sense until finished?

There are subliminal themes of profound import in this one scene, I believe. Did you know that the Old German word for "fate" is "wurt", meaning spindle? Our word "spider" comes from the Old English "spinthron", meaning the spinner. Boethius in Late Antiquity wrote that God turns "...heaven like a spindle." The Virgin Mary is often pictured spinning as the archangel, Gabriel, ~continued next page

comes to her to announce the extraordinary event that she has conceived divinity in her womb. Sleeping Beauty received the prediction that she would die at 16 when she would prick her finger while spinning. Some say that the fate that was thought of by the ancients as "spun" has now turned into the "wheel of fortune" where we take our chance with destiny. We cast off fate in order to make ourselves new. Leaving home is a casting off, a re-creation, an escape from social class and destiny-- we become spiders spinning our own webs. If you think that these archetypes of consciousness are lost to us today, think again every time you go on-line into the "World Wide Web".

While speaking of destiny or fate, we might venture into the realm of religion and faith for a moment. It's been my experience that many involved in the adoption triad claim religious right in their points of view and often claim to know with certainty that it was "God's Will" that such and such happened, sort of like both sides in a war claiming that God's on their side. It's been my experience that Carl Jung's observation about organized religion applies here. "Religion," Jung said, "...often protects us from an encounter with the divine." In other words, religion often does the opposite of what you might expect it to do. God or God's Will might be too goddamned scary to handle, so religion protects us from it. Unfortunately, religion has had to lie about some things in order to do that. St. Augustine would say that there are many kinds of lies, but when done in the name of religion, it is especially despicable.

I'm thinking here of the little known documentary from (a few) years ago called "My Brother, My Sister Sold for a Fistful of Lire." It is the story of an elderly Italian woman trying to find the siblings taken from her parents immediately after the war when families were desperate to feed their children. The church arranged for a number of children to be taken from their families and adopted out to America through Catholic Relief Services. The Italian families never understood it would be permanent or that the records would be sealed. The documentary traces the attempts of this humble woman from the hills of rural Italy to New York and Chicago. A number of priests were interviewed and came across as rather shady individuals who encouraged the woman to 'let it go'- she'd never find them. A priest from my own diocese actually, who died... was also interviewed, since he had arranged for many of these adoptions. He ended up kicking the woman out of his office blabbering the same mantra- 'let it go, it's God's Will. I can't help.'

In the truly great film "Babette's Feast" about Babette, a great French chef who escapes revolutionary France and seeks refuge in a remote Danish fishing village in which the inhabitants belong to an obscure evangelical Christian sect which eats simply and never imbibes alcohol, we see how religion, when taken to an extreme, can prevent us from the joy that religion is supposed to promise. Babette wins the lottery. She wants to thank the two ladies for their generous

hospitality toward her and offers as a gift what she does best- cook a feast. It is the best of foods prepared by one of Europe's greatest chefs, accompanied by the finest wines. Babette spends her entire fortune on that one meal. But the strict puritans can only struggle to enjoy, for they have foresworn sensuality. And that's the point: religion can, indeed, prevent us from the very thing it intends for us to have.

Regardless of organized religion, it is my suspicion that the notion of destiny v. fate or chance figures large in the psyche of the adopted. There are many "what if's" lurking just below the surface in an adopted history. The film that won the Oscar... for Best Documentary Film explored this issue. "Into the Arms of Strangers" was a documentary about the children of the *kinder* transport. In the 1930's, there was an effort to place children of German Jewish families with British families when it became more and more evident that their lives might be in danger in Nazi Germany. The documentary records the personal stories of several of these children.

There was one extraordinary story about a girl who was brought to the train station by her family. As the time of departure was approaching, her father became more and more agitated. They placed her on the train and her father began to walk along as the train moved. She was leaning out of the large window until her father reached in and grabbed her, pulling her out of the train. Not too long afterward the Nazis arrested her and her family and they were sent to different concentration camps. She survived; her parents did not. She has nightmares wondering whether her father went to his death thinking he was responsible for her death since he had taken her back into his arms. Those who wish to believe in destiny argue with those who see everything as random chance about such a story.

There was another story from "Into the Arms of Strangers" that touches on the complexities of relationships and touched me as an adoptee. Of all those interviewed as survivors of the *kinder* transport, only one man's parents survived the holocaust. After the war he was reunited with his family and describes that first meeting with his father. This man seemed the most jovial and friendly of all of those interviewed. He smiled when he spoke and talking glowingly of the British family that took him in. When he described meeting his father again, his face changed. He became notably somber and talked of the shame he felt when his father put his hand through his hair and how embarrassed he was by the fact that his father spoke to him in German. He had grown accustomed and fond of his British family and, although he didn't say it, you felt he really didn't want to be reunited with his family. The complexity of relationships, I believe, is heightened in adoptive situations. Issues of loyalty become paramount. This seems especially true for male adoptees and might be one reason why a much less percentage of male adoptees search than female. ~continued next page

I met my birth father not long after I met my birth mother. He denied paternity then... and still does. That unresolved aspect of my story, I believe, reflects a more primordial situation between father and sons and the nature of relationships. As for my adoptive father, I wonder how much his own infertility coloured the way he looked at me, especially when I entered puberty. That thought occurred to me gradually but noticeably during the movie "Frequency", about the relationship between an adult son and his long-deceased father. His father was a NYC fireman (as was mine) and how, through some supernatural force, he is able to communicate with his father across time on his short-wave radio. I envy that communication, that kind of relationship-- I missed out on it with both of my fathers.

Relationship hinges on a sense of belonging. The adopted often do not feel that they belong where they're at-- and this has little or nothing to do with the amount of love the adoptive family showers on the adoptee. Perhaps it has something to do with what Penny calls in her poems-- mirroring- the need to see yourself reflected in the physical bodies of those related to you by blood. Not a top-ten movie, "An Officer and a Gentleman", moved me to cry in the theatre the first time I saw it and, at first, I didn't know why. The plot: Richard Gere is a street-wise punk, no mother, abusive father, no life, no future, so he joins the Navy. He develops an adversarial relationship with the drill sergeant who seemingly hates Gere. The drill sergeant punishes Gere for some mistake by brutally pushing him all day. He wants Gere to quit. "Will you quit?" Will you quit?," the drill sergeant yells at him, brutalizing him. "No," Gere shouts back. "Why won't you quit? Why won't you quit?," the sergeant yells. "Because," the young man cries, "...I have nowhere else to go." Richard Gere broke down and cried those words. And so did I.

All the priests I know hated the seminary. My classmates couldn't wait to get out. I could have stayed forever, I loved it so much. When it came time to go, I was heartbroken. The adopted, I think, don't like to leave things they've become accustomed to. When I first lived in Korea, I found it very difficult and later worked in New York in a Korean parish for nearly 15 years. I was the only Anglo. My classmates could not understand why I stayed-- some even attributed it to a certain sense of sacrifice or holiness. The truth is, though, that I liked it-- I felt at home being different. I was accustomed to not feeling like I belonged. I was at home in places I didn't belong.

Orphans symbolize that for us in our literature and in our movies. They don't have to be literal orphans, but simply embody that essence of loss that turns even the hardest heart all mushy. They are the misfits, cousins to the bastards of this world- the misbegotten, the mistake, the mistook. I don't remember from the plot of the movie if Tom Ripley's family history included orphan hood, but he certainly seemed he could have fit that profile in "The Talented Mr.

Ripley." Please don't get alarmed: I'm not taking this anywhere near the subject of adoptees as serial murderers (but I will say that I think we... should be open to support research into the reasons why some adoptees do commit violent crimes, or partake in antisocial behaviour). I like Ripley because he was a misfit who was so convinced of his unbelonging that he did anything to belong. Not unlike Odysseus, he was ever-ingenious in the way he disguised his identity. So needy was he of friendship, acceptance and love, that when he couldn't have it he let himself rage to murder and then, in the end, murder the very person who would have given him what he needed, but "oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." There's that "web" again, spinning its tale which soon must come to an end.

And so here's the last film on my list. An old movie with Gregory Peck as "Father Francis Chisolm", based on A.J. Cronin's "The Keys of the Kingdom", about a young Scots priest who goes to China as a missionary. I cannot tell you how much this movie means to me on so many levels and how much it has affected my life. I believe, for instance, that on an unconscious level it was this movie that made me really want to be a priest and helped me entertain the idea of studying Chinese in College and then going to Korea many years later. It is the source of my fascination with things Chinese and my secret suspicion that I shall return there someday-- perhaps for good.

But to adopted themes: Gregory Peck is a misfit of sorts. He is the product of a Catholic father and a Protestant mother in 20th century Scotland-- he knew what it felt like not to belong from the start. Orphaned as a boy, he's raised by his Catholic aunt who wants him desperately to be a priest. He becomes a priest when he learns his old girlfriend has become pregnant by someone else while he is away at school. She will die young, leaving an illegitimate daughter who will eventually have an illegitimate son of her own, for whom Gregory Peck will return to Scotland to raise. As a young priest in Scotland, he is an utter failure, an awkward hick. The old bishop, however, sees him as genuine. "You're like a stray cat wondering down the church aisle looking for a place to stay," the bishop tells him and then sends him to China.

He remains always the unaffected humble man, even when put down by the aristocratic German nun sent to work with him. His disarming personality eventually wins her over, and their parting is especially bittersweet-- as if they were married. Vincent Price places the affected classmate who eventually becomes the bishop. While visiting him in China, Price brings a bottle of fine European wine. The young Chinese man, Joseph, who has virtually dedicated his life to the young priest, overhears the dinner conversation when Vincent Price complains about how dirty the Chinese are and how they would all benefit from a little soap and

...Continued on page 16

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NANCY VERRIER in NEW WESTMINSTER: The Forget Me Not Family Society is pleased to present a workshop with Nancy Verrier, "Awareness, Authenticity and Accountability", which will be held at Douglas College in New Westminster, B.C. on October 17th and 18th, 2009. We will be having a meet and greet Friday October 16th in the hospitality suite at the Inn at the Quay, which is just a few blocks from the college. This will be from approximately 7 pm until 10 pm. For information on the workshop, or to register, please contact Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca

REPORT on DISCLOSURE VETOES: *ONTARIO*- Fewer than 2,500 vetoes have been registered out of the 500,000 people eligible for information under the brand new law; *ALBERTA*- approximately 2,800 vetoes filed and 9,600 requests for information since records opened in 2004; *BRITISH COLUMBIA*- 3,100 disclosure vetoes and 12,871 applications for service since open records in 1996; *NEWFOUNDLAND*- 468 vetoes to disclosure and 923 applications for information filed since records became open on May 1, 2004.

CHANGE to SURREY MEETING: Please note that the Surrey support group for adoptees will be meeting the **third Tuesday** of the month at the **Strawberry Hill public library**, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The library is located at 7399- 122nd Street in Surrey, very close to public transit. The coffee will be on! Any questions, please contact Sandra Walters at: 778-994-2845.

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
Fall/ Sexuality	Oct 13, 2009	Nov 10, 2009
Winter/ Disabilities	Jan12, 2010	Feb 9, 2010
Spring/ Ethics	Apr 13, 2010	May 11, 2010
Summer/ Undisclosed	Jul 13, 2010	Aug 24, 2010

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

ADOPTION GREETING CARDS: Have you ever needed to send a card to somebody, but couldn't find the card that expresses what you want to say? Today, a range of 36 cards and 24 bookmarks is available to acknowledge relationships affected by loss and gain, unlike anything currently on the market. The idea for *Reunite Cards* was born out of a conversation between two women, both adoptees. Both women were adopted to loving families and both were told early on that they had a different "mummy & daddy", and that their birth parents were not able to keep them. After 13 years of waiting, one of the women was finally reunited with her Birth Mother and, as she soon discovered, reuniting was just the beginning and not the end. The other woman met her Birth Parents together. Six years later, she lost her mother for the 2nd time, as a result of her death to cancer.

As a result of their experiences, the two women set out to create a range of Greeting Cards that were suitable to use for those relationships affected by loss, by gain - cards that fully express the need one has to be understood and connected. The *Reunite* collection addresses the special occasions that need to be acknowledged by people who have been separated and long to be involved in the process of reunion. Infused by life experiences, passion, and interest in helping others to find expression, Megan and Jeanette have created an inspirational range of unique greeting cards that facilitate reunification. To view this range of cards - please go www.reunitecards.com.au or www.reunitecards.com.

NEW VIDEOS FROM THE AMERICAN ADOPTION CONGRESS: At long last (and after several technical difficulties,) the first two of the AAC videos are live on YouTube – today! We currently have two slideshows on YouTube with two more to come in the fall. Currently, "Adoption & Truth" about adoptees' need to know where they come from, and "Birth Mothers Never Forget" are posted. We are putting the finishing touches on the final two videos and are aiming (hoping) to have them on YouTube in early September. One is about reunion and how it positively impacts an adoptee and his birth mother. The other focuses on an adoptive mother and her feelings about her daughter's reunion.

You can watch the videos at:

Adoption & Truth:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDX9LBTPs2o>

Birth Mothers Never Forget:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNkA6yoKzHO>

Personality Profile



Brenda McCreight

Brenda McCreight- PH.D., R.S.W.

Brenda is an adoptive parent, therapist, and the author of "Recognizing and Managing Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/ Effects: A Guidebook", "Parenting Your Adopted Older Child", and the children's book "Eden's Secret Journal: The Story of An Older Child Adoption".

Brenda is the mother of 14 children, 12 of whom are adopted and are considered to have special needs. Since 1982, Brenda has worked as a therapist with children and families facing issues such as sexual abuse and family violence as well as adoption and foster related concerns. She provides parent coaching by phone and e-mail for clients who don't live in Nanaimo, B.C. Please see her website: www.theadoptioncounselor.com for more information. Brenda is also a writer and a sought after speaker in the area of behaviour disorders.



1. How have I personally been affected by adoption

Adoption has made my life both better and worse in ways I could never have predicted. We have adopted 12 children (1 single and 3 sibling groups) who are currently between the ages of 7 and 31. We also have two children by birth and 6 grandchildren. My children were prenatally exposed to alcohol

and drugs and most experienced neglect and abuse prior to placement with us. As any parent knows, children change one's life profoundly and those of us who adopt older children find our lives affected in ways we never could have expected. I feel as if I have been twisted into a thousand different emotional shapes as I've stumbled, tripped, walked, and run from highs to lows and ins and outs and upside downs and right side ups. I sometimes feel that my life as an adoptive mom is a never ending bungy jump of the heart.

I think if I hadn't adopted, I would have had to express my risk taking personality in more dangerous ways. When I was a teen I wanted to become a journalist in war zones. I was rejected for journalism school so I've walked the mine fields of parenting a large adoptive family instead. Fortunately, the stress and the unpredictability, as well as the boundless love, suit me well.

2. When/why did you get involved in the adoption field?

I became involved in adoption as a professional in 1980. I was on an academic path to my doctorate and my career choice as a psychotherapist when I had the opportunity to hear Claudia Jewett speak. At the time, I had one birth child and was waiting to adopt. Listening to Ms. Jewett, I realized that I was going to have to greatly expand my parenting skills if I was going to succeed as a parent with my prospective adopted child. Since I was in the counseling field as a professional, it was relatively easy for me to access further training and I gradually began to switch from a generalized practice in child and family therapy to adoption specialized.

My first son by adoption had multiple issues which we eventually realized were the result of FASD. I sought every bit of information there was on the subject (and there wasn't much back in 1990) and I soon started presenting workshops in the topic. These led to my first book "Recognizing Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/ Effects: A Guidebook" published by the Child Welfare League of America in 1994.

My practice kept expanding internationally and I wrote two more books on adoption (actually three more but the last has yet to find a publisher). I still maintain an adoption specialized practice but in the last two years I've started using neurofeedback and biofeedback as my main treatment methods and so my private practice now includes civilians (non adoption related clients) who are

experiencing anxiety, stress, depression, and of course, adhd.

3. What adoption related issues/organizations have I been involved with over the years?

Organizations - I have often belonged to the Adoptive Families Association of BC. It's a great organization but I'm not very good at remembering to send in membership fees so I don't belong now. I have recently joined the online site Rad-Online.org. They don't ask for any money and it's easy to join online.

Issues - For many years I pushed the issue of keeping siblings together. That has become a more standard practice although I'm still asked to consult on cases in which the separation of sibs is being considered. Then, as the field of neuroscience advanced, I saw how important it was that adoptive parents understood the effect of neglect and abuse on the pre and post natal brain and how that impacted their lives with their child/ren. That was the focus of my workshops throughout North American and the UK for a number of years and still is to a large degree.

Another significant issue that has arisen in the last few years is how to manage the inevitable adoption break downs and disruptions that will occur. As the number of older child adoptions has increased, it is only natural that there will be some who simply can't succeed for many different reasons. I now provide workshops on how to manage these in a way that reduces the harm done to everyone involved and how to help the child successfully move on to another adoptive family.

4. What do I see as the current issues of most concern in the adoption field?

In my opinion, the pressing issue in adoption today is the lack of services for families who are raising children who have a mental illness or who are dangerous to themselves or others. I'm on a crusade to bring this issue to the attention of the public and to the top of the "to do" list of politicians and policy makers.

There's a real denial among adoption professionals regarding the degree of chaos and danger that a minority of adopted youth present to their families and to their communities. There is still a myth that children or youth can't be mentally ill or dangerous to others. Underlying this is the belief that extreme acting out must be the fault of the parents who are often labeled as being too rejecting, or as expecting too much from the youth, or as not knowing how to use sticker charts! Many adoptive parents find that once they realize that they can't safely parent a dangerous child or youth, they are blamed and stigmatized by professionals and they find that the few services that are offered are not effective.

In Canada it's next to impossible to get residential treatment for a dangerous youth, and in the US, the services might be too expensive or they might be in another state, or they require so much paperwork that by the time the youth can enter, too much harm has occurred for the parents to feel they can ever take the youth back into their home.

I want to be clear that the children and families who need these services are in the minority. Most adopted children, whether they have fasd, ocd, or most of the other commonly diagnosed conditions, are not dangerous and their families are able to manage well with the available services, but those few who do need them are desperate for help; and, effective, adoption specialized residential services that are both emergency and long term simply aren't available to them now.

Adoptees at the Movies- Part II *~continued from page 13*

...water. The expensive bottle of wine crashes to the floor. Joseph stands there, having just washed some dishes. "How could you do that? You're so clumsy," Vincent Price yells at the Chinese man. Joseph, ever respectful, casts his eyes downward and says, "...the benefit, Father, of too much soap and water."

At Gregory Peck's farewell when he must retire back to Scotland, Joseph, now old with grown sons of his own, is to read the farewell speech. He has written it and practiced it many times but gives up amid tears and simply says, "Dear Father Francis, how can I say good-bye when all my memories, my joys and sorrows, are all of you." But Father Francis must return to Scotland and take care of the illegitimate son of the illegitimate daughter of the woman he was going to marry. So the spindle spins. "All journeys," G.K. Chesterton would write, "...are about coming home."

LEAN ON ME

Telephone/e-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (cecelia_r@telus.net) (604) 857-2125
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 Dan Carson
 (ariete_132@hotmail.com) (604) 557-0230
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 Leanne-Neighbour – Kamloops
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Reunited with Siblings:

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Reunited Birth Parents:

Nancy Kato (katosan@telus.net) (604) 777-2920
 Susan Wiesendahl
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 Alice McKinnon - Chilliwack
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 John Post - Castlegar
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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. **NEW:** We will meet the third **TUESDAY** of each month in a meeting room at the Strawberry Hill public library at 7399 – 122nd Street, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. (next one Sept. 15th) 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.

Ontario COAR Update

On June 1, 2009 Ontario opened its adoption records to adopted adults and their parents at birth.

What does this mean?

As of June 1, adopted adults (aged 18 or older) and original parents (of adoptees aged 19 or older) will be able to access the adoptee's original birth certificate. Birth parents will also be able to access the adoptee's amended birth certificate. Both of these documents contain identifying information about the other party.

I am adopted. Where can I get my information?

Beginning on June 1, application forms for original birth certificates will be available at ServiceOntario* (www.serviceontario.ca) You will need to print out the form and mail it to the address provided on the website.

If you submitted an application form for your original birth certificate before Judge Belobaba ruled the previous law unconstitutional, you do **not** need to send in a new application form. The government will fill those applications before turning to those it receives after June 1.

You will receive a copy of your original birth certificate. It will give you:

- * your name at birth
- * your birth mother's name at the time of your birth
- * your birth father's name, in some cases

If your birth parent has filed a contact veto, you will receive it along with your original birth certificate. If your birth parent has filed a disclosure veto, you will receive it instead of any identifying information.

I am a birth parent. Where can I get information about my adult child?

Beginning on June 1, applications forms for original birth certificates will be available at ServiceOntario (www.serviceontario.ca.) You will need to print out the form and mail it to the address provided on the website.

If you submitted an application form before Judge Belobaba ruled the previous law unconstitutional, you do not need to send in a new application form. The government will fill those applications before turning to those it receives after June 1.

You will receive:

- * a copy of the original birth certificate naming you as the parent of your child
- * information from the amended birth certificate. You will receive the name your child was given after adoption. The names of your child's adoptive parents will be blacked out.

If your adult child has filed a contact veto, you will receive it along with the original and amended birth certificates. If your adult child has filed a disclosure veto, you will receive it instead of any identifying information.

What other services are available under the new law?

Adoption Disclosure Registry

Adopted adults and birth relatives can place their name on a government run registry. Applications for the registry are available at www.serviceontario.ca. Once the government receives your application for the registry, they will check to see if another family member has also registered. If there is a match (i.e. two parties have registered) the government will notify both individuals and arrange for the release of information.

Non-Identifying Information

Adopted adults, birth relatives, and adoptive parents may apply for non-identifying information. This is information that was collected at the time of the adoption. It will come to you as a summary compiled by a social worker or as a direct copy of the files themselves.

If a CAS handled the adoption, you need to write to the CAS and ask for a copy of the non-identifying information. Make sure to include a copy of your identification.

If a private agency or individual (e.g. lawyer or doctor) facilitated the adoption, you need to go to www.serviceontario.ca, print off, and mail in the form for non-identifying information.

It is important to note that no identifying information will be released this way.

Severe Medical Searches

Adoptees and their descendants, and birth relatives may apply to the government for a search done for medical reasons. The government's doctor will decide whether a search will go forward. Applicants must demonstrate that they need information vital to the diagnosis or treatment of a disease or that they have information vital to the diagnosis of a disease to pass along to the other party. Applications for a Severe Medical Search are available at ServiceOntario at www.serviceontario.ca.

What is a Contact Preference Form?

This is a new form that allows adopted adults and their birth parents to specify how they would like to be contacted. You will find the form at www.serviceontario.ca. Again, you need to fill it out and mail it in to the government.

*NOTE: If you are hoping for a reunion, we strongly urge you to fill out this form **immediately** and send it in. When the other party applies for the birth certificate, s/he will also then receive the contact preference form with your contact details on it. This will make the search much easier and significantly decrease the time you will need to wait for a reunion.*

If you want to read the *Access to Adoption Information Act* (ARRA) in its entirety, go to www.e-laws.gov.on.ca and search.

You can get your application form in one of four ways:

- Download and print them from the ServiceOntario website

- Go to a ServiceOntario kiosk in places throughout the province
- Phone toll-free: 1 800 461-2156 or in Toronto: 416 325-8305
- Visit a Government of Ontario office, but phone first!

Should you have any questions about what the law changes mean to you, please feel free to contact any of us, or to take your questions to a local adoption support group.

In solidarity,
Michael Grand
mgrand@uoguelph.ca

Karen Lynn
ccnm@rogers.com

Wendy Rowney
wrowney@rogers.com
The COAR Coordinating Committee

Bill 60 a “Safe Haven” Bill in New Brunswick

By Marnie Tetz

A 'safe haven' bill has been proposed in New Brunswick that would allow 'desperate' mums up to 72 hours to leave their newborns at an emergency room without penalty. This bill has had its first and second readings in May of this year, and if it becomes law will be the first in Canada. By doing so, the mothers are relinquishing their legal guardianship to the baby, which will then allow the baby to be placed for adoption. This bill was proposed after an abandoned baby was found dead.

The bill was proposed by a Conservative member, and is supported by the Liberal government, however the Minister of Social Development, Mary Schryer, supports the bill in principle but is concerned about the 'no questions asked' policy. The basis of the bill would be to save a child's life who otherwise would have been abandoned and perhaps die. The questions being raised by the minister as well as those in charge of women's shelters are:

- what is the mental state of the mother?
- is this in fact the mother of the child?
- why is she abandoning her child, what lead up to the abandonment? was it rape?
- is there drug abuse involved?

This bill is more complex, babies need to be saved, but more questions need to be asked, letting people just walk away is not the answer.

To July 15, 2009, Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Family Services Act (the Safe Haven Bill), has been referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments. The Committee has not yet met on the bill to determine whether it will conduct a public consultation. If the Committee decides to consult the public, they have agreed to be in touch with Sarah Pedersen, Acting Executive Director of the Adoption Council of Canada, which is also a member of the Forget Me Not Family Society. If anyone has any questions in regard to this matter please contact Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca, and she will forward any questions on to the Adoption Council.

The latest update:

This was an Opposition Bill that has been passed at Second Reading with the support of both the government and the opposition. It was referred to Law Amendments Committee as the Bill cannot probably be passed as drafted. Child Abandonment is an offence under the federal criminal code. It is not possible to for a provincial law to supersede the federal criminal code. The Bill will need to be crafted in a way that provides safe haven for the infant but treat the safe haven as an exemption from the federal criminal code as that would not stand a legal test.



"I'm Legit", a song by Darryl McDaniels and Zara H. Phillips, mixes the rap of McDaniels (an adoptee and also known as 'DMC') and the rock of Ms. Phillips (an adoptee and the Profile Personality for the Fall 2007 issue of Adoption Circles- #45)

Phillips:

Some nights I'm tossing and turning in my bed,
imagining your face,
But I know what I'm up against
Feels like I'm climbing a mountain,
swimming upstream,
Hold me I'm falling, I'm falling
further away

Tell me do you remember, when you're on the streets?
Do you look for me the way I look for you?
How I wish that I knew, I wish I knew.

Evening comes, can you hear me call for you?
in the hope that you will somehow hear me too,
I'm under the moonlight, what's clear in this dark night,
I need to know you and tell you that I'm okay.

Tell me do you remember, when you're on the streets?
Do you look for me the way I look for you?
How I wish that I knew, I wish I knew.

Do you wish too?

DMC's rap lyrics:

At nite I can't sleep, I toss and turn
My true reality is what I wanna learn
But they are tellin' me I can't see the proof
On a little piece of paper that holds the truth
Of who I am and what I be
Yeah I'm living but I'm missin' a part of me
I have a right to know where I come from
It's a human right just like everyone's
I'm not ashamed that I was born
And the way that I came here is not wrong
My identity must identify
With every part of me 'til the day I die
In my own country I am living a lie
Cause they're ashamed of me and I don't know why
It's the lies that cause all the guilt and shame
But the truth will set us free and kill all the pain
I'm legit, I'm legit
Not illegitimate and I will not quit
This rhyme I will spit until I get
My original birth certificate

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

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

- ✓ Subscription to **Adoption Circles**, a quarterly publication
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