

ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

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Mary Ann Hernandez
Dubeski

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ADOPTION CIRCLES

Summer 2010
Publisher
Forget Me Not Family Society

President
MARNIE TETZ
marnietetz@shaw.ca

Vice-President
AUDREY HARRINGTON
ahhfashionsathome@shaw.ca

Treasurer
GAIL DAVIES
g.davies@telus.net

Secretary
GLORIA SWEDER
gsweder@shaw.ca

Directors

SANDRA WALTERS
walters.sandra@shaw.ca

AMY NEWMAN
info@nrsfind.com

HEATHER ALBRECHT
chacha2@shaw.ca

BERNADETTE RYMER
bjrymer@telus.net

Newsletter Editor
SANDRA WALTERS

Newsletter Layout
LYNN MAYHEW

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#102- 1860 Southmere Cres. E.,
Surrey, B.C. V4A 6Y7
Telephone: 604-828-9577
Fax: 604-531-2511
Residents of the U.S., please send U.S. funds.

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walters.sandra@shaw.ca or by mail care of the Society at the address noted above.

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 Cloverdale
- Support and information through a Facebook page
- 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

The Forget Me Not Society reserves the right to edit all material submitted on the basis of space, relevance, and suitability. **Please note that the material published in the Newsletter, including the article by the Editor, does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Forget Me Not Family Society.**



President's Message *Marnie Tetz*

I am now the President of the FMNFS. What is that about? I still am thinking that I'm the adoptee who walked through the doors in Cloverdale in 2001. Confused about who I was and what I wanted. What I was learning about, and what those that I was learning about (my family of origin) wanted to

share... or not. Does that sound like a ramble from a confused person?

I think it sounds like the ramble of a person who has had their life affected by adoption.

Undisclosed.

What does that word mean?

Sandra Walters, our editor, gives one word as the topic of the next issue of the newsletter. That word can mean any number of things to those that choose to respond and submit an article to that issue. Submissions to the newsletter are always welcome. Sandra also encourages those that agree or disagree with her editorial or any of the articles in "Adoption Circles" to share their thoughts. I believe that that is what makes our newsletter as good as it is. This is a forum that is open to publish any respectful thoughts and views. Please note that what is printed in "Adoption Circles" is not necessarily the views or opinions of the Forget Me Not Family Society.

Undisclosed, what does that mean?

I have thought for some time what that meant to me. In the end it meant something very personal. When I was contacted

in March of 2000 by the Post Adoption Registry in Alberta, that I needed to call them, I of course thought that they had a match for my mother. That didn't prove to be the case. They had a brother who had also registered. After a gulp, I was thrilled. I had a sibling that was wanting contact. Long story short, I told my sister, (adopted sister, the one I grew up with... Wendy) she was thrilled and supportive... My adoptive mother was anything but, she wasn't supportive... thrilled... happy... or understanding. She was totally not understanding. *"Why would I have wanted to do this. Especially after all of these years"*. She had no idea that Wendy and I had snooped in our parent's file box, and gotten what little information we could almost 20 years earlier. And why would we have told her? We both knew that even though we had been told at an early age that we were adopted, that adoption wasn't a topic to be discussed. Unless we wanted to go to the warm and fuzzy place... the 'happy place'. This was when our Mum would tell us about how happy they were to have their two girls, and would share the story of the day they had picked each of us up.

I disclosed to our adoptive mother that I had looked for and found my family of birth/origin. I also suffered the ramifications of that disclosure. My adoptive mum was less than pleased, she was hurt, she was angry. She didn't get it. She made this all about her. She didn't understand why I needed to know where I came from. She didn't understand why I had waited so long. Little did she know that I had, that both of her daughters had, started our searches many years earlier. We didn't tell her because we already had that 'vibe' from an early age, that this just wasn't something that 'happy' adoptees did. And heaven knew, we had to be 'happy' adoptees. Even though as a young child it was obvious I wasn't happy... another topic for another issue.

And so, Wendy, chose not to disclose... she was 'undisclosed' to our mother, the mother that raised us. After witnessing how our mother treated me, how she reacted to my reunion, my sister decided to have her reunion and not let our adopted mother know. In some ways I totally got/get that. Why would she go through what I had? She got to be the good

daughter, never having searched, always happy with who she was and where she came from. My sister was the good daughter, I was the difficult one. And yet that did hurt me. If my sister had have 'come clean' with her reunion, our adoptive mother would have known that I wasn't the 'bad' one. She would have known that it was normal for those of us who are adopted to want to know where we come from. Or at least in our family of two adoptees the percentage would have been more in my favor... 100%. I would have had an ally in this journey of reunion.

Many adopted adults don't search until their adoptive parents have passed away. For me, I didn't think about how a reunion would have affected my adoptive parents. Then again maybe my sister and I did and knew that we had to 'snoop' as adults to find what information our adoptive parents had about us and our adoption. However, when I was contacted by the Post Adoption Registry that there was a match, I thought that my adoptive mum would 'get' it. Sadly she didn't, and so my sister learned from my mistake in disclosing, that being undisclosed was the better choice.

As always, Sandra has chosen a topic that I hope will encourage thought, empathy, and a look inside of ourselves as to what the journey of reunion means to each of us.

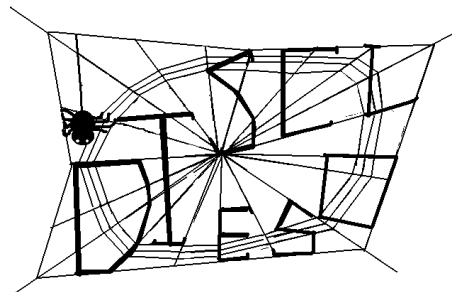
After writing this I sent it to Wendy to see what she thought of it, this was her response:

"I am sad that I couldn't stand by you with coming clean with Mum. At the time I wasn't so much thinking about you but thinking if I said anything I would be back in that place that I would be in whenever I displeased Mum. I didn't know how I could handle it again, she would make me feel sooooo bad, like whatever I did was the most terrible thing in the world and the guilt would take over so bad. I wish I could have been braver and more grown up and stood up to her with you. That would have really validated what you had done. I'm so sorry I couldn't do that. Even looking back on that I'm still not sure I could have told her."

Adoption Circles focuses on the concept of "undisclosed" as it relates to adoption for this summer edition. Mothers who did not tell their spouse or subsequent children that they placed a child for adoption, or adoptive parents who choose not to reveal the truth of adoption to their adopted child or others, or adoptees who try to obscure the fact that they were relinquished are all aspects of this concept. And, as usual, we have a number of different perspectives discussed in the various articles.



Walters' Web
Sandra Walters



As an adoptee, I see this failure to disclose the truth as examples of people buying into the shame game. The mothers

who fail to disclose to those people closest to her have fallen into believing that having a child outside a marriage relationship is shameful. Adoptive parents have to buy into either the shame of infertility, or the shame of relinquishing a child, in order to feel compelled to hide the fact of adoption from the adoptee and others. And, of course, the longer that this secret is kept, the harder it is to come clean because the question will always be: why wasn't this very significant fact disclosed earlier? And with adoptees, we must have bought into the concept of personal rejection in order to find the concept of relinquishment objectionable. In other words, if our birth family voluntarily relinquished us to adoption, they must have been rejecting us personally and we find that hurtful.

In my view, we will have truly started to make progress when we break away from the old thinking, when we refuse to buy into the shame associated with adoption and we look at what is truly best for everyone, including the child, in a 'crisis' pregnancy situation. As Albert Einstein has been quoted as saying, "...we can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." We have the opportunity to be leaders in looking at pregnancy/parenting in a bold new way. I look for the day when the community celebrates pregnancy, no matter what the circumstances, and seeks to support the parent(s), and the entire extended family, in fulfilling their role. Rather than being a horrible crisis, and something to be avoided, the prospect of a new, unique person entering the world could be a joyous occasion, if we all choose to see it that way. When prospective adoptive parents do not regard the facade of genetic offspring as essential for their self-esteem and might consider caring for children without yearning for pride of ownership. And when adoptees can take the "rejected" chip off their shoulders and admit that in order to have been available for adoption someone in their birth families did not want a child at that time. Then, in my view, we can start to ask hard questions and to make decisions based on what is truly best for the child, and not based on protecting someone's pride or sense of status.

Several years ago I gave a speech to a group of women about my personal experience with a 'crisis' pregnancy. I started by introducing myself as having been an "...unwanted child". A couple of women approached me after to thank me for my frank comments and then added, with a hug, that I couldn't have been an "unwanted" child. I had never met these women before and had not shared the details of my coming into the world- how could they possibly know if I was wanted by my family or not? All I had disclosed in my discussion was that I was an adoptee. Were they saying that all children are wanted by their mothers? That's certainly not true. We wouldn't have mothers making over 100,000 trips to abortion clinics in Canada every year if that were the case. Or, were they saying that I must have been wanted because I wasn't aborted? Even though I wasn't aborted, I would not have been available for adoption by strangers if even one adult in my extended birth family stepped up and made a commitment to take care of me, or had "wanted" me.

In my case, my mother did not disclose the fact of her pregnancy to anyone in my birth family, so no one else in my extended family was given that opportunity to choose. My birth father, a slew of aunts and uncles, and my biological grandparents on both sides never knew I existed. The way I look at it, my mother was blessed with a child and my mother gave away that child to strangers. I was not wanted by her. If there wasn't as much shame associated with conceiving a child out of a marriage relationship, she might have wanted me, or she might have told her family about me and given them a choice to care for me. As it was, she's sure her parents, especially her father, would have 'disowned' her if they had found out. So, in her case, even if there had been community supports for single parents at that time, she might not have wanted me. If my father had been an eligible bachelor like he claimed to be, they both might have wanted me. But, my mother's circumstances and the pressures by society in Canada in 1961 to view her pregnancy as shameful and unacceptable resulted in me being an unwanted child.

By saying that, I don't feel personally rejected. As respected adoption psychotherapist, Joe Soll, says: we can't be 'rejected' by people who do not know who we are. My mother did not know me as a person at that time. Rather, she rejected being a single, unwed parent and assuming on-going responsibility for a child, and that child happened to be me. If her pregnancy and the prospect of a child being born were, rather, seen as a blessing to her and the community, the outcome may have been very different for her, for me, and for many other mothers and their lost children. We who have been impacted by these destructive attitudes, who have felt and witnessed the pain, can work to change them for the future. We can refuse to shy away from difficult questions.

When the child who gets delivered to strangers later speaks up and says things like: "...I was unwanted by my extended family" and "...our society endorses unwanted children", things get messy. The idea of unwanted babies/children is distasteful. How can a civilized society encourage birth families to not want, keep, and care for their children? How can we encourage families to relinquish their parenting rights and hand over their children to strangers? There are cultures and religions in which adoption is unheard of, or where the act of transferring a child to be raised by complete strangers is, itself, seen as shameful. The meaning attributed to the idea of adoption in some of these other systems is that the biological extended family has failed in its responsibilities to the child.

We can choose to change our attitudes. In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the family is recognized as the crucial social unit and the family unit is referred to in many of its basic principles, or "articles". If we were to shift our emphasis on the care for a child from the parents to the extended family, then we would naturally look to the child's aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents to assume responsibility at any time that the parents cannot. There are countless advantages for the child in staying connected to his or her genetic family with opportunities for mirroring of personality characteristics and traits, and

possibilities for later contact with biological parents. Instead of talking about an outmoded concept of a "village", we could shift to a meaningful statement that "...it takes a family to raise a child", with the associated expectation that when there is a pregnancy, the entire extended family is looked at to take responsibility for the child. We can each choose today to change our perspective- this is how a single "man in the

mirror" can impact the world. Then, we might actually hope for the day when there will be no "unwanted" children. 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

Adoption & The Missionary Position- Part IV

Presentation in Dublin, Ireland 2003

by Father Tom Brosnan

As continued from the Spring 2010 issue:

" It is dangerous to employ hyperbole when speaking of adoption, and I do not intend to insinuate that adoptive parents are like slaveholders. But I do believe the system of closed adoption, of sealed and altered records, which employs a subterfuge which in effect intentionally robs the adopted of the knowledge of their natal identity – I do intend to indict that system as an utterly cruel one which should be abolished whether enshrined in civil or church or religious law. It's time. It is time."

... One poignant example of the cruelty that secrets effect, intentionally or not, can be seen in the area of names – so fundamental and problematic for adoptive families. Here are a few stories not necessarily about adoption – but nonetheless about adoption:

In 1988 I had the good fortune to be studying in Korea during the Olympics. It was a great moment for Korea – the feelings of national pride were palpable as you walked through the streets. That was made clear during the opening ceremonies of the Olympics when an elderly Korean gentleman lit the Olympic flame and the entire nation, it seemed, began to chant his name. At first it was clear he was chosen because he was the first Korean to have won a gold medal years back. But there was more to this than simply a man who ran fast. It had been the 1936 Olympics. At that time Korea was a colony of Japan. Korea remained annexed to Japan by force of arms from 1910 through 1945. Japan subjugated Korea, not only through military force, but through a psychological possession of sorts. All Koreans had to learn Japanese. School was conducted in Japanese. If a group of Korean men were found conversing in Korean on the street they were arrested and imprisoned. And then the ultimate subjugation – every Korean had to take a Japanese name. This was especially humiliating. Remember that, as a Confucian people, Koreans venerate their deceased by reverencing the nameplate representing the ancestor. And so when this Korean man won the gold medal in 1936 he had to receive his award while standing under the Japanese flag. And it was his adopted Japanese name, not his given Korean name, that was broadcast throughout the world as the gold medal winner. In 1988 the memory of Japanese

oppression was still very much alive in middle-aged and elderly Koreans. And so, as if to right a terrible injustice, a nation chanted their hero's Korean name (Son Ki-chong) as he lit the Olympic flame – as if they were righting a terrible injustice, reclaiming what was stolen, all through the power of names.

In Helen Fremont's memoir of her family, entitled *After Long Silence* (Delta Dell, 1999), the importance of names and what they mean when they are lost take on poignant meaning. *After Long Silence* is Helen Fremont's memoir of discovering as an adult, after having been raised Catholic, that her parents were really Jewish and how she uncovered the story of their terrible ordeal before and after the war in Poland. How they kept their lives and history a secret from their daughters and their neighbors and friends. How her parents, on moving to America became Catholic, brought their children up Catholic, kept Gentile friends. Helen Fremont realizes that there were hints and signs all along the way that things didn't quite fit, but it is only in hindsight -- after you know the truth -- that things fall into place, that they finally make sense. One poignant episode is about the author's mother and her aunt – her mother's sister. During the Nazi occupation of their town, Nazi sympathizers massacred a large number of Jews in the town square. Both the author's mother and aunt survived the massacre, protected from detection by the murdered dead who covered their bodies. Her aunt told her the story fifty years after the event – after the author confronted her parents and aunt about their history. Her aunt confessed, in shame, that since the day of the massacre fifty years previous, she could not remember her own sister's name. For the rest of their lives, she called her sister by the nickname she used that day during the massacre. She was too ashamed to tell her sister she could not remember. The author goes on to say: "What I didn't realize was that all our names had been recently invented. My mother had survived the war using a false name and papers; she had escaped from the Nazis dressed as an Italian soldier, under yet another name and false papers. My parents had changed our family name upon applying for citizenship in the United States. "To this day", Fremont confesses, "...I (too) don't even know what my mother's real name is."

I came across another story about names and exile in a very unexpected way a few months ago when a young man joined

the convert classes at my parish. It was odd that he should be there since mine is a predominantly Hispanic parish in the heart of Brooklyn; he was from Westchester, an affluent suburb of New York City. He was not of any religion but had met a girl who was catholic and from my area and so agreed to take classes to see if he might be baptized. His name is Z. That's it, just Z. His parents had just given him the letter Z as a name, which turns out to be a hinge on which a very interesting story turns. Z's aunt (Thea Halo) wrote a book a few years back entitled *Not Even My Name* (Picador Press, 2000) about her mother, Z's paternal grandmother, and her story of forced exile from her native village in northern Turkey in 1920. Z's grandmother is a Pontian Greek who, like the Armenians, were rounded up and sent on death marches if not outright killed by the newly installed government of the man who would become known as Atatürk. The story begins with her and her daughter returning just a few years ago to Turkey to try to locate the village where she lived until she was ten before she lost all her family. Fearing that her

daughter would starve to death, Z's grandmother's mother gave her to an Assyrian woman who turned out to be very cruel. The Assyrian could not pronounce Z's grandmother's Greek name so she renamed her Sano -- a name which Z's grandmother kept -- as if to remember the horror she went through. It was the woman's cruelty that led Sano to run away and so take fate into her own hands. The rest of her journey is quite remarkable as well. She is still living and will be her grandson's godmother at his baptism this Easter when he will, I suppose, have to choose a name for baptism or at least fathom the mystery of why his parents never gave him a full name. But maybe he will be baptized just Z -- carrying with him into eternity the reminder of all that loss of name can mean.

When I found my birthmother, she told me she named me for her brother, a Jesuit priest. Never underestimate the power of names.

To be continued in the next edition of Adoption Circles... stay tuned.

DID CHANGING MY NAME CHANGE WHO I AM?

by Marnie Tetz

Most of us have two or three names, unless of course we are *Cher* or *Sting*, or *Byonce*. We have our first name, middle name and then family name. Sometimes when we marry we become a hyphenated name. Usually though it's all pretty basic: Marnie Dawne Tetz used to be Marnie Dawne McElroy until she married Rodney Gordon Tetz (please note that only his mother can call him Rodney... lol). However, what if Marnie had been someone before she was Marnie? What if she had been a whole different person for her first 16 days? Would that mean that, for those 16 days, she was one person, and then on the 17th became someone else? Just a question...

When our name changes because someone else wants to change it, and because we are too little to know, does it change who we are? I was born and then named Fay(e)* Jorgenson. So for 16 days, that's who I was. I don't know if the nurses called me Fay(e) or if they called me baby A,B or C because that was the crib I was in. I don't know if my mother called me Fay(e), she wasn't able to go there with me when I met her, and for the time that I knew her... or for the short time that she was able to acknowledge that she was my mother.

Sooooooooo, when I was picked up at the home by my adoptive parents and then named Marnie, was Fay(e) gone? Did she cease to exist or was I (Fay(e) Jorgenson) Marnie Dawne McElroy? No... wait !! I couldn't have been, the judge said I was Marnie. Fay(e) Jorgenson was gone, she didn't exist anymore. Wow! Just like that, Fay(e) was gone. Where did she go? Did she continue to be inside of me? Was she the one that was so angry, and so sad that her mother was gone, and that she was confused with being where she was and who she was? I wonder...

What is in a name? Do we change when our name changes? Does it matter if the name change is voluntary or if it's

sanctioned by the powers that be... and adoptive parents? I wonder... **Because I wondered, I asked a few other adopted adults about their original names. Like my adoptive sister, Wendy, whose name was Carol Jean Cox.**

"No, I never felt like a Carol and I don't really like the name Jean. I do think it was neat that Ella (birth/ natural mother) named me after the lady who took her in, in Edmonton, her name was Jean. When Ella arrived at the bus depot in Edmonton from Calgary, she looked in the paper to see if there was an ad for someone who would take in an unwed mother in exchange for babysitting or what have you. Ella trustingly made the call to Jean. Jean and her husband picked Ella up at the depot, provided her with a home in exchange for babysitting until the night they drove Ella to the hospital where she gave birth to Carol (Wendy). The first thing I thought of when I read the name was... in elementary school there was a Carol there and I didn't like her at all. Thought she was very snooty and all. She is the only Carol I think that I know. Then rather a weird thing. The first time I met Ella I had all my papers with me and she was looking them over and saw my birth name and she said... "your name was supposed to be Caroline"... Now I don't remember really looking again at my papers to see if the name had been typed (which I don't think it was) or whose hand writing it was. I have the papers put away right now. But maybe it was someone else filling out the forms as she was talking to Ella. So, I don't feel like a Caroline either."

I then asked Gloria Sweder, secretary of the Society; her adoptive parents had kept the name that Gloria had been given by her mother. I wanted to know what Gloria's thoughts were.

Continued on page 12



Poetry

UNDISCLOSED

by Bernadette Rymer

Unperson: It felt like that to me,
You will not love or feel: denied my right to be.

You are not mother as are your sisters, no love or grief can you spend.
Your life will carry on just fine, you'll forget the whole event.

You must keep what happened as secret for if you were to talk,
No man would want you for his wife, a lonely life you'll walk.

I can't celebrate her birth or life, as year after year goes by.
No happy birthday darling, each Mother's Day denied.

Love, grief and always wondering, forever in my heart.
For not one moment of one day, were we ever far apart.

They were right about one thing: my life it did go on.
Devoid of joy and laughter, but hope was never gone.

I always knew that one day we would meet again.
Free at least to create our life as we should have way back when.

Then buoyed by courage and desire to meet and know each other,
And through the long reunion process, finally proclaiming daughter and mother.

My secret life is over and done, my real self now unfurled.
Now I can celebrate and sing "What a wonderful, wonderful world."

Focus: Undisclosed

Conflict of Two Moms - An Adoptee's Dilemma

by Joe Soll, LCSW, DAPA,

Author of "Adoption Healing... a path to recovery", and Co-author of "Evil Exchange" and "Fatal Flight"



Our first moms need to accept that we can love our adoptive moms.

Our adoptive moms need to accept that we can love our first moms.

We adoptees need to accept that we can love both moms.

As adoptees, we are usually socialized to believe we can only love one mother, yet we are told we are adopted and that our first mother couldn't or wouldn't keep us or is dead etc., and that is supposed to be the end of it. But it cannot be. Bonding is a physiological and psychological process that begins in the womb and one part of the process is that babies are born loving their mothers. Then how could we not think about them? Why can't we love both of them?

Since to children growing up, their mothers are all powerful goddesses, children believe they know everything. Therefore to an adopted child growing up, if they think about their first mom with love, their adoptive mom will know and get angry and throw them out. The adoptee knows she lost her first family for some reason and doesn't want to be "re-abandoned" no matter what. So, the adoptee has to stop thinking about her first mom. To complicate matters, if the adoptee thinks about her adoptive mom with love, her first mom will know and not return. All of the above is usually unconscious but causes a powerful conflict that is impossible to resolve. It gets buried.

Skip forward to adulthood. If the adoptee can overcome the fear of "abandonment" enough to search, the process and hopefully reunion will trigger the conflict of two moms and an inner battle of loyalty will often ensue. If I love this one, that one will "reject" me and vice versa.

To further complicate matters, it's common for our adoptive parents to be terrified we will leave them for our first parents.

Plus:

Our adoptive moms are often jealous of the love we have for our first parents. Our first moms are often jealous of the love we have for our adoptive parents.

Our adoptive moms are often jealous of the fact that our first moms gave birth to us.

Our first moms are jealous of our adoptive moms because they got to raise us.

Our adoptive moms are often angry at our first moms because they gave birth to us. Our first moms are often angry at our adoptive moms because they got to raise us.

And the adoptee is caught in the middle of this very powerful, emotional conflict. For the adoptee, the usually unconscious struggle seems like life and death. If I choose a relationship with my first mom over my adoptive mom, I will surely die. The fear is that terrifying and no logic in the world can get most adoptees past that without help. Also, most adoptees have rage at their first mom for leaving in the beginning and cannot trust, no matter what they are told, that their first mom won't leave again. It is often, again unconscious, fear of being loved by their first mom that tips the loyalty scales towards their adoptive mom. This is not about whom one loves more but who is safer to one's inner child who is terrified about being left again.

This conflict can be assuaged for the adoptee if she is willing to dig into the conflict with some inner child work.

For the two moms, understanding the adoptee conflict will lessen their confusion and pain.

For all involved, we need to understand that we adoptees can love two moms without lessening the love one has for the other.

SECRECY

by Laura Forrest, Reunited Adoptee

For many of us in the adoption triad (natural parents, adoptive parents and adoptees), we have lived a life of extreme secrecy. That being said, most adoptees were aware of their adoption and of course the natural parents knew they had given up a child. Pretty much this is where it stops. No one ever talked to me about my adoption, nor was I ever asked how I felt about it.

The issues that have come up in the Forget Me Not Family Society meetings lately have inspired me to write this. I have met many wonderful people through this journey of search and reunion and I have learned a lot from everyone. It has become quite evident to me that we all have lived similar patterns throughout our lives. Everyone has a different story to tell, yes, but we have all been in the same boat.

It's amazing how most adoptees that I have met felt very alone when growing up. Society made it very difficult for us to talk about our adoptions openly. For many of us, we were told to be happy with our current circumstances and to move on with life as if nothing had happened. We have all become very good at creating walls around us, and living in a state of denial, especially when growing up. We strive to do well in life in the hope to appease society to gain approval. For me, I buried myself in my work and never really felt like I could settle. I was willing to do anything to fill the gap that lingered inside me.

It is clear I am not the only one out there. Nothing I did before initiating my search worked. The missing piece of our lives is a big thing. A lot of adoptees feel this

intense loyalty to our adoptive families. We don't want to hurt them so we refrain from learning about ourselves. At what cost? Sometimes the adoptive parents can make us feel guilty for wanting to find our natural parents, and we shut ourselves down. Some adoptive families do encourage their children to search, more so nowadays because the records are opened. It really depends. That being said, lots of us have come out of the woodwork and it's amazing to see so many people wanting to walk this path of self discovery.

The struggles we go through throughout our lives is very real. We are constantly battling with ourselves and others for understanding and acceptance. It wasn't until I met everyone in Forget Me Not, when I realized we all understand each other. The support and love is indescribable. I have seen many walls be brought down and the self- transformation is something to be embraced. No one said search and reunion was going to be easy, in fact it's very hard. The emotional

rollercoaster we go through is very intense, and once we break down that door, there is no turning back. How can we? The changes that happen to us are the gift.

It takes a lot of strength and courage to walk down this road. We are all very strong and we are survivors. Not one of us ran away from this issue, we faced it head on. Even through the most painful of situations we never gave up. I commend all of you for being willing to open yourselves up and admit to yourselves the truth. We have had to explain ourselves many times to people who don't get it, but all-in-all it's worth it. Thank you all for your support.



adoption

poem

ANNUL
DIGNITY.
OBFUSCATE
PARENTS:
TRAGICALLY
INCORPORATE
OWNERSHIP.
N-WORD.

Sandra Walters 2005

Personality Profile

Mary Ann Hernandez Dubeski



1) How have you personally been impacted by adoption?

I grew up believing I was the natural child of my parents, Frank and Lydia. It was only when I found my Ontario adoption order in my mother's apartment, whilst she was in hospital with cancer, that I found out the woman I'd always called "mother" wasn't my biological mother. The year was 2008. I was

nearly fifty years old. I had just become a late discovery adoptee.

Interestingly, I was not completely surprised, and I was somewhat elated to find this out. It made sense of a lot of things which went on through the years.

By way of explanation of the geography in my life, I was born in Manila, Republic of the Philippines where my Canadian parents lived, and where my father was a career employee with a multinational oil company. We lived there until I was four when my parents brought me back to Ontario, where I was officially "adopted". Then we returned to the Far East and lived twice more in the Philippines, twice in Singapore and once in Hong Kong. We returned to Canada in 1972, when my father retired from the company and have lived in British Columbia ever since.

My father was deceased for two years when I found out, and my mother was developing severe dementia, so we were never able to really talk it over, talk it out. She did grudgingly relate some "facts" to me about my biological mother. But our former mother-daughter relationship was forever changed. Though I kept up my duties as her daughter, it was not the same as before. In my eyes, both my parents were totally transformed when I discovered the big lie they had perpetrated on me. My adoptive mother passed away in 2009.

Through asking her relatives, I was told that my father was indeed my biological father but my real mother was someone "hired" to have a baby for them when they were living overseas. Everyone else in the family "knew". All the cousins were told by their parents, who were sworn to secrecy by my dad when I was about two years old.

It might not have hurt so much had everyone else been kept in the dark. But the fact that all the relatives knew (plus family friends, acquaintances and neighbours) was humiliating to me. My real mother was somebody else! They'd known for years! And here I was at fifty, just finding out!

This knowledge has changed my life. The impact of finding out so late in life was devastating, in the beginning. But it has turned out to be a blessing, as time goes on. I felt angry, hurt and betrayed. I grieved for over a year for everything that had died: my "parents", my identity, my sense of "family", my sense of trust.

I have survived the storm and feel much stronger than before. It has been two years. Time has given me perspective. But it has taken a lot of hard work to come to peace with it. I journalled fiendishly, read books on adoption, co-dependency, trauma. I talked to people willing to listen to me, tried acupuncture, exercise, prayer, meditation, and yoga. There have been very many dark days in the last two years. Fortunately, my husband has been understanding and has given me encouragement to find healing.

I needed to do these self-help things because I was totally "at sea". I didn't know who I was. I felt like I was being pulled backward through a small locked keyhole and it physically and mentally hurt. That's the image that still sticks with me....

However, I do want to stress, that **I am happy, and have always been happy, to know the truth.** This may sound contradictory, but there has never been a second in which I had wished I'd never found out. Emotionally and mentally I was suffering. **But spiritually, I was soaring. I felt free, unshackled for the first time in my life!** It's very hard to explain in words.

My one regret is that I wish I had known earlier in life when my identity wasn't so "fossilized". It would have been easier to adjust. I still forget from time to time, that some "facts" are no longer true. Being told the truth as a young child is much better.

I "nearly knew" at age seventeen. My adoptive aunt told me, there was some "friction" between my adoptive mother and her brother over my not knowing. In retrospect seventeen would have been a perfect time for me to find out: just before adulthood, before attempting university, five years before marrying. It would have been good for my parents to come to terms with their issues (their hurts and disappointments in not having their own child).

Finding birth family thirty years ago might have been more successful. I did get my original birth certificate from the Philippine government, thereby learning the identity of my mother. But fifty years has passed, and though I've hired detectives to search for my birth family, I have not been successful. My parents were probably most afraid of this. They did not want to "share" me, or "lose" me, after going through the trouble and expense of rearing me. And after all, I was his child. Why would I need my real mother when my stepmother could be "the mother"?

Besides the emotional consequences of not knowing the truth, there is the fact that I was living with a false medical history. Luckily, I am relatively healthy, as are my children.

Growing up with a false ethnicity has been "interesting." My adoptive parents brought me up to believe I was half Irish-half Russian. That's what I would have been if I were their "real" child. My biological mother was a Filipina. Many people pointed out through the years that I look like a mestisa: a person who is half-Caucasian, half-Filipino. My adoptive mother always explained that she was Russian from Siberia, i.e. "Asiatic" Russian, and that is why I looked half Asian. Even though my adoptive mother and I looked like we each could be half-"something", we did not resemble each other.

There is such a rich cultural heritage in the Philippines, that I've always "felt something in my bones". I loved the country when we lived there and I identified with the people who are, generally, optimistic, passionate, family-oriented, musical, artistic, and very sociable. I now know why I had such strong affection for the Philippines when we were living there. It's too bad I was not allowed to learn the language or have Filipino friends. All I can say is being half-Filipino agrees with me. I'm proud to be who I am and have even reclaimed my Philippine citizenship under a new dual citizenship law.

On one adoption website, there is an article with a list of statements to help you determine if you were adopted. One of the points is : "You may be adopted if you've never seen your birth certificate." I never saw mine though I asked about it numerous times. My adoptive mother told me I didn't need one since I had a passport and a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship.

"Your birth certificate had to be surrendered to obtain the Canadian Citizenship papers", she told me (possibly, a lie, or half-truth). Because my original identification papers were surrendered, my up-to-date passport surfaced whenever identification was needed, especially for school registration, etc. We travelled a lot, so our passports never expired.

My parents kept a whole constellation of lies and half-truths going for over fifty years. It must have taken a lot of energy. I often wonder if it was because of this that they missed out on a contented and peaceful old age. They both lived into their eighties in relatively good health. But both were typically unhappy for many decades, even though they had good health,

the material comforts of an interesting well-traveled life, grandchildren, and an attentive, loving daughter, like me.

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

My involvement in the adoption field has been primarily through searching for birth family, and seeking help for the trauma of finding out so late in life. I literally "fell" into an identity crisis and sought professional help, but could find no psychologist, psychiatrist, or counselor who thought there were any significant "issues" connected with adoption, or the late discovery of it.

I first visited a registered psychologist who told me, "If you had loving parents, there should be no problems...." . I then saw a psychiatrist who said to me, "What you have is *merely* an identity crisis....You seem resilient. You'll get over it. When we're adults, we don't need our families.....There is no trauma associated with adoption..." This psychiatrist admitted he had not looked at the literature in over seventeen years, since he had entered practice.

The most telling comment came from the registered psychologist, "In our culture, we lie to children all the time. We make them believe in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny. *It's fun for us.* It's an accepted part of growing up.... We find out the truth as we grow older and go on.." And finally a clinical counselor, whom I did continue seeing regularly, told me, after several sessions, "What's important is what we tell ourselves." I'd been telling myself the wrong thing for fifty years, that's why I was so messed up! She still didn't understand. None of them seemed interested in finding out more about adoption issues. Why?

Having trained as a counselor myself, I turned to the Internet and found: The Primal Wound, and Coming Home to Self, by Nancy Verrier; Twice Born, by B.J. Lifton ; Adoption Healing, by Joe Soll; and many other articles on websites.

There was also latediscovery.org moderated by Ron Morgan. Ron Morgan is the person responsible for coining the term "Late Discovery Adoptee". His story is very similar to mine. The group has about 200 members and grows every time someone finds out they were adopted and finds the group. The stories of the members all have a striking similarities in that "...all the relatives knew and were sworn to secrecy by the adoptive parents."

It's such a common theme, this secrecy thing. I've figured the reason adoptive parents "get away with it" is because it seems acceptable to society to keep the "dastardly truth" from those born out of wedlock.

It's interesting to note that this kind of secrecy is not a remnant of the past, but continues happening today. When I tell my story to others, invariably someone will say that they "know of" an adoptive parent who is "never going to tell their adopted child". They are certain that their "child "will never find out." All I can say is, "How do you know they will never

find out?.....and why be so cruel?....." Yet, in all cases, here in front of me, is a friend of this adoptive parent telling me-- a complete stranger-- another adoptee's very personal secret.

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

FAN (Filipino Adoptee Network): based in the U.S. which helps adoptees from the Philippines and their adoptive parents better understand the culture.

Forget Me Not Family Society: My husband and I came down to the Nancy Verrier workshop as a way to help bring closure to my discovery and to meet Nancy. We read and re-read her second book Coming Home To Self to help us understand why I was the way I was. Just because I didn't know I was adopted, I still had all the issues. I still suffered the primal wound.

www.latediscovery.org : mentioned previously

ISRR (International Soundex Reunion Registry): registered as searching for birth family with this not-for-profit volunteer-run registry.

two yahoo groups: the registry and 1950 adoptees search groups where I've received excellent free search help from knowledgeable and skilled search angels.

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

This isn't really about traditional adoption, but it's related. It's

about people creating children using ART (Artificial Reproductive Technologies).

There are no international rules being enforced to protect the right-to-know-the-truth of persons conceived by ART. The United Nations has a section about protecting family and heritage in the Declaration Of The Rights of The Child, but I don't think many fertility clinics or infertile couples pay attention to children's rights. They are only interested in "getting a baby". In many countries records are destroyed after two to six years, or not kept at all. And many prospective "parents" prefer to have a baby without the complications of traditional adoption. This is planned secrecy.

Nowadays, non-related "parents" can assemble children from anonymous gametes (sperm, ova) and hire an anonymous surrogate. The rules allowing anonymity for donors in many countries means that these children, if they are ever told about their conception, will be prevented from ever finding out who their biological parents are. It's unfair to the persons who are "products" of this system.

If parents choose to keep mum about their child's conception, because there is no documentation, no "adoption record", the child would likely never "know the truth." I don't think this is a good thing, because I do believe that spiritually we are connected to those with whom we share our DNA .

Most of us *need* that knowledge. It's the foundation of our identity and how we each fit into the world. Witness the immense popularity of genealogy. So many of us are searching for ancestral roots. It's our connection to the human family, to our spirit, to our ancestors. It's comforting to know our history. I could go on and on about this, but I'll stop here.

...Continued from page 6 (.Did Changing My Name Change Who I Am?)

"Yes you are correct. My birth mom named me and my adoptive parents thought it was me so they kept it. And most definitely that always made me feel good. I can't imagine what it would feel like to find out that your name was changed by your adoptive parents. I think I would feel that something was stolen from me."

The next person I asked was Kimberley-Ann Jandl, a Society member who has been in reunion with her mother for a long time, and in reunion with her father for the past two years. Kimberley-Ann shared her thoughts on names and how she chose to incorporate them.

"I first saw my adoption papers and my birth name when I was about 10 years old (and not again until I was 29 when I requested my paperwork from the ministry). At that time, I don't remember feeling much about it, but made a great effort to memorize it. I DO remember using the name in my creative writing assignments and writing stories that were actually based on things I had done but didn't want to admit - maybe the 'other' side of me. It wasn't until after I was reunited with my mom that I started having issues with my name. And it wasn't even the name I was having issues with but that I felt as if I were two people. There was the me that I was raised as and the me that I was meant to be. Which was I? Eventually I realized that I was not one or the other but both. I decided to change

my unused first adoptive name Patricia (Ann was my middle name that I had always gone by) to Kimberley and leave it at that. I was not going to use it. At that decision I felt a sense of calm go through me. A little while later I still felt like I was denying a part of myself and decided to hyphenate it and use Kimberley-Ann. Now my name encompasses all of me, in the order I acquired those name - My birth name Kimberley, my adoptive name Ann, and my married name Jandl. I am a combination of all three. *When asked if I could use her name in the article this was her response:* "And of course it is fine to use my name. It's a great one, don't ya know?"

At this point in thinking and writing my article, I was getting such varied responses, and yet they weren't surprising... I asked another friend of mine. George Robinson, he was also born in the Beulah Home in Edmonton where I was born... except his mother had kept him for the first year of his life before she finally lost him to adoption. George didn't start out as George, he really was someone else, had another name for his first year of life...this is the what George had to say.

You were born Leo Burg, and remained Leo Burg for the first year of your life... correct? "That's right Marnie - I don't have any non-hypnotic memories of that time, but enjoy the knowledge that Dorothy gave this name to me. My only task now is still to find out where this Leo might have originated."

How did that make you feel knowing that you had had another name for your first year and then it was changed? “By the time that I found out how it had been changed, it was not a big deal... however, when I found out that I was not allowed to have all of the information that I wanted about my ancestry BOOM!!! It's taken me a long time to eject the anger for the incompetence and outright criminal activity associated with Alberta government adoptions and their concerted efforts to hide or not produce required documentation. Now I understand when I read a passage from Will and Ariel Durant's *The Story of Civilization* quoting Hindu religious thought from the sage Bhartri-hari: "Everything on earth gives cause for fear, and the only freedom from fear is to be found in the renunciation of all desire... Once upon a time the days seemed long to me when my heart was sorely wounded through asking favours from the rich; and yet again the days seemed all too short for me when I sought to carry out all my worldly desires and ends. But now as a philosopher I sit on a hard stone in a cave on the mountainside, and time and again I laugh when I think of my former life."

Hmmmm... so are you speaking of your former life when you were Leo? “No it's not just the Leo part I laugh at - the poor Robinsons had this adoption thing about secrecy and it nearly drove them crazy... and in the end it was just laughable. This and a lot of other things made most of my known life laughable... but you know what they say Marnie: comedy is a heartbeat away from tragedy. There was absolutely no joy associated with Dorothy's (George's mother) life right from the get go... AND I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHE WENT THROUGH so I can laugh right along with her.”

Do you feel like a Leo Burg, or do you feel like George Robinson... or are you the same person?

“I feel and act on the duality of my particular gift - notice that I consider it a "gift"... mainly because learning of my origins and all of the circumstances of the people around me from birth have given me a unique view of life - maybe not so unique as it is useful to help understand that it is possible to have more than one view of life at the same time... and by extension to accept other "double visions" like that of Northrup Frye and his helpful understanding of compassionate religious thought through outward rational investigation, experienced at the same time as an introspective and imaginative form of conscience”

Ok, now you are getting a bit deep for me... so at times you feel like you are two people? “What I'm getting at here Marnie is that your consciousness can be from internal sources as well as external (you know... all the now stuff that you have to pay attention to to stop you from going through the stop sign etc.) and that, if you are not driving and your mind has a choice, it will go both ways to come to some decision on what is true, real, right, believable, etc.”

If that's what you mean, I do get that... sometimes I don't know who I am... who I was or was supposed to be. So I have to just say... ok I'm me... What got me started on this name thing is that a woman who is a recent member to the group said when she first saw her paperwork with her birth name she said she felt odd, like she didn't know who she was... and so I've been stewing about writing something. Maybe I can't do this topic justice... “Interesting that you used the word "justice" here Marnie because I believe that this is linked to peoples' first reaction to finding a never-seen-before name that they have had in the past. It is the shock that the civilization and legal system that they live in would do this to them... not a surprise that a regular citizen wants to deal with. So if they have no experience with sadness, anger or the raw emotions connected with adoption and name changes etc, their lack of ability to

go inward for answers will make them unstable or struggle longer to get to that balanced place (you know that balanced place that you are now Marnie... and from which you can in fact "do this topic justice" after all)”

Do you think that you grew up to be who you were supposed to be even though your name is different, or do you think it matters? Have you thought of changing your name back? “I don't believe that I grew up to be who I was supposed to be because I do not believe/ have any faith in the doctrine that says everything is predetermined. I have wound up in the place that I should have been much earlier because I made it happen and did not accept what was handed me... nor do I accept today the lies that were used to maintain any sort of artificial arrangement known as adoption. No name change back... maybe a combination - Georgio Robinsburg :-)” George/ Leo Robinson/ Burg. As always, George had another spin on this topic of names...

The next person I asked about names was Jean Provance. Jean has shared art and articles with us over the years. You will know her as Kristen Petela, here is her response...

When you first saw your name... Jean Provance, did it seem right? “It's hard to remember exactly. I have to say I was glad to find out that I was not a Garvens (my mom's married name) and I know I loved Jean. It did seem very right to me. I love Provance, it totally reflects MY heritage. I wasn't keen on my middle name Louise at first but the more I thought about it the more it grew on me, Jean Louise is quite classy, classic even, very kind of old English. I know of other adoptees who hate their original names, I know of ones that were named by nurses or given a name just so there was something to identify them.”

Did it feel right, did you always know that you weren't really Kristen... I don't mean the person, but the name? Or did you look at the name and think wow, glad that's not my name? “I'm so relieved to see it go. I let go of a lot of baggage when I dropped the name. I cannot tell you how many people who knew me as a Kristen told me "that's such a snobby name" or "well it makes sense you weren't always a Kristen" or "you don't look like a Kristen". I've had people say those sorts of things before they knew I was adopted, before I told them I was renamed. I didn't know I was Jean until I was 21 but I had always wondered what sort of name I might have had. I was lied to about not being named. I recall many times wondering if I was an "Ann" or Ana. I think I thought I had a short name, but that could totally just have been me being a kid. I've always been sort of a tom boy. Jean fits, it captures it really well. I have to wonder if it had to do with the fact that my mom took so much in considering what she was going to name me, the final two were Jean Louise and Elisha. She said she knew which I was when she saw me. I have to believe there is something to that. There was some deep meaning for Mary when she named me, after her mother's sister. My adoptive parents just liked the name and thought it was a good name for a girl. They would have given the name to any girl who came into the family, I think.”

Like do you think that changing our name changes who we are? Or are we the same person anyway? “My administrative director showed me my time sheets going back through the last year. Now I started the legal process last October just for reference. Over time my handwriting got bigger and bigger. She commented that I just seem happier and that I was more confident and that she enjoyed the change. Her last statement was "...you just aren't playing the people-pleasing, adopted child role anymore". (Good timing eh?) I think it says a lot. I'm not a different person. I found a way to grow into myself, to not live in fear of what someone else thinks or what someone else wants. This was the biggest gift to myself that I could

possibly have given. Yes, it was scary at times. Yes, it was difficult and painstaking (three years in the making) and no, it wasn't a simple or quick decision. I think if we allow for it, we will become the person we were born to be. The process was different but my talents, my traits, my blood shows through, because I opened the door and allowed the real me out. There's nothing left to hide, no secrets, no pretending, nothing left to run from. I wish everyone could come to this place. It's quite peaceful, it's real, it's authentic. I want to be clear I don't know that changing one's name is for everyone or that it would bring them to the same place this has brought me but I hope they would be able to come to a similar place in their own way."

I know that we don't get to be who we really are because we are taken from our mums, and therefore we can't possibly be who we were supposed to be or who we could have been, but do you think that the name makes us a different person too? "I think the people doing the naming have huge influence on us. I think that their desires and hopes show through in how we are named and treated. We are nature and nurture. I think it's not 100% accurate to say that we don't get to be who we were supposed to be. I am kind and gentle and passionate like my natural family. I am that way because I found a way to just be me and cut the ties loose that held me to pretending, to people pleasing, to being someone I wasn't. I think it's about what we are willing to give to get what we want. I knew that my adoptive family was not going to like the change. I knew they wouldn't understand and wouldn't make an effort to understand. They tried to make it get ugly, they tried for drama and I refused to be dragged into that. I have not heard anything from them since the day I told them I was legally Jean Provance and Kristen Petela was no more. They are not going to be paying for or involved in my wedding... it was all their choice in how they reacted. In my process, I was willing and ready to give up the conditional love. I've concluded that real love, the unconditional type of love would manifest differently. I knew there would be anger but, if there was real love, they wouldn't throw me away and I was willing to take the risk. I didn't feel that, in the end, I would be losing anything. I don't have an inheritance. It's

money I've never had, so it's not a loss. I didn't plan on a wedding like they wanted so, again, it's not a loss. If their love was conditional then, again, I was only giving up the facade. I'm not saying that's easy or it's the path for everyone, but it's worked for me. I'm genuine, I'm authentic. I'm happier than I've ever been and I'm not letting people rain on my parade. I'm exactly who I was meant to be nowadays."

And so, after hearing what my friends and family had to say about names, I came to my own conclusion. At first I thought that this would be just a simple article... wondering about names, and if THEY can actually have the power to change who we are, when they themselves are changed. Do we lose who we are, who we were meant to be? I don't think so. I think that who we are from the beginning is in there, the nurturing we get as children is a large part in who we become. However I think for those who have the desire and courage to look within, to really look within, they will find that the person they are meant to be, and that original name is a part of it... as Georgio Robinsburg said "...enjoy the knowledge that Dorothy gave this name to me."

I like that... now I can enjoy the name that Helen gave to me, it was important to her that that be my name, as I believe many of the names our mothers gave us were important to them. It was something they could give us... I think it's sad that adoptive parents felt the need to change our names, to take that away from us. And yet, we were "as if born to". We were a part of a new chapter in their lives called "Making a Family". Many thanks to all of you: Wendy, Gloria, Kimberley-Ann, George and Jean.

**Fay(e) The reason that I write Fay(e) that way is because in the file that I received from the Post Adoption Registry in Alberta, some pages had my name as Fay and others had it as Faye, heck, it didn't matter to them, it wasn't their name... it was just the name of another kid that was going to be 'as if born to' other parents.*

ONTARIO UPDATE

Adoption Records Spell Heartbreak and Happiness

May 31, 2010
by Nicole Baute

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The past year has been emotional for many adults who were adopted in Ontario, and for their parents, both biological and adoptive.

On June 1, 2009, Ontario opened its adoption records, after a 30-year fight launched by members of the adoption community. Adult adoptees and biological mothers could finally apply for copies of their adoption orders and birth registrations by mailing applications to the Office of the Registrar General.

Those who wished to remain anonymous could file a disclosure veto to protect their identity.

Over the following months, and slowly at first, birth names and post-adoption names were removed from long sealed files and sent by

mail to people who, in many cases, had longed for years or even decades to see them.

As of April 20 of this year, some 10,300 people had applied for such information.

There have been happy reunions. There has also been disappointment.

Some people's searches led to graveyards; others to non-disclosure vetoes and the discovery that the person they sought didn't want to be found. Sharon Doerr was rejected when she contacted her 49-year-old son. She found him working in the medical profession in the U.S. He had applied for a non-disclosure veto in September, but he did it too late — Doerr had already applied for and received his post-adoption information.

Continued on page 20

What Child Am I? An excerpt from my Journal by Mary Ann Hernandez Dubeski

A remembered conversation between me and Lydia, the woman I was taught to call "mother".... I was about eight or nine years old when this conversation happened. Lydia had never told me I was, in actual fact, her step-daughter, and that she had adopted me as a newborn. I never "knew" this until I was forty-nine and a half years old when I found my adoption papers in her apartment. I never explicitly knew I was adopted, but I knew "something" was not right. Throughout our lives, things "leaked out", facts didn't "check", emotions couldn't be explained by "how things were." Here is a memory which came back to me to be *reprocessed*, almost two years after I discovered my adoption. I wrote it in my journal as a remembered conversation.

What day was I born? I mean....what day of the week was it?

I don't remember. I think you were born on a Thursday.

Are you sure? That means I'm Thursday's Child.....Thursday's Child has "far to go."

Maybe you were born on a Wednesday. I really don't remember. They knocked you out in those days. Gave you gas. It might have been a Wednesday.

Do you mean I'm Wednesday's Child?....Wednesday's Child is full of woe....Do you think I'm full of woe?

Yes, I think so. You're definitely Wednesday's Child...definitely full of woe (half-teasingly, but also I can tell she's irritated).

I'd rather be Thursday's Child with far to go.

No. You're definitely full of woe.

I don't really like that day....

Well, it's too bad. That's the way it is. You were born on a Wednesday (with an air of finality).

Are you sure....?

I don't really know.....What does it matter anyway? It was a long time ago. (By this time, she's definitely annoyed with me. I figured the conversation was over.)

A long, long pause. She smokes her unfiltered Pall Mall cigarette, blows the dual plumes out her nostrils and lights another, while we sat. We are watching late night TV, which was our habit on weekends.

But it *did* matter to me. It *really* bothered me that she wasn't sure.

In my mind I go through the rhyme:

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace
Wednesday's child is full of woe.
Thursday's child has far to go.
Friday's child is loving and giving
Saturday's child works hard for a living
But the child who is born on the Sabbath Day is bonny and blithe, good and gay.

(Maybe, I reason with myself, it doesn't matter to her because she is Russian. An English nursery rhyme has no meaning or importance for her.)

She starts speaking again. (The movie was on commercial break.):

What I do remember is when you came out, *you were blue*. (emphasis on each word, big pause for effect). We thought you were dead. You had the cord wrapped twice around your neck.

I told the doctor. "Do something. Make her breathe. Then the doctor hit you hard several times on the back and you started to cry...You hollered!....You turned very, very red in the face (she makes a face at me) and you looked *exactly* like your father (ugly face, tongue sticking out to mimic the way my father looked when he was drunk)!"

And your fists, they were clenched, real tight, not open, which means you are stingy, just like your father!"

The last part was said teasingly but also with a bit of venom. I knew she and dad were unhappy because he drank too much. But she had often said things like that. I felt like she was blaming me. So there I was on the day I was born: a "stingy", red-faced newborn, looking just like my drunken father.

I felt ashamed.

And then, I often wondered how she could remember such details like this if she were "gassed" for childbirth.

Later on, when we moved to Hong Kong, when I was about nine years old, I looked up my birth date in the Hong Kong phonebook, where there was a "coded" annual calendar of all possible calendars.

I found out my birth date was actually a Friday. I was actually Friday's Child, loving and giving. I was so happy!

When I told her I was born on a Friday, she just shrugged her shoulders and continued long drags on a cigarette, not really meeting my eyes. Something more interesting was on the T.V.

Looking back, throughout our lives, I couldn't determine if she actually "remembered" things or just made them up on the spot to appease me. There were many questions she gave a non-answer to. I just thought it was part of her weird personality, that she could never give a straight answer.

Now that I know the truth, I know Lydia was never "gassed" for childbirth. She may or may not have been in the delivery room, when Connie, my real mom, was giving birth. Lydia, stepmom, adoptive mom, "captor", was (perhaps), an observer.

In the end she was the one who kept me. I was hers. Her property.

I may never know the truth about what actually happened at my birth and whether Lydia was actually in the room or not, unless I find my birth mother, Connie. But for now, memories return like this one, begging for me to fashion a new, deeper meaning. It will be interesting to see if they are true.

UNDISCLOSED

by Bernadette Rymer

Undisclosed: to keep information about who you are from others. . .

This theme resonates deeply within me because I lived with the reality of being undisclosed, and with the affect it had on my life for close to 40 years until I had the courage to publically name myself as 'mother'. For all those years I held within my heart both the fact that I was a mother, and the love that I felt for my child.

After my daughter's birth, my family carried on with life as though nothing had happened. My child and my loss were never discussed. I celebrated her life and grieved her loss in silence. As I am from a very large family, I watched with anguish and often desperation as my siblings and their spouses celebrated the births of their children (56 nieces and nephews), and as they proudly watched their children say their first words and take their first steps. It was expected that I would attend all family functions and celebrations such as Baptisms, birthday parties, First Communions, high school graduations, marriages and so on. Yet my daughter's birth and birthday were not only never celebrated- they were never discussed. Every year her birthday came and went and it seemed that I was the only one who remembered. It was always the hardest day of each year for me.

After my daughter's birthday, Mother's Day was the next hardest for me. Every year I would faithfully buy a card and present for my mother. At church the ushers would give a red rose to every mother in the congregation: I never got one. Year after year, I would sit in silence in the pew and stare at the floor, the world crushing in on me while all other mothers were recognized and publicly celebrated.

As I was preparing to write this article I was struggling with how to describe what being undisclosed for 40 years felt like. To describe it to those in the adoption circle is a difficult task but one I must do to continue my healing process, and hopefully to help others in their healing processes. However, to describe what undisclosed felt like to those who have not lived the experience is a monumental task, and one that takes much thought. In my efforts to clarify my thoughts I referred to the English thesaurus which provides many alternate words to the word 'undisclosed'. From the words listed there I have selected a few words that best fit how being undisclosed has affected my life. These words are: secret, hidden, nameless, private, unrevealed, unidentified, restricted and hush-hush.

Secret: My pregnancy was kept secret from all except my immediate family: the shame I had brought on my family was too much for them to bear. I quickly became the black sheep and it was obvious that they were ashamed of me. (respected therapist and author, Nancy Verrier, speaks about how secrets are toxic: this was certainly the case for me.)

Hidden: To keep the secret hidden I was whisked away first to a foreign land and then to a home for unwed mothers. Much energy and expense was spent in ensuring that the secret was never revealed. Being hidden away instilled in me the belief that I was bad, and too awful to be part of my family during that time. As a result of being hidden away, I became emotionally alienated from my family and never really felt part of them again (until very recently).

Private: I was never able to share my joy at being pregnant and my love for my child with anyone. I would lie in bed awake for hours every night, cuddling my growing tummy and telling my child how much I loved her, and how I would do all I could to ensure that she had the best life possible. I

never shared this with anyone: until now as I share it with you.

Nameless: I did name my child, however no one ever asked me her name, and so to my family she was nameless for 22 years, until the beginning of our reunion process. Over the years as I bought gifts for my nieces and nephews and wrote their names on cards, my daughter's name was always on my lips, but nobody heard it. (Imagine the anguish of a married mother who could not name her child!)

Unrevealed: I made many efforts and at considerable cost to survive, to improve my life opportunities and to "make something of myself". I developed professionally and was able to support myself well, but because of the trauma experienced by the loss of my child, I could not mature emotionally as I was locked into my loss and sorrow as a 19 year old girl.

Unidentified: While I spent countless hours and dollars on counselling and psycho-therapy, I could never name myself as mother, nor ever talk about the loss of my child. Therefore my core being and core needs were never identified. Thus, healing did not happen!

Restricted: Being restricted from revealing myself to the world felt more like being *constricted*, as if my life blood was being cut off and my spirit was forever dying.

Hush-hush: I was instructed to "keep it hidden and you can get on with your life as if 'it' never happened". But how could this be? You see, fourteen years before my child was born, my mother's 12th child died a few hours after his birth. She never forgot him or recovered from her loss. So I wondered how my mother expected me to forget my daughter and carry on as though nothing had happened? Many times I wanted to ask her how I was to forget my daughter and carry on as though nothing had happened, when she had lived the experience of losing a child. Somehow I had the wisdom to know that there are some questions that should never be asked, for they can open vaults that should never be opened. Grieving for a lost child was expected and understood for a married woman; an unmarried woman was not afforded the same rights or understanding.

My daughter and I began our reunion process 22 years ago. Throughout this time and until last December it was still very difficult for me to talk openly about who I am as a mother. For many years I have wanted to write my story but did not have the courage to put pen to paper. I finally did write my story which was published in the Winter edition of Adoption Circles. Then in January of this year, I joined the newly-formed FMNFS support group which meets in Cloverdale. Those two events have dramatically changed the way I view myself and the way I present myself to the world. I am now (finally) so proud to present myself as mother and so delighted to be able to talk about my daughter and granddaughters to whomever is interested. I also can now talk about the past events and my feelings with my siblings and nieces and nephews.

Disclosed and delighted to be so:

On my daughter's 40th birthday, I asked my support group to sing 'Happy birthday' to her. As they were singing I cried tears of sorrow

and then joy as this was the first time I had ever heard anyone sing 'Happy birthday' to my child. Unfortunately I was too tearful to sing along with them so I have yet to have that pleasure, but I am sure that I will be strong enough next year. (Imagine a married mother waiting 41 years to sing 'Happy birthday' to her child!)

While my husband has given me cards and flowers for Mothers' Day every year since we married (15 years ago), it was when my daughter

started to send me cards and/ or email messages that I started to feel I could openly rejoice in being a mother.

As all good stories have a beginning, middle and end, it might be appropriate to finish with "...and they all lived happily ever after". However this is not the end of my story, but rather the beginning of an exciting new chapter in which I can celebrate every day the life of my daughter and her daughters and share my joy with all.

Adoption Anecdotes

by Lynn Carrier

Back in the dark ages when I was born (according to my sons) there was no such thing as long distance telephone calls to the north. My adoptive mother came to Edmonton with her adopted son "on holiday". When my adoptive father went to the airport to meet his returning family, he went up to the radio tower and asked them to radio out to the airplane to ask how many children Mrs. P... had with her – and that is how he found out he was a father again.

Many documentaries have been done about the amazing similarities that have been found between children given up for adoption and birth siblings they never knew.

I was born in Beulah Home in Edmonton in 1950 and am currently working on a search for an adoptee (Theresa) born at Beulah Home 45 days after me. As I wasn't "chosen" until at least 50 days after my birth, it is amazing to think that my adoptive mother could just as easily have chosen Theresa. It seems very strange to think that the other adoptee easily might have taken my place with my family, after all, I was a crying baby, had a rash, etc. Good thing I had gas and smiled when I did all those years ago! Theresa's adoptive father's name is George (as was mine), she goes by her middle name Lynn (my middle name is Lynn). We also both have an older, adopted brother.

My adoption papers arrived and, as I met my birth family over thirty years ago, there wasn't a lot of new stuff. However, there was a letter from my mother to the Beulah Home as follows:

Introduction to the 'Letter to Ruth': May 31, 1931

The attached letter was written by a father to his daughter almost 80 years ago. Little is known about the circumstances of the father and daughter. The letter was on file at the Beulah Home for Unwed Mothers in Alberta and was sent by Lynn Carrier to Marnie Tetz. Every effort was made to reprint this letter in its' original form, however as the original letter was very hard to read it did not copy well, it therefore has been reprinted here for ease of reading. It has not been edited in any way in the hopes that as you read the letter you will get a flavour for the time and place. There is one reference early in the letter which is marked by an *. As the letter was written to Medicine Hat, I am thinking that "...in the hat.." refers to Medicine Hat, but this may not be correct.

The letter is a clear example of societal beliefs at the time and shows the anguish the dad felt at the time of writing the letter. On reading and re-reading this letter I ask myself many questions about it: The anguish is obvious, but whose anguish? Was it the dad's anguish and he wrote out of shame and embarrassment to have his daughter in her

"March 4, 1963

Dear Miss H:

I don't expect that you will remember me since many years have passed since I was at the Beulah Home at which time my little girl was left for adoption. I communicated with you on another occasion at which time you told me information on such children was kept sealed and opened only under special circumstances. I have wondered since if this information is kept so for all time or is it possible after a certain number of years to get it. I would very much like to know if there is ever any chance of finding out where my little girl is, what she is like and what kind of life she is leading. I have heard of adopted children being re-united. Is there any particular age, 16, 21, etc. when such information would be released?

In the meantime I have a little girl of 9 and a boy of 8 months. I have given serious consideration to adopting more children or to taking in foster children, perhaps two, as I feel I am in a position to help such children and I am sure they would help me too. Does all this have to go through the Department of Child Welfare directly or are you in a position to give me information about the availability of such children? I would be willing to take children between the ages of two and six or even eight years. I would very much appreciate what information you could give me about both these matters."

'situation'? Was it his anguish for the pain his daughter was experiencing? The letter hints that perhaps Ruth's mother had found herself in similar circumstances. What happened to the mother and where was she at the time of the writing of the letter? How did Ruth respond to the letter? It sounds like Ruth kept her baby and created a new life for herself as a married woman?? I wonder how many women in her circumstances have done the same thing. As Ruth was shunned by her father (and maybe also her family), did she have any support or did she carry on alone? Society in the 1930s clearly was not understanding and accepting of a mother who was not married.

Sadly, society in the 40s, 50s, 60s and yes even the 70s was not much more tolerant than society or this dad from the 30s. I am sure that many of us who are reading this introduction to the letter were victim to the same societal beliefs and suffered much as Ruth did. Being shunned by family and society, and for too many of us being forced to place our children for adoption, takes a life-long toll on our emotional health and development. Although we can learn to recover and move forward, it is a tough road to slog along and one I believe is almost impossible to travel alone. Thankfully for those reading this,

we do not have to heal and move forward alone because we have the FMNFS to support us in this process.

If you are feeling alone in your search and/or reunion process, know that we are here to support you at any time. Please feel free to email Marnie Tetz, at marnietetz@shaw.ca for friendly and confidential support.

This letter touched me deeply such that I had to write about it to further process my experience. If you are also deeply touched and would like to write about how this letter, or any other article in this newsletter has affected you, you can do so by attaching your name, or anonymously, whichever you prefer.

Bernadette Rymer

"Medicine Hat, Alberta. May 31, 1931

Poor Ruth you ought to be ashamed to write to me

*anymore you are worse than your mother and she
married and settled down you say you have just
got religion and think you can pass as a married
woman you surely will have a name in the hat
and my advice are to stay where you got all your
friends I don't want to make it worse for you but
you certainly are the limit and I to have worried
and spend love and money on a worthless thing
like you don' write to me agin as you have killed
the last of my love for you I wont to forgit you
Your old papa"*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FMNFS FALL WORKSHOP OCTOBER 23RD, 2010: Please mark October 23rd on your 2010 calendar to make sure that you attend the Forget Me Not Family Society's fall workshop. The FMNFS will be hosting Anne Petrie, author of "Gone to an Aunt's" and Mary Anne Alton, producer of "The 40 Year Secret". This promises to be a day full of learning about mothers and the maternity homes of the 1950's - 1970's. As always, we will offer a light breakfast, lunch, and a day to be with those that 'get' how adoption affects our lives.

We will be having our early bird draw as in past years for those that register prior to September 10th, 2010- this will give you a chance to win back your registration fee of up to \$100. Registration for FMNFS members **on or before September 10th** is \$75, non-members \$100. (Why not become a member for \$25 per year which will also give you our quarterly newsletter? If you wish to become a member let us know and send us \$75 + \$25 membership and you will be on our mailing list to receive your own copy of Adoption Circles). After September 10th, registration will be \$85 for members and \$110 for non-members. For more information please contact Marnie at: marnietetz@shaw.ca. *Please note:* Copies of Anne Petrie's book can be found at the Amazon website, and "The 40 Year Secret" video can be viewed in Canada on the CBC website.

ADOPTION CIRCLES NEWS: FMNFS board member, Bernadette Rymer, has agreed to take on the role of Associate Editor for publication of the Fall edition of the Newsletter. **Please forward any submissions for this edition to her attention.**

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, or to Bernadette Rymer at: bjrymer@telus.net

The deadlines and focus of the Newsletter are as follows:

EDITION	FOCUS	DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION
Fall	Suffering	October 12, 2010	November 9, 2010
Winter	Belonging	January 11, 2011	February 14, 2011
Spring	Religion	April 12, 2011	May 10, 2011
Summer	Canada	July 12, 2011	August 23, 2011

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

SURREY SUPPORT GROUP DISCONTINUED: Since starting in January 2006 (over 4 years ago), the Surrey Support Group for adopted adults has met faithfully every month, with the exception of July & August. When the Surrey group started, there was only the New Westminster group as an alternative meeting. Currently, there are open groups going strong in Cloverdale and New Westminster, and the Adoptees' Association also offers a discussion group for adopted adults in Vancouver. The Surrey Group, therefore, has been discontinued, with the expectation that alternative support will be provided to its attendees through the groups in New Westminster (2nd Tuesday each month) and/ or Cloverdale (1st Thursday).

NEW MEMBERSHIP OFFERING: Currently, an individual membership in the Forget Me Not Family Society is \$25 per year, and a corporate membership is \$60 per year. Now, the Society is offering a "couples" membership, for two people, at \$40 per year. This is to encourage spouses and significant others to also become members of the Society and to get the benefit of a personal copy of the quarterly Newsletter and all of the Society's other supportive services.

SAD NEWS: Annette Baran, author, crusader for open adoption, died recently, at the age of 83. The clinical social worker and psychotherapist co-wrote an influential book that helped popularize the argument that an adoptee's knowledge of birth parents is crucial to his or her identity. She was also co-author of 'Lethal Secrets', the first book to examine the emotional aspects of donor insemination and other alternative methods of reproduction.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER???: As many organizations are now publishing Newsletters forwarded to members via e-mail, and the Society has received some requests, the Society is considering this option for the future. If you have a strong opinion on this topic, please send a quick e-mail letting us know whether you are in favour of an electronic **Adoption Circles**, or not. Please email Sandra Walters (walters.sandra@shaw.ca) or Bernadette Rymer (bjrymer@telus.net). Thank you for your feedback!

SUPPORT GROUPS



LEAN ON ME

Telephone/e-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

Cecelia Reekie (cecelia_r@telus.net) (604) 857-2125
 Betty Anderson (betboop@telus.net) (604) 531-4074
 Dan Carson
 (ariete_132@hotmail.com) (604) 557-0230

Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca) (604) 535-4434
 Kimberley-Ann Jandl – Abbotsford
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca) (604) 852-9663
 Judy Lanyon- Courteney
 (juriah@shaw.ca) (250) 338-2429
 Leanne Neighbour – Kamloops
 (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca) (250) 374-0990
 Lynn Carrier- Edmonton
 (carrierlynn@hotmail.com) (780) 455-8528

Reunited with Siblings:

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

Reunited Birth Parents:

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

Searching Step-Adoptee:

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

Interested Professionals:

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

Genetic Attraction:

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

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

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

Cloverdale The Forget Me Not Society holds a support group for adoptees, birth/ natural mothers, adoptive parents and those in a supportive role. We meet the first Thursday of each month (except for July & August), at the Cloverdale public library on the 2nd floor at 5642- 176A Street from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. For more information, contact Marnie Tetz by e-mail at: marnietetz@shaw.ca or call: 604-535-4434.

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 Since starting in January 2006, the Surrey Support Group for adopted adults has met faithfully every month. When the Surrey group started, there was only the New Westminster group as an alternative meeting. Currently, there are open groups going strong in Cloverdale and New Westminster, and the Adoptees' Association also offers a discussion group for adopted adults in Vancouver. The Surrey Group, therefore, has been discontinued.

Vancouver The Adoptees' Association holds a discussion group for adopted adults the third Wednesday of each month starting at 7:00 PM at the Rhizome Cafe, 317 East Broadway (near Main Street). Please e-mail Catherine for more information at: catiesue@shaw.ca or visit www.adopteesassociation.ca for more information.



Doerr, 69, looked him up on the Internet and found a photograph. He looked like her father, who died when she was 7. Doerr sent a registered letter marked "personal" to her son's office, then called the office in horror when she found out that someone else had signed for it.

She received a letter in response. Her son said he has had a good life and harbours no resentment toward her. But he does not want contact.

"I'm just hoping that somewhere down the road he may change his mind," Doerr says. In particular, she wants him to know she had a brain aneurysm, which would be hereditary, but she has no way to tell him.

Some, like Catherine McPherson, were welcomed with arms wide open. In December, she found her 28-year-old son living in Surrey, B.C., and messaged him on Facebook.

David Hart, who works as a dump truck driver, had tried looking for his biological mother in the past, and was not surprised to hear from McPherson.

"I just figured that if she's anything like me she'll probably come and find me," he says.

McPherson flew west to meet Hart a few months later, spending eight days with him, his very welcoming adoptive family, and his 3-year-old daughter, Devlyn.

"It was one of the most natural things I've ever done," McPherson says. They have stayed in close contact and are planning future visits.

The Internet has facilitated many reunions. Almost immediately after receiving her 20-year-old son's name, Rebecca Fraser also found him on Facebook. On April 15, he came to her Scarborough home. "He was very polite, very sweet," Fraser says. They plan to see each other again.

Monica Byrne, national director of Parent Finders of Canada, says the adoption legislation needs fine-tuning in a few key areas, the first being the fact that biological fathers' names are not on the documents being released — even though some fathers signed a declaration of paternity or other paperwork during the adoption process.

That means adult adoptees often cannot find their fathers and that fathers cannot access their child's post-adoption information.

According to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the legislation will be reviewed in 2014. A spokesperson said the ministry did not yet know how the review would be conducted and whether other stakeholders would be involved in the process.

To place a sponsorship ad, please call: 604-828-9577. 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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- ✓ Subscription to **Adoption Circles**, a quarterly publication
- ✓ Reduction in workshop fees
- ✓ Information on books and support groups

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Individual membership is \$25.00 per year. Couple membership is \$40 per year. Corporate membership is \$60.00 per year. Please send cheque payable to the

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