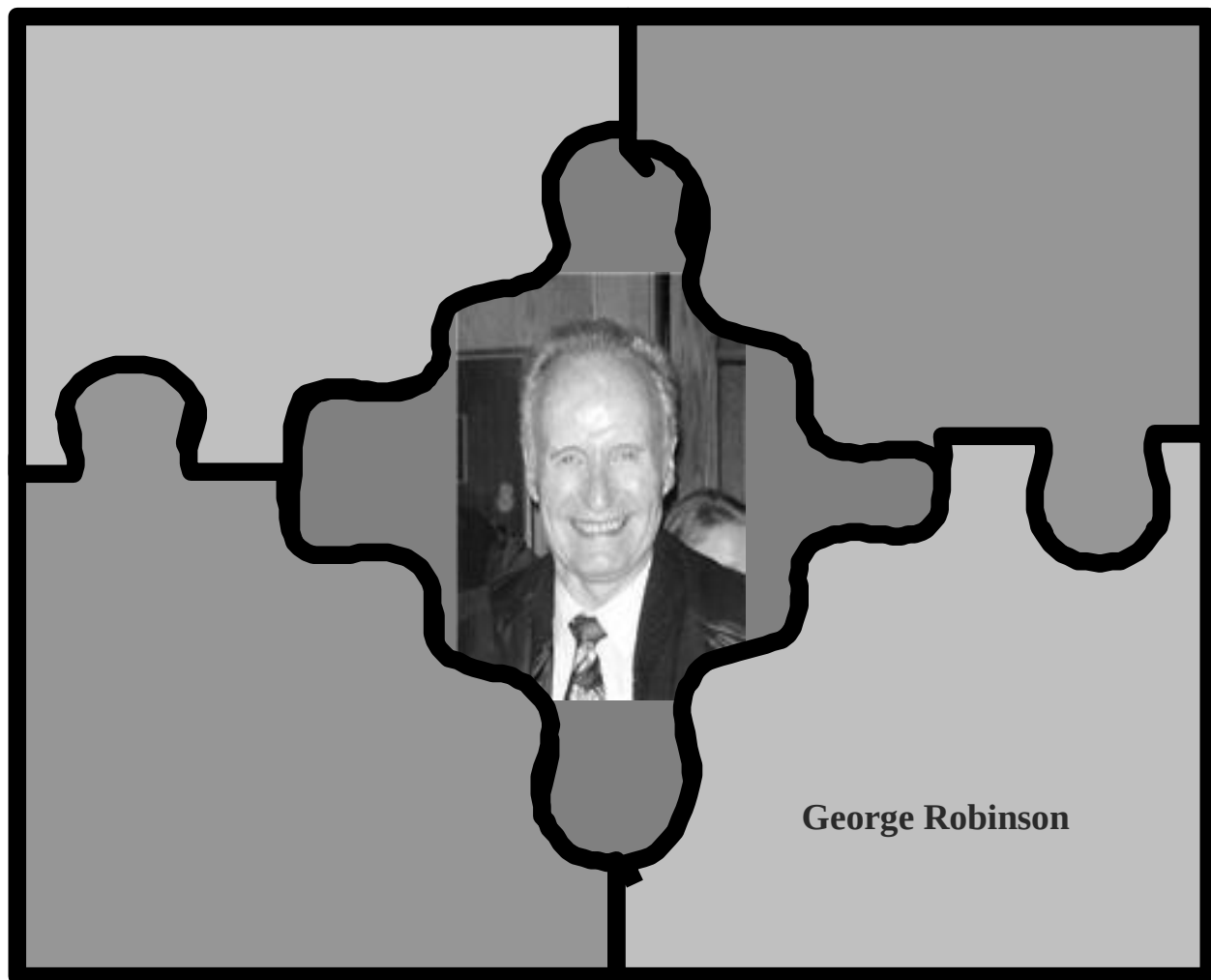


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue 55 Fall 2010 \$3.50



George Robinson

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ADOPTION CIRCLES

Fall 2010
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FORGET ME NOT FACTS:

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

WHAT WE OFFER:

Experience shows that at various times in life, the issues and concerns of adoption need to be addressed. We provide our members with opportunities to gain further understanding of adoption issues through:

- Conducting monthly support groups in New Westminster and Cloverdale
- Internet "chat" support group 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 Editors at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca or bjrymer@telus.net
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*

Once again its fall, that time of year when the leaves are flying and we think about wonderful stews, and soups, cozy fireplaces and good books. Or, if you are like my husband, you are dreading the winds that we get on

the west coast because of all the work they create with the endless leaves.

Personally I look forward to the fall because it means that it's time for the annual fall workshop that the FMNFS has become known for hosting. This year was our fifth, and again we had a chance to get together with those who have now become old friends, as well as to be with those that have only just discovered us. This year was THE BEST !!! We had two very special Canadian women who shared with us what it was like for those young women that were in homes for unwed mothers in the 60's and 70's in Canada.

We were honoured to have Anne Petrie, author of "Gone to an Aunts" and Mary Anne Alton, producer of the documentary "The 40 Year Secret", as our presenters this year. Anne Petrie is a veteran broadcaster in Canadian radio and television. She is also a reunited mother, who has enjoyed a long term reunion with her son and his family. Mary Anne Alton has been a documentary film maker for over twenty years. For me, Anne Petrie's book was an awakening. I'd been attending FMNFS support

groups, meeting and being with mothers, and listening to them. However when I read "Gone to an Aunt's" it was like a light bulb was turned on, and I finally was able to actually hear what the mums were saying. When I read what it was like for mothers that had lived in the homes, it made me realize just how my mother was treated. Mary Anne Alton's documentary put a face to the many mothers that were sent away.

Many of the positive comments that came from the workshop started with "wonderful choice of speakers". I believe that between our panel of mums, Gail Davies, Diane Herbert and Bernadette Rymer, and our guest speakers, we were able to ensure that our participants had a safe place to share. I believe that a healing kind of sharing took place for everyone: speakers, panellists and participants. I would like to thank all who took part, with a special thank you to Nancy Kato for facilitating our support group afterwards, that allowed each of us to come back to 'earth' in a safe caring way.

I know that you will enjoy this issue of Adoption Circles, by our new Associate Editor, Bernadette Rymer. Our focus for this issue is "Suffering". Those of us in the adoption constellation know only too well what kind of suffering takes place when adoption impacts our lives. I am very pleased that George Robinson (originally Leo Burg) has agreed to be our personality profile. George and I were both born in the Beulah Home in Edmonton and we met through the CCNM (Canadian Council of Natural Mothers). Our other common denominator is that Ray Ensminger (our guest at the AGM this year) helped both of us find our family.

Also in this issue I hope you will read with interest Bernadette's review of her interview with Dr. Geoffrey Cundiff, the obstetrician/gynaecologist at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver who spearheaded the "Angel's Cradle" program. Bernadette delves deeper into what "safe havens" mean for the babes and mothers who find themselves pregnant, and desperate, and without support.

Rymer Writes



Welcome to our Fall edition of Adoption Circles. My name is Bernadette Rymer. Perhaps you have read some of the articles I have written for our newsletter since December 2009. I am a reunited mother and am also now honoured to be the Associate Editor of Adoption Circles. Sandra has been at the

helm of our newsletter for 6 years and has done a wonderful job of presenting issues and in editing and organizing all aspects of the development and printing of the newsletter. Sandra will remain as Editor Mentor for me over the next few months as we share responsibilities of presenting stories, articles and issues to you. Also working hard behind the scenes in Toronto is Lynn Mayhew who has generously arranged the entire layout for our newsletter for the past 2 years. Our sincere thanks go to Sandra and Lynn for their countless hours, energy, creative input and commitment in bringing the newsletter to you four times a year.

In this issue of Adoption Circles we explore the theme of Suffering. Whoever you are and wherever you are in the adoption circle, you have suffered greatly. Perhaps

because of how adoption has affected our lives, we will continue to suffer as we are always on our healing journey to wholeness. Any conversation about our personal suffering, the suffering we have caused others, or about the meaning of suffering would not be balanced if we did not also talk about healing. As I have shared with you in previous articles, my suffering continued almost unabated for 21 years until my reunion process with my daughter began. Since then the suffering continues, however the healing aspect of my journey has become much more prominent in my story. Each of you reading this editorial will have your own take on how prominent suffering and healing are in your current journey. I sincerely hope that the issues, articles and stories in this edition will help you to come to a deeper understanding of your suffering and healing journey.

Another aspect of suffering is adversity (hardship, misfortune, danger) which is the root cause of suffering. It is in facing our personal adversities and adversaries, and living and working with and through the suffering that we come to healing, which is not a 'one-off' event. Healing is an ongoing process whereby we gradually regain our health and eventually come to a new sense of balance and of wholeness. Oh yes and one more thing: because we are by nature social beings, healing happens faster and more easily when we share our journey with

others, and we share in their healing journeys. (In this edition, see the item on Quotable Quotes and Definitions of Suffering and Healing).

I personally am extremely grateful to my daughter for introducing me to the FMNFS, and to the Society, for it is since becoming involved that my healing has accelerated. You see, before my association with the FMNFS, I was (unknowingly) depending on my daughter to provide all the opportunities for my healing. Only in the past 2 years have I realized that this is what I was doing and what a terrible and unfair burden I was placing on my daughter. Now I know that healing comes in many forms and often from places I would have least expected. I have only to be open to the possibilities of healing and I know that my healing journey continues.

In this issue of Adoption Circles we will present many of the usual features and some new features which are designed with the intention of helping you connect with your feelings, connect with others who have similar experiences, connect with others who have different but equally heart wrenching experiences, and connect with others who may have beliefs and opinions that are very different from yours.

Angel's Cradle Articles

Since the Angel's Cradle Program at St. Paul's Hospital opened in May of this year, the FMNFS Board has been closely following this issue. The goal of the program is to allow a mother in crisis to safely and anonymously abandon her baby. The FMNFS is currently drafting a position statement on this issue. This draft will be included in the next issue of Adoption Circles. In this issue we present information about the program and points of view both for and against the program. We strongly encourage you to review these articles, web search 'Safe Haven' and Angel's Cradle' at St. Paul's Hospital and 'Adoption Institute', and offer us your thoughts on this

program and the issues. Your input is very important to us as we work on our draft position statement.

Win this issue we present the following reports, interviews and commentary for your information:

- a) Article: 'Abandoned Baby drop off Misguided, says critics';
- b) FMNFS Interview with Dr. Cundiff;
- c) Commentary by Mary Ellen Turpel-LaFond;
- d) Excerpt from an interview with Adam Pertman, Executive Director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

Abandoned Baby Drop-off Misguided by Frank Stirk

Reprinted With permission from CanadianChristianity.com
May 27, 2010

ADOPTION advocates are upset that St. Paul's Hospital in downtown Vancouver did not consult them first before it gave the green light to Angel's Cradle, a safe place where mothers in distress can drop off their newborn babies with no fear of being found out.

Your thoughts, feelings and responses to any aspect of this newsletter are very important to us as it helps us to serve you better and to plan for future events and newsletters. Several people I have asked to submit their stories or comments have said that they would be happy to share, but do not feel confident in their writing skills, and they don't know how to get started. If you feel this way, don't worry; we can help with that too. I am more than happy to assist you in creating your story. We can do a tape recorded interview and then I will transcribe your story for your approval. Or I can provide you with a few focus questions which you can fill in at your convenience, then I will write your story and send it to you for approval before it is printed. Your story can be published anonymously if that is what you prefer. It is your story and your voice that we want to hear and share because you are unique: no one else has lived your story.

The theme of our next edition of Adoption Circles will be 'Belonging'.

So, when is your turn to share?

"It might sound like a great idea, because you hear about babies being abandoned at a bus stop or worse. But this is just too final," said Marnie Tetz, president of the Forget Me Not Family Society in Surrey, B.C. "Once the baby is dropped off there, mom is gone."

Angel's Cradle - the first of its kind in Canada -- is an outside door the size of a small window in an alcove near the Emergency Department entrance. Behind the door is a

bassinette. Thirty seconds after a baby is left in it, an alarm goes off at a nursing station inside the hospital. Following a medical assessment and any necessary treatment, the infant is placed in the care of B.C.'s Ministry of Children and Family Development. People who use the drop-off, which opened May 3, are promised total anonymity. Staff will not try to identify them, the door cannot be seen by security cameras and the Vancouver Police Department has promised not to investigate.

Dr. Geoffrey Cundiff, head of St. Paul's Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department, came up with the idea as part of a larger campaign by the hospital to reduce the incidents of babies being found abandoned in unsafe conditions.

"There are many programs to assist pregnant women, and women who have new children. All of our literature -- even the door to the cradle itself -- has contact numbers to access those available resources," he said. "Our hope is that this is a mechanism for us to reach women in crisis and make them aware of other alternatives -- with this as a last resort."

Funding for Angel's Cradle was provided by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, in the form of a one-time-only \$5,000 grant from its Project Advance -- which supports social programs in the community.

Father Glenn Dion, past chairman of the Project Advance committee, said when St. Paul's made the request, the committee and Archbishop J. Michael Miller were both "quick to respond favourably." (St. Paul's is run by Providence Health Care, a Catholic agency.) "It's very much a part of the church's ministry to do anything that we can to promote the sanctity of life," Dion said. "And little ones left unprotected in very sad circumstances -- that's an easy heartstring to tug at."

But Tetz doubts that most women who contemplate abandoning their baby would be thinking clearly enough to even know about Angel's Cradle, let alone see it as an

option. "They're even in denial about being pregnant," she said. Tetz is especially concerned that promising blanket anonymity denies children any chance of ever discovering anything about their family of origin, their genealogy, and if they might even have some hereditary medical condition. For many, the result can often be a devastating identity crisis. "I know of adopted people who wished their mother had had an abortion rather than give birth to them," Tetz said. "That's how messed up their life has been. And some of them were adopted into wonderful families."

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the independent Representative for Children and Youth in B.C., strongly commends St. Paul's for wanting to come to the aid of abandoned newborns. But she worries Angel's Cradle could end up endangering the mothers as well. "They may have had a birth without any medical support, which is very high-risk; or they may have some very serious mental health issues," she said. "And they may become stable in six months and be completely different. We have to always allow for that." Turpel-Lafond is also concerned that the anonymity rules would deny the father or other relatives the option of becoming the child's guardian.

Dion concedes that these are all "legitimate" concerns. But he still insists that their "primary concern is the sanctity of the child's life. And that kind of trumps them all."

"It is without a doubt most ideal for a baby to be put up for adoption with a medical history, a family history," said Cundiff. "But we feel that it is preferable to have the baby in a safe location without information than abandoned in the community. It's a pragmatic approach to really trying to balance reality, I guess."

"Is there someone living in the suite beside you who is pregnant and struggling? Be a good citizen. Support them. Assist them," Turpel-Lafond said. "Try to build up a society that cherishes children -- so no child will be abandoned."

Interview with Dr. Geoffrey Cundiff October 19, 2010

As a medical doctor and knowing the number of diseases that are inherited and treatable if an individual can take informed preventative action, how would you advise someone abandoned St. Paul's with no access to family medical history to manage their health? (E.g. heart attacks, diabetes, certain types of cancer [for which people with close family members with the disease are allowed exploratory tests,] FASD, etc.

Dr. Cundiff: We see patients on a daily basis who do not know their medical history. In fact the majority of people don't know about grandparent's history and, if they know any medical history it is about their parents. So while it is ideal to have as much information as possible we operate without that information on a daily basis. I don't want to minimize the values of having that history, but it does not prevent us from providing care.

How does this program differ from the Safe Haven programs?

Dr. Cundiff: Well this is really quite different. Safe Haven programs in the States are so varied that I think that term invokes a much broader view of abandonment than what we are trying to focus on which is really just for newborns, and on trying to provide anonymity and to try to reach out to women who are in crisis and might abandon a baby and provide them with information about other options.

What are the other options that are presented to the mother? How does that work?

Dr. Cundiff: When we developed this program we developed a place for leaving a baby anonymously but we also developed a print program to go along with it and we never intended to have a media campaign. We actually tried to provide printed material to women who we thought might be vulnerable so that they would be the audience for this. The goal of the print program was to provide them with information about the other opportunities through the Ministry of Child and Family Development, Crisis Intervention Centers, Birth Right, etc. That information is also on the door and was distributed very widely to clinics, to schools, to welfare offices, churches etc.

Given that there is no demonstrated proof to date that Safe Haven type programs reduce the number of abandoned children, what studies and evidence convinced you that this was a worthwhile venture for St. Paul's Hospital?

Dr. Cundiff: Well (long pause) I think (long pause) what convinced us was that there is clearly an element that is not taking advantage of the available options. This is a very old tried-and-true idea. It is an 800 year old idea and it fell out of favour when the whole concept of social safety net was developed and it fell out of favour because it seems to be contradictory to the idea of a social safety net. But the fact is that even though there are many programs available to women, there are still babies being abandoned. So what is it that is preventing them from using those resources?

You are right there is very little evidence that Safe Haven type programs reduce the number of abandoned babies. I think you can make a couple of assumptions or hypotheses. One is that they don't know about these resources and our campaign was to make them aware, and the second is that their circumstances are such that they have to remain anonymous. Now there is a third possibility which is that they are in a state in which they have no concern for their baby and so that is really what is the motivation, and I know that that is a very popular belief among some of the detractors of the program. We believe that given the option

of taking care of their baby and taking care of themselves they will do what is best for their baby.

Abandoned children have no access to family, ethnicity or medical history, yet we know from adoption and other early childhood studies that this information is foundational to the development of the whole person. How much discussion and consideration was given to this concern when creating the program?

Dr. Cundiff: The printed material that we have developed states that it is preferable and they can leave that information without fear that it will be used to find them.

Much research has documented that a newborn child knows his/her mothers face, voice, and smell, touch and feel of her skin on his/her skin. New research within the last 10 years has documented the trauma a newborn experiences at the moment of separation from his/her birth mother, and if the separation is permanent, the newborn grieves for his/her mother. How does the program address these needs of the infant?

Dr. Cundiff: Well first of all, St. Paul's doesn't take custody of the child. Abandoned children go to the Ministry of Children and Family Development. We don't want to minimize the impact of being abandoned on the child but we believe that the safely abandoned child is much preferable to the baby that is abandoned in the dumpster.

There is a new field of research into adoption trauma, and the effects of PTSD on birth mothers who lose their children to adoption. In the eyes of the church, "all are precious in the eyes of the Lord". Can you please respond to the statement that it appears that St. Paul's and the Catholic church are more concerned with the needs of the baby than the needs of the mother? Do you have anything to add to that in addition to what you said about the printed materials available?

Dr. Cundiff: Well the printed material offers mothers other options to deal with crisis circumstances. It also encourages them to present to the emergency department and for us to say that there will be no effort to link them to the baby. As an obstetrician and I have two patients and I feel that it would be a mischaracterization to say that we don't care about the mother.

What about the rights and responsibilities of the father, and extended family?

Dr. Cundiff: Well as I have said before, this is a pragmatic approach. The goal is to save a baby and ideally, the mother would involve the father of the baby but the fact is that they frequently don't. We have women who come in and give birth and abandon their babies at the hospital. That happens several times a year and it is not possible in those circumstances to find the father, so it doesn't provide for

paternal rights but it does provide a way to save a baby who may be abandoned out in the community where it can die.

In several other jurisdictions where Safe Havens have been implemented, older children have been abandoned by a parent or grandparent who can no longer take care of their child. What structures are in place to ensure that this does not happen at St. Paul's Hospital?

Dr. Cundiff: There is an important distinction between us and the Safe Haven Laws in which you can take your child at any public institution be it a hospital, fire hall, as long as you declare "I'm leaving my children". Our printed material is quite clear that this is for newborns and most abandoned children are within the first week of life. We have also built the crib so that it can take a newborn, you couldn't really put a toddler in.

How do you respond to the concern that the Safe Haven program and the Church are encouraging and legitimizing child abandonment rather than working to build safe families in your community?

Dr. Cundiff: Well you know first of all, I am not positioning myself and neither is St. Paul's as advocates for Safe Haven laws, and I am not going to tell you that this is the solution. One of the things we are trying to do is to collect information about abandoned babies so that we can be better informed about the problem. As you noted earlier, there is very little evidence about women who abandon their children. I have concerns that what we hear about in the media is only the tip of the iceberg so I don't think it is encouraging or legitimizing it.

So what is the process of evaluation for determining that this is a good program or we need to take a different approach?

Dr. Cundiff: Well in developing the program we spent 2 years talking to stakeholders in the hospital and around the hospital and those discussions have continued since we initiated the program. We have had one infant left and that particular case shows that this has value. Now as to whether this is long term solution, that will show over time.

Commentary on the Angel's Cradle Program at St/ Paul's Hospital

by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond is the BC representative for children and youth. We contacted her requesting an interview, but due to a very heavy schedule she was not available within time to meet our printing deadline. She did send us a transcript on an interview she did on the CBC radio soon after the Angel's Cradle program started at St. Paul's Hospital. Following is a summary of the interview:

"I give kudos to the hospital and Dr. Cundiff in particular for his leadership here to say here's an alternative that exists. In terms of the safety, though, I mean, there are very few cases a year but we do have more than 15,000 children in BC living out of parental home. My concern is, in 47 of the US states that these safe haven projects have really taken afoot, in some instances it's older children that get dropped off and there are some really significant issues around the health and safety of the children and also the involvement of family and the rights of the non-relinquishing parent, in particular fathers and grandparents and so on. So, it's a delicate issue. I'd like to see a clear policy set out throughout the province on how we're going to treat this issue.

While this program is for newborn babies, who's to say someone is not going to drop a 2 or 3 year old off in the safe haven? The concern that I have is people get in desperate situations and leave their children. The really important thing for us to consider in British Columbia is do

we have a strong system of services and support to particularly moms who are pregnant and parents who are in crisis? We need to strengthen those systems and in my experience as representative I see some fragmentation and some desperation on the part of parents who put their children in care or give up their children and then a few short months later they have stabilized, found supports and they want their child back. Yes, the child's safety must be considered but these are complicated issues and complicated cases.

....The sad reality is we still have in this Province situations where people conceal their pregnancies. That's a small number of cases in a year. But the fact is that most of the cases I deal with are cases where children have experienced some really significant neglect and actual abuse. So if someone is dropping off a 2 year old infant at St. Paul's Hospital and the infant shows signs of being physically or sexually abused or seriously neglected, I expect the police to investigate that, and I think British Columbians should expect the police to investigate it because it's the law that we have to provide the necessities of life to children. So, on the one hand, yes, we want to make it easier for people to get out of a crisis but at the same time we don't want to make it so easy to get out of a crisis that you escape responsibility and the society as a whole escapes that responsibility to look at our self carefully to make sure we have supports that we need for children.

.....We have to remember some of this harkens back to another era, an era of shame and hidden pregnancies and so on. I mean, we live in a different era now. We should be very open. We should be very supportive and fundamentally in our communities and families we should look to support those that we think may be struggling. And, as a province, we need to talk about this issue thoroughly

and examine it but I still do give credit to the hospital because when a baby is dropped on your doorstep in a garbage bag you do really feel like the number one priority is the safety of the baby, so I give them credit for it but there are deeper issues here and British Columbians need to think about them.”

Excerpt from an interview with Adam Pertman Executive Director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

The safe-haven idea has become widespread in the United States, where most states have instituted “Baby Moses” laws that allow parents to deposit babies at hospitals and other designated locations without repercussion. Those jurisdictions argue that any infant left at a safe-haven site is a potential life saved. Not all experts agree. In a 2003 report, the New York-based Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute noted that the scant, mostly anecdotal, evidence available suggested the number of dangerous abandonments does not drop after legislation is introduced. And in the seven years since that report was published, the limited evidence indicates “these laws are even more counterproductive than we’d expected,” Adam Pertman, the institute’s executive director, said yesterday.

The problem is that mothers who kill or discard their newborns in a dangerous way are unstable and panicked, not cogently thinking people who would seek out a safe-haven drop-off, said Mr. Pertman.

Those who do use the sites are likely women who would otherwise contact an adoption agency but have now been convinced to take an easier way out, he said. With counseling at an agency, they might even have decided to keep the baby; they would at least be ensuring that adoptive parents had access to the infant’s family medical background, something not possible with legal abandonment.

“Everybody thinks they have found an answer,” said Mr. Pertman. “It feels good, it’s intuitive, and we can clap our hands and say ‘We’ve solved that one and move on.’ The problem is, we haven’t solved it.

~~~~~

### **MEANT TO BE**

by Gail Davies  
(October, 2010)

Nothing is finished, nothing is done.  
I can’t seem to finish what I’ve begun  
Where am I, why can’t I see,  
The person that I used to be?  
What will I do, what will I say  
When everything is taken away?

For everything’s lost,  
At a terrible cost.  
No one cares, no one sees  
Me standing here waiting patiently.  
I can’t take much more.  
Where am I, what was I meant to be?

### **SEARCHING**

by Gail Davies  
(October, 2010)

A nomad I am on the sea.  
How long will I be searching aimlessly  
For what was lost and can’t be found?  
No longer able to put my feet on the ground.

Where is my youth that used to be  
Lost when she was taken from me?  
How can I at 63?  
Become the person that I was meant to be?

## SUFFERING

Society's messages to us in 40s, 50s, 60, and 70s.

|          | To Unmarried Mothers                                                                                                                                     | To Adoptees                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>S</b> | <b>Surrender</b> your child to those who know better. S/he will be better off without you.                                                               | <b>Such</b> a lucky baby to be given to such wonderful parents.                                                                                                          |
| <b>U</b> | You are <b>Unfit</b> to be a mother.                                                                                                                     | They will treat you as though you are their own and they will <b>Understand</b> and care for you with great love.                                                        |
| <b>F</b> | You have created a real <b>Fiasco</b> and now you must pay for your mistakes.                                                                            | <b>Forget</b> the smell of her skin and her milk, forget her soft loving touch, forget the sound of her voice and the feelings of love and security you had in her womb. |
| <b>F</b> | Because you have <b>Failed</b> to meet the standards pre-ordained by the church and society, you will                                                    | <b>Forget</b> your name and who you are. You have been given a new identity.                                                                                             |
| <b>E</b> | <b>Erase</b> all feelings of love for and loss of your child.                                                                                            | <b>Erase</b> your past: Everything will be fine, you'll see.                                                                                                             |
| <b>R</b> | You will <b>Renounce</b> your right to motherhood and forget that you had this child.                                                                    | You should <b>Rejoice</b> in the fact that you have 2 parents who saved you from a life with her.                                                                        |
| <b>I</b> | <b>Ignore</b> who you are as mother and pretend that it never happened.                                                                                  | <b>Ignore</b> your feelings that something is missing and that things are not right: ignore the questions you have about who you are.                                    |
| <b>N</b> | As you have <b>Neglected</b> to abide by our social norms, your emotional, psychological, spiritual and developmental needs will not be addressed by us. | It does not matter that <b>No</b> one in your new family looks like you: that is not important!                                                                          |
| <b>G</b> | Oh yes, and be <b>Grateful</b> that we are here to give your baby the life s/her deserves and to save you from yourself.                                 | Oh yes, and be <b>Grateful</b> for the life we have created for you. Who knows what your life with her would have been like?                                             |

Adoption Loss is the only trauma in the world in which the victims are expected by the whole of society to be grateful.

Anonymous

### FMNFS Workshop with Anne Petrie and Mary Ann Alton Reflections

by Kimberely-Ann Jandl

**T**his workshop focused on mothers who had lost their children to adoption from the 40's to 70, their treatment by society as a whole, during their pregnancy and child birth. There was also a particular focus on girls and women who had been placed by their families in homes of un-wed mothers.

**As an adoptee, why did you decide to attend this workshop?** I like to learn more about adoption related issues and meet with others who have been impacted by adoption.

**What was your overall impression of the contents the workshop?** I felt that everything discussed was very relevant to anyone involved in adoption. I felt that Anne and Mary Anne both offered a great deal of insight into adoption from the viewpoint of the birthmother. Although Mary Anne is not a birth mom, she still knew a lot about it

from following Linda and Ray as they worked together to find their daughter in "The 40 Year Secret".

**Were there any sections of the workshop that were challenging for you to listen to?** I found that listening to the panel of mothers at the beginning was very emotional. Just as they had difficulty relating their stories, it is difficult to hear firsthand of the pain that these women had to endure from the very beginning of their pregnancies. I also found it hard to watch Linda in the "40 Year Secret" as she was walking through the maternity home that she had been in. It really showed the pain that she had endured while being there.

**What resonated deeply for you?** Although I knew that the birthmoms' moms were frequently behind the decision to send their daughters to maternity homes, and ultimately give up the babies for adoption, I still was shocked to hear

how involved, and seemingly cold, they were. It is hard to understand how a woman would be able to force her daughter to give up a grandchild. I know that later on these women sometimes regretted the decision, but by then the damage to everyone were done. It was at a great cost even to their relationship with their daughters.

**What new insights and understanding did you take away from the workshop that will cause you to think differently from now on?** I think I really realized how the socio-economic status of a family really didn't matter to how the daughters were treated. It seemed that most unwed, pregnant young women were treated pretty similarly by their parents and were sent away or otherwise hidden from everyone else. I am glad to see that society has stopped making that the way things have to be.

I also really noticed how painful this event still is, decades later, for all these women. That demonstrates what a profound impact it had on each of them and their lives to follow. One can't help but wonder how their lives may

have been different if this had not happened to them. And I say it happened "to them" because many girls were sexually active in their teens but did not become pregnant and did not have to lose their babies to adoption and were, therefore, not affected by their behaviour the way the women talking at the workshop were.

**How will this new thinking affect your behaviour and how you think of yourself or others?**

I know that adoption has been a horribly painful experience for many people and I will continue to try to support everyone who has been impacted by adoption. I know that just as the mothers have been hurt, so too have the adoptees at the loss of their moms.

**Is there anything else you would like to add to your comments?**

I appreciated the opportunity to attend this workshop to hear and support people impacted by adoption. Even though many tears were shed, there was also laughter and companionship which leads to healing for everyone.

## **FMNFS Workshop with Anne Petrie and Mary Ann Alton Reflections**

by Martha Konishi

I attended the FMNFS workshop held October 23 on the subject of Mothers and the maternity homes of the 1950's - 1970's. A little background on me: I am a birth Mom who lost my daughter to adoption in February 1975. I was 17 years old. I spent the greater part of my pregnancy in a maternity home. The horror stories I've heard of some homes wasn't true for me. The couple that ran the home were genuinely kind & the chores consisted of keeping the communal areas tidy & cooking a group meal every week or so.

In 1975 the tide was starting to change with more teen/single Moms choosing to keep their babies. But the pressure to relinquish was still pretty strong, especially if one was a teen, unmarried, still in high school and with no job prospects. The cards were stacked against me for keeping my daughter as I was repeatedly told that I was unskilled, unqualified and unmarried to raise a child. The shame & secrecy of the time was so great, I bought into & internalized this negative belief system of myself: I was unanything – unhappy, unvalued, unlovable, unworthy, unwanted.

After signing the adoption papers, I tried to go on with my life as if I was a normal 17 year old. I graduated from high school, went to college, moved away from home, got a job. All the supposedly normal stuff, although something irrevocably changed for me inside, something so shameful that it would have to be kept a secret forever – I gave away my baby.

Before the workshop I hadn't read Anne Petrie's book, "Gone to Aunt's" or watched Mary Anne Alton's documentary "The 40 Year Secret." Yet I wanted to attend this workshop out of curiosity. I wanted to hear the courageous story of others who have come "out" about their "fallen" past as it's difficult for me to comprehend that there are women out there telling their "shameful" story so publically.

Prior to 2004, the people who knew my secret could be counted on one hand. That all changed when my daughter contacted me. By then, it had been almost 30 years since I lost her. And though I had been lead to believe that I would forget about her, of course I hadn't. In fact, coming up on her 30th birthday was increasing my sense of, "what's wrong with me because I'm not forgetting?" I truly thought I was going crazy as I found myself thinking more & more about her as that 30th birthday approached. Instead of forgetting as I had been lead to believe, I was becoming more & more obsessed. Thoughts of where is she, what happened to her, is she even alive filled my daily thoughts.

Prior to my daughter contacting me I had no idea there were adoption support groups, or that you could even search. I was under the impression that I was to suffer in silence until the end of my life. The notion of typing "adoption" or "birth mother" into an internet search engine never entered my mind.

Being contacted by my daughter was momentous occasion for me as of course I wanted to meet her. But now I felt compelled to share my secret with friends & family who knew absolutely nothing of this part of me. I had to “out” myself as “one of those girls.” Coming out had to be one of the most difficult things I’d done in a long time. I was consumed with self recrimination of past labels that I believed they would all hate & abandon me. What would people think of me knowing that I was one of those girls that went away? Would they shun me, think less of me, find me a freak & whisper among themselves?

What a relief when none of the fears of my imagination occurred. They may have been shocked but they were welcoming & congratulatory. Though my reunion isn’t what I’d like it to be, it’s better than the not knowing & trying to forget. However, I still have a hard time sharing the birth Mom part of me. I am very selective who I share this part of me with. I have been stung by words spoken in ignorance from people I consider friends. Am I still harboring shame or self protection? I like to think it’s that latter. What I do know for sure is that I lived the greater

part of my adult life believing that I was less than. The societal and parental edicts of the time made a generation of young women like me believe that we were un-anything. We were not bad, wayward, wanton, fallen or whatever. In truth, we were teenagers and young women caught up in the misogyny of the time.

For myself, I have suffered long enough believing falsely in myself. Those old, anachronistic beliefs no longer serve me. I don’t mean to minimize or dismiss my pain, sorrow & anguish of having lost my daughter. Those feelings are still there. But how I think of myself and how society at that time labeled girls like me, that’s not who I was then & it certainly isn’t who I am now. I have lived in shadow of the self I could have been. It is now time for me to create, believe & realize new truths about who I am. I know it won’t be as simple as flipping a switch & all will be better. But whenever I find myself wallowing in those old societal/parental/self belief systems, I have the strength to tell myself, “wait a minute, that’s not true, that’s not who you are and you know it.”

## Summary of Workshop Evaluation

Workshop evaluations asked participants to rate various aspects of the day with one of the following:

1- Poor 2- Fair 3 Average 4 Good 5 Excellent

A few people rated the venue and food as Average. However all other ratings for organization, topics, speakers' content, presentation and ability to encourage group participation were either Good or Excellent. Many

people added comments which are very helpful in planning for future workshops.

We were delighted that 24 of 26 participants completed an evaluation. This is a 92% return rate which beats all statistical odds. On average about 34% of conference and workshop evaluations are completed. Occasionally a well managed process will glean up to a 67% return rate. Well folks, we beat the odds again! Congratulations and thanks to all that attended and completed the evaluations.

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Good Grief: Making Sense Out of Suffering

Joe Soll, LCSW, Psychotherapist,

Author of "Adoption Healing: a path to recovery" (1 for moms, 1 for adoptees)

Co-author of "Evil Exchange" and "Fatal Flight"

The first two words, “Good Grief” can express many things including, surprise, horror and sadness. Our sadness, the loss of what to me is a sacred relationship, is rarely dealt with in a way that will promote healing.

The last four words may cause you to sit up and say, “What? Suffering makes sense?” Let’s explore a bit...
How can we make sense of it?

By understanding the causes of the suffering and resolving it. Resolution means accepting the

reality of what happened. We need to recognize how bad our trauma was and doing healing work so that we are not in pain all the time. We must accept our trauma as being as bad as it was, without downplaying it in any way.

In the beginning, when mother and child were separated, each of us experienced the death of the person from whom we were separated.

.....Continued on Page 16

Quotable Quotes and Definitions

Definitions of Suffering	Definitions of Healing
1. agony: a state of acute pain: 2. misery resulting from affliction: 3. distress: psychological suffering: 4. troubled by pain or loss: 5. feelings of mental or physical pain: 6. miserable: very unhappy; full of misery; feelings of depression.	1. to make healthy, whole, or sound; restore to health; free from ailment: 2. to bring to an end or conclusion, as conflicts between people or groups, usually with the strong implication of restoring former amity; settle; reconcile: 3. to free from evil; cleanse; purify: <i>to heal the soul</i>. 4. to effect a cure. (of a wound, broken bone, etc.) to become whole or sound; mend; get well.

Suffering Quotes	Healing Quotes
Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars. <u>Kahlil Gibran</u>	Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy. <u>Sai Baba</u>
We shall draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival. <u>Winston Churchill</u>	The wish for healing has always been half of health. <u>Lucius Annaeus Seneca</u>
I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable. <u>Anne Morrow Lindbergh</u>	The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world. <u>Marianne Williamson</u>
The great artist is the man who most obviously succeeds in turning his pains to advantage, in letting suffering deepen his understanding and sensibility, in growing through his pains. <u>Walter Kaufmann</u>	Healing in a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity. <u>Hippocrates</u>
There are people who are suffering beyond description. They are innocent people; they didn't bring this upon themselves. They are the victims of the sins of other people. And while it's hard to see, it's important to understand that these people exist. <u>Mia Farrow</u>	"Healing," Papa would tell me, "is not a science, but the intuitive art of wooing nature." <u>W. H. Auden</u>
So long as little children are allowed to suffer, there is no true love in this world. <u>Isidore Duncan Jose M</u>	Healing yourself is connected with healing others. <u>Yoko Ono</u>
Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it. <u>Helen Keller</u>	Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it. <u>Tori Amos</u>

There is one final quote that I want to share with you. I have separated it from the others because it strikes me as the quote that best fits who we are as members of the adoption constellation. First is the original quote and author, then the quote re-written to represent who we are at this time in our history.

Original Quote

Suffering makes a people greater, and we have suffered much. We had a message to give to the world but we were overwhelmed, and the message was cut off in the middle. In time there will be millions of us becoming stronger and stronger, and we will continue the message. **David Ben-Gurion**

Our Quote

Suffering has made us greater people, and we have suffered much. We had a message to give to the world but we were overwhelmed, and the message was cut off at the beginning. Now there are millions of us becoming stronger, and we will continue our message.
Bernadette Eileen Rymer



Personality Profile

George Robinson



1. How have you been personally impacted by adoption?

Unfortunately, I have been profoundly and negatively impacted by adoption. I use the word unfortunately because it's the word that was used by Alberta Children's Services to describe why they didn't have any of my family history recorded properly for my later knowledge as an adult.

Information from the Alberta Social Services (Child Welfare):

"History of Adoptive Child - Mother" form, compiled from their records from the time of adoption and Birth Registration

Dorothy Burg

Age: 20 (in 1937) Place of Birth: Ontario

Marital Status: single

Racial /Ethnic Origin: Swedish

Religion: United (Church) Occupation: Domestic

"UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO FURTHER INFORMATION CONTAINED ON FILE PERTAINING TO YOUR BIRTH MOTHER OR HER FAMILY"

Unfortunately is a clever word, but it's true connotation is almost hidden - only a religious fundamentalist's mind would consider it to be an appropriate justification for omissions like this; when in fact it is a substitute word for God's will and predestination. 'Ill -fated' and 'unlucky' are synonyms for unfortunate and fate is defined as the supposed power that predetermines events.

Even now this same often unconscious religious attitude is the basis for the assistance of pregnant mothers needing help through many private agencies. The unwed mother must still be on a redemption path in order to atone for her sin(s). The Children's Aid Society (CAS) do a better job now of getting some mothers out of poverty and enabling them to become self supporting, without being too

judgmental. However, they still do channel most of their efforts into adoption as the solution. They have a long term experience with poverty and adoption and have done well in most parts of Canada since the mid 1800s - Alberta however, got rid of the CAS in 1924.

Alberta did not want any interference from professional social workers in adoptions (including the CAS) - this was a stated and preferred policy that prevailed until after WW II. The only professionals involved were government lawyers. This created a perfect world for the use of adoption in eliminating the need to address society's real poverty and child care issues. Evangelical government employees kept unfortunate or non-existent records while children were being exported for adoption into the United States and elsewhere, on passports arranged between Alberta and the federal government ...and who put an end to all of this criminal activity? The Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire (Alberta Provincial Chapter), that's who! They seem to have been the only women's group (or group of any kind) who were watching and who did something about this travesty of justice - they hired Charlotte Whitton (the man eating Pit Bull from Ontario) to come to Alberta and produce a welfare report/study. In the Summary of Findings and Recommendations in her Welfare In Alberta Report of 1947 she says: "The Superintendent of Child Welfare directly or through the Commission, holds and exercises powers without parallel in any enactment in the Study's knowledge except one in Hitler's Germany and certain provisions in the code of the Soviet Union but which, it is understood have been recently modified." All of this led to a later Royal Commission on Child Welfare in Alberta. Unfortunately for me, I was adopted during the Great Depression in an even less than perfect world before Charlotte Whitton's inquisition.

So, the negative impact of adoption for me was created by a system designed by government, run by professional government lawyers and documented by incompetent citizens. This is how I came to be adopted; lots of legal paperwork but not much else. I don't hate adoption itself as much as I hate the evil that it fostered in the past and the secrecy it maintains today. The evil of the secrecy of my past came back continuously to bite the Robinson's. They lived their lives like people in some kind of witness protection program. The pain and trauma that they endured in their old age, when the bubble finally burst, was cruel

and totally unnecessary. The result for me was not a loss of love for Annie and Ted Robinson, but a new found anger for the people who had done this to us and our families..

My anger has grown because the more that I want to know, the more obstacles keep showing up that have been created by adoption. This continuously prevents me from knowing my complete family background and heritage. The fact that Alberta was negligent/criminal during my adoption has not made it the least bit remorseful or conciliatory towards me.

Of course the last nail in the adoption coffin has been the development of the so called Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP). Therefore, there is no end in sight for me. All I can do now is make sure that Alberta does not burn my first mother's stuff and ensure that our children will be able to have their complete family history when I'm gone.

2. When/why did you get involved in the adoption field? When/how did your journey begin?

I had no interest in adoption during my youth (this is pretty symptomatic for children in adoption not wanting to destroy their world). It was not until I had a family of my own that I happened to read an article in the Toronto Star in 1976 on Mrs Joan Vanstone (the founder of Parent Finders). Mrs Vanstone's story was a cautionary tale for me as a father regarding family medical information as well as for me as a person with respect to my other family's unknown genealogical history. The articles optimism towards "...this quiet revolution in the field of adoption" also gave me an enthusiasm toward inquiring about myself and gave me reason to expect more and effective adoption reform in the future. So I wrote to the Alberta government seeking my birth parents. My family and I were healthy, plus I also found out how really secret or non existent my records were, so nothing happened!

My real odyssey didn't begin after a war in Troy like the Greek one did, but it did start with this military person...me, returning from a final tour in Europe in 1987 to a final posting and retirement in Ontario. Although I was never captured by pirates on the way home, I did encounter many criminals at home waiting for me when I started to seriously investigate my roots.

However, to my surprise in 1990 a post adoption mutual consent registry was established in Alberta. So, with conditions improving like this, I decided that it was time to... (as Larry the cable guy would say) "Get er done." Ray Ensminger, my Alberta government authorized search agent found my first father's family very quickly (note- this search agent system was later cancelled by Alberta).

Unfortunately my first mother was not located, through no fault of Ray's for not trying!

This successful part of the searching was enhanced by the then Minister of Children's Services, Iris Evans. She granted me access to my original (yet forged) Birth Registration...pretty gutsy for an Alberta Minister of the Crown! She is currently the Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations Minister and visited my area (Belleville) recently encouraging local businesses to "get involved" with the Oil Sands cleanup. She seems to be spending her political career cleaning up one disaster after another....I couldn't resist that shot!

I built up a really big head of steam as I continued to deal with those people in Alberta responsible for my adoption and the missing (more like undisclosed) information about my first mother, Dorothy Burg. Needless to say I was shocked at the replies that I was getting to my inquiries! While I had been working in a less than perfect world during my time in the military, I had never been overwhelmed by any pervasive evil during that time. However, to find that there were people in Alberta who were acting towards me as if I was not even a Canadian citizen, convinced me that I had now found that pervasive evil.

3. Why do you feel passionate about adoption?

I feel passionate about the rights of children placed in adoption and Foster Care and their later rights as adults. Sorry I had to go all lawyer on you there, but I've been at this so long now that I even think in evil terms when I reply to adoption questions like this. I feel that I have to be very specific about who I am fighting for and for what objectives. Put more simply, you could say that I feel passionate about eliminating the secrecy and forgery involved in the adoption process.

My passion is founded in my newly acquired knowledge of three generations of my first mother's family that struggled through two World Wars and a Great Depression. Because of adoption secrecy combined with incompetence and the FOIP, I have been unable to find the first generation of my first family in North America. I think that I know some of the names, but don't have enough information to be successful in finding them. I do know that my grandfather James Lynam was killed in a train accident in 1941 in Sapperton, B.C. (now a municipality of New Westminster). My grandmother gave birth to Dorothy in Toronto (maybe) in 1917 (as an unmarried mother), but was living in Calgary shortly afterwards (where she remained for a number of years). Dorothy was taken from her mother in Calgary at the age of about 6 and put on the train to northern Alberta

and then to central Alberta for eventual permanent Foster Care and likely unpaid farm work. Ultimately, her whole life was a tragedy. I feel her pain and want to share it, even after she's gone. Dorothy gave me the adoption option because she had gone through the Foster Care one - I feel passionately that her decision should not be used to add more tragedy to her life, even after her death. After all these years, here I am thinking about her now, while she bore the brunt of the burdens of life all those years before. "Life," said Horace Walpole, "is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel." And that pretty much sums up how Dorothy and I have shared our lives on this planet.

4. What adoption related issues/organizations have you been involved with?

The organizations and contacts were originally linked to searching for Dorothy. Lynn Carrier in Edmonton put me onto a newly formed organization then called Alberta Adoptees Search and Reunion Registry Inc. which I joined. Shannon Cherkowski then performed her magic and found Dorothy, plus my four other brothers!

I was later accepted as a member of the Canadian Council of Natural Mothers (CCNM)/Coalition for Open Adoption Records (COAR) groups here in Ontario and their now completed fight for adoption reform in the province. This all started when that sneaky Ray Ensminger said that I should see if they would let me join their organizations some years back - mainly because, like most men I was avoiding anything that smelled of therapy. Well, I got what I needed as part of the joining, the later advocacy package and the shared life experiences of the mothers. Marnie Tetz was one of the other adoptees that I encountered in these organizations and we have met and have continued our friendship and association ever since.

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

We still do not have any national adoption policies, standards or laws in Canada. This lack of uniformity and oversight results in every city and province deciding for themselves whether or not to have things like a "no questions asked" drop off location for newborn children" There should be a national oversight of adoption that would also allow people poorly or improperly served by the provinces to receive help.

6. Why do you continue to dedicate so many hours and so much energy to this area? Do you have a message you would like to share with us?

My current dedication to children's rights is now focused on helping pregnant women get the legal and medical help that they need in their hour of need - or should I say their initial nine months of need? Anything that can help them more and in better ways than the help (or lack of it) that Dorothy received in 1937. Don't get me wrong here...I'm not cruising the streets with money and lawyers looking to change the world. However, I did recently join a group called Birthright that seems to do a better job than most here in my home town in Ontario.

Interesting, that when I was being interviewed by Suzanne Goettler, the director of the local Birthright chapter, we both recognized that there was more going on than just an interview. She knew it right away, but of course, being a man it took me a few days to realize why I was feeling so much better. So, again I had an indirect and pleasing therapy session, thanks to someone with more experience than me in this kind of business. Suzanne understood how important it is for me to be dedicating my time and efforts in the memory of my first mother, Dorothy.

7. What can we do?

Unless you have money, power, influence etc. I don't believe that there is much that any ordinary citizens can do right now - or that we ever could overcome objectives of any kind now without some kind of life altering changes in society that would just sweep everything aside and start over - something that has been going on now for centuries.

There are no true single answers. We have to recognize that sometimes we have to view evil things in perspective. In ancient times slavery was common...so slavery was the most evil thing on the face of the earth right? Not so, because it was not until the ruthless rulers of those days realized that they could make money off the enemy survivors of decisive battles, that they stopped slaughtering every man woman and child in sight. We've moved on some, but we in the Western world still have economic slavery which we should soon be thinking about leaving behind.

While slavery was saving the lives of many military men in ancient times, the children of slaves were lucky to be left alive, if they ever were discovered. So, if it was Greece again (who had writing as well as limited democracy) and I was Dorothy's son then...guess what. We would not have had the opportunity to share these thoughts.

8. What is your hope for the future?

My original hope for the future was that Bill Gates would one day discover that he was adopted and would throw the

full force of his power and communications empire behind the destruction of poverty and adoption. My hope is still linked to the communications industry, but is now a wish for some computer genius to someday set up an adoption alert network similar to the one used for abducted children - the AMBER alert system.

Hope for the future is in the next generation, which is under development. Hopefully, they will pick up the sword of rightful change for the good and fight using it to help conquer diseases, the causes of war, and a myriad of other noble objectives. And to not forget to include adoption reform on their To Do List!

I have some confidence in the next generation in this regard. I was watching Justin Timberlake being interviewed on the Tonight Show with J Leno recently when Justin said some very interesting things - which he usually does not! What he was talking about was his role in a movie called The Social Network...the story of how Face Book was founded etc. As part of his character discussion he said that the young founder of Face Book did not have to take his ideas to someone older, wiser and richer to have his idea fly and eventually succeed...all that he needed was himself! And Timberlake said that his whole media generation (in the USA) is operating now on that modus operandi. So, maybe it will be a media savvy cyberspace leader who will change adoption in the future without even consulting us or government.

I believe that children's rights and adoption reform are the canaries in the coal mine of any civilization and I hope that the next generation is taking notice. If they are and if most them in their working worlds starts to operate through social networking and do it in a positive way towards bettering society, then I am optimistic about the future of both civilization and adoption reform. Youth also seem to like Leonard Cohen and they may just follow his advice:

"Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There's a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in"

9. Is there anything you would like to add?

I'd like to thank Marnie Tetz for thinking of me as the poster boy for this issue when she heard that "suffering" was going to be the theme. Bernadette Rymer gets my thanks also for her article in the last issue: "Undisclosed." It brought back the suffering endured by those who give up everything for adoption; and set the mood for me in answering these other questions.

Dorothy and I would also like to thank a woman who helped to bring us back together and to show us "how the light gets in." Audrey Lang is her name and she is my sister - my new sister and definitely no half-sister. She is a sister and a half, if anything! Without the guts of this Alberta prairie flower the world would not be the better place that it now is! The light of happiness that she and her husband Don have brought back into our lives has also restored some balance and optimism to the purpose of the universe.

My new Aunt Elsie (by marriage) is having her 94th Birthday as I'm writing this and I must mention her in closing. She represents the very best of Evangelical Christendom out there in Alberta. When Audrey was introducing me around the province to my new relatives, Aunt Elsie was my most enthusiastic supporter and made it her personal crusade to arm twist any of the reluctant family members who wanted to sit my arrival out! Another prairie flower! - Audrey and Aunt Elsie, two Alberta wild roses!

George Robinson/Leo Burg

~~~~~ *Joe Soll, continued from page 11:*

There is no difference in the experience of losing a mother or child to death or adoption. Baby is here, baby is gone. Mommy is here, mommy is gone. We experience that death but what **is different** is how we are treated if there is a death as opposed to adoption.

If there is a real death, presumably those close to us will say, "I'm sorry your baby died when she was born, you must be sad, let me comfort you", or "I'm sorry your mother died when you were born, you must be sad, let me comfort you." That encourages good grieving of the tragic loss that society acknowledges.

Every mother of adoption loss that I have ever met was told, one way or the other that she did the noble, selfless thing and to go on with her life making believe it did not happen. Every adoptee I have ever met was told that she or he was Special, Chosen or Lucky (which means they are lucky their mother died for them) and make believe it didn't happen. These scenarios deny loss and deny the need to grieve. To survive the pain, we have to hide from it thru denial or repression.

If one has a tooth ache and applies a topical anesthetic to relieve the pain, the decay that causes the toothache continues unnoticed. If we are not allowed to grieve our losses the hidden pain causes emotional decay. The fact is that un-grieved losses paralyze lives. Moreover, the subsequent death of any loved one is unlikely to be grieved in any meaningful way as the fear of the pain of the un-grieved adoption loss is likely to inhibit true grieving.

If we are afraid of the pain of our loss, we are not free, we are enslaved by the emotions of adoption. To be truly happy, have peace and contentment, we must find a way to grieve our adoption losses.

Good Grief of the healing kind involves letting the pain out with those who have experienced the same losses. We need to have validation from those who understand. We need to grieve the loss of the person, the relationship with that person and the special moments we would have had. It is not easy to grieve a relationship that we did not experience but it is possible and necessary. We need to cry until we do not need to cry any more. This does not take a long time at all and the relief is incredible. We discover a new way of life. It's called **Living** and that means living without fear of our own emotions

We may think, as I used to, that if we start to cry that we will be unable to stop but the fact is that we **will** be able to

stop. We may think, as I used to, that if we start to cry our pain will kill us, that we will be annihilated, but the fact is that we will **not** perish.

I **used** to think the above thoughts until I tried, a little at a time, to let the pain out in a way that was safe for me. When I discovered that I would not cry forever or perish, I became unafraid of my pain. I'm not saying it doesn't hurt horribly, but once unafraid, I could let it out so that I could my grieving.

Does this way of dealing with the suffering make sense? I sincerely hope so! Because if it does and you try it, you will discover, as I did that the injuries caused by separation of mother and child can, in time and with work, be dealt with effectively to the point where the loss will not interfere daily in our lives. Instead, the pain might rear it's head a few times a year. We may need to cry--get a hug and perhaps vent our anger--but the pain will pass more quickly each time.

"And the day came when the risk to remain closed in a bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom" - Anais Nin

Freedom involves Good Grieving. Together we can do this. Good Grief! What a concept.

Sad Passing of Judy Capes

It is with deep regret and sorrow that we announce that Judy passed away on Friday night, October 29th, 2010, from complications associated with Leukemia.

Judy was a friend of FMNFS having presented twice on Grief & Loss issues. Judy worked with the Living Through Loss Society of BC and was honoured to come and talk to us (after our AGM) on the issues of loss (primary, secondary and symbolic).

She was a gentle, beautiful woman. She will be sorely missed.

News Updates from Around the World

West Australia Parliament apologizes for forced adoptions: Adoption Apology:

This is the first official government apology anywhere in the world for the policy of snatching babies from mothers at birth. The apology includes admission of the trauma caused to both mother and child by the forced adoption policies of the 1940s to 1980s.

Quote: "Today's apology by the West Australian government to mothers who had their children taken has spurred calls for the Federal Government to do the same. It's the first time a government has apologized for the practice of taking babies from single mothers and putting them up for adoption".

For more information about this and to view the apology and interviews, type in 'Google Australia' and then 'West Australia Adoption Apology'.

Fathers Deleted Ontario Omits Fathers from OBCs

So, as of June 1, 2009, adult adoptees who were adopted in Ontario can get the names of their first parents from the government, right? Well, not exactly. You can get your mother's name, but not your father's. It turns out that unless your parents were married and your father agreed to have his name on the Registration of Live Birth—the form that later became your Original Birth Certificate—you can't have his name.

So far, reports from all adopted adults who have applied for their OBCs say that all of the fathers are missing.

We have not heard from one mother from Ontario who received her child's original registration of live birth who has reported that the name of her child's father was on the form.

For years, young mothers were forbidden to write the names of their babies' fathers on the form that registers the birth of their children. Many wrote in their partners' names anyway, but they were always deleted. Local registrars would literally cut out pieces of paper from blank forms—dotted lines and all—and paste them over the fathers' names. The forms that were sent to us after the records opened last year were much reduced photocopies that were supposed to hide the artifice. But it didn't work.

The OBCs have been defaced in other ways. Mothers' certified documents were written on, their names bracketed and adoptive names written in.

Many are now writing to the Ombudsman to complain. Adoptees are complaining that their fathers' names are systematically missing. Mothers are complaining about their treatment at the hands of medical staff and social workers, and that their certified documents were meddled with by the government itself.

If you are:

- ☐ An adoptee, born and adopted in Ontario, whose father's name is missing from your original birth certificate
- ☐ A mother who gave birth to a child in Ontario (who was adopted) and you had been forbidden to record your child's name on his or her OBC
- ☐ A natural mother who was abused by a social worker or hospital staff in Ontario because you were unmarried
- ☐ A natural father who was not allowed to include his name on your child's OBC in Ontario because you were not married to the mother

Please write to the Ombudsman of Ontario to let him know. He wants to know. Please join us in a campaign to complain to the Ontario Ombudsman. Go to the Ombudsman of Ontario Website www.ombudsman.on.ca/en.aspx. Click on the green box: "Make a Complaint Online".

Our solidarity has worked before. Let's keep it up!

Karen Lynn
ccnm@rogers.com
Coalition for Open Adoption Records
Canadian Council of Natural Mothers

Upcoming in our Winter Edition of Adoption Circles

Due to space limitations and our decision to present to you detailed information and varied points of view about the Angel's Cradle program, several articles submitted for this edition of Adoption Circles will be held over for our next edition in which we will be exploring the theme of BELONGING. Fortunately these articles fit very well with the upcoming theme. We will present:

- Stories of birth/natural mothers and those adopted who have found a place to call 'home' in the FMNFS;
- Photos from our workshop; and the stories shared by the mother's on the panel;
- Personality Profile;
- Articles by Fr. Tom Brosnan, Linda Hoye and Ann Wilmer;
- FMNFS **Draft** Position Statement on Safe Haven programs;
- Book reviews about adoption related books and other best sellers that have adoption as a major story line;
- Poems by members of FMNFS, and others;
- Your views and input about articles in this issue.

What else would you like to see included in the next issue?
Email: Bernadette at bjrymer@telus.net, or Marnie at marnietetz@shaw.ca

LEAN ON ME

Telephone/e-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

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

Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca) (604) 535-4434
 Kimberley-Ann Jandl – Abbotsford
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca) (604) 309-7436
 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.

SUPPORT GROUPS



Forget Me Not Family Society Support Groups

The FMNFS holds two support groups a month, for adoptees, birth/natural mothers, adoptive parents and those in a supportive role.

Cloverdale meets the first Thursday of each month September through June.

Cloverdale Public Library 2nd floor
 5642-176 A Street, Cloverdale, B.C.
 6:30 - 8:30 pm
 Contact Marnie Tetz at marnietetz@shaw.ca or 604-535-4434

New Westminster meets the second Tuesday of each month year round.

New Westminster Public Library 2nd floor
 716 - 6th Ave, New Westminster, B.C.
 7 - 9 pm
 Contact Nancy Kato at katosan@telus.net or 604-777-2920

Other Support Groups

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

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

Vancouver:

The **Adoptee's Association** holds a discussion group for adopted adults the third Tuesday of each month starting at 7 pm at the Rhizome Cafe, 317 East Broadway (near Main Street). Please email Catherine for more information at katiesue@shaw.ca or visit www.adopteesassociation.ca for more information.

Vancouver Adoption Support Group and BC Mothers Action Group meets monthly in Vancouver. Please contact:

Hanne Andersen
 Provincial Coordinator Origins Canada
 604-254-4577
www.originscanada.org

Please note that the "Other Support Groups" do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the FMNFS, but are listed above for your information only.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER? As many organizations are now publishing newsletters distributed to members via e-mail, 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 your preference for the current format or an electronic Adoption Circles, Thank you for your feedback!

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, of \$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.

Please send cheque payable to the
Forget Me Not Family Society
 #102- 1860 Southmere Cres. E.
 Surrey, B.C. V4A 6Y7

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 Editors at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca, or bjrymer@telus.net

The deadlines and focus of the Newsletter are as follows:

EDITION	FOCUS	DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION
Winter	Belonging	January 11, 2011	February 14, 2010
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

To place an advertisement, 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.



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

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

Name: _____

Address _____

City/Province/State _____

Postal/Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

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

Prospective Adoptive Parent _____ Adoption Professional _____ Other _____