

# ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue # 59 Fall \$3.50



*Celeste Maier and Gloria Sweder*

## Communication

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## ADOPTION CIRCLES



Fall 2011  
Publisher

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## FMNFS 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 number 88908 4869 RR0001. Our Society was formed for education, consultation, peer counseling and to offer support to all those touched by adoption: adoptees, birth/natural/first parents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals. Our primary source of income is through membership fees. These funds go directly towards printing, postage, telephone, wireless expenses 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
- 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: 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.**

**C**ommunication: What does it mean and how do we do it? Can it help us find our way in our journey of adoption search and reunion? I think it is a very important topic that Bernadette has chosen for this issue of the newsletter.

This Fall issue of Adoption Circles is jam packed with articles, poems, pictures and thoughts from our members about what communication means to them, and their thoughts on our workshop with Joe Soll.

Usually when we communicate we do it verbally by sharing stories of what has just happened or what went on in the past. We don't actually talk about how we feel. We think that we do - we say "I feel tired...I feel ok...I feel...excited" - when we should say "I feel *happy, sad, scared, hurt* or



*President's Message*  
*Marnie Tetz*

perhaps *angry, etc.*” These feeling statements more accurately communicate what is actually going on inside of us. Not many of us know how to do this, how to make feeling statements to communicate our pain, sadness, anger, fear and happiness. It’s not easy because our society isn’t programmed for us to share actual feelings and many people don’t really listen anyway.

Another way we can communicate is to share our tears, hugs and laughter, when we are in an environment where we feel safe to do so. (“Okay, Joe

Soll - is safe a feeling?” I think it is. ) If I feel safe I can share my tears, hugs, and laughter. When I am with trusted enlightened witnesses I can communicate freely my feelings of pain, fear, anger sadness and happiness.

Please cozy up in your favourite chair, have a chat in your head with your inner child, letting him/her know that they are loved and safe, and then enjoy this issue of Adoption Circle: you are safe with these enlightened witnesses.

~ Marnie Tetz~

## *Rymer Writes*

**C**ommunication in Reunion! How do we do it? How do we learn to effectively communicate with our loved one when there is so much pain attached to the relationship from the very beginning?

I believe that for parents who lost their loved ones to adoption, we need to reflect on how we communicated our feelings and needs from the very first moment we became pregnant. I have heard many say “I so regret that did not communicate my needs”. My increasing understanding of adoptees leads me to believe that because they were not consulted about their adoption at the time, and for most their adoption occurred in the first few months of life before they developed language, when communicating their feelings and needs they were either not understood, or worse, ignored.

**FACT:** As you will read in this issue, we cannot NOT communicate. Every verbal and non-verbal act communicates something about us. If we are not effective in communicating our feelings and needs outwardly, we turn our communication inwards by using negative messages: “I am not fit to be her mother, she will be better off without me”, “My mother gave me away: My mother did not love me, I am unlovable.” These are powerful messages that we have lived with and believed for far too long!



In this issue you will read about mothers and ‘children’ who are learning to communicate in new and very freeing ways about who they are, about their individual and collective pain, about what happened to them, who did it to them and why, and about how they are embracing their pain, developing relationships with the lost loved one, and healing and growing in ways that are unique to us.

For our spouses, other children, parents and siblings, close friends, those people precious to us who have **not** lost a loved one to adoption, it is impossible to explain how we feel because, much as they may love us and may be totally supportive of a adoption healing journey, they have not experienced our loss on a real cellular level. Perhaps in reading this issue, they may gain a deeper understanding of the person they love so much who so often seems preoccupied - if not obsessed with this process we know as adoption healing.

We offer our sincere thanks to all contributors in this issue. Your wisdom, understanding and caring are reassuring and very much appreciated. We also welcome FMNFS Director Amy Newman as our Associate Editor. Amy, your editing expertise is also very much appreciated.

This issue of Adoption Circles is not for the faint-hearted. As Marnie says, cozy up in your favourite spot with your favourite drop and learn, heal and be at peace. ~ Bernadette Rymer~

# *Forget Me Not Family Society Annual Workshop*

**"Good Grief"** Presented by Joe Soll October 14-16, 2011

## Reflections by Participants

**M**elinda and I had arrived early to the hotel on Friday. The first meeting was to be dinner at the hotel restaurant. I had already signed us up so that we could have a preview meeting with Joe Soll. I had read the first few pages of his book until my tears literally prevented me from reading anymore. There was a compassion in those first pages that I had never felt before. It was strange to me.

The dinner group was larger than I had imagined it would be. I felt uncomfortable in such a large group of mostly strangers. Many of them were middle aged or older women than me. Melinda was very obviously going to be one of the youngest of the group, if not the youngest. Joe Soll arrived and was seated at the head of the long stream of tables. I could steal a few peeks at him and observed his meek demeanour. He had a full head of snow white hair on top of a warm smiling face. He appeared shy to me. I guessed his age to be in his early 70s. I liked him.

After dinner we moved to the hotel conference room for our first gathering. As Melinda and I had gone to our room first before joining the group, we were late arrivals. That forced us to sit in the back row and remain somewhat hidden from the group. The group had already begun and Joe was asking us to take turns by putting our hands up and saying how we feel. He coached us in our speech by telling us to state, "I feel, (name the emotion), because 'this' (name event) happened to me. It took a couple of times for the group to get going. The first ones to speak stay with the safe emotions, "I feel happy because I talked to my sister on the phone." "I feel frustrated because it took me two hours to get here through the rush hour traffic," another comments.

Gently, compassionately, Joe guides us into the feelings that represent the reason why we are here. "What else do you feel?" he probes. "Wait and listen



to what you are saying out loud in your head." He waits and gives examples, "You may be feeling sad that you lost your baby to adoption," and immediately some are triggered in the room. He focuses on one member and reads her nametag. "Trudy, why are you crying?" And then it begins.

We each tell our stories mostly in one-liners but each comment weaving together into the next person's feeling comments. The room becomes safe, very, very quickly. There is silence between comments and Joe gently encourages more to speak, then waits and someone gains courage again. "I am angry that I was told I was special for being adopted. Whenever I hear the word 'special' I flinch and become angry all over again. If I am so special, why was I given up in the first place?" one woman releases.

There is no crosstalk. Joe holds us like a gentle shepherd leading us one by one through the gates into our own pain. When we cry, he notices and calls us out. The brave ones put up their hands and speak about their losses. I am learning a new language here. It is the word 'lost'. Joe refuses the term, 'give up your baby for adoption' and replaces it with 'lost your baby to adoption.' I struggle to understand his meaning and then take the risk to speak.

"I feel frustrated because I believe I gave my baby up for adoption. It was my choice and no one forced me to make that decision."

"You were brainwashed," he simply but gently corrects me.

I become even more frustrated and feel that I have to build my case, so I begin. "I made the decision about 10 minutes after my doctor told me I was pregnant. The first choice he offered me was to abort. As I drove away from the doctor's office my mind was racing to problem solve." I insist. "I admit it was a fear based decision but I chose to give my baby up for adoption."

"But did you have any support?" he asked. "Was your boyfriend supportive to take care of you and your baby, was your family supportive? You had been brainwashed to think that your baby would be better off without you and to be raised by another family with two parents. You were given these messages way before you think you made your choice, way before you found out you were pregnant. That is not a choice, that is brainwashing."

I decided to remain open and to be teachable. "I feel like I might be having some kind of awakening here." I speak, through my tears. My thoughts were firing rapidly trying to catch up and process what I was being told. I had trained myself for all these years to take full responsibility for my loss. All of my work to date had been about me finding relief from my regret, my shame, my guilt. I was not quite ready to let myself off the hook so fast.

"Are you angry at your 19 year old self?" Joe intuitively asks. With downcast eyes, while catching a memory glimpse of myself at 19, I respond through my tears, "Yes." "Are you okay?" he asks, marking the end of my turn, for now.

The movement continues as we spend hours together in the 'grief' room. My heart is torn and shredded as I listen to the stories, one after another and see the pain of our losses, one after another. I am aware of the freedom that comes to me every time I speak. I feel lighter and lighter, as if the lid has been taken off of my pressure cooker of sadness. I grieve for others in the room, alongside them and for them. I am seeing 8 year olds in 40 year old bodies, crying for their Mommies. I see 18 year olds in 60 year old bodies crying for their babies.

The quote from Joe Soll's book repeats itself over and over in my brain as I watch this drama unfold: "The horrors of war pale beside the loss of a mother." (Anna Freud) "The horrors of war pale beside the loss of a child." (Joe Soll)

I am there, with my daughter sitting to my left. She is not crying. She has her Mommy. Others in the room comment on this. It appears as if we are the only reunited couple here together this weekend, (although I have been told that we were not) We are a trigger of pain to some but also an encouragement to others,

as some have shared with us. As for me, I feel grateful.

~ Barb Van Ee, Reunited Mother ~



It was so nice to have Joe Soll back in the West. His dedication is second to none. I believe because so many of us are so comfortable with Joe we were able to go deeper with our wounds and our pain. We were able to bring things UP from our soul, and do the work required to start the healing process. Fabulous workshop! I would do it again in a heartbeat!

~ Reunited Mother ~



Joe Soll, for me, was like a parent that truly believes and understands the feelings involved in being an adoptee. A safe place.

~ Ruth Huber ~



I opened my heart and bared my soul... I shared parts of me, I didn't even know existed. I felt safe to express my darkest fears and received validation, not judgement. This could only have happened with Joe Soll's guidance and a room filled with love, acceptance, and understanding. Sharing my pain, in such a safe environment gave me a feeling of lightness, I have never experienced before. Listening to other people share their pain, feeling so much love and gratefulness, that they would share their experiences, so we can all learn and grow. In the past few years, I try to live in the moment - that is exactly what I did during the weekend. Although I was dealing with experiences from the past, I have never felt so present. My mind didn't wander, it was focused on the here and now, dealing with the emotions that were surfacing, allowing myself to express my vulnerability without any fear of judgement.

I thank Joe, and each and every person in that room for making me feel so safe and so loved. The emotion in that room was palpable; you could look anywhere and feel the love and understanding!

The experience was life changing! I feel an emotional renewal: a sense of hope, becoming non-judgemental of my experience, freedom to feel all of my emotions.

A quote I read recently that I felt to my core is: “It’s not what is lost, but what is left” (*The Memory Palace*, by Mira Bartók ) – that is what I have learned from my weekend with Joe Soll. The loss of my baby is not what defines me. It is part of who I am, and it carries sadness, pain, and regret for all that could have been. But, it is not what I have now.

What is lost:

- My baby
- What could have been
- Watching her grow up
- My innocence
- Love

What is left:

- Joy – pure joy of knowing her and having the knowledge that she is a beautiful person inside and out. Being able to love her for who she is, and not some abstract imagery.
- Hope – for a future of closeness. Building a bond that will stand the test of time.
- Acceptance – for what is, not for what could have been. Accepting her for who she is. Accepting the here and now, that is what we have. We don’t have a lifetime of past milestones, but we have a future filled with possibilities. Accepting what she wants in this relationship. Knowing my pain and loss is not the same as hers.
- Gratitude – for the little things. I know where she is. I can email her, and talk on the phone sporadically. I have her PICTURE! I know her smile. I am full of love for her, the real person, not just the baby. Being able to think about her and having the context of actually knowing who she is, and not just a baby out in the world somewhere. For all the unconditional love I feel.
- Unconditional Love – to love someone so unconditionally is beautiful. I love her just because of who she is. There are no strings attached to this love. I feel love for her with every fibre of my being. She doesn’t have to do anything to make me love her, it just is. I am so full of love when I think of her, and nothing ever takes away from that. To feel such a pure love, is a gift in itself!

I don’t think I really understood what I received from the weekend with Joe, until I read that quote. I feel an inner peace; acceptance for what is, not what should be. It doesn’t mean the sadness will ever be erased, but I can live with the grief, because I accept that too. I feel what I need to feel, but I don’t let that cloud what I have. I have Krista now, in a way I never thought possible. For that, I am grateful beyond measure!

Thank you to the FMNFS Board for organizing such a wonderful experience!!!

~ Diane Wilcott, Reunited Mother ~



Thanks to Joe Soll and the workshop, I now realize why I was so fascinated by my birth mother's eyes when we first reunited. I am working on very long anger and grief lists so that I can get to '*the best way to get justice is to become happy*'.

~ Reunited Adoptee ~



Having only online support where I live, it was so much more personal being with other moms and children, being able to speak openly without being invalidated, as well as learn of others' experiences. Thank you for all your efforts in making this possible.

~ Cathie, Reunited Mother ~



The most important thing I learned from Joe is that “we are not responsible for other people’s feelings.” As children we are made to feel responsible, through our behaviour (and *thoughts* and *feelings*), for “making” Mum happy, for “making” hubby happy, for making so-and-so happy. I really believed I was responsible! It’s a real eye-opener for me. It’s not as if we should be acting like spoiled children, or behaving badly with intent to hurt others. What it means to me is that we be true to ourselves, our innermost authentic selves, even if those around us are not “happy” with our decisions. They’ll get over it, but we won’t if we go against our most *inner authentic yearning*. There is great wisdom in raising children not to be blindly obedient to adults.

~ Mary Ann Dubeski, Late Discovery Adoptee ~



What I learned: We can begin to heal the lifelong impact of loss when we are open to sharing our feelings, compassionately listen to one another, and take care of our inner child. When this is done surrounded by enlightened witnesses, amazing things can happen. I want to express much gratitude to Joe for courageously leading our group to do this hard work. I am so thankful to have been a part of this.

~ Fran Kuefler Josey, BSW, RSW ~  
Reunion/Post Guardianship Consultant, Alberta Post Adoption Registry, Ministry of Human Services



On the way home I started thinking about those who attended being Enlightened Witnesses and being in the Company of Eagles. For us to truly heal, we need to be with a full complement of those who understand and those who want to understand. Everything I've learned about that makes us all tick and what we can do to heal has come to me by listening to everyone I could listen to. Mums, other adoptees, adoptive parents who truly want the best for their children and from social workers who want to make change.

The change in every single person who attended your seminar was strikingly beautiful. What a difference in them from Friday evening to the end on Sunday. Clearly everyone wanted to learn and clearly they all did.

To heal we need to have our hearts and eyes wide open. Some eyes were closed on Friday evening but they were wide open by Sunday noon. It was my honour to be able to be with all of you brave healers!

~ Joe Soll, One of the 35 Eagles attending.



#### PEWTER PINS FOR SALE

1 ¼ in size: See page 24 to order pins and T-shirts

Photos from "Good Grief" Workshop Presented by  
Joe Soll October 14-16, 2011



Marnie Tetz and Joe Soll



Two reunited moms and a reunited adoptee:  
Alison Csanyi, Barb Van Ee and  
Melinda Heinrichs



L – R: President Marnie Tetz, Vice-President  
Audrey Harrington and Kimberley-Ann Jandl,  
sporting **Forget Me Not** T-shirts.



Our 38 participants and presenter Joe Soll enjoying communicating during our annual workshop.

## Workshop Evaluations

**T**he FMNFS Board would like to thank all who attended our annual workshop on October 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>.

In addition to the wonderful responses we received from attendees (pages 4-7) 30 of 34 participants completed an evaluation form telling what they liked, what really worked for them and what they would like to see next year.

We are delighted to report that by a large majority, participants were either satisfied or very satisfied with the organization, communication, topic, presenter and group sessions. Our new venue this year, the Travelodge in Richmond, received mixed reviews as the meeting room did not have any windows and was small for the number of participants, and the food was very disappointing. However the location was a big hit as it was so convenient for out of towners, and having all events in the one location was also appreciated.

Thanks also for your suggestions for our workshop next year. We discussed your suggestions and have already begun conversations with possible presenters and management at various hotels in Richmond. Details will be decided before Christmas and full 2012 workshop details will be announced in our next Adoption Circles published in March 2012.

## The Truth

In my womb a baby grows  
In my heart the feelings flow  
In my mind I can't comprehend  
The sadness and sorrow that has no end  
What will I do, where will I go  
To hide the shame that I can't control.

Society says I must hide away  
Far from family, far from friends  
To a darkened home that always sends  
A message of hopelessness, a message of pain.  
No matter what I do, there is nothing to gain  
If I keep my baby she will be  
Illegitimate, ostracized, shrouded in shame.

How would I know that the same would be  
In someone else's arms, she would not be free  
Free from the pain nor free from the shame.

A terrible truth did arise  
Out of the misconception, she was the prize  
To someone else but not to me  
And in the end we would never be free.

Gail Davies  
November, 2011

## TO SINK, OR NOT TO?

by Solveig Nordwall

I start out on the surface, daily life, stuff to do,  
places to go, lists, chores and  
blissful little humming moments  
when it's the weekend, and no place to go,  
no one to see,  
just me and the cats and Esquimalt Harbour  
right outside my windows, peaceful, bird-filled,  
every day different-filled.

Work of course, lots of that, serious stuff.  
Projects and plots and schemes,  
You must stay focused, finances need shoring up,  
Yes indeed.

And then a weekend in Vancouver,  
About things still in the shadows,  
A son yet to be found,  
With others who share the deeper levels  
of primal loss  
Where sometimes the sun don't shine ever, honey  
Where the pain is a permanent resident,  
and all losses keep aching.

Where we, from the common, wordless, aching pit  
that is in each and every one of our hearts,  
Cries "PAIN!! HELP!! HOLD ME!!"

And since the primal moment of separation not  
one of us has lost the soul-deep, bone-deep, all  
deep need to cry and wail and scream,  
And be held until it's all bled dry...

For this time.

## But Once

by Myrl Coulter

If I could talk with you but once,  
I would speak of youthful love and curiosity  
with no hint of blame or shame.  
If I could talk with you but once,  
I wouldn't waste a minute.

I'd tell you our stories:  
the sadness in a young father's eyes,  
a brother by half denied a brother  
and sisters that light up the world.  
If I could look at you but once,  
I would tell you  
about the shape of your chin or  
the raise of your brow,  
all the while not taking my eyes from your face.  
Are they blue like mine or brown like his?  
They were closed that last time late in the night.

I would tell you of the secret place  
I have kept you all these years.  
Safe. Warm. Loved.  
Tucked away in the yellowed envelope  
with that picture and those wristbands.  
For to see you anywhere else was  
unthinkable, not survivable.  
And then I would pause because,  
most of all, I need you to know,  
somehow I would sort out how to say this –  
I would not change that I gave you life,  
but change I would the life I gave you.  
If I could talk to you but once.

From *The House with the Broken Two:*  
*A Birthmother Remembers*  
Used with permission of the publisher.

## Conflict of Two Moms: An Adoptee's Dilemma

by Joe Soll, LCSW, DAPA

**O**ur 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 that 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

Kimberley-Ann Jandl with her two moms.(March, 2000)



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 who 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.

☹ ~ Joe Soll ~

**The Collective Consciousness of Society: 1945 - 1985**  
**The Crimes Against Unmarried Mothers**  
by Val Andrews, 2011

Submission to the Australian Inquiry into Forced Adoption Practices  
(Reprinted with permission from the author)

From the end of WWII until approximately 1985 in Canada, Australia, UK, and the United States, a phenomena took place which is being called by some the “Baby Scoop Era”(Wilson-Buterbaugh, 2003) the mothers of that time sometimes referred to as “BSE Mothers.”

During WWII, women in allied countries “held the fort” while the men went off to fight. Women drove trucks, worked in steel plants and more, some simultaneously caring for home and children. After both world wars, it became the social duty of women to provide offspring to re-populate. The arrival of Displaced Persons, War Brides, and others added to the theory that the economy and the social fabric of society depended on the creation of families and women being in the home to nurture those families. Soldiers returning from the war expected to return to their jobs, and so the women dutifully returned to home and motherhood. Social conventions of the time argued that “women’s most basic satisfaction came through service to others in the domestic sphere” (Strong-Boag, 1994). In Commonwealth countries, the new youthful monarch in Elizabeth II and her devotion to family life was also to become an ideal to emulate. Birth rates increased dramatically, now known as the Baby Boomers.

With the increase of car purchases, the ability to live further from the core of the city became easier and suburbs were created. Women took on the task of creating and nurturing family life in those suburbs while men took on the role of provider. Everything in popular culture supported this model including advertising, television programs, books, magazines and other media. Church attendance and enrollment in Church Schools was at an all time high and the morality of the neighbourhood was closely watched and enforced by the women in these suburban homes.

It was in this setting, in this Collective Consciousness of how post war life should be, that some of the most horrific acts against women took place. Mostly in secret and hidden from public view even until today, the human rights violations and crimes against the unmarried mother have little been discussed, or acknowledged.

Unmarried pregnant youth and women were a blight on this ideal of post war society. These women had broken the rules of sexuality and motherhood. The social stigma attached to an unmarried girl who was pregnant during this period cannot be understated. She was in severe violation of what was expected by society.

Sometime before WWII, these women were viewed as “Fallen Women” and their children as “Bastards”. Society scorned both mother and child legally and socially and they were encouraged to stay together in their misery and ostracism. They were considered “feeble minded” and their immoral behaviour considered hereditary. During and after WWII, a new theory emerged with the growing professionalization and acceptance of Social Work casework and Psychiatry. “Appointing themselves the new experts, social workers sought to claim the field of illegitimacy as their proper domain” (Kunzel, 1993). The deviant mother was no longer considered to be feeble minded or morally unredeemable, instead she was ill. The idea emerged that the mother could be rehabilitated by keeping the pregnancy a secret, relinquishing her child for adoption and returning to society to fulfill her role as “bride, coquette and co-ed” (Solinger, 1992). “This procedure...is based on the concept that the baby is a symbol, without actual reality to the mother” (Solinger, 1992). The child would be given to infertile couples to raise “as if born to” which would help them in their quest for the ideal. In a mother driven society

this became a social experiment which destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives.

This simplistic idea seemed to solve everyone's problems:

The unmarried mother would simply forget about her child and be transformed from an aberration of society to a respectable and marriageable woman once again. She would have learned the lesson of her crime and pay her debt to society by her punishment which included harsh and inhumane treatment designed to teach her not to duplicate her behaviour, and the loss of her child to adoption. A harsh punishment indeed. Dr. Marion Hilliard of Women's College Hospital stated that "When she renounces her child for its own good, the unwed mother has learned a lot. She has learned to pay the price of her misdemeanour and this alone, if punishment is needed, is punishment enough." (Toronto Telegram 1956)

Infertile women were also considered deviant in this mother driven society. The "deserving moral woman", who had not broken the rules and by no fault of her own was infertile, would receive "the gift" of a child to carry on the ideal - perhaps in those very suburbs. The child would be considered "as if born to" with records altered and sealed, perpetuating the myth and denying the child their right to know her origins. These records were sealed for the Adopter's peace of mind, and not to protect the child's mother as governments would later attest. Adoptive mothers would live the adoption myth often believing the children were unwanted. In some cases their desperation for a child allowed them to justify their actions as rescuers of a child, who in fact, needed no rescue. Society offered them adoption as a "cure" for infertility, and they took it. This was fully encouraged by the Social Workers, and the adoption industry.

Society would go back to normal, with a newly redeemed women in place to continue on to perpetuate the ideals of motherhood and a new Adoptive Mother to do the same. All was well in the suburbs. But was it?

This "method" was endorsed by all aspects of society and each segment of society met the terms.

Religions met the terms by the creation "Homes for Unwed Mothers" (Andrews, 2009), "Magdalene Laundries", (Finnegan, 2004) and "Reform Institutions for Wayward Girls" to house the deviant mothers and to redeem their souls thereby transforming them from Magdalenes to Marys. In these facilities young women en masse were required to change their names and wear apparel provided by the institution. Although not legally incarcerated, their movements, telephone access and visitors restricted, particularly male visitors (to discourage the fathers of their children from being involved) and their mail censored. In these institutions they were subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse. Their self esteem was systematically eroded. Their ability to parent was ridiculed and undermined so as to make them believe that their baby "would be better off" with strangers. These young women were required to attend religious services daily, and work as indentured servants. They were labelled sluts, whores and sinners. They were told repeatedly their only way to redemption was in the relinquishment of their child. They would become a martyr to their sin, and their child the price of their martyrdom. The coercive nature of these institutions to force a mother to surrender her child cannot be overstated. These facilities provided little if any information about labour and delivery. Young women were routinely left alone at hospital admission with no knowledge or support through labour and delivery rendering them terrified and traumatized. Abusive treatment in hospital was routine for these women. The entire procedure was designed to groom the inmates for adoption and to make the experience so terrible that they never returned. It was also designed to make it easier to obtain signatures from terrified, traumatized, medicated, young women. Most of these facilities were either wholly or partially financed by the government.

The Medical Profession met the terms by keeping mothers separate from married mothers in hospital, by restraining mothers on delivery tables, by removing babies from their mothers while still in the primal act of birth, still in labour, bound, awaiting the expulsion of the placenta (culminating in a violent trauma to the female psyche from which no mother is able to recover) (Wellfare, 1997), by preventing eye contact between baby and mother by the use of pillows, sheets

or other apparatus, by preventing lactation by administering cancer causing medications without consent, by sedating and drugging mothers, and by denying mothers free access to their own babies by removing babies to remote locations, by trading live babies with stillborns, or by simply disallowing mothers to see and hold their infants.

Governments met the terms with Social Workers who denied the deviant mothers all knowledge of their legal rights regarding parenting, adoption, foster care, or visitation, by using overt and covert methods of coercion to obtain consents, by not advising mothers of the long lasting severe psychological damage of separation to both mother and child which was known at the time, by discriminating against Caucasian mothers by withholding information and resources which were commonly released to visible minority mothers, by refusing to listen to mothers who wanted to “keep” and mother their children, by “grooming” mothers throughout their pregnancy to “unbond” (Ruane, 2003) with her child, by consistently pressuring mothers into adoption as the only “loving option” for their child by using their love for their child to extract a surrender when no other recourse appeared to be available to them. “The mothers desperately wanted to keep their children and were perfectly capable as loving souls to do so, but were forced, literally, to surrender the most precious little one they protected and carried into full life from their own bodies. Between harassments, betrayals, demeaning treatment, being told they were incapable and withdrawing all resources in order to prove the point instead of bending to help keep mother and child united, the mothers and children were given no choice but severance.”(Estes, 2010).

Society met the terms by keeping the secret of their daughter or other family member, by supporting the professionals, by supporting the redemption myth, and by supporting the idea that the child and the mother would be “better off”, and by supporting the notion that she was not a mother. Society also met the terms by building a multi-billion dollar adoption industry which promotes adoption as “the loving option”. “Regrettably, in many cases the emphasis has changed from the desire to provide a needy child with a home, to that of providing needy parents with a child. As a result a whole industry has grown, generating millions

of dollars of revenue each year, seeking babies for adoption and charging prospective parents enormous fees to process the paperwork.”(Petit, UN Report, 2002).

When it was all over, society was satisfied, adoptive parents were satisfied, but what happened to the mother who was released from hospital without her child? Breasts flowing with milk, traumatized, stripped of her child and motherhood, still recovering from birth, told never to tell a living soul of her secret, told that she would forget about this child and would go on to have “children of her own” in the future, sent home without even a piece of paper in her hand as proof of the act, and no counselling to help her.....a “throwaway mother”. What happened to the child who was separated as an infant from his mother’s smell, heartbeat, voice, skin and touch....a child who lived with strangers and was supposed to be “grateful that his mother gave her away because she loved her”; a child who was never allowed to grieve his mother but was expected to just fit in “as if born to”; a child with no one to mirror; a child who felt abandoned and rejected.

In 2011, we know the answers to these questions. We know that the mothers never forgot their children. They suffered long lasting permanent effects including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Wilson-Buterbaugh, 2010), Splitting of the Psyche, Unresolved and Pathological Grief, Clinical Depression, Post Partum Depression after subsequent children, Secondary Infertility, Unresolved Anger, relationship issues and more. They simply never recovered. We know that their children suffered Abandonment issues, Attachment Disorders, Unresolved Anger, low self esteem, Clinical Depression, Unresolved and Pathological Grief, Post Partum Depression, (for women adopted persons), Identity issues and more. We also know that these mothers and children search for each other in the thousands.

Australian mothers were treated no differently than Canadian mothers, British mothers, or mothers in the United States. Now that these mothers are communicating with each other with the help of technology, social media and other resources, they are sharing their and stories have come to the shocking

realization that they were victims of a systemic plan with few differences in the method, particularly between Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom and the USA.

At universities all over the world, students of History, Humanities, Sociology, Social Work, and Women's Studies are writing papers and books acknowledging this terrible history. No longer can the facts be ignored. It is only in the telling of these terrible secrets does the healing begin. "For people to heal, the truth must be revealed" (Desmond Tutu).

These events took place with the sanction of the collective consciousness of society. However, one must consider that many atrocities have taken place with the sanction of societies at different times, including the Holocaust, Residential Schools, and the stoning of adulterous women. The fact that a society endorses a practice does not prove the ethical value of that practice. The crimes and atrocities against the unmarried mother cannot and will not be diminished or erased by implying they were the norms and mores of society at that time.

It is time that the stories of the mothers are told. It is time for validation and acknowledgment for mothers. It is time for the mothers of adoption separation to shed their heavy coat of shame and in that shedding, the naked perpetrators of these crimes will be exposed. It is time for governments, religions and others to take responsibility and to acknowledge their part in the forced separation of mothers from their beloved children. Mothers are beginning to speak out, to move past their secret and their shame, but for many mothers this is still not possible. The shackles of the secret they were told to keep, the emotional trauma, and the shame still bind their souls, their spirit, and their very lives.

It is time for acknowledgment of the truth. It is time for those involved to be accountable.

For the mothers. For the children

~ Valerie Andrews, 2011  
Origins Canada ~

## **A Psychological Reunion Between Mother and Son**

**- or -**

### **Storytellers and Forgiveness - or - Self Induced Amnesia?**

by George Robinson/Leo Burg

**I**f you had read any of my earlier contributions to Adoption Circles you may recall that my quest for missing relatives has been a long and difficult one. Some of you may also recall my most recent article: "*New Life - Spring and a Rose called Irish Gold.*" (Issue 57, Spring 2011). In it I paid tribute to those who had helped me over the years - especially Shannon Cherkowski for the searching and to Ray Ensminger, my family and the adoption family in general for guidance in preparing submissions to my Alberta Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner's Inquiry. While that help and guidance was being received, the process of my researching and information gathering for the Inquiry provided another unexpected benefit. This gift ultimately helped me to achieve a psychological reunion with my first mother Dorothy Burg. So, after

I had completed my Inquiry arguments, I discovered that "what I had gained was already more important than what I was asking for." This past Spring had already brought that Irish Gold and New Life! But this was not to be the end of my discoveries in adoption land this year.

Sure I've had some successful discoveries in the past that have given me happiness in putting the missing pieces of my adoption puzzle back together. However, this *Spring* had not finished "bringing this cluster of intangible gifts to me." She knew that while it's important to have some joy or successes in a local adoption arena or in my own mind, that it is more important to have real success at the centre of civilization - the main Coliseum in Rome/Alberta. So, this summer when the Alberta Privacy

Commissioner's decision - Order F2011-001 was recorded in my favour on his web site, in Roman terms, for the first time the score was Christians 1, Lions 0.

I am still in shock! However, this time it has been a good shock and has made my life less cluttered with dedicated fury. You know the fury that I'm talking about - that anger that keeps you going back for more information and punishment even in an often toxic and secrecy laden adoption environment. That negative environment would have taken a greater toll without the Forget Me Not Family Society and other adoption support groups. The American civil rights activist Cornell West puts it more clearly: *"Spirituality is all about how you deal with your constraints and limitations. When you run up against constraints and limitations, you're going to need something to fall back on. You need a community that's sustained by a level of spirituality that contests, shares, and supports people – so that you don't become a short-term freedom fighter."*

After searching for years and finishing up with this recent Inquiry I was emotionally spent and prepared for a break. However, after digesting the positive decision, I nevertheless could not help continuing to read again some of the references that I had used during the Inquiry. I wanted to see if I could figure out what may have been the *tipping point* in my submissions that produced this favourable decision. I may never know the answer to that question for sure. However, I did discover something completely unexpected in my continued reading of Simone Weil, the author of my primary references. What she gave me was an insight into a more important aspect of adoption trauma and its effects. Thanks to her, I now know that all that it would have taken for me, as an adopted person, to have satisfaction was for more people in authority to have shown me some compassion; and to have treated me with the respect deserved by someone who had been wronged. Sounds like pretty basic stuff, but it was something which was seldom attempted by adoption officials.

Sometimes all that it takes is a kind or inspiring word to alter the universe. In an article by Marnie Tetz on the subject: *Forgiveness, or Understanding, Issue 49,*

*Spring 2009*) she pointed out how "important wording can be" in her own adoption journey: a journey in which the wrong words "send one (her) over the edge" when those same words had "little or no effect on someone else." So maybe we should agree that words are probably more thoroughly considered by us adopted folks than the general population.

Another person who considered words to be important was the Canadian author Mordecai Richler. When he wrote his book *Barney's Version* (also made into a movie), he indicated the importance of the storyteller: *"The true story of a man's life depends on who tells it."* We of the adoption triad are all on the same page with Mr. Richler here and want to be the authors of our *"Version"* of our own lives. We certainly don't want to have someone from the adoption industry writing their *"Version"* of our story and then never sharing it with us. When an adopted person finds their history, it enables them to be that storyteller and to finally make the story a true one. As for my first mother and her mother, I will now be speaking for them as their storyteller in a truthful Future. - *George's/Leo's Version.*

I continued the storytellers hunt for inspiring words while reading that reference book that our son had found to use in the Inquiry: *An Anthology by Sian Miles.* The author Simone Weil had all the credentials for a fine mentor and advisor - she was a French Jew/Catholic during WWII and a spin doctor for the Free French in Britain. A woman who was saying back then, while she was working on their Constitution, that human rights were not enough to guarantee the safety of a future free French society. Her big thing was *obligations* - the ethical criteria of humanity that says that every human being requires respect and consideration. Since these criteria would apply to those pesky adoption officials of my past, I began to feel a bit uneasy about what was coming.

Weil was also a philosopher, theologian, critic, sociologist and political activist, and sometimes a difficult author to read. So, I was not expecting her to be speaking to me directly as I was making my way through her sometimes complex ramblings. But to my surprise, she began by saying: "Men owe us what we imagine they will give us. We must forgive them this

debt.” Weil continues later with a zinger - something that she was suddenly saying that I should know about, based upon her own experiences: “I also am other than what I imagine myself to be. To know this is forgiveness.”

I had to read these words over and over because they were so compact and precise that each one was almost a story unto itself. When I finished digesting it, I realized that I was now changed and for the first time able to forgive. And if this new ability were somehow lost, I realized that maybe self induced amnesia might work as well in the future.

But who do I forgive?

Well, if I had been treated respectfully as a person by the adoption system, the list would be a short one. However, by now the list is long and includes first and second parents etc. So, I had to do a review of them all to see if I could actually do this forgiving thing! This turned out to be pretty easy after someone has given you the keys to adoption freedom with a newly self induced ability to forgive. Someone said

that selective amnesia is also the key to a successful marriage.

I’m completing these thoughts on the Thanksgiving Week-end. Sort of appropriate since I’ve been thanking everyone and have lots to be thankful for - especially thankful for the decision of Teresa Cunningham, the Adjudicator in my Inquiry. I can only believe that she recognized and understood her obligations toward me as a government representative while the Executive Director, Legal Services for the Minister of Children and Youth Services did not. She has for once corrected a long term systemic fault of the Ministry’s over emphasis on the legal aspect of adoption, while it should have instead been focusing on the social work one.

Simone Weil gets a special thanks and gets the last shots in her statement: “It is secrecy that is everywhere the soul of bureaucracy. It is the condition of all privilege and of all oppression.”

Please don’t ask what would have happened if I had lost the Inquiry!

## **Communication in Reunion: Salvation or Damnation?**

by Bernadette Rymer, M.S. Registered Speech Language Pathologist

**I**n reunion, developing, nurturing and maintaining our relationship with our loved one is of prime importance. Whether you are a parent who has lost a child to adoption or an adoptee, we come from different experiences and it is probable that we will have different opinions, values, beliefs, and needs. How we express our ideas and feelings and how we listen to our loved one can make or break the communication and the relationship.

All acts of communication involve three components:

1. verbal – our words
2. non-verbal – our body language, and
3. paraverbal, which is how we say what we say – the tone, pacing and volume of our voices.

To communicate effectively, we must use all three components to send clear, concise messages and to listen to, hear and understand the messages our loved one is sending to us.

### Sending Messages

#### *Verbal Messages:*

Effective verbal messages are organized and are comprised of words that create a sense of openness and caring about the person with whom you are communicating. On the other hand, words that are critical, blaming, judgmental or accusatory tend to create a resistant and defensive mindset that is not conducive to nurturing our relationship.

#### *Nonverbal Messages:*

The power of nonverbal communication cannot be underestimated. Messages we send through our posture, gestures, facial expressions, and spatial distance account for 55% of what is perceived and understood by others. In fact, through our body language we are always communicating, whether we want to or not! Nonverbal messages are the primary way that we communicate emotions.

**Facial Expression:** The face is perhaps the most important conveyor of emotional information. A face can light up with enthusiasm, energy, and approval, express confusion or boredom, and scowl with displeasure. The eyes are particularly expressive in telegraphing joy, sadness, anger, or confusion. Consider how you feel when your listener is rolling his/her eyes versus attending to you with appropriate eye contact.

**Postures and Gestures:** Our body postures can create a feeling of warm openness or cold rejection. For example, when someone faces us, sitting quietly with hands loosely folded in the lap, a feeling of anticipation and interest is created. However if they are sitting with arms crossed over their chest they portray feelings of inflexibility.

#### *Paraverbal Messages:*

Paraverbal communication refers to *how we say something*, not *what we say*. They accounts for approximately 38% of what is communicated to someone. A sentence can convey entirely different meanings depending on the emphasis on words and the tone of voice. For example, the statement, "I didn't say you are heartless" has six different meanings, depending on which word is emphasized. To understand the six different messages, look at yourself in the mirror and say this sentence six times, each time emphasising a different word. You may be surprised by the difference in what and how you communicate!

#### Listening, Hearing and Understanding

When we listen effectively we gain information that is valuable to understanding the situation as the other person sees it. Also, because truth is subjective and a matter of perception we gain a deeper understanding of another's perception, and whether we agree with it or not, we hold the key to understanding that person's motivation, attitude, and behaviour. Being an effective listener requires multi-tasking of the old fashioned kind: it requires concentration and energy, a psychological connection with the speaker, a desire and willingness to try and see things from another's perspective and a willingness to suspend judgment and evaluation. It also requires something that is very

hard for us to do: it requires paying full attention to the speaker, e.g. don't text, turn off your cell phone and put it out of sight.

"Listening in dialogue is listening more to meaning than to words . . . In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed verbally and nonverbally... I can never tell you what you said, but only what I heard." John Powell, Theologian.

#### Barriers to Effective Communication

A barrier to communication is something that keeps our meanings from meeting. When we are under stress, as is often the way we feel in reunion, we are more likely to unconsciously inject communication barriers into their conversation.

Verbal barriers include attacking, blaming, shaming and using "you" messages.

*Nonverbal Communication Barriers* include rolling eyes, quick or slow movements, arms and legs crossed, gestures made with exasperation, slouching, hunching over, doodling, staring at people or avoiding eye contact and excessive fidgeting with materials, and most commonly now days: texting, making calls and answering your cell phone.

Barriers thwart communication, mutual understanding, respect, problem solving, and identifying solutions. This then causes increased emotional distancing between the parties, escalates the intensity of the conflicts and creates a negative environment for everyone involved.

If you would like more information about effective communication and barriers to communication, Google these topics, or email me and I will send you a more detailed information about how to, and how **not** to communicate with your loved one.

In closing I have searched the web and other sources for famous communication quotes: I have selected those that speak to me most about the importance of how we communicate. I hope you find these quotes both inspiring and useful.

## *Communication Quotes*

“One thing I have found as my adoption journey has unfolded is how important wording can be, and how important terminology can be. What sends one over the edge has little or no effect on someone else.” ~ Marnie Tetz ~

“Do not assume, in the early days of reunion, that you both speaking the same language. For example, when I was in the early stages of my reunion with my daughter, I would say “Call you soon.” To me, “soon” meant anywhere from 1 to 4 weeks. My daughter thought “soon” meant 1 – 7 days. If I said “Talk to you later,” I meant 1 – 2 weeks; she thought it meant 1 – 2 days. It took us a while to figure out we had different interpretations of these common words. If in doubt, ask for clarification. Reunion is a perfect opportunity to practice the art of paraphrasing and asking open ended questions!” ~ Nancy Kato ~

“Sometimes all that it takes is a kind or inspiring word to alter the universe. ...so maybe we should agree that words are probably more thoroughly considered by us adoption folks than in the general population.” ~George Robinson/Leo Burg ~

“We are healed of a suffering only by expressing it to the full.” ~ Marcel Proust ~

“Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.” ~ Benjamin Franklin ~

“Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.” ~ Rudyard Kipling ~

“Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much.” ~ Blaise Pascal ~

“Everything becomes a little different as soon as it is spoken out loud.” ~ Herman Hesse ~

“No one would talk much in society, if he knew how often he misunderstands others.” ~ Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe ~

“When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.” ~ Ernest Hemingway ~

“Communication is not only the essence of being human, but also a vital property of life.” ~ John Piece ~

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.” ~ Anthony Robbins ~

“Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel. It is to bring another out of his bad sense into your good sense.” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

“I never gave anybody hell! I just told the truth and they thought it was hell.” ~ Harry S. Truman ~

“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention. A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.” ~ Rachel Naomi Remen ~

“Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something.” ~ Plato ~

“Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.” ~ Charles Dickens ~

“The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it.” ~ Edward Murrow ~

“It seemed rather incongruous that in a society of super sophisticated communication, we often suffer from a shortage of listeners.” ~ Erma Bombeck ~

“Be sincere; be brief; be seated.” ~ Franklin Delano Roosevelt ~

## *A Letter to Our Members*

**H**ello All,  
I'm a new subscriber to Adoption Circles newsletter. When I opened my second newsletter I saw the picture of Joan Van Stone of BC Parent Finders. It was so wonderful to see her again through the pages of my newsletter of Adoption Circles.

I was born with Cerebral Palsy in 1965. For 3 years doctors were trying to decide if I was medically fit to be adopted. I was cleared for adoption at age 3. I was adopted in 1968. My adoptive parent died before I was 10 years old. I have wonderful foster parents who stepped into my adoptive parents shoes. They are my family and with whom I celebrate life's special moments with in addition to my spouse. I started looking for my birth parents when I was 16. At the age of 17, I met Joan and she helped me with my search through suggestions and hints. She also was the one who contacted my birth Mom by telephone. I did meet my birth mother and sister. That was very confusing for me. I asked simple questions like who's my dad.

To date I received no more information from my birth Mom on that question. The highlights of my search were that I found wonderful aunts, cousins and I got

to meet my grandmother in person and spend a month with her while she visited Canada in 1990. My birth Mom and I no longer have a relationship for the past 21 years by her choice. I am married and no longer live near my birth family. So I see them whenever it is possible. My aunts and I still chat by phone and email.

My adoption reunion was a very bumpy ride, and my foster father has expressed it is the worst thing I could have ever done. I feel sad that my birth Mom is no longer in my life but I understand she is unable to include truth in her life. Her life has many secrets. To the world she says she only has one daughter, but it is not me. The truth is something else entirely. I think it is very important for adoptees to discover their rich life history.

Thank you Joan for your gift of assistance in March 1980. I am so grateful to you that I got to meet my grandmother. Those 30 days of my life have meant more to me than words can express.

The best gift I received was love in unexpected places, and the people who really matter are still in my life today.

~ Kostantina O'Connor, Williams Lake, BC ~

## *Book Nook*

### **Found**

*End Note:* by Jennifer Lauck

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**S**ince the creation of this book, I have been involved in many conversations about adoption and have attended several conferences. I am a member of The Adoption Mosaic in Portland, Oregon, which offers support to all members of the triad, which include adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth families. I maintain a close connection to the leaders in the field and am a member of Concerned United Birthparents as well as the American Adoption Congress.



My general feeling about adoption is that we are not thinking very well about this very important subject, nor are we applying common sense to biological connection of mother and child.

Is this lack of thought due to the fact that there is just so much money to be made in the field of adoption? From lawyers to agencies to intermediaries and over to churches, adoption is a big business.

Perhaps our lack of thought also comes from a strong need to idealize family and behave as if everything is perfect - when it's not.

It's hard to know why we do as we do, but when we adopt, we face a myriad of complex challenges and opportunities that must be faced, discussed, and resolved.

Adoptive parents must be better informed.  
Birthmothers must be better informed.  
Adoptees must be better informed.

IT IS DISTRESSING to learn that U.S leads the world as the single largest adoption nation. It seems startling to me that Americans are so fast on the scene of international disasters, and we scoop up orphan children and have them adopted into U.S. homes before body counts are added up.

Imagine if a collective of Chinese emissaries rushed to our shores after a disaster like Hurricane Katrina and took off with Louisiana babies. Or say a collective of Australian humanitarians came to Manhattan after 9/11 and hauled away orphans. These scenarios are ludicrous, and yet this is what American representatives are doing under the guise of being helpful.

Helpful is keeping children within their own culture and empowering the people of those lands with resources, food, medicine, and water. Helpful is helping children to grieve and move forward in their lives with dignity. It is not helpful to take a child, in the midst of a crisis, from her land and her people.

Nor is it helpful, within our boundaries, to take a child from a mother due to her economic struggles, her age, or even her education. It is helpful to offer support, education, and solutions.

We can fund wars and build bombs, but we cannot empower mothers to keep and care for their children?

Yes, much thought and much conversation are needed on adoption. The high instances of mental health disturbance in adoptive children and grown adoptees are stunning, and yet, there is little to no recognition

for why. I once listened to a high-level government official and lawyer (who is an adoptive mother as well) explain that she felt there were higher instances of mental health issues in adoptees due to poor reporting - prior to placement - by birth parents.

Her comments held no recognition of the practical and well-documented evidence that shows trauma occurs in a baby at the time of separation from the birth mother.

This gap in the conversation needs to be straddled and I hope we, in future generations, can recognize that displaced children have legacies, genetics, and lineages that predate placement in their adoptive homes.

Think of this practically. If you or I found a small child in the aisles of a grocery store - lost and crying for her mother - would we snap the child up, strap her into our car, and drive away while admonishing her to "forget that mommy, I'm your mommy now"? Of course not. That would be kidnapping. Yet this exactly what we do when we adopt and somehow this is legal.

Adoption, in an open situation, is humane.

Adoption where the baby is given a time of physical proximity to the birth mother is also more enlightened as it allows a more healthy development of the child's brain.

Reunion, at some point in the adoptee life, is vital. I do not have answers for how to structure adoption to make these scenarios manageable.

I do believe women, especially the educated women of the West, have the power to heal this world. I also believe that honouring and empowering women worldwide, we will certainly come to the obvious conclusion that our future is our children. To create generations of children nurtured by their mother's touch and care will make this a world worth living in.

I suggest more conversation, more compassion, much more common sense, and much better thinking. I also suggest we place children not last but first. ~

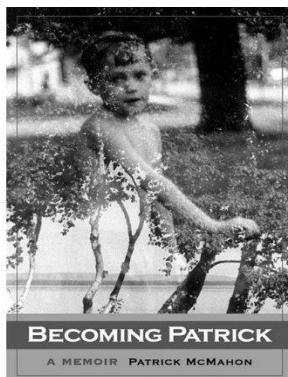
## BECOMING PATRICK

by Patrick McMahon

Review by Bernadette Rymer

In *Becoming Patrick* the author invites us into his life as he searches for his birth family and as he comes to terms with the essence of who he is. Reviewers of the book use descriptors such “You will feel safe”, “brilliant”, “written with courage, humor and thoughtfulness; “deeply honest”, “fascinating and compelling”, to describe how they journeyed through this story with Pat, who in the fullness of time takes on his new and full identity as Patrick.

When reading this book I felt that Patrick was speaking directly to me as he shares his deepest thoughts, fears and insecurities. He shares with us that he did not understand why Dr. Seuss’s book *Are you My Mother* took him into a deep and scary place. Patrick struggles with balancing his love for his adoptive mother with his need to find and connect with his birth mother, and wonders if he will ever be



able to explain to his adoptive mother that his life feels like a book that started on page 10, and he needs to know the set up so that the rest of it works for him.

Patrick shares what it is like to hear his mother’s voice for the first time and to have it reach into the deepest part of who he is, and what it means to him to know where and who he

came from and to know for sure that he did not wash up on a beach in a basket, or hatch from an egg. His journey of self-revelation moves through a period of integration and culminates in a deeper understanding of who he is, who his two moms are and how adoption has shaped the lives of each of them.

This book is a beautiful read. I was sorry when I came to the end. I do hope there is a sequel in the works.

## *Members Out and About*

### From Gloria Sweder

1. Added to my ever expanding new family I now have a brand new great-niece named Maedy born in Regina, Saskatchewan.

2. The Forget Me Not Family Society received a donation of \$500.

As a retiree from the TD Bank Financial Group I was recently made aware that this organization has a program to reward retiree’s efforts in the charitable sector, if the retiree can prove she has volunteered at least 40 hours in the previous 12 months. As I definitely qualified, I submitted an application and was extremely pleased to receive a cheque for \$500 for our Society. Part of this money will be used to set up a new Trust Fund to pay for speaker costs in our annual workshops.

### From Celeste Maier

This is my sister, Holly, from my dad's side. I met her in 1991. She lives in Oregon. Holly is active in Search and Rescue and has invited me to some of her trainings. This picture is near Mt. Adams in Washington State, where we practiced rescuing people from the lava tubes. We're getting together this weekend in Portland, Oregon with our step-mom, who is dedicated to keeping all four of her daughters together. She's my hero.



Well, so is Holly!

## From Ann Walmsley

In the early 1950's my Mum found herself in an untenable situation: husband had left, no family to help, no resources, left alone with a toddler who meant the world to her. After months of struggling to make ends meet, Mama felt my sister deserved so much more than she could ever offer her. She believed a stable, two person family with resources would provide the best life for my sister. After the adoption our parents reunited and later I was born. My sister's adoption and my Mum's lifelong heartache went to the grave with her. In May 2010 a family member back east mentioned a notation of my sister's birth in the family bible and my search began.

Below is an excerpt from my journal the day after hearing that Newman Research Services had found my sister's identity and would soon know her location:

Sept 30th 2011 5:30 AM: I sit here at my desk in the early morning hours, sleep no longer an option. In fact I'm surprised I slept at all. Yesterday will be a day etched in my memory forever more. 17 months of wondering, searching, of never allowing myself to get my hopes too much, have now taken a dramatic and stunning turn of events. My sister now has a name and a face even if it is only a high school photo from 1968. I look at her photo again and again thinking how much family resemblance there is. Myself, our dad and Mum, my son all mirrored back so vividly. I pray that I will not suddenly wake up and find it's all been just a dream, one of those mirages in the mist on a desert island.

My mind races, I have to catch my breath, my heart is pounding, tears stream down my cheeks, the joy unmistakable, the fear palpable. What if the cruel hand of fate has allowed something to happen to her? Unthinkable! The even bigger fear is one I can barely consider but know I must. What if we do find her in today's world and the sister I have dreamed of finding, the sister I never had growing up, what if she doesn't want me? What if her life is completely full and happy and she has no desire or interest in knowing me?

Worse yet, what if her life has been unhappy and to her I represent the pain she has felt all of her life. What if all she feels is anger, disdain and distrust for the person I loved more than anything: Our Mum.

UPDATE: I have now met my sister after travelling to Edmonton in mid-November. It was the weekend that would have been our Mum's birthday (she passed away in December 2003) so it's quite fitting. It was four days of hugs, smiles, tears, laughter and most of all, the beginning of what I know will be a wonderful and very long overdue relationship. Margie (as she is called now) finally feels peace knowing that her birth family LOVED her and wanted her. We felt an immediate bond and discovered SO many unusual similarities between us and our Mum it was crazy. We called our brother Rick in Maine which was great and hope Margie and he will meet this summer.

We KNOW that our Mum was smiling down knowing her children were together at long last.

## WRITERS WANTED:

Adoption Circles is created by volunteers who have their own adoption stories and who feel a commitment to support others.

- Do you have some original writing relating to adoption that you would like to submit for publication?
- Are you itching to share your story and experiences?
- Do you have ideas about how to improve our AC to better meet your needs?

We would love to hear from you. Please contact Marnie or Bernadette if you would like to contribute to our upcoming Adoption Circles Newsletter. Writing and editing support are available for your convenience.

Please forward it to the Editor at: [bjrymer@telus.net](mailto:bjrymer@telus.net)

## 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, BC (604) 852-9663  
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca)  
 Judy Lanyon- Courtenay, BC (250) 338-2429  
 (juriah@shaw.ca)  
 Leanne Neighbour – Kamloops, BC (250) 374-0990  
 (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca)  
 Lynn Carrier- Edmonton, AB (780) 455-8528  
 (carrierlynn@hotmail.com)

### **Reunited with Siblings:**

Michael Hodgson (778) 395-0206  
 (tiggerboots@shaw.ca)

### **Reunited Birth Parents:**

Nancy Kato (katosan@telus.net) (604) 777-2920  
 Susan Wiesendahl (604) 275-3243  
 (susanwiesendahl@yahoo.ca)  
 Alice McKinnon – Chilliwack, BC (604) 858-9970  
 (chkekrry@shaw.ca)  
 John Post - Castlegar, BC (250) 365-5991  
 Diane Herbert – Abbotsford, BC (604) 870-1821  
 (dalendi@shaw.ca)  
 Bernadette Rymer - Ashcroft, BC (250) 453-2360  
 (bjrymer@telus.net)

### **Searching Step-Adoptee:**

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

### **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, BC (250) 992-5688  
 Christine M. Gatzke, M.Ed., CPAC/ARC  
 Psychotherapist (306) 352-4069  
 (christine.lachaine@clc-apathtohealing.ca)  
 J. Amy Newman, Newman Research Services  
 Genealogist/People Finder, Burnaby, BC  
 (info@nrsfind.com) 1-877-521-3463 (604) 521-3463

### **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  
 Support List.

## Adoption Circles Future Topics

| EDITION | FOCUS      | DEADLINE                         | DISTRIBUTION                         |
|---------|------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Winter  | Education  | January 30 <sup>th</sup><br>2012 | February 28 <sup>th</sup><br>2012    |
| Spring  | Activation | April 25 <sup>th</sup><br>2012   | May 25 <sup>th</sup><br>2012         |
| Summer  | Wellness   | August 25 <sup>th</sup><br>2012  | September 25 <sup>th</sup> ,<br>2012 |

## Forget Me Not Family Society

### Support Groups



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

**Cloverdale, BC** meets the first Thursday of each month  
 September through June from 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

Cloverdale Public Library 2nd floor  
 5642-176 A Street, Cloverdale, B.C.

Contact Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca) or 604-535-4434.

**New Westminster, BC** meets the second Tuesday of each  
 month year round from 7 – 9 pm. New Westminster Public  
 Library 2nd floor 716 - 6th Ave, New Westminster, B.C.  
 Contact Nancy Kato (katosan@telus.net) or 604-777-2920.

### Other Support Groups

**Abbotsford, BC: Hope Services** hosts a support group for new birth  
 mothers. The group meets bi-weekly in either Abbotsford or  
 Langley. Please contact Hope Services toll free at 1-800-916-4673  
 or (hopesupport@shaw.ca) for information.

**Vancouver, BC: The Adoptees 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 contact Catherine at (katiesue@shaw.ca) or visit  
 www.adopteesassociation.ca for more information.

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

**Forget Me Not T-Shirts and Pins now available\***

**T-Shirts \$15 includes taxes ~~~ Sizes small to 2XL**

**Choice of purple with mauve logo or mauve with purple logo**

**New pewter pins \$7.50 or 3 for \$20 taxes included (\*photos p.7)**

**Plus shipping charges if applicable**

**Contact Gloria Sweder**

**604-271-4303 gsweder@shaw.ca**

**Advertising:** \$20 per issue or \$70 for 4 issues for a business card size ad.

**Forget Me Not Family Society MEMBERSHIP - RENEW NOW AND SAVE\***

**Current rates, per year: Individual \$25, Couples \$40, Professional \$60.**

\*Please note that the Board is proposing a rate increase in 2012 to keep up with operating costs.

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/First Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Adoptee \_\_\_\_\_ Adoptive Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Sibling \_\_\_\_\_ Reunited? Y \_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_

Prospective Adoptive Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Adoption Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_



Please send a cheque payable to the  
**Forget Me Not Family Society**  
#102- 1860 Southmere Cres. E.,  
Surrey, BC V4A 6Y7  
Telephone: 604-828-9577

Residents of the U.S., please send  
U.S. funds.