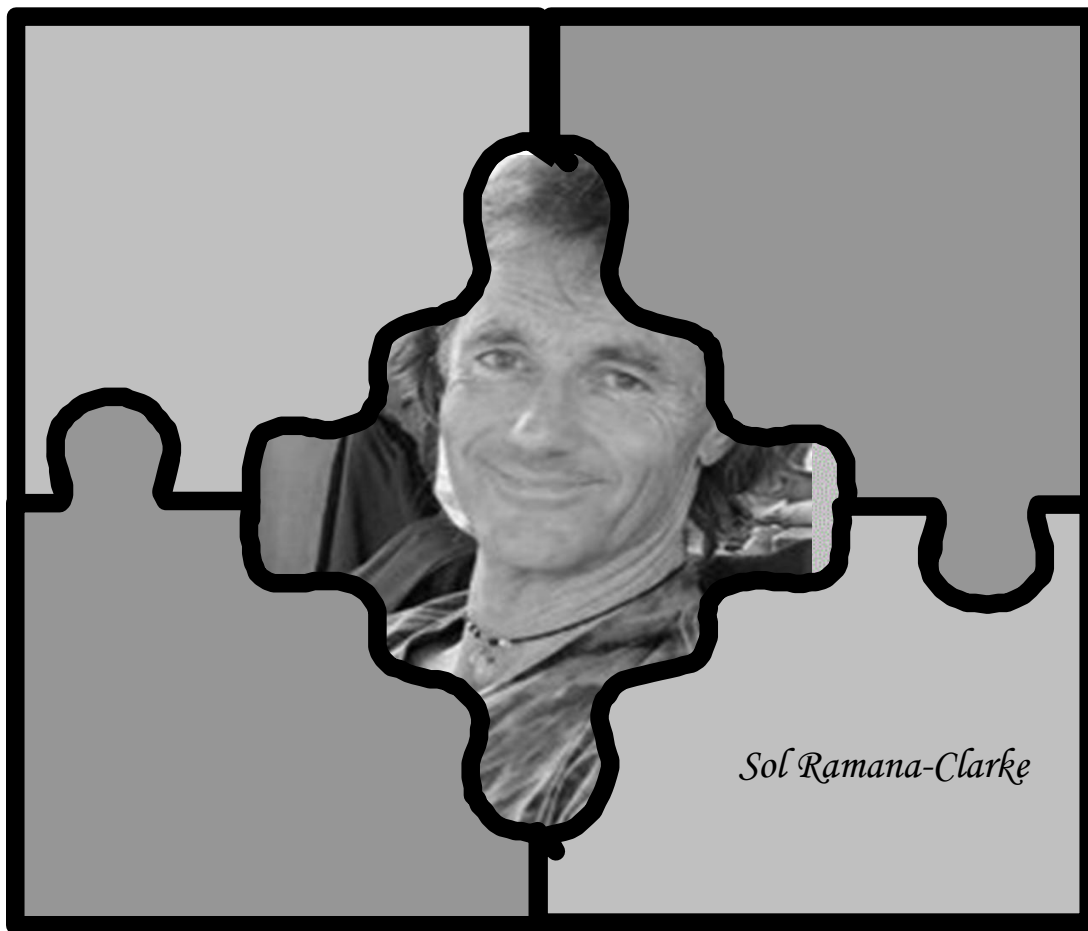


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue #62 Summer 2012 \$3.50



Sol Ramana-Clarke

Wellness

President's Message: by Marnie Tetz	2	My Daily Wellness Routine: by Joe Soll	16
Editorial: Rymer Writes by Bernadette Rymer	3	Reflections on Healing Weekends:	17
Letter to the Editor: by Diane Hebert	5	Book Nook: <i>Two Hearts</i> by Linda Hoyer	
Birth Search and Reunion: by Sol Ramana-Clarke	6	Book Review by B. Rymer	20
Adoption: A Happily Ever After Tragedy:		Afternoon With Shari Ulrich:	21
by Elizabeth Christian	9	<i>By The Grace of Goodbye</i> - lyrics:	22
Letter: Yours Always, (birth) Mother:	12	Conversation with Brian Stanton, part 3:	23
Adoption Language:		Upcoming Events:	24
What's in a Name?: by Monica Byrne	13	Members Out, About and Over the Moon:	25
Drop Your Qualifiers: by Jean Provance	14	Poem for B: by Sol Ramana-Clarke	26
My Adoption Story by Wendy Barber	15	Lean on Me Support List:	27

ADOPTION CIRCLES



Publisher
Forget Me Not Family Society

President
MARNIE TETZ
marnietetz@shaw.ca

Treasurer/Secretary
GAIL DAVIES
g.davies@telus.net

Directors
AMY NEWMAN
info@nrsfind.com

BERNADETTE RYMER
bjrymer@telus.net

Newsletter Editor
BERNADETTE RYMER

Associate Editor
AMY NEWMAN

Newsletter Layout
AMY NEWMAN

ADOPTION CIRCLES is published quarterly by the Forget Me Not Family Society, a non-profit organization.

Annual Memberships:
Single: \$30.00
Couples: \$50.00
Corporate: \$65.00

Please send cheque payable to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** at:
#102 - 1860 Southmere Cres. E.,
Surrey, BC Canada V4A 6Y7
Telephone: 1-604-828-9577
Residents of the U.S. - please send U.S. funds.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part(s) of this Newsletter may be reproduced in any form without the written consent of the author and/or the Society.

Please send editorials and letters to the Editor, Bernadette Rymer at:
bjrymer@telus.net or by mail care of the Society at the address noted above.

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 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.

President's Message

Wow, what a Summer! I know that by the time you are reading this we will be well into fall. However, the indications are that fall will be like summer, with only cooler mornings and more comfortably sleeping evenings. Now, how's that for a weather report?

Since I am in a reporting mood I need to draw your attention to the article and pictures of our Afternoon with Shari Ulrich. This event held on Saturday September 22nd was well attended and enjoyed by all.



Marnie Tetz

I also wish to remind you that we will be holding our **Annual Fall Workshop** November 3rd and 4th. Our presenter is Brian Stanton, adoptee/actor/playwright who will be performing his one man play BLANK. This workshop will be a bit different than our past workshops as the afternoon portion will be totally interactive with our participants learning how to “Release Our Voices”. This will be done by breaking into groups and sharing the ways that those of us hurt by adoption can learn to find our voices, either with skits, song or monologue. Brian will champion us on this path to help us *release our voices*... I am up for the challenge... are you?

Our topic for this issue of AC is Wellness. What does *wellness* mean? I associate wellness with healing, and for me healing was a long path that required many helpers along the way. Those helpers came in the form of members of FMNFS... and mostly those members were mums who helped me understand my own mum and what she went through. In understanding what my mum and other mums went through, I was able to learn that I was loveable. I wasn't tossed out with the trash...and forgotten.

For my *wellness*, for my own personal *healing*, I needed to know that I mattered, that my mum cared about me. And what I wanted for my own personal healing (wellness) was for my mum to feel safe enough to acknowledge that she was my mum, the mum who gave birth to me.... I had two mums, one who raised me, and one who gave birth to me. I wanted, so desperately wanted, her to be able to say she had given birth to me and, on the visit, after I had been coached by some of the best, when I said “I think that you are the one who gave birth to me” my mum was able to say she thought so too. She said it....she thought so too. This was music to my ears, and is a mind video that I will always have. My mum holding my hand....our eyes locked, and her saying that she thinks so too.

- What was/ is your wellness/healing moment?
- Have you a mentor?

Always questions....I hope we help with answers.

As always I hope that you can curl up with this issue of Adoption Circles in your favourite spot with your favorite drop.
~ Marnie ~

Rymer Writes

The Puzzle of Wellness

Welcome to this issue of our Adoption Circles which explores the theme of Wellness. The concept of wellness is somewhat nebulous (vague, imprecise and hazy). So what is wellness and why was it chosen as the theme for this AC?

In developing this issue of AC, I was puzzling over how to create and present articles and information that would be helpful in your healing process. While preparing every issue of our AC I take time to surf the web for articles and information to help me to clarify the theme and to develop an integrated approach to presentation.



It is probably self-evident for us in the adoption loss community that healing and continued well-being is critical not only to our survival but to our health, happiness and growth. So how do we attain well-being and more importantly, how to we maintain well-being?

Wellness has traditionally been viewed as freedom from disease; thus, if you were not sick, you were considered healthy.

Given this traditional view of wellness, many of us in the early healing stages would be considered not well because given our trauma, we seem to suffer from numerous physical and emotional ‘conditions’. Fortunately this is not the end of the story. During the 1980s a broadened perspective of wellness started to

evolve. While everyone agrees that the absence of illness is one part of being healthy, it doesn't indicate whether you are in a state of well-being.

New concepts of Wellness generally involve an understanding of a *healthy balance* of the mind, body and spirit that results in an overall feeling of well-being. Far from being a static state, wellness is a state of well-being that is oriented toward maximizing an individual's potential. It is an active process that promotes health and enhances quality of life, is a constant and conscious pursuit of living life to its fullest potential and of achieving and maintaining optimum levels of health, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental well-being.

Wellness can also be defined as an active process through which you become aware of and make choices toward a more successful existence and is closely associated with your lifestyle. Each person has a responsibility to provide for such health essentials as good nutrition, proper weight control, exercise, and controlling of risk factors such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. Therefore, it is important that you educate yourself to "take charge" of your daily life and to set healthy lifestyle goals. The choices you make have a dominant influence on your health and wellness. The secret to attaining and maintaining wellness is not in availability and quality of medical care, but consistent quality self-care.

Key words in this approach to wellness are ***healthy balance, maximizing potential, active process, choices, responsibility, controlling risk factors, education and lifestyles***. Thanks goodness for this enlightened understanding of wellness because it not only puts the ball back in our court, it also puts us in a strong position of control in the court - our court of life.

This tennis analogy comes from your editor who has suffered many physical and emotional 'conditions' all topped off by a rather severe heart attack 8 years ago. Before that I thought I was healthy, after that I had to make serious choices and changes in almost every

area of my life. However my healing did not really begin until October 2008 when I attended my first FMNFS annual workshop. As I have shared with you before, the very moment I walked into the room on that miracle day, my life changed forever: I knew I had found my community and I knew my community would help me to find ME. And it did! With the support of the FMNFS I took charge of ME: I retired from my very high pressured job, I am now very physically active and attend to healthy diet, I tell my story orally and in writing, and I am committed to helping others to tell their stories.

To support you in your pursuit of optimal wellness, and in telling your stories, we have chosen articles from mums, adoptees and health professionals about how they gain and maintain wellness. We also have a real treat for you in this AC as we hear for the first time since I have been editor, from an adoptive mum as she shares with us her joys and struggles with her two beautiful, now adult children. We continue our 'conversation' with Brian Stanton, our annual workshop presenter, who will lead us through a process of finding and releasing our voices. We share with you several reflections from those who have participated in Joe Soll's Healing Weekends and we have wonderful news from several members in our *Members Out and About* feature. Our *Book Nook* feature reviews a book written by a FMNFS member, Linda Hoyer who openly shares with us her 'journey from grief to gratitude'.

We have also included two articles on adoption language which we present in response to questions we are often asked about adoption terminology. We understand that some people find certain terms offensive, and we respect each person's right to use the terminology they are comfortable with when talking about themselves.

It is our sincere hope that that this issue of AC will support your pursuit of wellness. Enjoy.

~ Bernadette Rymer ~



Dear Bernadette and FMNFS members and readers,

I thought I might finally share a few thoughts with you – something that I’ve hesitated to do in the past because I lack confidence in any kind of writing situations. It’s something that I’ve learned about myself fairly recently. I’m not sure when I lost my ‘blind confidence’ in most things: seems I’m more critical of myself than ever.

Here are my thoughts I would like to share with you and our AC readers:

1. Although I’ve been very ‘lucky’ in my reunion process (my daughter and I can only come up with that word to use) I still sometimes have to fight the feelings of unworthiness. Sometimes I question the ‘right’ that I’ve taken to instigate a reunion, develop a unique relationship within another family that would have been ‘fine’ without me, and to feel so blessed and complete, while others might at times feel a little left out. Do I have right to invade someone’s life and SOAR to a position of special bond? These feelings only complicate my thoughts when we’re not together, and all is put at ease when we visit, and quite naturally. The adoptive mother and myself always make time to have our own personal visits, and as in any relationship, I find it rewarding and healthy.

2. Six years into our reunion as mother/daughter, the newest chapter is the relationship that is starting to blossom between my daughter and her half siblings (I have 3 teenagers at home). For the past six years we’ve enjoyed visits from my daughter and her husband, but now that my teenagers are starting to work away from home and they all drive, they are incorporating visits to Kelowna to spend time with Christine this summer. I see them getting closer to the grandkids and having their own stories to tell, and it warms my heart!! I’ve encouraged them in the past to continue a relationship if something were to happen to me, and I’m convinced now that it would be part of their ‘normal’ life.

3. I picked up a book the other day that I had made note of that I can’t wait to open, ***Where We Belong*** by Emily Griffin. I have read ***The Girls Who Went Away*** and it had the biggest impact on me out of any adoption related books. I lent it to my daughter and she CRIED for all the mothers. She has always had huge compassion for me – again, not something I ever felt I deserved, even though my years without her were SO painful and buried SO deep. Because I had never talked about my daughter, I had never DARED pick up a book to read until I joined FMNFS. It’s very healthy to find out you are not alone.

And that is why I continue to attend FMNFS meetings and events. These kinds of journeys do not really end. Are we ever really ‘healed’ just because we feel pretty lucky?

Just a few thoughts to share: I ADMIRE your writing ability Bernadette, and really feel like I got left behind. I had just finished my first year at the University of Alberta in Edmonton when I found out I was pregnant. BELIEVING the adults who told me I had ruined my life, I did not go back to school to achieve my teaching goals. I now regret that decision.

~ Diane Herbert ~

Birth Search and Reunion

An Adoptee's Journey Across the Ocean

by Sol Ramana-Clarke

Thanks to the FMNFS for a Joyful Reunion!



Our first meeting

I was adopted in Melbourne, Australia in 1957 to very loving parents who also adopted a girl two years after me. I presently live in Central Tilba, 5 hours south of Sydney. Although my parents always told us we were adopted, I didn't feel a desire or need to find out about my birth parents. My present family was simply enough, although I sometimes mused that I'd like to tell my birth mother that I was fine.

RE-BIRTHING

When I was 35 my father died and my marriage broke up. I guess this left me in a more open and vulnerable frame of mind than usual. Shortly afterwards I was offered a "Re-birthing Session" by a friend. This process of forced deep breathing and guided meditation helped me to enter a very deep state of altered consciousness and memory recall as I regressed back through the early years of my life. When it got to my birth I experienced the huge agonizing pain of being separated from my birth mother... for the first time. This prompted me to contact the adoption support organization "Vanish" in Melbourne and I later got my original birth certificate

and adoption papers. This gave me my mother's name, B. C. H. - beautifully hand written by her, her B.C. Canada state of origin, her birth date and the name she gave me. I also got a pile of literature from Vanish which helped me further understand the possible situations and emotions I was potentially seeking to uncover.

After searches of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the state of Victoria and my home state of New South Wales failed to show B., I turned my attention to Canada. I found and wrote to an organization called "Parent Finders" in Vancouver. A few months later I was happy to receive a letter from Joan Vanstone who had discovered that B. had attended Royal Columbian College of Nurses in New Westminster until 1955.

EXPERIENCING REJECTION

About 6 years later I got the internet and did a White Pages search. There were several listings in North America with the same first and last name, and in Alberta, one of these also had the same middle initial. I called this woman on the phone and she answered. I introduced myself and said I was looking for a B. C. H. Her reply was so defensive it was almost aggressive: "And why might you be looking for a B. C. H. Mr. Sol Ramana-Clarke?" "I think she might be a relative" I explained. "No! I'm B. Claire H. sorry... can't help you" (different middle name) and the receiver slammed down. Her attitude was so unusually abrupt I felt sure it was her. This thought was partially confirmed in my mind when I noticed the next year that her White Pages listing had changed from B.C.H. to B. Claire H. "Just to make the point quite clear to me..." I thought. I surrendered to the idea that she didn't want to meet me and have her painful secret revealed. When I looked her up a few years later, the listing was nowhere to be found and I assumed she must have died.

I accepted this, and “let it go”, but deep down in my unconscious the feelings remained alive and I experienced their agonising intensity on two more occasions: once during a group shamanic meditation and once during a weekend workshop called “Family Constellations.”

A TRIP TO CANADA

In April 2012, we decided to visit my stepson Tenzin where he was working in Whistler, B.C. so I thought I'd take the opportunity to have another go at my search. I imagined myself spending a couple of days going through micro film records in a BC library somewhere. I got on the net and registered with the Canadian Adoption Reunion Register and wrote a letter to the Canadian Government. I was about to leave it at that when I found The Forget Me Not Families Association in New Westminster. I called their President Marnie Tetz who invited me to their Annual General Meeting luncheon which just happened to be on the Saturday that I was planning to be in Vancouver. She also referred me to a professional searcher, Amy Newman, who was also an adoption birth mother. I commissioned her to do a search and a couple of days later I was thrilled to get an email of B.'s photo from her nursing graduation.

FOUND!

A week later we arrived in Whistler and on the first morning after we arrived I received another email from Amy saying that she'd found B. alive and well on Vancouver Island! Amy had searched through the few old student annuals from B.'s nursing college that she located, and after finding nothing relating to B., had contacted another retired nurse who was active in the alumni association. Personal details of the nursing alumni are confidential, but after 5 phone calls and 3 hours of conversation, Amy had convinced the lady to contact B. on our behalf and say that “an Australian man would like to make contact with you.” B.'s response was: “Oh for heaven's sake... that's nice... I think I know who it is” and she agreed to give her address details.

FIRST CONTACT

I wrote a carefully worded email to B. saying she knew me as “David,” the name she gave me, in Australia, but not revealing my identity as her son in case her present husband didn't know about me. B. is

not familiar with emailing, but on this occasion was looking out for one from me. When it arrived, she was so excited that she accidentally deleted it! But eventually, she was able to find it, and then called me at our hotel in Whistler and I picked up the phone.

“Hello this is B_____.”

“B.! Fancy you calling me after all these years!” We laughed together and had a most joyful conversation. I was so happy, and grateful, that she was such a bright spirited and perky lady at the ripe age of 79. She told me of her adventurous journey by ship, with a fellow nurse, to Fiji and New Zealand where they worked as nurses, and then on to Australia where they hitchhiked all over the country. In a youth hostel in Alice Springs, in the red centre, I was conceived. My father was also a Canadian from Quebec but he was already married and had no interest in having an extra-marital child. She explained to me that she felt giving me up to adoption was her only option at the time, and that she often prayed for me throughout her life. I was excited to hear about my Canadian family: a brother and two sisters – all with partners, 2 nieces, 4 nephews and B.'s present husband – all living on Vancouver Island or Vancouver. We agreed to meet up.

I felt a huge sense of relief and astonishment that this was all suddenly happening!



Sol at FMN AGM with Amy Newman & Marnie Tetz

Amy was also happy to hear of our reunion and cautioned me to be understanding of possible

potential challenges and also to make quite sure B. and I had some quality time alone, and not just get swept up in the excited dynamic of a big family gathering. I became a little bit concerned about the possible reaction of B.'s husband and my brother who had been kept in the dark about me, but in a second phone call, B. said they had been shocked by the news, but also very eager to meet me and that the nephews and nieces were excitedly "Twittering" each other!

The day before our big meeting was, by chance, the AGM of the Forget Me Not Families Association in New Westminster. I attended with my wife Shanti and felt so supported by this group of birth parents and adoptees.



Sol with B-mum & siblings: "Seeing if we all inherited B.'s hitchhiking gene..."

REUNION

The ferry ride the next morning from near Vancouver to Nanaimo on the Island was blessed with clear sunny weather and spectacular views of the snow capped mountains meeting the sparkling water. I reflected on the miraculous way the search had just fallen into place and felt the perfection of it all. Meeting B. was tearfully joyful and natural and fun and we sat together in the back seat learning about each other's lives and families for the hour long journey up the coast to the town where she raised her 3 children. She explained how she had carefully documented her whole experience of being pregnant, giving birth and letting me go in a journal that she subsequently burnt. It felt to me that she had a wise

and conscious way of dealing with what must have been a very challenging experience.

Once at her home, we had a great time meeting nearly the whole family... 14 really warm-hearted people giving us such a warm loving welcome! We exchanged stories and photos, had a huge lunch, went out for a picnic cup of tea near the beach, had a forest walk, returned home to dinner and then went out again to view the magnificent rising of the full moon. We accepted the invitation to stay the night, and next morning B. and I had that quality time together sitting at the breakfast table for several hours. We then had a visit to one of my sister's homes nearby and another beautiful forest walk, and then my other sister and her husband drove us to the ferry and back to Vancouver. We left Canada the next day.

FAREWELL

As we parted company, B. wisely said to me: "The past is gone, let's stay in the present." That's good advice for all of us. We've had a really joyful meeting and are all eagerly looking forward to fostering our new relationships, but there has been, quite naturally, a need to let go of some grief that surfaced over the next few days. My sisters experienced some regret that neither they, nor B., did more to find me, and my brother was a bit miffed that he didn't even know about me. B. was on a high until a couple of days after I left, but then experienced a big tearful release and anxiety that she mightn't see me again. Our big exciting meeting over two days was gone and I was once again a long way away.... but we're also only a phone call away and we've enjoyed phone chats every few days, and phone calls with my two children.

After reading adoption literature and discussing adoption with many people over the years, I feel I've been well prepared to understand the emotions around birth family reunions and the reasons for the secrecy of birth mothers. I'm grateful that I've found myself in a very loving new family and I'm sensing that we can all let go of any past heartache... and keep growing in the love. That love has been pouring in in regular emails and is also reflected by the offer of my siblings to help us pay for airline tickets to return to attend B.'s 80th birthday in October! This time we'll stay 2 weeks. I'm eagerly looking forward to that! ~

A poem that Sol wrote for B: is on page 26

Adoption: a Happily Ever After Tragedy

By Elizabeth Christian, Adoptive mum

As a mother of two adopted adult children, I have been coming to the FMNFS meetings in Cloverdale for over a year now and I thought I knew about Mums (birth mums) and adoptees. My sister Bernadette was forced to give her baby to what society told her was a "better family" because she was given no support to keep her precious little newborn.

When I started coming to the meetings my eyes were opened to the suffering of mums and adoptees and how my perception of adoption was warped by how society has molded this tragedy into a supposed fairy tale ending. I gained a new awareness of the enormous unbearable grief of birth mums and adoptees, and the desperate need to find "the missing piece of the puzzle."

My son Peter used the words "missing piece of the puzzle" when he was asked to give a eulogy at the funeral of his birth father, who died suddenly at 47 yrs. Before the funeral, Peter had never used the expression. Although I thought I knew how he needed to know his first families, as I sat there at the memorial service I realized how complete he felt after finally meeting his "blood family," as he calls them. Both of Peter's birth families embraced him as their own and he uses the word "BELONGS" when talking about them.

I came from a huge family. I was one of 11 children and my children Peter and Samantha had 55 first cousins. All I saw was a huge loving family embracing and loving them both, yet Peter said he felt they were looking down on him. I know that was not true or maybe it was true and I didn't see it.

To go back to my beginning as a mother: I was unable to conceive, and although I saw many

specialists there were no medical explanations or answers. I could not even think of my life without a family and so we put our name on the adoption list and waited a few years.

I knew (or I thought I did) of the grief the birth mothers were going through (because of my sister Bernadette's grief) but I honestly believed that they wanted a better life for their children that they were unable to give as a single mum. I never really realized that if they had been given emotional and financial support from family and government, and if society changed its perception of how it viewed single mums, that this would be different.

When I first heard this at the FMNFS meetings, I felt a panic-like feeling inside. If all those things were in place I would never have been a mother. I always believed and vowed to give my children the best upbringing I could

possibly give them. We had wonderful times and tough times but they always knew how loved they were, and still are. They were and are the most precious gifts. That may not be the most appropriate word but my children were SO loved and we never took that for granted. I gave thanks every day that the moms had chosen US. Unlike many of you who had no choice, my two mums were given families to review and choose. So we WERE chosen to parent our two beautiful children.

Because of society and my selfishness, I was terrified that the mums would change their minds and want their children back. Although I know this does not go down well with birth mums, at the time I believed that because I could not conceive that God had chosen you "birth mums" to carry my babies.

When I started coming to the FMNFS meetings... I gained a new awareness of the enormous unbearable grief of birth mums and of the adoptees, and of their desperate need to find "the missing piece of the puzzle"

I even FELT when my babies were born. On the day Peter (my eldest) was born, I actually told my mother-in-law that "I feel my baby has been born." On the August day Samantha was born, I felt the urge to call the social worker to find out how long an estimated wait I had. Ten days later I was called and told that my baby girl had been born on the same day that I had called. Originally, the social worker told my husband David and me that we would not be on the top of the list to adopt until May of the next year. The mum was presented with a list of 10 profiles, all of which she rejected. The mum was given a second list, and from that list, she picked us. So I feel very strongly that we were chosen by the mum and God to parent "Denise", who we named Samantha.

On the day we received Peter into our lives, I said to David as we were driving home with Peter from the social worker's office "I feel my womb leap with joy."

I sent photos of Peter and Samantha with a letter of how they were doing at six months and I received letters back from the mums. In my mind I kept the birth mums in all the major decisions, thinking how each would feel about this decision and that one. I looked forward to meeting both mums when my children were 19 years old. I even kept extra photos of them for when I did meet them.

So you see how incredible my bond was with our children: your children, as birth mums, and mine as adoptive mum. However, as we all know there is not 'Happily Ever After' for any of us.

It is well accepted that the first five years of a child's life are the most important developmentally. With the birth mums' love for our children, and our five years of protection from society's mores I believe that we all gave them our best to help them through the tough times, a chance that a lot children don't get. We were

always there for our children and I believe the birth mums were always there too, even though they were not physically in their lives. Before school was a wonderful time and my memories are as vivid as if they were yesterday.

I rue the day our children had to go to school. Up until then they were the happiest children you would ever meet, surrounded by unconditional love, happier than any child I knew then, and I knew a lot of young children their ages. Although they knew they were adopted they were sheltered from society's perception of adoption.

Peter, although very bright, had many learning challenges so he had difficulties with the school

system and making friends. After he actually made it through school I realized how he felt like a second class citizen as an adopted child. He felt it and the other children at school picked up on that. It was the same with Samantha when she went to school. Again Samantha is very intelligent but struggled to belong in school and dropped out after grade

10. She was bullied and went from one school to the next trying to fit in. After trying all I could to make her happy in school I realized that the bullying was because she felt she was different or the kids at school made her feel different.

At times as teenagers it was hell for them. I think for adopted parents it was even more hell as I felt I was failing them and failing their birth mums who entrusted them to us. I have spoken to many adoptive mums and they too are dealing with these same issues that are more profound because of the child's sudden separation from their real mum: their "missing piece of the puzzle." My heart ached for the struggles they were going through. As adoptive parents we are very proud of how our children have struggled through these times. They have become warm and loving



Elizabeth, David, Peter & Samantha

adults and have now made many friends, and are making their own decisions on where they are going with their lives.

Samantha has a beautiful letter from her birth mum, written when she was born. At nineteen years old Samantha put her name down with the Ministry but her mother has not done the same. Now she says "If she does not want me then I don't want her." We know this is not true but she will never know this UNTIL she meets her Mum. I pray every day that her Mum will call the social worker. I never understood why Samantha's birth mother did not call the social worker on Samantha's 19th birthday. Now I do, after to coming to these meetings and hearing that birth mums don't feel they have the right to search.

So it is a doubled-edged sword: Mother and child not feeling they belong, feeling different due to society's perception of adoption, and the birth mum feeling she does not have a right to be in her child's life. Both mother and child are so afraid they will be rejected.

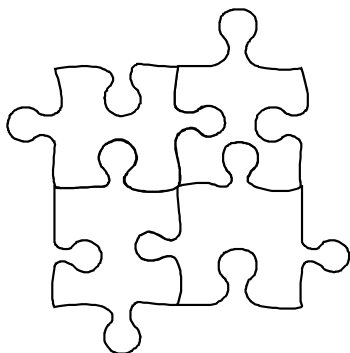
My son Peter has his piece of the puzzle and is now catching up to his chronological age as he was stuck emotionally before finding his first families. Samantha now has three beautiful children and is a wonderful mother but still does not have her missing piece.

I am only sorry that I did not have the support of the Forget Me Not Family Society in those times, to help me understand even more than I thought I did know.

So thank you for all your sharing your struggles and your stories happy and sad, good and bad, and may we all eventually have our "Happily Ever After" and continued healing.

I apologize to you all now for changing our children's names and having the real mums names erased from their birth certificates (by society) like the mums never existed and our babies never existed before they came to us. Before they came to us I thought and was told to feel that erasing names would make their children feel like they started their lives the same as others with our names and the names we chose for them. Now I realize, thanks to the FMNFS meetings, how painful that was for you mums and adoptees to be erased by society and by us adopting parents. If I had it to do over again I would not change my children's names.

To Peter and Samantha's birth mums:



Your children had a wonderful life with us. They had a great start, then a rough journey but now they have come full circle. My son Peter has the pieces of his puzzle and is now catching up to his chronological age as he was stuck emotionally before finding his first families. He is now training as a chef and has many friends and a very fulfilling life. My daughter Samantha does not yet have the missing pieces of her puzzle but

we continue in our search for her mum and first families. Samantha is a wonderful mother to three beautiful children. She has completed training as a paralegal and is preparing now to specialize in automobile injury claims.

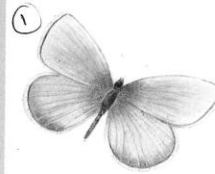
I am a very grateful adoptive mum for having the chance to travel this journey as a Mum, which without you, I would never have had.

~ Elizabeth Christian ~

With Samantha's permission I share with you the letter written to her by her birth mum. I hope that by sharing this letter you may find comfort and healing.
~ Elizabeth

***"Yours Always,
(birth) Mother"***

*A letter written to
Denise Angeline Beattie ~
Age 8 months*



April 9, 1986

My dearest Denise,

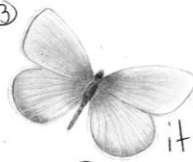
This is the most difficult letter I have ever written, for I feel as if I am writing to someone I know so well yet very little. I am only suspecting that when you receive this letter you will be in your late teens and hopefully will be able to understand the very difficult decision I had to make for the both of us. When I found out that I was pregnant my world fell apart

②



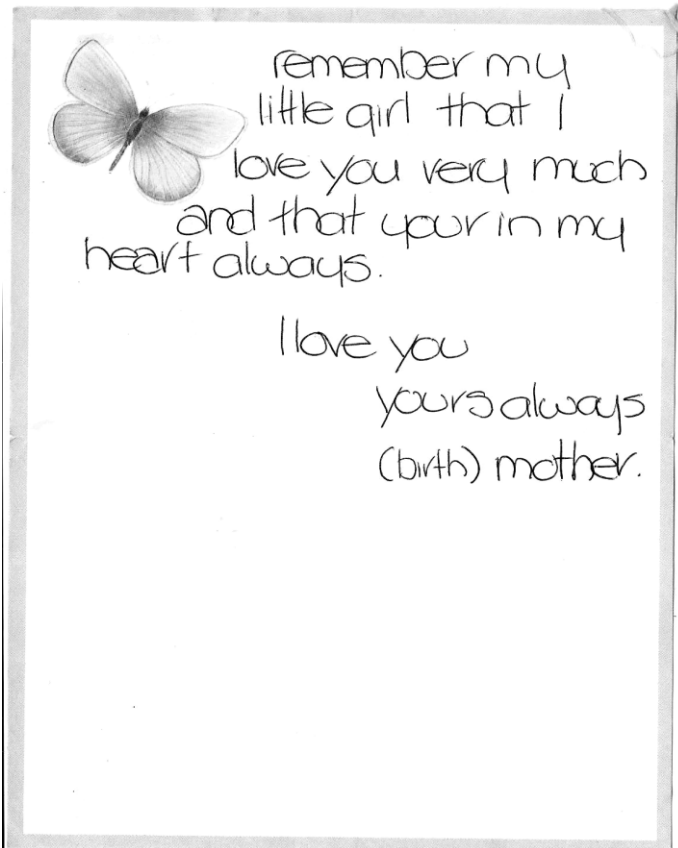
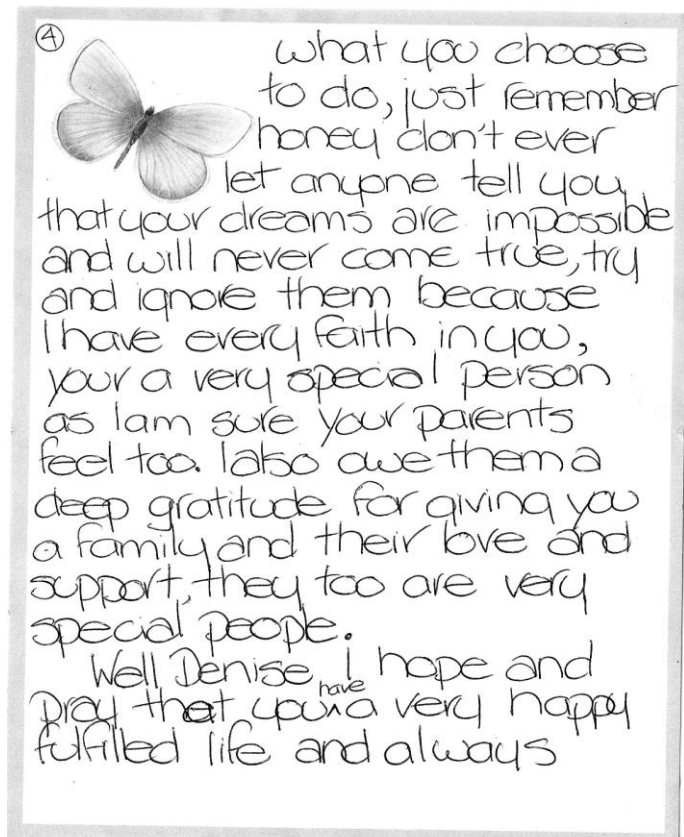
around me, all my dreams and goals came to a halt. All my thoughts were blurred, nothing made any sense to me, and the final blow came when your father left me alone to cope with the decision. It wasn't until very late in the pregnancy that I decided the best thing that I could for both of us was if I gave you to a better family than I could ever give you, and that you deserved so greatly. Maybe you think differently and maybe you don't, but when I was young I grew up without a father

③



and I know how hard it was for my mother and very hard on me, as it still is. Please my little Denise I am not asking you to respect my decision only to try and understand why.

Please realize Denise that I love you so very very much and that you are the most special memory that I hold deep within me and I think of everyday of my life. The first time I saw you I thought that you were the most beautiful baby I had ever seen. I was so proud of you as I'm sure I always be no matter



Adoption Language:

What's In a Name?

by Monica Byrne: National Director, Parent Finders of Canada

Reprinted with Permission

A controversy has been building for some time within the adoption reform movement. It concerns the use of the term 'birthmother'. Years ago, this term replaced 'unwed mother' and many mothers from the 50s and 60s are comfortable with it. Others, especially mothers who lost their babies in the 70s and 80s, find the term birthmother offensive and prefer to use 'natural mother' or 'first mother'.

Over the years, various other terms have been used to describe a woman who is a mother but did not raise her child. These include 'biological mother' and 'genetic mother'. It would be simpler if we could just call ourselves 'mothers', but the reality of adoption is that there are two mothers. To avoid confusion, we

need to distinguish between the mother who actually gives birth to a child and the mother who becomes that child's legal mother through adoption.

At Parent Finders we respect each person's right to use whatever term is acceptable to her.

There are some, however, who are criticizing those who use the term 'birthmother' and dictating that it is not to be used. It is sad and counterproductive when groups who are dedicated to similar objectives criticize each other and thereby weaken the movement as a whole. We have to acknowledge our differences. Not all birthmothers wish to be "found". Not all adoptees wish to have a reunion. But the fact remains that one person's wish should not supersede that of

another. If I call myself 'birthmother', it is because I gave birth and I am proud of that. I do not consider it pejorative in any way. I expect my feelings to be respected, just as I respect those of others. Telling other women what to call themselves is as cruel and as damaging as any other treatment they have

received, especially when it comes from those who purport to speak for their interests.

We hope this conflict can be resolved so that we can present a strong and united front as we move forward.

Drop Your Qualifiers!

by Jean Provance, LCSW

It wasn't long ago that people who sought mental health care were called "patients". Now mental health professionals use the terms "consumer" or "client" to describe the people they help. While it may seem trivial, the language change made a huge difference in how those who sought mental health treatment were viewed. The self-image of our clients improved after we stopped constantly insisting they were ill. These subtle changes have made huge differences in how people experience treatment and have reduced stigma from the world at large.

As a mental health professional I am constantly choosing my words carefully for the benefit of others. The language and jargon I use is always evolving to meet the needs of the people I serve. I've noticed that when it comes to adoption, people assume they know our experiences and feel they are qualified to tell the world what words to use to describe adoption. Then, when we express that we don't, as adults, wish to be called "adopted children" or that we prefer "first mother", "natural mother", or "mother of loss" we are called extremists, dissatisfied, and ungrateful.

I cannot say how many times I've heard, "I'm glad you were adopted or I wouldn't know you" or, "Aren't you glad you were adopted? Who knows where you would have ended up otherwise." People make these kinds of statements not realizing the power of their words. If you tell someone that you are glad they are adopted, or that they placed a child for adoption, or that they adopted a child, you are also telling them that you are glad their lives have a monumental loss (loss of a child, loss of a family, or the loss of the ability to have a child, etc.) When you

say that the person should be glad they were adopted and they make the "who knows" statement, you are assuming the worst possible outcomes when in reality there is no way to know what would have happened, only that it would be different. The assumptions and the hidden message in such statements are harmful.

Adoptees grow up with parents who are sometimes unknowing and erroneously make the statement, "I love you just as if you were my very own." Using the phrase, "as if" points to this as a non-normative experience, that we are not "actually yours." The actual statement should very simply be, "I love you." Nothing else is needed. Yet it seems adoption is always at the forefront, AS IF it explains so much about any individual and their life experiences.

With adoption it doesn't stop there. Adoptees are taught to put a word in front of mother, father, sister, aunt. The system typically tells us that "birth" or even "biological" is the qualifier for these relationships. This use of qualifiers separates the adoptee from that family unit and attempts to legitimize the adoptive family. The adoptive parent is simply called "mother" or "father". Those doing the parenting get the qualifier dropped, again legitimizing the adoptive family as a unit, but also the system of adoption. Typically, adoptees are often referred to as "adopted child" or "adopted son/daughter". Yet to qualify and say "adopted child" creates a degree of separateness from the family, as does the "birth" qualifier. Rather than having two, close, loving families, any adoptee who is taught to qualify their relationships is experiencing an additional degree of separateness from everyone -

exactly what we don't want when it comes to secure attachments! The adults in the person's life must be secure with the fact that adopted persons have two lineages from which they derive their being. They

need to acknowledge that they came into the adoptee's life in different ways BUT that one cannot, and does not detract in any way from what the other gives.

My Adoption Story

by Wendy Barber

At last the letter came. It felt like I had waited all my life, well in reality I had. The letter from the government was a non-identifying letter, as they call it, meaning that the letter acknowledged my adoption but did not give any names, places or clues to who I am.

My search began twenty five years previous when I approached the Children's Aid Society. However I did not search in earnest until my adoptive father passed away. Out of loyalty to him and gratitude for the good home he had provided me, I felt pangs of guilt whenever I searched for my birth family. Upon my adopted father's death my mother gave me secret papers from their safety deposit box. She was no longer interested in keeping the secret: she was preoccupied grieving the loss of my father. Now the search progressed to a determined mission. I was armed with a name and a number and I felt free to search for my heritage.

As an adoptee I made it my personal quest to find my true heritage and create my own identity and this search occupied more than half of my life. I did not know to what I could compare my lack of identity. The loneliness is impossible to describe. The government treats us adoptees in a shameful and degrading manner. At birth they take our birth certificate and all history from us, lock this information in sealed files and turn us into social orphans. At one point in my life I had a number and no name on my government documents. Some philosophers have said that life is only a perception, not a reality. Most of my life I perceived myself as an orphan, a ship lost at sea. However, an adversity such as this can sometimes motivate us to find our reality.

My determination paid off, I found my birth family. I missed meeting my mother as she had died at age thirty seven in a house fire in Nanaimo. My first meeting with family was with her younger brother John. Talk about a life changing moment, when I walked up the stairs of my Uncle John's house he said to me, "There is no mistaking who your mother is". That is the first time in my life that anyone has indicated to me that I looked like someone else. That moment in time is frozen in my mind it seems like yesterday.

I found a sister in Toronto; she is a nurse at the sick kid's hospital and has four children like myself. I met my birth mother's oldest sister Lorraine, who I was named after, Lorraine was my name at birth. My maternal grandfather was the oldest of fourteen children so I have a huge search ahead.

It is not so much that my life changed with this experience, it's that I changed. Probably not visibly to others but I changed inside. I saw and felt differently not only about myself but also about other people as well. I was able to search myself, examine who I was and enjoy my journey from birth to the present. I no longer felt like a number now I had a name a family and a history from birth. I felt and appeared to others to be a goal oriented person. I raised my four daughters alone; created and operated a successful business. However, I was only surviving in the moment because I could not look back and I was unable to look forward. After finding my true heritage I could look to the future with ease. Harry Truman said, "I tried never to forget who I was and where I came from and where I was going back to". Quotes such as this had no meaning to me because I didn't

know where I came from or where I was going and therefore did not know who I was.

I believe that many of us women are gifted with initiative and adaptability, with flexibility, humour, spirituality and intelligence and most of all strength. During my search I reached way down inside myself

and there I found a strength I never knew I possessed. This strength enabled me to realize myself, to know who I am. Since finding my birth family I have never felt lonely, I feel strong and focused. We are born alone and we will die alone, those moments are only moments in time. I think it is the space in between when we live our genuine life that really matters.

My Daily Wellness Routine

How I Stay Emotionally Healthy: Me and My IC

by Joe Soll 조살, LCSW,

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

Every morning while I brush my teeth, I give my Inner Child a hug, say good morning and tell him *I love him*. Then I ask him how he is feeling. If all is well then I continue my day. If he says he is sad or angry etc., I ask him why, listen to what he says, validate his feelings and if he needs some talk time, I give it to him.

All the above is the same as I would do with any child in my care.

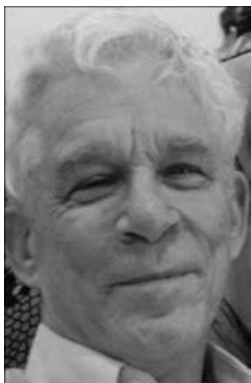
As I go about my day, I listen very carefully to the things going on in my head. We all have a continuous narrative in our heads and one of the chores of our healing is learning how to listen to what's being said and identify who is saying it. (Is it my 7 year old self talking or is it my adult self? Is it an Inner child of a different age?)

When an adult says for example, "I know I shouldn't have that piece of cake but I will anyway," it's the adult who says I know I shouldn't and one's inner child who says I will anyway! If we can learn to listen before we speak or act, identify the age of the voice we hear, we can learn to not let our Inner child control our lives.

The more one nurtures any child, and our Inner child IS a child, the less that child will try to do things she or he should not do, to get attention.

So, by learning who is talking, we will be more in control of our lives and have a healthier life with healthier relationships.

During the day, I channel anger into my physical activities. I do this without thinking of anger, I just say, "I'm going to take my anger and use it so.....," and then do the activity. The activity gets done without stress and I use negative energy to do it, leaving my good energy for other things.



Here and there during the day, I do a few of the exercises from the wonderfully helpful, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Zen Living*. ***Please don't let the title scare you off, this book coupled with Inner Child work is superb.***

I take time as often as possible to just be present, to just be in the now with my inner child.

Every evening, while brushing my teeth, I check in with my Inner child, ask him how he is, give him a hug, tell him I love him and wish him sweet dreams. We both sleep well and wake up refreshed and this keeps me and my Inner child healthy, peaceful and content. I wish you the same!

Namasté, ~ Joe ~

Reflections on Healing Weekends with Joe Soll

1. Barb Van Ee ~ Reunited Mother

I attended Joe's Healing Weekend in May of 2012 at his residence in Congers, New York. I travelled there with my daughter, Melinda. Melinda and I have been reunited for 5 years and 5 months as of this writing.

Attending Joe's workshop was another stepping stone in our journey towards healing and health as we both recover from the trauma of adoption. It has been a latent trauma, for both of us - as adoption has built into it the covering up of all pain, Moms who lose their babies, Babies who lose their Mommies (and for Adoptive parents who lose out on the truth.)

Over the past five years I have been brought out of denial of my own grief, layer by layer, until I could weep openly in a room of 'enlightened others', expressing the pain of the loss of my baby at birth. My own grief was wrapped in shame and self-recrimination for doing the unthinkable, abandoning a baby to adoption. It was through Joe's gentle and insightful truth-speaking, "you had no choice, given your life experiences, the culture around you, your lack of support, and the lies that were told you."

I realized at some point of my journey that I could not stay in this place of guilt, shame and regret, because staying there would keep us both stuck. So, with encouragement and support, I kept moving forward in telling my story and reaching ahead to the *more* of healing that is there for me. Making the trip to New York to Joe's healing weekend was part of that step-taking. The trip was far out of my comfort zone, both rationally and financially, it was just a trip that I would have never considered to be practical for me. However, with a commitment to both myself and my daughter to *go after* healing, we went.

For many of our sessions there in Joe's living room,

we were invited to respond to a variety of provocative stories and/or questions that he presented to us. These queries were intended to bring us into our true selves, the sadness of our losses and subsequent expressions of that sadness. I admit that I focused much on others and was easily drawn into the pain of our children as they expressed their feelings of *lostness* and *unattachment*, as adoptees. I remained aloof with regards to my own pain - a character trait that I have had for most of my life and probably one of the key reasons why I had bowed to the adoption lie to begin with.

It was during one of Joe's assignments that I finally found my own writhing grieving 19 year old self. She was assigned the task of writing her good-bye letter to her baby girl on the day of surrender. The assignment was to write the letter in our non-dominant hand, a method which would actually help in bringing ourselves into the realm of our inner-younger selves. I toyed with my pen in my left hand for several minutes, evading the task and instead amusing myself with distracting thoughts, trying to get Melinda's attention from across the room with my eye gaze. Eventually Joe, who must have intuitively felt my disengagement, came and sat in the room so that I felt I had to settle down and do the work.

I wrote:

June 14, 1982. Today is your birthday.

You are beautiful, big, healthy and perfect, and amazing. I am in awe. I am also so very proud and honored that you came from my body.

I am sad too, my little one. Our time together is over, for now. We have had the most amazing, and for me, very difficult journey for these past 9.5

months. I am so sorry for the pain that you must have felt from me. My heart has been broken during this journey, knowing that I cannot keep you.

You are the most precious and beautiful part of me. Even as I write this, I cannot understand why I have to be separate from you. I only know that we have been alone and my hearts cry is that you will not be alone anymore. All I can give you is the best possible life you deserve, and for myself - I just have to find a way to survive without you. One day, someday, we will understand. I love you. That is the only sure thing I know. I will hold on to you in my heart forever, but I will know you sooner than that.

I will survive and I will get better, and one day, when the time is right, I will see you again. You will know how much I love you and always have.



Stay safe and well. Be loved and free. Don't forget me. I will never forget you. I will see you soon. I love you, I love you, I love you, my daughter. I am

Your Mom.

The second part of the assignment was to read the letters out loud in the group, of course this was optional, but I decided yes, after all isn't this why I came?

When I read and heard my own young self, I cried. It was her voice within, aching for her baby and feeling helpless to have her. My now grown up daughter, Melinda, moved across the room to sit with me and she comforted me in her arms, there in Joe's living room.

It was breakthrough for me, to feel the loss again of my baby from this Inner Child perspective and to not feel ashamed or angry at her, my 19 year old me, just very, very sad.

I visit her regularly now, 19 year old Barb, who lives within me. She is being loved and nurtured in me.

Melinda and I are steady on our course of emotional health, moving beyond grief and coming into greater acceptance for what has happened to us. We see each other daily, pray together in gratitude and sometimes desperation. We cuddle and practice eye gaze. We practice honesty even if it hurts. We seek out help when needed.

And we Love without Fear.

~ Barb Van Ee ~

2. My Healing Weekend ~ Gail Davies

Last May, I travelled to New York to a healing weekend at Joe Soll's. I arrived on Thursday, a day early, in order to participate in his support group and listened in awe as I was too tired and jet lagged to participate. The next day, we had time at leisure and then the real work began. Joe gently led us into really getting into our issues and finding our pain.

At times it was scary, other times it was funny, and always a release. I found that I was able to communicate in ways that I am not used to as I always had to be strong and be the big girl. I really

felt the effects of nature and nurture. It was a beautiful site on a lake with views through the trees of the lake and swans with a lovely tranquil feeling that was conducive to my healing experience.

We shared close quarters as seven of us shared one bathroom but it did not seem to matter. We were a family and everyone was there for their own purpose but also respectful of everyone else. We bonded in a way that only people who share a common story do and Joe helped us all. As Joe would say "we were okay, we didn't die".

~ Gail Davies ~

3. *Adoptee*

I set my suitcase down and stood with my hand on the doorknob to the house, building up the courage to enter. It was the first hot weekend in May in the tri-state area and judging by the traffic that Friday afternoon, many people were leaving the office early to enjoy the weekend. I had been alternatively looking forward to and dreading the Adoption Healing weekend. Like going to the dentist, I felt it was something I needed to do and would feel relief afterward, but feared the process might be painful and unpleasant.

I entered the house and met the 6 other workshop attendees for our intensive weekend program. I was amazed to discover that one person had flown from Florida and that three people had flown from Vancouver to participate. I myself had only met Joe Soll, the leader and host, in person once before at a monthly support group he runs in NYC.

I feel blessed that Joe created a safe environment for us to share our feelings and communicate with our inner children. I learned so much and gained healing from the diversity of experiences and perspectives that the other members opened their hearts to share in our temporary community. As an adoptee, it was especially powerful to hear from the mothers who gave birth and were coerced into giving up their children for adoption. It was also inspiring to experience a mother and daughter who had reunited and to understand that reunion is not the magic bullet of healing the pain of separation.

I shed many tears during the weekend, but it was not a painful or unpleasant experience. I am glad I walked through that door.

~Name withheld at Author's Request~

4. *Male Adoptee*

I'm a fifty-six year old transracial adoptee, married with grown children. I met my natural mom and my father's family (he died before I found him). My natural father was Cuban and lived out his life there.

My adopting parents were white, well educated, interesting people who had no clue that adoption was not the same as giving birth. I was in foster-care until I was fourteen months old; born and raised in the United States.

It will be eight years since I met my natural mom and about that long that I have let myself really face my experiences of relinquishment, foster-care and adoption. Acceptance is the fruit of telling personal stories and focusing on feelings in the context of inner child therapy. Before acceptance is acknowledgment. Acknowledgement of pain and hurt, denial and ignorance, begin when one can name them aloud, recall their reality and context.

Part of me is still the newborn left in the hospital; the six year old whose brother was kicked out of the house; the ten year old whose brother died. Each of these inner children have feelings and thoughts that

clamor for recognition. Recognizing feelings and listening to one's thoughts bring light and acceptance, which is healing.

Therapy also helped me understand my (natural) mom, or at least the general challenges that pregnant mom's faced. I also see that others sometimes find challenges in making new relationships with (first) families after long separation.

I feel angry sometimes that my life took the course that it did and that I had the difficulties I had. I think about it. That anger, and feelings of sadness, were not things that I let myself become aware of. Feelings of fear and the terror were also hidden. By habit, I sank into isolation. It was impossible to find words for my inner feelings. I found those words with the help of others. Feelings and history are social. They need to be shared.

My wife often comes with me to therapy groups. She gets insight into my reality and adopted persons in general, as well as (first) families. My wife and I talk more easily because of it.

~ Name Withheld ~

5. Abby Forero-Hilty ~ Reunited Adoptee: U.S.A.

In late 2011, I began doing search preparation and booked my first healing weekend. I had booked it to coincide with my upcoming trip to the USA (I was born in Colombia, grew up in New York, and have been living in Switzerland for 14 years).

In March 2012, I was ready to search for my mom. A few days and a great many Euros later, an agency found her and I made a flight to Colombia; meeting my mom would happen just one week before the healing weekend.

Everyone arrived at Joe's early Friday evening. In the relaxed and quiet environment of his country home, we all settled down to dinner together. There was immediate interest in each other, story-telling, question asking and camaraderie, not to mention good home-cooked food! After dinner, we each found a comfortable space to occupy in the living room and the 'work' began. Sessions consisted mainly of making feeling statements and doing visualizations, which sometimes focused on inner child (IC) work. Before each exercise there was a lead-in, and Joe would 'warn' us as to the expected 'pain' level that an exercise would most likely induce

(and yes, there were some truly fun ones too!). Although tissues were sometimes passed around like hot potatoes, we all enjoyed a lot of laughs together as well. The final and most difficult exercise took place Saturday night. We were instructed to have our IC write a letter; the mom in the group wrote to her baby and the adoptees wrote to our natural mothers. Letters could be read aloud at the end if we wanted, but it was not a requirement. As the group had become quite close by this point, everyone felt safe enough to share their letter. It was clear that doing IC work in a group setting was not only possible but also highly beneficial.

I believe the only reason it worked was because of how the weekend is set up. First, we began with a relaxed meal during which we could get to know each other and build trust. Only afterward did we begin to do work, which built up over the weekend in expected pain level and level of comfort each group member would need to feel in order to share their inner visualization with the rest of the group. After Sunday's wrap-up, I left feeling safe, proud of my accomplishments, and with a handful of new friends.

Book Nook

Two Hearts - An Adoptee's Journey Though Grief to Gratitude

By Linda Hoyer

Book review by Bernadette Rymer

Two Hearts is the autobiography of a FMNFS member and as such I was both excited to read it and in awe of the author's strength and courage to present her story in such a positive light. Linda writes in a 'real time' conversational style which seems to be invitation to travel with her on her life journey.

In "A Note from the Author" Linda shares with us about her difficulties in grappling with being adopted and her struggle as a child, teenager and adult, wondering who she was and where she fit in. She talks about her pervading sense of grief and shame and her terror at being abandoned in any relationship, which she admits leads her to make

many unwise choices. These themes are present throughout the book.

I was disturbed by Linda's statement that she believes in the 'blessing of adoption'. In my stuck mode, it almost put me off reading her story. However as I read it, I became aware that Linda did indeed have a very happy early home life and was loved and valued by her adoption family. For me, this then added to the 'punch' of her story because even given her happy early life, she still suffered terribly by the fact that she was adopted.

Linda begins her story in the present with a brief yet picturesque description of the birth of her first

grandchild. I immediately had the feeling that Linda is now in her 'happy place'. She then moves us back in time by chronologically relating her life through ages and stages to her adoption, including her quest for reunion with her biological family and her search to find herself and meaning in her life. Her story is both heart-wrenching and heart-healing as she finds

her way through her grief to a sense of gratitude for the many blessings of her life.

Of the many books I have read about the effects of adoption, *Two Hearts* may be the most hopeful and the least bitter. It is certainly realistic. I am pleased that I read this book, and I applaud Linda for her efforts to share her story. This book is a good read!

An Afternoon with Shari Ulrich ~ September 22, 2012

by Amy Newman

Our afternoon with Shari was wonderful! Shari was warm, entertaining, real and fun. She told her life and reunion story and performed two moving songs: *By the Grace of Goodbye* and *Mysterious Child*, interspersed with some good discussions.

Although her pregnancy was kept a big secret back in 1967, Shari's mother was accepting and didn't burden her with a feeling of shame. Her mother was the "voice of reason" and she is grateful that she didn't get married to her sweet but wild boyfriend.

Shari wrote *Mysterious Child* in 1978. She has incorporated the belief that 'secrets are not healthy' into her music. When she performs these songs and women tell her, "This happened to me too" she feels their sense of relief, that it's okay to open up and share.

Shari was fortunate to have a very harmonious reunion with her son Mike and his family. He was well-raised by a nurturing, open and honest family and had no baggage to work through. They experienced an "innate, indescribable, genetic connection" and have become very close. Mike's adoptive mother was thrilled. It made her heart ache to know his birth mother was out there and didn't know what a wonderful person he was.

Shari is a good example of Wellness: Open, authentic, honest and self-expressed. She is down-to-earth and makes others feel at ease in her company.



She took the ferry over from Bowen Island, parked her car in Vancouver and then rode her bicycle for an hour and a half to get to our venue! How cool is that?



Shari Ulrich, with FMN members Blake Allan & Gail Davies



BY THE GRACE OF GOODBYE
Lyrics & Music by Shari Ulrich

Forty years ago
On a cold December morning
A baby boy was born and
He cried and he cried
His mother signed the page
They whisked away her Big Mistake
She went home the next day
And she cried and she cried

Her mother said, it's for the best
Now you can move on with the rest of
your life
By the grace of your goodbye

Forty years ago
On a January morning
The call came without warning
We have a baby boy

To another's hungry arms
He came so precious and disarming
A family was born
With that little baby boy
The mother said, I wish the best
For the one who changed the rest of our
lives
By the grace of her goodbye

And every year on that day in December
She knew somewhere out there
Another mother was thinking of him and
be wondering
Was he happy, was he whole?
She so wanted her to know that he was
And so loved

Forty years went by
And on a warm day in July
Something told her she should find him
That it was time, it was time
Those three words "yes it's me"
Ended years of mystery
Opened hearts and families
It was time, it was time

Brothers, sisters, daughters, wives
A mother's wish, a father's pride
A miracle of fate and time
Tracing all the threads of our lives
To the grace of that goodbye
All by the grace of a goodbye

used with permission of Shari Ulrich

Conversation with Brian Stanton, part 3

By Marnie Tetz

Continued from AC issue #61, Spring 2012

I realize that many adoptees struggle with their birthdays, I somewhat am a fish out of water in that respect. Brian and I started our conversation around our birthdays and this is what we discussed.

Marnie: How do you like your birthday? Have you always liked them? I always have, my adoptive mum always made a huge stink out of our birthdays. Tons of gifts, angel food cake, cut in half horizontally with money in the middle, lots of balloons streamers, the whole nine yards. And yet I know lots of adoptees that hate their birthdays.

Brian: I have always loved my birthday too. So many of the adoption books out there talk about how birthdays can be really hard on adoptees (as well as their first mothers). It was great for me though, probably because I knew I would get the attention and acceptance I always craved. I know it was difficult for my B-mom though.

Marnie: I think it's interesting what you say about the attention and acceptance that you always craved. I had never thought of it in that way. Why do you think that it was about attention and acceptance rather than just about you and the day being your day? Hmmm! I wondered if my B-mum thought about me on my day... this was when I was older and looking for her, I never thought about it being difficult for her.

Brian: Yeah, I'm probably not the best one to talk with about the birthday thing. I was actually

surprised to read about birthday struggles with adoptees in all those books; I guess it just didn't relate to me. All of my birthday memories are very warm. I was half-joking about the acceptance thing because we adoptees certainly want acceptance, but I think there is certainly some truth to it for me. It was a special day about me when everyone took notice of me with presents, balloons, cake, ice cream, parties, etc. How could I not enjoy that attention?



My B-mom told me that my birthday was tough for her every year, which I completely understand. Whether or not, the choice was 100% mine, I can't imagine having to relinquish my own child. I'm sure every day a thought of the lost child enters the mind, and the day of birth has to be a little extra hard. I can't speak from that point of view though; I'm just empathizing with my own B-mom.

~~~~~

### A message from Marnie -

I hope that you have enjoyed this three part conversation with Brian Stanton. Through our emails I have learned how being adopted affected Brian and been given more things to ponder on how those of us in the adoption 'tribe' are affected, mums/dads, adoptees and adoptive parents. It's made me even more excited about our upcoming FMNFS Fall Workshop.

## Upcoming Events



Nancy Kato

Past President of the  
Forget Me Not Family  
Society

FMNFS will have a  
booth at this event

### Family Tree...or Family Stump: The Adoption Perspective

Presentation by Nancy Kato

1 to 2 PM Saturday, October 13, 2012

*Class description: The lack of family/ancestral knowledge has a huge impact on those who have been adopted. We will look at what drives adoptees to search, how to get started, disappointing outcomes, the role of agencies in the search journey*

Part of Finding Your Roots Tri-Stake Seminar

Family History Centre

6270 – 126 Street,

Surrey, BC Canada 604-597-9695

Lots of FREE genealogy classes scheduled 8:30 AM to 4 PM

Registration: [www.findingyourroots.ca](http://www.findingyourroots.ca)

Optional \$5 bagged lunch if pre-ordered.

### FMNFS Annual Fall Workshop: November 3 & 4, 2012

#### *“Releasing our Voices”*

Featuring actor, playwright and adoptee Brian Stanton  
performing his one man play **BLANK**



**BLANK**  
BY BRIAN STANTON

An entirely new workshop experience!

Following his performance, Brian will lead a fun and interactive workshop where we will learn to embrace our own stories and release our voices in innovative ways.

Location: Delta Airport Hotel in Richmond/Vancouver, B.C.

Cost: \$175 members, \$210 non-members

Sat only: \$140 members, \$175 non-members

Registration information and forms available on the FMNFS website:  
[www.adoptioncircles.net](http://www.adoptioncircles.net)

# Members Out, About and Over the Moon



Wow, a wonderful few days spent in Kelowna with my brother Rick and his wife Nancy. They travelled all the way

from Cape Porpoise in Maine to spend time with my husband and I and our son Anthony.

This is the third time we have been together since we discovered we were brother and sister in October of 2010 and it just keeps getting better and better. I really feel like I have won the big lottery of life to



Anne with her brother Rick

discover in my 50s that I have a brother and sister. Our sister Margie was to have joined us and met Rick for the first time but sadly her health precluded coming this time. Hopefully Rick and I will visit her in Edmonton soon.

I really encourage anyone who is wondering whether to make contact with someone to find a way because an amazing connection could be waiting just around the corner!

~ Anne Walmsley ~



My daughter turned 40 this year. We will celebrate our 18th year of reunion this year. In some ways it feels like only yesterday that we met (for the second time, the first being when she was 10 days old). Other times I feel as if I've known her forever. And for me I have, as Leanne has always been in my heart and especially from the moment I signed the relinquishment papers and thought I would never see her again. I never stopped thinking of her and wondering how she was doing. I know now that for her it was different.

I was some disembodied "human" that sat on the peripheral of her life with only momentary thoughts of "oh yea, that other person is out there somewhere".



Nancy with her daughter Leanne

Our reunion wasn't easy in the early days – I think now that we both had expectations that were not met in terms of who we thought we were going to meet. It didn't help that Leanne's adoptive parents chose to separate from her when she contacted me (and they still do not have a relationship with her to this day). There were times in our reunion when I thought the pain would never go away, that meeting her, in fact, was not the silver bullet that would make

everything okay. There were times when I thought I should walk away, that our lives really would be better without each other. It took a long time for the two of us to find common ground – there were many tears, and anger, and disappointment. But with all that we were going through, I knew that I could never leave her again – she was and is my daughter and I love her.

For the past 10 years we have managed to find and work toward that dreamed of place for birth mothers – I am "mom" to my daughter and "grandma" to my two beautiful granddaughters. Last summer my daughter asked me for advice, for the first time, and I felt honoured, respected, and loved. We have learned to relax and have fun with each other and we can make each other laugh. She came over to visit me in July and we went to the football game (see picture), golfed, went to a birthday dinner and just hung out. It was a blast and a crowning moment in our reunion. I love getting the "love you mom, miss you" texts from her for no reason (and I love sending them to her too). I am truly blessed to have Leanne back in my life.

~Nancy Kato ~



In June I travelled to Regina for the marriage of my niece. Since reuniting with my siblings, this is the 6th wedding I have attended and now I have 5 Great Nieces

and Nephews! Wow! This reuniting stuff is expensive! But wouldn't trade it for anything!

~ Gloria S.~



In August I had the thrill of my life with my first holiday EVER with my daughter. With her two daughters we travelled to Florida for a fun filled adventure including visiting many theme parks, swimming with the dolphins, lolling on the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and going on an alligator expedition in the everglades.

Unplanned adventures included outrunning Hurricane Isaac, and surviving a massive airline mix-up on our

return journey. Aside from those two events, we had, as we Aussies say, "a fan-bloody-tastic time".

Our journey together had two main purposes: to spend lots of time during which get to know each other better, and to create many happy times which I hope will turn into happy memories for my daughter, my grandchildren and for me. Thus our journey was spectacularly as I believe we more than achieved our two purposes. We look forward to more trips and more quality times together.

~ Bernadette Rymer ~

## *Poem for B*

by Sol Ramana-Clarke

*Who would have thought after all this while  
That I'd find my lost mother on Vancouver Isle  
And while in BC to see a son and to ski  
I'd find nephews and nieces and siblings-a-three!*

*I give thanks that my search finally fell into place  
With a few good helpers and some luck and some grace  
I give thanks I can tell you that my life's turned out great  
For us Aussies say: "No worries, she'll be right mate!"*

*So I wish to say to you Mum from my heart  
Please have no worries, you've played your part  
In God's plan for our lives unfolding and true  
And I welcome this time to get to know you!*

~

## 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 (604) 557-0230  
 (ariete\_132@hotmail.com)  
 Marnie Tetz (604) 535-4434  
 (marnietetz@shaw.ca)  
 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         |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Fall    | Culture                                                                    | Nov. 20 <sup>th</sup> | Dec.15 <sup>th</sup> |
| Winter  | FOCUS ~ YOUR CHOICE:<br>What topics you would like as the focus of our AC? |                       |                      |

## Forget Me Not Family Society Support Groups



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

**Cloverdale, B.C.** 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, B.C.** 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.

**Kamloops, B.C. NEW Interior Support Group** meets once a month (days and times vary).

For information please contact Bernadette Rymer at

(bjrymer@telus.net) or 1-250-453-2360.

## Other Support Groups

**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](http://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.

## FMNFS Lending Library



**DID YOU KNOW?** We have a well-resourced lending library of about 30 books and DVDs on the topic of adoption. Members are welcome to borrow them any time. To arrange for an item to be brought to a support meeting contact: [margaretferguson@telus.net](mailto:margaretferguson@telus.net) Subject line: "FMNFS Library."

Books will be available for review at the Fall workshop, Nov. 3rd & 4th.

---

## Adoption Circles is your Newsletter ~ Your Voice!

The planned theme for AC Issue #63 Fall 2012 will be CULTURE. Do you have something to say about lost heritage, adoption and native culture, non-white babies raised in white homes; differing cultural and religious attitudes towards pre-marital sex and out-of-wedlock births; acceptance versus shame and secrecy etc.?

We love hearing from you. What is on your mind and in your heart?

What topics and issues would you like to see explored? Tell us your story. Editorial support is available.

---

To place a sponsorship ad, please call: 604-828-9577. Business card size is 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Membership \$30.00/year  
Couples Membership \$50.00/year  
Corporate Membership \$65.00/year

Please send cheque payable to the  
Forget Me Not Family Society  
#102-1860 Southmere Cres. E.,  
Surrey, BC V4A 6Y7  
Residents of the U.S. may send  
U.S. funds