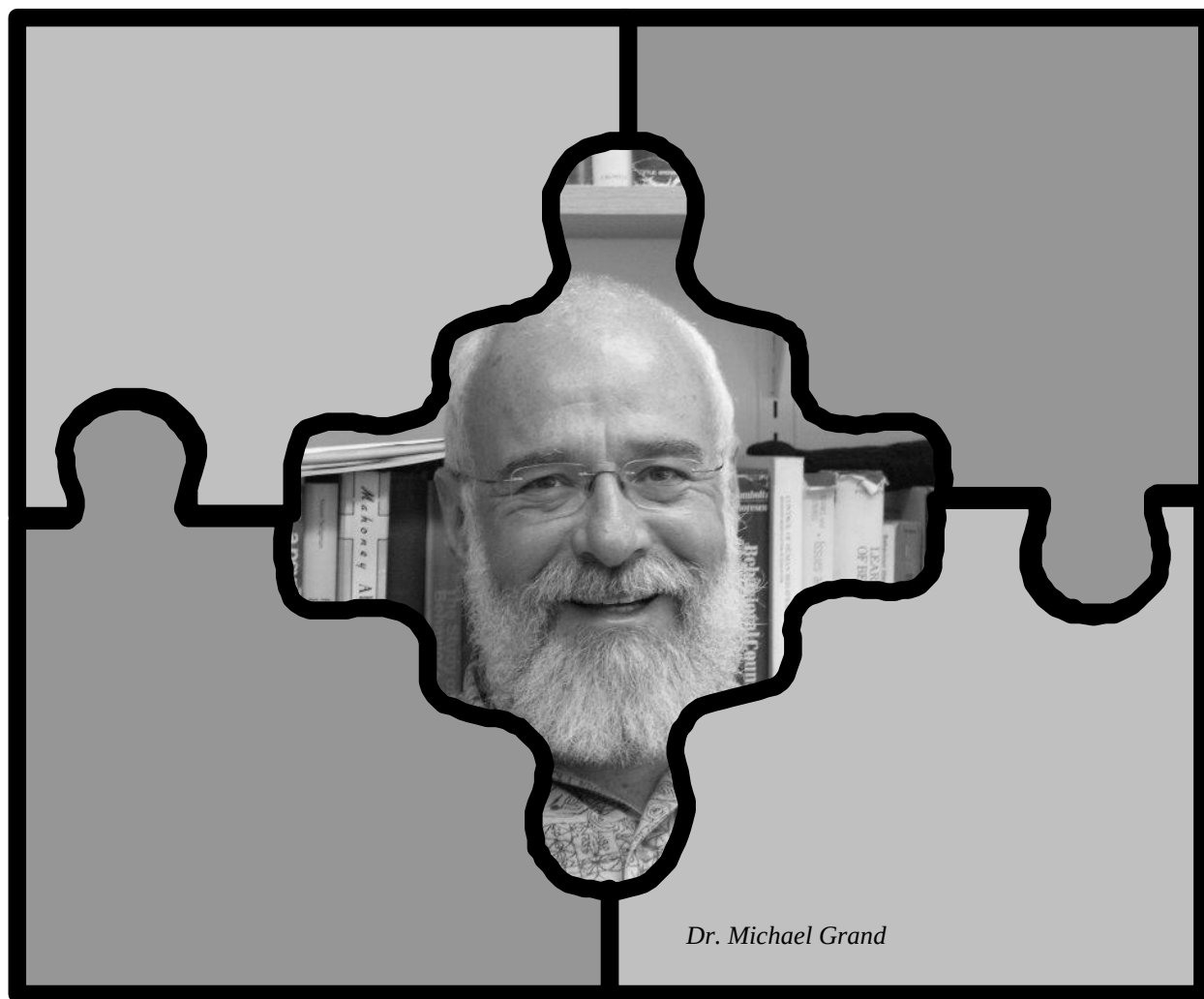


ADOPTION CIRCLES

Canada's Post-Adoption Quarterly

Issue 38 Winter 2006 \$3.50



Dr. Michael Grand

Inside This Issue

President's Message	2	Likeness	11
Walters' Web	3	Views on News	12
Announcements	4	Siblings In Reunion Relationships	13
Poetry	5	Personality Profile	16
Siblings Everywhere!	6	Movie Fundraiser Report	17
Attraction	7	Lean On Me List	18
Sibling Reunion	8	Support Groups	18
My Own People	9	Movies 2 Mention	19
Sisterhood	10		

ADOPTION CIRCLES**WINTER 2006****Publisher****Forget Me Not Family Society****President**

NANCY KATO

katosan @telus.net

Vice-President

MARNIE TETZ

marnietetz @shaw.ca

Treasurer

GAIL DAVIES

g.davies @telus.net

Secretary

DENISE KELLY-JONES

sanddjones @telus.net

JESSICA BOWN

jesbown @yahoo.ca

Directors

CECELIA REEKIE

cecilia_r @telus.net

BILL NORTHCOTT

wilnor @telus.net

LAURA FORREST

forrestlaura2002 @yahoo.ca

Editor

SANDRA WALTERS

walters.sandra @shaw.ca

Layout

LISA CHAN COULING

ADOPTION CIRCLES is published quarterly by the Forget Me Not Family Society, a non-profit organization. Individual membership is \$25.00 per year. Corporate membership is \$60.00 per year.

Please send cheque payable to the **Forget Me Not Family Society** to:
1047- 250A Street,
Aldergrove, B.C. V4W 2S8
Telephone: 604-777-2920 or 604-857-2125 Fax: 604-857-2177
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, Sandra Walters at:
walters.sandra@shaw.ca or by mail care of the Society at the address noted above.

FORGET ME NOT FACTS:

Forget Me Not Family Society is a provincially registered, non-profit society and a federally registered charity. Tax receipts are issued for donations to our Society.

Our Society was formed for education, consultation, peer counselling and to offer support to all those touched by adoption: adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals. Our only source of income is through membership fees, fundraising, and donations. These funds go directly towards printing, postage, telephone, office equipment and supplies.

WHAT WE OFFER:

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

- Conducting a monthly support group in New Westminster
- Bi-monthly Internet "chat" support group
- Individual peer support
- Resource library
- Referrals to professionals and other service groups
- Speakers Bureau to educate groups on post-adoption issues
- Quarterly Newsletter

OUR MANDATE:

- To encourage and develop a recognition of the benefits of family preservation and openness in adoption practice.
- To establish and operate a Post Adoption Resource Centre providing education, consultation, counseling and support to those touched by adoption: adoptees, birthparents, adoptive parents, and concerned professionals.
- To provide community education programs, panel presentations and workshops on post adoption issues for any members of the community who wish to learn more about adoption and reunion issues.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER:

ADOPTION CIRCLES is published quarterly and is available by subscription to our Society. Membership is open to anyone who is interested in adoption and post-adoption issues.

Comments and contributions are always welcome. Please mail submissions to our office or forward to the Editor at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year everyone! I hope you all enjoyed a safe and healthy holiday season. The weather certainly stayed mild and I was personally thankful for no snow in the city! I spent my holiday time taking it easy and getting much needed rest. It was also a time for reflecting on all the things we've accomplished over 2005, and what we can look forward to in 2006.

Our newsletter has been a wonderful accomplishment for 2005 - I can't thank Sandra enough for taking this on. It is of a high quality with great stories and information. Thanks also to those who contributed a little bit of themselves so that the rest of us can learn from your experiences. We have a new Website up and running (thanks to Ms. Marianne). We organized a new support group in Surrey/Newton for adopted adults only. We did a Movie Night as a fundraiser that was very well attended. The support group in New Westminster continues to bring together lots of people. We completed and/or mediated a half dozen reunions; welcomed back some members from the past; and provided support and empathy to those who needed it.

In November, the government of BC facilitated a process for investigating the possibility of photo listing on the Internet for BC's waiting children. Some of us met with the coordinator of the investigation and many of you took advantage of the on-line survey. Forget Me Not has taken a stand against photo listing and we are hopeful that this will not occur in this province. *(continued on next page)*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *continued*

In 2006, you can look forward to much more from us. We will be refining the Website information and adding more content. More movie nights are in the books ('The Other Mother' is coming up next). We are holding a fundraiser at the Royal Towers Hotel in New Westminster on **Friday, March 24th**. A burger and beer for only \$10 and great raffle prizes and a 50/50 draw. We will continue working on the development of our continuing education program and looking for ways to bring in quality speakers for workshops and weekend retreats. Thanks to Audrey who has agreed to help us with fund raising for 2006.

This edition we look at siblings in adoption reunion - whether it is the ones you find or the impact to the ones you grew up with. I remember when I first met my daughter and how disappointed she was that I did not have any other children. Even though she grew up with two other children in her adoptive home, she always dreamed of finding her "own" brother and/or sister. It made me so much more thankful for the relationships I have with my own siblings. We don't agree on everything and yet we are secure in our knowledge that we are there for each other - only achievable because of our long history with each other. At the Las Vegas conference last July, it was interesting to note how big of an issue sibling relationships was - I facilitated an hour long workshop on this subject and the dynamics appear to be much more complex than any other adoption reunion relationship.

Remember, if you have a story to share, we would love to hear from you. In the meantime, enjoy our Winter edition of Adoption Circles. And don't forget to check your mailing label to see when your membership expires - you can renew for a mere \$25 a year.

Nancy Kato
President

For this issue of Adoption Circles, we are putting SIBLINGS under the microscope. This can end up being many relationships to consider: adopted brothers and sisters as well as biological brothers and sisters or half brothers and sisters, either those with whom one grows up or with whom one connects later in life.

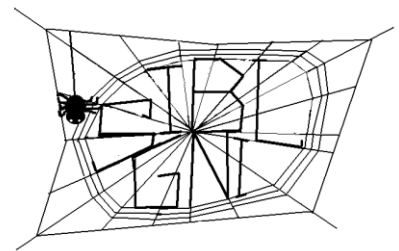
I was blessed with an adopted brother three years my junior, and there are possibly a couple of my biological (half) siblings older than me living in Alberta. Unfortunately, I have only come to appreciate my relationship with my adopted brother later in life. The deep regret that I have for the way that I treated my brother when we were growing up was uncovered when I was asked to compete in an impromptu Speaking Contest as part of the Toastmasters public speaking program. I was asked to represent our club in a contest involving several other clubs in the local area.

I really didn't know what I was getting myself into. There were close to 200



Walters' Web
Sandra Walters

people in the hall waiting to be entertained by speakers in the Humorous and Impromptu Speech contests. The planning for the contest had not included setting aside a room for the contestants to wait in. So, the contestants were shepherded out into the parking lot to wait their turn, me with a short-sleeved dress and no coat in the middle of November. Things were not going well for me! But they got even worse when it was my turn to enter the hall and be given the topic for which I was to compose a speech on the spot and entertain the audience. Having come from the cold parking lot to an over-booked hall of about 200 breathing bodies, my eyeglasses immediately fogged so I could see nothing. Then the topic: you have found a time machine and you can travel either into the past or the future and do whatever you want there. Please answer the questions: Where do you go? And what do you do there?



Well, given my vulnerable circumstances, being half frozen and suddenly blind, I chose to speak from my heart- in front of a couple hundred strangers. The audience was expecting humour and I did not deliver! I assured the audience that I would choose to go into the past because that is where I had some unfinished business to take care of. I explained that I have deep regret over how I treated my baby brother when we were growing up as kids. Ironically, I had actually asked my parents for a brother. I had been excruciatingly lonely as a child. Living in the Yukon, we didn't get out and about much (especially in the winter), and my adoptive parents are somewhat reclusive people at the best of times. I rarely had contact with children my age.

Trouble is that when I requested a brother (NOT a sister), I thought that he would

come pre-packaged and ready to go as a playmate. I hadn't thought that it might take a few years for him to be companion material. So, my request, which was answered promptly via adoption, resulted in me becoming even lonelier-- my adoptive mother had even less time for me with a newborn to attend to. I got angry and jealous and I took it out on my little brother. I think my young brain actually figured if I showed my displeasure sufficiently, my brother would either be returned as defective merchandise to the 'adoption store' that he came from, or he would find his way back through his own choosing.

Instead of taking his hand through our parents' divorce and assuring him that we could get through these things together, I chose to view him as a competitor for the few scraps of affection that were available in these turbulent times. It was also

revealed to us during this time that we were both adopted from different families. I am not proud of my behaviour in neglecting my brother. To make it right, I assured the Toastmasters audience, I would travel back in time. I would act like the protecting and affectionate big sister that I was designed to be, and I would put my arm around my adoptive brother's shoulder and tell him that "we are a team" and "we can get through anything together". Together, we would be united and strong.

Needless to say, I didn't win the contest. I didn't come close. But, I've always thought that if even one person takes something meaningful away from thoughts or ideas communicated, then it was worth the time and effort and, in my case, public defeat. I was later told that a person in the audience had been touched by my words. And it had certainly

highlighted for me how heavy this had been on my heart. I have determined to show my brother how much he means to me today, and to stand up for him at every opportunity with a sense of sisterly loyalty and commitment.

It was my younger brother who started me on my search for birth family. He was found by his biological mother around Mother's Day several years ago. His experience launched me on a journey that has been difficult at times, but which holds the promise of more healing and discovery as it progresses. I will always be grateful to him for helping me to overcome a fear: of keeping eyes wide open in complete honesty and courageously facing whatever I find or unearth in the past, present and the future. AC

ANNOUNCEMENTS



LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED!!!
Hey Everyone! Come on out, have a burger and beer, and help support your favourite adoption search and reunion

group! **When:** Friday, March 24, 2006 **Time:** Drop in after work, dinner is at 7:00 p.m., dancing starts at 8:30 p.m. **Where:** Royal Towers Hotel (Clancy's Bar), Royal Avenue & 6th Street, New Westminster **Why:** FUN and Fund Raiser for Forget Me Not Family Society **What:** Burger and Beer (or wine or highball) – Veggie burgers also available **How Much:** \$10.00 per ticket **What Else:** We will have a 50/50 draw and tons of raffle prizes (Keg gift certificates, free night at a hotel, Counter top wine cooler- holds 10 bottles, sports tickets, gift baskets, and MORE, MORE, MORE)

How: You can order your tickets by contacting the following: Nancy - 604-777-2920; email katosan@telus.net Marnie - 604-535-4434; email marnietetz@shaw.ca Or you can send a cheque to: Nancy Kato, #204 - 67 Miner Street, New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5N5. Come on and join us for a great evening of food, fun and dancing. Bring your friends; bring your family (adults only); bring your neighbours; **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

ART THERAPY AND ADOPTION WORKSHOP: Are you interested in

promoting adoption awareness in the professional counseling community? Do you want adopted adults and birth parents to receive necessary counseling and post-adoption support services? If your answer is YES you may want to attend an upcoming workshop. **If you are a birth mother, birth father, birth sibling, adopted sibling, adopted adult (reunited, not yet reunited, or in a post-reunion relationship) you are welcome.** If you are a birth mother or adopted adult and have received support from Forget Me Not in the past and are resolved about your adoption experience or have had a successful reunion you are also welcome to attend. As a member of the BCATA (B.C. Art Therapy Assn), Lee Crawford will be providing a workshop on Art Therapy and Adoption: Implications for Counselors.

Her intention is to create awareness about the themes and issues in working with adopted adults and birth parents and extended family members who are touched by adoption. She will be offering a 3-4 hour workshop where the members of Forget Me Not will have opportunity to make art about their experience with adoption. Materials such as pastels, paint, collage materials will be provided. Art will be photographed for the purpose of showing how adoption is expressed in art images and forms. Confidentiality will be maintained. Members will take their art with

them at the end of the workshop. *There is a nominal fee to cover costs of the workshop: \$25.00 per person. No previous art experience is necessary.*

***The session is scheduled for **Saturday, March 4th** at the New Westminster Public Library (auditorium). Times to be confirmed with participants. If you have any questions, or would like to attend please contact Lee Crawford, M.Ed., R.C.C., ATR (pending) as soon as possible @ 604-875-9957.

ADOPTION IN ONTARIO-COAR UPDATE: Representatives of the ADR have clarified what services they are offering during this waiting period. ADR will: * **ACCEPT** new applications for the passive registry. Adoptees and birth relatives may place their names on the registry. The ADR will then check to determine whether there is a match. If there is a match, the ADR will facilitate a reunion. * **CONDUCT SEARCHES** on behalf of adoptees who filed their application before *January 3, 2006*. The ADR will continue to work its way down the list of applicants as they were doing previously. * **ACCEPT** applications for immediate searches when the health need is urgent. The ADR will decide whether the need is "urgent." Read about the changes at: <http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/cfcs/en/programs/scs/adoptionsearch/publications/adoptreg.htm>.

POETRY

"Mousie"



Yearning for a friend to chat and sip tea
To cast for fish under the stair with me

To carve out an X in response to my O
Be eenie and mynie 'tween meenie & moe

Crossed my fingers, wished on a star
Come out; come out, wherever you are

A bundle arrived as I longed into space
But it cried, it fussed, and drooled on my face

And now my mom's got him in her heart-
On her lap, in her hands: what did I start?

Love left for me has grown even smaller
I plot my next move as I hear the thing holler

A see-through rodent mate does give a hoot
I spill out my guts while she remains mute

Pull on white gloves and your fanciest dress
Today we fix tea, tomorrow this mess.

Sandra Walters, January 2006

*"Only eyes washed by tears can see
clearly".*

Louis Mann



"Somewhere out there
Beneath the pale moonlight
Someone's thinking of me
And loving me tonight

Somewhere out there
Someone's saying a prayer
That we'll find one another
In that big somewhere out there

And even though I know
How very far apart we are
It helps to think we might be wishing
On the same bright star..."

*Excerpt from "Somewhere Out There"
(Cynthia Weil, Lyricist and James Horner
& Barry Mann, Composers)*

From An American Tale

**"To match the world of childless homes with the world
of homeless children,
what other work has a more noble intention?"
*anonymous***

"The greatest thing in the world is

Siblings Everywhere!

By George Robinson



Being sentenced to live *permanently* as an adopted child is not a unique experience for many people in Canada. However, being from the Old Regime of adoption (1938), does give me a somewhat unique and longer view of the condition. That Old Regime, based upon the Victorian beliefs of the day, denied the potentially “demoralizing” effects of welfare on adults. Instead, they concentrated on the health and welfare of children. This was primarily because of the high infant mortality rate in Canada at that time. Unfortunately, all this reform was based upon *ad hoc* ideas with no firm basis in family or children’s needs. Therefore our ancestors missed the link between helping adults who were caring for children and the overall welfare of children. The *ad hoc* adoption system that they also created at that time is now being dismantled.

“Orphaned, neglected, and delinquent children were perceived as a

threat to public order and it was feared that they would grow up to be criminals,” says the *Historical Atlas of Canada*.

Newly established juvenile courts removed children from the contaminating influences of adult criminals and increased public control over children.

However, the attitude that poverty was a sin and also a crime led them to lump adoption into the same court methods and procedures. How they believed that by taking children away from their mothers and giving them to other mothers was in any way going to help children is now the question that we all ask. This is also the reason that the adoption system in most of Canada is continuing to crumble.

Interesting to note is that the two provinces at the front of the current

dismantling of the Old Regime (Alberta and British Columbia) were the same provinces that contributed to the darker side of children’s welfare. Members of the mental hygiene movement in those provinces agitated against the rights of those judged as mentally “unfit” to have children in the first place - sterilization programs were the result!

So, my longer view begins therefore in the 19th Century and is still extending into the 21st. Because of The Depression and its devastation, I was given to parents who were old enough to be my grandparents. In fact, my future adoptive father and my biological grandfather served in the same army unit during the First World War. But I’m getting ahead of myself. Under the circumstances, there was nothing wrong with being raised by

grandparents - who were incidentally, born in the 1880s. The only unfortunate circumstance is that I was raised as an only child. Please don’t get out that

psychiatrist’s couch for me yet; I know all about how spoiled I am and how China is raising a whole generation of ‘only children’ like me and that this will result in an eventual mass temper tantrum that will destroy their country. I didn’t really think of myself as an ‘only child’ or someone in unusual circumstances. We lived in Victoria, B.C. and at that time I thought everyone’s parents were senior citizens. Beside that, a lot of those seniors were mentors to me and some had a lot of important things to say: about their lives that were lived all around the world before eventually retiring out on the West Coast.

The fact that I did not have any brothers or sisters did not really come into my consciousness until we were finished raising our own two sons. This is when I

began to get serious about finding out about my adoption. So, this “ungrateful bastard” set out on the quest that finally resulted in the recovery of most of my missing four brothers and five sisters. Now when I try to regain those missing pages, no let’s say chapters, in the story that is my life, everything has become blurred as far as the boundaries between ages is concerned. When you consider the old chestnuts about “age is only a state of mind” etc., it becomes a case of some people being born forty years old and some seniors who often retreat into their “second childhoods”. So where and how do these once missing siblings now fit into all of this....or do they even belong?

A few years back, when I read Robert Bly’s book *Sibling Society*, I thought it had much to say about the way in which we view the role of both siblings and parents in today’s Western society. The book was supposed to show parents that they are not supposed to be just friends with their children, that they might want to think about guiding and mentoring etc. Since it was recently written, I thought that it had some messages and thoughts for the future, about children, siblings and adoption combined. If we are supposed to be a democracy, then shouldn’t we all consider ourselves to be siblings? At least in the sense that we all share the same original parental government: Canada. It this is true, then I feel that our present federal system is opting out of its parental duties just like some of us individual citizens do with our own families. Some of our “sibling provinces” are out of line now and should be “cut out of the will” or something until they stop abusing their adopted children.

On a personal level, having siblings is just fine thank you. Some I deeply love and some I’m not really interested in too much. Sound familiar? It’s a normal family! No matter how long that you have

to search or wait, finding siblings is a quest worth pursuing.

After all this stupidity and downright illegal activity on the part of all governments to keep me from my rightful place in society as an adult has helped to

shape my new view of adoption. Until I die, I will rattle chains and advocate for the removal of secrecy from adoption. I'm not very forgiving when it comes to government either. I will never forgive the present day governments for not doing what they should have done for me and

countless other adopted children, as we became adults - HELP US TO FIND OUT WHO WE REALLY ARE!

I have to go now and call my sister!

ATTRACTION

By Jenny



My birth mom got pregnant with me when she was 17 and a senior in high school. My father was someone she dated yet she says she was raped. I have yet to meet a birthmother who does not say the same thing. I don't know what to think. I was adopted at about 2 weeks of age. I always knew I was very loved and wanted. I also always knew I was adopted. It was never a big deal. I knew lots of adopted kids and I never really "wanted" for anything. My family traveled, I got to see many wonderful places and I had a privileged life. Naturally, I always wondered about the "ghost family" out there but never enough to search.

When I was pregnant with my first child, my adopted mom gave me the non-identifying information as a gift because, being pregnant, I was very curious. There were no names but there were lots of other details so that was enough for me at that time. Of course every year on my birthday I wondered if someone was thinking of me. On my wedding day, I wondered what my birth mom would think if she knew I was getting married. I wondered the same thing when my children were born but I never searched. Yes, I was curious and when a friend found her birth mom four years ago I became more curious but did nothing. One time I did look at several message boards to see if someone was looking for me but no one was so I did not search myself.

My birth mom had me and then went to college. Her freshman year of college she said she was date raped and got pregnant with my brother. I knew nothing of that. She gave him up for adoption too. My brother (for whatever reason) started searching for our mom when he was 32 years old. He found her. When he did meet her it was not what he had hoped for. Her husband was not happy with the reunion and consequently my brother has not been back. While he was there, our mom blurted out that before she had him she had a baby girl. He thought he was the oldest and then she told him about me. He had no idea that there was another baby.

Our mom has a boy and a girl from the man she married. Our siblings were age 30 and 25 when my brother found them so imagine the shock to them to find out they had not only an older brother but also a sister. My brother told me that as soon as she said there was another child

When he first found me it was extremely intense. We emailed back and forth several times a day. We talked on the phone. BOOM! It was beyond anything either of us had even experienced. My brother actually said to me, "...what we have is like an affair. We can't get enough and it is amazing to think that these feelings will never end". He scared ME when he said that. It was he who also brought up the issue of genetic sexual attraction. After a very intense month it was just too much and he backed away and stopped all communication.

After he "stopped" all communication, I did a great deal of research on the topic of genetic sexual attraction. It is very real. Whereas neither of us was interested in "acting" on those feelings - the reality was/is that the feelings were very, very strong. It was very intense, very emotional and he got scared. I do understand. I want to tell him that it is going to be OK and that we can work

"There was some kind of bond that goes way beyond what we have with a spouse. People do NOT understand that. They simply cannot fathom those feelings for a sibling but it is SO REAL."

through this but that is hard to do when he is not ready to talk about his feelings!! I am on a list serve for a GSA yahoo group and also receive posts from Barb Gonyos' site www.geneticsexualattraction.com but so many of those people are "way out there".

that he vowed to himself to find me. He looked for me for 14 years and found me this past year; he had been to support groups, read books, etc. I had not been searching so I knew NOTHING.

There are many who post on both sites who are involved in sexual relations with parents, siblings etc. I believe that if he and I were to go there that it would ruin our chances to experience the "normal" sibling relationship that we both want. I am 49 years old, he is 47. However we

felt complete after he found me. We were each other's missing piece. I love my husband - we have been married 26 years - but the emotional connection with this brother was way more intense than ANYTHING I had with my husband. There was some kind of bond that goes way beyond what we have with a spouse. People do NOT understand that. They simply cannot fathom those feelings for a sibling but it is SO REAL.

Reading some of the posts on those other sites made me at least think I was not crazy. The reason my brother knew about it was because he has been going to adoption support for so long and because he had read many books. I have NOW also read many books but when he found me I had never read a thing, never been to any kind of support group - nothing. It was a total shock to me and thank goodness he realized what was happening! It is true my emails scared him too because I write very emotionally and he (an engineer) was not used to sharing any of his inner most thoughts or feelings and so he was scared of the fact that I somehow brought out those feelings and yet I was his "sister".

He did not feel any of what he feels for me when he met our other sister. And I felt none of the feelings for our other

brother. Part of that is because the brother who found me is so much like me. We are both well educated, were brought up in similar socio-economic households, share interests, etc. Our siblings never got to go to college. My sister pointed that out, she said, "...it's funny how you all were the ones given away but you all had such better lives and more opportunities". That made me uncomfortable. I simply said, "...We were both fortunate to grow up in the homes we did".

My brother received his degree from a prominent university on the east coast, and I received a degree from a well-known southern university and also studied at a prestigious university in Europe. I have traveled all over the world. He and I could spend hours on the phone. Sometimes we could complete the other's sentence. It was almost like the missing twin syndrome. I believe one reason we became so close so fast was the fact that we wrote so much. I believe that you share your soul when you write and you pour out much more of your thoughts and feelings. For that reason, our feelings for one another were intensified.

When he first said he wanted no more contact and needed "space", I was devastated because I did not understand.

Now I do understand, but it took me a long time. All I saw initially was that he was "rejecting" me. Now I know better but that initial separation was excruciating. I know he loves me. He knows I love him. I finally wrote to him about a month ago and said, "...Take a month, a year. I love you and love is patient so take all the time you need". It pained me to write that but I did not want him to feel threatened. I WANTED to be able to tell him that, yes, I have read much and that I totally truly understand. But he was still not ready to communicate. I have written a couple more emails that I know he has read because he has referred to something I said when he has written to our mom or to someone else. So at least I know he reads them.

He finally wrote to me and said he had been thinking of me and asked for space for "just a little while longer". I do know he loves me. But I also know he was scared of his feelings and my reaction. It is easier to know that he backed away because he loves me as opposed to backing away because he did not want me in his life, but the PAIN is still there.



Sibling Reunion

By Kimberley-Ann Jandl

As an adoptee, I grew up as a middle girl between two boys - a reasonable-sized family, not too big, not too small. My older brother was adopted like me; my younger brother was not. (Definitely a surprise baby!) Although I didn't really want more siblings, I did wish I had a sister.

When my birthfamily found me seven years ago, I suddenly had another older brother (who had also been given up for adoption) as well as another younger brother and two sisters who had been raised by our mother. All of a sudden I had six siblings including the wished for sister, times two! I was thrilled (for the

sisters anyway). I was welcomed into the family immediately by almost everyone.

At first it was quite overwhelming. I was now trying to get to know five new relations, not to mention the partners of four of them and four ready-made nieces and nephews. Since my older brother had found our birthfamily less than a year before, everyone was already in the "getting to know you" mode. Everyone handled it differently and felt differently about the whole process.

My older brother that I grew up with was intrigued. He was interested to know about the similarities, parallels and

connection my birthmother and I had discovered. He has since searched for and found his birthmother.

My younger brother that I grew up with was not so happy. He did not understand how I could feel so close to this "stranger" and felt that I was turning my back on my adoptive family. He did accept that it was important to me and tried to support me. He met my birthmother and even made the eight hour round trip drive to visit me at my birthmother's home when I was there one summer.

My older brother who had also been put up for adoption and reunited with our mother was my biggest support during the early stages of my reunion. While he cautioned me that our reunions might be nothing alike, he was able to tell me what he had gone through (as did our mother) so nothing came as a real shock when emotions ruled. Although both my brother and I feel that we have more in common with our birth-siblings that with our adoptive siblings, we also recognize that we are the most alike (and most comfortable together) as we share both genetics AND an adoptive background. He plays the role of big brother to me.

Before I was able to get to know my younger birthbrother very well, he went through a crisis in his life. This was actually somewhat helpful to our relationship as I immediately fell into the role of big sister and was his main support during this time. We became extremely close and when we eventually met six months later, I was very nervous as I felt that I had the most to lose in this relationship if it didn't work out.

I probably communicated the least with the older of my sisters (both younger than me). However, I feel that this is the

easiest of my relationships. I found from the very beginning that pictures and videos of this sister affected me in a strange way; I always felt as if I was looking at myself. We are both married with two children, both trained in the same area and we both chose not to pursue full-time work in that field. When we are together, we are totally at ease as if we have always known each other.

And finally, my youngest sister. She is the only sibling who lives close enough to see regularly and this has also been the most complex relationship. When she was first told about me (the day our mother and I spoke for the first time) she was not interested in meeting me or having any kind of relationship. She was just getting used to the idea that she had an "other" brother and now she also had an "other" sister. She did not want another sister. (She was also extremely upset with our mother for keeping these secrets her whole life and this spilled over into our relationship.) Within days though, a death in her partner's family made her decide that she had to meet me, but was VERY clear that the most she wanted from our relationship was the possibility of a good friendship. Although she immediately accepted my

children as her niece and nephew, she still has difficulty introducing me as her sister.

In the early stages of our reunion, I usually felt as if she was the big sister even though I am nine years older than she is. (I don't think she liked this role.) Over the years, our relationship has got closer and she frequently initiates getting together, probably more than I do as I am always leary of pushing her to give more than she is willing. I have also found that in times of family crises, she turns to me. When our brother had his problems, she immediately contacted me, as I was part of the family, but also not. When our mother had a major accident this past year, she again turned to me for support and I find that we relate to each other more and more as "sisters", with me as "big sister". Just recently, I was the second one she told that she is pregnant. Our other sister was the first.

Each of my relationships with each of my siblings is different and rewarding in its own way. I am happy to have all of them in my life. (Even if Christmas gets a little expensive.)



My Own People.....

By Marnie Tetz

Recently my sister, my adoptive sister, (I really don't like saying it that way, however for clarity I will) reunited with her birth mother (another term I'm not too fond of, but for clarity again, will use it). Initially, my sister's mother was hesitant to revisit that time in her life when she was all alone, having to make decisions by herself, without the support of her family. She had a huge family, but was alone in it because of her situation. This was over fifty years ago, and nice girls didn't find themselves in this position, so despite the fact that she had a close loving relationship with her mother, she was alone with her situation, and had to deal with it, alone. Which she did, and then managed to put it all behind her. No one knew. No one except her husband and,

most likely, the birth father.

So with the stage set, fifty plus years later, my sister was able to get her information and, within a very short time, with some help from those selfless search angels, her birthmother was found. The letter written, the picture taken and enclosed, and sent off to the intermediary. In a very short time (a matter of months), the intermediary was able to persuade and convince, with a great deal of compassionate understanding, my sister's mother that it really was going to be okay to let this long lost daughter back into her life. Her mother had already shared the picture and letter with her raised children and they were very okay with it all. The phone call was finally made by the mother to the daughter, at the urging of

the husband. Awesome, loving, supportive man, that husband.

The date for the first meeting was set, the flowers bought, the cameras ready, as well as the Kleenex. The meeting couldn't be better: hugs, a few tears, lots of laughter, and many interrupted and unfinished stories as the words flowed with great ease...

That's my sister's reunion. Mine, on the other hand, has been anything but picture perfect. Mine includes denial of me, two others lost to adoption as well as two raised by our mother. Lots of misunderstandings with the siblings, much pain, many tears and sadness. I have also learned that I have a lot of strength and bravery. I've learned to

become patient. I have also learned that what to some may appear to be obsessive and intense behavior is really my need to pull my little family together. The need comes from knowing, deep within myself, that this must be done, not only for me, but also for my mother and for my siblings. After all, we are related and even though one sibling and I connected pretty quickly and the others have been more work (due, in part, to misunderstandings) it is work that I must do-- for all of us.

My sister made the comment that I deserved the reunion that she had. She said that out of kindness I'm sure, thinking that, with all the work that I have done, and all that I had been through, that it was a thought I would appreciate.



However, my reunion, as difficult as it has been, is still mine. It's about me and my people. Their reactions come from their lives and experiences. In order to learn about them and to understand them, this was part of the journey that I needed to take.

It hasn't been easy and it's still not over, but I have learned so much. I have learned that none of this is 'surface', that

these are living, breathing people. In the beginning I don't believe I thought that. I went into searching and then reunion as a child. I am coming out of it as an adult. Realizing that we don't all react the same way, and we don't all have to like each other because we are related by blood. I have learned, though, that if I am gently persistent and take baby steps, that maybe, just maybe, we can learn to understand each other. Learn about our own pain, and learn that we can like, and maybe even love each other. Maybe not as siblings but as friends-- I don't know which yet. What an honor that would be in the end to our mother. These are my people and this is my reunion-- the one that I cherish and wouldn't alter one little bit.

Sisterhood

By Michelle Edmonds

On the a plane heading to New York City, I gazed anxiously out the window, visualizing over and over again how it was going to be meeting my sisters for the first time.

The official search for my natural family (and I say 'official' because never was there a time where I did not want to know my family) began in 1995. One morning while watching a TV talk show, which had the audience and viewers blubbering over live adoption reunions, I knew it was time to search out the truth. I phoned the Children's Aid in Toronto that had facilitated my adoption, and asked if there was any possibility of locating my family.

Within seconds of identifying myself, the adoption worker said, "Oh, My, God, Michelle, you have a sister who is looking for you." My body felt an immense sense of relief. At 34 years old, I had just experienced my first sensation of feeling connected to the universe. A blood sister -- was I dreaming? The next step, said the worker, was that letters be exchanged between the two of us, the worker as the conciliator, of course. The only information the worker offered was that my sister's name was Colette, she was 38, and she lived in Brooklyn, NY with her husband and two kids.

I do not recall how many attempts were made at putting my thoughts onto paper, but after six months, and many crumpled up sheets of fancy stationary, I had not written the letter. I never got past the first paragraph. What could I say? Perhaps I was not impressed with this three-way communication, and the idea that we were not allowed talk on the phone had dispirited me. My sister was on one side the fence -- the law was on the other. In strictly unusual CAS fashion, the worker called after many months, and was quite beside herself that my sister and I had not yet made contact, and she decided to give each of us the other's phone number.

One month later, on a Saturday night while entertaining some friends, the phone rang. My friend answered the phone, she quickly called me to the phone as she shrieked, "It's your sister from New York!" I thought for a second, I do not have a sister in New York. *Wait a minute, . . . yes, I do!* The voice beamed, in a raspy, New-York accent, "Hi, this is your sister Colette from New York (*which sounded like, this is your sistah, Calette from Nu Yowak*)." It's a shame the call wasn't recorded, as I simply not remember the conversation, other than a constant "Oh, My God, this is so amazing..."

The aircraft descended into LaGuardia Airport. I picked up my luggage and walked through the gate. There they stood -- my two



beautiful, smiling, petite dark-haired sisters, Colette and Mignon. We spent the weekend at Colette's house in Brooklyn; we drank coffee and sifted through years of paperwork that provided bits and pieces of our natural family's history. We shopped, we ate in restaurants; and Ashleigh, my five-year-old niece, gripped my hand everywhere we went. As we danced blissfully to the rhythm of Sisterhood, we knew innately, that never in a moment's history had there been time as perfect as this one

Colette and I spoke on the Eve of 2006 -- Ashleigh is deciding at which university she will study journalism. Colette's poetry has been published into a book. Mignon still teaches art at a high school in Queens.

We have since discovered that we are a family full of writers and artists; we never understood what it meant to share genetic family traits; but we are confident now, that our blood is rich and strong -- it has gotten us back on track, and we know who we are.

Likeness

By Wendy Rowney

When I was a very little girl, I used to pretend that I had four identical sisters. We were quintuplets. We looked alike; we dressed alike; we were best friends; and we had rhyming names.

In reality, I had a younger brother who looked nothing like me and with whom I didn't really enjoy playing very much. He liked to build things, to run around outdoors, and to make lots of noise. I liked to read books, to play imaginary games, and to dance to music in the living room. He was definitely not the identical sister for whom I longed. Since both Ted and I were adopted as infants and joined our family complete with our own unique set of genes it is no wonder that we had little in common. As we became older children, it became more and more obvious that we were different from each other. Our interests, temperaments, and even our approach to decision making were worlds apart.

Somehow, however, this did not seem at all strange. I simply assumed that every person was unique and that each individual was simply that, an individual. Living in a home in which no member of the household was related by blood to any other it never occurred to me that a person could be anything but unique.

Then I met my mother and her family. When I was in my twenties, I finally decided that I was ready and started down the path to reunion. I was exceptionally lucky and a mere three years later found myself sitting at my mother's kitchen table in England ready to meet my sisters. After my mother had surrendered me, her parents sent her to school in Ireland. While there she met an Englishman whom she eventually married. Together they had two daughters. Years later she remarried and had another daughter with her second husband.

Before flying to England, I had seen pictures of my sisters. My confidence

was considerably shaken to discover that they looked nothing like me. I am short with dark hair and eyes. The two older girls in my mother's raised family were tall and blonde while the youngest had light brown hair. (Soon after we met, my mother said to me with a nervous laugh, "Each of my children looks like her father.") At the time I first saw their photos, however, I was shocked. How could I possibly be related to someone who was blonde? Could these really be my sisters? Where were the people who looked like me? One of the factors motivating me in my search was to discover people who looked like me. Harkening back to my dream of being a quintuplet, I knew that I desperately wanted to look like someone. Yet here were my actual sisters and they looked nothing like me.

Over time I realized that we had other things in common. We had shared interests and hobbies yet our biggest similarity was less tangible than these things. It was in comparing our approach to the world, in the way that we saw issues, in how we interacted with other people that it became clear to me that we all carried the same



genes inside us. This was an enormous revelation to me. I was astounded. People who are related to each other have things in common. Everyone is unique but not in the way I thought they were before my reunion. It turns out that family members can be alike. Who knew? I certainly didn't.

These similarities make me want to meet my other siblings. There are rumours that my father surrendered another child to adoption shortly after my birth but no one, including the government adoption registry, seems to know whether this is true. My father went on to marry and have two girls and a boy. I have never met them although I have seen their pictures. Ironically, since I share our father's

colouring, I don't look anything like them. Maybe some day I will know them and learn what it is that we do have in common. Maybe we all share a sense of humour or maybe like me they are bossy (my little brother will attest to my own bossiness!)

Despite the fact that I have never met them and I do not believe that they know I exist, I am their sister. We share common ancestors and, if we had children, they would be cousins. I have a sibling that I know very well. I have siblings that I know. I have siblings that I do not know at all. And I may have a sibling that I am not certain exists. In the years since my reunion I have struggled to find an answer to the question, "Do you have brothers and sisters?"

What to say? "Well, I have one brother to whom I am not related at all but whom I love and with whom I grew up. He's the only sibling I have ever lived with. I have three sisters who live on a different continent and whom I don't know very well. I also have two other sisters and a brother whom I have never met. There is also the possibility that I have another sibling; no one seems to know for sure and since my father doesn't want to meet me, I can't ask him. Oh, and I have five stepsiblings in two different families. I am the only person in the world who is related to all of these people. How about you?" Most people look at me askance and try to find a way to fit this mishmash into a mould with which they are familiar. Most fail.

In the end I have decided that I know all of these things are true. Someone can be your brother because of a shared background. Someone else can be your brother because of a shared ancestry. I don't have to explain this to other people unless I want to. What I say in public in no way alters the truth or makes my family less convoluted in construction. Most of the time now when I am asked whether I have brothers and sisters I simply smile and say, "Yes. Yes I do."



VIEWS on NEWS

LOOKING BACK TEN YEARS AGO, the Winter Edition of Adoption Circles in **1996 featured** the following headlines discussed in this Section, then called "MEDIAFILE":

"INDEPENDENCE DAY" was the appropriate front page heading of the November 4th (1996) issue of The Province newspaper, with our very own Jim Kelly commemorating the arrival of the new B.C. Adoption Act. Jim has fought since he was 16 years old for the right to know who his biological parents are and, on page A5 of the paper, was what summed I up: "Years of mystery end as adoptees get files."

LAW THAT OPENS ADOPTION RECORDS TAKES EFFECT. *That's first in B.C.'s 'brief' news on November 4th (1996) in the Vancouver Sun newspaper. A brief article describes the proclamation of the new Adoption Act and what will open this month for B.C.'s **50,000** adoptees, along with the parents who have given up children in this province. Minister for Children and Families, Penny Priddy, says that to date (November 4, 1996), more than **1,000** disclosure vetoes have been filed.*

BOY IN THE MIDDLE: DAVID, 4, IN CUSTODY TUG OF WAR: *This headed a full-page news article on December 1st (1996) in The Province, written by staff reporter, Suzanne Fournier. The story is of a Cree Indian child who was adopted by a supposedly ideal white couple and is now in the middle of their bitter marital break-up. Four-year-old David Tearoe has been tugged back and forth between his native mom and his adoptive family, awarded to one and then the other by the courts. Children's Minister, Penny Priddy, is now being asked to intervene. Involved in this battle is the issue of protecting David's human rights. If David stays with either of the Tearoes*

(they have separated), whether it be his adoptive mother or his adoptive father, both agree there's no reason to tell David of his aboriginal heritage, at least until he is 18, if at all. This is despite the new B.C. legislation that makes it mandatory for adopted or fostered aboriginal children to retain their cultural heritage. David's biological mother is currently raising her 3 other children under three years old, taking college-level courses, and dealing with her alcoholism. She loves her son and wants him better taken care, though at this time she is unable to take care of any more children.

ADOPTION GROUPS LAUD JONI: *entitled the December 4th (1996) "Who's Who This Morning" column of The Province newspaper. Entertainer Joni Mitchell has recently gone public in the search for the daughter she gave up for adoption in 1965. The 53-year-old singer's willingness to reveal her past in the New York Times required courage. Gayle Friesen, Director of the Adoption by Choice search agency, says, "It's a generational issue. People from Joni's parents' generation are more likely to feel shame and a reluctance to discuss it." And indeed, Mitchell's parents in Saskatoon said they wish she'd stop her search, stating, "It's a real sore spot and ...something we'd just as soon forget."*

ON OCTOBER 25th (1996), THE ONE-HOUR NEWS STORY PROGRAM *"20/20", hosted by Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs, aired a 45-minute segment story about Irish adoptees. The story was about young catholic girls raised in Ireland who became pregnant at an early age, unwed. Their families insisted they go through their pregnancies in a catholic house on an Irish hillside, have their babies, and even help to raise them for up until they became 12 to 15 months of age. Then, these women were strongly encouraged to give their babies up for*

adoption. Unfortunately, most of those adopted out were sent to America with no records kept as to their history, their origin, and their biological families. The birth mothers interviewed on the program all had the same memory of their stay at the catholic house- that of standing in an upstairs window watching and listening for the car that took their babies away.

HOW WERE OPEN RECORDS LEGISLATED IN B.C.? *Legislation was passed in 1995 (after much lobbying from adoption/ reunion related community groups). It took a total of 2 weeks to be passed, from its first reading on June 21, 1995 to 3rd reading (vote) on July 4, 1995 and Royal Assent two days later. In the House debate, Joy MacPhail had this to say, "The previous speaker suggested that there are maybe 50,000 women in British Columbia who may not want it to be known, that they would like to keep their past secrets. I would suggest to that honourable member that perhaps the reason that is so is that we have had legislation in this province and we have had an attitude in the 50's and 60's that took young women who happened to become pregnant, ripped them from their communities, put them in homes for unwed mothers, shut them away from their families and friends, punished them for this horrible thing they had done, literally took their children from their bodies and threw a piece of paper in front of them to be signed, and then expected those women to go back as if nothing had happened. Maybe that is the reason some women in British Columbia are frightened. But I maintain that that is exactly why we need to take this legislation out of the 50's and bring it into the open, to celebrate a society that supports women and children...and that supports access to identifying information."*

Continued on page 17

SIBLINGS IN REUNION RELATIONSHIPS: A CHOICE FOR CONNECTION



By Lee Crawford, M.Ed., R.C.C. A.T.R.(pending)

As a therapist in private practice, when working with siblings in reunion or open adoption my central focus is to meet the needs of my clients. Common needs or themes are: creating a more satisfying relationship between adopted or non-adopted siblings or birth siblings, providing support with the grieving process when siblings end a reunion relationship, to provide the necessary therapy for those siblings that have experienced trauma in a sibling relationship or who have experienced genetic attraction, assist siblings to reunite with each other even if other members of the family are opposed to reunion and to assist siblings to navigate through the complexities of post reunion relationships.

Family systems theory is one of the foundational concepts in adoption therapy. Family relationships express many dynamics such as: emotional closeness /distance, the boundaries of physical/ emotional space, communication styles, the balance of personal autonomy vs loyalty to the family system etc. Families also have a racial/cultural history, socioeconomic history, beliefs, secrets, shared interests and abilities (or not), and rituals that create shared meaning for those members in the family system. In addition to these ideas, adoptive families also evolve a pattern of how to address adoption issues based on the cultural biases of the day along with the intergenerational patterns of behavior that are passed down from one generation to another. To understand how a family has lived with adoption I create a family map with my client to learn about who is who in the family and how the adoption story has evolved over time. From there I begin to explore the current experience of the family life cycle and the different developmental stages in an adopted person's life to understand how those stages have impacted sibling relationships in adoption. I consider both the birth and adoptive family systems when working with siblings.

One of the central goals in working with siblings in adoption is to foster connection and understanding. Through the telling of personal history siblings begin to hear how the family lived out adoption. Memories about how each sibling experienced adoption can be used to reshape a new perception of self and others. The central goal in working with siblings is to enable them to become a resource for one another so that they can be free to decide how to play a more central role in each other's lives. Individual or family therapy or group therapy enable siblings to decide how they will continue their relationship or change their relationship pattern.

In this article the focus will be on adult siblings in reunion relationships. Within the experience of reunion siblings learn how they can express and act on their ideas about adoption without jeopardizing the relationship with birth parents. However, in some family's birth adults or adopted adults will remain loyal to the parents' beliefs regarding adoption, preventing a sibling relationship from developing. They also can decide how they want their relationship to evolve. As Siblings did not decide to place their sister or brother for adoption, reunions are based on compatibility, there is no base question such as "Why did you not keep me" influencing the outcome of a reunion. Sibling reunions are successful for the same reasons that friendships are successful. A central theme in sibling reunion is to discover what growing up with brothers or sisters would have been like and to explore if they have enough in common in which to build a relationship. As siblings discuss the adoption placement etc, birth siblings can provide their perception of their parents which in turn provides the adopted adult with additional information regarding their birth family and the birth mothers' personality. The inverse is also true, that as siblings develop a reunion relationship the adopted adult can discuss his/her family values, beliefs etc that may provide birth siblings with more insight about why their mother placed a child or children for adoption or to simply get objectivity about their own family. Siblings experience grief differently than the grief between birth parents and adopted adults. The grief is about the loss of choice to grow up with the sister or brother placed for adoption. The grief between birthparents and adopted adults is complicated by the separation of the mother-infant bond and the deeply held core issues of acceptance/rejection, guilt and shame.

As an adoption therapist, some of the concerns and issues that I have witnessed in my practice regarding child and adult siblings in an adopted family are:

- Favoritism with the biological child when one or more adopted children live in the family
- Competition between biological/adopted siblings for adopted parents' attention/approval
- Biological children feeling guilty because they are the biological child of the parents
- Confusion between siblings about who is who in a "family" or the legitimacy of persons in the adoptive family.
- Adopted siblings experiencing social isolation/disconnection as a result of feeling different

Emotional and sexual abuse between adopted and non-adopted siblings
 Lack of communication regarding adoption between siblings in the family system.
 Jealousy between siblings regarding strengths, abilities, physical appearance, or personality type.
 Jealousy between siblings if both are adopted and only one sibling is in a reunion or open adoption, while the other sibling has not heard back from the birth mother or has been in a negative reunion/open adoption.

Siblings who are raised with the birthparents have remarked on the following:
 The experience of loss and grief being felt yet not discussed.
 Learning that they had lived with secrecy about the child who was placed for adoption.
 Lack of emotional intimacy in the family.
 Living with feelings of guilt and powerlessness when the birthparents disclosed that they had placed a child for adoption.
 Inability to properly grieve loss of a sibling.
 When birth siblings are in a reunion with the adopted adult and the birthparents do not know, birth siblings feel guilt and stress .
 Birth siblings learning that they are not the first born child, rather the second born child of the family.
 Birth siblings have also discovered that his/her birth parents have been in a reunion with the adopted adult for months or years resulting in the birth sibling feeling anger about not having the same opportunity to be in a reunion .

On a positive note, siblings have also found satisfaction in their relationships:
 -Non-adopted siblings have been supportive, curious, and genuinely interested in the adoption story of their adopted sibling.
 -Siblings who communicate their open adoption/ reunion experiences with each other learn how to tolerate differences.
 -As a result of ongoing reunion relationships, siblings are able to see how families are different and that not all birth family reunions are created equal.
 -Siblings have also learnt how to express grief and loss in the presence of a sister or brother
 -Siblings begin to create their own beliefs about adoption that may be different from the beliefs of birth and adoptive parents.
 -Reunion and open adoption issues enable siblings to develop a sense of identity and autonomy that contributes to healthy self concept.
 -Siblings share life experiences, create new connections and soften feelings of being separated from one another.

This list is a sample of some of the issues that I have witnessed and by no means is conclusive. If your theme in your sibling reunion is different I would be interested in hearing from you.

In my practice siblings have commented or asked questions regarding their relationship with other siblings in their family system:
 How can I learn more about my adopted-siblings feelings about being adopted?

We are too different to have a relationship- we never see each other as adults.
 My sibling is from China and I was adopted in Canada, our cultures are so different.
 I am glad I reunited with my sibling(s) but I do not feel any connection with them.
 I am sad that I do not look like my siblings that I grew up with.
 My sibling was so insensitive about adoption issues that I just stopped speaking about it.
 My birth sibling continues to contact me and I have no desire to continue the relationship.
 After reuniting with my birth family ,I have become sexually attracted to my birth sibling .
 My non-adopted sibling is so close to my adoptive parents that any hope for a relationship with him/her is pointless.
 I am so jealous of my sibling I set it up so that we don't have a relationship that is meaningful.
 I didn't grow up with siblings and my birth mother has vetoed my reuniting with her or her family- I feel like I will never experience what a sibling relationship is like.
 My reunion was great for a few years and now we are having so many disagreements that I don't know what to do.
 My sibling in my adoptive family was so abusive to me when I was young, I have severed all ties with his/her side of the family.
 The reunion with my birth sisters has enabled me to understand what it means to have a positive and satisfying relationship with siblings that did not grow up together.

Comments such as these are a barometer for the overall experience siblings experience in the context of adoption. The comments change as adoption policies and practices change. Adoption wisdom has been cultivated in the last twenty years and adoptive parents are learning how important it is to address sibling issues in adoption. Siblings being raised today have a more realistic understanding of adoption and adoptive families are communicating more openly, creating a path for more satisfying adoptive and birth family relationships.
 To conclude with sibling relationships in reunion or open adoption I will highlight some of my learning's from my own reunion

To highlight some of the themes I have discussed, I will briefly describe my personal experience in my post reunion relationships with my birth siblings.

I grew up in my adopted family with an identical twin sister, Jan. We were placed for adoption when we were two weeks old. Our birth parents were married and had two daughters; Carole, 16 and Shauna, 10. Both Carole and Shauna recall their mothers' pregnancy and were told that the baby had died. Reuniting with my siblings was complicated in the beginning because I unearthed a family secret . Time passed.
 After 20 years in a post reunion relationship with my birth family and living with my adopted twin my entire life, I have realized how sibling relationships have shaped the direction of my life. I have also been given a more realistic understanding of sibling relationships. I also developed a fresh perspective on

living life as an identical twin. As we grew up with no other siblings biological or adopted, Jan and I grew up as our own biological unit within the larger context of our adoptive family system.

Like others, I fantasized about meeting my birth mother some day. I did and that was a very sacred day. I also met my birth father and birth aunts and cousins, nieces and nephews and great niece and nephews. Having satisfied most of my adoption mysteries I realized that the relationship that I thought would give me all my answers and heal my adoption loss would have been a connected relationship with my birth mother whom I address as HelenMom. To my surprise, the relationship that enabled me to feel connected to my birth family was my relationship with Shauna. I did meet my other birth sister who is sixteen years my senior but our philosophical, religious and personality differences were so incompatible that a relationship was not possible. I grieved, and I was shocked because I held the belief that biological similarities were enough to create a good relationship. I was naïve and hopeful. I took a step back from my reunion to gain objectivity, I remained loyal to my sister Jan and got on with my life. After some time had passed I decided that I would bravely contact Shauna. Being a twin I assumed that she held the same beliefs, as her sister and would be loyal to her sister over the twin sisters that she didn't grow up with. As luck would have it, she contacted me. Although Carole is not interested in participating in our reunion, Jan, Shauna and I have remained very close for the past ten years.

I continue to be surprised by all the wonderful family members I have met. It is clear to me now that all of Shauna's adult children and their spouses and my birthmothers sisters' have all been open minded and supportive of our reunion. Jan, Shauna and I are enjoying the experience of being sisters to each other and also enjoy the feeling of family that has been created.

What did we do to create such a successful sibling relationship?

We bravely let go of preconceived ideas about one another and took the steps to rekindle the relationship.

We agreed to participate in the creation of a healthy relationship.

We gave time, energy and emotion to the relationship.

We were honest with each other.

Shauna honored the twin ship Jan and I have cultivated over the years and was not threatened by our level of closeness and intimacy.

We discovered that we all had an interest in fine art, culinary art – we took stock of our similarities.

We discovered that as a family group we had much in common.

We took time to pace the reunion.

We created emotional safety about how to discuss adoption topics.

We gave each other permission to grieve losses in such a way that was respectful

We decided that it was our right to be sisters to one another.

We created a vision for the future of how we wanted to evolve as sisters.

We all agreed to accept our lifestyle differences, placing our connection as a priority.

We agreed to deal with issues as they arose and to not create unfinished business that would influence the development of our relationship.

We shared our histories of growing up, pleasant and unpleasant.

We invited each other to experience our home life and to participate in a larger friendship circle.

We included each other in times of celebrations, weddings, births, anniversaries.

We all shared in the funeral of our birth mother and were welcomed to grieve and give a eulogy that was meaningful to us.

We agreed to experience all the things sisters would have experienced had we lived together.

We all had done and continue to do personal growth work as persons to ensure how we contribute to the relationship is based in awareness and psychological health.

After the loss and grief was expressed and shared we agreed to laugh, live fully and enjoy the moment for many years had been lost to us.

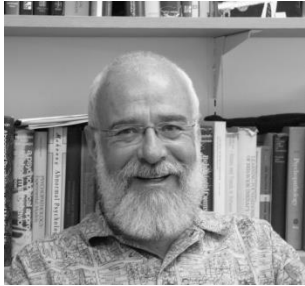
My list is not conclusive as we will evolve in our relationship over time. We have created a secure base. We have not defined our relationship on our shared history of adoption as much as we used to, probably because we feel like sisters. We have taken a step beyond our parents shared experience of adoption and infertility and reclaimed our relationship as siblings.

This article is meant to illuminate the possibility of creating satisfying sibling relationships. It is also an introduction to complications and challenges in reunion relationship between siblings. In reading this article you may begin to explore what you are wanting from your sibling relationship- knowing when to let go, knowing when to take a break, and knowing that your sibling relationship is satisfying. Sibling relationships are a choice and require a commitment, and regardless of how birth parents or adoptive parents deal with their reunion, you have a right to decide how involved you want to be with your sibling(s).

No part of this article may be published without first contacting Lee Crawford, M.Ed., R.C.C. A.T.R. (pending). Lee is in private practice as a psychotherapist in Vancouver and is also a reunited adopted adult.

Contact: leecrawford@shaw.ca or 604-875-9957.

Personality Profile



Profile: Michael Grand, PhD, C.Psych is an adoptee and a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Guelph. He has been a member of the board of directors of the Adoption Council of Canada and the Adoption Council of Ontario and is currently a member of the coordinating committee of the Coalition for Open Adoption Records. He was the co-director of the National Adoption Study of Canada, a comprehensive analysis of adoption policy and practice in Canada. The results of the study are published in his book *Adoption in Canada*. For this work, he received the David Kirk Award for contributions to research in adoption. The North American Council on Adoptable Children and the Adoption Council of Ontario have also presented him with activist awards for his efforts to bring about open records in Canada. In addition, Dr Grand has a private therapy practice directed towards adoption-related counselling.

1) How have you personally been impacted by adoption?

My adoption story began when I had just turned six. I have a faint memory of my father lying in bed, having just suffered a heart attack. Everyone spoke in hushed tones. I knew something was wrong, but I had no idea what it was. A few months later, this gentle soul passed away and my mother found herself a single mother with two very young children. Two years later, she had remarried and her new husband adopted my brother and me.

Right from the beginning we were told to call this stranger “dad”, even though the memory of my father was still deeply alive in my heart. As I write these words, tears still well up. I was never allowed to refer to my father, to ask about what he was like or why I was never again to be allowed to speak with his parents, my grandparents.

The years passed. The marriage failed and neither my brother nor I saw our adoptive father until 35 years later. Today, as a clinical psychologist I marvel at many of my reactions. Although I had been adopted and had lived with my adoptive father for 9 years, I never thought of myself as an adoptee. I felt the pain of disenfranchised grief. I mourned for my father in silence. As a child, tears dampened my pillow almost every night. I craved to know whether I looked like him. I wanted to know how his family came to Canada. I wanted history and family connection. But, the social worker told my mother to never talk of my father again, so even when the adoption had dissolved, she remained mute to my requests for information.

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

As time went by, my interests turned to other matters and for the most part, I forgot about my adoption. I went on to receive a PhD in clinical psychology and flirted with retaking my name but my brother wasn't ready at the time, so I left it. In 1981, my life in adoption took a significant change. A graduate student named Jeanette Cardiff approached me, asking whether I would supervise a MA thesis concerning the

psychological factors that would lead adoptees to search for birth relatives. I rejected her request. After all, adoption was not my area of expertise, and even more significantly, I had repressed my connection to adoption and the distress it had brought me. But, as luck would have it, Jeanette persisted and finally I said I would supervise the project.

This was a major turning point in my life. Within a few months I had read everything I could find on adoption. One day, I woke up and realized that what I had been reading was describing me. I saw the harm of restricted communication about origins, the denial of access to my grandparents and the loss of an identity tied to origins. Jeanette forced me to confront what had been buried in my heart. I will be forever grateful to her.

A few years later, the searching study was published and it has become one of the foundation articles in the searching literature. Other papers followed, and then in 1990, Kerry Daly and I received significant funding to carry out the National Adoption Study of Canada. This was the first nation-wide study of adoption practices, policies, demographics and legislation in Canada. In our final report, we offered many recommendations to open up the practice of adoption, one being that adoptees and birth kin should have the right to know who each other was. I would like to think that the report served as a catalyst for legislative change, starting with the groundbreaking British Columbia Act.

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

I still continue with my adoption research. I have published work on identity, open facilitation, post adoptive services, birth parent reaction to placement and theoretical metaphors for the understanding of adoption. One of our recent studies that I am very excited about was carried out by Julie Menten, one of my graduate students. She found that success in reunion with birth siblings was driven primarily by how open the birth parents had been with their children in the years prior to the arrival of the adoptee. If the parents had been silent, connections between siblings were tenuous. However, when the siblings knew of the

existence of the missing child (usually the eldest), the adoptee's entrance into the birth family was a much smoother event. All along, we had been thinking only about openness in adoptive families. Now, we had evidence that openness was also important in birth families as well.

Over the past few years, I have also been concerned with legislative change. The BC legislation, while innovative in 1996, still contains a disclosure veto. Other provinces and territories have followed with similar legislation. Fifteen years ago, I thought this was a necessity if legislators were to vote for a more liberal bill. The force of the evidence today is such that a straightforward case can be made for a process without a disclosure veto. Drawing on what I had learned from activists in British Columbia, I joined with Karen Lynn and Wendy Rowney to form the Coalition for Open Adoption Records. After a five-year struggle, Ontario finally passed Bill 183 without a disclosure veto. We still have a long way to go to insure that the regulations meet the community's needs but we

MOVIE NIGHT FUNDRAISER

The Forget Me Not Family Society, held it's first movie night, on November 24, 2005. The movie was '**Secrets and Lies**', and the popcorn and pop were plentiful. However, the best part was the conversation afterwards. The night was attended by about 15 members of the society and friends. We all laughed and shed a few tears at the adoption story that we watched. We all could identify with at least one scene in the movie...whether it was Hortense (the adoptee) thinking of applying for her 'birth' information, or Cynthia (the birthmother) taking the first call from her daughter...or possibly it could have been when, finally, Hortense and her sister (Roxanne, the raised daughter) decide that they really do want to know each other. For sure the climax is when Maurice, Cynthia's brother, takes centre stage and laments about the loss that all of his loved ones, including himself, have suffered through...secrets and lies.

Our conversation afterwards took many twists and turns, each one of us talking about the characters, how what one character had gone through we could identify with... soon enough the conversation left the actual movie far behind. The point, though, was for us to watch a movie, the subject matter very close to our hearts and minds, and then for us to be able to discuss it, openly, with those who 'get' it.

The bonus was that we also were taking part in a fundraiser that took no work at all. We raised, after expenses, \$130 dollars, and you can be sure that we will have more movie nights in the future. The biggest benefit of all was the chance for us to be together, and to talk and share our thoughts and feelings.

We are looking forward to our next movie night to be held in the spring (date to be determined) and the movie will likely be "The Other Mother" which is based on Carol Scheaffer's

are a lot closer than we have ever been. I pray that soon we will see open records from coast to coast. We must keep up the pressure until all adoptees and birth kin receive the respect they are due.

The latest turn in my adoption journey has brought me back to the beginning. My brother and I and all of our children have retaken our original family name. Every time I sign my name, Grand; I feel a sense of joy. If you will forgive the pun, it is such a Grand gesture. Finally, I walk again in the world as the person I truly am. Over the past five years I have found all of the living members of my father's family. I have visited the graves of my grandparents and I know the names of my kin going back to the beginning of the 18th century. I feel very grounded, indeed.

To all of you who have accompanied me on my journey I offer my thanks and affection. Your stories, courage and wisdom had truly changed the direction of my life's work.

book of the same name. The cost of attending a movie night is \$10 per person, which includes, the movie, all the popcorn you can eat (made by master popcorn maker, Jes), pop or juice, and lots of Kleenex. Being with those who 'get' it is FREE! -- Marnie Tetz

Views On News – continued from page 12

FAST FORWARD TO 2006:

ARE YOU MY SPERM DONOR?: The title of a New York Times article by Amy Harmon which discusses the lack of regulation of fertility clinics and the pervading belief that preserving anonymity is best for all parties. According to this article, critics claim that the industry's preference for anonymity allows it to escape accountability: how would anyone know, for example, that a sperm donor advertised as a Ph.D., non-smoker is really a chain smoker with a high-school diploma? Or there may be no limits put on their "best seller" donors whose offspring might number more than 100. Advocates for more regulation say there is a growing urgency to protect the children from "genetic bewilderment", and guaranteeing access to genetic heritage could be the cornerstone of an industry ethics code. Several European countries have already begun to ban anonymous donation of genetic material, but this has resulted in a big decline in donors, according to Harmon's article. Unlike adoption, which requires judicial action to create a relationship between the adoptive parent and child, parenthood via assisted reproductive technology is orchestrated entirely by the private agencies that supply the genetic material. According to industry estimates, there are approximately 40,000 children born in the United States each year through donor eggs and sperm. Unlike adoptees, who have gained the right to their original birth certificates, most donor-conceived offspring still do not know how they came to be.

LEAN ON ME

Telephone/e-mail Support List



Reunited Adoptees:

Judy Lanyon – Courtenay (250) 338-2429
 Cecelia Reekie (cecilia_r@telus.net) (604) 857-2125
 Betty Anderson (bettboop@telus.net) (604) 531-4074
 Denise Kelly-Jones
 (sanddjones@telus.net) (604) 596-3163
 Kimbeley-Ann Jandl – Abbotsford
 (kajandl@yahoo.ca) (604) 852-9663
 Leanne-Neighbour – Kamloops
 (neighbourhoodz@shaw.ca) (250) 374-0990
 Marnie Tetz (marnietetz@shaw.ca) (604) 535-4434

Reunited with Siblings:

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

Reunited Birth Parents:

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

Searching Birth Parents:

Diane Herbert - Abbotsford
 (dalendi@shaw.ca) (604) 870-1821

Searching Adoptee:

Sandra Walters
 (walters.sandra@shaw.ca) (604) 507-6769

Searching Step-Adoptee:

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

Interested Professionals:

Judy Archer, MSW, RSW, (250) 758-1275
 Counsellor and Consultant in Adoption
 (judyarcher@shaw.ca)
 Lee Crawford, M.Ed. R.C.C. (604) 875-9957
 (leecrawford@shaw.ca)
 John Thomas - Quesnel (250) 992-5688

Genetic Attraction:

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

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

SUPPORT GROUPS



Abbotsford Hope Services hosts a support group for new birth mothers. The group meets bi-weekly in either Abbotsford or Langley. Please contact Hope for more information by telephone: 1-800-916-4673 or e-mail: hopesupport@shaw.ca Nanaimo Family Life Association has a support group for adoptees. For details, contact Stephen Cochran at: 250-754-3331.

New Westminster The Forget Me Not Family Society holds a support group for birthparents and adopted adults. We meet the second Tuesday of each month at the New Westminster Public Library, 716- 6th Avenue, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. For more information, contact Nancy Kato at: 604-777-2920; or e-mail at: katosan@telus.net

Surrey The Forget Me Not Family Society holds a support group for adopted adults. We meet the third Tuesday of each month in a meeting room in the lower level of St. Andrew's-Newton Presbyterian Church at 7147 – 124th Street, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. For more information, contact Sandra Walters at: 604-618-0407 or e-mail at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca

Vancouver Sunrise Family Services Society offers a birth mother support group meeting the last Thursday of the month 7:00 PM. For further information, call Marg Harrington by phone at: 604-984-2488 or by e-mail: marg@sunriseadoption.com. Additional details on the website at: www.sunriseadoption.com

Victoria The B.C. Chapter of Origins meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Emily Carr Library- 3500 Blanshard Street. A support group for natural mothers (all mothers separated from children by adoption), with adopted persons and spouses, etc. welcome. Please e-mail Bryony to get on the 'contact list' if you are interested in attending at: bryony8@pacificcoast.net or see www.originscanada.org for more information.

MOVIES 2 MENTION

The windy days of Winter are still with us...perfect for curling up on the couch on a Saturday night with a few friends and a bowl of popcorn.

The following are the A, B, C's of movies having something to do with adoption...without the thumbs up or down, or any direction at all. Of course, we would love it if you could offer a full-fledged review of any movie you see relating to adoption for an upcoming issue of the Newsletter! Or, recommend a good one for our "Movie Nights" to be hosted periodically at a Society member's place.

G:

Gas Station Jesus- 2001: Lori Heuring, Clayne Crawford. When a young woman opts to abort a miraculous conception, a Christian group intervenes. Persuaded to place the child for adoption, Maggie agrees to carry the baby to term but gradually comes to suspect the entire arrangement. She ends up marooned at a rural service station where she meets a wise old radio preacher, Isaiah, who ends up guiding her on the rest of her journey. Maggie is stalked, chased and forced off the road. In a field, she comes face to face with her assailants and herself as she prepares to undergo a painfully unorthodox delivery, and yet another unforeseen miracle.

H:

Here Comes the Groom- 1951: Bing Crosby, Jane Wyman, Alexis Smith. Directed by Frank Capra. A foreign correspondent, Pete Garvey, has been running an impromptu adoption agency for war orphans in Paris when an ultimatum from his fiancée draws him back to Boston, accompanied by two adopted orphans to melt her heart. But it's too late! She is now engaged and if Pete's not married within five days, he loses the kids.

High Tide- 1987: Judy Davis, Jan Adele. A birthmother is stranded in an Australian trailer park only to discover the daughter she placed for adoption.

I & J:

Immediate Family- 1989: Glen Close, James Fox. A wealthy, childless couple enters into an open adoption.

Jack Be Nimble- 1993: Alexis Arquette, Sarah Smuts Kennedy. Abandoned by their parents as babies, Jack and Dora are desperate to find each other after years of adoption. Jack's young life has been spent with a sadistic family. Dora, whose life has been somewhat better, has developed extra-sensory powers, which tell her that Jack is in danger, and drives her to search for him.

Announcements – continued from page 4

SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE ADOPTION EXPERIENCE

V: An Educational Conference About Realities: The Lifelong Effects of Adoption and the Need for Family Preservation, sponsored by Adoption Crossroads, OriginsUSA, Origins Inc. Australia, Origins Canada, and the Washington Square Institute for Mental Health. Please consider attending on **September 15-16, 2006** at Fordham University (Lincoln Center Campus), New York City. Featured speakers: Ann Fessler, Betty Jean Lifton, Antolin Llorente, Carol Schaefer, Rickie Solinger. * Note: Volunteers will be needed for registration, hospitality, etc. Volunteers will receive one morning or afternoon conference session for each half day of volunteer work. Please visit www.adoptioncrossroads.org/Conference for more details and email for information if you wish to volunteer. We hope to see you in September. Joe Soll, LCSW, conference coordinator.

WWW.GIVEMEANING.COM: Please visit this Website and search the word "adoption" under 'Find a Giving Group'. Read about our goal to develop an educational workshop geared to adult adoptees, birth parents, and anyone wanting to learn more about adoption. It's an easy, convenient (credit cards accepted), and generous way to donate to Forget Me Not to help us achieve this goal (ALL of the money you donate through the site is paid over to us). Your on-line donation will help us to advertise and promote the course, to print course materials, and to finalize the workshop manual. **See how much is in our piggy bank! :)

NEW LOGO: We will be getting a new logo for the Forget Me Not Society, compliments of the Allegra Printer's FootPRINT grant that we were awarded in 2005, and the creative input of Harry Walters. Look for the new Logo on our promotional materials soon.

WEB SITE: The Forget Me Not Family Society is pleased to announce that we finally have a Website. Ms. Marianne, who many of you will know as a search angel from Canadopt, helped set up what we hope to become an informative site for those with ties to adoption. The site has links to various other adoption-related groups, such as the CCNM, Adoption Crossroads, Parent Finders, as well as the Forgetnot Yahoo Group which, for the time being, holds a chat every second Wednesday evening. There is also information on who to contact to start a search, the various government ministries across Canada, and we will be posting helpful information to help guide you in your search. Our site is new, and will continue to grow as we learn what we need in order to help others. *visit:* www.adoptioncircles.net.

NEW SUPPORT GROUP FOR ADOPTEES:

The Forget Me Not Family Society is pleased to announce the commencement of a support group for adoptees to meet monthly (*third* Tuesday of each month) in Surrey. We meet in a private meeting room in the lower hall of St. Andrew's- Newton Presbyterian Church at 7147-124th Street (just south of 72 Avenue on the West side of 124th) from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Any adult adoptees are welcome to join us to share our thoughts and feelings relating to our adoption journey.

Continued on back page

WRITERS WANTED: Adoption Circles is created by volunteers who have their own adoption stories and who feel a commitment to help others. If you have some original writing relating to adoption that you would like to submit for publication, please forward it to the Editor at: walters.sandra@shaw.ca.

The deadlines and focus of the Newsletter are as follows:

EDITION	FOCUS	DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION
Spring	International	April 11, 2006	May 9, 2006
Summer	Alternatives	June 13, 2006	August 8, 2006
Fall	Fathers	October 10, 2006	November 7, 2006

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

MEMBERSHIPS: Individual memberships are \$25.00 per year. Corporate membership is \$60.00 per year. This includes a subscription to Adoption Circles, which is published quarterly, information and support groups, and a reduction in workshop fees. Please keep your membership up to date. **Not sure what your membership status is?** E-mail Nancy Kato at: katosan@telus.net, and she will check the membership list.

GROUP CHAT FOR ALL: Yahoo 'forgetornot' on alternating Wednesday evenings at 8:00 PM (Pacific time). There is usually a specific topic for each chat, which will be posted on the group site prior to the chat. Please e-mail Marnie Tetz at: marnietetz@shaw.ca for information on joining, or any other questions (the chat is not limited to Forget Me Not Family Society members).

GROUP CHAT FOR SIBLINGS: Yahoo 'SiblingsLostandFound' - My name is Shannon, and my sister, Desi, (my birth mother's kept daughter) and I have started a group for those who have found siblings, or have been found. It is a place to talk openly about the complex and profound feelings associated with a newfound brother and/or sister. We have about 75 members so far; among them are adoptees, fosterreels, found siblings, and those searching for siblings. We are so excited about all of the interest! You can find us at: SiblingsLostandFound@yahoogroups.com OR you can write to me privately at Jadanosh@aol.com.

BOOKS 4 SALE: We need to make room and are offering the following books for sale.

(Quantities are limited so order soon)

- * Adoption Reunions, Michelle McCole - \$19.00
- * Finding Family, Rick Ouston - \$16.00
- * Lost and Found, Betty Jean Lifton - \$19.00
- * Lyle Finds His Mother, Bernard Waber - \$9.00
- * Outer Search, Inner Journey, Peter F. Dodd - \$20.00
- * Reunion: The Search for My Birth Family, Madeline Allen - \$25.00
- * Stories of Adoption, Eric Blau - \$25.00
- * The Other Mother, Carol Schaefer - \$19.00
- * The Other Mother (video), Carol Schaefer - \$25.00
- * The Primal Wound, Nancy Verrier - \$25.00
- * Torn From the Heart, Louise Jergens - \$18.00
- * Touched by Adoption, Blair Matthews - \$15.00
- * Twice Born, Betty Jean Lifton - \$15.00
- * Yesterday They Took My Baby, Ben Wicks - \$15.00

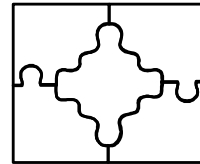
Please add \$2.50 per order for Shipping and Handling. Make cheques payable to

Forget Me Not Family Society and send all orders to:

Nancy Kato, #204 - 67 Miner Street, New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5N5

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 _____

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

Forget Me Not Family Society to:

1047- 250A Street,

Aldergrove, B.C. V4W 2S8

Telephone: 604-777-2920 or

604-857-2125

Fax: 604-857-2177

Residents of the U.S., please send

U.S. funds.

Please circle: Birth Parent Adoptee Adoptive Parent Sibling Reunited
 Prospective Adoptive Parent Adoption Professional Other