

Chain of Life

ISSUES IN ADOPTION AND CHILD WELFARE

▲ SINCE 1989 ▲

P.O. BOX 8081 ▲ BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94707

ISSUE 29 · WINTER 1994 · JANINE BAER, EDITOR



THEY TOOK YOU (AND ME) AWAY

by *Sandy Musser*

WRITTEN NOVEMBER 7, 1993

WHILE IN LOCK-UP ISOLATION UNIT

1954 I screamed with pain, then you were born (though no papers either of us can see). They snatched you right from my womb to sever our bond that they said could never be. They forbade me to lay eyes upon you, but they could never remove the memory of you from my heart no matter how hard they tried — for years and years I silently cried.

1976 I spoke of you today for the first time in 22 years. I announced to a group of 8 adoptees that "I gave you away, but I never forgot you." My heart began to scream with the pain that had been suppressed all these years. And now my journey to find you begins. It would be a journey to end the awful pain, to put to rest the longing inside and to finally find peace.

1988 For the past 12 years I've devoted my life, my heart, my soul to helping others find the peace I found when I found you. I built a national organization. Loved ones around the country were being reunited. I was pegged an adoption reform activist as I spoke out against the government's practice of sealed records. I was devoted, committed, dedicated.

1993 And now I am in a locked cell 6 x 10 — 325 concrete cinder blocks — no sunshine — no contact with anyone — something like the hospital room where it started 39 years ago. They punished me then for giving birth to you — I hadn't obeyed the rules — there was no ring on my finger — Punishment required — sacrifice my first born.

And now they are punishing me again — in my work of reuniting families — they again said I broke the rules. Adoption records are sealed — shall not be broken. Punishment required — jail.

What a sick sad world.

Sandy is no longer in isolation, but she is still in jail. She would appreciate your letters there through the end of February 1994. Write: FCI Marianna, S. Musser 51963-060, Seminole B, P.O. Box 7006, Marianna, Florida 32447-7006. ▲

Going to Jail with Sandy

for all of us but especially for Kandy Thorsen

"If Sandy spends three nights in jail, then we should all spend three nights in jail." — *Annette Baran*

"Sandy is standing there for all of us." — *Linda Cannon Burgess*

Report to prison on Friday — all of us! We are going to jail for taking part in a conspiracy to defraud the institution of closed-record adoption.

Defraud it of its supposed right to send us through life to death, not knowing the name of a single blood relative or ancestor.

(The Harvard law professor has said that open records would be all right but should be delayed so we don't grant biology too much importance.

Meanwhile, some people are biologically DYING not knowing. So do those people deserve to know or not, Professor?)

Defraud it of its supposed right to keep birthparents in the dark, not knowing where their children are this hour, this year, this lifetime.

We do plead guilty — don't we?! tho we didn't mean to be secretive. It's just that a lot of us adoptees have these very soft voices.

And a lot of birth parents are so practiced in secrecy that especially when they first start to speak, they do sometimes choke a bit.

But now that we are actually going to jail fo this "conspiracy," just wait til they hear how less "secretive" we are about to be.

— *Penny Callan Partridge*

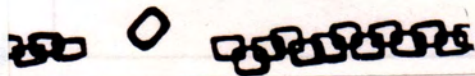
Chain of Life

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Chain of
Life



The title "Chain of Life" refers to the physical, genetic connection that *all people* have with other people, but that only adoptees in closed record adoptions are asked to ignore. Like everyone, adoptees are the product of our genes, our life experiences, and our own thoughts and actions. We have a right to know as much about ourselves as we need and want to know.

In addition to advocating open adoption records, *Chain of Life* works toward developing an understanding of when adoption is appropriate for some children, and when other forms of support are preferable, both in our current society and in a more humane society of the future.

This newsletter should not be confused with an anti-abortion group of a similar name.

PRO-
CHOICE,
PRO-
CHILD

▲ CHAIN LETTERS ▲

October 6, 1993

Dear Friends and Colleagues in the Adoption World,

Many of us haven't known how we wanted to respond to Sandy Musser's indictment for "conspiracy to defraud the government" (for providing people with identities/ whereabouts of parents or offspring — information obtained "illegally"). I have to say that I myself ALMOST managed to avoid thinking about this for several months. But I became haunted by three things:

1. I kept thinking of the underground railroad and how those people were breaking laws for a higher good. I like to think I would gladly have participated in it had I been in the right time and place to do so.

2. I did not like the image I began to have of Sandy unsupported by many of us as she went from indictment to sentencing to serving whatever sentence she might get.

3. I began to think of this situation as an opportunity to STAND UP for disobedience in the face of closed record laws. Rather than say, "Oh no, we don't want laws broken," it seems to me we should be telling the world that until we have open records, people are going to be doing whatever they have to, to reestablish links that should never have been broken in the first place.

I have decided that if Sandy

goes to jail, I want to be there. I want to support Sandy by directly witnessing the price she is paying for getting people THEIR information. And I want to protest closed record laws — whether enacted decades ago or recently in the backlash against our movement toward openness in adoption.

SANDY HAS NOW BEEN SENTENCED TO FOUR MONTHS IN JAIL, starting November 1, in a federal prison in Florida. I know some have resented the money that the Musser Foundation has charged people for successful searches, but Sandy points out that this money has been plowed back into the movement, and that she wasn't fined because no funds were available for paying a fine. I would ask if we want the paid searcher controversy to split us as a movement at the moment the backlash is getting most of the attention. If we don't put aside differences about means for this one, I'm afraid we will be pushed back from the ends we have in common.

Please pass this letter on in any way you want. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Penny Callan Partridge
38 Cosby Ave.
Amherst, MA 01002
413-549-1385 ▲

November 10, 1993

One of us is now in jail. "One of us," because, despite our different beliefs, affiliations, etc., I still think of us as one community — of triad members and their friends who oppose adoptees and birthparents being kept in permanent ignorance of each other's identities.

Sandy Musser entered the federal prison in Marianna, Florida on November 5. The appeal of her conviction has not yet been heard, but her lawyer did not get a stay against the serving of the sentence (4 months) until it is heard. Four of us were waiting when Sandy and her husband arrived outside the prison. Many

Adoptees Sold as Babies Seek Birth Parents

more people were there in spirit or through practical help to those of us there physically. Marianna was hard to get to, especially on short notice.

We were able to spend a short time with Sandy and Norm at a local Hardee's. It was raining and we didn't fit into one car. We got separated and had to go back and start over. We were glad that Marianna's turning out to be on Central Time gave us an unanticipated extra hour before Sandy had to report by 5. Unfortunately, the prison people considered her late. She was probably supposed to arrive at 5 Eastern Standard Time, while she only knew 5 p.m. Because of this "lateness," she was put "in solitary" until Monday. She is apparently okay, although she wasn't even allowed, during that time, to take her prescribed medication.

What can we do for this one of us who cares passionately about helping reunite people, who has followed her own conscience in doing so, and who is now "paying for it"? I trust that others will come up with more, but the following come to my mind:

1. **Send a card.** FCI Marianna • S. Musser 51963-060 • Seminole B • P.O. Box 7006 • Marianna, FL 32447
2. **Send a check.** Musser Defense Fund, c/o James Zimmerman • 303 Brookline Ave. • Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08002
3. **Be inspired.** I know Sandy's situation has galvanized me into more activity and involvement. Maybe for every day she is in jail, you can give an extra dime (or \$) to the adoption reform organization of your choice, or increase your contributions of time and effort. And let Sandy know.
4. **Refuse to be intimidated or disheartened.** I am thinking of Sandy as a political prisoner. She was convicted of conspiracy to defraud the government (obtaining information from the Social Security Administration), but she was set up by New York State, guarding its closed records. Private investigators frequently break into government data systems but aren't set up and indicted for it. One

Imagine obtaining your original birth certificate, only to discover that the names of your birth parents are missing and your adoptive parents are listed instead. That was the experience of Mable Deane, one of a group of thirteen adoptees who are calling themselves "Gertie's Babies" because they were all delivered, and then sold illegally, by Gertrude Pitkanen of Butte, Montana. Pitkanen, who died in 1960, was a chiropractor and nurse who operated an illegal abortion clinic in Butte and also sold full term infants for \$500. between 1936 and 1957. Mable and three others have gone public to try to find out the identities of their birth families. They also want to alert other adoptees who might be one of "Gertie's Babies." There may have been a total of 28 children sold over several decades.

It was in January 1992 that the four adopted women, three from Montana and one from Texas, discovered they had all been delivered by Gertrude Pitkanen in the 1940s and '50s.* Three of the adoptees sought family medical history for health problems. The Montana women soon learned of another adoptee in their state who was also delivered by Pitkanen.

Mable Deane was surprised to

agency is now using "You can go to jail for this!" to discourage searching. We know we can count on the backlash folks to try to use Sandy's situation against the rest of us. But let's pull together around this and be braver and more committed than ever.

Sincerely,

Penny Callan Partridge ▲

learn that her adoptive mother, Margaret Page, was a go-between for Pitkanen, finding homes for seven babies delivered by Pitkanen. Page's motivation in arranging these adoptions was to make sure the infants were raised in "Christian" rather than Catholic homes. The children were raised in "loving families" according to journalist Peter Chapin, and "obtaining medical history records and some idea of their ancestors are their main objectives."*

The only clues the adoptees have about the identities of their birth parents is that two birth mothers are rumored to have been the daughters of politicians whose parents took them to Gertrude Pitkanen to avoid public scandal. Other women who used Pitkanen's services were rumored to have been prostitutes, although one of three victims who died as a result of an illegal abortion by Pitkanen (for which she was accused but not convicted) was a school teacher who died in 1929. Chapin stated that "much more is known about Gertrude Pitkanen as an abortionist than a baby-seller, largely because of research on the history of abortion in Montana about a decade ago by Diane Sands of Missoula, currently director of the Montana Women's Lobby."*

If any readers can offer information about their birth families to "Gertie's Babies," write to them at P.O. Box 321, Bozeman, Montana 59772. ▲

* Source of information and quotes is Peter Chapin in *The Montana Standard* (March 15, 1992): 3. Thank you to Mable Deane for sharing this information.

— Janine Baer

▲ RESOURCES ▲ & NEWS

EVENTS

January 2: Was Sandy Musser on "60 Minutes"?

January 8: Adoptee groups led by Amy Jane Cheney are scheduled for January and February 1994 in San Francisco; a free introductory afternoon for adoptees will be held January 8. For more information, phone 415-647-1492.

Ongoing: Monthly support groups for all triad members in the San Francisco Bay Area by PACER, the Post Adoption Center for Education and Research. Phone PACER's answering machine for more information: 510-935-6622.

April 21-24: American Adoption Congress 16th Annual Conference, New Orleans, at historic Monteleone Hotel. Lots of fascinating workshops and presentations. If you are not on the AAC mailing list and would like a complete brochure, send a 52¢ stamp to: AAC Conference Department, 20111 Riverside Drive, Santa Ana, CA 92707. March 1 is deadline for early registration (members pay \$175 for the full conference, plus the hotel of course).

April 30: There will be a rally April 30, 1994 for open records in Albany, New York. A big turnout is important! For details, phone Joyce Bahr, American Adoption Congress Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, at 212-289-6782.

ADOPTION NEWS

▲ **The West Virginia Mutual Consent Voluntary Adoption Registry** recently lowered its fee from \$100 to \$25. The Registry was created in 1991 to provide a centralized location for West Virginia adoptees and birth parents to voluntarily register their consent to

the release of identifying information when all parties are at least 18 years old. The Registry can also provide non-identifying information to adult adoptees who would like to know about their medical, social, and genetic histories. For more information, contact: West Virginia Adoption Exchange, Children's Home Society of WV, 1422 Kanawha Boulevard East, P.O. Box 2942, Charleston, WV 25330-2942.

▲ ***The Psychology of Adoption*** edited by David Brodzinsky and Marshall Schechter and first published in 1990 is now available in paperback by Oxford University Press. That means you can obtain a copy for about \$20 rather than twice that amount. It has some interesting stuff, like a good explanation of how adoption takes on more and more meaning the older an adoptee gets. "With the development of higher order cognitive functions, adolescents begin to re-evaluate the loss in terms of their emerging identity" (Brodzinsky, page 14).

Eighteen chapters/articles are divided into four subtopics: Theoretical Perspectives on Adoption Adjustment, Research on Adoption, Clinical Issues in Adoption, and Social Policy and Casework Issues in Adoption. If you are interested in this kind of research, you could try putting in a special order at your local feminist bookstore. Or you can purchase it by mail from Tapestry Books, P.O. Box 359, Ringoes, New Jersey 08551, a mail order service of adoption books, or call them at 800-765-2367. Tapestry sells the book for \$19.95 + \$4.50 postage.

▲ **Public Support for Open Records.** Are we there yet? Maybe we're closer than we know. A study about how the "average person" views openness in adoption was published in the May-June 1993 issue of *Child Welfare*. Elizabeth Lewis Romph, Assistant Professor at the College of Social Work at University of Kentucky, Lexington, described her study in an article "Open Adoption: What Does

the 'Average Person' Think?" Professor Romph did a random survey of 646 people in a southeastern state, asking them about both open adoption and search by adoptees for birth parents. Her results: 92% of the men questioned and 86% of the women answered "yes" to, "Do you think most adopted children would want to find their biological parents?" The rest responded either, "no" or "it depends." Fifty-two percent approved of open adoption, and another 20% thought open adoption "should be an option in certain situations" (p. 227). Seventy-seven percent thought adoptive parents should help their children find their birth parents. Romph concluded that adoption agencies that are arranging open adoptions "can expect little public opposition."

A high percentage of African American respondents (71%) supported open adoption, compared with Caucasians (51%), as was anticipated because of informal adoption patterns among African Americans. The whole article is worth reading; you could try calling CWLA at 202-638-2952 (in Washington, DC) if you can't find their journal at a research library.

LESBIAN AND GAY NEWS

▲ **Gay Sperm Bank Planned.** Leland Traiman, an Oakland nurse, is planning to open a sperm bank specifically for use by lesbians. What will differentiate the Rainbow Flag Health Services from other sperm banks, he said, is that it will stock only the sperm of gay men and will encourage the biological mother to meet the father and introduce him to the child shortly after the birth.

"A lot of lesbians don't want to have children by using anonymous donors, and they'd rather be connected to a gay male household than to a heterosexual one," he said. (from David Tuller, "Lesbians Demand Health Care Meant Specifically for Them," *SF Chronicle*,

▲ **Psychology Group Backs**

Lesbian in Custody Case. ASSOCIATED PRESS, *Washington* —The nation's largest psychological association is asking a Virginia court to allow a lesbian to regain custody of her son, saying research shows that sexual orientation does not affect parenting abilities.

The American Psychological Association, in a brief filed with the Virginia Court of Appeals, also argued that removing the 2-year-old from his mother was not in the child's best interest.

"Sexual orientation should not be a sole or primary factor in deciding any aspect of parental rights," the association's Clinton Anderson said December 3. "Our hope is that good information based on empirical research, not bias, has an impact on the court."

A Henrico County Circuit judge in September awarded custody of Tyler Doustou to his grandmother, Kay Bottoms, because his mother, Sharon Bottoms, is a lesbian....

In fact, the latest study on lesbian mothers shows that they score significantly higher than do heterosexuals on the Parent Awareness Skills Survey, which measures sensitivity to common childhood problems, the association reported.

Joining the psychologists' association in the brief were the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the National Association of Social Workers. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1993, p. A6)

▲ In Spring 1994, the new *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* is scheduled to publish its first issue. The first four issues cost \$28. for individuals. To order the journal, write to The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, New York 13904-1580. If you are interested in writing for them, contact James J. Kelly, Ph.D., (310) 985-5794, at California State University, Long Beach.

▲ Several Free Factsheets on Adoption are available, including "Practice and Policy Issues for Adoption and Foster Care of HIV-Affected Children," "Open Adoption," "Adoption and School Issues," and "Explaining Adoption to Your Child." Contact the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, 11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 410, Rockville, Maryland 20852; (301) 231-6512; FAX (301) 984-8527.

▲ A 13-page reprint of **Chain of Life articles about gay men and lesbians who want to adopt children** is now available for a \$5. donation to *Chain of Life*. It includes articles from Issues #1, 11, 21, 24, and 28.

▲ **Second Story Press, feminist publishers** based in Toronto, has published *Adoption Reunions* by Michelle McColm. McColm is an adoptee and an "adoption disclosure worker with a children's aid society." It is a guide to the problems and rewards of searching for birth parents, including "post-reunion let-down." 175 pages, cost is \$15.95 plus \$1.75 postage. US orders can be made to: Inbook, P.O. Box 120261, East Haven, CT 06512, or 800-253-3605.

TELEVISION

▲ A television program I saw in late December on a publicly funded station was a documentary by Marco Williams about trying to find the father he never knew. Marco is an African American who noted the frequency of missing fathers in his own family. The search seemed very similar to adoptee searches; in his case, a persistent curiosity transcended numerous telephone rejections by his father. They did meet eventually. Williams' thoughtful commentary kept me watching despite the painful content.



How You Can Help Chain of Life

All costs for the publication of Chain of Life are paid by your subscriptions. Doubling subscribership would really help! A form is on the back page for your convenience.

1. **Subscribe**, or renew your subscription when it expires. The cost is still \$2.50 per issue, which is only \$10 a year now that *Chain* is publishing quarterly.

2. **Send a gift subscription**. If you already subscribe, you can buy a one-year gift subscription (4 issues) for only \$8.

3. **Donate** beyond the subscription price if you are able.

4. **Tell others in your community about Chain of Life**. Let me know if you would like some flyers describing back issues.

5. **Buy my research papers**. Send a \$5. contribution for each term paper. Proceeds beyond photocopying costs will go to support the publication of *Chain of Life*. As a graduate student in social science, I have written three papers on the following topics:

• **Paper #1 • The Child Welfare League of America's approach to adoption and sealed records from 1925 until 1945**, based on its publications from that time;

• **Paper #2 • Changes in California adoption law from 1870 until 1935**; and

• **Paper #3 • Contemporary Issues in Foster Care**.

6. **Your thoughts and letters** to *Chain of Life* are always welcomed.

*Thank you for your support,
Janine Baer, Editor*

"You'll Be Special to Me"

This interview of two gay adoptive fathers in Ohio was published by Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International in Fall 1993. Steven G., a health administrator and pre-law student, and Stephen H., a professor of agriculture, adopted Christopher, who had recently turned four. For Steven G., who like his son is African-American, it's a new experience. For Stephen H., who is white, it's a second chance to be a father — he has two adult children from a prior marriage. Since becoming a couple six years ago, the two men pursued adoption as an openly gay couple, first in New York, then in Ohio.



Stephen, you're a dad again. Why?

STEPHEN H: After my divorce, I felt I hadn't had the chance to be the parent that I wanted to be. Kathy was 10 and Brian was 7 at the time my divorce occurred. Every time I went to get the kids, I had a legal battle on my hands — even for a two week visitation. After three or four years, I finally got an attorney to turn that around.

When Steven wanted to adopt, it was something I also wanted to do. I wanted to give a chance to some kid who didn't have the opportunities that my kids had — even with the divorce.

And Steven, what motivated you?

STEVEN G.: There are kids out there who need love, and I had the love. It used to be that a hard-to-place "special needs kid" had M.S., Down's Syndrome, was wheelchair bound or something. But then they changed the definition to include Black male children who are three years old and older. Now that really hurt me personally.

Another driving force was hearing, "Black men do not take care of their own." I can look through my family history, and we have always been there. I couldn't let some of these Black male children fall into that "special needs" category. Instead I thought — you're going to be special, but you're going to be special to me.

How did you get started?

STEVEN G: When we met, Stephen and I briefly discussed that I would like to have a kid. We were living in upstate New York and adoption for gay men wasn't as prevalent as it

has become. A year or two later we moved right outside of New York City. I kept stressing to Stephen, "The time is coming. I want to have a child."

STEPHEN H: After we moved, we became affiliated with Center Kids in New York, which was absolutely wonderful. They gave us all the information we needed to do an adoption. We found a "facilitating agency" trying to place minority children within our county. They didn't have children, but they would do the home study. If a "custodial agency" became interested in us, that work was already done.

A social worker came to our house, and she realized that we were together. She asked if we were a gay couple, and we said "Yes, we are." She said, "Well, we've never done this before, but I think it's wonderful." We started working with a couple of agencies [with children] in New York that were friendly to gay adoptions. At that point I had the job change which brought us to Ohio. And we had to start all over again.

Was it more difficult in Ohio?

STEPHEN H: After we moved, we didn't know where to start. We had no contacts, no organization like Center Kids for support and information. So we had to strike out on our own.

STEVEN G: I bought a book — a government publication listing all the adoption agencies in the United States.

STEPHEN H: We started contacting public agencies, private agencies. Everywhere we went in as an openly gay couple. If one of us went in as a

single male and they later learned that we were gay, that was grounds for removing the child from the home. Every place we went, they would say, "We think this is wonderful, but it's never been done in Ohio. We'd sure like to see it done, but we don't know how the courts are going to react." We went through about a year of this until Steven found a facilitating agency working for the placement of Black children primarily in Black homes.

Being open about being gay — is that usual?

STEPHEN H: It's very rare to go in as an openly gay couple. To our knowledge we are the first openly gay couple in Ohio who have adopted. And it certainly goes against the conventional wisdom, which is, "Don't offer it."

So you found an agency...

STEPHEN H: Yes, they are a very progressive agency. They wanted to be able to show that they would stand behind a gay placement, and to show that it could be done successfully.

STEVEN G: Here they were, working with a gay male couple — and an interracial couple too. When we spoke to them, all they said was, "Isn't it wonderful that you guys have been together for so long?"

Race? They didn't care about it.

STEPHEN H: They told us that they had been looking for the "ideal couple" with whom to try this, and we apparently fit the profile that they were looking for — a stable couple with stable incomes, professional jobs, etc.

What were your views on the race of your future child?

STEVEN G: Before we left New York, we discussed what we wanted — a little boy between the ages of 0 and 5. The child could have been biracial, we weren't specific.

STEPHEN H: But primarily we were looking at a biracial or Black child, because Steven would be the adoptive father. In Ohio, at this point only one [unmarried] person can legally adopt.

Was the process easy?

STEPHEN H: They completed the home study, but none of the agencies with children could get past the fact that we were two men. Finally, there was a picnic for prospective parents and children that were up for adoption — for many agencies throughout northeast Ohio. For the straight couples there, it was like they were in a grocery store picking out kids to buy. Steven and I started playing with the kids. We started playing baseball and tag...

STEVEN G: ...and running, and going down the slide, and playing on the swings. We just started doing it, because we enjoyed it.

STEPHEN H: It was spontaneous, and we had a good time. A week later, three agencies called and said they had a child for us. It was the direct result of having seen us interact with the kids.

And then you met Christopher?

STEVEN G: The information we got on Christopher was that he doesn't talk. He doesn't warm up to people very well, and he is very standoffish.

STEPHEN H: They thought he might be developmentally delayed. We went to the agency and he was playing on the floor. We had talked to some adoptive parents we know about some things to look for, because we didn't have a lot of information on Chris. They gave us some pointers and some things to take with us — various games and toys — so that we could observe what his reactions were. His reactions were fine.

STEVEN G: Technically, we were meeting to discuss the child. Instead Stephen and I ended up on the floor, playing with Chris, and the social workers talked. We thought, "you guys go on ahead and do your business; we're having fun." And every one said, "We're just amazed — he doesn't do this with anybody."

STEPHEN H: At the time, Christopher only said one or two simple words. His speech was delayed. But the social worker told us that after that first meeting, in his own broken way he told his foster mother, "I have two new daddies." And nobody had said anything to him.

And they okayed the placement?

STEPHEN H: They said, "We've got two or three stipulations." First, they wanted to follow us longer than just the standard year, because they wanted to prove that gay families and gay fathers can be successful in raising children. The second was that they wanted to delay finalization longer than the traditional six month period, because they wanted to have a good history and a good background before they went before

a judge. None of this was negative. They were supporting us, so that we wouldn't have any problems.

STEVEN G: And we didn't take any chances. For instance, when we went to do our paperwork for the agency, instead of getting two or three references, we got eight references.

STEPHEN H: It progressed from the point of everyone being overly cautious, to now, when they came to us and offered us another child. It's been a really amazing story. The social workers are just flabbergasted at how Chris has taken to us and how well he's adjusted, and how he's progressed; and now he talks all the time.

What does Christopher call you?

STEPHEN H: We struggled with that one because of the two Steves. I'm "Daddy J" — J for my middle name.

STEVEN G: And I'm "Daddy."

What is the general reaction to your family?

STEVEN G: People at the mall look at Stephen...look at Chris...look at me...look at Chris...and they can't figure out what's going on.

STEPHEN H: Most of the time people smile and say, "That's kind of nice." I don't think the animosity is really out there in the majority of people.

And your families' reactions?

STEVEN G: When we went home to my family for Christmas, my mother, who hadn't yet met Chris, first says, "Okay, so he'll be spending the

continued on next page...

**IF
YOU ARE
AGAINST
ABORTION
DON'T HAVE
ONE**

Spring 1994 Deadline is February 28

Submissions of articles, news items and events are always very welcome in the Chain of Life mailbox, although I cannot guarantee to include every submission. Announcements for events happening in April, May, or June 1994 should reach me by the February 28, 1994 deadline (that will be issue number 30). Deadline for the Summer 1994 issue will be May 31. If an item is received after the deadline, it may be held for the subsequent issue.

... continued from previous page

summer with me, right?" They started making plans. He was family.

STEPHEN H: We've been very fortunate in that our families — my family too, my other kids, my mother — have been very accepting.

So what's the last year with Christopher been like?

STEPHEN H: Wonderful!

STEVEN G: Last year at my birthday, Stephen asked me, what do you want for your birthday? I said, "All I want is to get Chris." Then at Christmas, he asked, "Honey, what do you want for Christmas?" I said, "Don't worry about it. We've got Chris. I couldn't ask for any more."

Reprinted from Network, newsletter of the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, P.O. Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091; (202) 583-8029.

FEEDBACK

FROM RENEWAL FORMS...

• I look forward to reading each issue of Chain of Life — for the articles certainly, but especially for announcements of other events, films, groups, etc. happening; Chain of Life is like a community bulletin board on adoption, and that's what I love most about it. Thanks so much for your work — it helps me feel linked to the larger adoption community. (California)

• Really appreciate your alternative perspective on adoption. Keep up the good work. I may be interested

in writing an article on the birth-mother closet — from shame at pregnancy to shame at relinquishing. (Texas)

• I have recently adopted a baby girl from the People's Republic of China. How do I help her deal with her abandonment, rejection & the Chinese societal values as she grows up in a white, middle-class American family? (Oregon)

• Janine, thank you for persisting with me. We're having a reading by adopted women next week — I'm preparing for that. I still plan to write for C. of L. Keep up the excellent work. (Washington)

ROBIN BROOKS, LCSW



P S Y C H O T H E R A P Y
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