

Chain of Life

A Progressive Adoption Newsletter

▲ SINCE 1989 ▲

P.O. Box 8081 • Berkeley, California 94707

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BASTARD NATION: SHAMELESS ADOPTEES

Founders of Bastard Nation, the newest and most outrageous adoptee group to surface in cyberspace — and soon in the flesh at adoption conferences — are proof that sealed

records do not protect us from knowing why most of us became adoptees. Our other selves are bastards and Bastard Nation is leading the way toward reclaiming the "B" word until it loses its power to stigmatize. "Founding Foundling" Marley Greiner wants to open adoption records "by any means necessary" to change the "secrecy = shame context of the closed adoption system." In addition to the serious side of the political movement, Bastard Nationals are "having fun with our social status and

heritage."

A trip to Bastard Nation's website reveals this humor. The "Adoptee Excuse of the Day Calendar" is a participatory compilation of excuses for not telling adoptees their birth names. This list was created to "assist" recordkeepers at hospitals in their task of explaining their inability to give original names to adopted adults who ask for them. When completed, the calendar will provide 365 ways records can be accidentally destroyed or lost ("the information is the property of another country's previous government, and was destroyed in the coup-d'etat") or ways the question can be evaded: "[your records] will take this agency three years to compile." Some excuses on this list are funny because they are not evasive: "the information you have requested may be revealed to faceless bureaucrats, but not to you." There may still be time to send in excuses to add to the list.

Pseudonyms add to the festivities. The following information about Bastard Nation was provided by "Sub-Commandante for Public Relations" Damsel Plum.

"In reality, there shouldn't be anything shameful about adoption."

What is Bastard Nation?

Bastard Nation was born in early 1996 on the Internet Usenet news group, alt.adoption (a.a.). Our beloved Founder Marley Greiner coined the term "Bastard Nation" and started signing her posts with it. Several of us followed suit, playfully assigning ourselves titles as the topic required (see the Founding Foundlings list on the

website for examples). In June I came up with the idea to create a Bastard Nation website. I collected material from people on a.a and on June 19, 1996 we announced the Bastard Nation website to the Internet community. Since then we have had over 1,000 hits a month to the

main page alone. In late September we moved the site to a custom domain: <http://www.bastards.org>. Our message is getting out and our ranks are growing.

What is Bastard Nation's message, exactly? We have been greatly misunderstood by those who would like to pigeonhole us

continued on next page...

CHAIN OF LIFE

is a forum for exploring adoption and related topics with special emphasis on the views of adopted adults. Viewpoints of authors are not necessarily held by the publisher and discussion on any topic is welcome. Please indicate whether any item you send to Chain of Life may be published.

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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 records 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. ▲

...*BASTARD NATION* continued from front page

into whatever enemy role suits their personal interests. We've been labeled anti-adoption, anti-birthmother, anti-reunion, whiners, professional victims — you name it. Not one of these accusations correctly describes us. As stated in our disclaimer on the Bastard Nation website's title page: "The only unifying concepts of BN are those of being for open records, search and reunion support, and freedom of expression." Otherwise, the opinions on adoption issues of our individual members vary greatly. In this way we are unlike any other adoption organization — we are truly a "big tent" without a whole truckload of associated "positions" on adoption and adoption reform. We have one big issue and all the other issues we deal with are directly born out of it: open records for adult adoptees.

Adoptee birth records are sealed because of an unspoken, unacknowledged attitude of SHAME towards adoption. I call this the "shame sham" behind sealed records. The justification we get for adult adoptees' birth records being sealed is: 1) They are sealed to protect the birth parent (unspoken assumption — from the SHAME of the unwanted birth coming back to haunt her); 2) They are sealed to protect the adoptee (unspoken assumption — from the SHAME of being reminded that one was born of an unwanted pregnancy); and 3) to protect the adoptive parents (from the SHAME of their own infertility). In reality, there shouldn't be anything shameful about adoption. Sealed records preclude that possibility.

The media like to play up sensational and rare instances of lunatics trying to track down their birthchildren or birthparents, wreaking havoc on their lives. Thanks to this misrepresentative portrayal of adoption, the American public is kept in the dark about the real issue regarding sealed records for the millions of adoptees: civil rights. If you would like to learn more about Bastard Nation's stance on open records as a civil rights issue, you can contact our Attorney General, Shea Grimm: sheag@oz.net.

Bastard Nation explodes the myth of shame by reclaiming the word "bastard" and all of society's myths and fears regarding adoption. We make fun of the unspoken shame, joke about illegitimacy, tell the untold tales of our sisters and brothers that the media have not been willing to tackle. We give adoptees a place to come and express themselves, share their experiences, read about others like (and unlike) themselves, find search and reunion support, and learn how to fight for their rights as adult adoptees. I update the site each week and frequently add new features. We have a guest book that people can fill out and read others' contributions. There is much more we have in store for our organization but the website has definitely been a rallying point for drawing attention to our cause and helping us to move forward. It is a prime example of Internet grassroots activism.

Bastard Nation will be holding its first conference the weekend of July 18-20, 1997 at the Howard Johnson's O'Hare International Hotel in Chicago. Those interested in more information can contact Damsel Plum at 454 Las Gallinas, Suite 199, San Rafael, CA 94903, or by fax: 415-479-3741 or e-mail dplum@ix.netcom.com.

- Damsel Plum for Bastard Nation

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FROM BASTARD NATION'S
MISSION STATEMENT
AND BYLAWS

Article II: Purpose:

Bastard Nation has as its primary goal the opening of all adoption records, uncensored and unaltered, to an adoptee upon request, at age of majority. We respect the diversity of opinion present in the adoption community among adoptees, which is why we advocate that each adoptee have the ability to choose whether he/she wishes to search or access his/her birth records. Bastard Nation asserts that it is the right of people everywhere to have their official original birth record unaltered and free from falsification, and that the adoptive status of any person should not prohibit them from exercising such a right. To that end, we have reclaimed the badge of bastardy as placed on us by those who would attempt to shame us for our parents' marital status at the time of our births. We see nothing shameful in being adopted, nor in being born out of wedlock, and thus we see no reason for adoption to continue to be veiled in secrecy through use of the sealed record system and the pejorative use of the term "bastard." Bastard Nation does not support mandated mutual consent registries or intermediary systems in place of fully open records, nor any other system that is less than access on demand to the adult adoptee, without compromise, and without qualification.

Were You Adopted in B.C.? Did You Place a Child for Adoption Here?

British Columbia is changing its Adoption Act. Starting November 4, 1996 it will be easier for adopted adults and birth parents to get information about each other.

If you were adopted in BC, and you are now 19 or older, you will have access to your original birth registration showing the name you were given at birth, and the name(s) of any birth parent(s) recorded on the registration.

If you placed a child for adoption in BC, and that child is now 19 or older, you will have access to the birth registration showing the name your child was given following adoption.

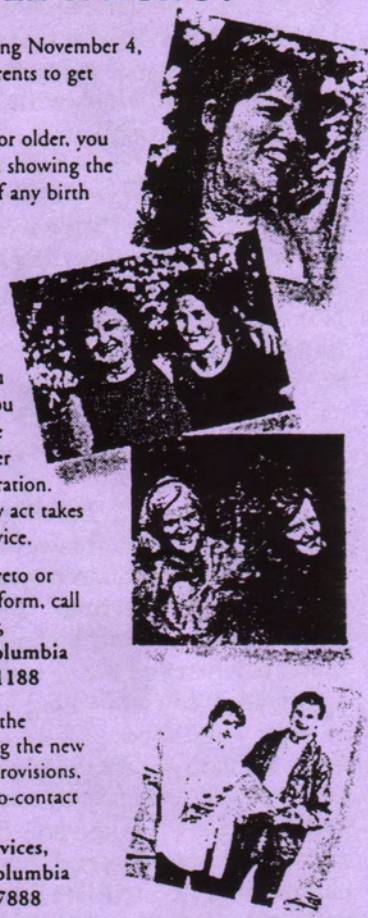
Some people may prefer to retain their privacy. If you do not want to release information about yourself, you can file a disclosure veto. If you are willing to share identifying information, but you don't want the other party to get in touch, you can file a no-contact declaration. You can file a veto or declaration *now*, before the new act takes effect in November. There is no charge for either service.

To obtain a disclosure veto or no-contact declaration form, call Vital Statistics Agency, Province of British Columbia (toll free) 1-888-212-1188

For information about the Adoption Act, including the new access to information provisions, disclosure vetoes and no-contact declarations, call Ministry of Social Services, Province of British Columbia (toll free) 1-888-236-7888



BRITISH
COLUMBIA



This advertisement appeared in the July 30, 1996 edition of the Globe and Mail.

Buttons saying "Some of My Best Friends are Bastards" and other pertinent statements are available from Damsel Plum by snail mail. Hint: Do not put the word "Bastard" on the envelope or the post office may return your letter to you.



Rainbow Flag Health Services:

The First Known Donor Sperm Bank for Lesbians and Gay Men

by Leland Traiman

In 1992 Rainbow Flag Health Services was granted a California tissue bank license to operate a sperm bank. We started Rainbow Flag Health Services for two reasons. First, because many lesbians were unsatisfied with the choices they were given at other sperm banks. They could not choose a gay donor because none of the existing sperm banks would accept gay donors unless they had been celibate for the last five years. Nor could lesbian mothers ever find out the identity of the donor. Some sperm banks would tell the child, not the mother, who the donor is when the child is 18 years old.

This leads us to the second reason we started Rainbow Flag: We do not believe children should grow up with secrets. Even finding out who your biological father is when you are already a young adult can leave a big hole in your childhood. Of course many lesbians are asking friends to be their donors and this can be beneficial for all involved. But many lesbians have delayed childbearing to their late 30s or early 40s and are rushing to beat their biological clocks. If they do not already have a healthy friend willing to be their donor, they may not feel they have the time to meet a guy, become friends, and then start the insemination process. That is where Rainbow Flag Health Services comes in. Rainbow Flag is the only sperm bank in the United States that accepts gay donors. In fact, Rainbow Flag

specifically recruits gay donors. And Rainbow Flag is also the only sperm bank in the world that tells the mother who the donor is when the child is three months old.

**Lesbians can
have known
donors but
sole legal
custody.**

Except for these two glaring exceptions, Rainbow Flag Health Services operates like most other sperm banks and has a physician who is our medical director. California law says that if a donor gives his semen to a physician who inseminates a woman who is not married to the donor, then the donor is not the legal parent of the child. This provides legal protection for both parties. Lesbians can have known donors but sole legal custody. Gay men can have children in their lives but do not have to worry about paternity lawsuits. Both can have what they want. Like all sperm banks, Rainbow Flag freezes sperm, quarantines it for 6 months, and retests the donors for HIV after the 6 months are over. Only if the donor tests negative will we then use his semen for insemination.

Sounds reasonable? It is. All was going well until the

homophobic attitudes of California's state government tried to put Rainbow Flag Health Services out of business. We were aware that the State Health Department was under legislative mandate to formulate sperm banking regulations. Every 3 to 6 months for 3 years we called the State Health Department, asked when they were forming the committee to formulate the regulations, and stated we wanted to be on the committee or at least to know when and where the committee would be meeting. This is every citizen's right under California law. Each time, we were told that they did not know when the committee would be formed.

In August of 1995 we were told the committee had already been formed and several meetings had already taken place. We discovered that the California Health Department's Subcommittee on tissue banking regulations has been holding de facto secret meetings and several of the meetings were conducted on the phone. This violated California's open meetings laws. As it turned out, we knew one of the Subcommittee members whom we called and questioned monthly about the proposed regulations. She always denied that anything in the proposed regulations would discriminate against the lesbian/gay community and she repeatedly said that the proposed regulations never even mentioned the words "gay or homosexual." However, in May of 1996, she said, "Of



course, what has always been true is that the criteria for being a sperm donor do refer back to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidelines and exclude any man who has had sex with another man within the last 5 years. Now, this does not discriminate against gay men per se, but I can see how some people could interpret it that way." This had been agreed upon one year earlier. We had been lied to again.

We called Kate Kendle of the National Center for Lesbian Rights and Kelli Evans of the American Civil Liberties Union who gave us wise counsel on how to proceed. We then called the California Health Department and informed them that their meeting process was illegal and demanded to know when and

Gay men can have children in their lives but do not have to worry about paternity lawsuits.

where the meetings were being held. Finally given a meeting schedule, we resolved to attend all future meetings.

We called the Centers for Disease Control and despite CDC

policy, Charles Schable, chief of the CDC's AIDS Diagnostic Laboratory said, "I have been doing this [working with AIDS] since 1983 and there are only 6 cases of false negatives, 4 men and two women. People who are negative to the antibody test but are antigen positive — who really are infected — have other things wrong with them... They are obviously sick. If one is freezing the sperm and retesting the donor after six months, the only reason to apply that criterion [5 years without sex] to semen donors is homophobia."

Tom Spira, M.D., Assistant Chief for Medical Science at CDC, said, "The rate of false negatives is quite low. I would not, categorically, want to exclude them (gay men) since we have appropriate testing. If you do so, I believe you gain a false sense of security. I would suggest testing all donors for p24 or PCR [which test for the virus itself, not just the antibodies] to be sure—of course, with the proviso that no testing is 100% accurate." However, both men stated that they would be unwilling to write down these positions because of political pressure from the CDC.

Armed with transcripts of these conversations and the recent Colorado decision by the United States Supreme Court, we wrote a letter critical of the Subcommittee's illegal process and its interim results. In our letter, we said, "As you can see, there is no valid scientific reason to apply CDC's guidelines ex-

cluding gay men to donated semen given the 6 month quarantine and retesting process; therefore, excluding gay and bisexual men from donating would be unconstitutional. The United States Supreme court decided on *Colorado v. Evans* May 20, 1996. Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, stated:

The fourteenth Amendment's promise that no person shall be denied equal protection of the law must co-exist with practical necessity.... We have attempted to reconcile the principle with the reality by stating that, if a law neither burdens a fundamental right nor targets a suspect class, we will uphold the legislative classification so long as it bears a rational relation to some legitimate end.

As regulations barring gay and bisexual men from donating semen provide no "rational relation to some legitimate end," i.e., the public is not protected, and such a regulation would "burden a fundamental right," i.e., the right to have children, to use the proposed guidelines would fly in the face of the Supreme Court's decision.

At its July 1996 meeting, the California Health Department's subcommittee on Tissue Banking reversed itself and adopted language that would allow gay men to continue to be sperm donors. An attempt at the August meeting to reverse the July decision was turned back by an overwhelming vote. August 1996 was the Subcommittee's last meeting so

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these recommendations have now gone to the California Health Department, which has the power to change them as they wish. The final regulations are due out in a year. However, if they try to prevent gay men from being donors, they will have to explain why they are contradicting their own Subcommittee. If it comes to a court battle, the fact that the Subcommittee debated this issue twice and found these regulations did protect the public's health (and did not violate our civil rights) will be a strong argument in our favor. This was an important victory, but this is only a battle. We must keep our eyes on what the Health Department ultimately proposes to make sure our rights are protected. ▲

NOVEMBER 16, 1996

THROUGHOUT THE U.S.
This is the **Second Annual International Search Registration Day**. In many cities throughout the U.S. people have organized a day to publicize the *International Soundex Reunion Registry* (P.O. Box 2312 Carson City, Nevada 89702). Volunteers will be setting up tables in public places to help adoptees and birthparents fill out the forms. Most of the organizing for this event was done "on line" but I was contacted by a local activist via snail mail. Please see page 7 of this newsletter for complete information about registration sites throughout the greater Bay Area, from San Jose to Sacramento. Feel free to copy the flyer and spread the word.

NOVEMBER 22, 1996

LARKSPUR, CALIFORNIA
Sheila Ganz's documentary "Unlocking the Heart of Adoption" is nearing completion. A benefit screening will be held at 7 pm. The current version is 85 minutes long and was recently shown at the Concerned United Birthparents (CUB) conference in Boston. For more information, call Sheila at 415-564-3691.

DECEMBER 3, 1996

BAY AREA
Pact, An Adoption Alliance (San Francisco) is offering a transracial adult adoptee support group. For more information and location, call Liza Steinberg at 415-221-6957. This group has been meeting once a month.

APRIL 3-6, 1997

IRVING, TEXAS
American Adoption Congress's 19th International Conference. It will be held at the Sheraton Grand at Dallas/Fort Worth.



Janine and Gray-Baer

LOOKING FOR A RELATIVE?

COULD A FAMILY MEMBER BE LOOKING FOR YOU?

...Separated by adoption, divorce, or other dislocation?

- Do you wonder...about your origins, talents, health concerns, nationality, other questions?
 - The family member with the answers may be looking for you!
- If you are related by birth, the ISRR (International Soundex Reunion Registry), a FREE non-profit service, may help you find each other!

You don't have to search, pay, or be online.

You don't even need to know names! (You do need to be 18.)

BUT both parties must register for this to work.

SO...the more who register, the more matches will be made.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS!!!!

2nd Annual Int'l Search Registration Day

Saturday, November 16, 1996

Stop at any Bay Area table site on Nov. 16 for forms and for help in filling them out.

Berkeley: Cody's Books, 2454 Telegraph, 10 am - 4 pm, (510) 653-4637 / (510) 843-0533, Lcingram@aol.com

Sacramento: Borders Books, Roseville, 2030 Douglas Blvd., 10 am - 4 pm, (916) 442-8377

San Francisco: The Grove Cafe, 2250 Chestnut, 10 am - 5 pm, (415) 546-6396, pbrouwer@netcom.com

San Jose: Location to be announced - call (408) 356-6711

San Rafael: Borders Books, 588 Francisco Blvd. West, 12 - 8 pm, (415) 381-1503, Merhunn@aol.com

Vacaville: Sam's Club, 1500 Helen Power Rd., 10 am - 3 pm, (707) 447-9898

Walnut Creek: Barnes and Noble Books, 1149 S. Main St., 10 am - 4 pm, (510) 831-0730, jlbrush@aol.com

* Official Registration Day Website: <http://odin.mdacc.tmc.edu/~cyn/regday/96plan.html>

* American Adoption Congress: <http://pages.prodigy.com/adoptreform/aacorg.htm>

* Adoption related support groups, US: <http://www.webcom.com/kmc/adoption/faq-2.html>

Local Support Groups:

East Bay, San Francisco, and Marin
Post Adoption Center for Education
and Research (PACER)
(510) 935-6622

San Francisco:
ALMA: (415) 873-0545
PACER: (415) 868-2355
SF Adoptees: (415) 931-2212

South Bay:
Search Finders
(408) 355-5711

Vacaville:
Triple Hearts
(707) 447-9898

ISRR Registration Forms: Send SASE to: International Soundex Reunion Registry,
P.O. Box 2312 Carson City, Nevada 89702, (702) 882-7755

This event organized by Bay Area Adoption Registration Coalition (510) 653-4637

NEWS

▲ Two women whose eggs were "allegedly stolen" by doctors at a now-defunct U.C. Irvine fertility clinic have jointly received \$1.1 million in a legal settlement from the University of California Board of Regents. The Regents had decided to settle the case in August but only in October did the agreement become public, in the *Orange County Register*. Two of the doctors — Ricardo Asch, now in Mexico, and Jose Balmaceda, currently in Chile — are angry that the University settled the case without informing them or allowing them to clear their names. A third doctor, Sergio Stone, is under house arrest on federal mail fraud charges.

— excerpted from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 1996

▲ The Associated Press reported May 2 that California may be over-reporting its rate of children born to unmarried mothers, which the state estimated was 35% of all births in 1993. A problem with this percentage (aside from its irrelevancy) is that it is a guess: California is one of six states that does not ask new parents for their marital status on babies' birth certificates. In order to report a number to the National Center for Health Statistics, the state's Office of Vital Records presumes a baby's parents are not married if the baby has its father's last name and the mother has a different last name. This situation led freelance writer Wendy Lichtman to note in a *San Francisco*

Chronicle article August 22 ("Bastards Out of California") that there are three kinds of bastards in the state: the old-fashioned kind in a one-parent family, the alternative kind in which lesbian, gay or heterosexual couples have not married, and the phony kind, created by a government in search of a statistic. Lichtman herself falls into the latter category, as a married woman who kept her unmarried name. (Lichtman is an adoptive mother who has written an article in *The Adoption Reader* about meeting her daughter's birth mother.)

Texas is another of six states that does not keep count of children born to unmarried parents but estimates in Texas are likely to err in the opposite direction, an undercount, according to William R. Mattox, Jr. of the conservative Family Research Council. Texas reported only a 17% non-marital pregnancy rate compared with a 31% national average.

More recent numbers representing the 1994 rate were released in October by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They showed a drop in nonmarital births in the United States for the first time in 20 years. "Federal officials believe that California has consistently over-reported the number of children born to single Latinas," it states. A change in reporting methods may account for the lowered "illegitimacy" rate in California from 35.7% to 31.9%.

The largest reduction in the nation was among black teenagers, whose nonmarital birth rate dropped 9 percent between 1993 and 1994. Both the Democrats and the Republicans sought to take credit for the nation's overall drop of 4 percent.

A U.S. Census Bureau employee told me that the Bureau counts nonmarital pregnancies by marriage licenses, not by last names, leading to a lower count than that coming from the National Center for Health Statistics, which uses the last name method.

▲ **WebTV is here.** For about \$440. plus \$20. a month, you can have unlimited internet and e-mail access without buying a computer. WebTV does not have storage or printing capabilities yet, but allows you to access the Internet using your television and telephone — no separate modem required. This price includes an optional keyboard. Printers for WebTV but are expected to be on the market soon. A lot of adoption activism is taking place on the Internet and the information that is accessible on all subjects seems endless. WebTV is a more affordable way to get on line.

▲ **Mark Acre, Oakland A's relief pitcher, was born in Concord, California, September 16, 1968 and adopted by Janet Acre. Now he would like to find his biological parents. The timing is related in part to the death of his adoptive mother last year. Acre is 6'8" tall and wants to know more about his birth father as well as his birth mother. "Everybody who's adopted has their own timetable," Acre said.**

— As reported by Sam McManis, March 12, 1996, in the *West County Times* (Contra Costa County in the San Francisco Bay Area). McManis can be reached by mail at P.O. Box 5088, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

NEWS AND RESOURCES

▲ There has been some very good coverage of our issues in the mass media recently. In October, "20/20" presented a 40-minute television segment on unmarried mothers in Ireland from the 1940s through the early 1970s who were forced by social custom to relinquish their children in that Catholic country. The children were taken to the United States for adoption, not immediately but at the ages of one or two years old. Some of the birth mothers have recently reunited with their children; others have tried unsuccessfully, while still others are afraid of searching. The television journalists were sympathetic to the birth mothers and not sympathetic to the Catholic Church's role in the secret adoptions. *Thanks to my friend in Georgia who told me to watch this program.*

▲ "An Adoptee's 30-Year Search for the Pieces of Her Past" was an article in the *Los Angeles Times* written by Debra Cano, published October 21. It told of the unsuccessful search for her birth mother by Shirley Frankel, 65, of Huntington Beach, California, whose adoption was arranged by the now infamous Georgia Tann of Tennessee. Even the opening of records in Tennessee last year to adoptees born before 1951 would have been no help because Tann had fabricated information about Frankel's birth family. Frankel actually had found adoption papers years before that named the wrong woman as her birth mother. The adoptee and her husband had gone to Tennessee back in 1967 to

search but were told the records were sealed. When she finally got a court order to open her birth certificate in 1992, she found that the "unmarried mother" named in her birth certificate was actually a married woman whose identity had been "borrowed" by Tann to fabricate the birth records. Denny Glad, who has worked to open records in Tennessee, said it was the first instance she had seen with "totally fabricated" records. This was likely to have been one of the adoptions about which Tann lied that a child had Jewish ancestry to satisfy a Jewish couple's request. "Frankel now doubts that she is of Jewish ancestry," wrote Cano, and fears she will never know her original identity.

— *Thanks to my mother in Los Angeles for sending me this article.*

▲ **GLASS — Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services** — is one of many agencies that the Child Welfare League of America has "linked" to its own web page on the Internet. GLASS provides social services, including five group homes and seventy-five foster homes, for young gay people in the Los Angeles area. Six of its residents recently graduated from high school. Its Mobile Health Outreach Project has completed its first year providing social services, HIV counseling, free hygiene kits, condoms, and referrals for shelters to over 3,000 clients as of July 1. A recent target of California Department of Social Services accusations, GLASS settled out of court on June 26.

For more information about GLASS, write to: *Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services, 650 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90069.* GLASS can also be contacted by e-mail from their web page.

▲ *The National Council for Single Adoptive Parents* wants us to know that it is legal in every U.S. state and Canadian province for single people to adopt children. This organization was founded in 1973 (as the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents) to inform and assist people who want to adopt. It sells a *Handbook for Single Adoptive Parents* for \$15. They can be reached at *National Council for Single Adoptive Parents, P.O. Box 150984, Chevy Chase, MD 20825, phone or fax: (202) 966-6367.*

▲ The City of Oakland has recently instituted a **Domestic Partnership Registration program** for residents and City of Oakland employees. "This program enables same-gender couples, as well as heterosexual couples, to register as domestic partners, which can enable them to receive domestic partner benefits if they work for a company or municipality that offers such benefits." To obtain a brochure call the Office of the City Clerk at (510) 238-7979.

GINNY PIZZARDI, M.F.C.C.

Psychotherapy

3896 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 285-4061
License MFC21756

RESOURCES

▲ **Adoption Awareness Resources** for Greater Seattle, Tacoma and Everett is a newsletter that was begun by a woman who wanted to consolidate information about the various adoption resources in her geographic area. She also includes national resources of interest to all sides of the adoption triad. If you live in the Seattle area and have not received this newsletter, be sure to write for the latest issue. (Stamps or monetary donations payable to "Elaine" are accepted.) If you would like to suggest inclusion of your organization in the newsletter, send relevant information to: *Adoption Awareness Resources, P.O. Box 15343, Seattle, WA 98115-0343, Attn: Elaine.*

▲ The Fall 1996 *Decree*, newsletter of the **American Adoption Congress**, includes "An Open Letter to the Pro-Life Community" by John C. Sonne, M.D., urging other anti-abortion advocates to support open records. He cites sources that show that opening original birth certificates to adopted adults does not cause the abortion rate to rise.

One of the positive changes in the A.A.C. over the last year is the inclusion of names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses for most of the board members. These folks are accessible! Membership in A.A.C. starts at \$35. a year but you can receive just the newsletter without membership for \$20. a year. For more information, write: *American Adoption Congress, 1000 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 9, Washington, DC 20036.*

▲ *Issues in Gay and Lesbian Adoption: Proceedings of the Fourth Peirce-Warwick Adoption Symposium.* This 1995 book published by the **Child Welfare League of America** is based on papers presented at a 1994 symposium that attempted to "dispel the many myths and fears about gay and lesbian adoption" and to develop sound policy based on available research, law, and practice.

You can order this book for \$9.95 — postage is free if prepaid with a check to CWLA. By mail, write to: *Child Welfare League of America c/o CSSC, P.O. Box 7816, Raritan, NJ 08818.* By fax, 908-417-0482. By phone with a credit card, it's 800-407-6273 or 908-225-1900. And you can order a catalog listing all of its publications through CWLA's web page, or its Washington, D.C. phone: 202-638-2952. CWLA's catalog has other interesting books, including *The Spirit of Open Adoption* by James L. Gritter (1996), *Adoption and Disclosure, A Review of the Law* by Madelyn DeWoody (a book about sharing or withholding from adopting parents the physical and psychological histories of children they adopt), and *Serving Gay and Lesbian Youths* (1991).

▲ Lesbians and gay men in the Cambridge, Massachusetts area who want to become parents can contact *Jenifer Firestone at (617) 576-6788 of Conception Connection*, which helps lesbians and gay men who want to have biological children "identify compatible others of the opposite sex" for donor insemination or co-parenting. Or write to *Alternative Family Matters, P.O. Box 390618, Cambridge, MA 02139.* Firestone is also interested

in forming a network called *Aunts and Uncles* in which gays and lesbians who are not parents meet gay families who want additional adults in their children's lives.

▲ Morning Glory Press offers many books for teen parents, some about adoption and some about parenting. One picture book helps explain their missing fathers to young children. Available in either an English or Spanish version, *Do I Have A Daddy? /¿Yo tengo papá?* is a 48-page book by Jeanne Warren Lindsay that includes 16 pages of suggestions for single mothers and "gentle advice from young mothers who've been there." One paperback book is \$5.95 plus \$3. shipping and handling. (Hardback versions in either Spanish or English are \$12.95.) Send a check to *Morning Glory Press, 6595 San Haroldo Way, Buena Park, CA 90620-3748.* Also ask for a free study guide. Books are discounted in quantity for classes and groups.

▲ A while back, *Chain of Life* published a book review and a poem about the relinquished birth daughter of scientist Albert Einstein and his wife-to-be, Mileva Maric. The 107-page collection of the couple's love letters is on sale for \$9.00 from Princeton University Press: *Albert Einstein and Mileva Maric, The Love Letters*, edited and with an introduction by Jürgen Renn and Robert Schulman. However, there is a minimum order of \$20. and the offer expires January 31, 1997 or as long as the supply lasts. Postage and handling for the first book is \$3; each additional book is 75¢. Call toll free: 1-800-777-4726 Monday through Friday Eastern Standard Time until 8 pm. Or fax your order any time: 1-800-999-1958.

I Never Meant to Hide:

A Birthmother's Story

by Nancy Schimmel

When I gave up my baby for adoption in 1955, I had no expectation of lifelong confidentiality. I thought that when she was eighteen she would be able to see her original birth certificate. I gave her my mother's first name, Malvina,

so she would have more clues for finding me if she wanted to. Years later I found out that California

records were permanently closed, so I wrote to the adoption agency saying that I was available if she was looking. Then I realized she might not know the name of the agency (she did not), so finally I registered with International Soundex Reunion Registry. A few years later, my daughter did the same.

Soon after, Soundex called me and said they had a possible match. They couldn't be sure because I couldn't remember the exact time of her birth, but did I want to talk to her before the match could be confirmed? Yes. So did she. They asked me to wait a few minutes while they

told her I would be calling, then to call. I did, and we had our first tentative conversation. In a week, they confirmed we were indeed mother and daughter.

Without Soundex, I would not have been readily available for

That she painted and danced and sang and wrote was a puzzle to her, but not to me.

my daughter when she set out to look for me as I had always intended to be. Without ISRR, she would have had to search, which would have been a financial hardship for her as well as difficult emotionally, as she would not have known whether I was willing to be found.

My daughter lived for 37 years without the most basic information about her history. From information I gave her, she got a sense of herself she had never had. Finally she knew her nationality, she knew why — contrary to her adoptive mother's expectations — she wore jeans and T-shirts, and

she knew where her creative powers came from. That she painted and danced and sang and wrote was a puzzle to her, but not to me. Her birth grandmother was Malvina Reynolds, songwriter of "What Have They Done to the Rain" and "Little Boxes"; her great-aunt is a photographer, and I am a songwriter and storyteller.

When my daughter told her adoptive parents about me, their first question was, "Is she Jewish?" The affirmative answer gave them the assurance that the adoption agency had not lied to them about their daughter's origins, as some agencies have done.

Getting to know the woman my baby grew up to be has been an amazing, at times difficult, and always rewarding process. I want everyone who has been separated by adoption to have the chance I had.

— Nancy Schimmel is a storyteller, author of *Just Enough to Make a Story: A Sourcebook for Storytelling*, and songwriter for two award-winning records of children's songs.

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