



LOST & FOUND

AUGUST 2001

SEARCH-FINDERS OF CALIFORNIA, INC. MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

From the Editor— Write to your Legislators!

This newsletter was longer in coming than I had anticipated. One reason was the scarcity of contributors. So Doreen brought me a few newsletters from other organizations like ours. I leafed through them and saw the same things I've been seeing for years. But there is one new, hot topic that caught my attention: the Safe Haven—or legalized abandonment—laws which are being set into motion all over the country. In the interest of time, I won't quote any of the articles I read. But, if you haven't heard about this new legislation, it's pretty much this: if you or a family member has given birth and wants to give the child up with no strings attached, you or a family member can just drop the baby off at a special site, such as a designated hospital, and that's pretty much the end.

So, if you're an adoptee who is lucky enough to have been spared being left out in some cold remote place because of this new benevolent law; you will never know where you came from.

Several years ago just such a man contacted Search Finders. As an infant he was left in a church. He was soon adopted. He called Search Finders to help him find his birthparents. It was a fairly high profile case. His story was even in the newspapers, but no one ever came forward. There was no paper trail to follow, he had no date of birth. A complete dead end.

We don't know what happened to this man. But we know the chances that he ever found out anything are nil.

As a birthmother I am perplexed by the idea that someone would be so naive as to think they had no choice other than abandonment. This is the year 2001, for crying out loud! I was only 17

when I got pregnant. Perhaps the difference for me was that I had my family to turn to. I didn't know how they would react, but I turned to them, never the less.

But what about the young naive and frightened women who can't turn to anyone? They are probably the last people on earth who would know anything about this new legislation. The old stigmas, fears and repressions are still present in this high-tech advanced civilization where girls are putting their babies in dumpsters all the time. Remember the story about the girl who gave birth and left her baby in the school bathroom on her prom night? How about the couple who went to a motel and had their baby - an unfortunate angel who perished in that room...

In this issue, the article *Wagging the Dog*, by Ron Morgan, will inform you about current legislation working its way through the system. But I'll be darned if I've seen anything about it on television news, or in the newspaper. Has it been the subject on any shows that teens would watch? And, when you read Ron's article, you'll see that our lawmakers have a very tough time identifying with our side.

I know we're mostly concerned with bills such as AB 1349 (open records). But considering who we are, isn't it fitting that we should take an active role in educating the public? What to do: write your legislators! If you know someone in the field of medicine, talk to them. I just called a friend of mine who is a pediatric R.N. at a local hospital. We talked about Safe Haven. "Gee, I never thought about the other side, not knowing anything! I'm going to talk to my staff..," she admitted. Every little bit helps. And I'll have a follow-up report in our next issue.

— Linda Ehle Callens, Lost & Found Editor
Submit your story! E-mail callens1@earthlink.net
or call 408.298.3037

Search Finders Broken Seals 2001

Christine Labagh, Adoptee, found her Birthmother in San Francisco on January 24, 2001.

Becky Hogue, Adoptee, found her Birthmother on February 14, 2001.

Irene Creager, Adoptee, found her nephew in Daly City on March 6, 2001.

Marie Moreali, Birth Grandmother, found her grandson in San Jose on March 10, 2001.

Diane Boudreau, Birthmother, found her son in San Luis Obispo on March 13, 2001.

Mary Kennedy, Adoptee, found her Birthmother in Brooklyn, New York on April 5, 2001.

Michelle Garcia, Birthmother, found her daughter in Montana on May 3, 2001.

Julie Hankins, Birthmother, found her son in Talkeetna, Alaska on June 20, 2001.

p o e t r y c o r n e r



Birthmother's Lament by Glenda Matthews

Are they relatives of mine? If so, must I be available
to them as well as you? Never was before...

Do we have too much in common? Too little?

It is crazy making to see myself (sic), to know exactly
how you're feeling, to feel so helpless, so vulnerable.

What am I to make of this? Why do I want to hide;
to somehow return to the land of denial. Someone
please tell me. What am I to do? Who am I? Who
are you?

Should I even question this relationship. Ordinary
question just don't go anywhere...

This is quite the uncharted territory - I don't mind
being...unusual; but somehow...this borders on the
ridiculous.

Thank God for all the others in the same fix.

We'll make it, together as I cut some very enormous
slack, especially for myself.

Questions without clear answers.

Like life, it's all such a mystery.

Follow my heart? Good idea to find it first - so
timid, it is. Long years of lies don't help.

Keep going, with God's grace we'll make it.

Learn to pray, learn to listen,
with your heart.

It's a start.

*Glenda Matthews is a 62 year old Birthmother who lives in
Morgan Hill, who has been in her reunion relationship for over
eight years.*

WAGGING THE DOG: Politics & Adoption

by Ron Morgan - PACER



As of this writing, several adoption related bills are winding their way through the California legislature, and what follows is a report on their progress. By the time this newsletter is published, though, some of the bills may have been voted into law. To follow the progress of a specific bill, got to <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>, and type in the bill number or author into the query field. There's even an email notification subscription service, which sends an email when action is taken on the bill you're interested in. I've found that notifications sometimes go out and no apparent action has occurred, but on the other hand, I've never missed an action, so I recommend this service if you're following a bill.

SB 104

Senator Jack Scott originally introduced this bill to shrink the time period in which mothers may revoke consent to relinquishment in private adoptions from 90 days to 25 hours, but strong testimony from birthmothers, child welfare advocates and adoption practitioners caused the Senate Judiciary committee to amend the new revocation period to 30 days. This compromise has held, the bill passed the Senate on May 10 and went to the Assembly. SB 014 passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee on June 19, and will no doubt be voted out to the Governor's desk by end of summer.

AB 1349

Authored by Assemblyman Anthony Pescetti, AB 1349 would allow adult adoptees to access their full court files and original birth certificates. It was heard by the Assembly Judiciary Committee on April 17, and the CA Open 2001 Committee sponsored a rally to coincide with the hearing, drawing 100 supporters including Oregon's Helen Hill and Susan Soon-Dum Cox of Holt International Children's Services. The Assembly Judiciary Committee offered an unacceptable compromise to the bill that should have set up a for-fee Confidential Intermediary system and expanded passive registry. On our advice,

Assemblyman Pescetti declined the amendments, and the committee voted to reconsider. We've been working on lobbying members of the committee, with the goal of reintroducing the bill early next year.

SB 101

Senator Brulte's follow-up bill to his legalized abandonment law of last year originally asked for \$3 million to promote Safe Haven programs, scaled back to \$1 million, due to dwindling monies as a result of the energy crisis. This bill passed the Senate earlier this year and is currently scheduled to be heard in the Human Services Committee in Mid July.

AB538

This bill, authored by adoptive father Assemblyman Cardoza, is focused on cleaning up procedural regulations regarding adoption without changing significant policy. This bill has no opposition, has passed through the Assembly and is chugging along in the Senate.

AB550

At the beginning of the legislative session, Assemblymember Charlene Zettel introduced this bill to regulate adoption facilitators with a certain amount of fanfare, due to the controversy surrounding the Internet Twins scandal. In the intervening months, the bill has bogged down as a result of intense lobbying from various factions of the adoption industry. Twice scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Judiciary Committee, the bill has been twice postponed. I called Assemblywoman Zettel's office to ask about their intentions with this bill and was told they're still "working on the language."

Ron Morgan is a late-discovery adoptee, PACER board member and support group facilitator, a member of Bastard nation's Executive Committee, and a chair of the California Open 2001 campaign. He can be reached at 414-647-2417. or rhyzome@best.com

Full Circle

February 2001
By Baby Knox ~ Paula Fraser

I am trying to find a place to begin my story. My story of a journey to find the truth, and fill the holes of my existence. I was born on January 22, 1957 in a County Hospital in Martinez, California. I was relinquished for adoption into the Contra Costa County Social Services System. I speak from a very deep place when I tell you that I never really felt like I was born. Somehow I just appeared, beamed down into a family where three children were placed on the same block during the same year. I marveled at the likenesses of family, children and parents. I felt a huge understanding of culture, traditions, and the inherent similarities of people.

I was raised in the Catholic school system of the 1960's and 1970's. I harbored a sense of humor inside; "Wouldn't it be a wonderful joke on everyone's sensibilities if I were Jewish?" The gift of my adoption is an understanding of who I could be, and needed to be at a young age. I could chose the essence of my values and fulfill my dreams. I was raised Lithuanian by proxy by my adoptive mother. She escaped in World War II when the Nazis invaded her country and the Russians came in to save them. She has given the shirt

off her back to anyone in need all her life, especially me.

Last summer, at the age of 43, I embarked on my search. This was not my first effort. In 1985 I wrote to the State of California for my "Non-Identifying" information. It took me days to open that letter. I drank straight from a bottle of brandy to help me handle the contents the letter that moved me into the biggest cry of my life. I had no idea that I would be rocked to the core of my being. I lost that letter, and sabotaged any further effort. I was too scared of what

I would find, so unsure of my ability to cope with the overwhelming emotions. I was 29 back then. I thought my needs were not as important as protecting my birthmother. I was always told I had two sisters. Born in 1953, and 1954, the "Non-Identifying" confirmed their existence. I longed to know them. I wondered where they were, and I loved these unknown women with all my heart.

Fourteen years later I had gotten to a place of being compelled to search for them, moved by instincts and a desire to know the truth. I went "all out". I enlisted the help of many angels. Dorothy and Doreen at Search Finders in San Jose, California, top the list. The universe parted and events happened that are indescribable. In five and a half months I found my birthmother and two sisters in Colorado. The day was December 15, 2000. My phone bill shows my birthmother and I talked for forty



Three Sisters in Colorado



*Connie, Paula, and Kathy
(Three Sisters Reunited)*

five minutes. My sisters called back immediately. The men in their lives knew about me. I asked my oldest sister Kathy, "What color are your eyes?" "Green," she said. "Mine are green, what color are Connie's?" "Green," she said. My birthmother, my two sisters and I have brown hair, green eyes, and are 5'2 to 5'3. The exchange was moving and powerful.

A family in Kennewick Washington with the maiden name Knox, prayed for me during this search. You see, I read my "phone script" to the wrong woman and her two girls. The mother and daughter's dates of birth, match the years and births of my birthfamily. I felt embarrassed and when I apologized to this woman, she brought me to tears. "Paula, I wish I was your mother, and if I was I would come get you right now." They made me promise to call them when I found my family. I did, and am still moved today when I think of them praying for me in their church.

A man who divorced my oldest sister in 1978 in Colorado drove miles out of Denver to get me a phone number to find my sister Connie. A woman in Hastings Nebraska sent me pictures of my sisters as babies, and gave me their marriage history for the Colorado marriage and divorce records. A woman in Dobbins, California almost fainted, and said, "You're

the baby....." and helped me put the puzzle together in the very beginning when the birth certificates were getting me nowhere. A man named Delbert on a cell phone on a tractor in Colorado cried with me as he helped give me my sisters' numbers and addresses. He choked up with me, "You are coming for Christmas?" They embraced me.

If anyone reading this thinks that the waters don't part when you embark on this journey, I say, "Just try". Mail that letter. Take a deep breath and make that phone call. The power of love and courage will lead us to our destiny.

On December 16, 2000 there were two seats left on a

*I speak from a very
deep place when I tell you
that I never really felt
like I was born. Somehow
I just appeared...*

flight out of Oakland, California to Colorado Springs for Christmas weekend. The woman at **Full Circle Travel** in El Cerrito, California asked if I was nuts trying to book a flight so late for Christmas. I told her why I was going and had to get there. I have never let myself cry so openly in front of people. She told me there were two women working the office that day, and they would find me a flight! I was bumped off of two flights and spent the night in Phoenix, Arizona. I was going to get there, no matter what. You see, my birthmother, Shirley Rose had "processed" my call and my visit and told all the men to stay home. The women were going to pick me up at the airport; my two sisters Kathy and Connie, my birthmother Shirley Rose, and

FULL CIRCLE

continued from page 3

my niece Suzette. The supervisor at the desk for America West marveled... December 24, 2000 I arrived in Colorado. My tribe was wearing Bronco



Separated at birth, we woke up together Christmas morning.

shirts, and gave me a Bronco Jersey. "Will you wear it?" Proudly through Oakland and San Francisco, "Yes!"

I spent Christmas Eve with my family at Delbert and Connie's home. I spent the night and shared a room with my birthmother Shirley Rose. I



Conversation with my mother Shirley Rose

woke up to snow on the ground and my birthmother saying, "I want to tell you about the day the nurse brought you into the hospital room."

I had four hours Christmas day before flying home and my sisters dressed me up to play, snowmobiling, and leathers on Delbert's Harley. A dream come true. I have filled up the holes, feeling more complete.

Christmas was like falling in love, and then I left. We talked on the phone often, and then I returned. I landed in Glenwood Springs Colorado for my first birthday with my blood sisters and birthmother, for January 22, 2001. My nephew Joey, 12, taught me how to snowboard, laughing loudly at a 44 year old Aunt he just met.



On Christmas we shared pictures...

And to the angels who were with me every step of my journey, I give you my love and gratitude:

Alisa Van Dissen, an adoptee on the same road of happy destiny showed me the ropes and let me talk; A family therapist, Jooske, her encouraging words will

FULL CIRCLE

stay with me all my life; A post adoption coordinator from social services named Harriette, her sensitive



*Big Sister and Baby Sister
~ Kathy and Paula*

phone conversations remain on my journal pages.

I was able to thank a Social Worker who helped me to walk at ten months of age; the County took care of braces and foot

surgery. Foremost, I must thank Juliana and Joseph Fraser! I have

no resentments. None. If it weren't for my birthmoth-



A Family Photo

er, I wouldn't be here. Because of my Higher Power and a fellowship of men and women, I am still here! This story is for Search Finders of California, enclosed is a prayer for those that follow me!

California Adoptive Parents for Open Records formed to support AB 1349

Led by adoptive parents Bill and Imogene Speed of Plymouth California, this new coalition is organizing to support AB 1349 and secure its passage. CAPFOR welcomes adoptive parents who share the goal of restoring civil rights to adult adoptees, here and across the nation. Join them! Provide the information below for the Speeds at: ispeeds@juno.com, or P.O. Box 787, Plymouth, CA 95669.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Calif. Adoption: yes___ no___ Date: _____
optional

Please include any comments you may have.

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INSIDE THIS EDITION:

POLITICS AND ADOPTION

2001 BROKEN SEALS

PAULA FRASER'S STORY

CA PARENTS FOR OPEN RECORDS

AND MORE

Next Meeting

Thursday, August 9, 2001

Pro Image, 1865 Camden Avenue
Camden at Leigh & Hillsdale
Next to Arby's. Ample parking
in front & back of building.

Next Meetings: Thursday, September 13, 2001
and Thursday, October 11, 2001