



# LOST & FOUND

December 2001

SEARCH-FINDERS OF CALIFORNIA, INC. MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

## From the Editor—

### HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS —OR— BAH, HUMBUG!

When my most favorite holiday, Halloween, is over and the Thanksgiving frenzy begins, my mood becomes as cold as the winter chill. I try hard to put on a pleasant demeanor because the sadness I carry around inside can put a damper on everyone else's good time.

My daughter is away in college; holidays mean she comes home. I would be lost if she didn't. "I'm here, Mom. I'm here for you..." she said on Thanksgiving day, "and I wish that were enough for you...." she said. Man did that make me feel guilty.

But I just cannot shake the way I feel. Even with my younger son, daughter and husband and in-laws around, the holidays are a time of loss for me. It's not only that I lost my brother Christmas of 1999 and then my father last January. Those losses are now added to the fact that my oldest son has only spent one Christmas with us. That was about seven years ago. This coming March will mark our ten-year reunion anniversary.

Every Christmas after he was born, I pictured him in front of a decorated tree; a little boy dazzled by the colors and glowing lights and presents. "Oh, I hope he's happy," I would pray as I gazed at my own tree. So when we did have that one Christmas together that dark mood vanished. I felt a peace I had never experienced during the holidays.

Now he has a little girl who will grab for the ornaments on their tree. I hope I get to see that. Maybe some day we'll spend another Christmas together. It may not be this year, but I am trying. I'm tired of waiting.

Waiting is one of the worst things. If you wait too long to do the things you want to do, you may miss your chance. One of this issue's articles, "It's Never Too Late", is by adoptee Irene Creager who found that her search was better late than never; but Irene is not a lady who waited around. Read and you'll understand.

I'm anxious to show the article to two of my friends who have been hemming and hawing around for far too long; both adoptees want to search but are "waiting for the right time". One of these friends hasn't even told their family that they are an adoptee!

Like the song says, time waits for no one. If you know someone who is standing at the edge, waiting to get their feet wet, have them read Irene's article and another article: *Overcoming Fear*.

This world has always been an uncertain place; and now it is even more so. Life is fragile and too short; we should all strive to live it without regrets or shame. This issue features a moving and insightful poem by adoptee Alan Holmstrom which says it best. What are you waiting for? Check it out.

Here's to a new year with no regrets!

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

# Search Finders Broken Seals 2001

Christine Labagh, Adoptee, found her Birth mother in San Francisco January 24, 2001

Becky Hogue, Adoptee, found her Birth Mother February 14, 2001

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

Diane Boudreau, Birth Mother, found her son in San Luis Obispo March 13, 2001

Mary Kennedy, Adoptee, found her mother in Brooklyn NY April 5, 2001

Mischelle Garcia, Birth Mother, found daughter in Montana May 3, 2001

Julie Hankins, Birth Mother, found her son in Talkeetna, Alaska, June 20, 2001

Andrea Hallgren, Adoptee, found her mother in Canada July 28, 2001

Pam Norman, Adoptee, found her mother near Chicago August 21, 2001

Frank Ducato, Adoptee, found mother and father married to each other in Oregon November 30, 2001

p o e t r y   c o r n e r

## *The Secret* by Alan Holmstrom, Adoptee



The secret was started, before I was born  
My mother was pregnant, ashamed and forlorn

The secret continued, the day of my birth  
A new name and parents, I lost my self-worth

they said I was special, and that I should be proud  
they said I was adopted, but don't say it out loud

My job as an adoptee, was to caretake and please  
to avoid more rejection, I kept the secret with ease

My birth parents met, but the truth was resisted  
I was never discussed, like I never existed

And even when I found them, after thirty-seven years  
They still kept me a secret, controlled by their fears

I'm sympathetic and kind, I know they had it rough  
I'm mad and I'm angry, I'm a secret long enough

I'm taking my space, I'm standing my ground  
I'm speaking my truth, I'm making more sound

I've crossed the threshold, I've entered the door  
Of my God given right to be a secret no more

So whether they acknowledge the day of my birth  
I am claiming forever my place on this earth

**JOIN US FOR SEARCH FINDERS**

# Annual Holiday Party

**OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

**FEATURING A RAFFLE AND GREAT PRIZES**

RAFFLE TICKETS, 50¢ OR 3 FOR \$1

**BRING AN HORS D'OEUVRE OR CONFECTION TO SHARE**

**DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED**

**THURSDAY • DECEMBER 13TH • 7P.M.  
PRO IMAGE • 1856 CAMDEN AVE • SAN JOSE**

*Search Finders would like to wish you and your family  
a safe and joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year!*

## **SEARCH-FINDERS STAFF**

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Irene Creager, Reporter

For Information Call 408-356-6711 Or visit our web site: **[www.searchfinders.org](http://www.searchfinders.org)**

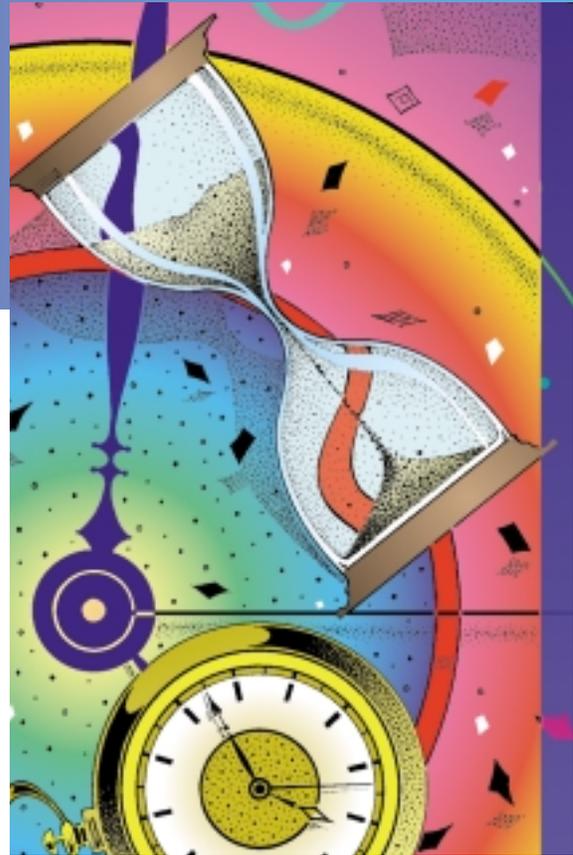
# It's never too late

by Irene Creager, Adoptee

*I was born on September 2, 1925 at University Hospital located at 3rd & Parnasus in San Francisco. I'll pause while you do the math. It was 76 years ago. I was relinquished for adoption unto the Native Sons' and Native Daughters' Central Committee on Homeless Children of San Francisco.*

I was placed in the home and care of my adopted parents about one and one-half months later. The adoption was done in open court and finalized on the 15th day of May, 1926. I now have in my possession a copy of this legal document and I found that the wording of this document offensive and it rocked my world. The document states and I am quoting, "And this Court having carefully examined the document executed by the mother of said minor abandoning and relinquishing said minor, the Court finding that said minor has been legally abandoned and relinquished, and is eligible for adoption....."

I wanted to defend my birth mother which is why the language of that document offends me. When I received my non-identifying information it shed a whole new light on the terminology used in the adoption document. I learned that I was the youngest of four siblings, that my birth father abandoned my birth mother, leaving her with four



kids during the start of the Depression. She was also unemployed during that time when she discovered she was pregnant. She felt under the circumstances, she was unable to care for me and that adoption was the only solution. My birth father was unaware of my birth. I don't think much about him, but I believe my mother did what she thought was best. I learned I had two brothers, 9 and 7 years of age, and two sisters, 5 and 3 years of age from my birth parents' marriage.

Fast forward now to August of 2000 when it was revealed to me by a member of my adoptive family that I had been adopted! At that moment I did not realize what an impact this news would have on me. When I got over the shock of this revelation, and considering the number of years that had passed, I began to wonder if I would be able to find

out anything about my birth family. You see this secret was kept from me for 75 years. Boy, could those people keep a secret or what? My first thoughts were that there may not be anyone still alive and time was marching on for me as well. But, I knew I had to find out whatever I could.

Through a dear friend of mine, I was introduced to

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a woman with similar circumstances as mine and at our first meeting she agreed to take me to my first SearchFinders meeting. This changed my wishful thinking into knowledge that it was possible to search and find real relatives of mine. Once I met Dorothy and Doreen my outlook became more positive and the "search" was on. Both Dorothy and Doreen started the ball rolling and by the time I arrived home from the meeting, my phone was ringing and I was receiving information and guidance from these two great ladies.

I was raised by my adoptive parents as an only lonely child, so to find out that there were more like me was such a thrill. Lucky for me I was born in San Francisco (as were my siblings) so I petitioned the Court for my original birth certificate. This took about 6 weeks to receive, but when I held that document in my hand for the first time it finally dawned on me that this was all real and it was not just a dream.

Dorothy and Doreen were able to furnish the names and birth dates of my four siblings so I went to San Francisco to the Hall of Records and got a

copy of my eldest brother's birth certificate and learned the names of my birth parents. I could get a copy of all four of them but at \$12.00 per copy, I figured all I needed was one to give me the information I wanted.

My next move was to go directly to Sacramento to the Department of Records with my signed Court order to open my adoption papers. At the same time I visited the Sacramento Library and found one of my brothers' funeral notices on microfiche. I learned I had a nephew with the same name as my brother Hugh. The two lovely friends I stayed with in Folsom found two addresses for my nephew and one of them was the correct one – the other address was his former address.

I wrote a letter to my nephew relating the story of how I was related to him and asked him to phone me. I mailed this letter on a Monday and the following day when my phone rang much to my pleasant surprise it was him. He invited me to come to his home for lunch so we could meet face-to-face and get acquainted. He sounded terrific on

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the phone but I became very nervous as I approached his house. I needn't have worried because as I turned the corner on his street here was this large man waving at me through his window. As I climbed the steps to his front door I found he and his wife standing with open arms in greeting. Immediately I felt welcome and like I

## it's never too late

*continued from page 5*

had known him all my life. This was in March of this year.

On July 15th of this year a cousin of mine from my adopted family acquired further information on the Internet regarding my siblings. I had shared their names and birth dates to him and what he found was that all of them were deceased. The most shocking news was of the sister who was closest to me in age and she died in Redding, CA this year on April 2nd. If only I had known sooner but timing has not been my ally during my search process. Through my nephew, I already knew that my birth mother had passed away in 1978.

I was adopted and went to live with my new parents when I was about a month and a half old. Did I have a better life? From a financial standpoint I probably did. From an emotional standpoint, I would have to answer NO. I had a wonderful father whom I adored, but he passed away when I was 16 years old and life spiraled downward rapidly. I didn't know why I did not feel close to my adopted mother and I felt very guilty about my lack of connection with her. In truth, I felt very ashamed of myself. The reality was that she and I had really never bonded. I don't want to dwell on this part of my life except to say that I believe my adopted mother should never have been allowed to raise a child.

Sadly, my four siblings are all deceased so I never

got to meet or know them. I do have a wonderful nephew living in Daly City and we have a great ongoing relationship. Recently I found my niece living in Henderson, Nevada and hope to establish a good relationship with her in the near future. The information I have learned about my birth family is that it was very dysfunctional and there was a lot of tragedy and sadness. My eldest brother was murdered in San Francisco in 1972 by a gang that followed him when he got off a streetcar. My other brother had stomach cancer and committed suicide in 1989. My eldest sister died when she was only 29 from a heart attack. And, my other sister died this year. Would I have given up my adopted life for a life with my real family? In a heartbeat! My biggest regret is that I didn't find out about my adoption for such a long time and was unable to locate my brothers and sisters before they passed away. I have learned all of this information in only the past twelve months thanks in large part to Dorothy, Doreen and SearchFinders.

I would like to tell anyone just starting on this journey of discovery that It's Never Too Late!!! If you have come to SearchFinders for the first time, know that you are in the right place to find what you are searching for. Whatever you find out is better than not knowing. You will learn as I did that the Search is the easy part – meeting is the more difficult part. Just don't give up! If I can do it at my age anyone can do it. You will receive a lot of support by continuing to attend the monthly meetings and meeting others who truly understand.

Good Luck! Irene Creager, Adoptee, Age 76

# Looking Ahead

**24th Annual American Adoption Congress Conference • April 10-14, 2002 in Philadelphia, PA**

**for information call Search Finders 408-356-6711 or go to [www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)**

# Overcoming fear

An excerpt from *Why Adoptees Are Afraid to Search*  
Tina M. Musso © March 1998

No one can overcome the fears (of searching) that an adoptee faces except herself. However, there are some things that can be done to make it easier to accomplish. First, decide that searching is a necessity for your peace of mind. No amount of alcohol, drugs or sex can ever fill the void that was left from the total separation from your past. Second, join an adoption support group, either on the Internet or locally. Speak to people who have been where you are going. Third, if the adoptee is on good terms with the adoptive parents, tell them you are going to search. These people were there for you from the beginning. Hopefully, they will support you during the search. However, if they are against it and try to make you uncomfortable, consider finding additional support somewhere else. If the adoptive parents are not supportive, you, as the adult, do not have to accept the guilt. It is their loss for not accepting your needs as valid. Fear is natural and neces-

sary for survival, but not knowing that other part of your "self" can be worse. Unless the pain of the current situation is greater than the fear of the unknown, most people will stay in the current situation. Knowing that you could be rejected by the birth family is difficult. But not knowing if they are dead or if they think about you can be worse.

The hardest part is overcoming the parent-child dilemma. For fear of hurting the parents, the adoptee may wait until everyone is dead but the adoptee. Not knowing is a very difficult psychological hurdle for people to overcome. However, the emotional effects of not knowing where you came from have been affecting you all your life, at some level. Give those who love you an opportunity to do the right thing by being there for you now. Isn't it time to let the fear go and to let the healing begin?

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## THE LATEST ON LEGAL ABANDONMENT

TEXAS HOUSE BILL 3423, which went into effect on September 1, 1999, allows a "parent or other person who is entitled to possess a child 30 days old or younger" to voluntarily leave that child in the possession of an emergency care provider. The abandoner is legally immune to prosecution as long as the child's health was not endangered in the process of delivery.

Nowhere does the law require that the parent or person leaving the child identify her/himself. Nowhere does the law require that the parent or person leaving the child sign any document relinquishing parental rights. Nowhere does the law state that the parent or person leaving the child provide any familial medical information. Nowhere does the law provide for a change of mind within any period of time. And nowhere does the law require the state to try to obtain any information.

### ALABAMA AND MINNESOTA

In Mobile, Alabama, it's called "A Secret Safe Place for

Newborns" and program materials stress that there will be no questions asked. Newborns up to 72 hours old can be dropped off at emergency rooms of participating hospitals with total secrecy, and a guarantee that the police will not be called for abandonment. No identification, no signed relinquishment papers, no medical history.

The Minnesota program involves three hospitals in Dakota County and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Called "A Safe Place for Newborns," a mother can anonymously drop off an unharmed newborn without fear of prosecution. She will be asked to volunteer medical information, but not required to do so. No identification required, no signed relinquishment, no mandatory medical information.

However, both the Alabama and Minnesota programs include giving the mother an identity bracelet that will match her with her child in the event she changes her mind.

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## Next Meeting

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Pro Image, 1865 Camden Avenue

Camden at Leigh & Hillsdale

Next to Arby's. Ample parking

in front & back of building.

Next Meetings: Thursday, January 10, 2002

and Thursday, February 8, 2002