



December 2002

LOST & FOUND

SEARCH-FINDERS OF CALIFORNIA, INC. MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

From the Editor—

MY HOLIDAY WISH

My holiday wish is that at least some reunited adoptees, their birthparents, brothers and sisters, adoptive parents and adoptive siblings will all share the holiday together.

I'm wondering how many families there are out there who have set aside their prejudices and fear of being replaced or losing someone's love, and celebrated together. Adoptive mom, Birth mom, daughter-in-law in the kitchen sharing cooking tips, sipping a bit of wine... The kids playing video games or listening to music and playing with the grandkids. The men setting the table while they discuss politics and sports.

Everyone sharing a meal together and telling embarrassing stories from the past about each other. Talking about the reunion and how scary it was for everyone at first.

And later on everyone in the living room gathered around the tree exchanging gifts and hugging one another. I wish with all my heart this happens for some one this year.

And if it does, would you share your story with we who find ourselves wishing this same wish every year? Maybe if it can happen for you it can happen for some of us some day.

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

JOIN US FOR SEARCH FINDERS

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FEATURING A RAFFLE & GREAT PRIZES

RAFFLE TICKETS, 50¢ OR 3 FOR \$1

BRING AN HORS D'OEUVRE OR CONFECTION TO SHARE

DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED

THURSDAY • DECEMBER 12TH • 7P.M.

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

A GREAT BEGINNING

MARIANNE'S STORY.

Marianne was born in San Francisco in 1961. She was adopted out of San Jose by wonderful parents who adopted a total of six children because they could not have children of their own. They had a wonderful life and Marianne always knew she had been adopted as it had not been kept a secret. Even though she thought it was out of reach, she had always wanted to find her birth family. When she was forty years old she learned about Search-Finders through one of her sister's friends who had found his birth parents, and she was eager to give it a try.

In August of this year she talked with Dorothy on the phone the night before a meeting and gave her some information about herself. When she showed up at the meeting, much to her surprise, Dorothy gave her the name of her parents. They had also found that there were only three in the country with the same maiden name as her birth mother. Marianne sent away for her non-identifying information, which arrived five weeks later, and she found out that she was of Ukrainian origin. Her grandparents had come directly from the Ukraine. She also learned that she had one uncle and one aunt from her mother's side, and a sister from her father's side. Her mother had also put another daughter up for adoption three years previously who she is now searching for.

Through her non-identifying information Marianne was able to locate her mother's brother in Lake Como, PA, and she made the first contact with him on September 13th. Through him she learned that her birth mother had died from untreated breast cancer. Her mother had known for approximately two years, but had kept many secrets. Understandably this upset Marianne to find out about her death in this manner, and she felt she had no choice but to tell the uncle who she was. From

there he and his wife decided they would keep it quiet until they were able to tell the birth mother's older daughter.

After Marianne was born, her birth mother married and had one daughter and two sons. Marianne's uncle and aunt waited two weeks until they told Marianne's sister, who is only eleven months younger than Marianne. After they told her, Marianne's half sister called her from New Jersey. She was also shocked, but very excited because she had no sisters growing up. A few hours later, one of Marianne's brothers called, also from New Jersey, and even though it was so hard to believe, they were very accepting of her. Marianne's very supportive husband said, "You two must get together," and they flew them out on October 24th for a four-day weekend. There are no words to describe that reunion. Marianne stared at her sister all weekend. They stayed up all night looking at many pictures and sharing stories. Marianne got to share her life and her childhood with her real sister. It was difficult for them when it came time to part and they were both afraid that when the sister left that they would waken from their dream. Since then, they email each other every single day.

Marianne has since talked to her mother's sister in PA, who already loves her dearly, and a cousin in North Carolina. She and her husband are flying to New Jersey in January to meet everyone. Marianne is awed by the fact that the family has opened their hearts to her, and describes it as indescribable. She has learned so much about who she is and about her roots. Marianne described it as the perfect ending. I believe it would better be described as a great beginning.

Reporter Irene Creager, Search-Finders

*Join us in
Atlanta to
celebrate
25 years
of adoption
education,
advocacy
& reform!*



American Adoption Congress 25th Annual Conference on Adoption 1978-2003 SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

April 3 - 5 2003 • Atlanta, Georgia

Westin Hotel Atlanta North • Call 202.483.3399 or visit our website

www.americanadoptioncongress.org

To submit a Workshop Proposal,

Contact Lynn Giddens at 919.968.1919 or email nccaae@aol.com

SEARCH-FINDERS BROKEN SEALS 2002

JANUARY

Sharon Faseer, Adoptee, found her mother and full brother in Sacramento, 01/14/02

Dana Ellingen, Adoptee, found mother and sister in Palo Alto, 01/08/02

MARCH

Jeannie Jordon, Adoptee, found her mother in Concord, 03/08/02

APRIL

Monica Escobar, Adoptee, found her father in San Francisco, 04/24/02

Cecile Lusby, Birthmother, found her son in Pennsylvania, 04/29/02

Judi Gilford, Birthmother, found her son in Louisiana, 04/29/02

MAY

Kirk Allen, Adoptee, found his mother in Oakland, 05/07/02

JUNE

Carla Danella, Adoptee, found her mother on the East Coast, 06/06/02

Mary Ehle, Birthmother, found her son in Texas, 06/22/02

SEPTEMBER

Jennifer Smith, Adoptee (information incomplete) 9/3/02

Marianne Houle, Adoptee, found birthfamily, 9/13/02

NOVEMBER

Susan Hughes, Birthmother, found her son in Stockton, 11/22/02

“You just threw me away.”

by Linda Ehle Callens

How many birthmother's have heard that one - even after a joyful reunion? So many adoptees still harbor anger and at the same time long to be close—

Is it that someone bent their minds over and over; perpetuating the myth that birthmothers are all horrible, uncaring persons? Even after 10 years into my reunion relationship with my son, he still has a love/hate thing for me. A while back I wrote a book, *Beyond the Bridge*, about my experience as a birthmother and the rigors of establishing a relationship with my son. Of course I had him read the manuscript. But he wasn't interested at all in reading the first part of the book recalling my relationship with his father, my pregnancy and relinquishment; he was only interested in reading from the point of our reunion. I'm running this small excerpt from my book so that maybe one adoptee will be touched and understand that most birthmothers don't really deserve to be tested and punished. We've already been through enough grief....

XIV NO MIRACLES AT MARY'S HELP

Again a wheelchair appeared. I picked up my bag and walked slowly to the thing, turned around and sat down. I hoped we would be going by the nursery window, even though my baby probably wouldn't be there. But we went the other way. As we wheeled through the hospital I felt as if I were in some sort of bad dream. The shock of leaving so soon, leaving without my baby seemed so unreal. I was not in my right mind. I think they may have given me something...

Pat was parked in front of the hospital at the main entrance. As we wheeled through the foyer I saw another new mother getting into a car with her baby and husband. I bit my bottom lip in an effort to keep from crying.

I held out until we were on the road. I stayed silent as tears rolled down my cheeks. Pat realized the solemnity of the moment and didn't say anything. No words would have been appropriate.

When we got to the house Pat informed me that a new girl had taken up residence in my room and my things had been moved downstairs to the game room. I asked if I could go and rest then. I was very surprised that I had been replaced so quickly.

The oxblood couch had been opened and prepared

as my new bed. I went into the bathroom and turned the water on in the tub. The nurse suggested that soaking in warm water would be good for my episiotomy. I was in an extreme amount of pain and discomfort from it. I went back into the room and made sure the door to the upstairs was locked and pulled the curtains closed, including the one on the doors which lead to the backyard.

I undressed and eased myself into the tub. I smelled of blood and medicine. Then I cried, cried, cried as I bled into the bath water.

I got out and dried off, and cried. I dressed and straitened the bathroom, while crying. Then I lay down on the bed and cried myself to sleep.

Pat came down and woke me as dinnertime approached. She said I didn't have to do any more chores, that I could just take it easy for the rest of my time there.

We had quiet conversation during dinner. Bill asked me what my plans were. I said I would finish high school at night and would be getting married soon.

"That boy isn't gonna marry you!" Pat blurted out. I looked at her in disbelief. She had obviously had a few too many glasses of the red wine of which she was so fond. Bill shot her a disbelieving look and said "Pat, don't talk to her like that...". Pat looked at me and said "Don't be so naive, sweetie....," pronouncing the word "sweetie" with an obvi-

“...threw me away” continued

ous sting. “Don’t call her that, Pat. Can’t you see she’s been through enough...” Bill reprimanded. I mumbled an unacknowledged excuse-me and left the table. I retreated with tears running down my face once again, to my newly appointed quarters.

The next day I stayed holed up in my room. I slept, paced and cried. I wasn’t hungry. I was still weak from the birth and sore from the incision. And I missed my baby. I kept seeing his little face. I wanted to die.

I knew I couldn’t endure the weeks of recuperation planned. I felt I was losing my mind. That night I called my mom and asked her to come and get me, but she had to work. So I bravely dialed Dexter’s number. His father answered, and yes, he was home. I told Dex I couldn’t bare to stay there any longer and begged him to come and get me. He finally agreed to come and pick me up the following day. I called mom back and told her I was coming home.

When Dexter drove up in the early afternoon I was in the foyer waiting. My bags were beside me. Pat appeared in the doorway and said good-bye. She gave me a pillow to take with me. Sitting was painful and she said it might make the car ride more bearable. I thanked Pat for everything, got in the car and waved good-bye.

We drove home on the Bayshore freeway. Conversation didn’t come easily. I kept glancing around to the back seat, imagining a bassinet there with our baby in it. I can’t remember what led to it, but at one point Dex said, “In a way it’s good that they didn’t let me see the baby, because I know if I had I wouldn’t have been able to go through with it.”

“You can still see him” I said, “We can go back and get him right now!”

“No way, we can’t do that”. “But we CAN; it’s what I really, really want to do. I don’t want to leave my baby with some strangers...” I was cut off by his sudden angry outburst, telling me to forget it, it was done....”...and I never want to discuss it again!”

Tears were running down my face and my bottom hurt. After I calmed down I asked him to stop at a service station so I could use the restroom. I still had to deal with the reality of the mega-period a woman has after giving birth. I sobbed while I was in the stall taking care of myself. Suddenly I stopped, sick with the fear that Dexter may have simply let me out and taken off. I hurried out to find that he was still there.

We arrived at my house at about 4pm. We drove

into the same spot from which we had left some five months earlier; it seemed like five years. Mary was outside the door as soon as we pulled up. I got out and went to her. As I hugged my sister, Dexter took my bags from the trunk and sat them on the driveway by the car. He stood there for a moment, looked at my sister and I and said he had to get going. And just like that, he got in the car and drove away. Mary and I looked at each other and then at the bags sitting there on the cement in disbelief. I sighed, hell, what was one more blow? I was used to pain and hurt and the feeling of abandonment and emptiness. At least I was home.

Deb and Mike appeared and gave me hugs. They carried my bags in for me, all smiles because I was back. As I walked through the house I had lived in all my life, I felt like a stranger. Everything looked so much smaller than before I’d left.

XVI FORSAKEN

When Dexter came to pick me up and take me to San Francisco he had a friend with him; one of his party buddies. I sat in the back seat of the VW bug. I looked at the empty space beside me and saw the bassinet there. “God,” I prayed, “please give me my miracle today”.

When we got to the old St. Vincent de Paul building in San Francisco, the three of us went in together. I went to the reception desk and Carmen appeared right away. She showed us to a small enclosed cubicle where we would conduct our meeting. Our third wheel decided to retreat and wait in the car when it was obvious that the proceeding was going to be of a legal and very personal nature.

Dexter sat down to my right with Carmen across from us. She rattled off the same information as she had during our previous conversation on the phone. I didn’t listen to a thing she was saying, I was like a prisoner waiting for execution; why would I care about the particulars, it would be all over for me.

And somehow I had gotten the notion that my baby would be there in case I decided not to sign the papers. And, of course, if the baby were there, Dex would finally see him. I don’t know where that fantasy came from; but I actually asked Carmen where he was, wouldn’t he be there...she looked at me with such pity and sadly shook her head. “He’s with the foster parents.”

Then Carmen was sliding a paper to me with a pen

Congratulations to Concerned United Birthparents Member Sheila Ganz Documentary – “Unlocking The Heart Of Adoption”

In 1968, twenty-year-old Sheila Ganz was raped and became pregnant. She unwillingly relinquished her newborn daughter. Twenty years later, she became an adoption reform advocate and began her first film, *Unlocking The Heart Of Adoption*. This feature documentary chronicles her journey as a birthmother, and compelling first-person stories of adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents in same race and transracial adoptions. Their stories run the emotional gamut from Hollywood-style ‘happy endings’ to heart breaking tragedy, with bittersweet accounts of loss, questions of identity, ethnicity and the need to know the truth, interwoven with fascinating historical background narrated by Helen Hill.

THE ORPHAN TRAIN ERA 1856-1919 AND SEALING OF ADOPTION RECORDS—from the 1930’s to the current civil rights reforms for adult adoptees are now being sought in state legislatures. In 1998, Helen Hill was Chief Petitioner for

ballot Measure 58 in Oregon. This landmark legislation passed, giving adult adoptees in Oregon unconditional access to their original birth certificate. This exciting work-in-progress screening of *Unlocking The Heart Of Adoption* proffers a brave, activist agenda through a deeply personal lens.

Go to www.filmarts.org or www.unlockingtheheart.com for more information.

Sheila’s documentary was shown at the Film Arts Festival in San Francisco on Thursday, November 14, 2002 at BRAVA! Theater Center.

Come to a Special Showing of

*“Unlocking The
Heart of Adoption”
at our meeting,
Thur., Jan. 9, 2003.*

*The film is 56 minutes long
and will begin promptly at
7pm. The regular meeting
will follow immediately.*

“...threw me away” continued

atop it. I slowly picked up the pen and scanned the document. I don’t remember what it said. Everyone became dead silent. My heart grew hot with pain as I held the pen over the empty line which awaited my signature. My shaking hand touched the tip of the pen to the left end of the line. Then I collapsed in tears. I was crying, crying uncontrollably with my head on the table, buried in my arms. I heard Dexter saying to Carmen, “I didn’t realize....”

Carmen tried to reassure me, Dexter put his arms around me. It took a while for me to compose myself. When I finally stopped crying I was just numb again. As I signed my name I felt as if I were signing my own death certificate. I was completely empty, bereaved and distraught.

Unless you have had to do it, against your will, you will never know how it feels. How shattering it is to know you will never have your own child in your arms, never see their face or kiss their cheek. Not see them take their first step or hear their sweet voice saying their first word. Not being able to soothe them when they cry or watch with

delight when they laugh. All the love I felt to only be held captive inside me...

Then Dexter signed his name. Carmen said she would send me a picture of Paul as soon as she could. But she wouldn’t be able to give me any further information about him. About my baby, Paul.

I remember Dexter reaching into the back seat and taking my hand on the way back home that day. I remember looking again at the empty seat beside me. It was so very empty, and so was I.

As you can see, I decided to be as candid and real as I could when I wrote this book....that may explain why the major publishing houses who have read it and came close to publishing it, pulled back at the last moment....It’s just a little too real. I’m still working on getting Beyond the Bridge published and when I do, you’ll all hear about it....And one more thing, they never sent me any pictures.

Linda Ehle Callens, Lost & Found Editor

CUB *SILICON VALLEY*

Concerned United Birthparents (CUB) provides peer support, advocacy, referral, and educational services to people who have surrendered children to adoption, to those experiencing an untimely pregnancy or vulnerability to family disruption, and to those who have adoption-related concerns; and promotes adoption reform.

CUB sponsors monthly support meetings, a support and referral hotline, a website, a quarterly newsletter, and other educational materials. CUB distributes literature outlining available alternatives to women who do not choose to surrender their children for adoption.

Believing it a basic civil right for adoptees and others to know their origins and for birthparents to be able to learn the fate of their offspring, CUB supports making adoption records available to adoptees at the age of majority and making birth records available to those born through non-traditional means. CUB works to reverse the trend of paid surrogacy and other hi-tech birth procedures where biological origins are kept secret.

CUB provides speakers and educational materials to

conferences, schools, counselors, and other professionals in social service agencies, the media, and public officials. Organizational representatives serve on committees and panels studying changes to adoption law policy, high technology births, surrogacy, and civil rights as it affects access to one's origins.

Concerned United Birthparents has a permanent meeting place, date and time for the Silicon Valley Group. Meetings are open to anyone touched by adoption. Meetings are from 7-9pm every second Tuesday of the month at The Retirement Inn of Campbell, 290 N. San Tomas Aquino Road, between Hamilton Ave. and Campbell Blvd.) 2nd Floor Activity room. From 880/17 take Hamilton exit, go west to San Tomas Aquino Rd and turn left. From 280, take the Saratoga exit and drive south to Payne, turn right on San Tomas Aquino Road. The Retirement Inn has a big screen TV-VCR for video presentations.

For more information contact Alicia Lanier, CUB National Board Member & Secretary and AAC California State Rep, aliciakla@aol.com

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