

AIS GENERAL NEWS:

What's new? An AIS telephone! Call AIS at 656-8555. Look for an AIS listing in the yellow pages under social service organizations this fall. Delivery of new yellow pages directories begins October 3.

Attorney Beverly Pearson is completing the process of incorporating AIS as a non-profit organization. Incorporation has many legal benefits. Since AIS will be a lobby for state and national adoption legislation, we can not be tax exempt. Our status will be similar to that of the League of Woman Voters.

AIS was represented at the 52nd annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association in late March as a guest of Dr. Arthur Sorosky. He reported on the Adoption Study Project which is a study involving one hundred adult adoptees who have successfully completed searches and have had reunions with their biological relatives. Several members of AIS have taken part in the Adoption Study Project by answering extensive questionnaires about their adoptive experiences.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) has written to AIS asking for information about our organization and other adoption activist groups across the country. CWLA represents approximately four hundred adoption agencies in the United States and has been adamantly opposed to opening of the sealed record.

Roberta Ross contacted Jean White of the Washington Post and suggested that an article on adoption would be of interest. After a great deal of research, Jean White wrote "Adoptees: Opening New Doors or a Pandora's Box". This well written, lengthy article appeared in the May 11 Washington Post. AIS has received many inquiries about our organization as a result of the article. It would seem that there is much interest in many aspects of adoption. AIS intends to increase public awareness of present adoption practice and laws by contacting other people in the news media and suggesting that they do in-depth stories on the many faces of adoption.

Susan Larsen and Roberta Ross were members of a panel of adoptees at a Montgomery County Adult Education class for adoptive parents in May. AIS hopes to foster understanding and encourage dialogue between adoptees and adoptive parents. AIS has had requests to organize adoptive parent workshops. Are you interested? Would you like to talk with adoptees, social workers, other adoptive parents, lawyers? As adoptive parents are you interested in the legal rights of your child (who will become an adult some day)? Please let us hear from you.

The Bureau of National Affairs wishes to inform lawyers engaged in private domestic relations practices and in legal aid societies about AIS. The Bureau will write an article which will appear in their organizational publication.

AIS LEGISLATIVE NEWS

The subcommittee on Children and Youth will be holding hearings on adoption and foster care this summer. On April 28-29, the subcommittee held a hearing on Baby Selling. Several lawyers, adoptive parents and the Child Welfare League of America were asked to testify at the hearing. No adoptees were asked to testify. Susan Larsen attended the April 29 hearing and submitted written testimony. Senator Alan Cranston and several other senators have drafted the Adoption Bill of 1975. It is the position of AIS that the opinions and attitudes of adopted adults—those who have lived adoption; who are the product of the adoptive experience; whose lives have been governed by the practices and policies of adoption—should be taken into consideration before drafting legislation. The fact that no adopted person was asked to testify at the hearings underscores the fact that there are many people to consider in adoption, but it is the adopted person who is considered last if at all. Asking an adoptee what adoption is all about is a very new idea among the policy makers. How Come? AIS intends to follow the activities of the subcommittee and hopefully offer testimony at upcoming hearings.

In Chicago, Yesterday's Children has filed a class action suit in the federal court of Northern Illinois against the practice of sealed records.

Attorney Pat Murphy—who is responsible for winning the Stanley decision (Stanley vs. Illinois)—is presenting the case for Yesterday's Children. This case could be appealed to the Supreme Court and have national implications. The case is being tried on the grounds that sealed records infringe on the Constitutional rights of the adopted person as stated in the Bill of Rights, specifically the First, Fifth, Ninth and Fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution. Money to pay the attorney's fees and court costs are being raised through contributions by adoptees and other interested persons throughout the United States. Contributions may be sent to:

Yesterday's Children
Box 1554
Evanston, Illinois 60201

AIS is in touch with other adoption activist groups across the country in an effort to organize a group response to congressional legislation. Call it lobbying. Together we can and must be heard! What ideas do you have? There is no federal adoption law. Adoption laws vary from state to state. At the state level we need to contact the powers that be regarding change in adoption policy, especially the sealed record. Search is difficult, at best. Lets get those records open. Do you adoptees have a medical history? Do you have your original birth certificate? Do you know your name? If not, why not?

SEARCH WORKSHOPS:

Search workshops offer mutual assistance in search techniques along with counseling on what to say to whom, when, etc. They can make an extremely difficult task easier. Members of AIS who have successfully searched and had reunions with birth relatives will assist new searchers. In addition, a member of the National Geneological Society has offered her assistance. A search workshop will be held Tuesday, July 1 at 8:00 p.m. Members should call 656-8555 for the location and other details about the workshop.

EDUCATION:

Neither the National Center for Health Statistics, the National Center for Social Statistics, nor the U.S. Census Bureau can furnish information on numbers of adult adoptees in the nation. However, informal estimates of the population of adoptees-children and adults-range from five to nine million. The lower bound estimates, five million, is approximately 2.5 percent of the total American population.

AIS GENERAL NEWS

AIS has grown to the extent that it must include business with pleasure! General meetings will begin at 7:30 p.m., with AIS business, followed by coffee-and-conversation--sometimes with a speaker.

GENERAL MEETINGS: September 14, October 5, November 9, December 14 (optional).
7:30 p.m. (Tuesday evenings). Bethesda Branch Library, 7400 Arlington Rd., Bethesda, Md. 20014. Meeting Room (B).

Tuesday September 14. Discussion: By-laws, articles of incorporation, financial report, adoption issues and general business.

SEARCH WORKSHOPS: October 12, November 30.
7:30 p.m. (Tuesday evenings). 7111 Fairfax Rd., Bethesda, Md. 20014

If you are considering search, but are not yet committed; if you are a beginner or are already in process; if you have completed a search--come to a search workshop. Workshops will be conducted according to need. It is essential that you be an AIS member over eighteen years of age, and adopted, to attend search workshops!

On Wednesday, August 4, Chic Engleking interviewed Roberta Ross on WGTS (91.9 FM) program "Perspectives on Health," produced by the Washington Adventist Hospital. During their discussion, Chic mentioned that when he was a boy, he would tease his sister by telling her the worst thing that he could think of...that she was adopted! Of course, she was not adopted. But it does give one food for thought. Adoption often appears to have a negative image. For example, adoption is not the first choice of most couples contemplating parenthood. Most nonadopted persons indicate that they are glad they were not adopted. Most adoptees would choose not to have been adopted. What's wrong with adoption??

Fred Fisk did a group interview of AIS members Carl Susinno, Rosemary Doud, Terry Elton, Roberta Ross and Tom Allen on WWDC (1260 AM) program "Empathy." The topic? Adoptees in search!

Roberta Ross and Tom Allen led a discussion in Columbia on September 3 before a Parenthood Through Adoption meeting. Sherald Reagle, program chairman of this growing adoptive parent organization, indicated that the group was seeking answers to why adoptees search, how search might affect them as adoptive parents, and how to understand the need to search for origins.

Amy Eisman interviewed AIS members Roberta Ross, Tom Allen and Linda Helms and others (adoption agencies, adoptive parents) regarding the work of AIS and its function, and the problem of sealed records, adoptee's rights, and search, for a Montgomery County Sentinel article on Thursday, September 2.

It was the feeling of some AIS members that the term "reunion," which is used by many adoptees to symbolize the culmination of a search, may be misleading; that "reunion" connotes a meeting of adoptee with birth mother with open arms and a long lost, at last together affect. Is it possible that this idea exists more in the minds of nonadoptees, in the sense of how it ought to be, and perhaps in the minds of adoptees as a fantasy of how it might be? If the adoptee is actually searching for origins--for an hereditary history, for information pertaining to the circumstances of his conception and birth, and if he does not or cannot remember ever having known his birth parent(s), is "reunion" the right word? Judi Folkenberg has compiled a list of terms which might be preferred to "reunion," and it is on file at the AIS office. She researched synonyms for contact, encounter, meeting, etc. One word which appears to represent the experience is confrontation, but it does have a negative connotation. How about the term confirmation? The act of confirming or the state of being confirmed. To establish the truth, accuracy, validity, or genuineness of: corroborate; verify; to acknowledge with definite assurance; to settle or establish firmly.... The searcher is the confirmand--a candidate for confirmation.

AIS LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Class action suits are expensive! Yesterday's Children, P.O. Box 1554, Evanston, Ill., 60204, needs contributions. They recently won an appeal, after their original suit was dismissed by a Federal District Court judge. Judge McMillan ruled that the issue was strictly a state matter to be decided by state courts. In May, the United States Court of Appeals ordered a three judge federal panel to hear the civil rights suit, in which they are seeking to overturn, as unconstitutional, an Illinois court order that allows all records in

an adoption to be permanently sealed. Patrick Murphy, the attorney for Yesterdays Children, said that the suit, the first of its kind, has national implications because 45 out of 50 states have regulations similar to the state of Illinois.

ALMA is bringing a similar suit in New York state. Several AIS members, adopted in New York, are planning to participate. Please send contributions to ALMA, P.O. Box 154, Washington Bridge Station, New York, New York. 10033.

Robert Rhodes, a fifty year old adoptee, was refused access to his medical history, by a Queens Co. (NY) Surrogate Court, inspite of well documented and established need for this information, i.e. advancing age and demands of health insurance firms. Mr. Rhodes is working towards making Surrogate disclosures mandatory as vs. discretionary on medical applications. He has written to AIS asking for support in the following areas. 1.) "I need some ammunition on medical requirements of adoptees that were denied them and the consequences to the adoptee, his family, the community, and state costs...." 2.) "...support with letter-writting, etc., to the NYState Temporary Commission on Child Welfare, Senator Joseph P. Pisani, Chairman, Albany, N.Y. 12224, advocating Senator Albert Lewis' bill to open records to all adoptees upon their reaching age 18 years." Robert Rhodes' address: Phillip Kearney & Assoc., 100-61 223rd. St., Queens Village, N.Y. 11429.

AIS SEARCH NEWS

Nine out of ten AIS workshop participants have been successful! Who are they? AIS has done a search profile. Of ten searchers, attending at least three workshops, from August 1975 to January 1976, the average search took four months one week. Four out of ten searchers were male. Six searchers were in their twenties--four in their thirties-forties. Eight searchers were married, with a total of 18 children. Found: Parents--seven mothers, four fathers (one not sure), and four deceased parents; siblings--fifteen; birth relatives--grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins.

From the Adoption Forum of Philadelphia newsletter: "It is interesting to note that although some adoptees feel that it would have been better if their 'searches' had taken LONGER, none that we know are sorry that they did search--even those that found a birth parent dead or in difficult circumstances. People are relieved to be dealing with reality. The most common regret is not being able to tell one's adoptive parents."

The birth date/birth registry exchange which was proposed by AIS in Colorado, has not materialized. The idea was to provide for a birth registry exchange system between adoption activist organizations, in order that registration in one group would allow for exposure to other group registries, thereby enhancing the chance of a matchup! Perhaps we can at least establish an East coast exchange. What ideas have you?

If you know of a birth mother or adoptee interested in registering in the AIS BIRTH REGISTRY, the fee is \$2.50 a year. Send a check and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to AIS and receive a registry form. We ask only for information known to both the adoptee and his parents: birth date, sex, place of birth. The ultimate success of any registry is dependent on the number of participants! Register!!

A group called Truth Seekers In Adoption (Illinois) is in the process of putting together a magazine (covering only Illinois and Wisconsin) which will allow adoptee's and birth parents to advertise for each other by birthdate hookings. AIS is to receive a first copy.

Several AIS members have worked together on compiling a search kit, which includes a two page outline, "...which may help you to search more efficiently and effectively!" However, it is not a substitute for search workshops. If out of town members wish the kit, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (8 1/2 x 11) and indicate "search kit."

EDUCATION

What is adoption? And what is it that may be considered to be the essential difference between the nonadopted and the adopted expdrience? The answers to these questions may be inherent in the very definition of the term adoption. For example, adoption is, "...a term in law for the act of creating the legal relationship of parent and child when it did not exist naturally." In social terms, the adopted child belongs by birth to one kinship group, but, "...acquires new kinship ties that are socially defined as equivilent to the congenital ties." Raymond and Dywasuk state that, "...adoption is an artificial situation and it creates families in an artificial way." From these definitions it is apparent that adoption is a process which artificially creates, intimately resembles, and is equivilent to the nonadoptive parent-child legal and kinship ties.

