



Northern California  
**ALMA NEWSLETTER**  
"ADOPTEE'S WORLD"

The ALMA Society Corp., 625 Post St., Box 252, San Francisco, CA., 94102 (415) 538-2592  
VOL. I, No. 1

JULY 1977

### ALMA GOES INTO THE COURTS

It's a joy to start the first issue of ADOPTEE'S WORLD with the announcement that on May 23rd, Florence Fisher, founder of ALMA, walked quietly into a United States Federal District Court and filed ALMA's Class Action Suit which challenges the constitutionality of the sealed records law on the basis of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

Since 1971, Fisher traveled tirelessly across the country challenging traditional adoption practices and morals. She shocked and angered the large majority, but touched the wellspring in every adoptee's heart. Her drive brought together an organization of 10,000 dedicated searchers and culminated in the present class action suit.

Adoptees: Talk to your friends in your schools, colleges, churches, temples, and community organizations. Tell them about our class action suit and that we can provide a speaker for their events. Write open letters to newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations. Call in on talk shows. Bring your friends and neighbors to our monthly meetings.

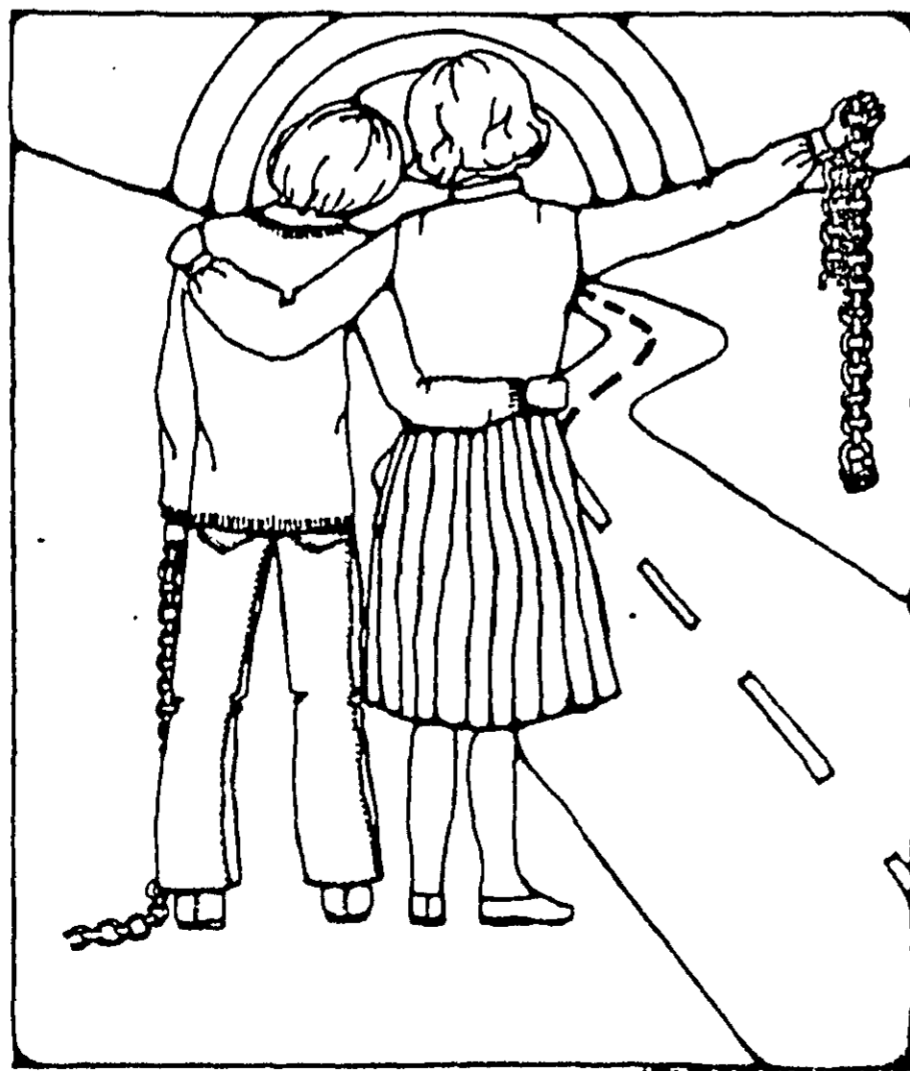
For adoptive parents, it's painful to deal with the unreality of myths such as: "If you're a good parent, your child will never want to know." Every person wants to know their roots. Adoptive parents feel lonely and hurt when they break their ties with their adopted daughter or son. By supporting their search they would cement a bond of devotion and trust that no one could replace. Our adoptive parents' rap sessions provide genuine support and honest information to help parents get involved instead of alienated.

Adoptees are prepared to fight discriminatory laws to gain access to their roots. Their natural parents hold the key. Only they can provide the answers to the adoptees' questions about their true heritage. All natural parents will find a welcome at our meetings and rap sessions.

We can turn the adoption triangle into a circle of caring and friendship.

Sarah Howe

### END OF THE RAINBOW



"I SAW MY NOSE ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S FACE" JIM SUTHERLAND, SAN FRANCISCO  
On April 20th, I mailed 18 letters to families on the East coast with the same last name as my natural mother's. The most I expected was a lead as to my mother's whereabouts after 34 years. 4 days later I received a letter which began: "Dear Jim, I am your natural mother." For the first time in my life I feel there is a place where I belong. I saw a picture of my grandfather. He looks like me...I saw my nose on somebody else's face. Though Fanny is not the mother that raised me, we developed a very rewarding relationship. Neither one of us was afraid, not I of what I would find, nor she of facing up to her past. Over and over she's told me she's glad that I searched, that she never forgot. I also found a wonderful brother and sister, and my father."

## MORE RAINBOWS

### "SHE WAS NOT SELF-PITYING...A QUALITY I LIKE" KAREN MASON, CONCORD

"I joined ALMA in December 1975. My adoptive mother was not threatened by my desire to search. I tried to find my natural parents when I was 18, 21, and 27, and never got anywhere with Children's Aid Society. On my birthday in February, 1975, I was diagnosed as having Hodgkin's disease which was treated and is now in remission. This intensified my desire to find my natural parents and learn their medical history.

I learned that my mother, age 17 and unmarried, had spent the last five months of her pregnancy in a hospital paralyzed with polio from the waist down. She had 10 brothers and sisters. I spent a day at the phone company copying down names and addresses. On Good Friday 1976, I found my mother's address in New York City. I called her immediately. She always hoped that I would find her. After all these years she still had my baby pictures my foster parents had given her. She never married or had other children. She is still paralyzed but can get around on crutches.

In May 1977, I brought her to California. She is tiny, very honest, interested in new things, and not self-pitying. These are qualities I like in myself and even though we were brought up in entirely different circumstances, I feel these traits must be inherited. We had a great two weeks together. Knowing my background for myself and my children, I feel complete and able to get on with my life."

### "NOW EVERYONE IS BACK TOGETHER AGAIN" CHERYL WOLGENUTH, SAN JOSE

"In October 1976, I joined ALMA in the hopes of finding my natural parents. By December, I had found my aunt and learned the names of my natural parents, a brother and a sister. By January 9th, I had found them all. Two weeks later, I flew to Los Angeles for our reunion.

It was a beautiful experience for me and our reunion couldn't have been better. My natural family had not been close for the past five years, but since we all got together at the reunion as a family, now everyone is back together again. It sure is nice to say I have a sister and a brother, and mother and father who I look like. I know now I am someone with a true family background."



### "I ALWAYS WANTED TO BELONG TO A BIG FAMILY" JEAN NIXON, SAN LORENZO

"I was adopted by an elderly couple and raised as an only child. I always wanted to belong to a big family. Less than two months after I joined ALMA in October, 1976, I made my first contact and things really started popping. Imagine my surprise that I really came from a big family of four sisters and three brothers. My mother is 86 years old, and in a convalescent hospital. My father had died when I was 4 years old. We had been very poor and I was the only child given up for adoption.

It is something to be part of a big family. There are hundreds of cousins, nieces, and nephews. I am looking forward to meeting them all in the future. I am no longer lonely. They have all accepted me as their lost sister from the past."

### "IT MADE ALL OUR LIVES RICHER" RICHARD CADY, SAN FRANCISCO

"I found my older sister Suzanne in Indiana. As I got off the train a woman ran across the platform and embraced me...it was my big sis Suzzy. We had a grand reunion. Suzzy and her husband Homer took me all over town and introduced me to everyone. Their Pastor, their butcher, and all of Homer's family. Homer is one of 14 children. You can imagine the size of that family. Next came the twins, Nancy and Bob in Ohio. Nancy was happy to hear from me, but I learned that my older brother Bob had been killed in an auto accident.

Contrary to what the social workers tell you, both my sisters were absolutely delighted to have been reunited with their younger brother. It in no way disrupted their lives. Instead it made all our lives richer."

"HERITAGE DENIED"

As I sat watching the news last night, I began to slowly burn. They were reporting on a large group of German people holding a genealogy meeting to try and find their Russian heritage. They stated how these people are desperately trying to learn their roots. I too would dearly love to find my true roots, but the laws of today deny me (and at least five million others like me) this privilege. I am an adopted adult. Many adoptees have gone to their graves craving knowledge of their heritage. I believe that I'm equal as the next person but being an adoptee, I feel like I have been raped of the privilege of knowing my true roots, something everyone else takes for granted.

I love my adoptive parents and that love will never change. I have children and I have enough love in my heart for each of them, just as I do for two sets of parents. I will do everything I can to try and change the sealed records law and if we can't change them, I'll find a way to get around them.

I recently joined an organization called the Adoptees Liberty Movement Association and learned there were 25,000 people in this organization that are searching just like me. I'm no longer alone in this fight to claim my roots.

Carol Portnoy, Hayward  
(reprint from the Hayward Daily Review)

"The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress..." Frederick Douglas, 1857



"THOU SHALT NOT"

I'm an adoptive mother and I disagree strongly with the practice of sealed records. A forbidden aura has hung over this subject and adoptees have felt guilty for even being curious, and most adoptive parents have felt threatened by this curiosity. My feelings are, no one owns any kids regardless of birth or adoption. I want a new law that says: Thou shalt not deny ANYONE over 18 information about his heritage. This data is the birthright of every human being and NO person or agency has the moral right to take it away from him.

My husband and I are ensuring that our precious adopted daughter will have this right when she turns 18. We are gathering the necessary data of her heritage and placing it in a safety deposit box for her. What a relief to know that it's there for her; even if something should happen to us, she'll know we wanted her to have it and cared enough to make it available to her.

If she chooses to meet her birthparents, our heartfelt wish is that each will joyously reunite with her and be a part of her life from then on. Either way, we'll be behind her, loving her and wanting her to develop herself to her fullest. To do that her God-given right can't be denied. To become all she can be she must have freedom of choice in this matter.

Time and again, others have told me that I am her real mother but the woman who grew within her the life of this child is also her mother. I know instinctively there will always be a tie between them that I don't share. I say: "Blest be the tie that binds." It is truly a sacred bond and every adoptee must have their choice to pursue that bond if they so wish. Don't deny the tie.

Molly Ann Greene, San Francisco

About Molly Ann Greene: She has been nominated as one of the outstanding women in America in 1977. She was the first adoptive parent to join ALMA, and addressed our 1974 conference on "The Right to Know." Formerly an elementary school teacher, she currently gives a course on "Effective Parenting". Molly Ann will lead rap sessions for adoptive parents starting in July. (See Calendar)

"THE RESULT IS SO REWARDING" RUTH DUSENBERRY, FREMONT

"I first joined ALMA on Memorial Day weekend in 1976. Emma Vilardi and her husband were such a tremendous help in our search for my son and daughter. From a phone booth, which I am sure was the hottest and the windiest corner in Anaheim, I heard my son's voice for the first time in twenty-seven years. I said, "George, this is your mother." He hesitated a moment and said, "I have two questions to ask you. What is my sister's name and what is her birthday?" Of course, I knew the right answers. He said, "You are my mother!"

When we drove up to his home, there standing on the lawn was this huge handsome young man with my grandson in his arms. The next afternoon we spent at my daughter's home. All of us spent the happiest Christmas we had ever known together. I have four grandsons, and they are looking forward to spending vacation with us and meeting all the relatives they didn't know they had. My advice to all of you, don't give up your search. The result is so rewarding it would stagger your imagination in finding the ones you love!"



IMAGES

I see your face as I look at my reflection in the waters of the past.  
Your hands are mine as I look at every fold and wrinkle of textured skin.  
My face as it is mellowed by the sun and wind is shaped by you.  
My eyes look deep into past images trying to form your face.  
You are the woman who formed my Soul.

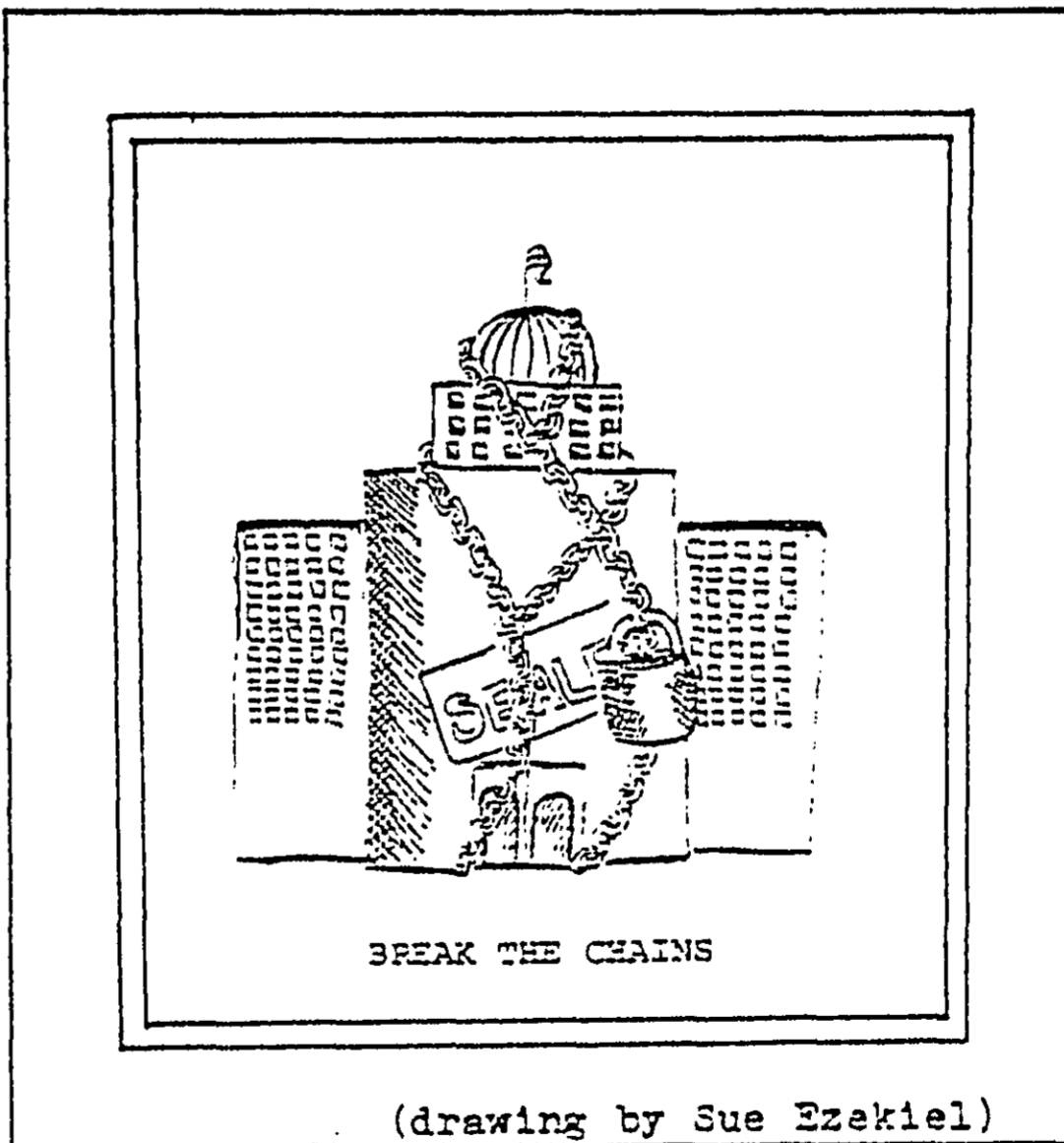
Phillip A. Lindberg, El Cerrito

"THE LAWS WILL NOT CHANGE THEMSELVES"

If we sit in a corner and feel sorry for ourselves, we will accomplish nothing. The laws will not change themselves. Every minute we neglect to follow through, someone may have died who had a piece of useful information. It's important that we share ideas with which we've had success. It's not for our own good that we are being kept in the dark about our origins. Until we take what is rightfully ours as adults, we'll be treated like children. Every person who is reunited with his or her natural family...every person who breaks the chains...is a victory for all of us.

I sometimes indulge in a little fantasy that all those persons who are keeping our records from us should one day be in a particular situation where they need their own records, and when they go to find them, discover that they have been sealed, and can only be opened by the order of a judge, and unfortunately, all the judges just happen to be out of town, for an extended period of time and aren't expected back for 10 years.

Sue Ezekiel, Oakland



(drawing by Sue Ezekiel)

TIDBIT: We have a new member who asks everyone she meets every day to donate one dollar for the ALMA Class Action Suit.



THE ALMA SOCIETY

The annual contribution to ALMA is \$20.00. This entitles you to: a listing in our nationwide Registry which can result in a match-up, a search plan with instructions for filling out form letters to obtain maximum information from private and state agencies, procedures for using legal forms regarding freedom of information and challenges to access restrictions, input to the "buddy" system which operates throughout the country to secure information from different geographic locations, ongoing follow-up on your case, and in the Bay Area, free counselling to help work out sensitive family problems during the search-reunion period.



"THERE IS A VERY SPECIAL PLACE IN HER HEART"

I am a natural mother searching for my twin sons born on Feb.8, 1954. Since joining ALMA in 1975, I've attended every meeting I could. I would like to say to all adoptees searching for their natural mother that you have not had one birthday that you were not on her mind. Had she been the woman then that she is today, she would have died before giving you up. There is a special place in her heart that she has carried for you.

Inez Bobbitt, Oakland

*things of interest*

SEARCH SPOTS:



The Eaines Directory covers the entire Bay Area. Listings are by street name giving the names of residents living on each block. It can be found in the main lobby of the Oakland Airport, on the corner of Doolittle and Airport Drive in Oakland.

The Mormon Temple, for good geneological reference. 4780 Lincoln Avenue in Oakland. For hours, call: (415) 531-3905

"EMMA SAYS":

Don't overlook the obvious! Many people neglect to check all variations of the phonetic spelling of surnames at birth of both themselves and natural parents. And above all, don't overlook the City Directories, present date.

BOOK CORNER:



"The Search for Anna Fisher," by Florence Fisher, 1973 (Fawcett Paperback \$1.25)

If you're temporarily tired of searching, read this book. You'll start all over again. "Compassionate without self-pity. I recommend it without reservation." - Rod McKuen

"The Politics of Adoption," by Mary Kathleen Benet, 1976 (The Free Press \$8.95)

A critical, comprehensive study of the "watergates" in adoption practice. Not yet in paperback, but available at the public library.

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HELP!! Cure staf of typiysts have two lefft hands. The red karpit is owt for top notch typiysts hwo will helpp us produse literatueand the Adoptee's World neuseletter. Please call Carol: (415) 538-2592

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In The Next Issue:

☀️ DETAILS OF THE FALL ANNUAL EVENT ☀️  
AN OPEN LETTER TO NATURAL MOTHEERS

Please send your suggestions, articles, art, and poetry to:  
Sarah, c/o ALMA, 625 Post St, Box 252, San Francisco, Ca. 94102

Editor: Sarah Howe, Assistant: Sue Ezekiel, Art and Calligraphy: Kate Knudsen, Production: Mike Ezekiel

# Calendar

## GENERAL MEETINGS AND SEARCH WORKSHOPS

Meetings are held on the last Sunday of every month  
 Time: From 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
 Place: Glendale Federal Savings Bank  
 6100 Geary Blvd (25th Avenue)  
 Bus Lines are 1, 2, 28, 31, and 38  
 The Bank provides us with refreshments.

For the remainder of 1977, meeting dates are: June 26th,  
 July 31st, Aug. 28th, Sept. 25th, Oct. 30th, and Nov. 27th.

Searchers: Please remember to bring your birth certificate and other available documents. The search workshop is open to members only.

HELP FOR THE HANDICAPPED: For adoptees who are handicapped or disabled and need assistance in search, we have an ALMA member who is skilled in sign language, manual alphabet, and in working with the handicapped. For more information, call: (415) 538-2592.



## JOIN OUR WEEKLY RAP SESSIONS

East Bay: (415) 834-1742 or 351-4299  
 Manteca: (209) 823-7966  
 San Francisco: (415) 538-2592  
 San Jose: (408) 274-2833

ADOPTIVE PARENTS RAP SESSIONS, led by Molly Ann Greene, are held on the 2nd Sunday of every month alternating between San Francisco and Oakland.

Date: July 10th, 1977  
 Time: 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
 Place: San Francisco (call: 538-2592)



etcetera.....

TAX DEDUCTABLE: Your contributions are tax deductible. Funds are needed to help defray our expenses and for the class action suit. Please make your checks payable to: The ALMA Society, and mail to 625 Post Street, Box 252, San Francisco, Ca. 94102. ALSO, gifts of stationary, envelopes printing and the like will be truly appreciated.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you would like a friend to receive this newsletter, please send in their name and address along with \$2.00 for a year's subscription.

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TIME VALUE

*To Emma Powell  
 with Sarah*

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED