**Oregon
Adoptive
Rights
Association**

OARA "The Right to Search"
P.O. Box 1332 · Beaverton, Oregon 97075 · 646-04

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APRIL 1980 Vol. I No. 1

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LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT:

Thirty-two years ago I was born with a club foot. My adoptiv parents were told by my mother's doctor, and the adoption agency th it was caused by positioning. Five months ago I gave birth to a daughter with two club feet. Through her Orthopedist I have learn that a club foot is a dominant heriditary trait.

We adoptees need to know our biological past. We need to kno for the sake of our children, our children's children, and our ow emotional well being. Birth parents need to be relieved of the anx of never knowing their relinguished childs fate.

The Oregon Legislature will be discussing the adoption issue again. How do you feel about this issue? Maybe you're not ready to search yet. But when you are ready, do you want the right to see you records? To have a name, a place to start?

This is an election year, numbers count. Each and everyone of your opinions count. Every personal story carries weight. Think about it. For hose of you who must remain anonymous, your letters will be kept confidential. For those of you who can go public, we can use you at the public hearings.

Please help, we need each and everyone of you. Address your letters and inquiries to me in care of O.A.R.A.

Karen Moyer
April, 1980

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In February, the newly elected Board of Directors met for the first time. At this meeting the election of officers took place. Th ollowing people were elected and agreed to serve.

Karen Moyer: President
Nancy Fix: Vice-President
Marj Mackay: Secretary
Nancy Ayres: Treasurer
Judy DeFrada: Editor of Bulletin
Ellie Keeney: Board Member
Stephanie Anastasia: Board Member

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All officers and board members may be contacted by writing or calling O.A.R.A. Anyone wishing to contribute articles to the O.A bulletin are encouraged to do so. This is the first bulletin put o by us. We hope to be able to publish quarterly. I would personally like to thank everyone for their support the past few weeks while th bulletin was being put together.

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MISSING PERSONS:

We have been missing many of our members at the meetings the past few months. It is important to have continued support from members who have completed their searches. Each member has something of importance to contribute to the group if only their presence. We are planning to start having guest speakers in the next few months. They will be speaking on subjects related to the adoption triangle.

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EXCERPTS FROM RESEARCH:

"The statistical data and case histories of the adoptees who have successfully searched for their birth parents are in accord with our impression that adoptees are more vulnerable than nonadoptees to the development of identity conflicts in late adolescence and young adulthood. Many of these adoptees seem preoccupied with existential concerns and have a feeling of isolation and alienation resulting from the break in the continuity of life through the generations that their adoption represents. The adoptee's identity formation must be viewed within the context of the life cycle, in which birth and death are linked unconsciously. This is evident in the frequency with which marriage, the birth of a child, or the death of the adoptive parents triggers and even greater sense of interest in the birth parents."

"We have encountered many adoptees who are perpetual searchers, always stopping short of a reunion. The search itself (along with the associated fantasies) is the significant process serving to hold their personalities together. It would appear that these individuals would almost prefer to live with their fantasies, a prolongation of the classic family romance theme, than to face the reality of a possibly disillusioning reunion with the birth parent."

Sorosky, Arthur D., Baran, Annette., Pannor, Reubon., "The Effects of the Sealed Record in Adoption." American Journal of Psychiatry, 133:8, (August 1976), pp. 900-903.

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For those of you who have the name and birthdate of your mother and think this means instant reunion, I have news for you. I have had this information for four years now, and have a folder three inches thick of correspondence. To date, my information about my birth family is exactly zero. After many years of wondering, and with great guilt I finally asked my adopted mother for any papers she might have. I received the papers along with a lengthy letter warning me that I should not search further since it could only lead to heartbreak and disaster to those involved. From these papers I first learned my parent's names, that they were Norwegian emigrants, my mothers birth date and the name she called me. With these I was able to send for my original birth certificate which gave me the address where my mother lived when I was born. I studied telephone directories and wrote to every person listed with her last name. I had many answers but only one who said she thought we might be related since her maiden name had been the same as my mothers. She thought perhaps my mother might have been her aunt. More correspondence followed and finally I spoke with her on the telephone. She told me she had discussed it with the family members and they decided that we could not be related. I wrote the adoption agency, the hospital where I was born, the son of the physician who delivered me, Salvation Army missing persons, Norwegian Consulate, Maritime Union, Norwegian American Lines, placed two ads in the Norwegian paper in that city, checked city directories and emigration lists. I also sent for death and marriage certificates and received the same answer "not enough information".

I paid a search adviser in that state to make two visits to the city to look for information. All negative responses. Then I tried Norway. I wrote letters to the archives in the six districts asking for a copy of my mothers birth certificate. All wrote that they had to know the parish where she was from before they could search. I have no idea what town she was born in. I wrote a long letter to the leading newspaper in Oslo asking that my letter be printed. They said it was too delicate a matter. What do I do next? I have no idea, but I'll think of something. Any suggestions? I have a mental picture of myself driving across the country in a large van with a megaphone on the roof broadcasting loudly "Asta Carlsen where are you?"

Marj Mackay
(Formally Lillian Carlsen)

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CHAPTERS

We are in the process of setting up a chapter group in southern Oregon. Anyone interested in participating please write to the following address.

Kathy Brown
1076 Queens Br. Rd.
Rogue River, Or.
97537

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ATTENTION: MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

We have quite a few O.A.R.A. T-Shirts left, and with warm weather coming they would be handy for the beach, gardening, or what have you, besides, informing the public we are here. Everyone can use pens and ours are attractive, of good quality, and our slogan catches the eye. Help us out people, we need your support.

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O.A.R.A. MEETINGS:

PLACE: Multnomah County Library at 7:00 p.m. Downtown Branch

DATES: Every third wednesday of the month
May 21, 1980
June 18, 1980
July 16, 1980

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The 1980 National Adoption Conference will be held in May at Disneyland. There will be four days filled with meetings and also a searchers workshop. We will report about the meeting at the next meeting and also in our next bulletin.

Upon being asked to write this article and relate something of my feelings about my adoption experience, my first reaction was, "Why would anyone be interested in hearing about a negative reunion, which probably seems like a devasting end result, to most people?" Then, later while driving home and thinking it over, the realization came to me that, although my contact with my birth mother was one of only 2 or 3 total rejections out of over three hundred unions during the past year in this area, for me the end result has definitely not been negative, but instead has brought tremendous change for good, and for greater clarity in my life.

I think now that it may be good that I do this, if only to encourage people who are searching for birth parents, and who may wait for periods of years before acting upon the information they do have, because of a gnawing fear of rejection.

Going to the first O.A.R.A meeting was one of the most rewarding and healing experiences I have had. I suddenly realized that there was a whole support group of people waiting to welcome, help, and to encourage me. I was finally not alone, different, or an ungrateful criminal for wanting to know who I was.

Before attending the first meeting, I had done a little research, and had sent for my original birth certificate, and that of my mothers. After the meeting, I felt emotionally and spiritually "recharged", and began to concentrate on my search with renewed energy. One thing led to another, and before long I finally had the name and address of my grandfather in Kansas City, Kansas, who is now 84. I couldn't believe he was alive, and at the same time was afraid to call and identify myself because of his age, and the uncertainty of his health.

I went to Nancy Fix's home with Marj Mackay who acted as intermediary, and she called him for me, saying she was an old friend of his daughters, and could she have her address and phone number so she could contact her. He sounded very pleasant and agreeable, and gave us the information.

Then came "the big call". I was so grateful to have Marj calling for me, as I was so nervous and apprehensive, and not at all certain of what my mothers reaction or mine would be, and how I would handle it. She called and I listened on an extension, with such a combination of fear and anticipation, that it was almost more unreal to me than all of the fantasies I had imagined throughout my life.

When my birth mother was finally on the phone, I was jolted out of my senses by her immediate denial, coldness, and lack of sympathy or any feelings at all, except total denial. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, and at the same time was fascinated to hear a voice which sounded very slightly like mine, except for the Missouri accent she had. Her husband finally came and took the phone, made some rude remarks, and hung it up.

That call had an odd effect on me. Instead of the grief one would expect, I felt so tremendously relieved and somehow released, that I went home, pulled the phone jack, and slept for two days. When I finally did get up, I realized that I had an inner peace and knowing I had never felt before, and a calmness and feeling of being emotionally grounded and more secure than ever.

Since locating my mother and resolving the mystery of her and of me, I find that I have opened up so much as a human being, and am experiencing such a richness and depth of feelings that I hadn't thought possible, in all areas of my life. The lines of communication are suddenly open with almost everyone I know, and I have felt such a change in my life since the weight I've carried around so long has been lifted. It has truly been almost a rebirth.

In essence, what I most want to communicate to other adoptees, is the reality was a long time coming to me. The fantasy is not better than reality. If you have information and are not using it, reconsider, please. Years pass quickly, and people come and go in this life. The contacts available to us now may not be later. I bitterly regret the time I let pass without searching because of other peoples feelings. We have valid feelings and emotions also, and the time and energy we expend just envisioning and imagining unknown family and events can add up to a wasted lifetime.

Just hearing my mothers voice, although negative and hostile and full of fear, lifted a tremendous weight from me, and has allowed me to finally get on with my life, and to realize that she does exist, and, therefore, I can exist in peace.

Nancy Ayres

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Editor: Judy DePrada Typist: Susan Fix

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OARA is very happy to welcome two ladies from Bend who have volunteered to be Area Representatives and are now working to arrange regular meetings for Central Oregon. Candi Adams is an adoptee who has completed her search with the assistance of her adoptive mother, and is eager to help others. Her number is 388-1078. She will be working with Dawn Kastning, 382-8010, another adult adoptee who is just beginning her search. Candi and Dawn met with Nancy Fix on July 25th, the day after a live TV interview talk program called "Sundial" on KTVZ. Nancy Landis, the host, invited Lynda Merrill (a board member of Boys and Girls Aid Society, who is also a volunteer worker in their Outreach program and the mother of three adopted children) and Nancy Fix of OARA to be guests on the July 24th show to discuss the needs and responsibilities of everyone involved with adoption. There were several interesting questions asked and comments made by callers and the discussion could have gone on for hours. A filmed segment of Diane Clark of Bend telling her own story of why she has decided to search, not for a new set of parents but because of a deep need to know her background and to find someone who looks and acts like her, was very moving. Judy is a new member of OARA and is working with Candi and Dawn. She can be reached at home in the evenings at 382-6744. Nancy Landis arranged for OARA to use a room and telephone in the First Presbyterian Church so Nancy Fix was able to talk with interested people in Bend. Our thanks to KTVZ, Nancy Landis and the First Presbyterian Church for their friendly assistance.

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As a child, birthdays for me brought out mixed feelings. I was of course excited and would look forward to my birthday. But each year a different emotion would show itself. At some point in the day I would begin to think about my birth mother. I would wonder if she was thinking about me or if she even knew it was my birthday. These feelings I was never able to share with anyone. Even my closest friends didn't seem to understand what I was feeling. If I dwelled too long on these feelings I would then begin to feel guilty for even thinking of my birth mother.

Birthdays for me have always left me a little sad but this year was different. Since my reunion with my birth mother we have both discovered how hard my birthday was for both of us. For her, it was being depressed and not being able to discuss it with anyone. I have waited thirty years to say thank you mother for the gift of life and for the friendship we have developed.

- OARA Member

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