

ADOPTION
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NEWSLETTER OF JIGSAW INC
March 1982

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President: Josie Committee: Maxine, Peggy, Gillian, Sue,
Secretary: Margaret Raewyn, Vil, Dean, Bruce,
Treasurer: Lindsay Stan, Jason

Letter from the President: The year as usual has gone so quickly. It has been a year of waiting to hear the outcome about our political issue, but I will leave the sub-committee to tell you about that. We have had a lot of publicity on radio, papers, etc. Our office is as usual overloaded with work. If it wasn't for one of our workers, Peggy, who unrelentingly carries on I don't know how we would have coped. After being involved and helping many people I can see if we don't get any change in our present law that our numbers will keep on growing at an alarming rate. Even now the few on the committee who actually work on files and do a day in the office cannot really handle the workload. So if you are just starting your search or have had your contact please think as to whether you could spare 4 - 5 hours one day a week to help in the office. All of us who help members and work in the office do this at our own time and expense. I think it needs to be known that none of us receive any monetary gain from it. And it's not only the hours in the office, there are many hours at home. Our phone numbers are on the (unreliable) answerphone, and we get calls day and night. It can be very emotionally draining at times. But the reward we get is worth every minute of our time.

There is so much that needs to be done besides helping our members: research, surveys, talks to groups and schools, preparing facts and figures, keeping contact with people and support groups all over Nz, updating our literature, replying to a big volume of overseas mail. This is why I am resigning as there is so much to do and I feel I'm letting everyone down by holding my position and not doing more.

I will always be grateful for Jigsaw Inc being an existence: to the people who started Jigsaw I give my thanks as it enabled me to find my Birth Mother. As for disappearing altogether, I hope to be able to continue helping members still as I have some unfinished files I'd like to finalise.

I'd like to thank everyone who helps Jigsaw Inc and hope that I will see you at the A.G.M.

Josie Hendry

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

28th April, 7:30 pm in the lounge, St Pauls Church
12 St Vincent Ave, Remuera

Mrs Betty Tennet will be speaking and supper will be provided

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If paying your subscription at the Annual General Meeting PLEASE fill out the tear-off form on this newsletter and present it with your payment.

NOTICE OF MOTION is hereby given that the Rules of Jigsaw Inc be amended so that Clause 6 reads as follows:

Clause 6. Members and Membership

Any person who has paid the registration fee as set from time to time by the executive committee and has had his or her name placed on the central register, and had his or her membership approved by the executive committee, shall thenceforth be a member of Jigsaw Incorporated. The executive committee may

STOP PRESS: OUR OFFICE IS DESPERATE FOR MORE HELPERS

decline to approve any membership without the need to assign a reason therefor. Members in good standing may resign at any time by filing a written resignation with the secretary of Jigsaw Incorporated.

AND that Clause 13 be amended by the inclusion of the following: Executive Committee members in good standing may resign from the Committee at any time by filing a written resignation with the secretary of Jigsaw Incorporated.

SEARCHING? One of our Wellington members is spending much time at present helping people with their searches, particularly with work at the Registrar General's office. She is willing to help anyone who is bogged down and has had many successes. Write to us if interested and we will put you in touch with her.

NEWSLETTER Helpers are needed for stapling, folding and addressing our newsletters. You would be needed 3 or 4 times a year, that's all. At present the committee are doing this on top of their other jobs - not fair when there are about 500 Auckland members not helping at all!! Besides it can be fun. And we need someone to type it please.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Members can use this column at a cost of \$1.00

- Adoptee, male, born 5.11.29 in Christchurch Essex Hosp, seeking his birthmother who was 18 years old, a Dunedin music teacher.
- Adoptee, male, born 6 Feb, 1960 at Bethany, Christchurch, seeking birth parents.
- Adoptee, female (part Maori) seeking birth parents, born 16.5.62, Wellington Public Hosp. Birth mother named Edith.
- Adoptee, female, seeking birth parents, born 25.4.49 at Bellevue Hospital, Auckland,
- Adoptee, male, seeking birthmother (South Islander), born Lower Hutt Hospital, 1.6.57.
- Adoptee, female, seeking information of Birth mother. Born 21.2.49 at Essex Hosp, Christchurch (named Robyn Anne Short)
- Birth mother seeking female child given in adoption, born Devonport Hospital 27 Oct, 1951.
- Birth mother seeking daughter born 2 Feb 1960 at Fairleigh Hosp, Grey Lynn. Given name Clarice. Motherhood of Man arranged the adoption.
- Birth mother seeking daughter born 18 Nov, 1966 at Motueka Cottage Hosp. Daughter's Christian names registered as Penny Lee. Contact with daughter and adoptive parents greatly desired.
- Birth mother seeking daughter born 18 Nov. 1968, at Thames Hospital, North Island.
- Birth mother seeking daughter born 26 November 1963 at St Mary's, Otahuhu
- Birth mother seeking son, born 2.3.57 at St Helens Auckland
- Adoptive parents seeking information urgently (for medical reasons) about Birthmother. Their daughter was born at Ed. Murphy Hosp, Gisborne, 28.1.69, weighed 6½ lbs. Birth mother was probably a clerk, she had one brother, her father was an accountant & her mother worked in a TAB agency. Can anyone help?

POLITICAL SCENE

Current news is that the Bill is being redrafted and will go back to the Statutes Revision Committee before being referred to Parliament for the vote. It is heartening that so many of you are supporting the Bill in a practical way. It is not too late to do something if you haven't already. A letter to the Chairman of the Statutes Revision Committee is what is required. His Address: Parliament Buildings, Wellington. You need to send 50 photocopies with your original letter.

STOP PRESS - WE NEED MORE HELPERS NOW 402

Do you belong to an organisation interested in Human rights? There are many groups who might consider sending a supporting statement to the committee, such as kindergartens, Playcentres, Plunket, Rotary, Jaycees, Lifeline etc. etc. We will be contacting some of these groups but could use your help.

At present our sub-committee consists of Gillian and Lyn - full stop!! We desperately need more people. If you have done anything political all the better. If not, there is spade work aplenty you could do for us. And it is an opportunity to learn something and to grow.

Gillian resigned from the Vice-president's position last year in order to organise this sub-committee, but our scope is so limited by lack of people. In the most important year for us regarding a law change, are we to be ineffectual through lack of manpower? Don't let that happen!

BOOKS

We are coming across some very good books now, most of which are difficult to obtain at shops and libraries. Keep asking your library so that hopefully they will note which books are often requested, and order them. A friend in the U.S.A. sent us a little gem called -

"Open Adoption and Open Placement" by January Roberts and Diane C. Robie. (The Adoption Press, P.O. Box 29617, Brooklyn Centre, MN55429)

As you are unlikely to come across the book, here are some excerpts to think about: - "Open adoption is the recognition of the fact that when adopting a child, whether an infant or an older child, one is accepting the responsibility of a PERSON WITH ANOTHER SET OF PARENTS WHO CANNOT PARENT BUT DO CARE. It is like a marriage. One does not necessarily marry a person, singular, but is truly marrying INTO a family. In adoption, a parent is accepting the responsibility of parenting a young person who already has a family, no matter how distant, uninvolved or interested..... Open adoption can function in many ways to suit the individuals involved. As they say in the book, 'It may include knowing names of the three parties of the Triad. Each of the birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) may know the whereabouts of the other and have direct contact with each other via letters, phone calls, pictures and visits. Open adoption may mean the birthparent(s) and adoptive parent(s) exchange only letters and pictures, either directly or through an intermediary.....

One adoptive mother tells "Open Adoption will not be readily accepted by all, but there should be that option for anyone who recognises the importance of realistic parenting of their adopted children. In our love for them, it would be foolish to pretend that they will not have the need to deal with their adoption...."

"The emphasis must indicate the adoptee as the most important individual in the adoption process, the person whom society's rules must encompass."

'January (the author) has not had to endure the 'unknown' of her children as have many birthmothers. She does not have to wonder if her children are alive and well. The communication of Open Adoption eliminates those secrets which are a predominant element of the traditional, closed method.

The traditional, closed method of adoption punishes birthmothers by 'sealing' the fact that she did indeed give birth to a child; in effect telling her she is of no value to her child or her child's future. Society imposes its morals and convictions on these birthmothers by demanding secrecy and denying their role in the child's heritage. Societal problems, pressures and the labels of illegitimacy, unwed, sinful, welfare mother and 'no good' are inflicted on many young single mothers. This is not just cause to punish a mother for the rest of her life by denying her knowledge of her child's well-being. The traditional closed methods of adoption are a societal form of punishment to these birthmothers. It says they are not worthy; it makes liars out of them because they must deny the existence of the child they bore.

Open Adoption allows the birthmother to take responsibility for her

STOP PRESS - WE ARE DESPERATE FOR MORE HELPERS

part of the adoption plan. When people ask January if she has children she replies in a confident manner -

"Yes, I have two beautiful children. They do not live with me, however, because they are being parented by someone else. I made a responsible adoption plan for them as I felt I could not Parent them effectively due to my emotional and financial state".

Sadly our Jigsaw members who are birthmothers are not involved in Open Adoption and had little say in how the adoption would work. For most of us there was no choice but to do what our parents, doctors, social worker told us what was best for the baby. Often we were instructed not to look at the child we bore, and told that we would forget it and get on with our life. At least we are seeing changes in some of these areas now, but what is lacking is the understanding that a birthmother grieves the loss of her child for years, and needs much support from family and trained counsellors after parting with the most precious gift that can be given.

But there is much cause for us also to hold up our heads in a confident manner. We had little choice, but we sincerely believed that adoption would provide a better life for our child and because we loved that child so dearly we wanted to do what seemed best for him or her. Perhaps we can gradually find the courage to say "Yes I had a beautiful baby and provided him with the best life I could by allowing him to be adopted". No one has the right to criticise - our society did not often allow any other choice.

Now there are more options. If adoption is chosen a mother can insist on having a say in what sort of adoption plan she wants. She can take time to meet the prospective parents and get to know a little about them, she does not have to sign the consent paper until she is happy about it. She can feed her baby until it is adopted. Social Welfare will act as an intermediary and pass on photos and letters for a short time. This is really Open Placement - it may still be difficult for this to develop into an Open Adoption which carries on what has been started. Social attitudes are slow to change. What a lot of trust there has to be between the 3 or 4 parents involved for Open Adoption to work well for the child. Some people are doing this successfully, it really can work.

It should be mentioned that there are still any number of people trying to make decisions for a birth mother, it is essential that she assert herself and obtain the best possible arrangement for the child and herself.

Another book to try for, by Betty Jean Lifton is "LOST AND FOUND" published by Bantam Books Inc. New York.

One chapter, "The Chosen Baby" discusses how the usual story of the chosen baby as told to young adopted children, can be the beginning of the distortion of reality, the seeds of a confusion that will grow in him as he grapples for some sense of authenticity over the years. The central character, the woman who gave birth to the child, is usually missing from the story told to the adopted child. Some adoptees have said the stories made them feel twice rejected - once by the natural parents who didn't keep them, and by the adoptive parents who couldn't have a baby of their own. Being 'chosen' meant being second-best (the couple choosing adoption only after failing to achieve their own child).

"The Adoptee as Double", another chapter explaining how adoptees unconsciously spend their lives in search of the missing part of themselves - sometimes feeling as though they have a twin - or another possible self that would have emerged had they been kept by their birth parents, or had they been 'chosen' by a different couple, or had they been the child their adoptive parents might have had, had they been fertile

A thought provoking book. I believe all parties in an adoption will learn much from this book and will be able to identify with the feelings it discusses.

"THE ADOPTION TRIANGLE" - Those who donated money for a copy of this book to be sent to an M.P. should know that there has been a delay in obtaining enough copies. If the books don't arrive in time to be useful for this purpose, we will refund your money. Thank you anyway, your donation is much appreciated by the law-change sub-committee.

"ADOPTION;PROCEDURE - DOCUMENTATION - STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND
1881 - 1981 . 100 YEARS" by Keith Griffith
Published by Keith Griffith,1981. (235 Karori Rd.,Wellington)

This is the title of a most comprehensive book about adoption in New Zealand, and should be in every Public Library. Please ask your Library to get it. It is available from the author at around \$20.00.

A member in England shares her diary with us:

10.3.81: Today is the day I had been waiting for after four years of hard saving. I was going to New Zealand to find my father. All I knew about him was his name and that he was a seaman.

Friday, 15th: We arrived in New Zealand. Mary, a friend, was with me and we went to Hamilton to stay with a friend of hers - the friend already had visitors named Pat and Bill. We were introduced to them, and we all went to bed. Next day Pat and Bill suggested it would be better if I went to stay with them nearer Auckland. We discussed the way we were going to find my father. We thought of an Ad. in the personal column, but we were not pinning any hopes on that. I was also to ring the Union Steamship Company. If that did not work, Bill was going to get a newspaper reporter or a T.V. reporter so no matter what we decided I would find my father.

Monday 17th: Pat rang before 9 a.m. with some information. A friend whose father was a seaman said that the name was familiar and he would make some enquiries for me. I then rang Jigsaw but had to wait for the office to open to make my appointment. Pat then rang me back with the name of my father's ship! But the shipping company had gone bankrupt! She also had rung the paper and put an Ad. in. Then I spoke to Peggy at Jigsaw, and she gave me an appointment for 10 a.m. the following day.

Tuesday 18th: When I arrived I told Peggy how I had already found my natural mother 4 years ago. It was made easier for me because the law on adoption had been changed in England, allowing any person over 18 years to find their natural parents. I had to be counselled by a social worker and an adoptive counsellor. It took a few weeks, but one Friday I had a phone call to say my natural mother had agreed to see me, so it was up to me to make the arrangements. I wrote her a letter, described myself and arranged to meet her the following week. When I arrived in South Shield and eventually found her street, I had second thoughts. I walked up and down the street about 5 or 6 times and eventually plucked up enough courage to knock on the door. I felt very strange - it was as though I had known her all my life, and yet I had just met her. She said she had always known that I would find her so when the social worker visited her she said she knew what she had come for and said 'yes'. My natural mother did most of the talking, I just listened. She told me the reason why she put me up for adoption, I accepted her reasons. Then my half brother came in and it was quite unusual - he looked like me and we had the same likes and dislikes. My natural mother said he had always known about me. We struck up a good stable relationship, which even today is very strong. The only thing is I cannot bring myself to call Marianne Mother, but through time I hope this will correct itself. After I had told Peggy all this she said she thought I was going to be lucky and she made me some coffee. Then - she said my father had just phoned Pat before I arrived and that he would like to meet me!! Peggy suggested that she come with me to meet my father, but I said no. She said he was going to ring me at 12 noon to make arrangements to meet me the following day. When I left the office I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. My father rang me at 12 noon exactly, and we decided to meet under the Post Office clock at noon the next day. The feeling I had was too great to describe, in fact when I sent a telegram to my Social Worker, I didn't know what to write. I never slept much that night but I think it was understandable!!

Wednesday 19th: I was very excited today because my life-long ambition was to be achieved. Bill took me into Auckland - we seemed to hit every red light and the minutes seemed like hours. Bill asked me what my father looked like, and I had to say that I forgot to ask him. The clock struck noon, I thought he would appear but he did not. Finally I saw a man standing under the Post Office clock. When Bill went over it turned out to be him. I felt all that we wanted to do was hug each other, but there was too much distance between us. The feeling I had was different to meeting my natural mother, and his first words were, "how are you?" I said "fine", and he said he was okay, then we walked Bill to his car. We went for a drink - he wanted to have lunch but I couldn't eat anything, there was so much to ask in such a limited time. He said he was proud of me to have come all the way from England to find him. The two hours went very quickly, but he said he would like to see me again. I wanted to go with him, but I knew it was quite impossible, as he had said his wife would not accept me. For the first time I felt a whole person. I had my identity and a sense of belonging. It took a long time to come off cloud nine, but the feeling was great. I met my father twice more and he rang me several times. I came back to England a whole person and a different person - it was as though a load had been lifted off my shoulder.

Here is a small poem I wrote while in New Zealand:

"A" is for adoption if in a state of despair
 "D" is for doubt for children in care
 "O" is for option most children don't have
 "P" is for parent for children to love
 "T" is for trust for both parents and child

Contributed by: Miss A.M. Johnson,
 14 Alexandra Terrace,
 Crook, County Durham.

OF INTEREST TO THOSE SEEKING BIRTH PARENTS IN AMERICA

We have over the last months established a contact in the U.S.A. with an organisation called "Adoptees in Search". The President of this group has indicated to Jigsaw that he is willing to be of assistance to our registered members who are searching for birth parents, whom they believe to be in the U.S.A., particularly birth fathers who were American servicemen.

If members are interested in corresponding with America, please write initially to Margaret, c/- Jigsaw for further details.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICIAL RESIGNATION:

To the Members and Committee of Jigsaw Inc; - In stepping down from the position of President of Jigsaw, I wish to make it quite clear that my reasons for doing so are only to provide the opportunity for another person to bring new ideas and thoughts to the organisation.

There is much to be done, and unfortunately I do not have the time to fulfil my position in giving it the attention that it requires.

I thank all of you who have worked with me on the Committee, and hope that it will be possible for you to continue the good work.

My resignation becomes effective from our 1982 Annual General Meeting.

-- Josie Hendry --

SOLICITOR, ACCOUNTANT:

Have we a Solicitor, and an Accountant who would come on our Committee? This would be a tremendous help to us. Also, someone skilled in applying for Grants.

DON'T FORGET TO PASS ON YOUR NEWSLETTER

One of our members, now residing in America, has given permission for the reproduction of the following short piece of prose she wrote, shortly after placing her baby for adoption.

And would you
snatch
the still, moist cub
from the lioness, knowing
no fear
of sharp claws upon your flesh;
Or dig the roots of some sapling - tree
and fear not
to watch the sap run dry
and crust upon the bark?
Yet you take from me
my life blood,
child of my womb -
conceived in Love and born in pain -
You would create for me
this empty hollow within,
the longing arms and unfulfilled sigh;
Why?

***** B.H. 1961.

~~Get here~~

Annual Subscription - payable in June
each year after joining: \$5.00.

(Please note: Members who joined this year and members who paid their subs. in 1981 will receive the newsletter until the end of 1982. Subscription reminders will be sent out with the first 1983 issue. Non-financial members - this will be your last newsletter.)

Name:

Address: Phone:

Amount Enclosed: Cheque or M/Order

I would like to help with:

- Searching Electoral Rolls: Typing at Home:
- Helping with Newsletters: Political Work:
- Casual Office Work: Duplicating:
- Joining the Committee: Photocopying:
- Helping form a Support Group in my area:

Please return to: JIGSAW INC.,
P.O. BOX 9228,
NEWMARKET, AUCKLAND.

WE URGENTLY REQUIRE MORE HELP - N O W !!!