



Information Please

(A Newsletter For Adults)

Publicity on the work and goals of A. B. C. is gaining momentum, courtesy of the La. Lions Club, WAFB-Channel 9 in Baton Rouge, and the "Morning Advocate" in B. R.

On June 5, the 2nd Annual Lions' Sight & Hearing Telethon will be broadcast between noon and 6 p. m. on Cablevision Channel 8. The Lions Club, through the advocacy of newscaster D'Wayne Graham, is allowing Baton Rouge A. B. C. 'er David Matson and two other A. B. C. reps to serve as guest telephone operators to take telethon pledges and to answer questions from the television audience on adoption and searching.

The "Morning Advocate" is considering a series of investigative articles on adoption, agency practices, searching and reunions. The newspaper, as a member AP newspaper, has been most faithful to promoting in a positive light the reunion of David Matson and his birth family. The articles have appeared as a front page local feature and as an AP wire story.

The media in Baton Rouge is giving a tremendous amount of coverage--all positive--to the reunion of David's family. Surely, the legislators in B. R. will be forced to at least acknowledge that the release of confidential information does have merit for all.

As of May 31, H. B. 114 has yet to be scheduled for hearing by the Senate Health & Welfare Committee. Unless amended back to its original version as introduced by Rep. Quentin Dastugue (D-Jefferson), A. B. C. opposes the bill since it further restricts access of information, even the ~~now~~ identifying information.

The original hearing by the House Civil Law & Procedure Committee found the bill weighted by amendments proposed by Reps. Hunt Downer and Jimmy Dimos, all we assume for personal reasons and through the influences of the three Edna Gladney diehards who testified. (The Oscar Awards committee missed a lovely opportunity to view the oral performance of those three who "at the risk" of having us A. B. C. 'ers "suffer cardiac arrest" did say they actually did "support" the original bill.)

In discussing Edna Gladney, we need to note that the Gladney business is alive & well in Baton Rouge. On page 1, Section B, of the May 23 "Morning Advocate", a young husband & wife are pictured displaying the 9-day old daughter they "picked up... in Fort Worth."

So often the thought of a search beginning in the Edna Gladney Home file drawers forces a giggle among A. B. C. 'ers. We veterans often neglect to explain to the uninitiated that the original concepts and practices of the woman Edna Gladney were truly admirable. She was truly a crusader for the welfare of children and unwed mothers. However....

The modern-day realization of her concepts and devotion has been transformed into a series of high-priced social clubs billed as "auxiliaries" in various cities in La. and Texas.

Excerpting from the Home's quarterly publication "Ours" we learn that the New Orleans auxiliary is "feeling quite proud" that "our Gladney Billboard is up for everyone to see on Interstate 10 in Jefferson Parish" and that it will "lead any young women to Gladney if she needs its wonderful services."

Further, auxiliary families are urged to join the National Committee for Adoption. The news entry of the Longview (TX) auxiliary also notes that the members "learned a great deal from her (a Gladney caseworker) about open records and the hope of establishing a Registry at Gladney for adoptees and biological mothers."

The Registry bill passed in both Houses of the Texas legislature is, as Ruby Lee Piester (Gladney's former Executive Director and now, Advisor of Long Range Planning) described it, "an appropriate compromise between open records and the present system." She, however, continues to work "against the injustices of the Model Adoption Act and the interruptions of privacy of open records."

(Bet she's promoting a Registry that is as operational and useful as the yet-existent one passed in the 1982 Louisiana Legislative session!)

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.

Do not trust those in whom the compulsion to punish is strong. --Neitzche

The most glorious moments in your life are not the so-called days of success, but rather those days when out of dejection and despair you feel rise in you a challenge to life, and the promise of future accomplishments. --Flaubert

Johnnie Kocurek and Gloria Veillion attended for a day the "Child Welfare League of America" Southern Regional Training Conference in New Orleans. They report that the once-powerful (self-proclaimed, no doubt) Richard Zeilinger, Director of Children's Bureau, New Orleans, was decidedly displaced, by his colleagues, as the spokesman for all La. social workers.

Two workshops within the 3-day conference dealt positively and specifically with adoption: "when adoptive parents and birthparents meet" and "working with adult adoptees or baby grows up!". The second was conducted by Penny Partridge, MSW, lecturer, and founder of Adoption Forum of Philadelphia.

Remember to mark Saturday, August 13 on your calendar!!!

The 1st annual Southwest Regional Conference of the A. A. C. is scheduled in Lake Charles; and, is being hosted by the Lake Charles chapter of A. B. C. The conference, housed at the Sheraton-Chateau Charles, begins at 8 a.m. and concludes around 6:30 p.m.

Chaired by Ethelyn Leger, the Lake Charles A. B. C. group is putting together a day of most informational and educational workshops and panel discussions. With nationally prominent speakers and authors invited, the program is designed to promote the goals of the American Adoption Congress, of which A. B. C. is a member organization. The goals:

1. To rewrite adoption laws and remodel agency practices toward greater openness, honesty and justice in adoption.
2. To rectify the deprivations of past adoptions by aiding individuals in searching their genetic heritages and in resurrecting their relationships of origin.
3. To grant a valid option of adoption to expectant birthparents who, in our open society, ask participation in their children's adoptions.
4. To relieve adoptive parents the anxiety of unknown factors in their children's medical and social backgrounds through more open communication both before and after adoptive placement.
5. To provide adopted children the security of a known birth heritage in an environment free of mystery and fear.

Subject areas for conference examination are: conducting a search; open adoption; intermediary activities; organizing a group; post-reunion feelings; feelings of birthparents; the "adopted" feelings; sibling relationships; educating adoptive parents & the public; psychological conditions of search and reunions.

Registration forms are being sent to all current A. B. C. members, social workers and other professionals involved in the adoption process. Registration forms are also being extended to the A. A. C. regional membership. The early registration fee is \$30.00; registration at the door will be \$40.00.

The conference is being prepared to benefit anyone seriously interested in searching or in educating people to eliminate the mystery and fears surrounding adoption. DON'T MISS IT!

Individual A. A. C. member organizations are requested to consider the possibility of hosting the '84 Regional Conference.

While A. B. C. and similar organizations around the U.S. are working to dispel the ignorance by which bureaucrats and others object to searching, the National Committee for Adoption (N. C. F. A.) with its big bucks opposes most vocally all openness.

A recent N. C. F. A. bulletin urged its members to voice objection to TV programming and other publications which publicize positively the opening of records, open adoptions, reunions and other positive events. Summarized in one excerpt, the N. C. F. A. attitude is, "Only by entering the active debate on these issues, by demanding fair and factual coverage, by having people who represent our reasonable views agree to talk and appear in the media, can we expect to offset the emotional appeal of the search groups or the dangerous ideas on adoption and maternity care being advanced by some agencies."

As we all know, the word "adoptee" is not often included in American dictionaries. However, a Sunday crossword puzzle in an October 1982 issue of "Magazine" has as a clue "126 _____ Pea, Popeye's adoptee".

Did you know that earlier this year the Pendleton Memorial Methodist Hospital in New Orleans was granted permission to conduct "test tube" conceptions for women unable to conceive under alternate options? Only the husband's sperm will be used, to provide "maximum respect for the egg." Wonder what ever happened to "maximum respect" for those adoptees conceived without such elaborate scientific advancements?

Winning the approval of the La. DHHR, Pendleton became the first hospital in the state to have such a program. Sure wish the old Methodist Memorial Home would care to dust off old records relevant to the children it placed while it served as an adoption agency.

from ISC Consultant Connection/California

I am so angry! I have just received, from a friend, a copy of an article called "Whose Child Is This?" It is taken from March 6, 1983 San Francisco Chronicle. The article is on surrogate parenting, but touches on adoption in a lethal way -- let me quote!

"Obtaining a child through a surrogate mother offers another advantage to infertile couples who want children; a measure of control," he said. You know who the father is and that the surrogate mother, under the terms of the contract, will be following a healthy diet regimen and receiving competent medical treatment during her pregnancy. IN MOST REGULAR ADOPTION SITUATIONS, THE MOTHERS ARE PROSTITUTES OR DRUG ADDICTS WHO ARE HARD UP FOR CASH."

We cannot let this one go by. Please take the time now to sit down and make yourself heard. This quote is from Dr. Geoffrey Nusbaum c/o Fertility Research Foundation 1424 2nd Avenue NY, NY 10021. Also write Editor, San Francisco Chronicle/This World 870 Market St. San Francisco, Ca 94102.

from Rapline/Michigan as it was quoted in Roots & Wings/Ga Birthmother Shares Her Sorrow

It is with unimaginable grief that I relate my sad new to you. I have finally found my angel unaware. I had been sitting going through some of my correspondence regarding my son when I saw Ginger's article about her angel unaware. I was moved to call the state school in my area and ask the woman who answered the phone if they had a patient by my son's name. She asked for his date of birth, and when I told her she said that yes, he had been a patient, but that he had died quite some time ago, on July 26, 1966. I called her on July 26, 1982, exactly 16 years from the date of his death. "Who is this anyway?", she asked.

Words can't express how I felt. I couldn't believe my ears. Was I really hearing right? I checked further and found to my grief that she was right. My baby had died at age 5. She said that he was never able to talk and was retarded, but she went on to very matter of factly assure me that he had not suffered. He had only been there about a month before he died of pneumonia.

Today, (July 29) is the anniversary of the day he was buried. I found his tiny grave, covered over by 16 years of weeds and brush. The caretaker said, "Well, that was a long time ago and they didn't have markers for the children, nothing to mark that he had even existed. Someone had once used a tin can to place flowers in, I think, but it was very decayed. Ironic that I had called the school on impulse, and my call was on the 16th anniversary of his death.

I had so hoped and prayed that he was happy, living in a family who loved him as much as I did. He was never even adopted, and I had never been told. If I had known, I could have taken him home with me. I have to question why God would let a little child go through so much. It all seems so senseless. The woman also told me that he weighed only 34 pounds when he died.

When I asked about the burial I was told he was put in a styrofoam box, the kind they use for all the state patients there. My heart turned inside out. I couldn't believe I was hearing this. I am going to see if I can scrape enough money together, because somehow I must at least get him a tombstone. In my grief, though, I am in a sense at peace for the first time in 22 years because at least now I know no one can ever hurt him or torment him again. He is now truly my angel unaware.

Karen

* Article - Time May 2, 1983
Searching for a Forever Home (TV program's helping children get adopted)
page 77

SEARCH TRIAD
LITCHFIELD PARK, AZ 85340

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of any these people should contact Johnnie Kocurek, in care of the Lafayette chapter of A. B. C.

Annie Rene Hendrix
Eddie Morrell (Horrell)
Martha Mae Devore

Alva Royce Sandy
Margie Gardner Hunt
Gay Robertson

Geraldine Feazell
James Charles Wright
Mattie Lois Trayler

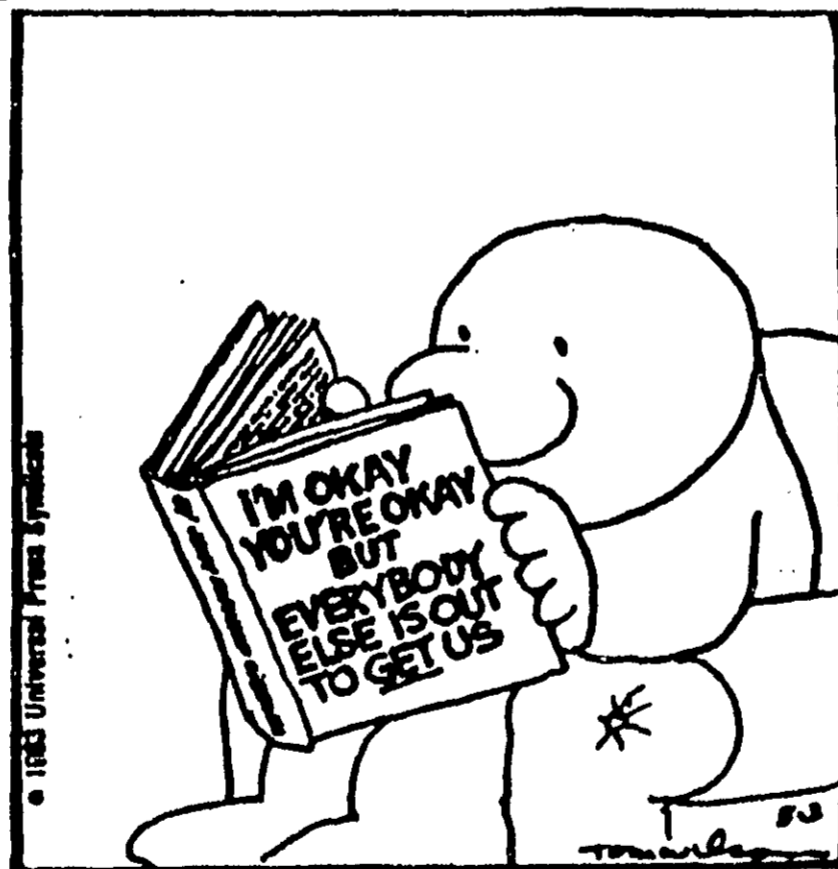
ABC continues to have its fair share - plus of successful locating and reunions. The organization, too, continues to need its FULL membership become and stay active to accomplish the important goals to which it is dedicated. Please offer YOUR time, ideas, and DUES to your individual chapter. The chapter chairmen appreciate every ounce of assistance given.

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At the April meeting of the Adoptees' Birthrights Committee many ideas were discussed regarding making the plight of adoptees' birthparents and adoptive parents known to the general public. Many people are under the misconception that medical records are available to adoptees' and that adoptees' may obtain their adoption records once they are 18. Support and understanding from those outside the adoption community is greatly needed. A.B.C. will be launching a project awareness campaign beginning with the promotion of a contest worth \$15,000 in prizes, a "Dump your dictionary campaign" and culminating with a conference of the American Adoption Congress Region IV, coordinated by A.B.C. Lake Charles.

Mr. Warren E. Siegmond, author of childrens books and former resident of Lafayette, La. has announced a contest sponsored by Cameo Press New York, N.Y..The contest involves solving the mystery in his new adoption book, "In Search Of A Stranger": \$15,000 in cash, prizes, travel arrangements, and accomodations in the Big Apple, will be awarded to the winner. Anyone interested in the contest, and would like a list of prizes and details; send a postcard to Cameo Press Contest Editors, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

In his most recent communication to A.B.C. Mr. Siegmond reminded us that there are 5 million adoptees in the U.S. alone. Add to that adoptive parents, birthparents, siblings etc. you have over 30 million people involved with the explosive human drama of adoption. Yet, in his nationwide literary search Mr. Siegmond found that in 97% of all dictionaries in the U.S. the word ADOPTEE does not appear. Mr. Siegmond provided A.B.C. with a partial list of over 40 published dictionaries that do not contain the word ADOPTEE. For this reason Mr. Siegmond has started his "Dump Your Dictionary" drive. This could be the biggest book recall in history. Mr. Siegmond stated that the Random House Dictionary of the English Language contains a series of four-lettered words as well as every disparagement ever applied against womankind... but no adoptee or birthparent. " If adoptees, adoptive parents, and birthparents aren't good enough to be in the dictionary, then perhaps the dictionaries aren't good enough to be in your homes. Send me your dictionaries and I'll see to it that they are dumped at the publishers doorstep." Members and concerned others are to send their dictionaries to Warren Siegmond, 382 Central Park West, New York, N.Y. 10025. A.B.C. hopes to have Mr. Siegmond address the Region IV AAC conference in August.



If your newsletter is checked here, your membership is due for renewal. Please send check of money order for \$30.00, payable to ABC, to your chapter chairman. We truly appreciate our loyal members who continue to support us when their searches are over. We welcome new members! If you support the work ABC is doing to bring openness and honesty to all members of the triangle, we hope you will join us.

NEWS FROM THE LAFAYETTE CHAPTER

The Lafayette chapter hosted a state board meeting with representatives from all six chapters in attendance. Ethelyn Leger, Lake Charles chapter chairman prepared and served a delicious lunch. Thank you, Ethelyn.

May reunions: Congratulations P.L. Search successful!
 Congratulations MM. Search successful!
 Maxine has a name and a place...Good luck!

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 All the Lafayette Chapter books have been loaned. We have many members waiting to read them. Please return them as soon as possible.

Future meetings: 3rd Saturday of each month
 June 18th July 16th August 20th
 at 2 PM. MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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 From Operation Identity N.M.: Military Persons that are blood relatives can be located by contacting your U.S. senator or U.S. Congressman. Simply say you want to locate your father, son, etc and give birthdate. You do not need a social security number.

The latest report on the bill concerning adoptees in Texas, is that it has not yet been voted on the Senate floor. All of the search and support groups have fought the passage of the bill, but the anti adoptee and anti birthmother groups have a greater influence over the legislature. I wonder what they would be doing with their time and money if there were no birthmothers and no adoptees. Interesting thought, eh?

Do you have a story to share? Or an opinion you'd like to voice? Send it in. Mail to: Mary Ellen Davros, 511 Blue Bell, Port Allen, La. 70767.

We would like to hear from some of our sister out-of-state groups. Your news is important to us and we always enjoy receiving your newsletters. The LAFAYETTE CHAPTER sends a large number of newsletters to many groups out of state and we are willing to exchange newsletters with others. Write us P.O. Box 3932 Lafayette, La. 70502

A.B.C. a search and support group, one of five chapters in the State, meets in Lafayette on the third Saturday of each month at 2:00 P.M. The next meeting will be held on Saturday May 28, 1983 at 2:00 P.M. Search assistance will be provided after the regular meeting. For information about A.B.C. and it's goals write P.O. Box 3932, Laf. La. 70502 or phone Helen Hebert at 984-2818.

NEWS from MONROE - A. B. C.

The chapter meets monthly on the second Saturday at the Swartz Recreation Center on Lincoln Hill Road, at 1:30 p.m. For more information, write: Adoptees' Birthrights Committee, P.O. Box 324, Swartz, LA 71281; or, phone: 387-LOVE or (318) 343-6730.

The chapter has had three reunions since April 1, '83. Congratulations to our members and many thanks to the other chapters for assisting in securing vital information that lead to one of these reunions.

Diane Barnett and Dianne Smith spoke to DHHR's prospective adoptive parents class on April 26. The success of that dialogue prompted the social workers to invite the A. B. C. 'ers back at a later date. Diane and Dianne were provided a copy of the Louisiana Adoption Laws. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of this, should contact either lady for this important reference material.

The Monroe office of DHHR is beginning to refer those in search to A. B. C. -Monroe. Our chapter most sincerely appreciates the cooperation being displayed and the sincere effort by DHHR-Monroe to aid adoptees and birthparents in search.

To generate operating funds, A. B. C. -Monroe is collecting recipes for inclusion in a cookbook. Please consider sharing your favorite recipe for this major undertaking. All entries should be mailed to the Monroe chapter post office box number.

NEWS from the LAKE CHARLES A. B. C.

As the hosting chapter for the upcoming regional A. A. C. conference, the group is urging everyone to attend the special and informative event. Aside from simply registering and attending, each member is being asked by Ethelyn and the Lake Charles membership to extend invitations to social workers and legislators and judicial system representatives. Influential professionals can contribute a great deal to our progression and attainment of better and more equitable adoption practices. See you at the Conference.....

NEWS from the BATON ROUGE A. B. C.

Congratulations to Andy, Kay and David on their reunions!!

Andy spent the last weekend of May in Virginia getting to know his birthmother and his six siblings. The weekend culminated a search orchestrated and completed under Virginia law by a bureaucratic arm of the Commonwealth. A. B. C. 'er Andy came home to B. R. mos gratified and "really pleased with the family". In making an introduction, Andy's birthmother said, "That's my oldest son!" For Andy, that was a marvelous gift of love. She also was comfortable in explaining the answers that Andy had wondered about, including the identity of the birthfather.

Kay located her natural sister last week and the two are making plans to visit soon in B. R. The sister had known of her own adoption, but had been unaware of any siblings. When informed about Kay, the sister exclaimed happily, "Oh, that's wonderful. Only three weeks ago my adoptive brother died and now I am getting some new family!" Looks like another case to refute the standard argument of opponents to searching.

David is in the midst of enjoying a "dream not dared to be dreamed". He, his two sisters, two brothers and half-brother will be together for the first time ever with their birthmother, grandmother and aunt. Members of the family will arrive from Texas, Mississippi, Florida and California. For David and his newly located family, a drama lasting over 21 years will finally be concluding. David looks forward to a unity that has long been denied to him.

Anyone with news or views to be shared should submit copy to: Mary Ellen Davros, 511 Bluebell St., Port Allen, LA 70767. The A. B. C. newsletter is published bi-monthly.

ADOPTEES BIRTHRIGHTS COMMITTEE
P. O. Box 3932
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Information Please

(A Newsletter For Adults)

The American Adoption Congress sponsors annually a national convention to bring together its member groups. The national gathering is designed to have the various individual groups learn and share more information on searching, legislative policy, adoption policies and their aftermath, etc. And, of course, attending the convention is fun; it's fun and re-assuring to be a participant in a large gathering of people who value and perceive adoption as we each do.

The dates for the 1983 AAC convention in Columbus, Ohio, are May 19 - 23.

Each of the individual geographical regions into which the AAC is divided sponsors annually a regional conference. Our Region Six Conference is being hosted this year by ABC of Lake Charles.

This conference is scheduled for August 12 - 14, at the Sheraton Chateau Charles Inn, Lake Charles. Workshops are being developed and guest speakers are being engaged to make this conference excitingly informational and educational. If you have any program contributions, please contact Ethelyn Leger, President, A.B.C.-L.C., at P.O. Box 6175, Lake Charles, LA 70606.

Mark August 12 - 14 on your calendar and plan to attend!!!!

South-central Louisiana will have more localized A.B.C. search and support assistance once the Morgan City A.B.C. Chapter is organized and fully operational. To join or to offer assistance, please call Pat at (504) 384-2903. Good luck and endurance, Pat! All the A.B.C.'ers wish you well and offer our support.

A.B.C. of Monroe reminds us that its meetings are scheduled the second Saturday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Call (318) 343-6730 or write "A.B.C.-Monroe, P.O. Box 324, Swartz, LA 71281" for more information.

Dianne Smith and her birthmother celebrated their first year reunion in March with newer and stronger positive bonds. Congratulations, Dianne, for proving again what patient persistence accomplishes.

The rummage sale held by the Monroe Chapter in March successfully enhanced the Chapter's coffers. The group expresses its appreciation to those who contributed time and materials as well as to those who bought.

Another fund-raising activity is planned for the near future. Please call Dianne Smith (343-6730) or Diane Barnett (323-0742) for more information. The group needs the support of its members and friends to continue its work.

Marsha Blackman, Jan Hill and Mrs. Rena Lindeman (member KarLynn Sanders' mother) are sent "get well" wishes. Sympathy is extended to the group's friend Rosa Bee and her family at the death of their husband and father.

All unpaid memberships should be paid as soon as possible! Dues are now \$30 annually.

"There's a time when you have to explain to your children why they're born, and it's a marvelous thing if you know the reason by then."
Hazel Scott, "READER'S DIGEST"

"And there is even a happiness
That makes the heart afraid."
Thomas Hood

The Louisiana State Legislature is now in its regular session. No bills pertinent to adoption records, as of now, are scheduled to be introduced. And why should any be introduced? The State is still attempting to implement the State Registry the Legislature deemed imperative and vital to the growing community of adoptees and birthparents and adoptive parents who wish answers. One year after the passage of the Registry, the bureaucratic red tape is still stuck on how to implement the complex program. While the DHHR and the State mull over their self-made tangle, A.B.C. continues its high success rate in reunions and counselling.

NEWS FROM THE LAFAYETTE CHAPTER

Congratulations to Lisa and Joy. Both completed their searches in March and are enjoying successful reunions.

The March 4th edition of the United Methodist Reporter, a newspaper circulated nation wide by the Methodist Church, announced that of the seventeen United Methodist agencies which offer adoption re-later services are eyeing open adoption. Dorothy Blakely, director of the Southwest Maternity Center, a service of the Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio, stated she could tell from an increasing number of contacts with birth parents, adoptive parents and adoptees old enough to inquire for themselves that more of them feel the need to know more about each other. In other words, she says, a trend toward more openness has developed. Her agency is now offering the option of a meeting and exchanging information between the adoptive parents and birthparents. A written form used by Southwest Maternity Center, explains it offers these options "in light of the awareness that openness is beneficial to the adoptee, rather than fantasies and the unknown".

Administrators at some of the United Methodist related adoption agencies are divided on whether benefits of open adoption will outweigh the problems.

The article mentioned the gray market in adoption is upsetting some of the agencies. The "gray market" (independent and private adoptions out side of agencies) services those wanting "open adoption". To quote Kathy Silber, with Lutheran Social Services in San Antonio, Texas.. "Open adoption has been a totally positive experience for both parties"..and Kathy should know. 235 children were adopted through her agency in 1982. Sixty percent of these were open placements. We have been told that some agencies are lucky if they make ten placements a year. Agencies should compare their numbers with Kathy's and work toward preserving adoption. Our group is in dire need of an agency in Louisiana where we can refer the birth-mothers that come to us seeking open placement for their baby. We ask that each of you talk with the agencies, priests, ministers and interested parties in your community about open adoption. REMEMBER adoptions are not "closed" until the petition is filed. Let's fight to reduce abortion, to see that children are placed when a birthmother can't provide and that all adoptees born after 1983 will never have to fantasize, never have to feel "not quite complete" and never have to search for identity, and that each birth-mother can surrender knowing she has done the right thing with openness and reassurance.

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Item: Marilyn, Linda and Johnnie spoke to a large group of case workers during a training session. We want to thank Blanch Fontenot for offering ABC this opportunity. Our members stressed to the case workers the importance of their role in the life of birthmothers and adoptees. We asked that they educate themselves as to the psychological advantage of open adoption and be leaders in working toward that goal. We were impressed with the interest shown by the group and in Blanche's statements as to the importance of compassion toward the birthmother. She encouraged a full explanation of the pros and cons of all options opened to the birthmother at her time of decision. Although, the primary topic of our talk was to have been "surrender and aftermath", we explained there is the inseparable extension of surrender...THE ADOPTEE, and the case worker will in time have to deal with him. We were given time to cover feeling of all involved in the adoption triangle. A question and answer period followed. The questions were constructive and a great deal of interest was shown.

Thank you, Blanche, for inviting us and thank you for you humanistic approach regarding all phases in the adoption process.

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Right is right even if everyone is against it.
Wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it.

