

Kansas adoption laws adequate, no registry is needed, panel says

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas doesn't need an adoption registry because current state law is adequate to help adopted children find their natural parents, a legislative study committee decided Wednesday.

"The old adage is, 'If it ain't broken, don't fix it,'" said Sen. Paul Felecinno, a Wichita Democrat.

Following that reasoning, he and other members of the Special Committee on the Judiciary voted to recommend that Kansas' adoption records laws remain unchanged.

In Kansas, people who are 18 or older may obtain information from their birth certificate from the state Bureau of Vital Statistics, and court adoption records can be obtained in most cases.

Although they are satisfied with the current system, committee members recommended that the Bureau of Vital Statistics give interested people in-

formation about private agencies that aid in uniting adopted children and their natural parents. Several lawmakers suggested that a brochure providing such guidance be prepared by the state.

The committee will make a written report explaining its recommendations to the 1984 Legislature, which will convene in January. The panel began its study in early summer and was to determine the need for a separate adoption registry, which would identify the natural parents of adopted children.

Eleven states have adoption registries, according to testimony given to the committee in previous meetings.

Advocates of a registry contend that it would assist adopted children in obtaining more complete medical records on their biological family and would aid in diagnosing inherited diseases and in identifying possible donors for transplants.

In its recommendations to the 1984 Legislature, the committee also will:

- Urge that a law be passed to require the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to conduct a "home study" in all adoption cases except those involving stepparents. The study would determine whether the people wanting to adopt a child would be fit parents. In a budget-cutting move, legislators changed the law in the 1983 session to give the court discretion to order a home study but not make it mandatory. That change was to save the state \$55,000 a year.

- Suggest that Social and Rehabilitation Services obtain a complete medical history of a child's natural parents during its home study and have it available for adopted children in case some medical problem arises later.

Searching In Texas / Telephone Hours

Pat Palmer is continuing her work on the book 'Searching In Texas'. Progress has been slow due to constant interruptions, day and night. The original deadline was Sept. 1. Searchline telephone hours are from 9am-4pm for Pat, and 7pm-10pm for both Pat and Ed. Please observe these hours, and only call when necessary. Put yourself in Pat's place! How would you like a constant barrage of calls when you are trying to prepare breakfast for your family? How would you feel if you were constantly interrupted while trying to get your children ready for school? How would you react if you couldn't eat dinner without the phone ringing constantly? How would you enjoy being awakened late at night and early in the morning by a ringing phone? While you may enjoy a quiet Sunday and holidays, Pat seldom gets that luxury. Please have consideration. Once again, Searchline telephone hours are Monday thru Sat., 9am-4pm for Pat, and 7pm-10pm for both Pat and Ed. Please do not call on Sundays or holidays.

Many of you feel that these hours do not apply to you because a personal friendship has been established. If so, this is even more reason to be considerate. This rule applies to everyone.

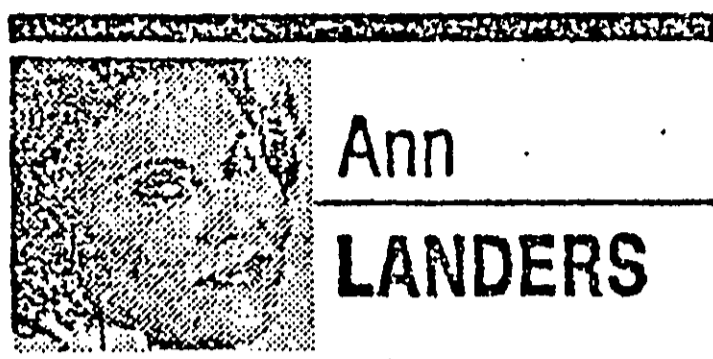
ANN LANDERS:

We encourage everyone to write to Ann Landers and let her know how you feel. Write to Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11995, Chicago, Ill. 60611

DEAR ANN LANDERS: There is a TV show called *Fantasy* that reunites adopted children with their natural mothers. I think it is disgusting. I want to adopt a child and I would like some facts before I go ahead with my plans.

Is it possible for adopted children to get their hands on their original birth records? Can they find their biological mothers? Lord, I hope not. If and when I adopt a child, I don't want to live in fear that one day I will hear a voice on the other end of the phone or meet face to face at my front door a woman who says, "I want to see the child you adopted 15 years ago. She belongs to me."

I can't imagine anything more dis-



ruptive to the child or more heart-breaking to the woman who reared the little one than a stranger who demands entry into that young person's life.

Please let me know if you agree.
— Afraid In La.

DEAR AFRAID: The handling of adoption records varies according to the state law. In July the state legislators in Illinois succeeded in

passing a bill that will keep adoption records sealed forever. I was behind this effort 100 percent and am delighted it succeeded.

States differ on adoption record handling

Searchline Welcomes Your
Suggestions And Contributions
For Future Newsletters

AAC:

The American Adoption Congress has asked Searchline and the local branch of C.U.B. to host the 1984 Region 4 conference. The conference will be held August 4-5 at the Marriott in Irving, Texas. You will be receiving more information in the months ahead. We will need volunteers to help at the convention with registration, setting up the banquet, assisting in the hospitality room, and misc. clerical duties.

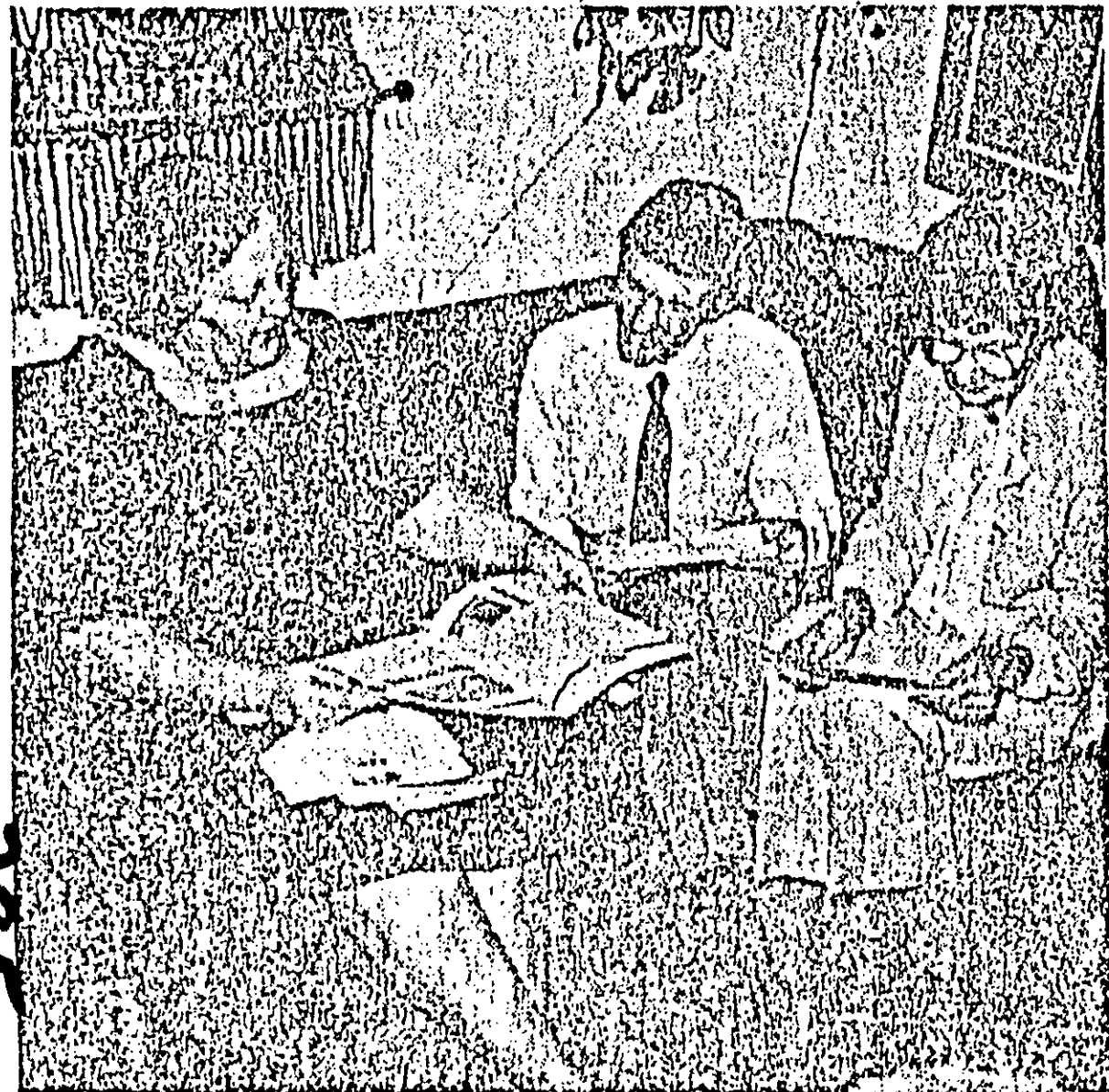
HAVE A HEART - GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK !!!

We have repeatedly requested that you limit your phone calls, both in frequency and length. Most searches require a great deal of research. This takes lots of time. You may actually lengthen your own search by calling Searchline frequently. When we have anything to report, we will contact you immediately. If you are in need of support, we encourage you to attend our monthly meetings. Sharing & support is the main purpose of these meetings. Please help us so that we may help you.

PUBLICITY:

Recent publicity has included an interview Pat Palmer gave to KRLD radio in Dallas. The all-news station repeated the spot several times throughout the day. In September, the Irving Daily News printed an article about Searchline. A copy of that feature is included in this newsletter. For several months, Warner-Amex TV Cable in Dallas has been running a free announcement for Searchline on its Community Bulletin Board channel.

The article was cut short, right in the middle of a sentence . If you're wondering how it ended, join the crowd, so are we !



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Daily News photo by RON BASELICE
Searchline founders Pat Palmer (left) and Ed Mulder help adoptees find their roots. At right is Mulder's adoptive mother, Louise.

Searchline helps adoptees open door to their pasts

By SUSAN KRASNOW
Daily News Staff

Roots. Because the United States is a country of transients and immigrants — a nation without a long history of its own — we have a fascination with discovering our roots. Knowing where we came from and who our descendants were helps us to understand who we are.

But for the two out of every 100 Americans who are adopted, the roots of the family tree start and end with them.

Up until a few years ago, it was either impossible or extremely expensive for an adoptee to find out who their birth parents were. It was even more difficult for a woman who had surrendered a child to adoption

to find out where that child was.

But during the past two years, 200 people around the country have been connected to their past with the aid of a non-profit Irving-based group called Searchline.

Searchline was conceived just over two years ago by Pat Palmer, an Irving resident who had surrendered an infant to adoption when she was 25, and Ed Mulder, an Irving native and adoptee.

Mrs. Palmer and Mulder met through Concerned United Birth Parents (CUB) in Plano. At the time CUB was basically just a support group, said Mrs. Palmer, and they felt they wanted to establish an organization that could actually help people in their search for parents or children.

In addition to the 200 successful searches completed through Searchline since that time, Mrs. Palmer and Mulder have counseled nearly 1,000 others by telephone.

The calls start early in the morning and continue late into the night, and they come from every state. Mrs. Palmer said she spends as much as 10 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, talking to people who need advice on how to open the door on their past.

"We try to help anybody that calls us, no matter what their circumstances are. We want to help as many people as we can," she said.

According to Mrs. Palmer, she has become an accomplished detec-

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Searchline tries to help adoptees

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tive and geneologist during her past two years with Searchline. Although she could charge handsomely for her services, she prefers to keep Searchline non-profit.

"A lot of people go to an attorney and pay a big fee to get that record opened. They don't have to; they can do it themselves," said Mrs. Palmer.

"We have people come to us who have paid as much as \$15,000 to \$20,000 for this information. We're trying to help people who can't afford this kind of thing," she said.

Mrs. Palmer stressed that all the techniques she uses to help people find out who their birth mothers were or to locate children given up for adoption are legal.

Often, people already have

enough information to complete a search and are surprised when they find out how easy it is to do, she said.

As the result of recently passed House Bill 1174, however, searches are about to get more difficult again, she said.

Previously, an adoptee in Texas could petition judge after judge until he found one willing to unseal his adoption records. With the new law,

Searchline Heartline

reunions



WE HAVE HAD 110 FINDS AND REUNIONS SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE STORIES:

Heartline Editor Pat Palmer

Judy C. found her birthfather after finding and meeting her birthmother a month before. Her birthfather and his family were very receptive and have visited back and forth with Judy and her daughter several times. Judy also has a really neat adoptive mother who has been supportive and helpful all the way.

Who could forget Amy Hull and her fantastic reunion? It was on Channel 11 News, the Dallas Times Herald, the national program "Fantasy", several papers in California, and one in Alaska. Amy was reunited with her mother from Alaska, her sister from California and her brother from Minnesota. Her sister flew to Dallas to meet with Amy and was met by newspaper and television reporters. Then Fantasy paid everyone's expenses to California and Amy saw her birthmother for the first time on the Fantasy program. Fantasy rolled out the red carpet for them. Amy even brought back Pat Palmer Telly Savalas's autograph. She was on Fantasy again in September but we have not seen a tape of that program. It was supposed to be a recap of some of Fantasy's better stories.

Clay H. has met his birthmother but was disappointed to find that he had no half brothers or sisters as his birthmother had no other children. But Believe it Or Not his birthmother found that she and her husband were expecting a special event right after Clay contacted her. She says it is quite an adjustment to her to have this instant motherhood with the soon to be new baby and her 20 year old "baby" cropping up at the same time. We hope Clay will let us know whether he has a brother or sister when it arrives.

One of our most heartbreaking cases has been Alene Wards. We first found her birthfather's family only to learn he had died recently. Then we located her birthmother's family only to learn that she had also died some time before. We did learn from her birthmother's family that Alene had a full sister also surrendered for adoption that she was not even aware existed but on tracking her down after a long and difficult search and with help from some searcher friends in California we learned that her sister was also deceased. Our hearts and love really do go out to Alene. Despite all this, Alene wants everyone to know that she has found two wonderful half brothers on her father's side and three uncles and a grandmother on her mother's side, all of whom have welcomed her joyfully. Alene has written her sister's adoptive parents hoping to learn more about her and they have promised to send pictures and more information soon.

Jerry L. found his birthmother and family in another state. The reunion went beautifully and they have sent us pictures.

Randall M. found his birthmother living only two blocks from where he was raised. They had lived this close all of his life but neither were aware. They knew a lot of the same people and had probably met a lot of times without knowing it. His birthmother was very glad to hear from him but it got off to a funny start. His birthmom thought he was making an obscene phone call when he called and hung up on him. He had started out his call to her by saying "Are you alone" in a very hushed voice.

Carol M. contacted her birthdaughter who was delighted to hear from her. The adoptive parents were also very happy to hear from Carol.

Melody Weise was another sad one for us. Her mother had been killed some years ago but she did find an aunt, a half brother and a delightful 101 year old grandmother. She is presently trying to locate her birthfather.

Vickie Shaw was another one of our good reunions. Her mother was delighted to hear from her and she has met with her twice and also with her half brother.

Nancy McGee also discovered one of those big coincidences when she located her birthfamily. Her half brother on her father's side lived across the street from where she was raised. Nancy has met her birthmother and her family and her deceased birthfather's family all of whom have been delighted to hear from her and know her. She brought a half sister to one meeting and a half brother to another one and they were super people.

Joyce Snider has located and talked to her birthdaughter. It was a dream reunion with the adoptive parents participating and glad for their daughter. Joyce and her husband who is also the birthfather have met with their daughter twice and have talked to her on the phone several times. Joyce's husband has even hired their daughter's husband to work for him and the whole family is moving to Oklahoma and will stay with Joyce and her husband until they find a place to live close by. Adoptive parents are completely supportive. Joyce's daughter seems to be as warm and full of life as Joyce is and we are very very happy for Joyce who is a special friend of Pat Palmers since they were in the same home at the same time some 20 years ago.

A. W. had a very good reunion with his birthmother and has talked to family of his birth father who is deceased. They were all happy to hear from him.

Jeanette S. was looking for her son's birthfather. Found that he was deceased but has talked to his widow and reunited her son with his half siblings.

Bob Parker found his birthmother, his birthfather's family and 13 half brothers and sisters who are also his first cousins since his birthmother's sister was his father's wife. It is all very complicated but everyone from uncles and aunts on down were thrilled to hear from him. He has talked to all 13 brothers, sisters and cousins on phone. He is going to visit them in November and they are having a big family reunion with over 100 people present. Bob is one of the nicest people we have ever worked with and the funniest. His new family is wonderful, just like Bob. We are really happy that this one worked out so well.

G. P. found her birthson deceased and is presently trying to find some of his family.

Donna W. just heard from her birthson. It was one of the sweetest letters you have ever heard. He seems like a fine boy. Good luck to Donna.

Mary M. found her sister close in Texas and they had a very quick, tearful, joyful reunion and they look just alike.

Jean B. found her birthmom deceased but has talked to half sisters and relatives all of whom were glad to hear from her. We are still trying to locate one half brother.

Shelly S. found her birthmom and two sisters only to find that birthmom had married a man with Shelly's last name and one of her sisters has Shelly's middle name and the other one has Shelly's first name. This is incredible and goes beyond the bounds of coincidence! Imagine having two children with the same first and last name.

/Sandra K. found her grown birthson very happy to hear from her. Sandra is on Cloud 9.