

M I D W E S T A D O P T I O N T R I A D
N E W S L E T T E R

P.O. BOX 37262

DECEMBER 1984

OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68137

HOLIDAY GREETINGS !!!

We hope this letter finds all of you enjoying the season and looking forward to the New Year to come. For those of you who are in the thought stages of your search or if you are actively searching now, we hope your prayers are answered. For those of you who have experienced your searches we trust you have gained, in some manner, from your search.

Although the Midwest Adoption Triad did not have a formal meeting in December, there was a social gathering on the 20th.

Our first meeting for the new year will be January 22. February 26 and March 26 will be the upcoming meeting dates. The Triad meets at the Swanson Library, 90th and Dodge Street on the lower level at 7:30 p.m.

Inasmuch as the Midwest Adoption Triad has gone through some re-organization, it has been discussed and accepted by the members that from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m. there would be a workshop for new and current members actively undergoing a search. After the business meeting, which would begin at 7:30 p.m., there will be time set aside for a guest speaker at 8:00 p.m. followed by the sharing of reunions and/or the progress of searches.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Our meeting on November 27 was called to order by Jean Bernth, President, following the workshop for new and current members. There were many new faces present among the 26 who attended the meeting. Jean presented the order in which the meetings would be held. Elections were held. The slate of officers was as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Jean Bernth |
| Vice President | Rena Stevens |
| Recording Secretary | Cis Carson |
| Corresponding Secretary | Sallie Sweenie |
| Treasurer | Beverly Mangold |

There were no other nominations. Phyllis Phalen moved and Jeanne Singles seconded that the slate of officers be accepted as written beginning with our January 1985 meeting.

The treasurer's report was given.

National Adoption Week was last week. A table was set up at Gateway Shopping Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. The three sides of the triangle were represented.

Jean read the committees comprising our group. The Committees are as follows:

| | |
|--|--|
| Newsletter | Cis Carson Beverly Mangold |
| Membership/Treasurer | Beverly Mangold |
| Program/Publicity/ Search Coordinator | Renaе Stevens |
| Calling Chairperson | Brenda |
| Legislative Committee | Susan Schultz |
| Librarian | Jody Treu |
| Reunion | Mary Jo Burris |
| Historian | Ginny Cowdery Sherryl Palmer Jody Treu |
| Hospitality | Jo Bennett |

Renaе spoke about Search Tips, a three page guide for current and new inquires, which she composed.

Jean spoke of Bob O'dell's Open Arms publication being incorporated into People Finders. This is a monthly magazine published by Finders Publishing, Inc. Contents include Friends From the Past, Missing Children, Missing Relatives, College Friends, Reunions; Lost Loves, Family Tree, National Message Board, Rewards, Adoptees/Birth families; Runaways, College Alumni, Unclaimed Property and Unsettled Claims, Inheritances and Business Listings. The publisher also prints pictures. This magazine is a great idea!

I have included, from People Finders, a copy for placing an ad for those of you who are interested. People Finders address is P.O. Box 651, Batavia, Illinois 60510.

IT'S EASY to place an ad in **People Finders**. Just fill in the information below and mail it back to us. If you have any questions about this form, or would like help in writing your ad, please call us at 1-800-458-4917 (312-879-6856 in Illinois). To remain anonymous in your ad, just check the "Ad Forwarding" box below. We will forward all replies to you for 6 months following publication. Credit card customers may place their ads by phone at the above numbers. Subscribe below and have 12 issues of **People Finders** mailed to your home for only \$9.00. Remember, Someone May Be Looking For You!

Your name _____
LAST FIRST

Street _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____ Payment: Visa Mastercard Money Order

Card No. _____ Expiration _____ Bank _____

AD COPY — (start with name of person you are looking for)

1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____
 5) _____
 6) _____
 7) _____
 8) _____
 9) _____

- CLASSIFICATIONS**
- 1) Missing Children
 - 2) Adoptee/Birthfamily
 - 3) Missing Relatives
 - 4) Friends from the Past
 - 5) Rewards (call for info.)
 - 6) Runaways
 - 7) National Message Board
 - 8) Missing Adults
 - 9) College Friends
 - 10) Military Buddles
 - 11) Inheritances
 - 12) Family Tree
 - 13) Reunions
 - 14) Colleeæ Alumni
 - 15) Lost Loves
 - 16) Business Listings

Yes No You may edit the copy of my ad to be grammatically correct.

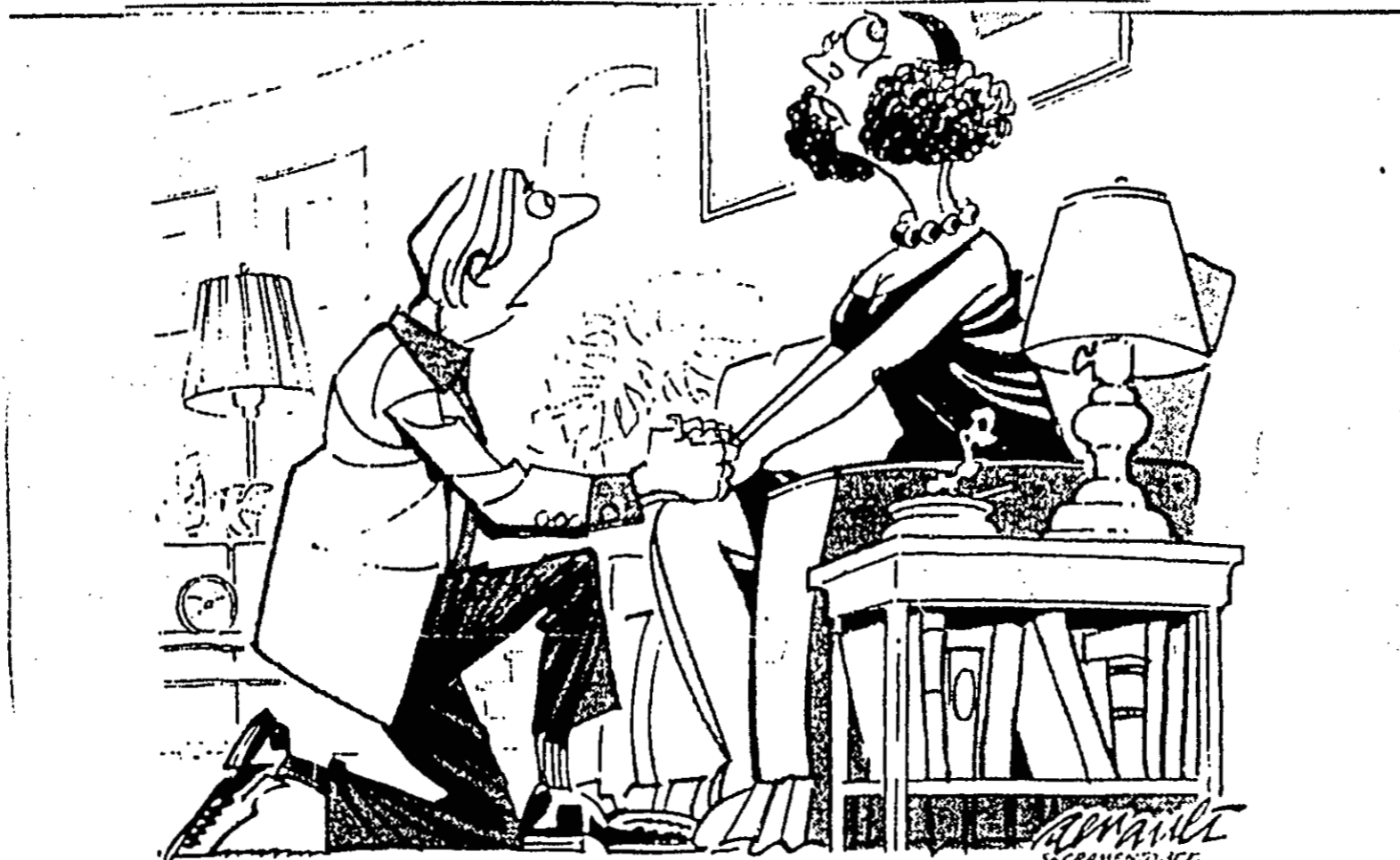
Number of lines _____ x \$4.00 = \$ _____
 Ad Forwarding \$10.00 = \$ _____
 Photograph of person \$20.00 each \$ _____
 Subtotal \$ _____
 Number of months ad is to run X _____
 Total \$ _____
 12 month subscription — only \$9.00 \$ _____
 Amount enclosed \$ _____

Signature _____

People Finders assumes no responsibility for materials submitted or for errors in ads placed. We maintain the right to refuse to print any ad. No guarantee is made or implied by the publisher of finding a person sought in the publication.

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Renault, Sacramento Bee

Rothco

"We were made for each other, Louise—you're from a surrogate mother, I'm from artificial insemination."

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." -- Mother Teresa

Jean spoke of Nebraska's present law which states a person must be 25 years of age and possess signed consent forms by THE BIOLOGICAL PARENTS - - - Catch 22 in other words. The last two years we have tried to draft a bill to open the records of adoptees, however, legislators have not gone along with this. They desire a Grandfather Clause which states 20 years from now, records could be opened. A bill containing this stipulation would not be acceptable as it would not be favorable for the adoptee adopted prior to the passing of a bill with such a Grandfather Clause.

A Task Force Committee comprised of persons from various agencies, the Department of Social Welfare, Senators, Attorneys and Judges is now preparing a final draft of a bill for the release of adoption records. This is slated for presentation in January 1985.

Mary Jo gave a brief report on reunions. Although we do not have open records in Nebraska, our group has a success rate of 92%. There have been 39 reunions, 36 of which have been successful. That's great. The three remaining reunions might also be termed successful when you consider the result of the search must be successful in order for a reunion to be unsuccessful. In addition, our group has twelve searches in progress.

Mary Jo is requesting a brief synopsis of your reunion so she may keep our organizations records up-to-date. Please submit to:

Mary Jo Burris
830 South 121st Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68154

REUNIONS

After having read a book, a feeling overcame Brenda which made her want to call the adoptive parents of her twin sons and ask for a meeting. Upon doing so, a date and time were set. Brenda drove to visit her sons and their parents who had been corresponding for several months. Brenda, of course, was nervous, excited and anxious but they had a nice visit and dinner. The adoptive mother drove Brenda back to her motel and they talked for well over an hour. Brenda has a feeling of relief at long last.

How happy we are for you, Brenda. Way to go!!!

REFLECTION OF AN ADOPTIVE MOM

The following letter and definition I received from one of our adoptive parent members. In the accompanying note Sherryl said:

"I've been doing a lot of sorting about adoption - I also have a feeling that that sorting also may be a life-long process in adoption too! The dislike of adoptive parents is sad, but I hope somehow adoptive parents will get on the bandwagon too."

Sherryl said her letter could be used in our newsletter. As you read the letter which follows, I'm sure it will touch your hearts and tap your emotions as it did mine.

GRIEF - (n) sadness, sorrow. An emotion or a collection of emotions we experience. There are various stages in grief work. It is accepted that grief work will be done sooner or later, completely or incompletely, healthily or unhealthily.

What does grief have to do with an adoptive parent? I have begun to wonder if adoptive parents also have grief in adoption. People acknowledge the birth parents' grief in relinquishing. It does not seem unusual to think of an adoptee feeling grief over a relationship with a birth family denied through adoption. I have read about adoptive parents having to work through grief because of infertility, but never have I read about an adoptive parent grieving because of the human dynamics involved in adoption.

I never understood until our daughter was placed in my arms. The joy was great, but as the caseworker spoke of her birth parents we could feel and see the love and admiration he held for them - suddenly a reality hit us hard - for our joy was someone else's pain and loss.

The difference between birth parent and adoptive parent? Circumstances. There is no doubt in my mind that our birth mom could have parented our daughter as well as we, had circumstances been different for her. For a while I struggled with some guilt, some anger, but mostly a determination to let these emotions come, to think about them, read and learn. I did not always understand all of these feelings, nor know for sure where they were taking us, but now as an inner peace and strength emerge, I realize that we had been grieving.

How can you love and parent a child without looking at the past and looking to the future? We feel sad that our daughter's birth mom will not have the experience of rearing her child. We also feel sad that someday our daughter will

be old enough to begin to deal with the dynamics of being an adoptee. Reality is that the adoptee has two sets of parents: those who gave him life and those who rear him. We have strong positive feelings for our child's birth family. Parts of her birth family live with us through her. Our love and home environment have shaped our daughter. Her birth parent's love and genetics have shaped her also. We love our whole daughter. We marvel in what each of us have given her. We would like our child to know both families. There is no doubt in my mind that both offer a lot to be proud of. Both have and will continue to shape her - both are her.

The various facets of adoption have a lot of human pain involved. As an adoptive parent it would be easy (tempting?) to deny the other's pain and only deal with our joy. If we had chosen this path I believe that at some point we would still have to deal with grief - someday our daughter will begin to sort out just what adoption is. It is a complex state of affairs that she will begin to tackle while yet a child, not having the advantage of postponing the issue until adulthood. I believe the more knowledge she has of her birth family the more clear her image of herself. I believe it is her birthright to have this knowledge so that she may move forward with life.

Birth parents are not forgotten. I hope that with more education, less secrecy, and more sharing, we adoptive parents and birth parents will learn not to fear one another. I hope that your decision of yesterday will not make you resent us today. Having never relinquished a child, I cannot understand the depth of your pain. I acknowledge your pain and have felt some of it. Together we can give our child all the pieces of his life. Together we can make adoption more humane for all of us. I hope that you have been able to do your grief work so that life may move forward for you.

The past nine months we have sat and listened to adoptees and birth parents. The one point that cannot be denied is the resentment held toward adoptive parents. It is a strange and sad resentment because 99% of those adoptees truly love their mom and dad (adoptive parents) but are angry (hurt?) because we are too threatened by searches and conversations of found birth families to share this important part of their life with them. In spite of these adoptee's frustrations with us, I have not known one who stopped feeling that mom and dad were we, the adoptive parents. No one can take away the years we spent nurturing, or the role given us by rearing them. I think that our fear of losing our child is unfounded. I think we would rather ignore and not deal with the grief processes surrounding adoption. Searches and reunions are tangibles reminding us that we did not and cannot give our child everything. It brings to the forefront that adoption is a life-long process for all three parties involved. Even with time this fact will not go away!

As the holidays approach, I again reflect on the years gone by and the years yet to come. Our daughter has added a new dimension to those reflection. It must have been hard that holiday season knowing that soon that life within you would begin another life without your physical presence. We will continue to remember you. Our daughter will also respect and care for you. I hope that some day the two of you will be blessed with knowing one another - then both of you will be free to say, it was a good decision.

For you, for our daughter, and for ourselves this grief work has been done so that we may be free to move forward in life; to tackle with gusto this sometimes hard to understand life-process of adoption. It was your love for our daughter that compelled you to relinquish, and it is our love for our daughter that has driven us to find you, birth mom. Our hope is that the door of communication remain open for all of us in the years to come.

That caseworker began the process by allowing us to view your grief through him - what a legacy that began for our child. You became real. After almost three years, I believe that we have begun to understand GIVING LIFE TO versus GIVING UP.

The work OUR acknowledges belonging or being shared by all parents involved.

Reflections of an Adoptive Mom

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In more ways than one all of our voices are being heard throughout the nation. Beside the media providing the usual documentary information from various members of or about the adoption triangle, those of us who are avid evening SOAP fans also know that searches and reunions have been written into the scripts of popular shows such as Dallas, Falcon Crest, Dynasty and Knots Landing. Each character's situation may be a variation but theme is the same. Presently, I am existing from one episode of Knots Landing to the next. I'm sure the majority of us have heard of at least one incident similar to the abduction of Val Ewing's children.

Yes, the writers are capitalizing on a controversial subject, however, despite the fact that the characters are fictional, we are all too familiar with the non-fictional subject matter. The television audience, at any rate is viewing this subject matter and we must admit that exposure is awareness!



John Dodge spent \$3 million on this Detroit mansion with 110 rooms and 24 baths . . . but he died before it was completed.

Fight Over Dodge Estate Takes Bizarre Turn

By James Risen
The Los Angeles Times

Detroit — Finally, nearly 65 years after his death, it all seemed settled last summer.
In June, after years of suits and countersuits, family battles and hushed-up scandals, the \$40 million fortune of John Francis Dodge, one of the wildest and most misanthropic of the automotive pioneers, was set to be distributed among his descendants.
But, as devotees of such television soap operas as "Dynasty" or "Dallas" know, skeletons in the closets of America's rich and powerful families have a way of popping out at inopportune times.
For the Dodges, it happened late last

month just as the family patriarch's fortune was finally being divvied up.
Frances Manzer Mealbach, a 69-year-old Dearborn, Mich., grandmother and wife of a retired business executive, walked into a Detroit courtroom to claim her place as John Dodge's last surviving child — and, perhaps, one of his primary heirs.
Dodge's recognized heirs and their attorneys were thunderstruck when Mrs. Mealbach attorney's argued that she may be either the product of one of Dodge's previously unknown adulterous affairs — or, in an even more bizarre twist, perhaps the separated Siamese twin of Dodge's late daughter, Frances.
What was worse, as far as the heirs were concerned, the Dodge estate's guardian ad litem, an attorney ap-

pointed by the court and charged with protecting the interests of unknown heirs, seemed to believe that Mrs. Mealbach was telling the truth.
To counter Mrs. Mealbach, the Dodge heirs as a group filed papers in court demanding that she be forced to present evidence to support her claim that she is John Dodge's daughter or else drop her attempts to halt the estate's distribution.
"This is frustrating. Everybody thought this case was over," said Charles Raimi, a Detroit attorney representing some of the Dodge heirs. "Where has she been for all these years?"
Mrs. Mealbach has refused requests for interviews. But according to her attorneys and the guardian, Mrs. Meal-

bach lived a normal life until her father died in 1968, when, to her surprise, she found out in his will that she had been adopted.
Over the years, as she searched for her biological parents, her lawyers say, she found an increasing amount of circumstantial evidence that suggested she was secretly put up for adoption by the Dodge family in order to cover up a family scandal.
And, after coming across a book about the Dodge family, she was surprised by her physical resemblance with the Dodge children pictured in the book.
Meanwhile, her attorneys say, early childhood memories of visiting a De-

Please turn to Page 4-K, Col. 1

troit mansion have come flooding back to her, to the point where she can identify the colors and furnishings of rooms in the Dodge house.
And when Mrs. Mealbach attempted to gain access to her adoption records, which in similar circumstances can usually be obtained through court orders, she was denied access.
She and her attorneys said at a court hearing that a probate judge in Detroit told Mrs. Mealbach that she would be better off not knowing what was in the sealed documents.
She also found that her birth was not registered with the state of Michigan until 1941, 27 years after her birth. Coincidentally, one of several major court battles over the Dodge estate was taking place at about the same time, her attorneys note.
Although she said she has been unable to obtain her birth certificate, Mrs. Mealbach is registered as having been born in Detroit on Nov. 23, 1914, four days before John Dodge's daughter Frances.

Scars on Back

She claims to have a series of scars on her back that physicians say could have been caused by the separation of Siamese twins. Her attorneys speculate that since Siamese twins were considered freaks at that time, the Dodges might have put her up for adoption to keep the twin birth a secret.
Mrs. Mealbach has not been able to obtain any autopsy records or other information related to the 1971 death in Florida of Frances Dodge, to see if she had similar scars.
But her attorneys now are emphasizing the possibility that she was the illegitimate daughter of John Dodge, rather than a Siamese twin. They note that Mrs. Mealbach's family was rather poor until she was adopted but suddenly were able to buy their home and improve their standard of living after she arrived.
Now, Mrs. Mealbach wants her birth and adoption papers opened to prove her case. "I think the adoption papers will be very revealing," said John Schaefer, Mrs. Mealbach's attorney.
"I don't think they will say that she is John Dodge's daughter, but I think it will show the name of one of Dodge's associates, who took the rap for Dodge."

11-18-84

