



Adoptees' Search Organization, Inc.

P.O. Box 55198 • Fort Washington, Maryland 20744

(301) 283-5222

newsletter

Spring 1984

Upcoming ASO events

Sunday, April 1 -- No. Virginia location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop
Topic: "Dealing with Rejection at the End of a Search"

May 5-6 -- Montgomery Mall, Bethesda, Md.
Self-help fair, sponsored by the Greater Washington Coalition of Self Help Groups. Look for the ASO table!

Sunday, May 6 -- Maryland location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop
Topic: "A Special Evening of Sharing Between Birthparents and Adoptees"

May 30-June 3 -- Seattle, Wash.
American Adoption Congress National Conference

Sunday, June 3 -- No. Virginia location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop
Topic: "After the Search: Reunions, Adjustments and Feelings"

Sunday, Sept. 9 -- Maryland location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop
Topic: "A Judge Looks at Opening Adoption Records" (tentative)

Sunday, Oct. 7 -- No. Virginia location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop

Sunday, Nov. 4 -- Maryland location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop

Sunday, Dec. 2 -- No. Virginia location
7 p.m. General meeting, discussion and search workshop

Maryland location: Warner Memorial
Presbyterian Church
10123 Connecticut Ave.
Kensington, Md.

No. Va. location: Bethlehem Lutheran Church
8922 Little River Trnpg.
Fairfax, Va.

Lotsa' ASO news!

So much has been going on in the first few months of 1984, it's hard to know where to begin to share the news with ASO members and friends!

●● First, ASO is pleased to report that the group has received its tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. This means that a portion of searchers' full membership dues, the entire amount of sustaining membership dues and any contributions to ASO are deductible on your federal and state income taxes.

This designation from the IRS allows ASO to qualify for other benefits as well, such as lower postage fees for mailing this newsletter and exemption from sales tax.

After consulting with its financial advisor, Jan Opper, the ASO Board of Directors has decided to advise its members that to be on the "safe side" of a very, very complex IRS code:

- \$10 of each \$25 full membership for those who are searching will be tax-deductible.
- the entire \$10 sustaining membership dues will be tax-deductible.

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Inside:

- Hard work and luck have led many ASO searchers to contact and reunions in recent months. Details on page 3.
- A bill in the Maryland legislature to create a voluntary, mutual-consent registry for adoptees and birthparents has died in committee. See page 4.
- Search chairperson Marilyn Moore has been elected Region 2 director of the AAC. Details on page 9.

Search stories

Finding My Birthmother - November 1983

by Cathy Schmitt

I didn't think it was possible, but I have found both of my birthparents.

In September of 1983, I started looking for my birthmother with only a letter from the adoption agency that placed me. The information it contained was next-to-none and was really more of a "good-luck-with-your-new-family" letter that lacked any pertinent data.

My next step was contacting a very cooperative social worker at the adoption agency and getting bits and pieces of information from each phone call. I'd dash off to the Library of Congress to find more clues in the city directories and phone books.

Finally, finding out that my birthmother was from my hometown, I calculated the year she would have graduated from high school. I had a friend back home copying old high school yearbooks from the year she might have graduated. As luck would have it, while my friend was waiting for a copying machine to become available, she was leafing through a yearbook, and a photo just jumped out at her. My friend couldn't believe the remarkable likeness between the woman in the picture and me. From that yearbook, I got the name of the woman, which fit all of the clues I had accumulated. She WAS the one!

Next, I had to use her parents' obituaries to find her first married name, and then call her brother for an address and another married name.

Joyce was thrilled when I phoned her in

Motherroot

Creation often
needs two hearts
one to root
and one to flower
One to sustain
in time of drouth
and hold fast
against winds of pain
the fragile bloom
that in the glory
of its hour
affirms a heart
unsung, unseen.

-- Marilou Awiakta
(from Abiding Appalachia)

Philadelphia right around Thanksgiving. A four-day visit in my home got a lot of questions answered -- I don't think words can express all the emotions that were exchanged. We were both very glad to know each other.

I also found out who my birthfather was, and that I have another brother who my birthmother relinquished seven or eight years after me. Together, with my birthparents' children combined, I have nine half-brothers and half-sisters.

I have not made contact with my birthfather yet, but I know how to reach him. It's just a matter of time and the right circumstances, and I hope to be talking with him.

Help needed

ASO has heard of several research projects dealing with adoption, reunions and searching. For a minimal amount of time and energy, you could help someone gain tremendous insight into the roles in the adoption triangle. Please help!

●● A doctoral thesis is being prepared on dealing with the impact of the decision to search or not to search and its effect on the adoptee's sense of identity and relationship to his/her adoptive family. Participants will complete a self-administered psychological test in their own homes. All information and names will be kept confidential.

If interested, contact Trudy Helmlinger, LCSW, P.O. Box 803, Carmichael, CA 95608.

●● A group called Parents for Private Adoption is conducting a research project to determine if private adoptions have advantages over agency adoptions. They are asking for honest feedback from adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents who have been involved with private adoptions.

Copies of their survey are available from PPA, RFD, W. Pawlett, VT 95761.

●● An ASO friend in Indiana sent a newspaper clipping about a Purdue University researcher who is convinced that adoptees and birthparents searching is not more than a passing fad and that their numbers are overstated. He is looking for volunteers from the adoption triad to participate in his research project. Can you help prove his theory is nothing more than hogwash???

If so, contact, Dr. Jerome Smith, The School of Social Work, P.O. Box 647, 102 W. New York St., Indianapolis, IN 46223.

Search update

Marilyn Moore, ASO search chairperson, reports on progress in several searches:

●● Marlene started her search with her birthmother's name and no background information. Luckily, the name was not too common, and after many calls to people around the country, Marlene was able to locate her. Marlene since has visited with several family members and hopes to meet her birthmother soon.

●● Julie was raised by her mother and the man she thought was her father. It was only recently that she found out another man was her birthfather and decided to search for him. Unfortunately, she discovered he had died many years ago, and she is now looking for other relatives.

●● Pat was adopted in a city where judges routinely give adoptees all of their identifying information. After she obtained the information, it only took a short time for Pat to find her birthmother. At this time, Pat's birthmother will not admit who she is. Pat is planning to send pictures and give her birthmother some time to adjust.

●● Jim, from West Virginia, wrote ASO for help in searching for his brother who had been adopted. In Jim's letter, he told us all the details, including the fact that the adoption had taken place in a county where we knew the birth name would be available. Before writing Jim back, I ran out one afternoon, got the name and, because it was rather unusual, found a listing for the same name in the phone book. Jim called his brother Jack that same evening, only to find his brother had just moved.

Good news, though: his brother had left a forwarding address with the post office. Jim called him, and Jack was thrilled. Jack even had tried to find his birth family years ago but didn't have correct information, so he was unsuccessful. Hopefully, they will be able to visit soon. Don't you just love stories like this?

"I feel that adoption attempts to abort the natural mother instead of the baby."

-- Diane Johnson,
birthmother
British Columbia



●● J.T. Griffin, ASO legislative chairperson, is shown above with his three half-sisters whom he met recently on his reunion trip to Arizona. J.T. completed his search last fall and discovered his birthmother had died several years ago. On his trip, J.T. got to know his half-sisters, a half-brother, nieces, nephews and other family members.

On his arrival, J.T. was presented with a truly lovely welcoming present: a family photo album filled with pictures of his birthmother, his siblings as they grew up, and early family ancestors.

●● Janet thought she had found her birthmother. But the woman said she wasn't the right person, even though so many of the facts fit together really well. So, we decided to return to "square one" and start from the beginning again. We got so far and then came to a dead end.

By a real coincidence, Janet was telling one of her in-laws about her search, and her sister-in-law remembered someone she had known during childhood by that name. After a long-distance phone call to a long-lost childhood friend, Janet was hot on her birthmother's trail. They found her, and it was Janet's birthmother, who was not the woman she had first called! Janet has talked with her birthmother, and their conversation went just fine. They plan to visit soon.

●● Meredith, her search advisor Christine Holderness and search chairperson Marilyn Moore made a trip to the Virginia county where Meredith was born and adopted, hoping to get a lead on where her birth family might be. The research went better than

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