

# Adoption

## A long and complicated process that continues as long as life

By Shirlee Rose Iden  
staff writer

Why did my birth mother give me away to be adopted?  
Who am I really, am I a worthy person?

Questions like these are always there for individuals who were adopted in childhood or infancy. As natural as breathing is the principal that we want to know where we came from.

Not a static procedure, nor a finite one that ends with a child delivered into the arms of joyful parents, adoption is a long, long process with many issues that complicate it and that continue as long as life.

One of the most complex facets of adoption is the question whether the adult adoptee should search for the birth mother, the birth parents.

"It's very difficult, it's not easy at all," said Linda Yellin, coordinator of the Post Adoption Resources Center of Lutheran Adoption Service.

**SPEAKING** as a professional who has organized and led support groups for adult adoptees, birth parents and teen adoptees, Yellin has an acute understanding of the mechanics of adoption and the problems of adopted people.

On the subject of birth parent search, her insight is deep, her vision unclouded. Linda Yellin is an adoptee who searched for her birth parents nearly four years ago.

"I joined a search and support group and fortunately, my adoptive family was very supportive about my decision," she said.

"When I was growing up, I wanted to know who gave me life. As an adult, when I considered having a child, I was concerned about the heritage I would give my baby."

A vital factor in searching for parents or children today is Public Act 116 of 1980, which brought sweeping changes to Michigan adoption law, allowing greater access to adoption records.

This law divides the information in adoption records into two categories, non-identifying and identifying information. At age 18, adoptees can request the non-identifying information, which is also available to adoptive parents, and in some cases to biological parents.

**IDENTIFYING** information is available to adult adoptees and biological parents alike if both consent to the release, although it is more difficult for the birth parents to get the file released.

**'In my job now I encourage the triad: adoptee, birth family and adoptive family to have contact and shared communication.'**

— Linda Yellin



"When you begin to look, you find that mostly files are not updated, and the file release is just the beginning of the search," Yellin said.

For her, the search was successful. With help from AIM (Adoption Identity Movement) she found her birth mother and siblings she had not known she had.

"I have brothers and sisters who are psychologically my brothers and sisters, but I also

found biological siblings."

As with many adoptees, finding a birth parent both opens doors and closes some, and exorcises many ghosts of the unknown.

Yellin stresses that it's the individuals who raised the child who are the parents.

"Today we know it is necessary for the adoptee to share knowledge of background, medical history, birth of the father, and the existence of siblings," she said.

"Today, the Department of Social Services keeps an Adoption Central Registry with statements of consent and denial to the release of identifying information given by biological parents."

"The statements will be forwarded to adoption agencies and courts upon request so they can determine whether the adult adoptee can gain access to it."

OVER the last 10 years, many people have searched for information and for family members.

Yellin contends that if the non-identifying information is given to adopted youth while they are growing up, it would be a positive help to adoptees.

"Adoption should be talked about. The issues of identification, why the adoption, a sense of birth family background, and knowing family history reduces confusion and enhances self-esteem."

"Adoption needs to be taken out of the closet, but searches can be positive. Seeing my birth family added to my life and to my relationship with my adoptive parents."

"Most people, no matter what the difficulties, are glad they searched. They usually wind up closer to their adoptive parents. A person needs to grow and un-

derstand himself. You don't really find another mother or dad."

**YELLIN** explains there are definite grief issues connected with adoption, both the sense of loss of adoptive parents who could not have a birth child, and of the birth parent separated from a child.

"The grief process is long, and often delayed. But we know now, the grief process must be addressed," she said.

Adoption and its spin-off have become a major focus of the Lutheran Adoption Service. Recently they have established birth parent and adult adoptee support groups.

Other programs have included an afternoon workshop for teen adoptees and their parents.

The programs and support groups are non-sectarian and aimed at helping people who want to know why they were adopted. Yellin said the birth parent support group is the first in Michigan.

"It is for all ages, works on the grief reaction, and allows people to share their stories."

"What these programs provide is necessary post-adoption services," said Yellin.

Lutheran Adoption Service can be reached by calling 822-8546.

### club circuit

**YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SINGLES** sponsor a singles dance to

### Freedoms preserved

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### Class for expectant parents set

The Oakland County Health Division will offer a series of six Expectant Parent Classes beginning at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 9, in Southfield office of the Health Division, 27725 Greenfield Road.

Classes will be taught by public health nurses. There is no charge for attending the series of classes, but preregistration is requested.

Topics will include maternal physical changes, good nutrition, growth and development of the fetus and the baby, labor and delivery, infant care and parenting.

To register call 424-7101.

### Information on lupus offered free

National Kidney Foundation of Michigan's scientific advisory board announces the release of a new publication, "Lupus and Kidney Disease."

Lupus is a disease that produces marked changes in a person's immune system. Lupus affects one out of every 400 women and can occur in both genders at any age, but its primary target is young women in their child-bearing years. Lupus occurs more commonly in blacks and can lead to kidney disease.

The brochure, written by Dr. Paul G. Smith, covers how lupus affects the kidneys, the current treatment and prognosis.

To receive a free copy of the brochure call the Kidney Foundation, a United Way Agency, 1-800-462-1455.

benefit Muscular Dystrophy Association from 7:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 31, in Cahots, 30863 Orchard Lake Road.

All proceeds earmarked to support the association's patient service programs and research projects to aid those with muscle disease.

**B'NAI BRITH METROPOLITAN**

**DETROIT COUNCIL** meet at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 3, in the B'Nai Brith Building, 25835 Southfield Road, Southfield, to consider members to lead the council in the 1986-87 season.

James D. Grey, the council's president and a Farmington Hills resident, asks that those who wish to be considered for a leadership position

contact Oscar Tuttleman, the nominations committee chairman, at his home, 357-2819.

**BIRMINGHAM-BLOOMFIELD-TROY SINGLES** meet for a "Michigan Go Blue" singles dance party 7:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. in Northfield Hilton, Crooks Road and I-75, Troy. Admission is \$3 at the door.

All club news and announcements for this column are to be addressed to: Club Circuit, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. The information must arrive before noon on the Monday before Thursday publication.

### The James Burns mark golden anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. James Burns of Redford celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at a party in Ancient Order of the Hibernians. The couple were married Aug. 8, 1936, in Benedict DeMore Chapel, in Detroit.

Among those at the party were the couple's five children, Mary Judge and Jim Burns, both of Farmington Hills; Julie Redier of Westland; Suzanne Dornay of Fairport, N.Y.; and Raymond Thomas Burns of Detroit; their 14 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Burns is retired from Ford Motor Co.



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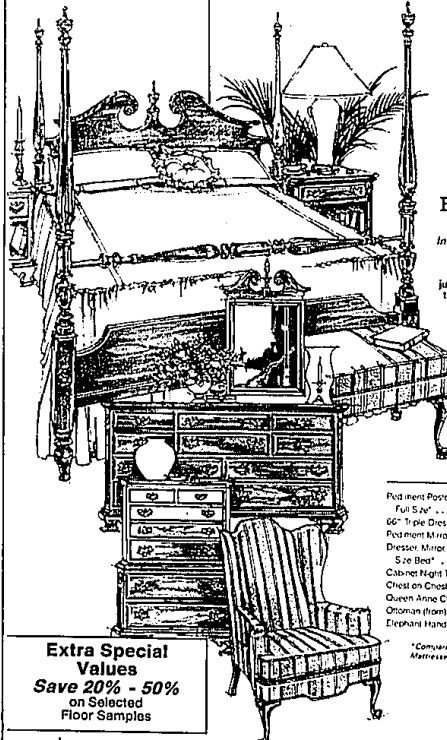
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