



Krista at 12 months.

# KRISTA

## In Search of Self

*There are an estimated 5 million adopted people in the United States. Today, more than ever before, they are seeking the parents who gave them life. This is the story of how Channel 5 weekend anchor Krista Bradford found hers.*

**BY KRISTA BRADFORD**

MY ADOPTION WAS A SAVING GRACE. IT SAVED MY adoptive parents from a childless marriage. It saved my birth parents from the shame of bringing a bastard into the world. And it saved me from the shame of illegitimacy. "I wasn't expected; I was selected," the adoption announcements proclaimed to my parents' family and friends. I was chosen; therefore I was special.

"Your mother had to love you very much to give you up so you could have a better life." That's how Mom explained it to me. My parents talked openly to friends about my adoption before I could even understand the words. They were open about it because they were told that that was best. But any six-year-old kid knows that "had to love you to give you up" is just a polite way of saying that your first mother rejected you. And because my first father was never mentioned, I thought he must have been really bad. And since my adoptive parents loved me just like my first mommy did, they could give me up, too, couldn't they?

But they tell me I'm chosen, I'm special. Maybe if I can figure out a way to stay special—maybe if I'm very, very good—they'll keep me. Maybe if I wear my adoption like a badge and brag about it, they'll know I want to stay. Maybe if I try hard enough, I can make all the scary feelings go away.

But they won't. They hide and come out in nightmares and I wake up crying, feeling alone and afraid,

*Krista Bradford is a reporter and weekend anchor for Channel 5.*

and Mom comes and rocks me back and forth in the creaky wooden chair by my bed. She tells me that everything will be all right. But she doesn't say how.

Maybe if I play pretend in my room—and pretend hard enough—my princess mother will come and hug me and tell me everything will be okay forever and ever. Maybe if I pretend hard enough, I'll feel safe and secure and loved.

THAT LITTLE GIRL IS STILL A PART OF ME. AND I AM NOT alone. All people are afraid of being abandoned; adoptees fear it more. Most people are insecure about who they are; adoptees simply don't know. There are pieces missing.

I had three sets of parents during the first three months of my life. After I was given up by my birth mother in the delivery room, I was cared for by foster parents before I was adopted. Three sets of parents in as many months. What does that do to a child? As Dr. Benjamin Spock says in *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*, "A very particular need of young children is continuity in their caregivers." And he observes that "babies will become seriously depressed . . . if the parent who has cared for them disappears."

Like many adoptees, I've been prone to depression throughout my life. I've learned to manage it with diet, exercise, and good friends—friends who now form the family to which I feel closest. Depression is perhaps not unusual, but behavior established in childhood is often repeated in adulthood. Childhood provides the script we act out again and again in an attempt to rewrite the ending. But successful rewrites

beer; my wife wanted to cold-smoke hams in the other. Little did we know that the 30-year-old, \$5 refrigerator is an absolutely classic Benefit Auction item. Homely, noisy, smelly, frosty—we never did *anything* with these terrific bargains. After they had occupied space for two or three years, we donated them to another Benefit Auction. More advanced societies use landfills to retire such junk.

Businesses make easy marks for coughing up Benefit Auction merchandise, and they lend some class to such events by supplying new goods to sell amongst the old—*new*, although probably overstocked or dead on the shelves. But I think—based on my impressions of recent offerings at Benefit Auctions—that the entrepreneurial class is getting tired of paying out protection money to one outfit after another. There seems to be an effort under way to poke fun at these sales, as when a local dress shop donated some rather risqué undergarments to a recent Lions Club Benefit Auction.

“Well, well,” said the auctioneer, a man not hired to find himself at a loss for words. He dangled the dainties at arm’s length like some dead mouse found beneath the cupboard. “*These* should liven things up after evening chores. Come on, ladies! Who’ll give ten dollars on these, uh, these—”

“Lingerie,” his sidekick told him.

“Lingerie. Right.”

The ladies, for reasons best known to themselves, refused to bid. In time, though, a couple of men did, and the crowd enjoyed a good laugh. Fifteen minutes later the old auctioneer was caught in a greater embarrassment. A local surgeon, he read off a card, was donating a simple, minor *operation* to the Benefit Auction. To the highest bidder. Now he faltered: “Vast—Vas—”

“Vasectomy,” his sidekick whispered.

“Vasectomy! Right! Now, what fella’s going to bid on that? Make you real popular! Start the bidding at one hunderd fifty dollars. All for a good cause, too.”

Just in front of me a Vermonter asked his wife, “Whuzuhell’s vast-ectomy?”

“Think I read about that in a ladies’ magazine,” she said.

“Hey! Let’s go! What am I bid?”

For reasons best known to themselves, not one man placed a bid. In time, though, several women did, presumably on behalf of someone else who may not have read a ladies’ magazine or known what was being auctioned. In the end, though, no one felt this operation worth the reserve price that its donor had placed on it. With a sigh of relief the auctioneer returned to hustling 30-year-old refrigerators and tired mattresses and broken lawn mowers. *Used goods. Cheap. Bargains.*

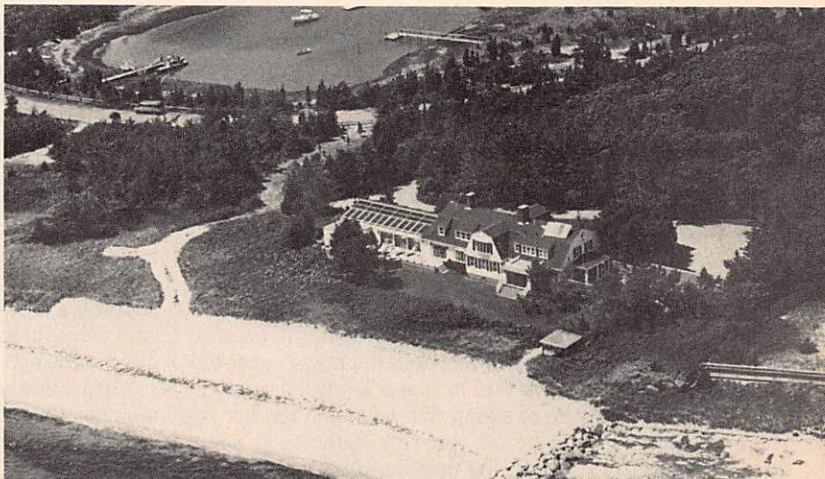
Recreational shopping? Up here we don’t practice it the same way city folks do. But honest merchandise does get bought and sold—and bought and sold, and bought again. And, by golly, sometimes we do have fun at it. □



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# The Right to Privacy

*An adoptive mother favors confidentiality.*

BY ELEANOR WESPIESER

KRISTA BRADFORD IS MY daughter by adoption.

I don't know how it feels to be adopted. I sound so much like my mother that hardly anyone can tell us apart over the phone. But I do know what it's like to feel that your mother has suddenly become some alien being who will never understand you, someone to whom you simply cannot talk about the things that matter most—such as who you really are. At some time in our growing up we all feel like that.

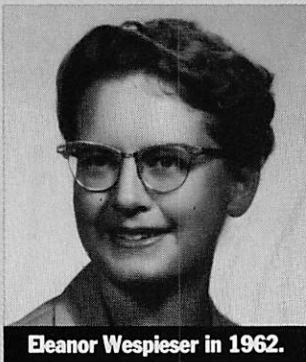
I'm sure these feelings are harder for adopted children to deal with than for those who only have to look to know who's Mom. On the other hand, the adoptees have an out—they can conjure up "real" parents to suit their needs.

"If only . . . if only they had kept me." That's the biggest hurt of all. It doesn't seem to matter how much your adoptive parents yearned for you, how much they rejoiced at your coming, how truly they believe that you belong to each other, that you are just as much a family as those joined by blood. When the chips are down and wills clash, there's always that niggling suspicion that even here, in your adoptive family, you were a second choice.

Somewhere in the struggle toward a confident, rewarding sense of who they are, many adopted children seem to drift from "if only" toward "if I could find them"—until this becomes the most compelling issue in their search for self.

So when Krista told us of her search for her natural parents, I tried to put aside my feelings of dismay. At first I felt defeated. Somehow I had failed as a mother. It's just as hard for mothers to be a second choice. I was afraid for Krista, too, and for her natural parents. An unacknowledged child, even a

*(Continued on page 107)*



Eleanor Wespieser in 1962.

are impossible without insight.

I turned to fantasy. I imagined that my birth parents were rich and famous, and perhaps as an extension of that fantasy I ended up on television. My brother—also adopted—imagined the opposite and ended up in trouble with the law. Adoptees usually imagine one extreme or another. My brother's crisis passed—he found himself through his relationship with his wife and son—but I was still missing in action, despite my successful career.

I WAS WITH KCBS-TV IN LOS ANGELES IN 1979 when I was sent to cover a local adoption seminar. I was listening to an anti-search-for-birth-parents speech by a nervous-looking adoptive parent when a woman sitting next to me gently asked why I was there. I told her that I was a reporter and added that I was also an adoptee. At that, she reached

into her purse and carefully pulled out a tattered photograph, a snapshot of a baby girl. She confessed that she was trying to locate this child, whom she had given up for adoption. She wanted to know if her daughter was happy, if she was even alive. There was a haunting urgency in her eyes. I saw it.

I immediately wondered if the baby in the snapshot was me, and this woman, my birth mother. The time warp in which I had been living—Before Adoption and After Adoption—collapsed. Until then I had never imagined that my birth mother might be wondering about me as I was wondering about her. On this day my search began.

Members of the Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association told me that the first step in looking for my birth mother was to get the adoption decree, the document giving my adoptive parents legal custody of me. I was told that my adoptive par-

ents would probably have it. They did, and they turned it over to me after I first asked their permission to search. Yes, I was 22 years old at the time, but I didn't want to alienate them.

Baby Girl Griffitts. That's what I was called in the decree. It was shocking to see a name—a real, not assumed or adopted, name. This had something to do with *who I was*. I got so excited I opened up the Los Angeles phone book and called the first Griffitts I found. I told the poor soul on the line that I was looking for my long lost mother. He hung up.

So I backed off from the direct approach and tried the paper chase. I was legally entitled to so-called nonidentifying information. The trick was to make it identifying. A few months after the adoption seminar, I met at the Los Angeles Children's Home Society with a social worker who had my court-sealed file open in front of her. I was tempted just to grab the record and run. Instead, we played a game.

Yes, she could tell me how old my birth parents were.

No, she couldn't give me their birth dates.

Yes, she could tell me that my birth parents went to college.

No, she couldn't say where.

Yes, she could tell me what they looked like and what their interests were.

No, she couldn't give me their names.

I asked her what harm could come from my knowing my birth mother's first name. I just wanted to know what to call her in my head. The social worker hesitated, said she really shouldn't, and then gave in. Quite a coincidence, she said, but my birth mother's name was in fact Christine, the same as mine.

Now, from the adoption decree and my interview with the social worker, I knew that I was looking for a woman who was known as Christine Griffitts and who had given birth to me in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1957. I telephoned colleges in the vicinity of Oakland, where I was born. No record of a Christine Griffitts enrolled. I wrote to the state to see if she had ever received teaching credentials, because the social worker had told me that she had majored in education. Yes, she had received a California teaching certificate, but the state had lost track of her after receiving a report that she had married and changed her last name.

A policeman did me a favor and ran a computer check on all the driver's licenses in the United States. Not one Christine Griffitts.

I went to a doctor and talked him into writing to the principal hospital in Oakland, requesting my birth records for medical reasons. There were no such records, and there were so many other hospitals where I could have been born that I gave up on that tack.

I wrote to the Catholic Church chancery in the Bay Area to see if I had ever been listed as a member, as I had been told that

# Floppy Disks and Floppy Gloves

*For the players in the East Coast Software Softball League, there's only one thing better than getting out on the diamond and having a good time: beating Lotus.*

**BY ART JAHNKE**

**W**E WERE PLAYING AGAINST INFOCOM," Miller Communications account supervisor Mel Webster recalls. "They were way ahead. I mean like 10 runs ahead, when that idiot [Infocom senior scientist Richard] Ilson calls a time-out to talk to a runner on second base. I'm in center field and I say, 'Hey, what's goin' on?' You know what he says? He says he wants to discuss game strategy. They're 10 runs ahead and he calls time-out to discuss game strategy. So I yell, 'I'll give you f— game strategy.'"

A few plays later, Ilson was thrown out at home plate, and a red-faced Webster raced all the way in from the outfield to scream in his face, "You're out, you f— geek."

For what he estimates was "a small price to pay," Miller's Webster was thrown out of the game. The incident didn't end there. Months after the softball season had ended, when Infocom was looking for a public relations company, Miller Communications was among those being considered. The Mel Webster incident was recounted by Infocom employees. Meanwhile, in the Boylston Street offices of Miller Communications, the possibility of working with Infocom revived tales of Richard Ilson's softball fanaticism. Miller did not get the account. (Today employees at both companies insist that the main reason they decided not to work together was that Miller was already handling an Infocom competitor.)

WELCOME TO THE EAST COAST SOFTWARE SOFTBALL LEAGUE. ITS SEASON runs from May to August. There are nerds in the infield, geeks in the batter's box. Entire squads (which by league rule must include at least three women) of semispastic entrepreneurs from the new frontier of American business. They are 30-year-olds who have made millions creating games for 12-year-olds; 35-year-olds who have made tens of millions publishing computer programs for



**Last year's champs: Miller Communications. Front row from left: Don**

business. It is an industry of laid-back excellence and cool competition that often heats up on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, when the software softball warriors meet at Tufts athletic fields for seven innings of "sport."

Last year, when Softrend dropped a play-off game to Miller Communications, the losing pitcher was reduced to tears. When Spinnaker Software Corporation lost to Lotus Development Cor-

my birth mother was Catholic. In reply, I received a list of scores of churches that I could contact individually. I was losing hope. Two years had now passed since the adoption seminar.

I tried the phone book once again, but this time I used a different tactic. I told the people I reached that I was a reporter helping a woman locate another woman by the name of Christine Griffitts. That sounded more legitimate. Within hours I had tracked down her family—among them a relative who was a nun. It was she who gave me the phone number of my maternal grandfather.

He challenged me. He said he didn't think I was a reporter. I told him he could check. He asked if I was with the IRS or some other government agency. Then he paused for some time and finally said that he didn't want to stand between me and God in deciding whether I should contact Christine.

I had found her. In a moment I was staring at her phone number.

I was at work at KABC-TV in Los Angeles. I couldn't wait, so I went to anchor Christine Lund's private office and placed the call. I turned on the recorder because I was afraid I would never hear her voice again if she rejected me. I dialed the number and cleared my throat. A woman answered after the second ring.

"Hello. Is Christine Scott there?"

"Yes, this is Christine Scott."

"My name is Krista Bradford. I'm a writer and reporter with Channel 7 Eyewitness News and I'm doing a story where I'm looking for a woman by the name of Christine Griffitts. I'm actually helping another woman locate this woman and what I did was I called a lot of, ah, numbers in the phone directory and I found several of your relatives and got your number from your father, as a matter of fact. And I was wondering since, um, this is sort of a private matter for the person I'm doing the story on, do you have a private moment now or would it be better to call back later?"

"Well, I could go downstairs and talk with you."

"Okay." I waited on the line.

"Hello."

"Okay, um, hello. What I first want to do is make sure you're the right Christine Griffitts, if that's okay with you?"

"Okay."

"The Christine Griffitts we're looking for has dark brown hair and hazel eyes. Does that fit at all?"

"Uh-huh. Right."

"And dark complexion and, ah, stands about five foot three."

"I'm five four."

"Uh-huh. She majored in education in college and enjoyed children, music, reading, and, um, liked art exhibits, decorating, and played the piano. Do you play the piano?"

"Uh-huh."

"Okay. It seems to me to be matching up pretty well so far. Is your religion Catholic or is your family Catholic?"

"Our family is."

"Is your ancestry English, Italian, Scotch, and French?"

"Uh-huh. Right."

"Um. This is very hard for me to say. But I am a reporter at Channel 7 Eyewitness News in Los Angeles and, um, I'm also the woman looking for Christine Griffitts and what I need to know is if the birth date 7-14-57 means anything to you."

"Yes, it does."

"It does?" My head was spinning, my hands were shaking, and I had to struggle to keep my voice from cracking. "I believe you're my mother."

"Oh, wow."

"And I know this must be a shock to you and if it's—if you wish to talk later—"

"No, it is a shock but I'm so pleased to hear from you. That's really wonderful."

"Okay."

"Oh, golly."

"Um, I want to let you know I'm not looking for anything. I'm not angry, and I just feel that life is so short that we should have a chance to get to know one another. Possibly, if that's okay in your life. I don't know who knows about me in your life, and that's why I wanted to make sure you had privacy in talking to me."

"I know. No, I would very much enjoy getting together with you and, um, I'm presently married. My husband does know. I have two daughters and they do not. But, ah, I really would. It would mean a lot to me and maybe I could tell you a little more about your background and so forth and just have the chance to get to know you. That would be really wonderful."

"I was afraid to call. I also wanted to say that I felt that you—carrying me to term and valuing my life that much to give me up—I really feel  
(Cont. on p. 106)

## The Right to Know

*An adopted child calls for open adoption.*

**BY KRISTA BRADFORD**

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF:

- your birth certificate were fake;
- you were bound by a contract to which you never agreed;
- you had no legal access to your parents' medical and personal history;
- you had no birthright?

Chances are you'd get mad. You'd resent being denied the same rights that other adults take for granted.

You'd be one of the estimated 5 million adoptees in the United States.

For my adoptive parents, Eleanor and Howard Wespieser, possession is nine-tenths of adoption law. As my mother says: "We went through a ceremony with the judge that's very similar to getting married. I mean, I take thee Christie, you know, for better or worse."

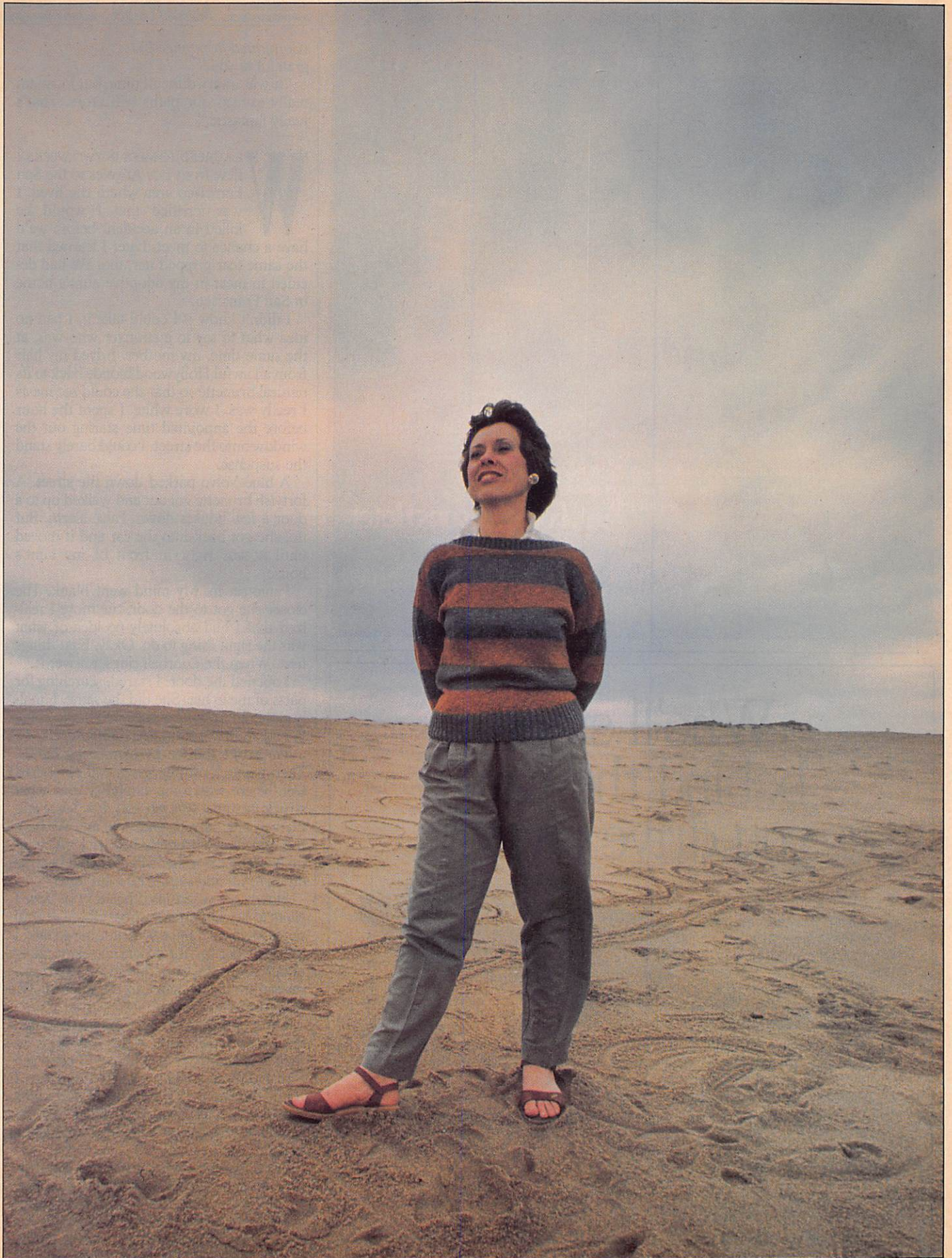
But birth parents don't disappear, and they rarely, if ever, forget. Adoptive parents usually worry that the birth parent will eventually decide to reclaim the adoptee or, in some way, interfere with the adoptive family. Although this fear is statistically unfounded, it is the concern upon which most adoption law is founded. It is the reason for the secrecy, the sealed records, and the government collusion.

My birth parents' medical histories are sealed by the court in California, where I was born. That means I have no legal right to know my genetic background. My file is stored in some room, somewhere, and I have no business looking for it. I could be a walking medical time bomb and not even know it.

Most adoption agencies ask a birth mother for her medical history before she gives up her child. The birth father is often not even around. The incomplete information is passed on to the adoptive family. In my case, it went like this: There's no  
(Continued on page 109)

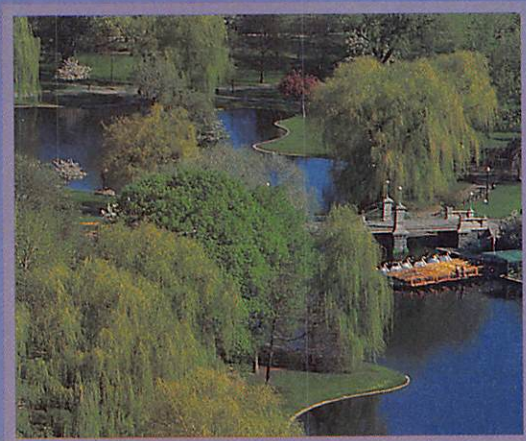


**Krista's first Christmas with Mom in 1957.**



**Nancy O'Keefe Bolick: Her son, Christopher, and her daughter, Katie, signed their names in the sand.**

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## ADOPTION

(Continued from page 87)

grateful to you."

"It was a very difficult time, but I just am really excited our paths will cross. That's really fantastic."

**W**E AGREED TO MEET IN TWO WEEKS. I flew from Los Angeles to the San Francisco area where she lived. I was terrified that I would be killed in an accident before we'd have a chance to meet. Later I learned that the same fear gripped her, too. We had decided to meet in my adoptive aunt's home in San Francisco.

I didn't know if I could take it. I had no idea what to say to a stranger who was, at the same time, my mother. I dyed my hair from an awful Hollywood blonde back to its natural Brunette so that she could see me as I really was. I wore white. I spent the hour before the appointed time staring out the window onto the street. I could barely stand the suspense.

A blue Volvo parked down the street. A fortyish Brunette got out and walked up to a door a few houses down. False alarm. But no, she got back into the car and it moved until it was right in front of my aunt's house.

Panic set in. My mind went blank. The closer she got to the door, the more I realized that I had absolutely no idea of what was the right thing to do. Okay. First things first. When the doorbell rings, answer it.

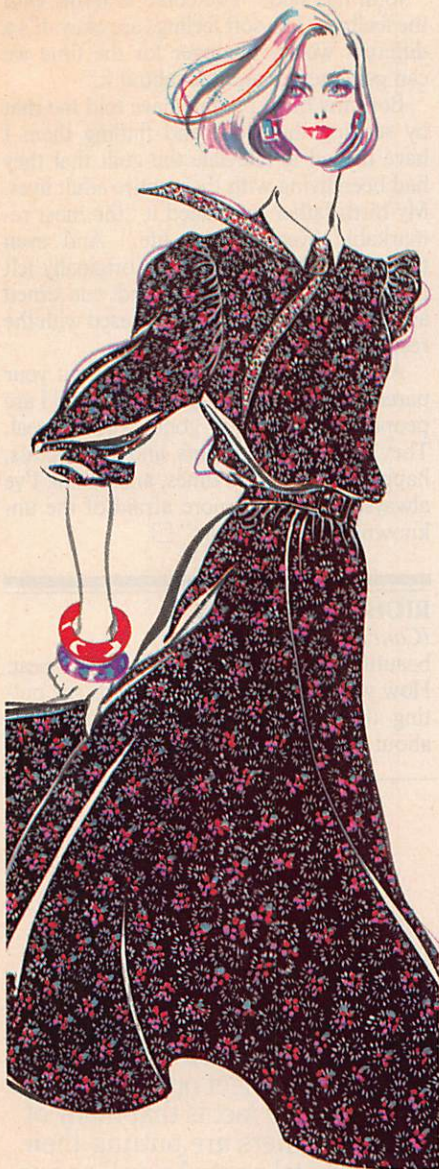
I opened the door. I stared, searching for parts of me in her. She did the same. I finally gathered my wits and invited her to come in and sit in the sun-filled dining room.

We broke the ice by comparing hands. Then we took off our shoes and compared feet. There was some similarity. But what struck me most was her soft, low voice and the way she moved. That was me. We have the same wavy Brunette hair, but my natural hair color is a shade lighter than hers, as are my eyes and skin. And I am taller.

Slowly we eased into the story of how I came to be. Christine's throat closed several times, making it impossible for her to talk. I told her that my throat did the same thing under stress. As Christine spoke, we broke several times for coffee in the kitchen. We were pacing ourselves.

I was conceived in the backseat of a car. She was in love. John Ames, my birth father, was not. Later he told me: "I never felt I misled [her]. I never spoke of marriage. I never discussed it. I remember her telling me that she was pregnant and I had the classic feeling, Oh, s—. What am I going to do?"

Their parents, who knew one another, discussed the situation and made that decision for them. Christine would be sent away to another town to have me. She was Catholic, so abortion was out. She stayed with a doctor's family in Oakland, where she was upset by the constant reminder of young children around her. She went on crying



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Or would her coming bring a welcome end to years of wondering what life had brought to that lost child? Once they were past the first encounter, I felt sure that they would be pleased with what she had become. I also hoped that she would find them not so different from us, and so find us more acceptable.

Krista found her natural parents by using the skills she had gained in the news-gathering world. She made her contacts discreetly, with care and consideration for the feelings and circumstances of everyone involved. She has heard her birth mother's story and knows that the decision to give her up was not without cost. She has seen the color of her eyes reflected in her natural father's and knows that he, too, has paid a price. She has found grandparents and half brothers and half sisters, and they have

ably into the hands of others. What if, later, either natural parent is unable to have other children? What of the adoptive parents' consequent need to prove to the child, as well as to the natural parents, that they were indeed the better choice? Finally, what of the child who all too soon will sense tensions and become confused as to where to place trust and loyalty? Will the child become unsure of where he or she belongs and where to look for comfort, guidance, and approval? What of the prospects for the adoptive parents of a second child with a different set of natural parents from the first? How could they possibly create a tightly knit, secure family unit under such conditions?

To me, the risks in open adoptions far outweigh the possible advantages. To participate in such a plan one would need a

*To the adopted child who, upon reaching adulthood, finds the identity of his or her natural parents necessary to a search for self, I would say, proceed with caution and caring for all concerned. Be prepared to give up your search if you find that it risks the welfare of your parents—any one of them.*

made her welcome. She has the answers to those long-asked questions—those missing bits and pieces of her identity. She also has accepted that in those families she is a visiting relative—welcome, but outside the immediate family circle.

Has her search resolved the adopted child's sense of being second best? Has it eased the pain of that early rejection? Has it led her to recognize that truly we are her family? With all my heart, I hope so.

Can the scars of rejection and the damage to egos of both adopted children and adoptive parents be minimized through the developing practice of open adoptions? Should adoptive and birth parents meet and know one another during the pregnancy, discuss together what they want for the coming baby, perhaps arrange for continued contact and visits as the child grows up in the adopted home? Will this kind of arrangement contribute to the child's security, lessen feelings of rejection, add to a sense of self? I wonder.

What of the natural parents, who have given up their legal rights to parent this child? What of the doubts, the second thoughts, the reopening of old wounds, of envy and jealousy? What of their need to keep in the past that which is past, and get on with their lives and obligations to new families? After all, at no little emotional cost, they have delivered this child irretreiv-

able maturity, an unshakable belief in one's own worth, flexibility within a framework of steadfast purpose. I am reminded of Kipling's "If": "If you can keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you, / If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, / But make allowance for their doubting too. . . ." It's too big an "if" for most of us.

No, I believe that in the growing years a child's sense of personal identity and potential is better served by one set of parents, one source of security and sustenance—emotional as well as physical—and one set of loyalties. I am a firm believer that the protections for both natural and adoptive parents that have been incorporated into the legal restrictions on the disclosure of names and whereabouts of either were carefully considered and are in the best interests of all concerned.

To the adopted child who, upon reaching adulthood, finds the identity of his or her natural parents necessary to a search for self, I would say, proceed with caution and caring for all concerned. Be prepared to give up your search if you find that it risks the welfare of your parents—any one of them. If it costs too much in pain and disruption to their lives, it will not bring a resolution of your doubts about yourself and who you are. The price of finding birth parents can be too high. □

jags. Things got so bad during the last month of her pregnancy that the doctor packed up his family and went on vacation.

When labor began, Christine went to the hospital alone. The doctor who delivered me was condescending to her. Everyone advised her not to hold me, but she did, just for a moment in the delivery room. That was the last time we saw each other until the summer of 1981.

**A**FTER OUR FIRST MEETING, WE WROTE to each other often to sort out our feelings. One letter in particular touched me. It was dated July 22, 1981:

Dear Krista,

A most happy birthday to you and all life's successes and heart's desires in the years to come. In many ways, your 24th birthday is very special to both of us. It seems to herald a new direction in your life and to me it's meant so much to come in touch again with an important part of my past—you!

Less than a year later, I found my birth father, John Ames. That was Christine's idea, not mine. I had mixed feelings about meeting the father who had not even been around when I was born. But he called me

at her suggestion, and we met.

Our meeting evoked much the same combination of awkward and loving feelings as had occurred when I met my birth mother.

John has since called that meeting "a deep psychic journey." He has said: "I re-

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*Both my birth parents have told me that by seeking them out and finding them I have helped to alleviate the guilt that they had been living with their entire adult lives.*

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call having some element of contradiction. I was totally blindsided by the soft feelings for you. I was feeling ashamed, confused, embarrassed by them, feeling almost kinky. It was a weird feeling. Any soft feeling was tabooish."

Although it is rarely reported, many adoptees who have found their birth par-

ents have been thrown by an attraction for the birth parent of the opposite sex. We feel connected physically, and it's easy to misinterpret that as sexual attraction.

John has said: "I've come to terms with the feelings. The soft feelings are okay. It's a different world. I hunger for the time we can get together and talk about it."

Both my birth parents have told me that by seeking them out and finding them I have helped to alleviate the guilt that they had been living with their entire adult lives. My birth father has called it "the most remarkable event of my life." And even though my adoptive parents originally felt threatened by my search and concerned about its outcome, they are pleased with the results.

As my mom says: "You found out your parents were people, just like Dad and I are people. The myth is gone. They're real. They've got good points and bad points, happy times and sad times, and I think I've always been much more afraid of the unknown than the known." □

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#### RIGHT TO PRIVACY

*(Continued from page 86)*

beautiful, successful one, might be a threat. How would they receive her? Was she putting them in an intolerable bind? What about their spouses? Their other children?

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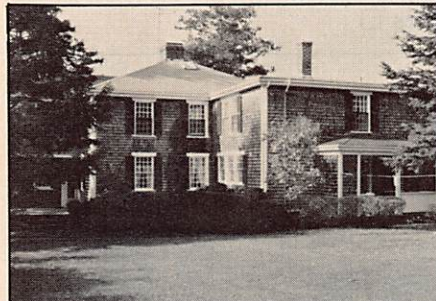
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## SOFTBALL

(Continued from page 89)

Yet it was Solomont who, in August 1983, two months into the league's first season, placed an advertisement in *The Boston Globe* for a third baseman. BPS did acquire an agile infielder, but it also received complaints from job applicants that the next time it advertised for someone to play third base it had better look for a "third baseperson."

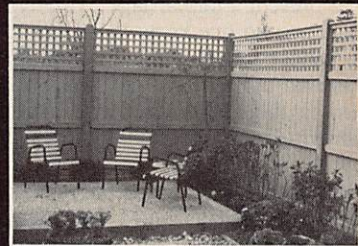
Solomont sits in his office in a renovated brick warehouse, one of the dozens of high-tech office buildings that have sprung up like mushrooms in the shadow of MIT, near Cambridge's Kendall Square. As is traditional in this industry with no tradition, Solomont wears blue jeans and an open collar. A colorful semiabstract oil painting of a computer terminal hangs on his office wall.

"In 1979 you had a handful of people on the West Coast and a handful of people on the East Coast, and they all knew each other," Solomont explains. "We all just happened to be around the same place at the same time. Now you take the group of us who had more energy, or more balls—we're the ones who got together and said, 'Hey, let's do a company.' Softball came about as a way to transcend the competitive nature of the industry and get together and have a few beers. Today the league has two whole different levels. One is the marketplace level, where someone like Softrend is trying to take on Lotus. Now there is no way in hell that they're ever going to win that one. But with the softball league, they have another level to win on. If Softrend can't beat Lotus in software, maybe they can beat them in softball. And vice versa: Lotus, even with 500 people, couldn't beat Softrend in softball, but they beat them in software."

ONE TEAM WEARS HAWAIIAN SHIRTS and straw hats. Another has the number 1 printed on every player's jersey. Another tried (and failed) to designate each player with a binary number: 0001, 0011, 0111. (They wouldn't fit.) There's still an argument among the teams as to who developed the concept for the league, even as the companies rise and fall in the crueler battles of the marketplace. Of the eight teams that played in the league last summer, two—Acorn Computer and Softrend—have been acquired by larger companies and have retired from the league. David Solomont's BPS has shrunk from 25 to 12 employees. Another three—Infocom, Spinnaker, and Lotus—have grown like strange creatures from another planet. (Last year alone, Lotus's revenues grew by 196 percent, and the company has launched a second team made up of people from its operations department.) CSA Press, which packages software and prints manuals, is known for buying beer at postgame parties. And last year's champion, Miller Communications, is a seven-year-old high-tech public relations company that

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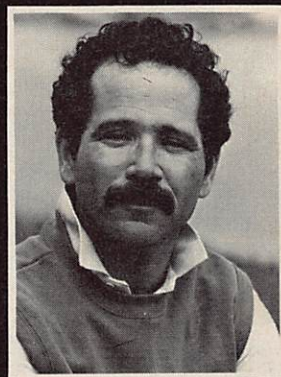
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## RIGHT TO KNOW

(Continued from page 87)

disease in your family; you have no hereditary problems.

By now that terse medical history is 27 years old. What if my birth mother took DES to prevent a miscarriage? Twenty-seven years ago no one knew that DES could cause cancer in offspring, so if my birth mother had taken it—as did thousands of women in the 1950s—she wouldn't have had any reason to mention it in her medical history.

And what if I develop any of the estimated thousands of genetically related diseases that affect 1 out of 10 Americans at some point in their lives? There is no system to update birth-family medical histories for adoptees. Nor do adoptees have the right to locate the information themselves.

Yet, ironically, the government takes great pride in protecting me. One of the documents sealed by the California court is my original birth certificate, the one with all the real information on it. What I have been given is a fake, a legal forgery, if you will. The names of my adoptive parents have taken the place of those of my birth parents, making it appear as if they gave birth to me. The name of the hospital where I was born is missing; the signature of the attending doctor is illegible.

This deception is designed to protect me

and both sets of parents. Perhaps the state reasons that it's best that I not know my birth parents' names and they not know my new, adopted identity. The state expects the worst and then tries to protect adoptees from it. Judges rarely rule that the adoptees' right to know outweighs the birth parents' right to privacy. And they rarely rule it illegal to hold adoptees to a contract to which they never agreed.

It's my feeling that this privacy causes all adopted children and both sets of parents to live with a fear of the unknown. The secrecy surrounding adoption creates a Pandora's box. But when I opened that box, I found love. That's what 9 out of 10 adoptees report they find.

People ask, "What did your adoptive parents think? Weren't they enough for you?"

My adoptive parents accepted the idea of my search. And yes, they were enough, because I wasn't trying to replace them. I was not being disloyal.

People ask about the reunion. They drop their voices; they're prepared to hear the worst—soap opera stuff. But I have yet to meet an adopted child or birth parent whose life has crumbled after that first meeting.

The real point is that I am no longer a child. I would like to become fully responsible for all the relationships in my life without interference from the government. At

the very least, the records should be available once an adopted person reaches adulthood.

I also support a more controversial change in our adoption system: keep the records open from the very start. Let the birth parents meet the adoptive family. If a woman carrying an unwanted child knew she could keep track of her offspring, there would be more children available for adoption. There would be fewer abortions and fewer teenage mothers struggling to bring up a child in spite of inadequate personal and financial resources.

Adoption agencies in several states—including Massachusetts—have been trying open adoption with great success. Most adoption agencies, however, are reluctant to dispense with the old protections of legally sealed documents. Ironically, many adoptive parents who have traditionally lobbied the hardest against open adoption become advocates once they see that it can work. Once they know that the birth parents do not want to reclaim their children, their fear tends to disappear.

But that fear still binds many legislators and stands in the way of widespread acceptance of open adoption. Those legislators need to realize that an adoptee doesn't have just a family tree, but an entire forest. It's time the government saw the forest for the trees. □

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