



Adoptions With Love

Fall 2010 Newsletter



Family mysteries often are shrouded in the secrecy of unnecessary shame and guilt. Such a mystery was revealed to me this past June in my own family. While visiting with my cousins Elizabeth and Jessica, they began to tell me that a woman named Susan, who is about our age, recently contacted Elizabeth saying that she believed that she is related to them. Luckily, this all occurred prior to their mother's death, so they were able to discuss this with her. It turns out that Aunt Annie, their father's sister, had become pregnant in 1958, gave birth to a baby girl and made an adoption plan for her daughter (Susan). What was discovered is that Annie had become pregnant while on vacation and her family persuaded her to make an adoption plan; in 1958 it was totally unacceptable for a single, Caucasian woman to raise a bi-racial baby on her own. Her family was not going to accept this child. Annie remained close with her nieces and nephew throughout her life but she never revealed this secret and, sadly, took it to her own death.

As the story unfolded we found out that Annie had always wondered about her child and there was always a void in her life. Susan, now a 52 year old woman, always wondered about her history and never was sure of her racial background. Finally, she was able to have many questions answered after contacting Elizabeth. While at the grave site for her mother, Jessica went over to her Aunt Annie's grave and told her that her daughter Susan had contacted them and that she was fine; she need not worry anymore.

After learning this, I discussed it with another aunt, who will turn 89 this month. She knew it all. I encouraged her to share whatever she knows with Jessica and Elizabeth so that they could share this information with Susan. This story left me with feelings of sadness; mostly for Annie, who was never able to resolve or even given the opportunity to work through the loss of her child, and for Susan who at the age of 52 is finally learning more about her identity.

Stories like this one make me proud to work in the field of adoption, especially now where we have an atmosphere of openness. Understanding ones' origins is vitally important to all of us, especially for a person who is adopted. This understanding aides in identity formation. I am glad that we work closely with expectant parents contemplating adoption and continue this work with them as they grieve their losses and rebuild their lives. Adoption is a journey that lasts many lifetimes and the work is never complete.

Almost everyday Nancy and I are contacted by parents, both birth and adoptive and by their children to assist them in this journey. It is a process that takes time. Ongoing dialogues and openness are paramount in maintaining healthy family relationships. It is not easy; call us if you need help. I hope that we do not have stories like that of Aunt Annie and Susan in our AWL family.

State of the Agency Update:

Placements for 2010 as of Sept. 30, 2010: 32 placements

Plans are underway for the 25th AWL Anniversary Celebration.

Save the date:

September 18, 2011

With warm regards,

Amy S. Ghera



A letter from Nancy By Nancy Rosenhaus, Associate Director



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Adoptions With Love

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I know many folks found this past summer exceedingly hot, but I enjoyed the heat and the long daylight hours. Now the chilly air reminds us that change is coming. We are trying some changes at Adoptions With Love! We have tried to become a bit more “social network” savvy and have a [facebook page](#)! You can link to our “facebook” from our website. Look down in the left hand corner for the F. Check it out and maybe you will decide to become a fan of Adoptions with Love, even though I’m not quite sure what that means.

Recently I was approached by a few members of the AWL family regarding making a donation. Their parents wanted to make a donation in honor of their grandchildren, and they wanted a bit more information in order to designate a fund. This is a lovely idea, so let me take a moment to explain each of our finds. Currently we have three funds set up.

RECORDS TRUST

The Records Trust is a separated trust legally established in 2002 to care for the children’s records in perpetuity. Our goal is to raise \$350,000.00 to fund our records and we have a long way to go. With the help of some very generous lead donors, this trust was established and we are extremely grateful for their generosity. The records trust will allow for a paid designated administrator to be attached to our records in the event that Adoptions with Love, Inc. closes. Of course, there is no worry about this now, but we are always looking ahead and planning for the “what if’s”. We have all heard of adoption agencies closing their doors and the records disappearing. We have set up this fund to protect your child’s records as well as the photo and letter files that birthparents call in for. Keeping your records in storage and protected is very expensive. Currently we store all of our closed records at Iron Mountain. It is all paper but we hope to be able to upgrade and possibly digitize the records someday. However, the state requires us to keep the records in paper and scanning them is exceedingly expensive. Now that we are 25 years old, we have had many occasions to retrieve records from storage and we see that this will only increase in the coming years.

GENERAL DONATIONS

This fund is set up to subsidize adoptions for a variety of reasons. In order to remain competitive we have had to increase our advertising funds. Adoption is very expensive and advertising has become extremely imperative and expensive thus increasing the fees. Even though we try to not increase our fees, from time to time we do have small increases. Advertising is the main avenue for birthparents to locate the services of Adoptions with Love. We subsidize about one third of our adoptions for families who are in need and can provide an excellent home for a child.

ELIZABETH QUACKENBUSH MEMORIAL FUND

This special account was established in memory of our founding director, Elizabeth Quackenbush. We utilize this fund to assist birthparents who complete an adoption plan, to further their education or set up a stable living situation for themselves and other children they parent. We have been able to pay for cosmetology school, GED courses, and household furnishings that otherwise would not have been attainable for these women.

As we head into our 25th year we will be planning several celebrations. A lovely way to honor your child’s birthday, graduation or another special event by making a donation to Adoptions With Love, Inc. We always appreciate any amount given.

SAVE THE DATE: 9/18/11

For our 25th Anniversary celebration



Appointing Guardians

By Debra Olshever



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Let me say this right up front, what follows is something you never want to think about!! You are young and healthy, and excited about expanding your family. Then, towards the end of your home study, your social worker asks you about whether you have a will and whether you have thought about what would happen if you should both die! (or only you, if you are a single parent to be). Talk about heavy – you have not even brought your new child home, and they are already discussing the time you hope will happen in about 100 years! After all, why adopt if you will die prematurely?

It seems unthinkable. Is this really necessary?

Yes, it is, as a sign of responsible parenting, making all kinds of provisions for your child, and not just financial. The question is who do you trust to take care of your child, and to help them grow and develop? It must be someone that you love, and who loved both you and your spouse/partner. Which of course means that they too are grieving, just as they are being asked to do the hardest thing – help a grieving child. And this child needs to be fully incorporated into their family, which means helping their own children adjust, to live with a new “sibling” and to share you. And a grieving child often means an angry and/or sad child who is overwhelmed and not at their best. This child has not only lost their adopted parents, they have also lost their best friend across the street, their favorite teacher/ coach/ religious leader, pet, etc. (fill in the blanks). And, by definition this child has lost their birth family and/or culture/ country – the list goes on and on. So a grieving person must help a grieving child, both struggling to come to terms with the loss of two people they loved. Not an easy task, and one that probably requires lots of outside support.

To further complicate matters, as pre-adoptive parents, you have been on a steep and exciting learning curve regarding adoption – the right language to use, how to talk about birth parents and loss and grief and joy and families. So much to absorb – can’t ask others to do this too, especially since we hope they will never need these skills. But they DO need to know what they do not know – and be willing to seek help and advice from experts should they be thrust into the position of raising your child.

One more factor in domestic adoption: you will have as much information as the agency can glean for you regarding the birth family and history for your child. It is his/ her information, and you are the guardian of it, sharing it when age appropriate with your child. Some of it is private, and you may not even have told the people closest to you- ie, the future guardian. So it is sensitive to tell them that there is more info in the file under “A for Adoption,” which they can only access if needed. “What, you trust me to raise your kid, but not with this sensitive info? What is that about?” (privacy)!

So how do you go about making a choice? Use your heart as well as your head. Talk with those close to you – this is more than just a way to honor a relationship, it is about the future of your child. Is this person willing to do the work? Are they sensitive and compassionate enough to seek outside counseling and coaching about raising adopted kids? Do you need to appoint a separate financial person to manage the money issues while someone else does the hands on raising the child? (If so, can these two agree when big expenses come up, such as for therapy, private school or camp or college)? Will this person be comfortable in keeping all the current family relationships intact? Know that you can leave a letter with your will expressing your wishes. And the named guardian can change over time as circumstances, ages, etc change. The will is NOT written in stone.

So much to think about, and more choices to make. How exciting – this world of parenting through adoption. A parent is a parent, but yes, it IS more complicated when you adopt.

Deb Olshever, MED, LCSW

Adoption Associates

Adoptions with Love



The Questions ... by Patricia Davis



Do you have any children? How old are your children? How many children do you have? I call these “the Questions”. They are asked by people who do not yet know me. They are normal, everyday questions regularly asked and happily answered by most of the world. For me they are an instant reminder of the one great hole in my life and the fact that I am different from most other women.

Regardless of how I answer the Questions, it is an immediate disclosure that generally leaves me vulnerable and the questioner in limbo. Through the years, I have come up with various ways to answer the Questions depending upon what information I want to convey. A simple “no” provides only the fact that I have no children and nothing more.

“No” was my response at the beginning when my husband and I were going through the adventures of infertility treatment, when we still believed we were among the 25% of couples that can be helped. This was when I still resented being referred to as an infertile couple. We were healthy, relatively young, no drinking or drug habits, and no family history of infertility. We were not infertile, we just needed help. So, I would say “no, I don’t have children.”

Sometimes the reaction to this response gave me the impression that I was being judged. I could just hear them thinking, “Oh, she’s a career girl with no desire for children.” Occasionally the reaction to “no I don’t have children” was the very happy parent’s misunderstanding that I do not want children. Unfortunately this is followed by their dissertation on the joys of parenthood in an attempt to talk me into having children. I call this the worst case scenario.

I was at a wedding once when a new father verbally shook me by the shoulders in an attempt to awaken my need for motherhood. On the hairy edge of a complete and very public break down, I caught myself and quietly but firmly said, “For years now I’ve been going through surgeries and giving myself

multiple injections per day in an attempt to have a child. I’m going to the ladies room now and when I come back, I want us all to pretend this didn’t happen.” Fortunately, that is exactly what the table did and we had a lovely time, though a bit too much to drink.

These reactions led me to change my answer to “no, I don’t have children yet” to convey the idea that I do want children but leaving the questions whether we have not tried or that we are having trouble up in the air. This worked for a while but as I neared 40, “yet” was tough to pull off.

It was a startling and intensely quiet moment when it finally dawned on me that my husband and I were not in the fortunate group of 25% that could be helped. (My husband actually realized this earlier than I did but he didn’t want to break my heart.) How would I answer the Questions now?

I came up with “no, we have not been so blessed” to let the questioner know that I wanted children but did not have any. Usually this response was successful in ending the topic of conversation.

I lived in fear of the Questions and the responsive pain I tried to hide. I worked a lot. Being surrounded by people who knew me and most of whom were men, meant I could avoid the Questions for longer periods of time. Still, you can’t work all the time and the Questions continued to haunt me.

I was desperately jealous of people who absolutely knew they did not want children and those who absolutely knew they would adopt. We were not against adoption but we were reeling from the impact of our loss. I found security in my belief that God must have a plan.

We decided to try living without children and embrace being different from most other couples. We had the freedom and money to travel the world, and we did. There were clear advantages to not having children but, for me, I knew that it would be my one great regret.

When my heart and soul could no longer take it, I told my husband that I had to adopt. I was relieved and thrilled that he

had come to the same decision. We then embarked on the adventure of adoption with its own ups and downs, and we adopted our son (thru AWL!). I would not alter one heart break, one delay, one needle or other medical procedure of our journey, because this exact path brought us together as a family and completed what I now know was God’s plan. I now thank God every day that my husband and I could not conceive because, if we had, we would not have our son which is something I cannot imagine.

Of course, I now love and encourage the Questions as I am happiest when talking about my son. However, I am careful not to ask the Questions knowing that the person may be on a journey which does not welcome them.



SAVE THE DATE!!!

Sept. 18, 2011

For our fun filled day for the entire family celebrating our

25th Anniversary!

We need volunteers to work on the planning committee.

Email kstrem@awlonline.org

To join this fantastic group.

Meet the Board—Michael Winter



Michael Winter is a Senior Vice President at J.P. Morgan Securities in Boston. He has been working within the financial field since 1974 and has gained extensive experience at some of the most prestigious investment firms on Wall Street. Before joining J.P. Morgan, Michael was a Senior Managing Director at Bear Stearns for 23 years. He joined Oppenheimer & Co. Inc. in 2008 and was recruited by J.P. Morgan in 2010.

Michael has hundreds of client relationships, including some of the largest investment advisors in the Boston area. He works closely with portfolio managers and provides both fixed income and strategic research to analysts. He also provides innovative and customized wealth management services to high net worth individuals.

Michael is very active in community service and served as Chairman of Jewish Vocational Services. He is on the Board of Directors of Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Board of Directors Museum of Science Boston, Past Board of Overseers Children's Hospital Boston, Past Board of Directors Jewish Big Brother Big Sister and Past Board of Directors Northeastern University's Family Business Center.

Michael has been on the Board of Directors for seventeen years and has been the Treasurer for twelve years. He currently resides in Brookline, Massachusetts with his wife, Deborah Goldberg, and two of his four children; Evan and Meredith.



Some of our newest babies above



Anyone up for a football game???

SAVE THE DATE !!!

September 18, 2011

for our

25th anniversary celebration!!!

A fun filled day for the entire family

At the Warren Center in Ashland, MA

Email: kstrem@awlonline.org to join the planning committee. We need your input!



Building Families Through Domestic Adoption

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