



'My natural mother carried me for nine months... She went through that kind of hell to give me up. I'm sure she wonders if she did the right thing.'

Rose, an adoptee

this woman who gave so much to me. No one has the right to take that away from me," she said.

Mildred Wilson is a social worker for the Rockingham County Social Services Division and several years ago arranged two separate reunions between adoptees and their natural mothers.

"I was the go-between in arranging the meetings. After the adoptees came to me with the information about who the natural parents were, I first contacted the individuals to be sure they were interested in a reunion," Wilson said. "In the two situations I was involved in, both adoptees appeared stable and happily married," she said. "If they had seemed unstable, I would have had second thoughts about contacting their natural parents for them."

The adoptees' desire to obtain information about their natural parents, Wilson said, is a normal, healthy development, as is the birth parents' desire to be aware of the development of the adoptee.

"From the adoptees' and their biological parents' point of view, there is not intention of disrupting each other's lives," said Robin Peacock. "The biological parent does not want to disrupt the placement of the child, but has a right and a need to know how their child has progressed, if they so desire."

Virginia Rader of CUB said she had never met a birth parent who was not concerned about the child they had given up for adoption. "They express a desire to know how the child has grown and not necessarily to meet the adult adoptee. They do not want to interfere in any way," she said.

Those who have come before the Legislative Research Commission are no longer children, but instead have families of their own and their own lives to live.

These individuals, who are seeking to remove the secrecy surrounding adoption records, stress that the adult adoptee is entitled to the same rights as other citizens—to know of their origin and birth. A need for complete medical history also is important. Adoptees' medical history usually is given by a teenage mother who has very little knowledge of past illnesses in her family.

"Adoptees from all different walks of life are aiming towards the same cause. There is a dire need for updated medical background that can only be obtained from the natural parent," Klein said.

"Past medical history available from older adoption records are not pertinent today in a preventative sense," he said.

"One of the reasons for sealed records, I believe, has to do with the 'Skinner baby box' belief," Rader said. "When the adoption policies concerning sealed records were started in the U.S., there was the idea that genes and heritage were of no concern to the development of a healthy child if the environment was strong."

Times have changed, however. The Forsyth County Department of Social Services and other adoption agencies are currently informing the birth parents who release a child for adoption and the prospective parents that if the law were to be changed, the adult adoptee could obtain information concerning his or her origin and the identity of the birth parents.

Yet most agencies similar to Adoptees Together have reported that despite strict laws concerning obtaining any information, usually any person in any state could find their birth parents. "In every state there is a group like ours," said Holly Hill, founder of Adoptees Together. "We act as intermediaries, dealing with the anxiety the adoptee or biological parent may feel."

"Adoptees Together was founded in August of 1976 and I have only encountered one mother who did not desire to see her adult child," Hill said. "The great majority of birth parents do wonder at least if they had done the right thing."

Although it appears as if many adoptees have a relatively easy time finding their natural parents. Many times the efforts are endless and unsuccessful in finding the answers. "There are a few thousand of us in North Carolina who just simply desire to know information and not to go out and knock on someone's door, invading the privacy of their natural parents," said Daniel, a UNC junior who has tried in the past to unlock the bureaucratic seal on his adoption records.

"Last summer I got up the nerve and the means to look into the situation," he said. "I went to the adoption agency in Greensboro. The most frustrating thing was to have the director of the agency, who is a total stranger and has no interest in my past, sit behind her desk with my records in her hands. She could read these records and I couldn't."

The process of sealed records establishes the type of secrecy which produces an ominous picture of something not to be acknowledged, Rader said. "Confidentiality is better contained in an atmosphere of openness than of secrecy," she said. "Secrecy is negative to the adoption process."

These 'hidden parents' are the source of many positive and negative fantasies. Some persons feel the opening up of sealed records may be the opening of Pandora's box.

In attempting to determine whose individual rights are to be most protected, legislatures are dealing with a bundle of heated emotions. As discussed during the first public hearing held by the North Carolina Legislative Research Commission, "There are no absolute answers—the solution to every problem generates another to be addressed."

Ann Peters is a staff writer for **The Daily Tar Heel**.

Adoption groups

Many organizations and persons throughout the United States provide help, advice and information on adoption laws and the rights of adoptees and parents. Some names and addresses of groups and people to contact are:

Adoptees Together
Holly Hill
Route 1, Box 3085
Climax, NC 27233

Legislative Research Commission Committee on the Rights of Adopted Children
Susan Frost
Legislative Building Annex
10 E. Jones St.
Raleigh, NC 27611

Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association
P.O. Box 15
Washington Bridge Station
New York, NY 10022

Concerned United Birth Parents
Virginia Rader
P.O. Box 23641
L'Elant Plaza Station
Washington, D.C. 20024

The next meeting of the Legislative Research Commission is Thursday, April 3 at 10 a.m. in the Legislative Building in Raleigh. The meeting is open to the public, and written comments or opinions may be mailed to commission members at the Legislative Commission address listed above.