



Special Issue:  
Book Reviews

Inside

FEATURES

3 *The Girls Who Went Away*  
— Roesle

4 *The Spirit of Adoption*  
— Nydam

*Fumbling Toward Divinity*  
— Drese

5 *Memoirs by Adopted Men*  
— Baumann

*Shar's Story: A Mother and Daughter Reunited*  
— Busharis

DEPARTMENTS  
& MORE

2 *Editor's Note*  
— Pittenger

8 *Adoption Book Order Information*

***Outsiders Within:***  
**Writing on Transracial Adoption**

Edited by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin  
Reviewed by Barbara Busharis

*Outsiders Within* is not the first book to explore the experience of being adopted across racial lines, but is perhaps the most challenging and ambitious to date. Rather than exploring the experiences of one ethnic or national group, the editors have gathered a collection of essays, poems, and memoirs that put transracial adoption in a multi-national context. The result is a book, in the editors' words, that is not only about adoption, but also about "loss, love, belonging, alienation, home, and exile."

The chapters of *Outsiders Within* are arranged in six thematic parts; they can be read out of order without losing the impact of individual chapters, but the grouping provides helpful context. The first part, "Where are you really from?", includes the perspectives of adoptees placed across racial lines within the United States alongside those of adoptees from other countries, and in doing so sets the tone for the rest of the book. This part, along with the fifth, "Journeys home," are the most subjective themes, but one of the great strengths of the book is the way it interweaves subjective experience with analysis and commentary throughout all six parts.

U.S. adoption literature, no matter the genre, is often grouped in a way that divorces the experience of minorities adopted internationally from those adopted within the country. In part this may mirror our continuing struggle to come to terms with our own history of racism. The practical result is that "international adoptees" and "transracial adoptees" are often discussed separately, with the word "international" understood to encompass primarily white, Asian, and Latino children, and the word "transracial" most commonly used to describe black and biracial American-born children. This may change, to a small extent, if the

*continued on page 7*

***Making Room in Our Hearts***  
**Explores Open Adoption**

By Micky Duxbury  
Reviewed by Mary Martin Mason

Adoptive parent and therapist Micky Duxbury acknowledges fears about open adoption in her newly released book, *Making Room in Our Hearts*. For skeptical birth parents and adoptive parents, as well as for adoption professionals, whose jobs have turned 180 degrees from practices of secrecy in arranging adoptions, the book is a guide into uncharted waters.

Duxbury relies on over one hundred interviews, providing the experiences of veterans of open adoption. Stories reveal how such adoptions fare for everyone with the invaluable inclusion of the child's view. Typical is a comment from Seth, 19: "The fact that I have known my birth mother all these years has made such a difference in my life. I know who I am and where I am from. It has helped solidify life for me."

The experiences of adopted children and youth reveal that growing up knowing birth family is not confusing or troubling, but rather meets a deep, profound need to explore identity within the context of two families. Loss is still loss for the child in an open adoption, the difference being that the child can explore that loss within a biological, cultural and ethnic context.

A chapter on openness for older children adopted from foster care addresses the complexities of contact between adoptive parents and birth

*continued on page 2*



**AAC Mission Statement**—The American Adoption Congress comprises individuals, families and organizations committed to adoption reform. We represent those whose lives are touched by adoption or other loss of family continuity.

We promote honesty, openness and respect for family connections in adoption, foster care, and assisted reproduction. We provide education for our members and professional communities about the lifelong process of adoption. We advocate legislation that will grant every individual access to information about his or her family and heritage.

**AMERICAN  
ADOPTION  
CONGRESS**



*Families Rooted In Truth*

*Established 1978*

**The American Adoption Congress**  
P.O. Box 42730, Washington, D.C. 20015  
202-483-3399  
[www.americanadoptioncongress.org](http://www.americanadoptioncongress.org)

**Editor:** Sharon Pittenger  
**Communications Chair &  
Managing Editor:** Pam Hasegawa  
**Associate Editors:** Monica Byrne, Barbara Busharis and  
Mary Martin Mason  
**Circulation Manager:** Carolyn Hoard  
**Staff Photographer:** Pam Hasegawa  
**Website:** Pat Dennett  
**Production Consultant:** Cameron Boswell

*The AAC Decree (ISSN 1092-0730) provides educational information to facilitate changes in attitudes, practices, public awareness and public policies that will open adoption records to adult adoptees and foster open, honest, humane adoptions.*

*Material for the newsletter may be submitted for consideration to Sharon Pittenger, AAC Decree Editor:*

*E-mail:* [sharon.pittenger@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.pittenger@gmail.com)  
*Mail:* 10031 SE Wichita Ave.  
Milwaukie, OR 97222-2669  
*Phone/Fax:* 503-794-0915

*For instructions for contributors, contact the editor.  
Advertising is not accepted at this time.*

*Portions may be quoted and copied if credit is given to the "AAC Decree, American Adoption Congress," with the exception of copyrighted articles. Permission to reprint copyrighted articles may be obtained directly from the author or by contacting the Editor of the AAC Decree.*

*The AAC Decree is published by the American Adoption Congress. Opinions expressed in the AAC Decree are not necessarily those of the American Adoption Congress.*

## Editor's Note

Book reviews have long been a popular feature in *The Decree*. Readers appreciate finding a new title to read, especially since some well-written books about adoption remain in obscurity. This edition is dedicated to books that explore adoption from a variety of perspectives, some newly published and some older titles that are in the "must read" category.

**Sharon Pittenger, Editor**

---

## Making Room

*continued from page 1*

parents whose rights were involuntarily terminated. While appropriate boundaries must be maintained, adoption workers discuss how an abrupt end to familiar relationships traumatizes children. Mediation, supervised visits, maintaining contact with extended birth family, and other innovative programs that make adoption less adversarial increase the possibilities for ongoing contact.

Two-thirds of fully disclosed adoptions began as confidential adoptions. The impetus to open up adoption is largely coming from older children who ask for increased contact or who are struggling with questions of identity. Duxbury suggests ways to build trust in reconnecting, using such tools as a Vision Matching Session to help individual parties discuss new roles to determined contact and conflict resolution. Opening up adoptions before the teen years is recommended.

Duxbury also addresses the complexities of dealing with multiple birth families, the risks of keeping secrets from a child who is in an open adoption, and the challenge of having both closed and open adoptions in the same family. Most freeing is the validation that there is no one right way to do open adoption; each differs in degree of contact, intimacy and sharing between the families. Success is dependent on the quality of communication, requiring honesty, trust and respect among participants. Birth parents, particularly, need education and support to understand the positive contribution they can make to the child's developing sense of self.

The book ends with a call for child-centered adoption education by open adoption professionals. Perhaps this is the most valuable chapter, as it points out the lack of any nationally recognized standard for educating clients about openness. Open adoption should never be a marketing tool—as it has become for some agencies—to attract birth parents, who increasingly expect contact. An open adoption that takes place without a roadmap may leave everyone perplexed. Thankfully, Duxbury has written such a roadmap at a time when those on the open adoption journey need this valuable tool.

## ***The Girls Who Went Away:***

*The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade*

**By Ann Fessler**  
**Penguin Press, 2006**  
**Reviewed by Denise Roessle**



For years, I wondered if I'd imagined it—not my pregnancy, nor the birth and relinquishment of my son, but what happened on the fringes. My parents' hard-hearted reaction, the indifference with which I was treated at the hospital and by the adoption attorney, and the collective expectation that I would walk away unscathed, played in my head like a bad movie. When I reunited with my son, 25 years after his birth, the memories came back with a vengeance. And yet, I couldn't help but think that I imagined it worse than it actually was. Surely, I could have done something to keep my baby, and, barring that, I should have been able to bounce back, instead of letting the experience so profoundly impact my life.

Reading about adoption issues and participating in support groups helped free me from the cruel grip of “what ifs.” But if I still harbored any fantasies that, as a frightened 19-year-old, I could have bucked the giant adoption machine of that time, Ann Fessler's book would have put them all to rest.

*The Girls Who Went Away* is the first book to fully capture the birth mother experience in the years before choice, sex education and birth control, when shame and secrecy ruled, and options other than marriage were virtually non-existent. Like Rickie Solinger's *Wake Up Little Susie* (1992), it portrays the socio-economic climate that allowed 1.5 million babies to be relinquished in the U.S. between 1945 and 1973. However, in Fessler's book, statistics and

analysis take a back seat to the birth mothers' personal and powerful stories.

The hauntingly similar tales of more than 100 women paint an accurate picture of the era I remember. There were no “adoption plans,” no choices offered. Only desperate girls, sent away to wait out their pregnancies in disgrace, until the babies they would not be permitted to mother were born and taken away. They were chastised by religious figures, sometimes tricked by social workers and adoption agencies, and ultimately scorned by a society with black and white rules.

Fessler, herself an adoptee, had been producing short films and audio-visual installations on the subject of adoption for fifteen years, when she began recording the birth mother stories that she found “so powerful that they transformed my understanding on adoption.” Framed by the author's own story of waiting to search while her adoptive mother was alive, and then finding and reunited with her birth mother, while still working on the project, the stories are told with courage, insight, and refreshingly little whining. (The tapes, on which the book is based, will be housed in the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard.)

Thank goodness, Ann Fessler saw the significance of a time in history that one hopes will never repeat. Like many adoption books, this one is not an easy read. But for birth mothers, the validation is worth the discomfort. And for adoptees who were relinquished during those years, and parents adopted them, the potential for understanding is vast.

*Before relocating to Arizona in 2005, Denise Roessle served on the Board of Directors and as a support group facilitator for the Post-Adoption Center for Education and Research (PACER) in the San Francisco Bay Area. A birth mother who relinquished in 1970, she is writing a memoir about her reunion with her grown son. She can be reached at droessle@mac.com. This review was originally published in the PACER newsletter and is reprinted with permission.*

---

## ***Scattered Siblings:*** ***An Adoptee's Search for His Biological Roots***

**By Lawrence Andrew Weeks (2006)**  
**Reviewed by Barbara Busharis**

The author was adopted in the 1940s and told that his birth parents had died in a car crash. With wry humor he acknowledges not questioning the story as a child, even when his adopted brother and adopted sister were also told that their parents had died in car crashes as well. Born in Ohio before birth certificates were sealed, he requested a copy of his original birth certificate when the birth of his first daughter awakened his curiosity about his origins.

“What came back in the mail a week later,” he writes, “triggered a search that lasted from my mid-twenties until I was fifty years old (and beyond, I might add).”

Eventually, the author located not only his birth mother but also six siblings and half-siblings from both his birth mother and birth father. The short length of the book (164 pages), coupled with the long duration of his search, leaves little room for reflection. The author's observations of both his adoptive and birth families are compassionate and warm, however. *Scattered Siblings* is a search story that will be entertaining for any amateur genealogist and encouraging to adoptees who confront difficult searches or complicated family situations.

## Book Reviews

### ***The Spirit of Adoption: At Home In God's Family***

By Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner  
Reviewed by Ron Nydam

A verse in Paul's Letter to the Romans suggests that all of us as children of God have received the "spirit of adoption," a confident assurance that we matter and have been claimed as God's own.

This positive life-giving notion of adoption by God stands as the heart of this book. The author, an adoptive mother and seminary professor, takes on the challenge of examining adoption through the eyes of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. A central point is that the family of faith is one in which we are all adopted.

In chapters tracing the beginnings and development of adoptive families, the author outlines how the image of God as Adoptive Parent can help those facing the struggles of infertility in "barren places," the anxieties of "expectant waiting," and the joys that accompany the "homecoming" of an adopted child. Her chapter on "growing pains" directly addresses the challenges adoptees face in adolescence, and captures some of the pain that adoptees face as they deal with issues of identity and grief that are always part of the story of relinquishment and adoption.

But God is also the Relinquishing Parent, a painful reality that receives less emphasis here. This truth, of course, has much to do with the difficulties of faith for adoptees. It is spiritually perplexing to think of God as both the Loving Parent, the caring mother who yearns for her child, and as the Relinquishing Parent. This dilemma of faith is not resolved by noting that God suffers too and therefore understands. Identity and grieving are formidable developmental tasks for adoptees; just as challenging is the formation of basic trust, out of which belief in God is born.

The author has made a very useful contribution to a positive theology of adoption. Although the book seeks to encourage all in the triad, however, it is primarily written from an adoptive parent-pain perspective. At times the book struggles with the reality that many adoptees and birth parents have trouble seeing adoption as a blessing from a loving God. Despite this, *The Spirit of Adoption* is a rich Biblical study of adoption as a metaphor for our relationship with God.

*Ron Nydam, Ph.D., is Professor of Pastoral Care at the Calvin Theological Seminary and serves as the AAC Michigan State Representative.*

### ***Fumbling Toward Divinity: The Adoption Scriptures***

By Craig Hickman  
Reviewed by Sue Drese

Books about adoption that venture into religious territory are sometimes overly simplistic, saccharine sweet or too dogmatic for this reviewer's taste. *Fumbling Toward Divinity* avoids these pitfalls and presents some of the real conflicts facing folks who are trying to connect despite strong religious differences. This 373-page memoir uses a "scriptural" stylistic device as a vehicle for telling the author's multi-faceted story—the story of an adopted, gay, black man who is a self-described poet, performance artist, drag queen, and cultural activist.

Born in 1969 to Southern college students, Craig Hickman was relinquished and adopted into a "loving Christian home" in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The book alludes to the role his birth mother's conservative religious upbringing played in his relinquishment, then tells of the arduous process of reconnecting with his biological family that began when he was in his early thirties.

The author's adoptive family is portrayed lovingly. He recounts as a positive outcome of his search that the family's bonds are strengthened, with each person dealing with what it has meant to become a "family."

The story of his birth family, particularly his birth mother, is more complicated. She appears as developmentally quite young. A card-carrying member of the Seventh Day Adventist church, she infuriates her son with her proselytizing and religious fervor. Her insistence on continuing to call him by his birth name of "Joseph" seems to be a dismissal of his separate identity. Their struggle for mutual acceptance is sometimes subsumed in the larger tale of his birth family, which seems to have a cast of thousands.

We don't have enough books on the personal experiences of triad members of color, or by men. Gay triad members, also, have rarely seen themselves represented positively, truthfully, or compassionately. Here is a strong gay man who wants readers to glimpse the struggles that have led to the person he is today; some will find the book is a welcome addition to the literature for this reason alone.

The book is not for everyone, however. Some readers will enjoy the intermittent stream-of-consciousness writing and variations in style; others will find it distracting and overly ambitious. Beautifully lyrical in places, in others the text is confusing. Although in some ways the book failed to meet this reviewer's initial expectations, underneath some of the stylistic devices is a story in which many adoptees will find parallels.

*Sue Drese is a psychotherapist and "recovering" adoptee in Oakland, California.*

# Book Reviews

## Memoirs by Adopted Men

Reviewed By Carol Baumann

It is good to hear more from men who have experienced adoption — as adoptees, birth fathers, and adoptive fathers. The two memoirs reviewed here may be of interest if you are looking for a book about a male adoptee's experience with adoption, search and reunion.

### *Not Remembered Never Forgotten, Robert Allan Hafetz*

This very readable book takes the reader on one man's search to find his biological roots. The doors that closed along the way, as well as those that opened, are detailed in his writings.

The author points out the unfairness and the pain of being denied access to basic information about himself. He emphasizes the early bond he formed with his birth mother as being a driving force in his search.

While additional editing would have increased the book's appeal, the book is certainly worth reading. It may give those who are considering searching the courage to do so, and it will be helpful for those who question why adopted persons can love their adoptive parents, yet still need to find those who gave them life.

### *Adopted Like Me, Michael C. Watson*

The author of this book began his search for his birth mother at age 17. He describes the feelings of emptiness and longing he felt throughout his life, while acknowledging he always felt wanted and loved by his adoptive parents.

His journey to his roots spans many years and many avenues. He was fortunate to encounter supportive and encouraging people along the way, including a judge who stepped away from the law to give Michael what he longed for. His adoptive parents, in their way, were able to support Michael in his search, even while fearing what he might find and what it might mean to their relationship with him.

It would be well for those considering adoption to read this book. This man's journey was lengthy and painful—because of the secrecy and closed records that still exist in most states. In reading it one cannot help but contrast what a different story/life Michael would have lived had he been part of an open adoption or in a state with open records.

*Carol Baumann, PhD, LCSW, is the associate director for the northern region of the Division of Child and Family Services in Utah. Prior to coming to Utah she owned and operated a private adoption agency in Topeka, KS, specializing in open adoptions. She has been active in the adoption counseling field since 1980.*

## *Shar's Story: A Mother and Daughter Reunited*

By Sharon Shaw Elrod

Reviewed by Barbara Busharis

This slim volume tells the story of a successful reunion between a birth mother, her family, and the daughter she surrendered to adoption.

The author summarizes the circumstances that led to the adoption; they are the backdrop, but not the whole story, and will be familiar to many. A summer relationship ends; she is pregnant; her parents blame her and expect her to "straighten yourself out." The prevailing social norms are inescapable. A young college graduate, she resumes her studies after the surrender and obtains advanced degrees in social work and education. The text moves quickly towards the reunion, alluding only briefly to the effect the surrender had on her.

Fifteen years after the author first gives the adoption agency permission to give her name to her daughter, she gets "the" call that her daughter, now named Kate, has asked for the information. The reunion story itself will be both reassuring and inspiring to readers on all sides of the triad. The book accurately captures the emotional highs and anxieties that result as the women move, first hesitantly, then enthusiastically, into their new relationship. Underneath the description of their initial contact, first face-to-face meeting, and finally, Kate's introduction to her extended family, are the themes of forgiveness, self-acceptance, and trust. The author's willingness to give her daughter time between each step, and her compassionate attitude towards Kate's adoptive family, are illustrated as well.

One loose end in the story is the birth father (referred to as the bio-father), who took no responsibility for the pregnancy and provided no support. Kate understandably expresses no interest in finding him when she learns of his treatment of her birth mother. But one wonders whether his attitude at the time, like the attitude of the author's own parents, was a product of that era.

Apart from this, the book is a positive story of a reunion that seems to have gotten off to a very good start indeed. The author's profound joy at reconnecting with her daughter illustrates just how false it was to ever believe that creating a rewarding life after relinquishment required denying the pregnancy and adoption.

# “Must Read” Adoption Books

When we began compiling a list of “must read” books, we immediately realized that any helpful list would be longer than a single issue of the *Decree* could contain. To include books we regarded as essential we decided to create several lists. Look for “must read” books on open adoption, international and transracial adoption, and other topics in future *Decree* issues! As a starting point, though, we present this list of classics, both the tried-and-true and newly released. If you are starting your journey into adoption issues, or are ready to expand your library beyond a few volumes, we feel you can’t go wrong with the books here.

## *Triad issues and relationships*

***The Adoption Triangle: Sealed or Opened Records: How They Affect Adoptees, Birth Parents, and Adoptive Parents***  
By Arthur D. Sorosky, Annette Baran, & Reuben Pannor (1989)

Originally published in 1978 and re-released more than ten years later, this book draws on the authors’ clinical experience and numerous personal accounts to make a compelling argument that secrecy in adoption was harmful to all triad members.

## ***The Family of Adoption***

by Joyce Maguire Pavao (1998)

Pavao reveals the complexities of adoption with practical information about predictable developmental stages for adopted people. She describes the grief processes, dilemmas, and potentials for healing of birth mothers and adoptive parents. She also discusses the difference between secrecy and privacy—a crucial distinction in adoption—and lends a strong voice to the movement for openness.

## *Being adopted*

***How It Feels to be Adopted***

by Jill Krementz (1982)

This classic is a rare book in which adopted children explain their personal view of adoption in a rich variety of experiences. Pre-teens and teens give their stories.

## ***Journey of the Adopted Self: A Quest for Wholeness***

by Betty Jean Lifton (1995)

Adoption pioneer Lifton explores the profound impact on adoptees of separation and secrecy, arguing that they can erode both adoptees’ sense of identity and their attachment to their adoptive parents.

## ***Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience***

by Betty Jean Lifton (1988)

Lifton explores the psychological issues faced by adoptees and by children born of new reproductive technology, making a case for the rights of both to know their true origins.

## ***Primal Wound***

by Nancy Verrier (1993)

This classic was the first to explore the primal loss an infant feels when separated from the birth mother and to argue that the impact on the adopted child is lifelong. The loss impacts the child’s identity and results in a feeling of incompleteness and a lack of wholeness. This “must read” for parents, professionals, birthparents and adoptees is now finding a new audience of those born from reproductive technologies.

## *Birth parent experiences*

***Birthmothers: Women Who Have Relinquished Babies for Adoption Tell Their Stories***

by Merry Bloch Jones (1993)

This anecdotal study of the experience of birth mothers focuses on women who gave birth from the 1950s through the 1980s. Not a scientific or random study, the book is still a compelling sample of experiences from the era of primarily closed adoptions.

## ***The Girls Who Went Away***

by Ann Fessler (2006)

In an era when more mythology than fact drives public opinion about birthmothers, Fessler’s book provides a history of women who surrendered their children to adoption before *Roe v. Wade*. The author gives a voice to a marginalized population in a searing social and personal history.

## ***The Other Mother***

by Carol Schaefer (1991)

This classic memoir begins in 1965, when the author was unmarried and pregnant. It describes the surrender of her child and the effect that had on her in later years. The book also explains her decision to search, her efforts to locate her son, and the initial stages of the relationship they were able to form when she found him as a young adult.

## *Search and reunion*

***The Adoption Reunion Handbook***

by Liz Trinder, Julia Feast and David Howe (2004)

This essential book is based on a comprehensive research study on search and reunion in England, where adopted persons have had access to their birth records for over 25 years. The reader is guided through contemplating search; first meetings; nuances between birthmother, birthfather and sibling reunions; adoptive family responses; the rare occurrence of rejection; and long-term relationship prospects. Each chapter includes a helpful summary of key points to consider before contemplating the next step, as well as statistics and personal experiences of research participants. The underlying research was published by David Howe & Julia Feast in *Adoption, Search & Reunion: The Long Term Experience of Adopted Adults* (2000).

## Book Reviews

### Outsiders Within

*continued from page 2*

current interest in adopting from Africa and Haiti continues; even before Angelina Jolie went to Ethiopia, that country was one of the ten countries that sent the most children to the U.S. for adoption. But adoptions from Russia, China, Guatemala and Korea so far outnumber adoptions from Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria and Haiti that it would be easy to continue to think of international adoption as having different implications from domestic, transracial adoption. The book's rejection of this distinction, and its choice to bring together the voices of those adopted both from and to a number of different countries, are invaluable and unique. At the same time that the book claims a commonality among the transracially adopted that crosses national lines, it gives a glimpse of the commonalities that exist among those separated from their families of origin regardless of racial lines.

The part subtitled "How did you get here?," for example, weaves together essays on racial politics in the United States; the relationship between race, incarceration, and termination of parental rights; the archetypal (yet, according to recent research, greatly exaggerated) "crack baby" and how that stereotype relates to adoption and foster care reform; and the relationship between supply and demand in international adoptions. These essays are interspersed with Patrick McDermott's description of the historical and sociological factors that surrounded his adoption from El Salvador; Kimberly Fardy's very personal reflections on the "brutally silencing reality" of growing up black in white suburbia; Sun Yun Shin's poetry; and a composite image by Mihee-Nathalie Lemoine that juxtaposes pictures of infants and young children with the numbers of children adopted out of Korea from the 1950s through 1998.

In short, it is nearly impossible to single out a "representative" essay or contribution for each part of the book. The great variety of contributions means that there are likely parts of the book that will appeal more to some than to others. Overall, though, the book transcends categorization as an "adoption" book, and can inform those whose primary interests are political, psychological or sociological.

As an adoption book, however, *Outsiders Within* is an important addition to the literature. The book does not replace full-length memoirs that more fully capture a single dimension of families formed across racial lines, but it provides a global context often missing from those works. It may be uncomfortable for some readers, particularly those who have adopted children of another race. The reality put forth in *Outsiders Within* is that there is no simple way to cross racial, ethnic and national borders. This is not the same as concluding that the crossings should not, or cannot, happen at all. It is a call, however, for those considering transracial adoption, or who have chosen it already, to see their choices in a larger sociological and historical context.

*Barbara Busharis is an adoptee, adoptive parent and attorney in Tallahassee, Florida.*

### ***Adoption Reunion Survival Guide: Preparing Yourself for the Search, Reunion & Beyond***

by Julie Jarrell Bailey, N. Lynn Giddens and Annette Baran (2001)

Using real-life examples, this compassionate guide helps adoptees and their birth mothers decide whether or not to try to locate each other, prepare for a reunion, survive the emotional turbulence of the initial meeting and avoid common pitfalls. Since the legal issues surrounding the process can vary greatly from one state to another, the book includes an overview of pertinent laws.

### ***Beneath a Tall Tree***

by Jean Strauss (2001)

When Jean Strauss sets out to find her birth family, she unearths roots that go far beyond her wildest expectations. Film-maker and best-selling author, Strauss redefines the meaning of family and celebrates the universal connections that link us all. Also recommended by the same author is *Birthright: the Guide to Search and Reunion for Adoptees, Birthparents, and Adoptive Parents* (1994).

### ***Birthbond: Reunions Between Birthparents and Adoptees: What Happens After***

by Judith S. Gediman and Linda P. Brown (1989)

The authors of *Birthbond* conducted intensive interviews with 30 birth mothers who had successfully searched or been found. In addition, they talked with adoptees, members of the birth family, adoptive parents, adoption professionals and others involved with adoption in order to discover the impact of reunions on the lives of the immediate and extended families.

### ***Ithaka — A Daughter's Memoir of Being Found***

by Sarah Saffian (1999)

One phone call, wholly unexpected, instantly turned Sarah Saffian's world upside down, threatening her sense of family, identity, and self. Adopted as an infant 23 years before, living happily in New York, Saffian had been found by her biological parents. In this searing memoir, she chronicles her painful journey from reluctance, confusion and anger to reunion.

### ***Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter***

by Betty Jean Lifton (2006)

The acclaimed author on the psychology of the adopted tells her own story of growing up when secrecy drove adoption practice. As an adult she needs to explore the question, "Who am I?" but is hampered by sealed and records and taboos against searching for her past. Originally published in 1975, the volume was re-released with a new epilogue in 2006. The addition, like a letter from an old friend, brings the reader up-to-date on the author's post-reunion relationships and adds insights about more recent legal and political struggles that have surrounded sealed records.

## Having Trouble Ordering that Adoption Book?

You can get many adoption-themed books on amazon.com, new or used. If you visit the AAC website and follow the amazon.com link, AAC will even get credit for your purchases—an easy way to support the organization! Some books that are out of print or self-published can be hard to find, however. The following sources may help you locate the book you seek:

### **Perspectives Press**

Although a majority of this publishing company's books concern infertility, some adoption selections are available.

P.O. Box 90318  
Indianapolis, IN 46290-0318  
317-872-3055  
www.perspectivespress.com  
ppress@iquest.net

### **R-Squared Press**

This small company specializes in open adoption resources, including a birthparent newsletters and books and booklets on developing healthy open adoption relationships.

721 Hawthorne Ave.  
Royal Oak, MI 48067  
248-543-0997  
www.R2press.com  
brenr@openadoptioninsight.org

### **Tapestry Books**

This company has a website and catalog offering many adoption titles, including books that may not be readily available elsewhere. It is a good source of resources for children, as well.

P.O. Box 359  
Ringoes, NJ 08551  
800-765-2367  
www.tapestrybooks.com  
info@tapestrybooks.com

Visit the AAC website and  
follow the link to amazon.com  
and AAC will get credit for your purchases!



*Families Rooted In Truth*

### **American Adoption Congress**

P.O. Box 42730  
Washington, DC 20015

Address Service Requested

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
SO. MD 207  
PERMIT #1368