

# Connecting adoptees with their history

## Brighton woman seeks to unseal adoption records

Robin L. Flanigan

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When Susan Moyer was growing up, people would ask whether she had any brothers or sisters and she'd answer, "No. I'm a lonely child."



Moyer

"I always said that instead of 'only child,'” recalls Moyer, of Brighton.

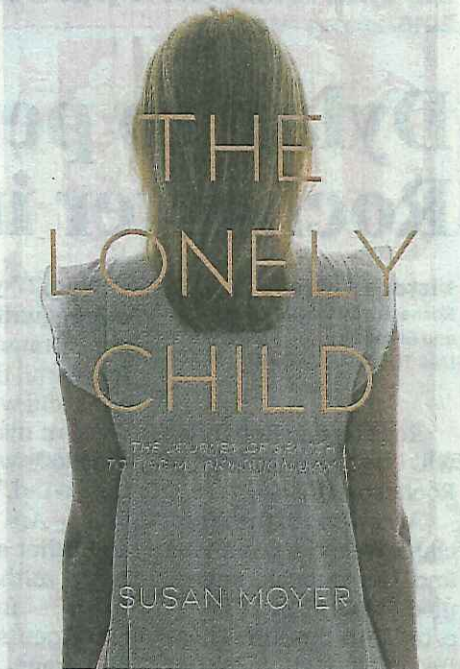
One reason is that, as a girl, she never felt like she belonged, even within her family. Her parents were short with dark hair; she was tall with

blond hair.

At 16, she found out why. She had been adopted as a baby, a topic her parents — who relinquished the truth only because they had to give Moyer her amended birth certificate to get her driving permit — would never want to talk about again.

Now that her mother and father both have died, however, Moyer has just released *The Lonely Child: The Journey of Search to Find My Biological Family*, a memoir detailing her three-decades search — one that continues — to find and connect with her birth family.

She also has become a vocal advocate for the unsealing of adoption records,



The Lonely Child book cover PROVIDED

championing New York Assembly Bill A9959B to establish the right of adoptees to receive a certified copy of their birth certificate at age 18.

The bill, which supporter Assemblyman David I. Weprin, D-Queens, has said would help adoptees connect with their "family history, medical background and sense of self," remains in the Codes Committee and is expected to be

introduced when the next session starts in January.

While 28 states allow some access to an adult adoptee's original birth certificate, only nine — including Alabama, Colorado, Kansas and Maine — offer unlimited access. Many states require a court order to gain access.

Moyer, who says she would have benefited from knowing medical history while battling breast cancer, emphasizes she would always respect the wishes of a birth mother who clearly stated in the adoption file that she never wants to be contacted. Without that declaration, however, she holds open the possibility that a birth mother might have other wishes — and if she were still on her search, she would want "a present-day, current statement from my birth mother" about what she now wants.

"I went into this without any expectations," she says, "but the process I had to go through just to find out who I was is unfair and unjust, and I'm going to keep fighting.

"We just want to know who we are and where we came from," she adds. "It's a civil right we are denied. There's discrimination of all kinds, and we are discriminated against."

Moyer, born in Albany in 1953 and kept in an orphanage until her parents found her at 6 months old, began her search long before the internet age, after the birth of her second son in 1984. It had been overwhelming to once again

see, and be able to touch, someone else who shared her flesh and blood.

She ran into multiple and consistent roadblocks along the way — making trips to Albany, waiting for letters in the mail, conducting research in the library.

"She's courageous, and she's determined," says Carolyn Birrittella, who got to know Moyer while designing the book's marketing strategy. "There were always underlying questions about who she was, which is something we all face at some point along our personal journeys, even if we're not adopted."

What Moyer has discovered so far is that she is one of 10 children between her birth mother and birth father.

"So I went from that lonely child to being one of many," she says.

She has met most of them, and still wants to find one "who remains a mystery."

To help with her search, Moyer is on five different DNA sites and a member of two Facebook groups: Unsealed Initiative Adoptee Rights New York, and New York Adoptees Searching for Birth Family.

She has accepted an invitation to speak at the American Adoptees Congress national conference in April 2019, and she plans on traveling to Albany next year to continue working on behalf of adoptees.

"I'm not going to stop until this injustice is rectified," she says.

Robin L. Flanigan is a freelance writer living in Rochester.