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SEARCHING THROUGH THE ISRR

On November 2, 1983, the following letter appeared in the papers in the "Dear Abby column:

6 Part II/Wednesday, November 2, 1983

Dear Abby

# Group Links Birth Mothers, Adoptees

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: What are your views on adopted children one day being able to meet their birth parents?

Nineteen years ago, my parents forced me to give up a baby girl for adoption because I was 16, unmarried and pregnant. I was very bitter at the time because I wanted to keep my daughter, but I realize that my parents did what they thought was best for me.

I am now a happily married mother of three, but my nightly prayer is to meet my firstborn child. I have no desire to "surprise" her with a telephone call or an unexpected visit. I want to meet her only if she wants to meet me.

I heard that there is a national organization with whom birth parents and adopted children may register, and if all parties are agreeable to meeting, they may do so.

I am not a wealthy person, Abby, but I would gladly pay a fee. Thanks for any help you can give me.

### MY NIGHTLY PRAYER

DEAR PRAYER: There is such an organization. It is: International Soundex Reunion Registry, P.O. Box 2312, Carson City, Nev. 89702.

I have checked the organization out and have found it to be a legitimate, nonprofit corporation that provides this charitable, humanitarian service gratis. Contributions are welcome in order to keep the operation going, but no fee is charged for services.

For a registration form, write to the above address, and please enclose a long, stamped, self-addressed envelope. Good luck and God bless.

mother is denied her rights," she says, "or for that matter, when any individual is denied rights of heritage and citizenship in this country, all of our rights are in danger. I could never tolerate an injustice, so I work to ensure that all people are equal. The registry is my way of doing this."

Prior to her taking an active stand in the adoption movement, Emma was involved at many levels. For seventeen years, she was the historian for her husband's home town of Kearny, New Jersey. She was a genealogist and historical tracer for many state and federal agencies. She authored a history book, which is now used in the public schools of New Jersey, covering over three hundred years of history pertaining to the locale of Hudson, Passaic, and Essex Counties of New Jersey. On the lighter side, Emma had the only junior girls' rifle team in the state of New Jersey. She helped to found a junior museum and historical association in Kearny. She also designs period costumes for dolls, and writes children's stories.

The ISRR was founded by Emma in 1975, was incorporated in 1981, and received a Federal Tax Exempt status in September of 1983. "I started the registry to spare all persons the agony of search, and to provide, under law, the first step in opening the records," states Emma. "Also, I felt strongly that all the triad organizations should be able to turn their membership to a central reunion registry available to all persons on a no fee basis."

The registry is operated under a system of classification whereby the main information pertaining to the registrant must first be coded. The code lines are then compared for a possible match. There are plans for purchasing a computer to classify and compare the code lines for a match. At no time will the name, address, or other vital information about the registrant be entered into the computer. Only the code line for each search will be entered. The computer will also enable the registry to furnish, with much greater ease, statistics that are now

In the three days following the publication of this article, the International Soundex Reunion Registry, or ISRR, received more than 4,500 requests as a direct result of the column. Approximately 9,000 requests were made by the end of the year.

Emma May Vilardi is the founder of ISRR. Her connection to the adoption movement is that she is the daughter of an adoptee. "When my

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