

How to Locate Anyone Anywhere

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Without Leaving Home

TED L. GUNDERSON
WITH ROGER MCGOVERN

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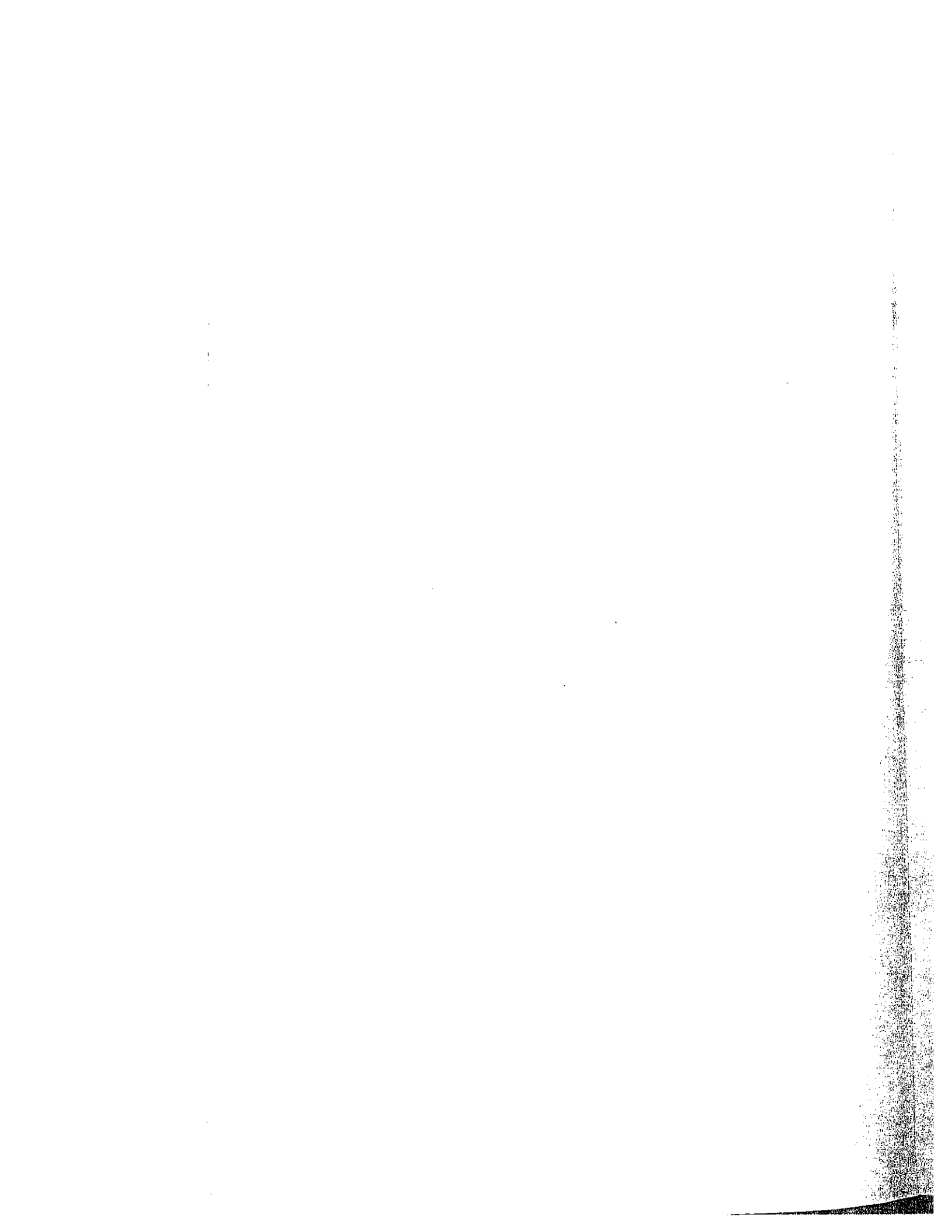
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TED GUNDERSON served in the FBI for twenty-seven years and retired as one of its top officials. He now heads his own private investigative firm in Los Angeles. ROGER McGOVERN is a Los Angeles-based writer.



TED L. GUNDERSON
with **ROGER McGOVERN**

**HOW TO
LOCATE
ANYONE
ANYWHERE**

*Without
Leaving
Home*



A PLUME BOOK

PLUME

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*I'd like to dedicate this book
to the more than one million Americans
who disappear every year, many
of whom are never heard from again.
God bless them.*

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other, Betty Gilliam.

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Preface

For almost all of my thirty-eight working years, my job has involved looking for people. People and evidence. But mostly for people important to an FBI case, or to one of my own. And at some point I became aware that almost everybody seems to be looking for somebody. So it occurred to me that it might be helpful to pass along a few of the search methods and information sources I've learned about, especially to those who can't hire somebody to do the looking for them and who can't go looking for themselves.

So I wrote this book in order to provide information about ways to search without leaving home base. It shows you how to reach more than 1,500 different, responsible, and usually cooperative sources of information on individuals through the use of the postal system and the telephone.

Chapters 1 and 2 offer guides on orientation, motivation, a short treatise on private investigators, and a look at some basic hunting tools.

The book is arranged with convenient records segments, so that you can pursue one specific search phase at a time: city, county, state, and federal. Because *that*—as they say—is where

it's at; in the countless files that keep millions of bureaucrats employed full-time.

We have listed the files by name, spelled out the kind of information you can expect to get from each of them, and suggested ways to retrieve it with the least amount of contention.

Chapter 7, "Miscellaneous," gives your common sense a chance to come up with some of your own solutions. In Chapter 8, "Computers, Credit, and Consumers," we name the best of the personal information-retrieval services for a fee, and show how credit cards can sometimes give out information about those who own them.

Chapter 9 is about "Missing Persons," as opposed to "misplaced persons," and Chapter 10, "Safety Tips," is followed by Chapter 11, "The Adoptee/Birth Parent Search."

I also have felt compelled to say something about "private eyes," the professional private investigators. Maybe it has crossed your mind, if you can afford it, to hire a P.I.—which brings me to one of the reasons I have prepared this book.

Investigation of the sort you want to pursue in locating a "lost" individual doesn't demand that you have a P.I.'s experience, but common sense helps a lot. No special skills are required; one logical step follows another. What I hope to do is organize that progression and help you develop the discipline that will keep your search efficient and make it productive.

I must emphasize that you should be flexible enough to accept help from unexpected sources and in unusual instances. The Salvation Army once gave backup to a New York City patrolman I know, who can still get round-eyed remembering something he witnessed at Grand Central Terminal last year.

A young woman and her six-year-old daughter were waiting on a mobbed platform to board a train to Yonkers after watching Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. The train pulled forward for some reason, leaving the tracks beside the platform bare. The train was backing up again when the child suddenly fell onto the tracks and lay there stunned. The cop himself admitted that he was completely unable to move, frozen to the spot. But an instant before the child would have been crushed beneath the wheels of the train, a shabby old man leaped down from nowhere, seized her, and saved her from death. The man vanished

into the throng after restoring the child to the platform and into the arms of her hysterical mother.

Each Friday until Christmas week, the mother returned, traveling the thirty miles from Yonkers to search the crowds with my policeman friend, looking for her scruffy hero. The cop finally asked the Salvation Army for help. From the description of the man, by Christmas week the Salvation Army had a street name and an address for the shabby one. He was "Felix," a resident at the Salvation Army shelter in Greenwich Village. "Felix" was located and compelled not only to listen to the mother's tearful speech of thanks, but also to eat a magnificent breakfast at a fine restaurant under the policeman's watchful eye. (You'll learn more about the Salvation Army's helpful record-keeping efficiency later.)

None of the foregoing is typical of the search methods we'll pursue here. The point is that almost no one—not even the homeless—goes unrecorded by one agency or another. And that is the foundation on which this book is based: records. Records that can mean a successful search whenever there is a genuine desire to locate someone for whom you have either great affection or great need. You will find the tools for doing that—at minimal cost, for the most part—in the pages ahead.

Something else I think you'll find is a growing excitement as your search gets under way and clues and leads fall into place. This has been my experience. This is what has kept me fascinated for more than thirty-eight years as an investigator.

So be prepared for a little "rush" that comes with getting information you need out of a balky agency, discovering a clue that has been there all the time without your seeing it, the long shot that works out.

Also be prepared for the "down" days, when nothing goes quite right and you experience an epidemic of right names, wrong people; telephone numbers said to be valid turn out to have been disconnected for months; the person you've selected as your cheerleader and main support suddenly says, "C'mon, let's forget it." Don't you do it!

Nobody ever said being an investigator was easy. I've known searchers who got caught up in their need to succeed to

the exclusion of almost everything else. You may not want to go that far. But if you begin to feel the pinch of frustration and sense that your main support is failing, act fast.

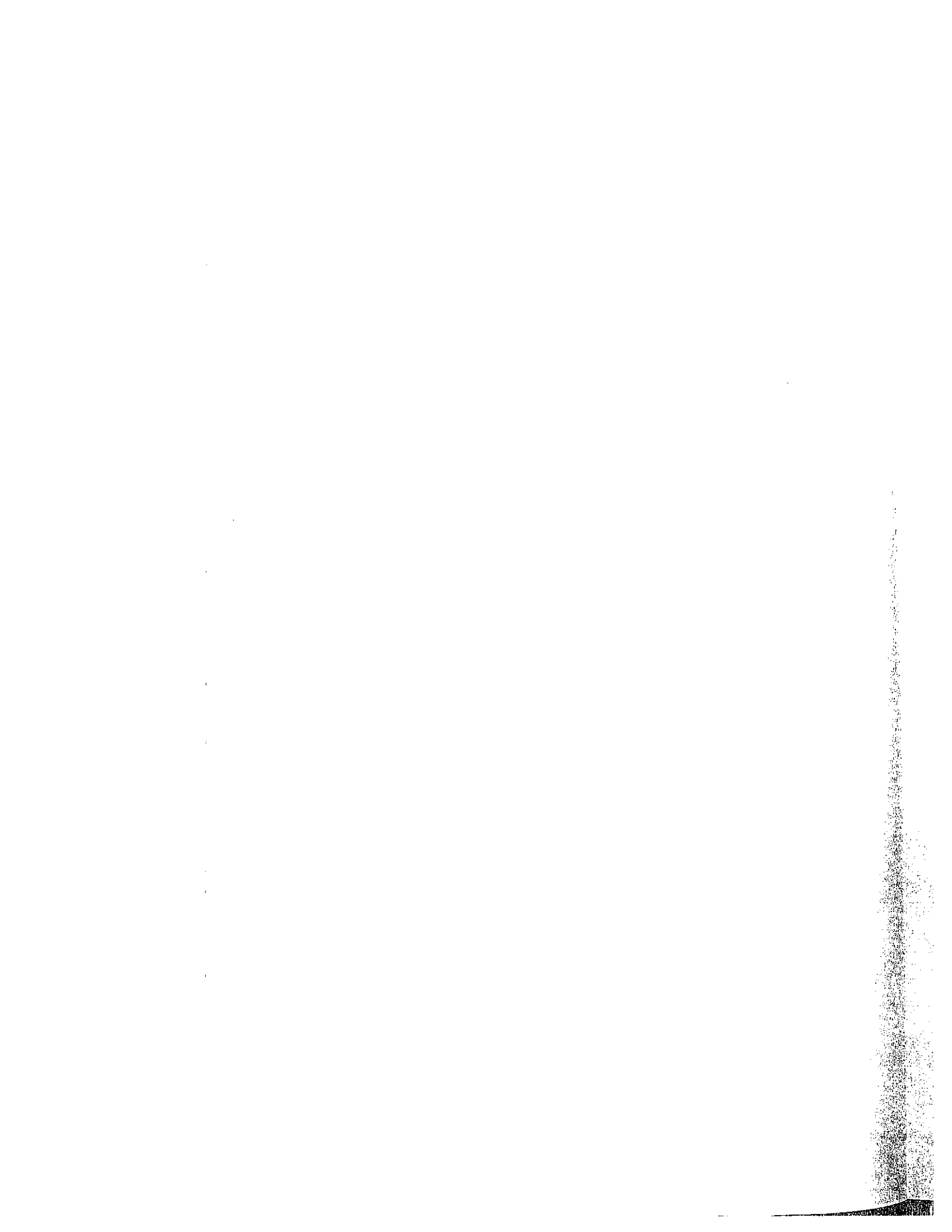
Sit down and rethink your entire plan and, if necessary, select someone else as your lead supporter. Fire off a new batch of correspondence to sources you have not written before, but should have. Consult your supporters. Ask them for some fresh suggestions. Stop thinking negatively.

In any case, you haven't really started just yet. So let's explore a search in which I was involved, mostly as a consultant. It will give you some idea of the courses to pursue, the wide range of information sources available, and the kind of tenacity it sometimes takes to bring a search to a successful conclusion.

As you will see from the following, Danny Nolan's reason for initiating a search may appear to be something less than urgent compared to the one that caused *you* to pick up this book; the worst result of failure would have been Danny's profound disappointment. But regardless of the degree of urgency you're feeling, read Danny's story as the *anatomy of a search*.

HOW TO LOCATE ANYONE ANYWHERE





ORGANIZING YOUR SEARCH

ABOUT DANNY NOLAN

Danny Nolan called me in Los Angeles as soon as his midterms were over and he knew he would graduate from the University of Nebraska in June.

"I want to invite my dad to come see me get my diploma."

Not so much to ask for, I thought, unless you knew, as I did, that Danny hadn't seen or really heard from his father, Tom, in more than a dozen years. Tom had left eighth-grader Danny and his mother, Marie, to shift for themselves in an unpaid-for house on Sioux Street in Lincoln, near my old neighborhood. Which is where I had come to know Tom Nolan, and why Danny was now calling me.

Tom was a financially ambitious fellow with an irresistibly attractive personality. Before disappearing, he had made some bad investments and borrowed a considerable amount of money. So for years he had been a subject of interest around Lincoln for others besides his son. A few unsuccessful attempts had been made by others to locate Tom. But love for a seemingly

unworthy father—and *patience*—is what paid off for Danny when he decided to take up the search.

There are two sides to every story. One year after he disappeared, Tom Nolan began to send increasingly substantial monthly postal money orders to the house on Sioux Street. Only once in all those years did a message accompany the money. This agonizingly remorseful note arrived long after Danny suffered a high school football injury that put him in a wheelchair for life. But now the house was paid off, Danny had finished his education, he and his mother were comfortable. Tom also had apparently satisfied his creditors in Lincoln. What kept him away from his family? Whoever can answer such a question has the answer to a great deal of puzzling human behavior.

Marie didn't like the idea of Danny's search for his father, but she raised no objections. Now came the problem of locating Tom Nolan. It was at this point that Danny called me, and we spent a half hour discussing strategies.

The money orders were the only good clue we had. They all originated in Concord, New Hampshire. Because the money order sender is not required to supply an address, this was a "blind" lead. But Danny had his father's full name and birth date, which are required to retrieve information from any driver's licensing agency in the United States, so he wrote to the New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles. No luck, Danny reported to me. Tom Nolan, who had never been known to be without a car, was either not in New Hampshire or was driving under an assumed name, which wasn't likely. So the money order sender had to be just a helpful friend. Danny continued to follow my instructions.

A phone call to Tom's only surviving relative, a brother in Minnesota, produced the information that although Tom had attended their mother's funeral five years before, there had been no further family contact. But the brother had been able to add that Tom spoke at the funeral of his half ownership in a fishing boat in New Orleans.

The reference librarian at Lincoln's main library dug up the necessary addresses for the Louisiana Department of Safety (driver's license) and the Wildlife and Fisheries Department at Baton Rouge (fishing vessel licenses). Responses to letters to

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each informed Danny that (1) Tom Nolan's driver's license had expired, and (2) he had sold his share in the fishing vessel to his partner, whose name and address were supplied.

Response to a letter to the partner revealed that eighteen months earlier Tom had invested in an orange grove near Sebring, Florida. The partner had no address to offer. He wished Danny and his mother luck.

The cooperative reference librarian at Lincoln's main library found three Thomas Nolans in the Sebring area directory, none with the correct middle initial. The information operator in Sebring was of no help, so letters of inquiry, with stamped, self-addressed postcards, went to the Property Tax Office in Highlands County, where Sebring is located, and to the Department of Highway Safety in Tallahassee. Addresses were courtesy of the reference librarian.

The tax office postcard returned with a groaner: Tom had sold his orange grove to a citrus conglomerate, for some reason listing his old, useless New Orleans address. But a day later, a computer printout from Tallahassee brought pay dirt: Tom's nice, clean driving record—and his Florida address!

"Let's not risk a negative reaction to a phone call, let's *send* him the invitation," Danny suggested.

It took a week for the RETURN TO SENDER—NO FORWARDING ADDRESS stamp to bring the invitation back to the Nolans' mailbox.

"That's it. Forget it, Mom. This guy is a spook, and I don't think I want him haunting my graduation."

But Danny hadn't quite given up. One day, at the supermarket to which he sometimes accompanied his mother, he sat in his wheelchair at a magazine rack while Marie was shopping. He found himself flipping the pages of a publication called *Entrepreneur*, directed to people who want to be in business for themselves.

A tiny bell tinkled in the back of Danny's mind as he remembered something I had mentioned to him in running down the list of possible information sources. Maybe Danny could solve his own dilemma with an end around that just might net his enterprise-hopping father.

It took time to explain to Marie what he planned to do, and

it seemed much too farfetched to her to work. But at my suggestion she wrote a touching note to Tom on an *unaddressed, stamped, forwarding postcard*, which she wouldn't let Danny read. And off it went, with a letter to *Entrepreneur's* subscription manager. Now if Tom just happened to be on that subscription list, and if the subscription manager was a sympathetic type who appreciated their concern for Tom's privacy, maybe . . .

Admitting the remoteness of his chances for contact, with a resigned sigh Danny put away his search records, and with them his high hopes.

It didn't help when graduation day almost didn't dawn, the skies were so black with rain clouds. A radio newscast confirmed the expected. Commencement exercises, which had been planned for outdoors that year, would instead be held inside the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

There was standing room only as the wet-smelling audience settled down for the speeches and presentation of diplomas. From the platform, the graduates could hardly see the faces of people packed under the overhang at the rear of the hall. But then Danny wasn't looking—or was pretending he wasn't.

The ceremony was under way when something aroused the standees at the back of the room. The polite pushing and shoving attracted the attention of the graduates, including Danny. He saw a tall man shouldering his way through the crowd. It had been a long, long time, but Danny recognized the lean, handsome face he had given up hope of ever seeing again.

Tom Nolan. Adult runaway, check bouncer, reluctant family man, incurable entrepreneur, and in the end, loving father—home to make what amends he could.

As Danny Nolan's story exhibited here, and as we'll read more about in the pages ahead, knowing your subject's behavioral characteristics (along with his or her political and religious leanings) can be important to your search.

So can the degree of urgency you feel.

It isn't possible to imagine beforehand the degree of urgency, which is so important a search-motivation factor, for any of my readers. There would be a thousand variations. You, for example, could be facing a matter of life and death, perhaps needing to learn the genetic background of an adoptee who has

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become seriously ill. On the other hand, a legal or financial crisis might hinge on the success of your search. Then again, failure to find your subject might result in nothing more traumatic than disappointment.

In any case, I'm determined to get you into a frame of mind that gives your search *importance*. I want to give you something that, once your search has begun, should see you all the way through to a successful finish.

And that's what the following is designed to do.



MOTIVATING YOURSELF

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Cranking yourself into mental gear—motivating yourself—could be the most important element in getting your search under way. And of course it should come first, before you attempt any exploratory work whatsoever. So I suggest that you, as a beginning, do the following things.

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1. Read this book from cover to cover, *all* of it, not just the sections that seem to apply to *your* search.
2. Give your search a priority ranking: casual, compelling, urgent, critical.
3. Assign a beginning and completion deadline accordingly.
4. Resolve to remind yourself often that, although this is a how-to book, you aren't building a barbecue pit or knitting a shawl for Aunt Olive. You're doing this for *you* and your feeling of well-being.
5. Spend some time anticipating the pleasure and/or satisfaction to be derived from completing your project successfully despite frustrations and setbacks; there *will* be some of these.
6. Accept my word for it; this is a fascinating game, one that you should convince yourself you're going to win.
7. Look forward to the challenge to your patience, ingenuity, and—this will get a good workout—common sense.
8. Enlist the support of family and friends. Their interest will help sustain *your* interest. Their suggestions will be invaluable.
9. Plan to keep accurate records and a *journal* to which you can point with pride when your project is completed.
10. From this page forward, think *success!*

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EXPENSES

The cost of getting your "friendly" living-room search off the carpet will be modest, probably somewhat less than the more complex searches covered in Chapter 8, "Computers, Credit, and Consumers," and Chapter 11, "The Adoptee/Birth Parent Search."

Here are some of the expenses you'll incur in your "friendly" search.

MAILINGS

Ream of white writing/typing paper
 Box of inexpensive white envelopes
 Half roll (50) first-class postage stamps
 Fifty meter-stamped postcards
 Photocopying
 Local travel (fares, gas)
 Highlight pen
 Lined legal pads (2)
 TOTAL: under \$50.00

TELEPHONES AND THE THREE-HOUR SPREAD

Consider the time of day in keeping down long-distance costs. Calls made on weekends between 5:00 P.M. Friday and 5:00 P.M. Sunday, and after 5:00 P.M. weekdays in your zone, offer a discount. Be aware that 5:00 P.M. Eastern is 4:00 P.M. Central, 3:00 P.M. Mountain, and 2:00 P.M. Pacific, with the business day still under way in those zones. A 5:00 P.M. California call, then, should find a New Yorker at home with dinner over. A call from New York at 11:00 P.M. reaches a West Coast callee at just about that same stage. So act like a calculating clock watcher and you won't find telephoning outrageously expensive. Remember—a call to the right party at the right time could abbreviate your search.

DOCUMENT AND OTHER FEES

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Some document fees are reasonably consistent across the country, such as driver's license records; I've given such fee amounts individually by state in Appendix 7. Other fees, even for essentially identical documents, vary so much from state to state that I can't even offer estimates. This is more of a problem for those pursuing birth parent and relinquished-child searches. They can expect to pay not only for basic correspondence and telephone costs but for a clutch of documents as well. They usually need copies of birth, marriage, and death certificates and other records that require photocopying and notarizing. Their searches might involve mass mailings to a host of people with the same surname as the subject's. Then there could be membership dues to support groups, advertisements in—and subscriptions to—search publications.

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The upbeat side of all this paperwork is that you can keep within your budget by doing some commonsense planning. For example, never send for a document unless you are certain it is absolutely vital. Write the agency beforehand for search and copying costs so there are no surprises. If the need for a mass mailing occurs, use less expensive double postcards rather than a letter with a stamped, forwarding postcard enclosed. Don't be put off by needing to run an advertisement or join a support group. Search publications charge modestly for both ads and subscriptions. Support and information group membership dues average only \$20 to \$30 per year.

Above all, keep good cost records; they will help guide you in the least costly way to go. You'll get into the habit of economizing.

BEGINNING NOTES

STEP 1

Use the Missing Person statistics list on page 9 as a guide for creating a Profile of your subject. Then knock on doors. Telephone. Talk to former fellow workers, friends, enemies, lovers, relatives. Ask traditional who-what-when-where-why-how

questions and take notes—mental or otherwise—of the answers.

Your objective here is to create as complete a word picture of your subject as possible. So add anything I've missed that you think should be part of his or her physical description and background.

Your subject's Profile is a document vital to an organized search. It will become part of your Inquiry Kit, which I will tell you about a little later. Keep adding details to your Profile as your search progresses. You'll be surprised (and your subject may be, too) at the amount of information you'll be able to collect.

Make at least two dozen photocopies of the Profile, one for each kit you'll assemble (you may need more). File the original Profile for further copying as needed. Interfaced (matched) with data for others with an identical name, it will help distinguish your subject from them.

STEP 2

Much of your search will be conducted through the U.S. Postal Service. Lay in some standard 8½" × 11" white typing paper; #10 envelopes; a highlight pen (for highlighting certain Profile items—military service, for example, when contacting the Veterans Administration).

Lay in a batch of meter-stamped postcards. And depending on how fancy a working journal you think fits the project, you might find a simple, lined legal pad quite adequate. Keep in mind that it is easy to lose track of details as you go along because your search is not something you'll be working on every day. There will be stretches of time when you're waiting for responses, and your memory of what you were doing last will start to fade. Your journal with notes of everything you've done up until that last working day will always be there for you to go back and pick up from when the waiting is over. Remember, *date entries* as you go.

STEP 3

Get a membership card from your *main* (if there is more than one) *library*. Acquaint yourself with the *reference librarians* there, and explain your project to them. Librarians are almost invari-

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PROFILE OF MISSING PERSON

1. **Full name** First, middle, last, maiden, confirmation, and nicknames
2. **Gender** M/F
3. **Vital statistics** Day, month, year, place, of birth; Social Security number
4. **Physical** Height, weight, eye/hair color, glasses, facial hair, accent, lisp, tattoos, deformity, limp, scars, moles, etc.
5. **Descent** Caucasian, Black, Asian, Latin, Middle Eastern, Polynesian, etc.
6. **Last address** And the two before that, if available
7. **Education** Grammar, high, college, trade, years attended, graduated
8. **Occupation** Business, trade, profession, last employed as, retired, etc.
9. **Organizations** Labor, social, service, trade, professional, etc.
10. **Religion** Denomination, tither, frequent service attender
11. **Military** Service, period served, where, when, rank at discharge, serial number
12. **Licenses** Driver (state, number), pilot, barber, contractor, lawyer, doctor, etc.
13. **Hobbies** Fishing, knitting, hang gliding, golf, etc.
14. **Search reasons** Legal/health crisis, friendly/loving desire for contact, financial/credit
15. **Relationship** Birth parent/adoptee, immediate family, other relative, lover, friend, priest, doctor, lawyer, etc.
16. **Subscriptions** *People, Sports Illustrated, Aviation*, etc.
17. **Possible location** Where you've been told your subject is, where you think he or she is, where your common sense tells you he or she might be
- *18. **Finances** (At last word) Well-off, well paid, broke, in debt, bad credit, etc.
- *19. **Law history** Arrest record, time served, where, etc.
- *20. **Bank account** Where, how long, how much
- *21. **Politics** Party registration, where
- *22. **Credit cards** Visa, MasterCard, Diner's, Macy's, etc.

*If yours is a "friendly" search, eliminate the asterisked entries (18 through 22). Any data acquired for these entries are so personal they should not be used without purpose in Profiles sent with requests for information.

ably knowledgeable and willing to guide you through their world of facts, figures, dates, and place-names. They have the addresses of most of the important information sources you'll be contacting, plus the addresses of every other library in the United States. Knowing these details now will be important later.

STEP 4

Use your legal pad/ledger or—if yours is a more complicated search—separate 3" × 5" filing cards for keeping records of contact names, phone numbers, addresses, dates, and other data. Make progress notes for each of your activities so you will be able to pick up easily where you left off even after long periods of inactivity. *Discipline* yourself. Be neat and accurate, as though your files might someday become a court record, which could well happen if yours is a search for legal reasons.

STEP 5

Again, I suggest that you read *all* of this book before beginning work. Be aware that Chapter 8, "Computers, Credit, and Consumers," and Chapter 11, "The Adoptee/Birth Parent Search," can be helpful in all types of searches.

From this moment on, keep in mind that most successful searches result from ten vital attitude factors:

1. enthusiasm,
2. patience,
3. a sense of dedication,
4. discipline in your work,
5. willingness to accept suggestions,
6. perseverance,
7. retaining a mental image of success,
8. reliance on your common sense,
9. the commitment to make things happen when it seems nothing is about to,
10. acceptance of results if you succeed.

Number 10 is the key to finding peace and satisfaction if you are looking for a relinquished child or a birth parent and

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are successful. Without first resolving to accept these consequences, whatever they might be, it may be best not to pursue your quest.

With all this out of the way, we are almost ready to go. But first I want you to meet someone who could supply you with an alternative to doing your own searching.

ABOUT PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

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You probably don't want to—or can't—hire a private investigator to do your search for you; that's why you bought this book. But let's take a quick look at him or her and his characteristics so you can relate to him somewhat.

To begin with, P.I.s are easy to find. There are thousands, licensed and unlicensed, at work in the United States. Very few of them are real professionals. Of course, some are trained operatives with law-enforcement backgrounds who are completely dependable.

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Private investigators are listed in most of the yellow pages between New York and Honolulu. The problem is choosing an effective one—unless you personally know of a capable P.I. you can expect effectively to carry out your assignment without its costing you an arm and a leg. An average fee for a P.I.'s services, whether he's good or not so good, can run as high as several hundred dollars a day, with the inevitable "plus expenses," an item that can become financially lethal over a long search.

In this book, I've discussed some of the techniques your eye-for-hire would normally use. But for the most part, although the P.I. depends a lot on personal contact with his information sources, you will be using the mails, the telephone, and public records.

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Another major difference between you and some paid sleuths is their willingness to wink at the law, using illegal acts to help shortcut the gathering of evidence; you've learned a few of these from watching television. And of course, it's not only illegal but unwise to represent yourself as a law-enforcement officer or government official at any time or for any reason. This kind of activity can get you into very hot water.

So my firm's policy with clients is: "We'll investigate anything and anybody, but we won't go to jail for you."

However, there are legal ruses we're not above using when the end justifies the means and we feel that gaining the information you need is reason enough. You might identify yourself on the phone as a telemarketer/surveyor wanting to know your subject's present occupation, or you might say you're a friend of old hometown friends with a message from "the gang" back there. This kind of subterfuge is not illegal; just don't try to represent yourself as a government official.

Beware, too, of coming off as stupid by asking the wrong questions, or by being unsure of yourself. Anticipate questions about your identity and have the right answers ready.

If you're into an investigation that calls for subterfuge and your subject is obviously trying to avoid you and detection, leave him or her alone. Look up the subject's relatives and pay *them* a visit. Or locate a girlfriend or boyfriend, maybe former work-mates. Forgo any Sam Spade stuff. Minor deceptions here and there will gain you what you need to know.

TWO YOU-CAN'T-DO-WITHOUTS

Before you begin any kind of comprehensive search, you must possess *two* vital statistics regarding your subject.

1. *Your subject's first, middle, and last names* (correctly spelled), the name he or she is licensed by, votes by, and gets credit with, whether it is a birth or adoptive name, and nicknames, if any.

If a birth or adoptive name has been changed *officially*, your identification problem is heightened and may call for a search of court records or for interviews with associates who know the subject by his or her new identity. If the subject has *assumed* a different name, an aka (also known as), that complication will also slow the progress of your search. These are all solvable problems if you read this book thoroughly.

2. *Your subject's date of birth* (DOB). Because of a population nearing the 250 million mark, there are thousands of name duplications in the United States. Of all the search data you can

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ORGANIZING YOUR SEARCH



supply to information sources—in addition to a full name—the

DOB is the clearest identifying statistic separating your subject

from others of the same name. (The place of birth [POB]

another helpful identifying item you should try to acquire.)

you don't already have it, you'll learn from this book how to get

about getting the DOB.*

*Less critical, but helpful in your search, is knowing your subject's Social Security number. The Social Security number is used in many ways as an American serial number.

2

SOME BASIC SEARCH TOOLS

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Most government agencies—and private ones, too—are like most people: they hate to divulge secrets, even if the secrets are not their own. "It's for me to know and you to find out" is their attitude. It's a good thing, too, for by retaining the right of privacy for you and for me, agencies protect us from irrelevant prying.

We are not going to challenge that right, nor are we going to pry in any sense. But our problem here is to make the agency person quickly aware of (1) why we want to contact a subject, and (2) how we can achieve this goal without invasion of the subject's privacy.

You can use a mailing device that will allow you to make contact without arousing suspicion or resistance in those guarding citizens' privacy.

Here is how it works; it's very simple.

1. Determine which public or private agency is likely to have your subject's current address, or a source for the address:

- Veterans Administration, Social Security, a state vital statistics office, an insurance company, whatever.
2. Write a short, clear *letter of inquiry* addressed to either the director or the supervisor of the agency (see directly below).
 3. Enclose a photocopy of your subject's Profile, highlighting statistics that might apply to that agency: military service, for example, when contacting the Veterans Administration.
 4. Enclose a *plain, post office meter-stamped postcard* (see page 16) on the back of which is a brief, clear message to your subject

LETTER OF INQUIRY TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
 Director, Regional Office
 Veterans Administration
 (your regional VA office address)

Regarding: Charles Thomas Ingham
 Date of Birth: 9/14/29
 In Louisville, Kentucky

(Date)

Dear Director:

I have an urgent reason for contacting the above-named former serviceman: U.S. Army, 1950-1953, Korean Theater, approximately 10/1/52 to 8/1/53. Discharge rank: sergeant. I have enclosed a vital statistics profile. If his present address is in your file, I request that you please forward to him the enclosed, stamped, unaddressed postcard. If his address is not available, please have the postcard mailed back to me.*

Thank you for your help.

Peter J. Anderson (your signature)

Peter J. Anderson (typed or printed)
 107 Maple Terrace
 Montgomery, Alabama 36104

*Note: Always request that the forwarding postcard be mailed back to you if your subject's address is not available. This will help you keep accurate files and eliminates the agency or individual as an information source.

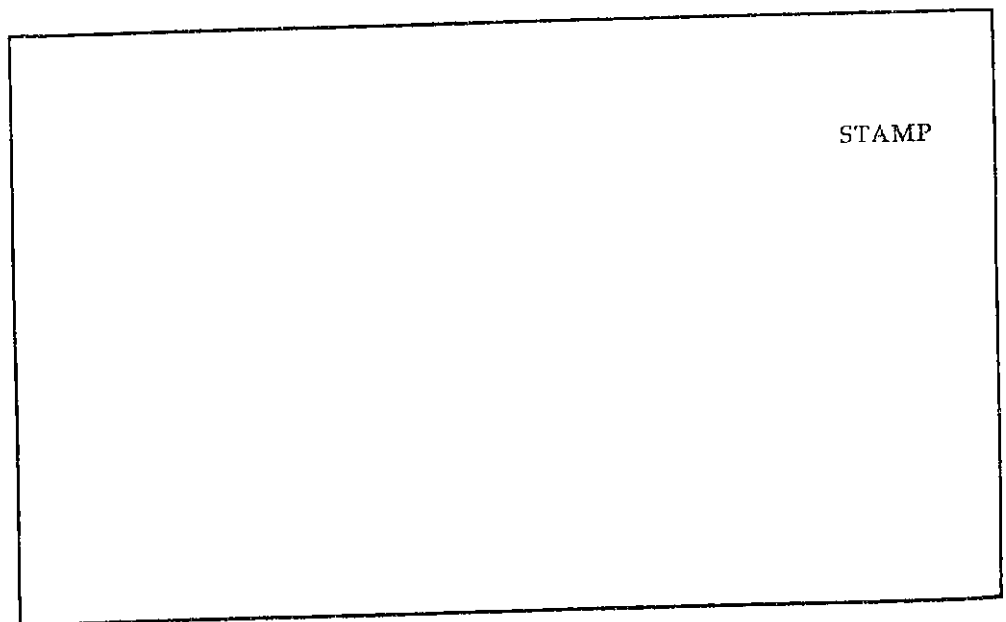
asking him or her to contact you; your name, signature, return address; and—if desirable—your telephone number. Leave the front (stamped) side of the postcard blank, so that your subject's name, if available from the agency's rolls, can be applied for forwarding. You now have—with your letter of inquiry; Profile; and stamped, unaddressed, forwarding postcard—what we will call from now on your Inquiry Kit. (An enclosed photograph of the subject would help.)

Note: If your longhand is as illegible as mine, I suggest that you print all your correspondence rather than use a typewriter. Pen and ink tends to attract the attention of clerks and officials exposed daily to bales of typewritten material. Furthermore, pen and ink will enhance the personal nature of your inquiry—and of the postcard to your subject.

Also, ask for the names and phone numbers of a couple of your subject's former neighbors. They just might be nosy enough to have learned where your subject was going when he or she left town.

You may have a same-name problem; Browns, Smiths, and

FORWARDING POSTCARD



Leave front blank for your subject's address.

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SOME BASIC SEARCH TOOLS



Dear Chuck: I asked the Veterans Administration to forward this postcard, since I have no idea where you are and we need to talk. I've got good news for you. Please write or call collect: 512-555-4567.

Pete Anderson
107 Maple Terrace
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

If the postcard is returned to you, take a deep breath and try again somewhere else.

Williamses take up dozens of pages in metropolitan directories. But if you don't have this problem, and want to do a thorough directory search, don't hesitate to call all the numbers listed under your subject's surname. You could well reach a relative who knows exactly where your subject is. Just be prepared to fib a little, if necessary, about your reasons for wanting to reach the subject; families don't give up the location of a relative to strangers all that easily. You might want to say you're the subject's former insurance agent and that you have some cash residue from an old policy you want to return to the subject. This should get you at least an address to work with, and maybe a phone number.

THE HAINES CRISS-CROSS DIRECTORY

The Criss-Cross is an amazing cross-reference directory. It lists every street in any given community alphabetically, from Abbe Lane to Zoetrope Circle, and gives the names, addresses in sequence, and telephone numbers (except for unlisted numbers) of the people who live on those streets.

That's the first half of the Criss-Cross. The second half lists all the telephone numbers, in sequence—with the prefix as a base—and the street names, addresses, and residents. So if you have nothing to go on but a telephone number, the Criss-Cross will let you run it straight down to the address and name.