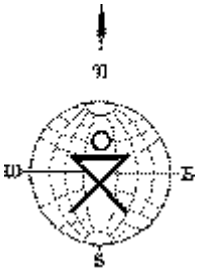

The Origins of the ISRR

By Tony Vilardi
1996

Stricken during her childhood years by three severe illnesses and diseases and again by cancer at age 26, Emma May Vilardi wondered how could this all happen to her. Her mother was an adoptee and severed from any access to her birth family history.

Emma May quickly learned the importance of knowing family medical history and of the inaccessibility by those in need of such medical history. Enlisting the help from medical professionals, guidelines were established for recording medical history, as much as was known about all the birth family members. It was the hope that adoption professionals make this a standard practice in future adoption placements and make it available to those would best benefit from its knowledge. Updating the adoption record is very important.

The social service system was too slow to respond or non responsive to the needs of the adoption community in providing access to any birth parent data. Many of the over 2000 illnesses and diseases of a genetic origin once manifested were deadly to many adoptees and their offspring.

Thus the International Soundex Reunion Registry was established to immediately respond to those touched by adoption wishing for contact or information. This was quickest and most non-restrictive way to serve these needs.

Since its establishment in 1975, the registry services were expanded to serve the needs of all in search of their next of kin regardless of any causes of separation.

The registry services continue to be provided at no cost to its registrants, supported entirely by individual donations.

For the many thousands of families reunited by this registry, it has brought the answers most had sought about their heritage. For those yet to be reunited this registry remains for many their only source of hope.