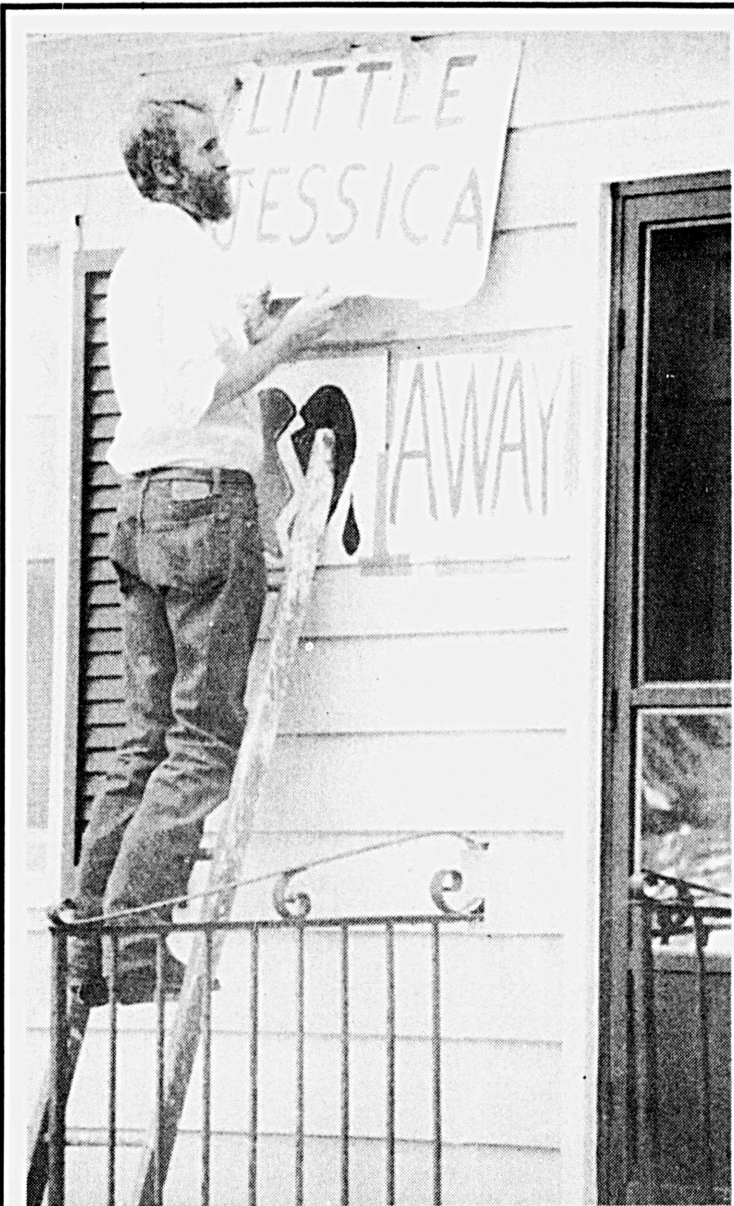


International



Jan DeBoer, who lost a two-year battle to adopt Jessica, removes signs from his home after turning the girl over to an attorney for delivery to her biological parents.

Biological parents win custody fight

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Taken away from the only home she has known, away from her swing set and her dog, 2½-year-old Jessica begins a new life with virtual strangers: her biological parents.

Screaming and crying, the dark-eyed toddler left the couple who raised her and was united Monday with Dan and Cara Schmidt, who fought a fierce legal battle almost since her birth to win her back.

"Mommy!" Jessica cried as she was carried from Jan and Roberta DeBoer's front door in Ann Arbor, Mich. The weeping DeBoers reached out one last time to the little girl, but friends restrained them.

"I want my Dad. Where's my Dad?" Jessica said on the way to meeting the Schmidts, according to the DeBoers' lawyer, Suellyn Scarnecchia.

Jessica was taken to a police station and was handed over by court order to the Iowa couple.

Within the hour they were on a chartered plane, flying toward a new life. The plane landed at an undisclosed location, where the Schmidts got off. Their lawyer, Marian Faupel, flew on to the scheduled landing spot — Cedar Rapids — to speak to waiting reporters.

The new family went into seclusion, rather than return to their home in Blairstown, about 40 kilometres west of Cedar Rapids, she said.

The Schmidts' small white home in Blairstown sat empty, wrapped in a yellow ribbon and decorated with a sign proclaiming "Welcome Home Anna." Below "Anna" in smaller letters was "Jessica."

The Schmidts have said they will call the girl Jessica, at least for now. They arranged for a therapist to help with the transition if necessary.

It wasn't known if the DeBoers would be able to visit Jessica, Scarnecchia said.

The Schmidts had been meeting with the DeBoers for three weeks to get acquainted with Jessica. The DeBoers sent along a few toys and a list of the girl's bedtime and bath routines, Faupel said.

"On the last visit, Jessica got out a blanket and invited Dan to lie down with her," the lawyer said. "It was clear she feels safe" with the Schmidts.

Cara Schmidt gave up custody of the girl shortly after giving birth in 1991 in Cedar Rapids. She was single at the time.

The DeBoers planned to adopt Jessica. But Schmidt, who initially named the wrong man as the father, changed her mind. She told Dan Schmidt in 1991 that he was the father, and the couple began trying to get their daughter back.

The Schmidts were married in 1992 and had another daughter in June.

Teen doesn't want to see blood family

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) — Regina Twigg wants to visit the daughter she lost in a hospital baby swap, and she doesn't think it should be up to the girl to refuse her.

Fourteen-year-old Kimberly Mays has made it clear she wants nothing to do with the blood family she considers strangers. But Twigg told a judge on Monday that she should disregard the ninth-grader's feelings because she is too young to know what she really wants.

"When she is older and has her own children and looks back, she may really regret the decision she has made now," Twigg said.

The testimony came on the first day of a trial to decide whether Ernest and Regina Twigg should be granted visiting rights.

Kimberly wants to preserve her life with Bob Mays, the man who has raised her since she was switched at birth with another girl in a hospital in 1978.

Circuit Judge Stephen Dakan said he will make a ruling by the end of the week.

In less than a minute on the stand on Monday, Kimberly said she was "positively sure" she

never wants to see the Twiggs again.

Kimberly's lawyer, George Russ, said the blond, hazel-eyed teenager has made a loving bond with Mays and that to force her to visit a family she hardly knows would be devastating.

Twigg testified about her mistrust for Mays, who she said failed to abide by a 1989 agreement that gave the Twiggs visitation rights.

Mays cut off visitation in 1990 after five visits with the Twiggs and their seven other children, saying the strain was too much for Kimberly.

The saga began at a hospital in rural Wauchula, where identification tags were switched and girls born to the Twiggs and to Mays and his wife, Barbara, went home with the wrong parents.

The switch was discovered nearly a decade later, when the child raised by the Twiggs, Arlena, developed heart problems and blood tests showed she was not their biological daughter.

After Arlena died in 1988, the Twiggs launched a search that led them to Kimberly and Mays, a roofing salesman whose wife died in 1981.

MAIN PILLARS KNOCKED DOWN

Maastricht Treaty 'a corpse'

An analysis by JULIET O'NEILL Southam News

LONDON — Britain's formal ratification Monday of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union was likened to "signing a corpse."

Ratification, after 18 months of political turmoil, followed the halting of a court challenge to the treaty on the grounds that it had become a harmless document.

Harmless because of the way European finance ministers and central bank chiefs settled a currency crisis on the weekend — by virtually abandoning the European exchange rate mechanism and thus knocking down one of the pillars of the Maastricht Treaty.

One of the other pillars — coordinating foreign and defence policy — was knocked down months ago when Europe divided over the breakup of Yugoslavia and has subsequently been unable to either bring peace or intervene to stop the bloodshed there.

Even the social chapter of the treaty, aimed at eventually giving European workers similar cross-border labor standards, has been the brunt of sober second thoughts that make it an expensive and unlikely plan.

Europeans must wonder what all the fuss has been about — negotiation and renegotiation, endless parliamentary debates, referenda, and painful economic policies meant to keep everybody's hat in the same ring.

"Some of the politicians, especially (European Community chief Jacques) Delors have been trying to hurry history along," Roger Alford, a London School of Economics analyst, said in an interview. "It's a Napoleonic approach to Europe, a grave mistake."

Alford held the typical opinion that the currency crisis settlement, by widening the band in which European currencies can fluctuate, was equivalent to allowing free floating currencies and thus abandoning the exchange rate mechanism. The Maastricht Treaty, he said, had become "a corpse."

Even as the dust was settling in the wake of the currency crisis, European leaders were giving contradictory explanations and predictions.

France was blaming Germany. Germany was hanging tough. Britain was claiming vindication for bailing out of the European exchange rate mechanism last year.

French Premier Edouard Balladur was saying stage two of European monetary union, as planned in Maastricht, would go ahead at the end of this year. British Prime Minister John Major was saying the monetary union timetable had been exposed as "totally unrealistic."

Nigel Gault, chief European economist at Data Resources Consulting, called the monetary union timetable, providing for a single currency by 1999, "a piece of fiction."

But by keeping the exchange rate mechanism, even if only in name alone, he said Europe left itself an opening to go back to the drawing board and change the rules at some stage. A single currency, he said, "is very unlikely now but I won't say it'll never happen."

tributed to the way Germany has handled the costs of unifying with the post-communist east. Germany has wound up with higher inflation and higher interest rates, which France and other countries need lowered to bail them out of recession and keep their currencies strong.

With currencies allowed to fluctuate widely now, economists say France and other countries are free to lower their interest rates and that, said economics professor Gordon Smith, "is good news on the economic front."

"They can at last cut their interest rates," he said. "Their currencies will fall a bit but they can export more."

It turns out, he said: "What's bad for Maastricht is good for Europe."

The currency crisis is widely at-

NATO threat helps poison peace talks

From AP-CP-Reuters

Bosnian peace talks have apparently lost their momentum, and participants indicated that NATO's decision to threaten Serbs with air strikes may have helped poison the atmosphere.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic stayed away as today's talks began.

His son Bakir, a member of the Bosnian government delegation, said Izetbegovic will not return to talks until Bosnian Serbs stop attacks in the Mt. Igman area around Sarajevo.

There was no immediate confirmation of continuing Serb attacks there. But Sylvana Foa, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said fighting between government troops and Croat or Serb forces was keeping convoys from taking aid to war victims in Sarajevo and other areas.

Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic showed up for the Muslim-led government to attend today's sessions.

The warring factions are discussing a Serb-Croat plan to divide the former Yugoslav republic into three ethnic states.

Early today, NATO allies meeting in Brussels warned that they would launch air strikes unless Serb forces lift their siege of Sarajevo. The plan, proposed by the United States, would use warplanes to break the Serb encirclement and increase humanitarian aid getting into the city.

Air strikes would mark a dramatic escalation in NATO's role in Bosnia's civil war, which has left up to 200,000 people dead or missing and more than two million homeless.

Lord Owen said today he feared the talks may have lost their "constructive atmosphere" and the momentum that marked the first six days.

He complained that NATO's warning came as progress was being made to end the conflict.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said the NATO move "may ruin this conference." He said the sides had been close to a solution under which Serbs would break their 16-month siege of Sarajevo.

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