

Imogene's Children

Fifteen children from the same family were taken from their mother Imogene Fannin by child welfare authorities at three different times in a misguided effort to improve the quality of their lives. The official reason was child endangerment. Violence shadowed the course of their lives in foster care, and the heartbreak never healed. The author's quest to find these children and reunite them was more than a search for justice. It exposed the Kentucky welfare system, a system that encourages institutional dependence.

This true story is told through the voice of the children and reveals smoothed-over reports by social workers and the frustration of foster parents as they expelled unprepared children into society. Fifteen lives told from fifteen points of view are skillfully woven into a seamless account.

This story is as vital and as painful today as it was in 1930 when Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge published their findings on childhood nutrition and deprivation, and in the 1960s after President John F. Kennedy flew into eastern Kentucky to save Appalachia. Children are still waiting for fulfillment of those promises.

What happens after foster care? This story identifies institutional dependence and how it binds a large segment of our society.

The Genetic Stork Plays a Trick on Imogene
America Holbrook's Proposal
Charmed by the Black Snake
The Hog Farm on Paradise Hill
Blind Baby Andrew in Avondale
The Ramey Children's Home and Black Lung
The Angry Boys Come Home to Henderson
Branch Murder at the Starlite Drive-In

The author is cousin to these children and grew up in eastern Kentucky where they lived. A former Idaho Constitutional officer and Idaho legislator, she has won numerous awards for public service. She is a seasoned public speaker having appeared on the Phil Donahue and Maury Povich venues for an unrelated subject. At 62, she hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine, bicycled around Cuba (alone), and at 65, became a French chef.