

# Kazakh Kids!

An Internet Newsletter for Kazakh-American  
Adoptive Families

*April 27, 2001*

*Issue #2*

## ***In This Issue...***

<b>Staff Sound Off</b>	<b>Page 1-2</b>
<b>Kids Corner</b>	<b>Page 2-4</b>
<b>Shared Thoughts</b>	<b>Page 5-6</b>
<b>Culture Connection</b>	<b>Page 6-7</b>
<b>Kazakh Kuties</b>	<b>Page 8-9</b>
<b>In The News</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Candid Questions</b>	<b>Page 11-13</b>
<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>Page 13</b>

## Staff Sound Off

*We want to thank everyone for your enthusiastic response to our first issue of Kazakh Kids! We received many warm and encouraging emails, which really meant a lot to us. This is turning into quite an interesting project with a reach far larger than either of us had ever originally anticipated. Our "subscribers" now number just over 100!!! It seems there are a lot of us out there with little Kazakhs running around or are anticipating having one underfoot soon. There are pre- and post-adoptive parents among us, and even some agency representatives who are searching for ways to help educate their clients about Kazakhstan and it's culture.*

*Sergey will be traveling to Kazakhstan to visit family from April 28<sup>th</sup> through May 14 and while he is there he will be searching for materials we can use in our*

*newsletter. He has carefully read everyone's initial emails with all your great suggestions and will gear his search towards those items.*

*We have been asked by a couple of people if they can have permission to share the newsletter with clients, support groups, etc. Consider it a standing "yes" that any and all material contained within may be freely distributed with no expressed permission required.*

*We'd like to point out that this publication is being put together totally independent of any kind of agency affiliation whatsoever. It is by families, for families and about families. There will be no advertising in our publication, and no way for any kind of preference or bias to insinuate itself into our newsletter. We feel this is the best way to stay "pure" and to keep our content untarnished.*

*Thanks again for the wonderful response, photos, and comments. Keep them coming!*

*Warmly,*

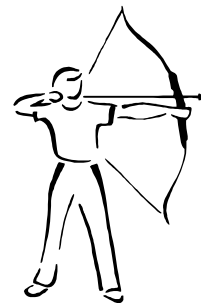
*Sergey & Cindy*

*Your Editors, Staff Writers, Publishers, Translators and Jack & Jill of All Trades*

## **Kids Corner**

### **The Hunter and The Snake**

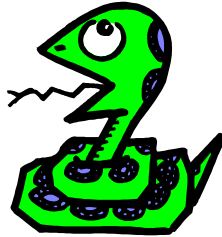
Once upon a time, late in autumn, a hunter returned from the forest. He was tired and very hungry. After leaving the forest he decided to rest for a spell. He sat down on a stump near a frozen stream, lifted a bag over his shoulders and placed it on the ground beside him. He then took out a large round cake which looked delicious!



He had just bit off a piece of the cake when suddenly he heard a noise near the stream bank. He leaned forward, drew apart the high grass and carefully looked downward. What he saw was a lash (a small whip) lying in the grass. He tried to touch it but the lash suddenly moved. It wasn't a lash at all! It was a snake!

The snake raised it's head, looked at the hunter and said in a sad voice,

"Help me kind man. Do you see my tail is frozen in the ice? Please free me, otherwise I will die here."



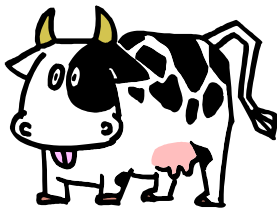
Feeling sorry for the poor animal the hunter took out an axe from his bag and cut carefully the ice around the tail of snake. The snake crept onto the bank, scarcely alive.

"I am very cold. Warm me, my friend", the snake requested. The hunter raised the snake up and tucked her inside his jacket. Having got warm the snake suddenly said "And now say goodbye to your life, you fool! I will bite you now." "Oh! Do not do that!" exclaimed the hunter in despair. "I have been kind to you and have saved you from certain death."

The snake hissed in answer "You have saved me, but I will still kill you. I always do harm, even when somebody helps me".

"Wait a minute" said the hunter "Let's go to the road and ask the first living creature we will meet what one should do, good or harm in exchange for kindness. If he says "harm", you will kill me. If he says "good", you will let me go freely without hurting me". The snake agreed to this proposal.

So the hunter started walking along the road with the snake coiled up in his jacket. The first living creature they met was a cow.



"Hello, cow!" said the hunter.

"Hi" the cow answered.

The snake stuck her head out and said, "Judge between us, cow. This man just saved my life but I want to kill him. Tell us, what should one do as a payment for kindness?"

"I repay good with good", the cow answered, "My master feeds me and gives me shelter. I give him milk in return, I repay good with kindness."

"Now you have heard it", said the hunter, "Please set me free."

"No. A cow is very silly animal" said the snake, "Let's ask someone else."

So the hunter trudged down the road again. Soon, they met a horse.

"Hi, horse!", said the hunter.

"Hi", the horse answered.

The snake asked the horse, "Judge between us, horse. This man has saved my life but I want to kill him. Tell us, what should one do as a payment for kindness?"



"I always repay good with good", answered the horse, "My master feeds me and gives me shelter. I work for him in return".  
"Do you see?", said hunter, "Now, please set me free."  
"No" said the snake in answer, "A cow and a horse are domestic animals. They live with people for a very long time, so they are going to side with you. Let's go to the forest and ask a wild animal if I should kill you or not."  
There was nothing else he could do so the hunter went into the forest with the snake.

Suddenly he saw a very large birch tree and in the lowest branch of it there was a wild cat sitting. The hunter stopped near the birch and the snake stuck it's head out a head and asked "Judge between us, cat. This man has saved my life but I want to kill him. Tell us, what do as a payment for kindness?"

The cat's eyes flashed and she said "Come closer to me. I am old and my ears hear badly."

The hunter came close to the branch and the snake put her head out further and cried "This man has saved my life but I want to kill him..."

The cat shifted her claws out, jumped on the snake and strangled it to death.  
"Thank you, cat", said the hunter. "You have helped me and I will repay your kindness in return. Come with me. We will live together in my house. You will sleep on a soft pillow in the summer and near the warm stove in winter. I will feed you meat and warm milk."

The hunter then raised the cat up, put her on his shoulder and away they went to his house. And there they lived for the remainder of their days.



# Shared Thoughts

## Shared Thoughts

International adoption is a complex journey, and each step of the way can bring about new and sometimes uncomfortable feelings, as well as doubts and concerns. Both parent and child are truly stepping into the unknown. We all experience a mixture of joy and fear and often feel as if no one else on earth can really understand what is going on inside of us.

Each issue we are going to feature “Shared Thoughts”...short perspective pieces written by one of our readers. We’d like it to serve as a window of sorts into the hearts and minds of our families.

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***Have you ever wondered what it feels like to be an orphan? To have no mommy or daddy? What does it feel like when suddenly someone walks into your life from a strange country far away and wants to take you to a new home?***

***We asked this question of 5 year old Jasmine Lasick recently. With her mommy’s help, Jasmine shared her thoughts on the subject...***



Jasmine’s memory of her life in the orphanage is dimming as it recedes further and further into the past. Fleeting images dance through her mind as she tries to remember. “There are lots of kids and I cried when they did not let me outside to play.” She tells her mommy “It was scary sometimes when the lights go out. I did not like not having a mommy and daddy.” She would see other kids when their new mommy’s and daddy’s came for them and she felt sad. She is also sad for her friends who do not get a mommy and daddy and were left behind. “I was

hungry and thirsty and ate only soups." but "the ladies were nice to me." She explains.

When asked about being adopted, Jasmine becomes much more animated. "I have a family, my mommy and daddy and my brothers and my dog. I love them from my heart." As she places her tiny hand upon her heart she adds "They love me too from their hearts and I love them forever and ever and always and always."

There are other great things about being adopted. "I get to play and go to school and see Mickey Mouse!" She is excited about an upcoming trip to Disneyworld. "Mommy and daddy fixed my heart (Jasmine had heart surgery after coming home) and now I play outside.". She has a big family "I have grandmas and grandpas and cousins!"

But life with her family is not without it's worries. Jasmine tells her mommy "I eat lots of food and drink and sometimes juice but not too much because it will rot my teeth." So far Jasmine doesn't have any cavities and she wants to keep it that way so she is careful to eat and drink healthy things.

But best of all Jasmine says "When I am scary (scared) mommy and daddy hug me. I have a home now."

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# Culture Connection

## Kazakh Marriage Customs



Marriage, as we know, is one of the most important events in a persons life. Once married, the relationship and the commitment it requires affects every aspect of your life. A good union exists when both partners exhibit such qualities as frankness, temperance,

stability, prudence, delicacy and rapport, faithfulness and devotion. In almost all cultures, a strong bond is formed between the husband and the wife.

Weddings for Kazakhs are events of paramount importance, but in spite of great attached significance, marriage originally was basically a matter of calculation and advantage.

Since Kazakhs had a tribal style of life, marriage between the representatives of one tribe was forbidden and considered to be the worst violation of national traditions. When choosing a bride, heads of a family tried to deal with the richest and most respectable people. Surprisingly, if it was of benefit to a family, marriages were sometimes planned between children that had not even been born yet. Polygamy was also a common practice among Kazakh families.

The opinions of young people of marriageable age usually were not taken into account, because the emphasis was put on the enrichment of the family and increasing the influence of separate families within the tribe. Young men and women could not disregard such offers because all tribes strictly followed these customs.

The wedding itself began with an exchange of gifts. Usually such gifts formed a “**Sheckpen**” - bridal clothes that implied consent to the marriage. Certainly there was never a single wedding held without public songs such as “**Sinsu**” which was a Song of the Bride, sung when she was walking through her native “**aul**” (village) for the last time, “**Dgar-dgar**” (fiance-bride) and “**Bet-Ashar**” (a short poetical edification to the married couple for their forthcoming life). All these songs would have been sung on the wedding day.



*A Kazakh Bride*



*An Aul*

To obtain a bride, a fiancé had to arrive at the **aul** of the bride and pay a “**Kaluym**” - a charge for the bride similar to a dowry. After that the grooms family could claim the bride. After a small pause the wedding began and lasted during the fortnight and was accompanied by many amusements and forms of entertainment. A bit later the bride would be led off to the **aul** of her new husband.

After the wedding, all the burden of home duties fell on the bride, who lived without virtually any rights. If a husband died, his widow became a wife of his brother. Age was not taken into consideration. So it sometimes happened that a young girl became a wife of an elderly person or vice versa. This custom was named “**Amangerstvo**”. After the October Revolutions of 1917, some traditions were abolished and forbidden. As for the good traditions, many are alive and practiced up to the present time.

# Kazakh Kuties

Email us your photos! We'd all love to see your kids!



From Left to Right:

Kara, Katy & Mira Vining  
All of Marieta, Georgia  
These are the 3 beautiful  
daughters of Steve and  
Karen Vining

Mira and Kara were adopted  
May 2000 from Aqtobe



The Bittner family wants to share their Kazakh Princess, Alia Lyn Bittner, with everyone. Alia was born on 3-13-00 in Petropavlovsk. They received her referral photo (taken at 2 ½ months old) on 6-14-00 and by 8-12-00 they were on their way to bring her home. Darin and Kristie Bittner, Alia's parents glowingly write "Alia has been more than a blessing to our family. She has exceeded all expectations and every day is a blessing to us." Below is a photo of Alia with her handsome big brother Billy, who is 7 years old and obviously loves his little sister very much!



### **COMING SOON.....**

The Murawski family is anxiously awaiting a travel date to Almaty to welcome their new daughter and sister into their lives!

Laura Elizabeth Murawski will be two years old on

July 9, 2001. Big sister Sarah (10 years old) will be traveling with her parents Jim and Sue, while brother Michael (4 years old) will greet them at the airport when they return after staying with Grandma. Congratulations!

**UPDATE:** The Murawski's received their travel date! They left on April 22, 2001.

# In The News

- Yuri Laptev of Kazakhstan finished 286<sup>th</sup> in the Boston Marathon with a time of 2:47:39.
- The San Jose Sharks NHL team retained goaltender Nevgeni Nabokov of Komenogorsk, Kazakhstan for their 2001 season. The 6'2" 200 lb Nabokov played in his first NHL game on January 1, 2000 for the Sharks
- 4/18/01 – An oil spill off the coast of Atyrau caused the Kazakhstani government to shut down the exploration of the area within the Caspian sea due to environmental concerns. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment ordered the Offshore Kazakhstan International Operating Company to stop it's testing at a second well and to obtain proper permits.
- 4-19-01 – President Nursultan Nazarbayev offered to host peace talks between Afghanistan's radical Islamic Taliban militia and it's United Nations recognized oposition, Northern Alliance. According to UN sources, President Nazerbayev is well versed in the Afghanistan conflict and it is hoped that his involvement can help bring an end to this crisis.
- 4-19-01 – As reported by the Asian Development Bank, the projected growth of the GDP for Kazakhstan will slow to around 4% versus 9.6% for 1999. This is due to the leveling off of global oil and mineral prices.
- 4-17-01 – Unemployment dipped in March 2001 over March 2000 figures. 2000 figures show 4.5% unemployment (288,100 workers) while 2001 stands at 3.8% (242,100 workers). This does not represent the number of underemployed workers nor does it accurately reflect workers who are employed but due to poor financial situations are receiving little or no compensation from their employers.
- 4-6-01 – US President Bush intended to nominate A. Elizabeth Jones to his administration as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Jones serve as the US Ambassador to Kazakhstan from 1995 –1998.

# Candid Questions

## *What Did I DO??*

We all come to international adoption from many different paths, but they all converge on the same one eventually. Some of us are older parents who want to add to our families but don't relish the idea of going through childbirth again, others have found themselves infertile, and still others have a strong desire to simply help a child in unfortunate circumstances. Whatever brings us to the decision to adopt a child born in another country, the end result is the same. What is not always the same are our individual reactions and emotions.

Throughout the pre-adoption process there is much excitement and anticipation as you imagine yourself meeting your new son or daughter for the first time. You wonder what they will be like and you picture yourselves doing ordinary everyday things together as well as thinking ahead to special occasions such as home runs, first dates and graduations. You allow yourself to indulge in the fantasies that are part and parcel of your impending parenthood.

Finally, the long awaited day comes, and in some room far away from all that is familiar to you, a child is brought in and you are face to face with reality. Some parents feel instantly connected to their child from the moment they see the photo or video. Others can't seem to allow themselves to believe it is really going to happen until the day they are able to reach out and grasp that child's hand. Still others...well, they are usually the silent ones...they feel nothing. Zilch, Zip, Nada. Oh, then the panic sets in and they feel something all right, they say to themselves "Oh man, what did I get myself into!"

Is it realistic to expect yourself to fall head over heels with a child whom you don't even know? Are you weird if you don't feel all warm and gushy from the very first moment? You must be a HORRIBLE person not to be able to bond quickly with your child, you tell yourself.

But wait a darned minute here...let's look at the very good dose of common sense you were probably given about adult relationships. We've all been told that infatuation, that instant reaction we all have towards the object of our desires, isn't at all what real love is all about. Real love takes time to grow and nurture. Why doesn't that apply to our relationships with our kids as well? Why should we put that kind of pressure on ourselves to feel that instantaneous "mother bear" kind of protectiveness towards our newfound cubs?

We shouldn't.

I know many people who have come home and in private written about feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and in some cases even doomed. They experience feelings of inadequacy and question their own ability to be a loving parent. This is, in my opinion, most often due to the unreasonable demands that they have put upon themselves to bond immediately to their child, rather than a true inability to build the relationship. And that is what is key. It is about building a lifelong relationship, not having a burst of fireworks that quickly fizzle in the twilight.

Whether you are adding another child to your life or bringing home your first, it is a wonderful experience...but let's face it, it also means the end of life as you know it. You might not have had time to think much about that prior to traveling, as there were so many details to attend to. But, in my opinion, there is even a small amount of grieving that must be done on the new parent's part for the life that will no longer be.

Grieving? Isn't that a bit harsh to describe this? No, not really. You can grieve over anything that is lost, and you will be losing a lot. No more sleeping in late and far fewer quiet times. You may be giving up jobs you love, brews after work, or late night movies. For those of you who are adding to your families it can mean suddenly having a younger child in the house again or adding to the already high level of

energy that already exists within your family. Whatever your particular situation, there will be huge changes to be dealt with.

So if you are one of those who finds yourself staring at that creature you have said you will parent and wondering what you have gotten yourself into, don't worry, this too shall pass. Soon enough you will be staring back down at that same creature and feel much differently. Don't expect yourself to react the way everyone else does. Perhaps they too are secretly forcing down feelings that they dare not express.

*Would you like to comment on our Column this month? Send us an email! We will include your response in the next issue, anonymously if you wish.*

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***For our next issue we would love to have more input from all of you! We are posing a question to those of you who have already traveled ...***

***What are some images of Kazakhstan that stick in your mind? Describe a couple of things other than meeting your child that you will be able to share with them about their country and how you felt while visiting Kazakhstan.***

***Also, we'd like to feature a Dad's perspective in an upcoming Shared Thoughts. Any men out there up to the challenge? You can write about how you felt about international adoption before and after you adopted, what makes you proudest as a Daddy, what you enjoy most, or anything at all!***

***Keep sending us those photos!***

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