

Kazakh Kids!

An Internet Newsletter for Kazakh-American Adoptive Families

May 21, 2001

Issue #3

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Staff Sound Off

WOW! It has been a very busy few weeks for Sergey and I. Sergey is back from his vacation and has some absolutely wonderful material to share with all of us. While visiting his family and childhood friends in Rudny, Kazakhstan he managed to take time out to go shopping and found many great resources to use in our newsletters. He also was able to find out the meanings of almost all the birth names we gave him. Sergey spent a lot of time working on "our" project and you will all enjoy the fruits of his labor in upcoming issues. You can read a little about Sergey's trip in this issue.

As for our family, I had a large project for work that I had to complete, which caused the delay in getting this issue out to everyone. Sorry folks...but I warned you ahead of time that our publishing schedule would be pretty relaxed <grin>.

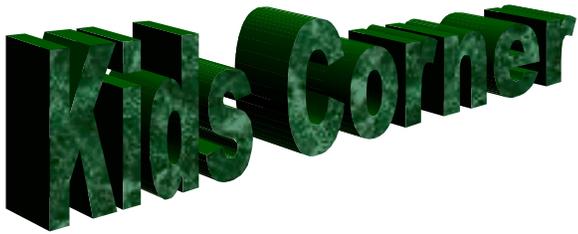
We also celebrated our first “Family Day” with Matthew. Watching the video of our trip brought everything back so vividly...I could almost imagine myself standing in that little room again holding him for the first time. All of you know what I mean...or sure will understand very soon.

We hope all of you had a wonderful Mother’s Day, and that those of you who have yet to bring your children home will do so very soon.

Warmly,

*Sergey and Cindy
Your Educational Servants!*

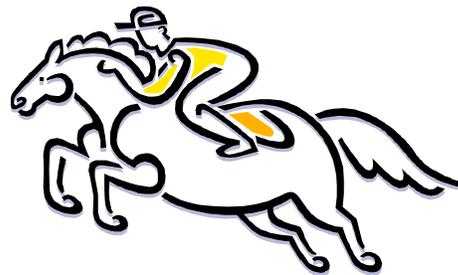
PS: We have received some really great photos and stories. PLEASE keep contributing! Everyone loves to see and hear what others have experienced.



“Living Water”

Many years ago a young hunter had ridden a long distance towards a far off steppe. He thought there was no one around but suddenly he saw people that looked very different from anyone he had ever seen before. They had horse’s legs with hoofs and large iron hooks were in their hands.

The hunter was scared to death!
“What shall I do?” he thought and forced his horse to run away. The people with hoofs noticed the hunter, laughed loudly and ran after him. The hunter forced his horse to gallop. The hoofed people raced after him with all strength they had. Slowly, they drew closer. The hunter turned back and saw the hoofed people with their outstretched hands with the iron hooks almost touching him.



Up ahead there was a swamp. The hunter lashed the horse and with incredible strength and effort the horse jumped up and flew over the swamp. The people with hoofs ran into the swamp, found themselves stuck in the marshy land and had to turn back.

The hunter appeared to be in a strange, unknown land. He rode a short distance and soon stumbled upon a large elk lying on the ground. The hunter dismounted from his horse, touched the elk and realized that the elk had been killed just a few minutes prior to his arrival.

“Who killed the elk?”, the hunter thought to himself. Just then he noticed a tiny man climbing up on the body of the elk. He was very short and was no taller than one cubit. The man cut open the belly of the elk and took out a long white rib.

The hunter asked him, “What are going to do with this rib?”

“I will make a bow out of it and I will use it to shoot animals.” answered the man. The hunter laughed, “But you are so small. Do you have enough strength to stretch a bow like this one? What kind of animal are you going to shoot?”

The man was a bit offended but replied in a polite tone, “I have enough power to kill any animal”.

The hunter laughed and said, “Ok. Then show me, my friend, what kind of animal you are able to kill! I am going to see how far your arrow will fly.”

The man said, “What is there to show? Look at this, the elk is lying here. It was I who killed it. If you keep laughing I will shoot you as well.”

The hunter was laughing even harder and in a loud voice said “Are you going to shoot me? Well then, shoot my leg. I am eager to see how well your arrow works.”

He then put forward one of his legs. The man raised the bow and shot. The hunter fell down. The tiny man gave a whistle and a saddled rabbit appeared from nowhere. He jumped up in the saddle and rode away.

The hunter was left lying and thought to himself “Why did I laugh at that man? He proved to be very smart and strong. His arrows proved to be perfect. What am I going to do now? I am unable to stand up and my leg is broken.”



Soon, nighttime fell upon the steppe.

The hunter had been unable to sleep all night long and he suffered from the pain in his leg. When morning came he suddenly saw many mice surrounding him.

“What are they doing here?” he thought and listened carefully to them speak. “This big man will die soon”, said a mouse, “Then we will have a lot of good meat to eat”.

The hunter lay still and breathless as he thought to himself “I am going to be eaten!”

Another mouse said, "Why wait? Why not just start now? He is lying very still." She ran up to the hunter and began to gnaw on his finger. The hunter became so angry that he grabbed her up in his fist and threw her aside. The tiny mouse hit a tree. She tried to run away but failed. One of her legs was broken.

Then the mouse went towards the swamp, hobbling on her three legs. When she reached the swamp, she climbed on a hillock, dug out a root of grass growing there and ate it. Instantly, her leg healed and she ran away on all four legs.

Upon seeing this miracle the hunter started creeping towards the swamp. He did exactly as he had seen the mouse do moments before. Immediately he felt quite good and completely healthy. His leg was well again. The hunter stood up, mounted his horse and left for home.

Some time later he heard the whine of arrows. The hunter rode out into a meadow and saw that many tiny people were training in using the bow and arrows. They proved to be very good at that. The hunter greeted them politely. The tiny people answered him and talked to him with pleasure.

Leaving them the hunter said, "Come and visit my **aul** (village), you will be treated as honorable guests. We will welcome you and serve you good food and meat." The tiny people answered, "We will gladly come and visit! At the time of the full moon we will come with a gift for your people, we will bring you "Living Water". Because of the "Living Water", we ourselves live everlastingly."

The hunter returned home and told the villagers about the tiny people he had met, about the wonderful country they live in, and that they had promised to visit the **aul** at time of full moon and bring "Living Water".

Women began to collect firewood and make a fire, and to prepare meat for the feast. On the day of the full moon the meat was boiled in large caldrons.

Finally, everyone saw the tiny people riding out from the forest, sitting atop saddled rabbits. The women started laughing, "What strange guests are coming to us! What strange horses they have! These foolish people have foolish horses".

The tiny people became very angry. "These silly people are not worth giving such a wonderful gift as "Living Water", they said. Furious, they splashed the "Living Water" onto the trees that surrounded the **aul**. They splashed it on a fir, on a pine and on a cedar. After that the tiny people turned back and disappeared in the forest.

Since that time, a fir, a pine and a cedar have become "evergreen".

And people on earth have lost all possibility of becoming "everlasting".

Shared Thoughts Shared Thoughts

Last issue we asked if there were any brave Daddy's out there who would be willing to share their feelings about the adoption of their child. We had one Dad who answered our call and I am sure you will be just as touched as we were when you read what he wrote. A big Thank You to Trey Futch for allowing us a glimpse inside his heart.

A Dad's Perspective by Trey Futch



When my wife Sandy first suggested that we pursue an international adoption, I hoped it was just a temporary phase she was going through. After all, we already two beautiful daughters by birth – Ellie and Sara – who were eight and five years old at the time. Why in the world would we want to invite all of the uncertainty of an adopted child into our lives? We were fairly comfortable in our routines: our work, our children's school, and our children's activities. What would an adopted child do to that "comfort"? Sandy is a teacher, and has always loved children. I am an engineer, so I was trying to consider all the practical aspects of what an adoption would entail. Not that I don't love children as well, but I was trying to keep the potential impact on our daughters and us in perspective.

Sandy was unwavering from the beginning. She believed deeply that adopting a child was something she had been called to do. However, she never tried to force a decision on me. Sandy always said “This is not something I can do by myself, and I would not want us to pursue the adoption unless you were totally committed.” I knew from her conviction that this was not a subject that was going to just “fade away.” I prayed about it, and we continued to discuss the possibility. We went to one of the monthly information sessions held in Atlanta by the Lutheran Ministries of Georgia, and we spoke with people who had previously adopted, others who were pursuing their first adoption, and others who were pursuing a second or third adoption. The guest speaker at the meeting was a representative of MAPS (Maine Adoption Placement Service) that provides placements from Russia and Kazakhstan for the Lutheran Ministries. I felt better knowing that the placement agencies were very experienced in guiding prospective parents through the process, and also felt better having an idea of how much information about the child would be available.

I continued to pray for guidance in the decision, and Sandy continued to have that “empty place” in her heart that called out for a child. In the end, my decision came down to three factors:

- Sandy is my wife, my best friend, and the most important person in the world to me. What’s important to her is important to me. I want to be the one to help bring her happiness, not stand in the way of it.
- As I prayed, I was getting an answer. I could feel in my heart as if God was saying “I was talking to both of you, and Sandy was listening first. I don’t ask you to do much for me – I want you to do this.”
- I love our two daughters with all my heart, and I knew that I would feel the same love for any child that joined our family. I knew it was a decision that I would never regret.

So, in August 2000, we decided to apply for an adoption. We discussed both Russia and Kazakhstan, having felt that God was guiding us by having the MAPS representative at the first Lutheran Ministries meeting

we attended. We felt drawn to Kazakhstan for a variety of reasons, and in September we submitted our application to MAPS to adopt a child from Kazakhstan. In December we received a referral for an 18-month-old boy named Arman. His video was quite extensive, showing him at 11 months, 14 months, and 18 months. We knew immediately that he was the one that had been chosen for us. We consulted with three pediatricians, and they confirmed our hopes that from all available information, Arman was a healthy, happy boy. I was proud to be able to show off the pictures and video of my son-to-be!

Although the INS approval seemed to take forever, in February we were finally able to make our arrangements to travel in March. It was difficult to leave our two daughters behind, but we were fortunate to have Sandy's parents to stay with the girls at our house. We also had lots of friends and neighbors offering to help however possible.

There are two moments from the trip that I will never forget. Of course I'll never forget when we first met Arman. The head nurse of the orphanage brought him into the room where we were waiting, and he screamed at the top of his lungs. (We later found out that she was his favorite caregiver, and he always screamed when she left him.) Nevertheless, he settled down after we took him back to his group and spent time with him there. By the third day, Arman would cry when Sandy left the room. He eventually warmed up to me, but it took a little longer, as I had expected.

The other moment that I'll never forget was on our last day with him at the orphanage and we were preparing to leave. One of his caregivers said "Oh Arman! America zaftra! America zaftra!" which of course is Russian for "America tomorrow!" Although she would miss this precious little boy, she was so excited for him and his new life with us.

We have now been back at home almost six weeks, and we are all settling in to new lives. Sandy and I are now the parents of THREE beautiful children; our daughters are enjoying having a little brother to play with

and take care of; and our son is enjoying having a family, lots of new friends, and experiencing new things every day! We've named our son "Jackson Arman", and are calling him "Jack", which is Sandy's father's name.



What makes me proudest as Jack's dad? It would have to be seeing his face light up when I get home from work, and hearing him say "Papa!" as he runs to hug me. It also makes me proud that our daughters will grow up knowing that every child in the world is important, and that we've

been blessed with the opportunity to have another child join our family. I think what makes me proudest of all is that I have a wife that listened to God's calling, and helped me to listen also.

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Culture Connection

KAZAKH BIRTH CUSTOMS



In the past, the Kazakhs had a lot of customs related to the process of giving birth, educating and raising a child. The most important of these customs were connected with the act of birthing and with a child's first days of life.

Just after a child was born its mother would drink a jug full of boiled milk. Men would slaughter and boil a ram outside the yurt and its neck was given to the mother (nearly two kilograms of meat!). She was to eat it trying not to touch the cervical vertebrae and larynx which would then be fastened together with thread and hung on the wall where it must remain for the next 40 days. After the 40 days had passed, the mother would take it and hide it somewhere in the steppes so that nobody would be able to find it. This ritual was believed to encourage growth and good health for the child.

Three days after a child's birth he/she was placed in a handmade crib made of seven wooden sticks, which were provided by the seven oldest women of the **aul** (village). After the crib was constructed, relatives were to find a paw of an owl and attach it to the crib. Kazakhs believed that it would protect a child from cruel spirits. An older woman of the **aul** (village) who had raised strong and healthy children would be invited to swaddle and place the child in the crib. After forty days the child would be bathed in salty water. The Kazakhs believed that it would help him to be cheerful and any wounds they might sustain in the future would heal quickly.

Throughout the forty days the child was slathered with butter and near his bed must be a light that would ward off evil spirits and ghosts that might try to steal a child.

After the forty days the main ritual began. Its name was "**Kirki**". Parents bought blue silk, a wooden spoon and a big white cauldron. There was a popular belief that these objects would have an influence upon the nature of the child.

The blue silk was thought to cause a child's temperament to be amenable, and to have clear thoughts.

White dishes were to insure that a child was pure and clean like the dishes.

Many people would attend the **kirki**. The infant would be placed in the large white cauldron and the most honored guests would then use the wooden spoons to ladle water over the body of the child, as they pronounced their own good wishes. Finally, the most highly honored guest would then speak the name of the child three times into the child's ear. Only then was the child handed over to his parents.

Sergey's Trip

Hello everybody!

I would like to inform you that my wife and I took a short vacation at the beginning of May and visited Kazakhstan to see old friends and relatives. While there I kept in mind the needs of our "Kazakh kids" project as well. It seems that I managed to find some published material for our newsletters that covers the range of your interest. We plan to use it all here as well as our ability will allow us to do it.

In addition, I tried to take some photos of this country while thinking: "What would be interesting for you to see, to learn here?". Mainly I was photographing buildings and streets, people, interesting events and so on that I had seen around me there. Not sure that every photo is well made as I am not a professional at it. We will see what we can do with them after all they have been developed.

I want here to tell you about something that I am sure will be interesting for you. It chanced that being in the city of Rudny we stayed with my wife's mother not far from a local orphanage. Of course I visited it with the intent of getting some information of the kid's life there and to take photos. I did it and now would like to share my experience and impression of all I had saw and heard there.

The orphanage proved to be a one floor building standing among some kind of small park. The courtyard area was enclosed by a low fence so that it was easy to see children with nurses playing there. I entered the courtyard and went towards the entrance of building. On the steps of the building I was stopped by woman about forty (the manager of the orphanage, as I was told later) who questioned me: Who was I and what was the purpose of my visit there. I answered that I would like to learn about this orphanage. She said that it was impossible. In order to do so I should be an official or have permission from the local government. I said that through Internet I know people who are interested in making contact with some

Kazakh orphanages so as to learn about this system in Kazakhstan. She asked if I had some official document that I am a representative of some organization. I said, "No".

"Then", she said, "In any case you can not take photos and get any information about the orphanage".

The woman said that they had their own official system of contact and information through the local government. To speak the truth I was discouraged.

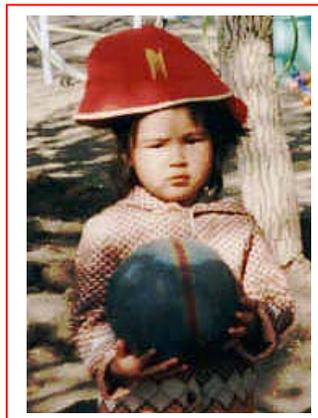
"If it is a secret to learn something about this orphanage", I asked. "Can I make several photos of children?"

She answered, "Yes, but outdoors only".



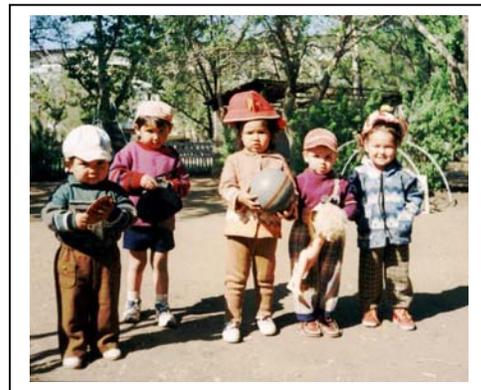
I went round the building and came up to one group. I told a nurse, a woman about 30 years old, that I would like to take photos of the children and had permission from manager to do it. The woman said that for this case she would dress them better but I said that it was OK, worrying that at any moment the woman- manager could change her mind and ask me to leave the courtyard.

Children surrounded me with a pile of question: who I was, what I was going to do. One most brisk boy even gripped my leg and began to climb up it like I was a tree! At that moment I was lucky to remember a package of sweets I had brought with me. I opened it and this act saved me from further invasion. When the sweets were finished I asked the children to prepare for a photo.



Why are you going to photograph us?" was the main question I was asked. "I would like many people to see you", I answered. You can see in the pictures those children. I made several photos.

I would like to say that they were dressed well enough, not worse than other children of this age that I have seen in Kazakhstan. And I think that they were not hungry. People say children in orphanages have enough food, but of course there is a lack of sweets and delicacies there. My wife's mother told me later that people often passing by the court of the orphanage would give the children some sweets. Russian people have a religious custom. After a member of their family has died, women give out sweets in a cemetery or just in the street. Many women in this case specially came to the fence of orphanage and give sweets to these children.



I am sure that any child in an orphanage is unhappy even if he or she smiles and laughs just now. And it is not because of the lack of sweet and delicacy- many children in Kazakhstan have no sweets or delicacies at the present time. It is because they have not the main thing every child MUST have - the LOVE of his parents.



Candid Questions

MY ADOPTION PET PEEVES

Ok, for the most part I am usually a very positive person and pride myself on not taking political correctness all too seriously. But at this very moment I decided to take a step back from my “Pollyanna-ish” image and share what have become the most annoying things to me about our experience with adoption. Maybe you share some of these, and maybe you have your own. I would love to compile a list to share with everyone of all of our pet peeves! Send them to me and we will take one issue to gripe together before moving ahead in a positive, forward thinking manner (There, didn’t that sound very Oprah-esque?)

WARNING: It is not my intent to offend anyone. If you are a person who leans towards political correctness, please pass over this article.

Here goes...

- 1) Why is it that everyone assumes that just because you adopted a boy he will have no interest whatsoever in finding out anything

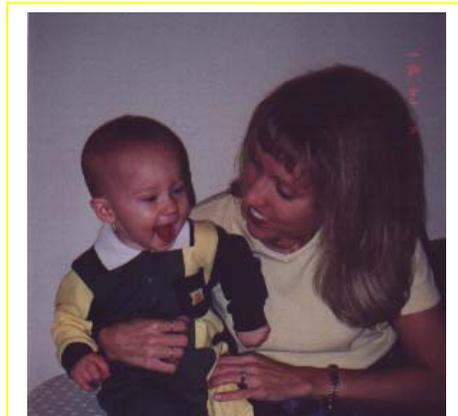
Again, sure hope SOMEONE out there has a sense of humor. Please, no flames. Just wanted for once to say those snappy comebacks you think of about 30 minutes after someone says something dumb to you!

Kazakh Kuties

Boy, do we have some great photos to share with everyone this month! Many of you have emailed and sent by snail mail photos, and if they don't appear in this issue please be assured that they will appear in the next one. In order to keep the downloads reasonable in terms of time for all of you, I try to limit the number of graphics/photos we put in each issue.



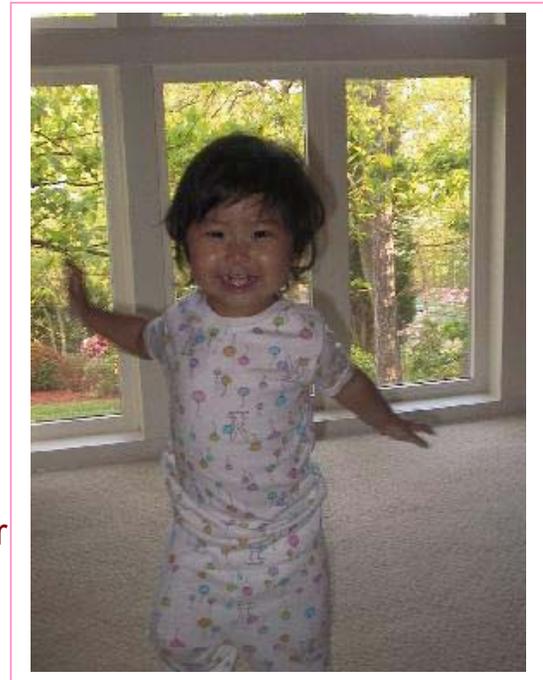
Now this is dedication to your kid! You gotta love it! Alia Rachel Fagerburg looks ready to take over for Vanna White when she retires! Alia is the daughter of Mark Fagerburg and Julie Grimes. She was adopted from Astana on 6/23/00 and just celebrated her 4th birthday on May 9th.



Here is the handsome Brayden Mohn with his proud Mommy, Julie! Brayden was adopted from Aqtobe in November 2000.

Someone's happy to be in her PJ's! This is Mia Gulnara Shand, daughter of Penny Phillips and John Shand. Mia was born 1/24/00 in Ust-Kamenogorsk and was adopted on 7/11/00.

Penny took the time to write and answer my request to hear about your thoughts about your child's birth country. Here is what Penny had to share:



Like our own country, Kazakhstan is majestic and beautiful. While visiting Ust-Kamenogorsk, the extreme northeast region where my daughter came from, I was struck by the landscape, nature, and big sky. It was July, and the rolling hills were golden, much like those I'd seen in California. Wrapping around the city's Soviet built apartment buildings were two converging rivers where young and old gathered for swimming, boating, and fishing – much like any riverside in mid-America. The Kazakh sky stretched for miles and miles, blowing in fluffy clouds, swift moving storms, and lots of sunshine in between – much like skies I'd seen in Arizona and Texas. Colorful wildflowers grew everywhere possible, especially in the sidewalk cracks along the river's walkpaths, Down south, in the former capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty's towering snowcapped mountains offered running streams, cool shaded forests, and winding roads. When journeying half way

around the world in search of a daughter, nature's bounty was not among the wonders one expects to experience. But what a pleasant, warm memory to be able to share with my daughter about her birthland.

Well, that's the end of issue #3. Hope you enjoyed it! We want to again encourage everyone to participate and send us photos, stories and thoughts. Stories/perspectives we'd like to feature in future issues are: Older parent adoption...what is it really like?, Sibling reactions and feelings, single parent adoptions, etc. Come on! We take any and all suggestions, so send them to us!

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