

Kazakh Kids!

An Internet Newsletter for Kazakh-American
Adoptive Families



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Issue #6

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Staff Sound Off

Well, here we are, Back To School is already here. I don't know about all of you, but summer was far too short for me. We hope everyone enjoyed the remainder of their summer and that fall will be good to all of you.

It has been a hectic month for us. Sergey and his wife, Irina, visited Spain for a vacation and had a wonderful time...in spite of the nasty cold he caught. My life has been something akin to “Murphy’s Law” with 6” of standing water suddenly appearing under our house on Labor Day weekend, and having both a refrigerator and freezer decide to die on us at our restaurant. Needless to say, I am looking forward to moving forward with September!

We have had a wonderful response from so many of our readers regarding our new web site, and I want to publicly applaud Sergey for the great job he has done with it. Without any real expertise in web page design, he somehow managed to create a very nice layout and an informative site. Knowing Sergey, it is only the beginning and I can’t even imagine what the site will become over the coming months.

We have added many new subscribers thanks to a short mention in Adoptive Families magazine in the “Letters to the Editor” section. Welcome to all those who are joining us! Inside this month’s issue we have some unique articles, and we hope you enjoy reading them. Keep on submitting your material! It is really appreciated and we love hearing from you all.

Warmly,
Sergey and Cindy

Kids Corner

Kanbak – Shal

Once upon a time there lived an old man named Kanbak (which means “tumble weed”). He had almost nothing to show for his years on this earth except for a very old **yurt** and a very old wife. He spent his days hunting and fishing. The old man was so small in stature that any slight wind lifted him up and carried away. It was because of this that he was given a nickname – Kanbak.

Kanbak had one enemy...the Fox. She never



left him in peace. If he had been lucky enough to catch a couple of fish during the day, it was certain that the Fox would take one of them. She also threatened Kanbak regularly, much to his dismay.

So Kanbak decided to get rid of the Fox and move his home. He took down his old **yurt**, tied together a **kerege** (trellised skeleton of **yurt**), gathered the rest of his fish entrails, took a **byrdyk** (a bag made of sheep stomach) filled with **airan** (sour milk) and left for a distant place.

He walked one entire day, and then another. Soon, he was overcome with weariness. He decided to bury his belongings and buried in one place the **kerege**, and in another place the remainder of his meager items, and in a third place he hid the **byrdyk** with **airan**. As soon as the old man stood up after burying his cargo, he was so light that the wind picked him up and carried him above the ground. The wind dragged the old man far away and deposited him somewhere in the gorge of the huge mountains. When he awoke, Kanbak saw he had fallen down near a giant. The giant was holding in his hands two mountains and striking one with the other.

Kanbak buried the fish entrails and then approached the giant.

“Where do you go, old man?” The giant asked.

“The world is so wide and I would like to see it all. If I can not meet a **batyr** (strong, brave man), I will become a **batyr** myself”, said Kanbak.

“Oh! You are an oddity, I see”, said the giant and he roared so loudly that the mountains around started to crumble.

“If you want to be a **batyr**, let’s test our powers.” the giant offered.

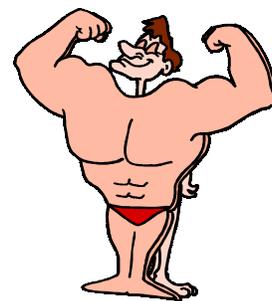
He took a huge stone, thrown it high up in the sky and caught it easily when it fell, as if it were a ball.

“Well, old man. Now you should play.” The giant snickered.

Kanbak was very frightened but he did not show it.

He chose a stone twice large as he was himself, grasped it and looked restlessly up at the sky, then at the land and at the sky again but did not lift the stone.

He did this for a rather long time, and the giant was disturbed.



“What are you waiting for? Throw the stone” the giant impatiently said.

It was that Kanbak was waiting for. He took a glance at the sky and at the land once more and finally said “I am afraid. If I throw this stone upwards, the sky will turn over and fall down on the land. And if I do not catch it, the land will break up...”

Hearing Kanbak say this, the giant was scared to death. He grabbed Kanbak in his hands and asked “Oh! **Aksakal** (old and very respectable man), I understand your force! Please, do not throw a stone. Otherwise, both of us will die.”

The old man realized the giant was not very smart and he then said “Let’s see if one of us can make the land spew out fish entrails.” The giant agreed and kicked the ground with his leg with such force that it stuck in the ground clear up to his knee.

Kanbak also kicked the ground, but it was at the place where he knew he had hidden the entrails. The giant was shocked to see the entrails come from the ground and thought to himself. “Oh! It is very dangerous to try and trick this old man. I need to treat him with great respect.” Then the giant began to do everything that Kanbak ordered him to do.

Kanbak realized that the giant was now willing to do all that might have been asked of him. He then said “Enough for today. Come to me tomorrow. If you have friends, bring them with you”.

The giant agreed and walked down the road. When he met a river, he stepped over it. When he came to the woods he drew the high trees apart and went on his way. What a giant he truly was!

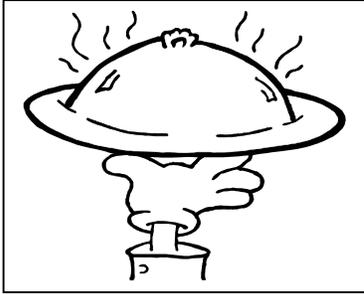
Kanbak returned to his yurt and said to his old wife “A Giant and his friends will visit us tomorrow.”

“What do we have to share with them?” the old woman asked, “ We have nothing”.

“Do not worry about it.” said Kanbak, “I have already come up with a plan. When the giant and his friends come, he will come into the yurt with me, and his friends will stay behind at the threshold. Than you

will say to me ‘ What will we entertain our dear guests with? We have nothing !’. And after that you will do what I ask you to do”.

Having said that Kanbak gave the old woman a huge knife. The next day the giant and his two friends came to Kanbak. He crammed into the **yurt**, but his friends were so large they could not fit so they remained outside.



At that moment the old woman asked Kanbak “ What will we entertain our dear guests with? We have nothing”. And the old man answered “What to do, my wife? If we have nothing let’s cook the head of one giant, brisket of other one. And, in addition, you can roast our third guest”.

At the moment old woman arose and grasped a huge knife, all three giants jumped up and fled away. And the giant who was inside the yurt even carried away the **yurt** on his shoulders.

“Oh! Friend, leave my **yurt**. Otherwise, I will have to find you.”.

The giant threw off the **yurt** from his shoulders and ran after his friends.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, the Fox appeared under the giant’s legs. She asked the giant “Why are you running like mad?”

“Oh! Do not ask” answered the giant, “We three are fleeing from a single smart old man!”

“What a fool! Come with me. I will get revenge for you”.

The giant has agreed, turned around and went back to see Kanbak with the Fox .

The old man has seen them back in the distance and shouted “Oh! Fox! Your grandfather owed me a debt, your father owed me a debt, and you want to pay off with only one giant?! Do not bother. I will not accept one giant. It is not enough for me”.

Having heard these words the giant grasped the Fox and said “You wanted to deceive me, to give use me to repay the old man for the debts of your father and grandfather! AARGGHH!!!”

The giant seized the fox by it’s tail, twisted his head several times and struck with all his force about ground. So in the moment the spirit has left her.

And so it happened that one old man, Kanbak, managed to get rid of his enemies – the Fox and the stupid giants!

Shopping Around

As all of you know, finding things that are appropriate for our families or are culturally related can prove to be quite a challenge. Last issue we featured the wonderful traditional dolls available from Mary Jane Capron. This month we have a couple of neat things for you to check out.

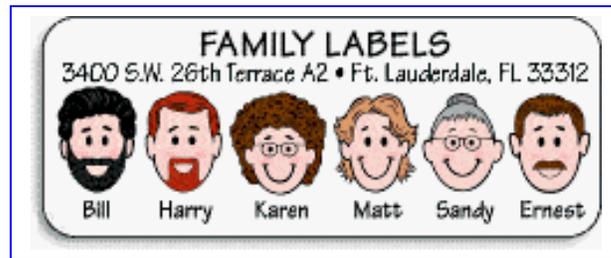
TRADITIONAL SHOPPING

Many of us have attempted to find very traditional items and have been stumped in our efforts. You can find some VERY interesting items at <http://www.tribalmax.com> . This site features some almost impossible to find Kazak items such as yurt decorations and household furnishings and other great Central Asian imports. This site does not exclusively handle Kazak goods and you have to check it often as it’s inventory changes on a regular basis. It is great fun to see the really unique items they have.

JUST FOR FUN

Many of the children adopted from Kazakhstan are Asian, and as such our families often “look” different from others around us. Additionally, many Kaz adoptive families have also adopted children from other countries and are truly “rainbow families”. I stumbled upon

a web site from an advertisement I saw in Parents magazine that offers one of the cutest products I have seen in a long time...and it fits us perfectly!



<http://www.familylabels.com> features personalized address labels, luggage tags, gift tags, etc. Each label has the faces of the members of your family (pets included too!) and you have hundreds of features, skin tones, face shapes and hairstyles to choose from...so your family can look exactly like it does in real life! I ordered address labels showing the three of us, and Matthew's little face looked just like him with Asian eyes! My husband Dominick is a dark skinned Italian and always wears a baseball hat and so his face looked like him as well. I got a big kick out of these and can't wait to send cards and other neat things using them. You can even order them with Santa Hats on them for your Christmas cards! Very nice folks to do business with and my order was received very quickly. I highly recommend them for those of us who occasionally give in to that need for a "cutsie" kind of item.

Kid's Stuff

If you do nothing else, you HAVE to check out this web site...especially if you have adopted a little girl. Remember good old Raggedy Ann? Well Judy Miller, a fantastic seamstress, has created a similar doll with an ethnic flair. Her Raggedy Dolls are incredible! You can see them on her web site at:

www.angelfire.com/biz2/raggedydolls/home.htm



The dolls are dressed in authentic clothing and are available for specific countries including Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Japan, Romania, Russia and Korea. While they are not specifically for Kazakhstan, they are about as close as you will likely find. I asked about having her create a Kaz doll and Judy said she was quite busy right now but would like to design one in the future if we could assist her in finding an authentic example of clothing.

An Inside View

Back in May I corresponded with a 16-year-old foreign exchange student from Aktobe, Kazakhstan. She agreed to answer some basic questions about what her life was. Ollga (last name not included to protect her anonymity) was forthright and honest, and I found her answers interesting. What struck me was how similar we all are, even though we undoubtedly have a much different way of life. Below I will share Ollga's perspective.

Q. What age were you when you first started attending school? At what age would the average child complete their standard education (not college)?

***A. Usually kids in Kazakhstan start school when they are 6 years old. I went to school when I was 5 and a half because I really wanted to :-)* Usually we have 11 grades. 9 of them are compulsory for everybody. After ninth grade you can either go on to complete 2 more years of school, or go to a vocational school (usually for 3 years) and get a profession. So, usually people graduate from school when they are 17. Also the schools in Kazakhstan usually have grades 1 through 11, and you can go at two different times, in the morning, or in the afternoon, usually 2 pm.**

Q. Do you think that many of your friends will go on to attend college?

- A. *I think yes, because usually people who graduate from school after 11th year go to college. And many people do go to college. In our schools we have a group of people (class) that we take all the classes with and stay with for the whole day. So everybody from my class is going to college.***
- Q. *What kinds of things did you enjoy doing as a young child? What kinds of games did you play? What do you enjoy doing now as a teenager?***
- A. *As I young child I enjoyed being with my friends that lived in the yard of my apartment building. Very many people live in apartments there, so mostly everybody has friends nearby. I enjoyed playing games like “hide and seek”, running with my friends. Well, I don’t know the names of most of the games in English...we used to spend lots of time outside. We also played snowball fights in winter. As a teenager...well I am not exactly a typical teenager :-)* I like reading, and learning foreign languages.**
- Q. *What are some of your happiest memories as a child?***
- A. *That is kind of hard...I guess when I spent time with my brother and cousins in a different city. It was really fun, we would go to the river and walk in it. Also we would go for the wild strawberries in the mountains.***
- Q. *What do you see for your future? What about the future of your country? Will things get better or worse for your family?***
- A. *That is a hard question. I really want my country to be better. But I don’t know how it will be. I hope I can get a job and get some more money. Right now my mom is not working, and since my parents are divorced it is kind of hard to live. So, I don’t know how it will be in my country, but I really hope it would be better. (Some say it can’t get worse, it is that bad already.)***
- Q. *What is the attitude towards young women who become pregnant and are not married? Are their families often***

supportive? Are there any kinds of government programs to assist these women financially?

A. *It is not very good...well, it is better now than it used to be. Now families are usually more supportive. I really don't know about any government programs to assist those women. Oh, and usually it is bad if a woman gets pregnant before she is married because it is really hard financially.*

Q. In your opinion what is the most common reason that children are left at an orphanage?

A. *I am not really sure, but I think it is when kids are born without a marriage, and the women can not then support the child.*

Q. How do people in Kazakhstan feel about people from other countries adopting these children?

A. *It is a very controversial issue :-)* Even I sometimes feel both ways. Well, first is if they can't live good here, at least they will have a good future somewhere else. And the other one is that people don't want our kids to leave the country.

Q. Having studied in the USA and Kazakhstan, which country do you think offers a better education?

A. *I really don't know...I think you can get a pretty good education in both countries if you really want to. But now an education in Kazakhstan is getting easier, so maybe it would be worse than in the US. Actually we study a lot more stuff than people do in America.*

Q. What do you find to be the most different between Kazakhstan and the USA?

A. *Well, I am poor in my country, and here I get scholarship money every month. So I kind of like that :-)* I can spend more here. But mostly, I think it is the public transportation issue. Here (at least in West Texas) cities are spread out, so you have to drive, and they don't have any public

transportation. And our cities are usually smaller in area, and it is not as far walking distance.

Q. What do you miss the most?

A. My family...and walking, sometimes :-)

Q. If you were to describe the majority of Americans to your friends in Kazakhstan, how would you describe us?

A. Well I would say that I cannot describe the majority, because that would be stereotyping. I would say they are very different:-)

Culture Connection



THE ANCIENT STATES OF KAZAKHSTAN

The end of the first millenium BC and beginning of our era are critical moments in the history of Kazakhstan. There were serious changes happening in the economic activities throughout the Kazakh steppes.

This had been caused by the invention of iron and the transition from the nomadic way of manufacturing. In the **Semirechie** region the **Sak – Ysyn** community developed, as well as in the **Aral** region – **Kangyi**, the northeast part of Kazakhstan (**Gyn**) and in Western Kazakhstan (**Alan**).

THE NOMADS OF KAZAKHSTAN

1. The formation of prototypes of state units within the territory of Kazakhstan.

The nomadic cattle breeding and the use of iron encouraged the development of the huge steppe spaces that had no population before. It caused an increasing amount of sheep and horse herds. Two opposite poles appeared. In the one - rich families that owned huge herds. In the other – poor, horseless people that had been engaged in agriculture work in the flood-land of the steppe rivers. The stratification of a society required the appearance of the force that would be able to adjust of the relations between various groups of the population. This force became the state. The first state structures in the territory of Kazakhstan began to occur in the first millenium BC in the form of unions of tribes. The necessity of control of the land and the use of water consumption resulted in the integration of nomadic tribes and complicated social structures. So, in the steppes of Kazakhstan the associations known as **Saks – Daha (Massagets)**, **Saks – Rayks (Tigrahayda)**, **Issedons** and **Arimasps** appeared.

The use of iron and horse riding resulted in a transition to new tactics of fighting – a mass horse attack. It raised the role of the ordinary horsemen and deprived the aristocracy of a monopoly within the business of the military. The consolidated **Saks** were more economically independent and they took a more active role in the political decisions. National assembly became a well used tool.

All full members of the community periodically gathered for discussion of internal and external problems. This political state could be considered a direct democracy, since consolidated people directly participated in the decision making process, without any intermediaries. However, it can also be considered a “military

democracy”, since all “full” members of a community were armed men.

One of characteristics of political system of this time was idolization, or the deification of authority. At the head of a tribe union was a king. He solved any matters of war and peace, sent and accepted ambassadors, regulated the relations between tribes. The imperial authority was saved in one tribe and considered to be sacred. The **Saks** believed that kings governed only with the will of the gods. The **Saks** governors had priestly functions as well. Women very often became supreme governors of tribe unions.

One main support of imperial authority were “Best Men”- military-tribe aristocracy. The lower step of the hierarchy was occupied by ordinary folk considered to be “consolidated soldiers”, which were poor horseless people and during war would be essentially an “infantry”.

2. Economy and culture of the **Saks**.

The prevailing type of economy within the Kazakh tribes was semi-nomadic and nomadic cattle breeding. The transition to this kind of economy meant economic progress in the life the steppe tribes. The work of the man became more productive, as the specialization of farms gave ample opportunities for the manufacture of superfluous products. Cattle and the products of cattle breeding quickly provided a barter function and created all the necessary conditions for active trade in the nomadic world with settled states.

The tribes combined three kinds of cattle breeding: nomadic, semi-nomadic and settled. Sheep prevailed in the herds. Horses played the leading role in farms and in the life of the steppe people in general. This fact is proven to be true by archaeological finds. Skeletons of horses were found at excavations of graves of soldiers and noble persons. Besides pure-race horses the ordinary ones were widely bred: small in stature with short legs, but very hardy.

On the basis of cattle breeding, more raw materials trading developed. People produced wheeled transports, leather and wooden utensils, quivers, short swords (**Anak**), knives and other

things adapted to nomadic and semi-nomadic life. This time is marked as the highest period of the bronze industry. The using of iron and the transition to more progressive farm forms promoted the development of the Kazakh tribes culture. Mobile lifestyles allowed them to come in contact with different tribal cultures.

The nomads lived in felt yurts and dwellings made from adobe and wooden logs. They wore pointed caps, fitted caftans up to the knee, girded by a belt, narrow trousers and heel-less footwear.

The dominant form of religious faith was a cult consisting of ancestor worship. There were special patrimonial cemeteries which were placed near winter places of living. Here, all dead were delivered irrespective of the season and remoteness of a place of death. In order to preserve a corpse, especially in summer time, steppe people practiced a form of embalming and mummification of corpses. **Saks** put a piece of property near the corpse in the tomb. Archaeological materials also prove the existence of sun and fire cults in Kazakh tribes, that corresponds to the messages of the ancient authors and early Iranian sources. However at the same time continued to exist such religious representations, as animism, totemism and magic.

The ancient arts derived from the nomadic lifestyle fascinates modern people as well. Its main component was the original representational form named in a science as "animal style ". This style has developed within the tribes of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Siberia and Southeast Europe. One of the main themes of it is the image of animals carrying cult characters.

Saks spoke in east – Iranian languages or dialects. It is likely that in the east and southeast regions the Turkic languages were beginning to take hold. In these areas the samples of most ancient letters were found by archaeologists, that testifies to a high level of social and cultural development of **Saks** tribes.

3. International-legal status of Kazakh states in 1st century BC

Settling down on the northeast borders of the largest states of the Ancient World, **Saks** breeding unions actively participated in political events of that time. Thus they acted as independent

sovereign states. It is known about an exchange of embassies **Daha - Massaget** with Persia and about a number of wars **Saks** unions had with this state. Struggling against Greek – Macedonian expansion, **Saks**, living to the north of Syrdaria, managed to save their independence. In 238 BC one of the **Daha - Massaget** tribe - **Parny**, led by the family of Arkashid, created in Iran the new empire which replaced Hellenistic states of Forward Asia, and the Parfian empire.

It's Your Turn...

Our “question of the month” only elicited 2 responses from our readers. I was hoping to get many more of you to share with us what your top 3 first impressions of Kazakhstan were. We have many subscribers who are waiting to travel and I am certain they would love to get an idea what to expect. If anyone else would like to contribute to this topic, feel free to email your answers!

David Van Houten’s first impressions were:

- How distant and unfriendly they seemed until you spoke to them. Here in the USA we smile and greet complete strangers on the street, and in doing so, we feel more at ease to talk to them. In Kazakhstan, you don’t get the feeling that they would answer if you ask them a question, not to mention the concerns about the language hurdles. But as soon as you approach them, you find they are warm and friendly and are willing to go out of their way to help you.
- How far behind in technology they were. And even though we view it as hardships, it’s everyday life for them. And you don’t complain about it taking an hour to bake a potato until you know you can microwave one in seven minutes.
- But the biggest impression was not about them, but my perception of the Kazakhs and how it changed in 5 short weeks. Because of all the hoops you have to jump through to adopt, I believed that they were doing their best to find a reason to reject

the adoption and wanted to keep the children in orphanages. But I realized that they only want what's best for the children. They don't care if the child will be raised in an environment that affords them anything money can buy. They want the child raised in a loving and caring home and given things that money can't buy...love, integrity, honesty, morality. And I think we all agree that these are more important than money.

And from Dana McKenzie we learn:

- Very warm/hospitable people: My husband and I were in Aktau for almost seven weeks in the spring of 1999, adopting our son. During our stay, several families opened their homes to us. We had a chance to visit, sample traditional dishes, enjoy conversation, and learn about everyday life in Kazakhstan. Most of the families we met did not have a lot of money, but made sure that their tables were filled with plenty of food and drink and that we were comfortable during our stay.
- Beautiful Countryside: we were fortunate to have the chance to visit three cities during our two trips to Kazakhstan. We experienced the desert climate of Aktau, where wild horses and camels run free, and the crystal clear blue water of the Caspian Sea pounded on our doorstep. We had two visits to Almaty, one in springtime and one in fall. The landscape was so beautiful and the architecture was so interesting. I will never forget the view of the mountains when I stepped off our first flight from Moscow to Almaty. It was breathtaking. The sun was rising and the sky, reflecting on the mountains was a warm golden yellow. We visited Ust-Kamenogorsk in November 2000. It was so cold and frosty there. Everywhere, fluffy snow covered the trees and the streets, as if it had just snowed, even though I don't actually recall it snowing there. One day it was reported that the temperature had reached -35 degrees F. When we walked outside our nose hairs instantly froze!
- Everyday life – how grateful we should be for the things we have: My husband and I have never traveled out of the country with the exception of Canada (we live near the border) and on a Caribbean cruise. It was such culture shock to see the way food (mainly meats) was sold at the markets. We came across live chickens to be sold and butchered at home. It was not

uncommon to see whole horse legs (I think they were horses) displayed for sale, baking in the hot sun. Everywhere we went, there were sun-dried fish, eyes and all. We often saw locals munching on them as they were shopping. Thank you for grocery stores and freezers! (McDonald's too!)

- During our trip to Aktau, it was not uncommon for us to be without clean running water for over a week at a time. If the water was clean, it was often cold. We would have to boil water to take sponge baths. If we had three days of hot water, we were lucky. Never take a hot shower for granted.
- Road conditions – In Aktau, the roads were horrible. Cars and taxis weaved in and out of oncoming traffic to avoid monstrous potholes. At times, I was even scared and had to close my eyes! I will never again complain of delays due to road construction.

Kazakh Kuties

Thanks to everyone who sent photos of their kids, both in the mail and via email! If your child's picture isn't featured in this issue, don't despair...we will be putting them in the next issue. Keep sending us your pics!

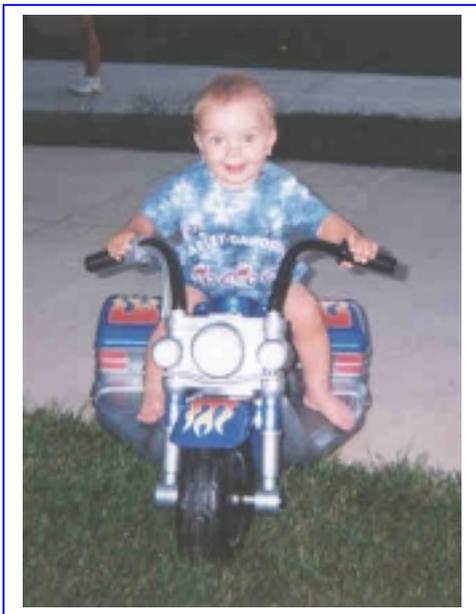


OK...I can almost hear the collective "Awww...isn't she cute!". Here is Karen Bushnell's beautiful Daughter Francis Camille. Francis was born on 1/28/01 and was adopted from Aktobe on 7/30/01.



It's the McKenzie Kids! Here are Zachary and Kaitlyn, both adopted from Kazakhstan. Zachary, who is now 3, was adopted 4/99 from Aktau. Kaitlyn was adopted from Ust-Kamenogorsk 12/00, and she is now 17 months old. Looks like she has no problem keeping up with her brother!

The Keilins adopted Max from Semey on 4/24/01. He was born 1/22/00. Max also has a sister Becca, adopted from Vlore, Albania. Sounds like The Keilin family are truly world travelers!



“Mad Max” on his motorcycle!
Check out the Keilin’s website at:
www.thekeilins.com

I am certain that there isn't a single person among us who isn't horrified and enraged about the terrorist acts that were experienced by our country this past week. It is my sincere hope that none of our readers has lost anyone in New York or in Washington DC, and that everyone and their families are safe.

It brings into sharp focus how fortunate we are to be Americans, doesn't it? While this tragedy is...even by other country's standards...monumental, one can't help but think how many people throughout the world live with this kind of thing happening around them on an almost daily basis.

I am grateful that this is not a daily occurrence for us, that we do not usually live in fear like this. I am grateful that our country and its citizens have such great strength of character. I am grateful that ALL who call themselves Americans, be they Black, White, Asian, Hispanic...and yes, even Middle Eastern...live in a free society where we can achieve anything we can dream of. For all the bickering that takes place between political parties, races, and religions, there is NO PLACE on earth where such a diverse population will stand together as one in a time of crisis such as we are experiencing right now.

And that is what makes ours such a great Nation.

Warmly,

Cindy La Joy

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