

HOPE HAPPENINGS

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

2001

Giving Back ~ By Bruce Regier

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How can we give back to the home country of our adopted child?

I think that the best way I can answer this question is to tell you about Brian McConaghy. He and his wife, Louise, are great examples of individuals who have given a lot back to Cambodia, the country where their son, Ian, was born.

Brian founded the Ratanak Foundation in 1991. This was even before he met Louise and long before the two of them considered adopting a child from Cambodia. Since marrying, Louise has done a considerable amount of work for the organization as well. One of the main goals of the foundation is to equip the people of Cambodia as they struggle to rebuild their country in the aftermath of communist oppression and civil war. The organization has invested considerable time and effort in understanding the tragedies that have been suffered by the Cambodian people and they have sought out the best agencies to work through; agencies that they believe truly

understand and love the people.

Currently the Ratanak foundation is involved in funding a number of projects including two orphanages, disaster relief in the form of food distribution, and a rehab program for children involved in prostitution. In the orphanages that the Ratanak Foundation helps to fund none of the children will likely be adopted. Instead, the goal is to provide them with good residential care and a solid

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education in their home country. The Foundation is also helping to fight poverty and disease in Cambodia by assisting to fund other economic development and health care projects.

Brian's work has been well recognized to the point that within the past year a documentary outlining his involvement in Cambodia was produced and aired on the Vision Network and the Knowledge Network. Also, in 1998 he was awarded a Governor General's Award for his humanitarian efforts in Cambodia.

Of course, not everyone has the time, energy or skill needed to start a foundation, let alone earn the Governor General's Award, but many organizations like the Ratanak Foundation are already in existence and need help from donors and volunteers like you. Organizations like the Nikki's Seed Society that has primarily been involved in caring for children who are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. Then there is the Canadian Foundation for the Children of Haiti whose goal is to improve the lives of Haitian children -"making a difference, one child at a time" by funding hospitals, orphanages, and community centers.

These are just a few examples of people doing exceptional work for the good of children around the world. If you would like to consider "giving back" to any of these organizations please call Hope Services and we will be glad to provide you with contact information.

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Paperwork and Intercountry Adoption

By Helen Mark, AFABC Intercountry Coordinator

This is an excerpt from the August/September, 1998 issue of Focus on Adoption.
For more information, contact the Adoptive Families Association of British Columbia (AFABC) at (604) 588-7300

Why is so much documentation and preparation required for Intercountry adoption?

“Families who give birth don’t have to go through all this preparation to become parents”, is a common complaint from prospective adoptive families. Perhaps birth parents should have compulsory preparation classes; however, the fact of the matter is they don’t, and the scrutiny and paper work that parents adopting overseas must go through can seem unfair. On the flip side, parents who adopted years ago when much less preparation and education was required tell us they wished they’d been better educated before proceeding. Experienced adoptive parents say they wished they’d read more, talked to more people who had done a similar adoption, knew more about community resources, had more personal resources and knew how to advocate on behalf of their children.

Seven years after adopting, no one says they were too well prepared for their adoption. Less than three years ago, a home study was the only form of education required for an Intercountry adoption, and in the early ‘90’s government safeguards were not in place to ensure that inappropriate families were not bringing children into the province.

It would be wonderful to report that all international adoption are successful, but this is not the case. So it’s important to listen and learn from those who have gone before. Canada ratified the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption in December, ‘96 (It came into force April, 1997), which has had a significant impact on adoptive applicants even when the child’s country has not signed the Hague. By signing the Hague, we as a province, promise to prepare a report on the applicant “including information about their identity, eligibility and suitability to adopt, background, family and medical history, social environment, reasons for adoption, and the characteristics of the children for whom they would be qualified to care”. This takes time, involves paper work and education of families. Some families may decide themselves that they’re not suitable candidates once they learn more about the process and the types of children available. Furthermore, by signing the Hague, we promise to collect, preserve and exchange information about the adoptive family and the child, again taking time and paper work.

As the parent of a young adult born overseas, I can attest to the importance of this step. Having little or no information about your child’s background in heartbreaking when they develop a need to know. Poorly prepared adoptive parents, who are disrespectful of the process, can jeopardize the adoptions of those following behind. Countries have closed their doors to Canadians because of complaining, demanding applicants. Korea closed its doors to Canadians partly because of negative publicity surrounding the adoption program around the time of the Korean Olympics in 1988. Part of any Intercountry preparation needs to include the importance of respecting the people and process in your child’s country. To most prospective applicants this is obvious, but now and then someone crosses the line, wiping out much of the positive work done by well-prepared, well-informed, respectful parents.

Many families take adoption preparation very seriously. Some families read several books on adoption, watch all the videos on Intercountry adoption, listen to audio-tapes and join a support group (if there is one) before they adopt. This is in addition to the preparation given by their agency or the Ministry for Children and Families. In the end, these families may have the fewest surprises and the most positive outcomes.

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ADOPTIVE FAMILIES ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Adoptive Families Association of British Columbia (AFABC) is a province-wide, non-profit society which offers information, support, and assistance to families and individuals involved in the adoption process. The organization serves the adoption community by providing up-to-date information through their magazine (Focus On Adoption), libraries and provincial office; by supporting local chapters throughout the province; by liaising with related groups at the provincial, national and international level; and by promoting adoption as a viable means of building families. The Association dedicates itself to children in need of homes, both here and abroad.

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HOPE HAPPENINGS

Hope Proudly Announces...

We are pleased to announce the following additions to Hope families since our last newsletter in March, 2001

Intercountry Adoptions

- ◆ Trent and Melissa, a girl, Daphne, born April, 1999, from Haiti
- ◆ Bert and Margaret, a girl, Yeshi, born June, 1993, from Ethiopia
- ◆ Mike and Heather, a girl, Kiara, born April, 2001 from the USA
- ◆ Travis and Mauni, a boy, Joel, born October, 1998 from Haiti
- ◆ Yvon and Angela, a girl, Olivia, born January, 2000 from China
- ◆ Danny and Anita, a girl, Nadine, born July, 2000 from Guatemala
- ◆ Luciano and Elspeth, a boy, Rory, born November, 1999 from Thailand
- ◆ Peter and Kathleen, a girl, Alexandra, born March, 2001 from Vietnam
- ◆ Grant and Jana, a boy, Jadden, born July, 1998 and a girl, Jenica, born August, 2000 from Russia

- ◆ Brad and Lauri, a girl, Emy, born February, 2000 from Haiti
- ◆ Cheryl, a girl, Julia, born April, 1996 from Vladivostock
- ◆ Jason and Eva, a girl, Jade, born May, 2000 from China
- ◆ Mike and Cheryl, a girl, Charmaine, born May, 2001 from Manitoba

Domestic Adoptions

- ◇ David and Meredith, a girl, Rebecca, born April, 2001
- ◇ Shawn and Denise, a boy, Jordan, born June, 2001
- ◇ Steve and Tina, a girl, Naysa, born August, 2001

Congratulations to all of the families and the new arrivals

Correction from the last newsletter

Frank and Verena, a BOY, Zerihun, born May 20, 1991, from Ethiopia
Apologies to Zerihun

Enduring The Wait

by Bob Smith, Social Worker
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Life would be pretty boring for all of us if we did not have special events to look forward to happening. But, it's just so hard to wait and wait and wait. I remember as a child the anticipation of the holiday season. It seemed like a magical time of year with the lights, the tinsel, the carols and most of all...the presents and gifts that I hoped to find under the tree on Christmas morning.

When I was a child I was under the distinct impression that somehow it would never get here soon enough. As the days slowly passed, mentally I'd note how many days were left until it would finally happen. As I recall, even when I marked off the days on the calendar, one by one, it didn't make things happen any sooner! At the most, it just represented how much time I had already put in. When Christmas finally arrived it seemed to flit by like a twinkling of an eye!

As I grew older I learned that the Greeks had a helpful way to conceptualize time, in the New Testament which was written in Koine or "Marketplace Greek". The first concept of time is represented by the word CHRONOS (which is the root worked for Chronological) meaning sequential time as the numbered days on the calendar. It is the term that one would use to say "we have been waiting for 12 months now and nothing seems to be working out!"

The second concept of time falls in the realm of being the "ordained moment" or the "right time" for an event to occur. The term used for this concept is KAIROS. In the context of New Testament writings it referred to what was being perceived as the divinely appointed or fulfilled hour for God's will to be realized. It occurs at just the right moment; not too soon and not too late. This time happens when it is "supposed to happen". It cannot be rushed or made to happen any sooner than it's suppose to. One might even say that it "takes its own sweet time"!

Folks who have been involved in the field of adoption are acutely aware that time can seem to take on a life of its own. Often even before arriving at the decision to pursue adoption, families have put in their "time" doing infertility work in the hope of being able to conceive their own child biologically. So, it's as if a great chronograph has been charting the days, months, and years already. Add to this the time, energy and money that is invested in exploring and educating oneself about the alternative of adoption and you realize there is another layer of time that has been consumed in the process. This is not even mentioning the period of time it takes to connect with a pregnant woman or birth couple and hope against hope that this is "finally going to work" and that it will culminate in the placement of an infant or child with the family seeking to adopt!

Thai Guests Shed Light On Thai Adoptions

By Lorne Welwood

In April, two special Thai guests came to BC in conjunction with a Family Thais adoptive families picnic in Abbotsford, hosted by Hope Adoption Services. Dr. Saree Chitinanda, president of Friends For All Children (FFAC) foundation and Saovane Nilavongse, the program director, run this organization, dedicated to the welfare of Thai children. It is also one of four Thai agencies authorized to arrange foreign adoptions. Established in Thailand in 1977, it charges no fees and supports all its programs by donations and fundraising. Although Hope is its most recent “registrant”, FFAC made 13 of its total 32 placements in 2000 with Canadians.

FFAC has two residential care nurseries, several daycare centers, education and feeding programs and other aid for children. A small number of its children are placed for adoption. It also handles adoptions from Agape Home, founded and operated by Avis Rideout of Newfoundland to care for the children of HIV-infected parents.

Both of our Thai guests have been involved with FFAC since its inception and are dedicated child advocates. Br. Chitinanda, a neonatologist and medical teacher, was honoured last year as Physician of the Year in Thailand. At a time when many people retire, she stopped in BC enroute to the US to take on the leadership of an international project on child abuse. Nilavongse, too, is a persistent and creative provider of services to needy children. During a recent heat wave, she apologized for a delay in completing adoption paperwork. It turned out that she couldn't get to her filing cabinets because she had moved the children's cribs into her office, where it was cooler.

As a result of the visit, Hope Services has a better understanding of Thai adoption procedures and how they are affected by culturally important factors, unwritten eligibility criteria, topics to emphasize in homestudies, and the importance of patience. North American “pushiness” in achieving goals is not appreciated there. We have modified our Thailand program and have developed suggestions for social workers preparing homestudy reports for that country. We also have a greater appreciation of the importance and role of Canadian donations in the welfare of the children being adopted as well as those remaining in Thailand.

Our guests appreciated this opportunity to increase their understanding of the setting and culture in which their children are coming to live. They met with representatives of the AFABC and the Ministry's Adoption Branch, and attended the Family Thais event the next day. Here they had time to interact with many of the children they had placed with BC families and see them with their parents and siblings.

We hope to visit them in Thailand so we can continue increasing our understanding of each other and improve the opportunities for their children and Canadian families.

continued from page 3 - Bob Smith “Enduring the Wait”

It is easy to become swept up in this peculiar time zone, which for lack of another term I will call “the adoptive time warp”. When you are in this space it seems as if everything is measured or conceptualized in relation to the “arrival” of the child. I suppose in some ways it is parallel to the experience that expectant parents have during pregnancy. However, often it seems that preadoptive folks feel as if they have less control and thus feel they are more vulnerable than folks that are pregnant. So, the waiting becomes ridden with anxiety.

The old adage, “A watched pot never boils” is of little or no comfort when it is you who is keeping the vigil. There is no way to avoid the reality of the wait however. How one chooses to understand, measure, or approach this period makes a big difference. It has been my experience that “CHRONOS” can at best only help measure how long you have waited already. It is a terrific tool organizationally and we'd be lost without it and it has its rightful place in our lives. However, I'd like to suggest that the approach of KAIROS is much more conducive to maintaining a modicum of balance and sanity in our lives in general and specifically in regards to negotiating the adoption experience emotionally than “watching the calendar and clock”.

It is perhaps humbling to see that at the most we can apply our best efforts, but, ultimately things will happen in their own “good time”. The acknowledgement that we are not in control can be demoralizing from one vantage point. However, seen from another place it can be an immense relief! Trusting that the process works and that it will work in your situation helps to put things in their rightful place in the overall scheme of life. Instead of focusing on what is missing, it can free us to celebrate what is present and to fully embrace whatever the future may have in store.

Do you have any ideas or articles you would like to see included our next newsletter? Do you have feedback you would like to share? Are you interested in writing an adoption relevant article? Please send any and all inquires to Hope Services at 604-850-1002 or email at hopeserv@telus.net