

AROUND THE WORLD

My wife and I accepted the assignment of two girls from India, ages seven and nine. The process took an unexpected nineteen months. Because I'm a career Air Force man, I am allowed to use military transportation on a "space available" basis. We planned that I would use this benefit to go to India to escort the girls home. We felt it would give me a chance to see India and would save us money on transportation fees.

On December 3, the girls' documents were finally in order. In preparation for the trip I planned to hand-carry a heavy suitcase that contained, among other things, a set of gaskets for a 1950 Ford, 100 ballpoint pens and paper. These items had been requested by Sister Mary at the orphanage.

Lois and I drove from Andrews Air Force Base, where we were stationed, to Dover, Delaware to check for "space available" from there to Europe. None was available, so we drove to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. There were no flights that day, but a possibility of some the next day, so I spent the night in transit quarters at McGuire, while Lois drove home. The next day, I caught a flight on a C141 to our base in Frankfurt, Germany. There I hit the first snag of many to come. The Leave Order I had was minus an authorization number and I was told I could go no further without that number.

Authorization was given to call back to the U. S. to get this number. It was verified and within three hours I left on a military flight to Madrid, Spain and on to Athens, Greece. I was feeling good about it because within 24 hours I had traveled all the way from the U.S. to Greece.

Well, that was where the fun started. It seems that about the time I arrived, the first bad winter storm was arriving in Europe. Most of the military flights from Europe to points east originate in Germany. Most of the planes were grounded as a result of the storms, and that left me stranded in Athens for several days. The first two nights were spent in hotels, the third in transit quarters on base, and a fourth in the passenger terminal. I was waiting for an incoming flight that was delayed, but finally left on that flight going to Adona, Turkey. I had been informed that flights left from there to Karachi, Pakistan which is close to Bombay where I wanted to go.

Things didn't go very well in Turkey. I spent three nights waiting for a flight to Karachi. The last night the flight came in at 1:00 A.M., but unfortunately was loaded with cargo, which meant I couldn't take the flight. I was so discouraged that I took a later flight back to Athens and decided to fly a commercial flight from there. I had checked on doing this from Turkey. Have you heard the saying, "You can't get there from here." Well, that's the way it was. I could not get a good commercial ticket from Turkey.

From Athens I flew directly to Bombay. I had originally planned to be in Bombay by the 8th of December, and it was not until the 13th that I arrived.

To my relief, I cleared customs easily. I immediately called Clarice D'Souza, who works with the agency from which we were doing the adoption.

Clarice had made arrangements for me to stay at a hotel. I caught a few hours sleep and proceeded to St. Theresa's Convent where the girls were being kept. My nerves were on edge. I was anticipating seeing the girls, but the unknown elements left me with a tinge of fear running through me. I was not sure how the girls would react.

When I got to the convent, I found they were expecting me. I was ushered immediately into the room where Sister Mary had the girls. All I had to do was to take one look at them. That's all it took, one look. All the 19 months that we had gone through, processing papers, letters back and forth, it was worth it. I held them in my arms and I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. We had a wonderful visit.

They brought out their school books and showed me the English words they were learning. They brought out the one small box which contained all their possessions and let me share it. I enjoyed the hours that we spent together so much that I cannot find the words to adequately describe it.

But I had to get to Bombay and make the arrangements to return home. I went to the home of Mr. D'Souza where I explained that I was running low in funds. He got me to the American Consulate and they contacted my squadron at Andrews Air Force Base to get me the money I requested. It took three days; during that time I visited the girls as much as I could.

When the money arrived, I went to the airport ticket office and there I hit several snags. I wanted to return to Athens, from Bombay, and catch a military flight home. Unfortunately, I found out it costs a great deal more to travel from Bombay to Athens than it does from Athens to Bombay. That fact I had not planned on when I requested my funds. There was no time to obtain additional money; I had to find an alternate route. Lo and

behold, I had enough money to take us to the Philippines. I knew we had a lot of bases in the Philippines, and I hoped we could catch a hop home from there.

Snag #2 surprised me somewhat. Indian law stated that in order to take the girls out of the country, I had to have tickets to their final destination marked on their visas. This was the U.S., the alternative to that was that I had to have a round trip ticket for them. That was so that if an emergency arose, and I could not take the girls all the way to the States, they could return to India. We solved the problem; I bought a one-way ticket for myself from Bombay to Manila and round-trip tickets for the girls from Bombay to Manila to Bombay. I had no intention of ever using those tickets for the return flight. On the 17th of December, the girls and I were on our way home.

I had several surprises on the airplane just watching my girls. They played with the overhead light switches and the ice cubes in the orange juice. They had never been around ice before, and they must have spent 45 minutes playing with those cubes. They made me appreciate things long taken for granted.

Then they had to go to the bathroom. I showed them how to lock and unlock the door and use the sink, but the surprise came when they had to be shown how to use the toilet. What they were used to was nothing like what we have in most countries.

I was a bit worried when we reached the Philippines. None of us had visas for there but the agent stamped our passports and told us to get on our way, and I was happy to do so. I heaved a sigh of relief when I found out that the nearest U.S. Airbase was Clark. I knew that if we were to get out of the Philippines, we had the best chance at Clark.

I couldn't make the girls understand that we were going to another airport to fly some more and they were scared.

In the morning, we tried to get airplane space on a military transport. It was a bad time because Christmas was only a few days away and there was a backlog of waiting people. We became numbers 76, 77 and 78 on "space available" to Travis AFB in California. I went ahead and signed up for Guam and Hawaii, also. It was the 18th of December and my leave was almost up. We spent the day waiting at the terminal. There were an Air Force Sergeant and his wife waiting there also, with some Thai children that they had adopted. The children all played together. They didn't speak the same language, but this was no barrier to play. It was wonderful to watch.

The Sergeant and his wife were almost out of money. I couldn't help them, as I was running short myself. The Chaplain on the base very kindly arranged a place for us all to spend the night. The next morning saw us back at the terminal. To my delight, the Sergeant, his wife and children, myself and our girls were all called for the flight to Guam. We reached Guam and spent the night at the home of the Sergeant (he was stationed there) and the next morning we were called for a flight to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. When we arrived, the crew had a 15 hour layover. I was broke. The Red Cross made arrangements for us to stay in quarters and lent us money for breakfast.

We finally took off for Travis AFB in California.

When we arrived, I called a friend who used to live next door to us at Andrews. Mike drove us to the airport at San Francisco. I was unable to take the girls on Air Force planes in the continental U.S. as dependent hops are not authorized inside the country.

Lois made arrangements for tickets for us, and we finally arrived in Washington, D.C. at midnight, at the exact time my leave expired!

Hey! Around the world is really the long way home...

eyes and in their faces I see the face of God. They are truly precious in every way.



YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH

There she is — a healthy active 6-month-old who wants her mother and doesn't want her spinach. We don't think about her tenuous start in life anymore, but we think about Cherie Clark every day.

We wanted a second child from the lovely part of the world that brought our daughter, Lara, to us from Bangladesh two years ago at age 2. Adoptions of Bengali children were no longer possible, so we looked west to India where one-seventh of the human race had to yield one child. We searched out many programs and even filed with some before we heard about I.M.H. - International Mission of Hope. We sent off our application, carefully stating that we wanted a toddler like our first child, one school-year younger than Lara. Soon Sally Clemens called to say that our application had been accepted but there was one problem - would we take an infant? One maybe three or four weeks old! Would we? Not only were we one of those adoptive families who didn't need an infant- we thought we didn't want one. When we had first begun looking into adoption, Bobbie Monahan had given us advice that we took to heart when she said, "Get a child at least one year old, for they're survivors." We subscribe to NEWS of OURS and we knew that these infants could weigh three pounds or less. We knew that a couple of them had died - and we knew too that Cherie had offered those families another child. Cherie's goal was to save lives; ours was to have a child. Would

we share her goal as she was sharing her love and care? Yes, we decided, we would.

So, the call came: "You have your assignment - twin boys- and they'll be there immediately because they're so small. Will you take them? We said yes, and thought of things like using both the names we couldn't decide between, how to finance all those college educations, where to get another crib. But within twenty-four hours another call came: "One of the twins has died" and then within another day, "The other boy is gone..." That call, thankfully, did not stop there, but went on to say that they had another child for us. She'd been born last week and her name was Faith - not the name we'd chosen but obviously one we wouldn't dream of fooling with!

She was coming and would be brought directly to Baltimore Washington Airport. We got a flight number, and then we got a telephone call. "Faith had made choking sounds and so had gone to the hospital rather than to the airport. She would come in a few days." A few days later we knew she was in the air but we didn't know where or when she would land. There was an airline strike in Delhi; there were connections in Frankfurt. We started calling random airlines that flew from India, asking about an escort whose name we didn't know. Finally, Kathy Hirsch, who coordinates east coast (our east coast, that is) escorts called to say Faith was coming and that she would call the next day with details.

It was a hard next day until the call came at 5:30 P.M. Faith had arrived in New York. Kathy would clear her through Immigration and take her to her home in Princeton, New Jersey. We drove off with the carseat and the Isomil, picked up our 5-week-old daughter and arrived back home with a very sleepy four-year-old Lara at 1:00 A.M. Two days later Faith had a fever and off we went to the doctor, traitorously thinking that if anything happened to

this baby, we would go to Cherie Clark again - but no way would we take one of her infants!

What happened to Faith was that she grew and prospered - kicked and screamed - smiled and cooed. She wore the hand-me-downs from a colleague at work who had had a preemie. Now she's very much a part of the family. Now, we know there's a lot of satisfaction, too, in parenting an infant. Now we've learned that there is something inside you waiting to be given to your second child.

Cherie Clark's children are vulnerable. At times the strain of waiting and the anxiety were almost unbearable but now, one of Cherie's babies is our beautiful daughter - beautiful and thriving! ... You gotta have Faith!

A LESSON IN BONDING

As I watch her dance across a room (as well as an 18-month-old can dance) or watch her charm strangers with her impish smile, last year's baby seems so far away. Yet there are memories and experiences that can never be erased nor should be; because these experiences have a special value. They are lessons in bonding between human beings and what the human mind and body derives from these attachments.

Faith was an IMH infant, one of Cherie Clark's babies. Her story appeared in last May's issue of FACE FACTS. Now a year or so later when I can look at things far more clearly, I see that Faith's story is not her own. It is the story of most infants that come from International Mission of Hope (Of course, there are exceptions to every rule!)

As we waited for Faith to arrive, we spoke to many friends and acquaintances about the arrivals of their infants and heard phrases like "no trouble at all" "adjusted so fast" and "sleeping through the night after the first couple of days."

None of these were IMH adoptions. Nowhere in anyone's vocabulary did those two ugly words rear their heads, words describing a condition that affects Cherie's babies so profoundly: MATERNAL DEPRIVATION. This refers to the absence of a primary caretaker and the warm relationship that goes along with this person. Most, if not all, of our

adopted children have suffered some degree of maternal deprivation. The IMH infant suffers complete deprivation. Abandoned at birth, in many cases the product of induced labor in the seventh or eighth month, and often unfed and clothed for the first 24 hours of life, these babies start life under the worst possible conditions. Even though they are hand fed, cuddled, loved by the ayahs (child care workers in India), at the IMH nursery shifts change and people come and go. There is no one face, voice or touch that the baby can depend on. Studies have shown that severe maternal deprivation can be a contributing cause of malnutrition. These babies will not develop well physically and mentally until the situation is remedied. This answers the question so frequently asked us, "Why does Cherie send the babies over so soon?"

Cherie's babies are survivors. They have survived the first few weeks of life without that primary caretaker; but when they begin to realize that such a person exists for them, their survival instincts intensify.

As I held Faith's five week old, five pound baby in my arms, I could feel the struggle, the reaching out for strength and the total reluctance to let go once she began to trust that I would stay with her.

Lara, our older daughter who is from Bangladesh, came at the age of two. I can remember her fear of losing us, her clinging because of that fear, but it never reached the intensity that Faith's clinging did. For the first several months, I was literally unable to put her down, except for the short periods during which she slept. Of course there were the feedings every two hours. By the time she was three or four months old, she wanted no one but me. No one else could comfort her. This condition was to last throughout the first year of her life. This kind of thing can leave one very tired and those around you very frustrated because of their inability to help.

From this strong bonding came growth in the form of astounding weight gains and physical and mental development at or above age level, but those early months were not easy ones!

Not all IMH families have such difficult first months, but many do. I have spoken to several of them and read stories about many others who have come to know the full value of IMH's advice to contact other IMH families in order to be fully prepared. Cherie's babies are different. They are babies who have all of the normal infant's needs and wants but these are intensified many times over. They need larger than usual doses of Tender Loving Care. It is this intensity that makes these babies different. Even people who have had lots of experience with infants find that psychologically these babies seem to require much more intensive mothering.

We have learned from our IMH adoption experience. It has reinforced our belief that every child needs a family to call his/her own. It reinforced the belief that all of us need to be touched, held and loved.

So, as I watch our beautiful, healthy, normal toddler perform her antics, as I receive her hugs and kisses or watch her wave me off to a FACE meeting from her father's arms, I realize that parenting one of Cherie's babies has done something for me besides giving me another wonderful daughter. It helped to teach me a little more about the human spirit and a very special type of bonding.

WARM WELCOME

Like most adoptive parents, I've received a few very special phone calls. There was the call, in December 1980, that told us that our agency had a baby girl from Korea for us. And there was the call, in early April 1981, that gave us the flight number and time to go to the airport. This past summer I was waiting for a call about someone else's adoption. Laurel Strassberger and I "met" when my article was in the January 1983 FACTS. We'd been writing to each other and she promised me that she'd call as soon as they had good news to share. So, in the back of my mind, I knew that someday I'd pick up the phone and it would be Laurel. I was looking forward to that call!!

However, it wasn't on my mind on July 15, 1983. We had a power blackout and it was just starting to get dark when the phone rang. I had no luck calling out and the phone didn't ring for hours before. The phone lines near us were down, so I was surprised to hear the phone ring. It was Laurel! The Strassbergers had just received word of their new daughter in Chile.

Now comes the frustrating part! My husband and my parents were also waiting to hear this, and I couldn't get a dial tone and call out. Marc wouldn't be home from work for several hours. I had to tell somebody or I'd burst!! So I decided to tell everyone on the street. Albacon Road is made up of young families — people from all different countries — Thailand, India, Israel, Cuba, Ireland, etc.

babies of their own in the running. We're very proud of both our girls and their relationship.

Our other reason to appreciate this little one's early days and months more is that we realize more than previously what a great privilege and gift a child is, the answer to prayers and dreams. Our first child arrived pretty much when we wanted her. Between children, we lost a pregnancy, spent two years in infertility treatment and another one and a half waiting to adopt, and we now know the pain of deprivation and uncertainty and the relief and joy of finally having that long yearned-for child.

During the months of our waiting, I could see no point in that painful process, but I now believe it did heighten our already great appreciation of parenthood. More importantly, we can now see that it put us in the right time and circumstances to become the parents of this particular child, and we can't imagine that it could have turned out otherwise.

KHOURANI

Jerry Schoenecker and I returned from India on November 9, 1983, following a two-week stay in that country for the Associated Catholic Charities International Children's Services Unit. The majority of our time was spent in Calcutta working with Cherie Clark, the Director of the International Mission of Hope, an organization which places infants and some older children for adoption in American homes.

Calcutta is a difficult place. The crowds one experiences in New York City at Christmas time approximate the press of humanity in Calcutta all year round. However, the people in New York gazing out the shop windows on Fifth Avenue are there by choice, usually well dressed, comfortable and imbued with the holiday spirit: Calcutta's crowds are of quite a different nature. There is untold desperation here - people lacking minimal creature comforts and in many cases lacking any hope of improving their situation. The estimate is that over one million people are homeless and sleep, live and function on the sidewalks of Calcutta. It is dusty - the air gritty - a cacophony of sound assaults the ears made up of blaring taxi cab horns, strident voices of sidewalk hawkers and the weaker voices pleading for money to be dropped in tin cups.

In the midst of this poverty and press, the International Mission of Hope holds its own, providing a clean, brightly lit and cheerful island.

Jerry and I visited there each day increasingly amazed at the heroic efforts of Cherie Clark and her staff. Sixty-two tiny babies were housed there that week in November, many already designated for U.S. families, others too ill to be assigned, others dying despite Cherie's care and tireless energy. These infants are considered "Khourani" in Calcutta - an Indian word meaning something you throw away. They are born in nursing homes in the city. Often this is a little more than a shelter in which a woman, usually unwed and poor, can give birth and then depart not without much anguish and desperate sadness, leaving her baby behind. This baby would die (and many did and still do) were it not for the I.M.H. The babies are collected and brought back to the center to begin the fight for survival. Not all make it. Some are too small (2 and 3 pounds); some are too weak, too tired to fight. But many of "Cherie's babies" do indeed survive and are escorted to waiting families in the U.S.

Jerry and I were privileged to escort four infants from Calcutta to New York. We arrived at the I.M.H. center early that last day to help in readying the babies for their departure. I.M.H. children are smaller than average U.S. infants and seem to be all eyes-watchful, wary. They are placed in baskets - two babies in each - dressed in sweater sets and wrapped in blankets made and sent by the anxious parents at home. We packed the formula and bottles and diapers; the medical records, the emergency medicine.

November in India is their winter and darkness falls quickly and thoroughly. As last minute preparations were made for our departure, the I.M.H. lights flickered and then went off, engulfing us all in total darkness. Barely missing a beat, Cherie's staff scurried about lighting candles, starting up the private generator, locating kerosene lanterns. A half hour later, the electricity was still off. Cherie's generator was struggling but unable to provide enough current. These "blackouts" are a

frequent occurrence throughout the city - one of the inconveniences Cherie has learned to cope with. Our way outside to the taxi was candlelit. We loaded into the car with the babies and all our gear; and our last view was of Cherie and the staff waving goodbye with one hand and holding lanterns in the other. Four more "khourani" had made it to become the beloved children of families all their own. We were humbled to have been able to have even a small part in the IMH/ACC work which takes place in Calcutta.