

THE SACRED PORTION CHILDREN'S OUTREACH *A Child Caring Ministry*

Spring 2007

*"And you . . . shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God has given you and your household. And you . . . shall say before the Lord your God, I have removed the sacred portion from my house, and have given it to . . . the orphan according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me . . . I have listened to the voice of the Lord my God."
Deuteronomy 26: 11, 12 & 14*

Our Mission



The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing for the needy children of the world who are without homes or families.

Formerly known in our community as Southwood Child and Family Education Center, the organization was directly involved for 22 years in the development and operation of an early childhood program. In 1997 the organization passed the care and continuation of that program into another's hands and the founders, Craig and Jan Druckenmiller, turned their hearts towards serving a more needy population of the world's children.

The organization, as part of its new mission seeks to assist facilities that care for orphaned and abandoned children in providing healthy, secure environments in which these children can grow and develop as normally as possible.

BEYOND THE VISION

BY JAN DRUCKENMILLER



Fe Canlas, the Deputy Administrator of the Rehoboth Children's Home, knows the stories of all of the children who have entered through its doors. She has been there since its inception when the Home first began receiving children in July, 2003. Joel was the first to arrive, followed by Lea and, sometime later, Jelly Rose. She supervised the care of these children from infancy to toddlerhood, making sure that they received the nourishment, medical attention and love that they needed in

order to thrive. As the months went by, Fe worked alongside the social worker to do the paperwork so that some day Joel, Lea and Jelly Rose could be adopted. It was a bittersweet experience for Fe when the day finally came for the children to leave with their adoptive families. She felt that her heart was torn out of her in letting go of these little ones whom she had mothered with all the love that was within her. And yet, she rejoiced over the hopeful future that lay before them.

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Joel, Lea and Jelly Rose all found homes in Australia. Their adoptive families have blessed Fe with continued communications, photos and updates on how their children are doing. These Australian families have also made an effort to visit one another periodically to keep the Rehoboth connection for their children. The families are quite spread out so that has been quite a commitment when living on a continent that is nearly as large as the United States!

In the fall of 2006, this Australian contingent began to plan a reunion for Rehoboth adopters. We were invited to attend, along with Fe. The details fell into place and we traveled from the Philippines with Fe, arriving in



Australia on March 25. Scott and Maggie Walters met us at the airport with their daughter and ex-Rehoboth child, Lea. Lea was a little tentative at first as she had been harboring some anxieties about "Mama Fe" taking her back to Rehoboth. Keeping Maggie always within her range of vision, Lea quickly warmed up to Fe. She expressed her delight over Fe's presence by ordering the seating arrangements in the car so that Mama Fe would always be next to her!

We had wanted to combine work with pleasure on this trip and hit the ground running with going directly from the airport to the Christian Reformed Church. There we did a power point



presentation on the Rehoboth Children's Home during the morning service which was followed by a barbecue at the pastor's house. We had numerous other opportunities during our time in Sydney and Melbourne to present the work of the Rehoboth Children's Home to small gatherings, churches and schools.

We gathered with the adoptive families for a weekend at a caravan park outside of Melbourne near the ocean. It



was a wonderful time of getting to know one another and exchanging stories and anecdotes about the children. Fe marveled at how much the children had grown and matured. I delighted in finally

being able to communicate with them. Joel, Lea and Jelly Rose had quickly picked up English whereas before they only understood Tagalog!

After our weekend with the adoptive families, we boarded a plane and flew from the eastern side of Australia across the continent to visit Bob and Barbara Morriss, the founders of the Rehoboth Children's Home. Bob and Barbara had toiled for many years to build the Rehoboth Children's Home, going back and forth between Australia and the Philippines. We came alongside them in 2001 and helped to bring the construction to completion. Once the construction phase of the Home was finished, Bob and Barbara returned to their home in Perth, Western Australia and handed the operation of the Home over to us. Neither we nor Fe had seen them in four years, so it was another joyous reunion. After the fast-paced itinerary we had experienced during the first part of our visit, we welcomed the rest and solitude that we found in Bob and Barbara's quaint, English-style "Wobbly Cottage." It was like old times, sharing devotions

together in the mornings, having tea in the afternoon and talking into the evening.

It had been Bob and Barbara's 50th anniversary shortly before we arrived in Perth and we had a special gift in store for them. Before leaving Montana, Craig had made a videotape in which he interviewed past work team members who had traveled to Rehoboth during the construction phase. There were many heartfelt expressions of gratitude from team members for the life-changing experiences that had been awarded them during their time at Rehoboth with Bob and Barbara. The videotape included interviews with the staff at the Rehoboth Children's Home, also



sacrifice for Bob and Barbara's children and grandchildren who missed them terribly during their absence. It was profoundly impacting for the whole Morriss family to see how the vision of a safe haven for destitute children in the Philippines had moved beyond the walls of the Rehoboth Children's Home, touching lives around the globe. Bob and Barbara are the most loving, giving and humble

people we have ever known. It was such a privilege for us to bless them in this way by placing before them a visual image of what had been wrought by their many years of faithfulness to the call that God had placed on their hearts.

While in Perth, we visited the family who had just adopted Shakirah, one of Rehoboth's baby girls. What a treat for Bob and

expressing their gratitude to Bob and Barbara for believing in them and including them in the vision of Rehoboth. In addition to the videotape, we shared our power point presentation which covered the history, present day operations and future vision for the Home. As one slide after another showed Rehoboth children in the arms of their adoptive families all over the world, Bob and Barbara were moved to tears. Tears also flowed from the eyes of their adult children who were in attendance at this gathering. It was an awakening for them to see the results of the sacrifice their parents had made in enduring months on end in another country and culture away from their family. It had likewise been a



Barbara to have a Rehoboth child in their own community! To see Bob down on his knees interacting with Shakirah and Barbara cuddling her was, once again, a striking image of Bob and Barbara's vision played out in the joy of family who had embraced one of Rehoboth's children as their own.

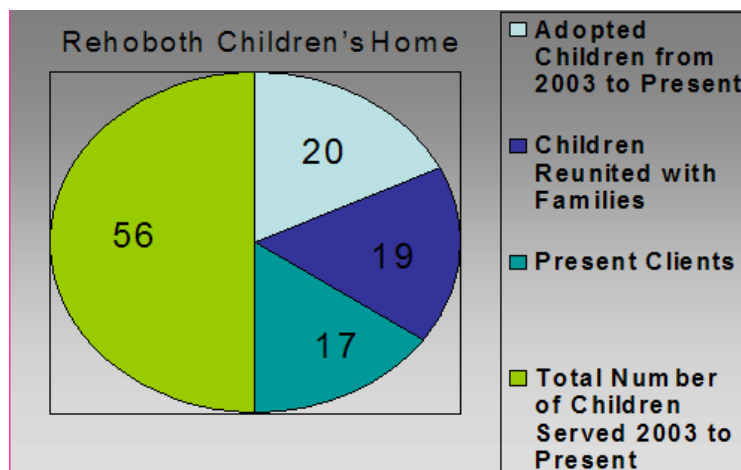
So much has been entrusted to us in carrying on the vision of Bob and Barbara Morriss. God has blessed these past four years greatly by keeping the children safe and well cared for, by putting in place the staff needed to adequately run the Home, and by providing a parcel of land upon which to expand the ministry of the Rehoboth Children's Home in the future.

Most importantly, we have adhered to Bob and Barbara's vision that the Rehoboth Children's Home would be only a temporary shelter for children who had been abandoned, surrendered or neglected by their birth parents. Too many children are growing up in orphanages without an alternative plan being made for their future. They suffer the effects of institutionalization and eventually age out of the system with no one to care for them and no place to call home. At Rehoboth, an intake plan is a discharge plan. In other words, from the time that a child comes through our doors, the wheels are set in motion to move the child on to a better life and a stable, secure future. In some instances, we are able to return a child to the birth family. But, in most cases, this plan usually entails moving the child's paperwork through the various channels to eventually clear them for adoption. A child's case is first presented at the local level and, if no match of a family is forthcoming, it moves on to international adoption. The



Rehoboth Children's Home is a small facility comparatively, caring for approximately 24 children at a time. Yet, in a little over one year's time, from October of 2005 until December of 2006, thirteen children were moved into adoptive families, either in the Philippines or another part of the world. Thus far, 2007 has seen an additional seven children leave for adoption. This is in stark contrast to some residential care facilities that place very few children, if any, for adoption because they lack the motivation, knowledge or resources to take on this task.

We are fortunate at Rehoboth to have an administrative staff committed to the rights of these children to have loving, permanent families and a social worker who grinds out the paperwork nonstop. To summarize the past four years of operation, the Rehoboth Children's Home has cared for a total of 56 children. Of these children, 19 were reunited with their birth families following intervention and 20 were placed for adoption in the Philippines, Australia, U.S., Canada, Spain, Finland and Italy.



A Portion of Love Child Sponsorship Program

It is critical for the Rehoboth Children's Home to develop a support base for the ongoing operation of the Home. While other types of contributions and gifts can be sporadic or seasonal, a sponsorship program provides a predictable and consistent income for the Home by which to meet the daily needs of the children for food, clothing, and medical care. In addition to providing a stable income base, the sponsorship program is an opportunity for others to become involved and have a role in providing love and care that can transform the life of a child. A child sponsor can be an individual or couple, a Sunday School class, youth group or civic organization. Once a sponsor is matched with a child, they will receive a description of their child and how he or she came to be at the Rehoboth Children's Home. Regular updates and pictures will be provided throughout the year. Sponsors will have the opportunity to send letters, cards and small gifts to their sponsored child.

The sponsorship amount is \$25 per month. Since it costs more than \$25 per month to provide for the many needs of a child at the Rehoboth Children's Home, a sponsor's gifts will be combined with others to form an extended family of support for their sponsored child.

If you are interested in becoming a child sponsor through the PORTION OF LOVE sponsorship program, please complete the form below and return it to us at the Sacred Portion Children's Outreach.

Yes, I would like to sponsor a child for \$25 per month.

*Enclosed find my first payment of
\$ _____ to cover _____ months.*

*I cannot become a sponsor at this time, but I would like to make a contribution of
\$ _____ .*



Name (please print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Make checks payable and mail to: The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach
7104 Bristol Lane
Bozeman, MT 59715

All contributions are tax-deductible



Philippines
3

Spain
1

Canary
Islands
1

Italy
1



United States
3

Canada
3

Finland
1

Australia
4





We are respecting the rights of two of the families who adopted locally within the Philippines to remain anonymous.



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Rehoboth's original three babies in July, 2003



The case load of the Home three years later

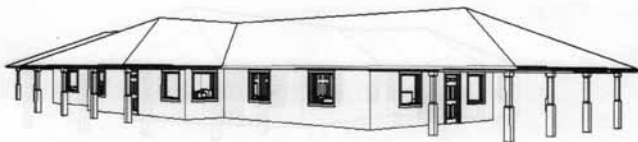
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The Rehoboth Expansion Project Update

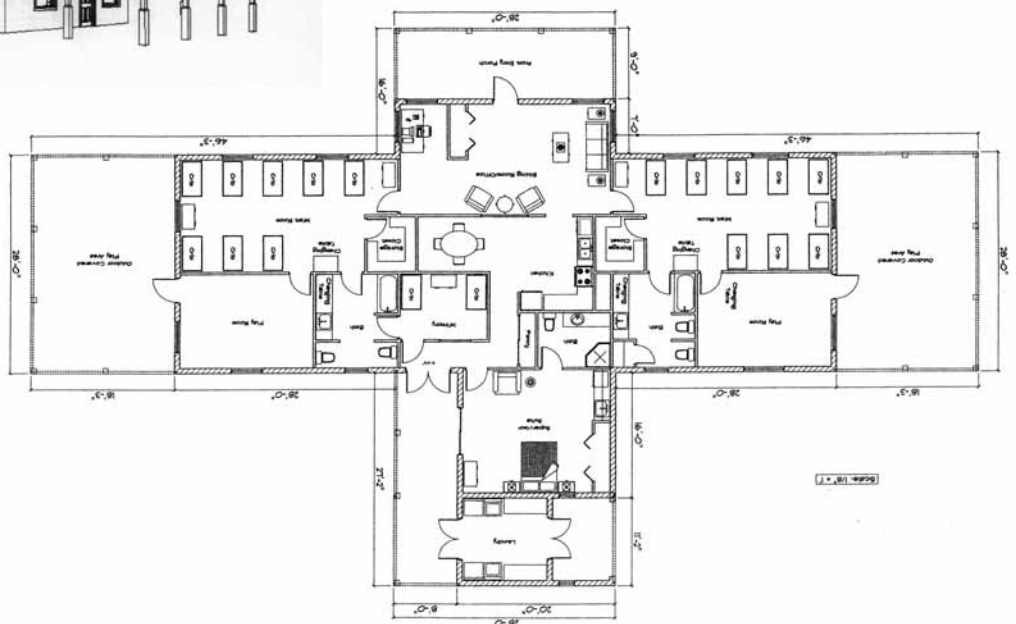
In March we made the final payment on 2.2 hectares of land located directly across the road from the present facility. This is a very large piece of ground (5 acres) and holds much potential for expanding the services of the Rehoboth Children's Home. Our first priority is to build **Bonnie's Heart Baby Home** so that we can serve more children. Beyond that, we have lots of other ideas as to how this parcel of land could be used. We would like to develop some agricultural and commercial ventures to help the Home develop a degree of self-sufficiency. A clinic, battered women's shelter and an education/vocational training center are goals for the future in providing support and help to people in the community of Sampaloc. It is very important to us that we be good stewards of what God has provided. Thus, we feel the need to put a great deal of forethought and planning into this project before moving forward. We recently submitted an application to Engineering Ministries International. This organization (EMI) is a non-profit Christian development organization made up of architects, engineers and design professionals who donate their skills to help children and families around the world step out of poverty and into a world of hope. If our application is accepted, we hope to be able to meet with an EMI team sometime next fall in the Philippines. EMI's team will develop a site plan that will incorporate our ideas and future vision for Rehoboth. The project will be phased so that we have a comprehensive plan for the use of the land but can proceed with small steps as God directs us. Our commitment to EMI will be to provide two weeks of food, lodging and in-country transportation for the team, as well as the cost of one international airfare for the staff project leader. The rest of the project costs (approximately \$55,000 US) are covered by EMI, including salaries, travel, design costs and project overhead. What a blessing this will be to have the help of professionals in translating our ideas into a workable plan at very little cost to us. We will, of course, need to raise the funds for the actual building costs. Please pray with us that EMI will agree to take on our project. Since 1981, they have completed over 500 relief and development projects in nearly 75 countries. From looking at their web site, our project would be their first one in the Philippines!

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."

Luke 14: 28 - 30



Schematic Drawing of
Bonnie's Heart Baby Home
by Mike Westfall of
Interior Dimensions
Bozeman, MT



The Wambekes are our first Summer Miracles 2006 family to return from the Philippines with their children. Tina Wambeke arrived home with Anna Joy, Ariel and Christine on May 12. The paperwork process takes about eight months from the time the kids leave at the end of the summer program. We currently have two families in the Philippines, two families in Colombia and two more families scheduled to travel to the Philippines within the next few weeks. It's exciting to finally reach this point where the children come home for good.

As our Summer Miracles 2006 children begin to trickle home, we are gearing up for another group of children to arrive on July 1st for Summer of Hope 2007. Yes, we have changed the name for various reasons and we like it! This year is unique in that we have expanded the summer program to two new communities - Billings, MT and Boise, ID. We have a coordinator in each of these communities running the show. A total of 15 children will be participating this year with seven of those children coming to Bozeman, four children going to Billings and four to Boise. Consequently, the programs in each community will be small this year, but we consider that to be best for just starting out in these new locations.



We are very excited to be bringing to Bozeman a sibling

SUMMER MIRACLES 2006

group of three from our very own Rehoboth Children's Home. This will be the first time that children from Rehoboth have participated in the summer program. We hope to include more in the future. Rommel, age 9, Romella, age 8, and Racquel, age 4, will be hosted by Eric Lindeen and Anna Graham. We love this sibling group and look forward to having them here in Bozeman for four weeks.

The children are accompanied by escorts who travel with them from the Philippines. This year we will have an escort going to each of our three communities. One of the escorts who was slated to come to Montana was informed by her doctor recently that she should not travel due to her pregnancy. A replacement needed to be found quickly and it needed to be someone who already has a passport as there is not time at this point to go through the passport process. The Intercountry Adoption Board of the Philippines was aware that Fe Canlas, our Deputy Administrator at the Rehoboth Children's Home, has a passport as she traveled to Australia with us in March. So, she has been

SUMMER OF HOPE 2007



The Wambeke Family

selected as the escort replacement. Now we are doubly excited to have both the Chato siblings and Fe coming to Montana for Summer of Hope 2007!

We are no longer working with Kidsave International but hope to develop our own program with Colombia by 2008. Ramona Linabary and Jenny Mead, moms who are currently in Colombia finalizing their adoptions, are using this opportunity of being in the country to scope out the possibility for us. They have developed relationships with some people who have paved the way for them to meet with officials from the branch of the Colombian government that oversees children's services. We are praying that Ramona and Jenny will be able to make some headway with this.



THE FACES OF SUMMER OF HOPE 2007



From the Philippines



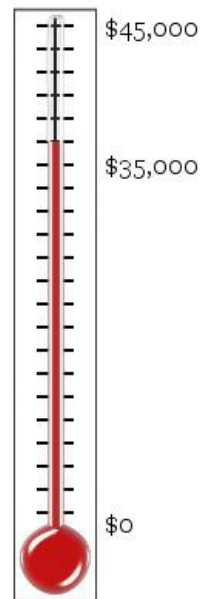
\$\$ = KIDS

Each of our Summer of Hope communities must raise the funds to cover the cost of bringing the children. This includes the airfare of the children and escorts, medical insurance, summer activities and other costs involved in running the summer program. Each community has planned a Hope Walk as their main fundraising event during the month of June. Each host family forms a team and other community teams participate as well. The teams solicit pledges for the Walk working towards the goal of raising \$3,000 per child. All total, the three communities must raise \$45,000.

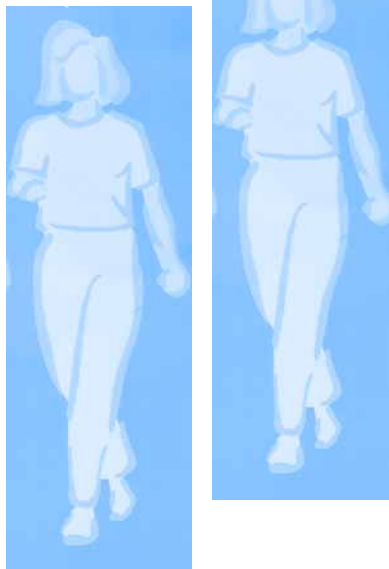
Help us achieve our fundraising goal to bring the children for **Summer of Hope 2007.**

It will be money well spent to give the kids a summer of fun and a chance to find a permanent, loving family. Checks can be made payable to Summer of Hope and sent to:

The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach
7104 Bristol Lane
Bozeman, MT 59715



Or make your contribution on-line by going to www.summerofhope.org.



Thank you for your support!

We will be acknowledging all of our contributors to Summer of Hope and the Hope Walk in our next newsletter.

VICTOR



Victor is a 15 year old boy who participated in the summer program of 2006. Victor had a very good hosting experience and his host family very much wanted to adopt him. They began moving in that direction but circumstances are such that they will not be able to complete their adoption of Victor. Victor will be turning 16 on November 25, 2007. At that point he will “age out” and no longer be able to be adopted according to the Philippine government and U.S. immigration laws. Time is running out and we would like to see Victor find a home. We are looking for a family who has a current home study completed or who would be able to move very quickly on the paperwork

that is required. Please contact us at The Sacred Portion Children’s Outreach at **(406) 586-5773** if you know of a family who might be able to give Victor a home. The orphanage prefers to have Victor placed in a Christian family.

More About Victor:

Victor came to live at the Children’s Shelter of Cebu on June 17, 2003. He had a very difficult life before coming to CSC. His father is dead and his mother was unable to care for him. He and his brothers earned a living by rummaging through garbage for bottles and other saleable items. They would go door to door in search of things that people wanted hauled away or other errands to do.

Victor talks openly about his past and the hardship he endured. In spite of this, he is a very laid back boy who doesn’t get into any conflicts. He just takes life day by day as it comes and seems to love living at CSC. Victor always tries to do what is right. He has a gentle spirit and makes good choices. He loves basketball and outdoor activities although his temperament (rather passive) sometimes works against him when playing sports. Victor’s self-esteem, which was non-existent when he first came to CSC, is now more evident. He is proud of himself when he does something well and always has a ready smile. The staff at CSC have been working with Victor to help him overcome his fear of failure and to challenge himself more.

Victor is behind for his age in school due to the fact that he had never been exposed to schooling before coming to CSC. He is inquisitive and is not afraid to ask questions when he does not understand something. He has shown interest in learning new things. He behaves in class and shows respect to his mentors.

Victor is a wonderful young man who needs the consistent and loving support of a family to help him reach his full potential.

Victor’s host family will be happy to provide more information about Victor’s personality and temperament and their experience of having him in their home.



THE BROKENNESS OF CHILDREN

This will be our fifth summer in bringing older orphans to our community in hopes of finding them families. In running the Summer of Hope program, we have learned a lot about the brokenness of the children whom we strive to help. In the beginning, we were filled with passion for this part of our ministry, eager to rescue as many children as we could and place them into the arms of a loving family. We were thrilled at the success of the program with over 80% of the children participating each year finding a home. Today, our passion has cooled somewhat. We have come to recognize that, as much as families want to help these children by adopting them, and as much as the children desire to have a family, sometimes the brokenness that they bring with them prevents a successful adoption. In the latter part of 2006, we saw two of our summer program families from past years reach a point in their adoption journey where they could not go on. These families had given it their all in terms of counseling, therapy and love. Yet, they could not seem to move beyond the damage that had been done in these children by their early experiences of abandonment, abuse and neglect. Added to that was the negative impact of institutional living. Then, in 2007, we saw a third family disrupt. Although a successful adoption in terms of bonding and attachment, an unforeseen situation arose that left no choice but to bring this adoption to an end. Our hearts were crushed as we saw these families topple. Emotional and financial devastation were the remains of their years of effort. We have learned that, despite our passion for rescuing children, a family cannot sacrifice itself for the sake of a child. We have learned that some children may be too broken and cannot be healed. We have learned that love is not enough. There have been moments when we have questioned whether we should even continue doing the summer program. But the conviction has remained that we must not give up the cause. We know what God's heart is for the orphan and that we are called to care for the "fatherless." Our naive passion has matured into a more realistic understanding of what that calling entails. We have come to recognize that adopting an older child is like a mission field within the walls of your home. It can be fraught with as many dangers as hacking your way through a jungle. And sometimes, when the way becomes too difficult and strength and endurance run out, it becomes necessary to pack it up. Yet, we will continue to invite people to this mission field. Just as God needs missionaries to go out into the world, He also needs people who are willing to take on the challenge of embracing children who may not be capable of loving, who may not be able to trust, who may lack the ability to form relationships, who may not follow rules, and who may not be able to see or understand anything but their need to survive. The families who sign up for this adoption "mission field" need to be well equipped for the challenges they face and must be supported during their days, months and years of struggle. We must do more to help families be successful in their adoptions. They need access to resources, counseling and therapy which may involve reaching outside of our community and state for the right kinds of services. They need on-going support through contact with other adoptive families and parent support groups. They need financial assistance to be able to afford the measures that it sometimes takes to help a child heal. Above all, they need prayer. A list of symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder created by the secular world does not address the spiritual plane where the battle rages for these children's souls. Obviously, we are limited in our ability to provide all that these families need. But we can strive to develop a more comprehensive network of support and help for adoptive families of older children. This is a goal that we will be working on conjointly with the summer program as we continue our efforts on behalf of older children who need families.

Please pray with us for the healing of the families who have suffered much in their efforts to save a child. Pray for the children, that their brokenness will be healed. We do not know the end of the story for these children and must continue to hope. We trust that God has His hand upon them.

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

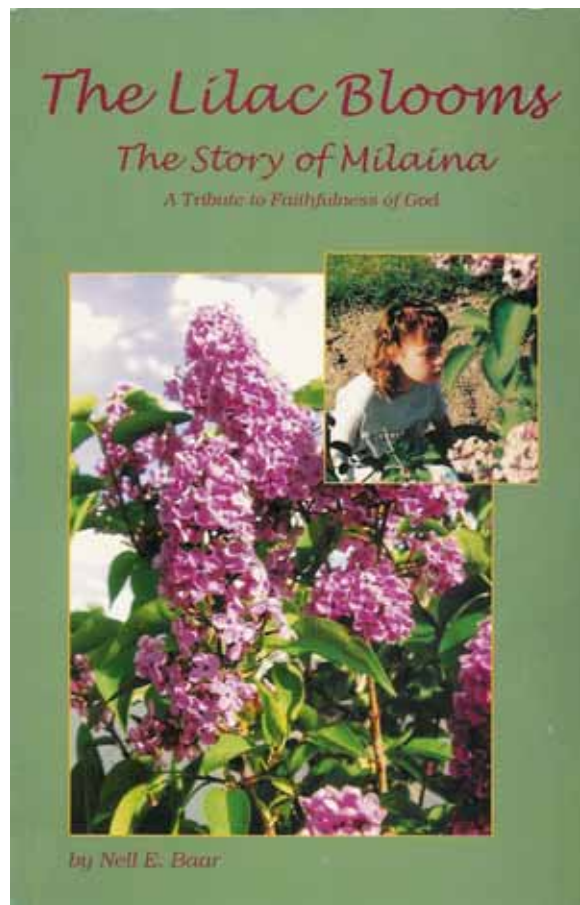
Psalms 34:6

In The Lilac Blooms, Nell Baar tells the story of her family's adoption of Milaina, a nine year old girl living in an orphanage in Albania. At the time of her adoption, Milaina was non-verbal and unsocialized - a result of environmental impoverishment. Milaina had been neglected for so long, the Baar family wondered if the damage was reversible and if Milaina could be restored. They clung to God's promises for healing and acted on that faith. Surgery for a congenital dislocated hip, speech therapy, occupational therapy, therapeutic recreation, and special tutoring were all part of the journey to bring Milaina towards healing and restoration. Today, as the lilac blooms, so does Milaina.

The author, Nell Baar, is a resident of Amsterdam, Montana. She says, "The journey of writing Milaina's story has been huge. God has made me so aware of stuff...things...Him. For instance, we ate at a Chinese restaurant yesterday and the saying in my fortune cookie was, 'Do you see the difficulty behind the opportunity or the opportunity behind the difficulty?'" Usually, I forget



the fortune cookie before I am out the door. But, from the beginning, the Milaina journey has been one of seeing the difficulties *and* the opportunities. I rejoice that we were not willing to be swayed by the difficulties we anticipated because we would have missed the blessing.



The Lilac Blooms can be purchased for \$12.00 by contacting Nell Baar at (406) 282-7933 or e-mail at ronandnell@hotmail.com.

The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is now a **child placing agency** licensed by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. We are able to do home studies for Montana residents who wish to pursue either a domestic or international adoption. The home study is the first step in the adoption process. It involves education and preparation for adoption as well as the gathering of information about the prospective parents. If you are just beginning to think about adoption and would like to learn more, you can contact us to receive an adoption information packet.

Call (406) 586-5773 or e-mail at sacrdportion@theglobal.net
(please note that the missing "e" in sacred is not a mistake!)

Visit our web site at www.sacredportion.org

POSITION AVAILABLE

The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach is looking to hire a new **Administrative Assistant** effective July, 2007. This person assists and supports the Executive Director in the development and implementation of all activities of The Sacred Portion Children's Outreach related to its mission and focus areas. The position is approximately 10 hours per week and pays \$10 per hour. Benefits are not available at this time. Although the pay is not commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position, there is a great reward in being involved in the work of a ministry that blesses God's heart. If interested, call Jan at **(406) 586-5773**.

The Suitcase by the Door

In May, we conducted a 10 hour training session for our Summer of Hope families to prepare them for their hosting experience. The social worker/trainer shared this vignette during the training. Using the analogy of a marriage relationship, it is a poignant illustration of the immense loss that a child can experience in being separated from his birth family. After a period of adjustment, the orphanage eventually becomes the child's home where he settles in to some level of security and comfort and forms relationships with his caregivers. That security is once again disrupted when the child is whisked away to a country where all is strange and unfamiliar. We speak in terms of "forever" families and permanent homes, but some children may have a difficult time believing that they are "home for good." Adoptive families must be sensitive to the insecurities that their adopted children may have, their inability to fully trust their new situation and the anger that they may feel over the losses they have experienced. This story was written by *Cynthia Hockman - CHUPP*. For the purpose of this newsletter, we have taken the liberty of changing the title to "The Suitcase by the Door."

Imagine for a moment....

You have met the person you've dreamed about all your life. He has every quality that you desire in a spouse. You plan for the wedding, enjoying every free moment with your fiancée. You love his touch, his smell, the way he looks into your eyes. For the first time in your life, you understand what is meant by "soul mate," for this person understands you in a way that no one else does. Your heart beats in rhythm with his. Your emotions are intimately tied to his every joy, his every sorrow.

The wedding comes. It is a happy celebration, but the best part is that you are finally the wife of this wonderful man. You fall asleep that night, exhausted from the day's events, but relaxed and joyful in the knowledge that you are next to the person who loves you more than anyone in the world...the person who will be with you for the rest of your life.

The next morning you wake up, nestled in your partner's arms. You open your eyes and immediately look for his face.

But IT'S NOT HIM! You are in the arms of another man. You recoil in horror. Who is this man? Where is your beloved?

You ask questions of the new man, but it quickly becomes apparent that he doesn't understand you. You search every room in the house, calling and calling for your husband. The new guy follows you around, trying to hug you, pat you on the back...even trying to stroke your arm, acting like everything is okay.

But you know nothing is okay. Your beloved is gone. Where is he? Will he return? When? What has happened to him?

Weeks pass. You cry and cry over the loss of your beloved. Sometimes you ache silently, in shock over what has happened. The new guy tries to comfort you. You appreciate his attempts, but he doesn't speak your language - either verbally or emotionally. He doesn't seem to realize the terrible thing that has happened...that your sweetheart is gone.

You find it difficult to sleep. The new guy tries to comfort you at bedtime with soft words and gentle touches, but you avoid him, preferring to sleep alone, away from him and any intimate words or contact.

Months later, you still ache for your beloved, but gradually you are learning to trust this new guy. He's finally learned that you like your coffee black, not doctored up with cream and sugar. Although you still don't understand his bedtime songs, you like the lilt of his voice and take some comfort in it.

More time passes. One morning, you wake up to find a full suitcase sitting next to the front door. You try to ask him about it, but he just takes you by the hand and leads you to the car. You drive and drive and drive. Nothing is familiar. Where are you? Where is he taking you?

You pull up to a large building. He leads you to an elevator and up to a room filled with people. Many are crying. Some are ecstatic with joy. You are confused. And worried.

The man leads you over to a corner. Another man opens his arms and sweeps you up in an embrace. He rubs your back and kisses your cheeks, obviously thrilled to see you.

You are anything but thrilled to see him. Who in the world is he? Where is your beloved? You reach for the man who brought you, but he just smiles (although he seems to be tearing up, which concerns you), pats you on the back, and puts your hand in the hands of the new guy. The new guy picks up your suitcase and leads you to the door. The familiar face starts openly crying, waving and waving as the elevator doors close on you and the new guy.

The new guy drives you to an airport and you follow him, no knowing what else to do. Sometimes you cry, but then the new guy tries to make you smile, so you grin back, wanting to “get along.” You board a plane. The flight is long. You sleep a lot, wanting to mentally escape from the situation.

Hours later, the plane touches down. The new guy is very excited and leads you into the airport where dozens of people are there to greet you. Light bulbs flash as your photo is taken again and again. The new guy takes you to another guy who hugs you. Who is this one? You smile at him. Then you are taken to another man who pats your back and kisses your cheek. Then yet another fellow gives you a big hug and messes your hair.

Finally, someone (which guy is this?) pulls you into his arms with the biggest hug you’ve ever had. He kisses you all over your cheeks and croons to you in some language you’ve never heard before.

He leads you to a car and drives you to another location. Everything here looks different. The climate is not what you’re used to. The smells are strange. Nothing tastes familiar, except for the black coffee. You wonder if someone told him that you like your coffee black.

You find it nearly impossible to sleep. Sometimes you lie in bed for hours, staring into the blackness, furious with your husband for leaving you, yet aching from the loss. The new guy checks on you. He seems concerned and tries to comfort you with soft words and a mug of warm milk. You turn away, pretending to go to sleep.

People come to the house. You can feel the anxiety start to bubble over as you look into the faces of all the new people. You tightly grasp the new guy’s hand. He pulls you close. People smile and nudge one another, marveling at how quickly you’ve fallen in love. Strangers reach for you, wanting to be a part of the happiness.

Each time a man hugs you, you wonder if he will be the one to take you away. Just in case, you keep your suitcase packed and ready. Although the man at this house is nice and you’re hanging on for dear life, you’ve learned from experience that men come and go, so you just wait in expectation for the next one to come along.

Each morning, the new guy hands you a cup of coffee and looks at you expectantly. A couple of times the pain and anger for your husband is so great that you lash out, sending hot coffee across the room, causing the new guy to yelp in pain. He just looks at you, bewildered. But most of the time you calmly take the cup. You give him a smile. And wait. And wait. And wait.



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