



Our Story

By Robert, Julia & Natali

In August of 2004, after going through a third failed Invitro procedure, Rob and I decided we needed to take our next step towards realizing our dream of being parents. As disheartening as the third failed attempt was, we knew we were supposed to raise children together – we just had to find the way to have a child.

We contacted Hands Across The Water, and scheduled our first meeting with them. While waiting in the lobby, we looked at the World Map on the wall, and all of the pictures of adopted children from around the world. We both immediately felt a sense of relief and felt an answer to our ongoing question (Will we ever be parents?) was finally answered.

We met with Theresa Light, talked through the program, heard her personal story, and felt excited. Theresa asked us which country we wanted to adopt from, and for no given reason, we both said “Russia”.

We delved into our home study process, started saving our dollars, and felt anticipation and excitement for the things to come. After successfully completing our home study, we began the paperwork chase in building our dossier for Russia. All the time in our head we knew what the payoff was going to be. No matter how many times we drove to Lansing for the “Seal”, or how long we waited for Homeland Security fingerprinting, we were content to know at the end of the journey we would be parents.

We filed our dossier, and waited for news. We jokingly had said our luck would put us in the middle of Siberia in the winter, and sure enough, our referral town was in the middle of Siberia, and based on the average process time, we would be going there in the middle of winter. We bought books on the Russian alphabet, and basic tapes on pronunciation. We bought travel guides to Russia as well as Mongolia, as it was a border country. I kept thinking of all of the warm clothes I was going to need, and kept waiting for our referral.

Two months later, a nationally reported child abuse case indicated that the 2-year old was an adopted child from Russia. She had been killed at the hands of her adoptive mother. Calls were placed to the agency for assurance that this was not going to change where we were in the process. To the best of their ability, they tried to assure us, but within the week, Russia had “shut down” indefinitely.

We were forced to make a decision on whether to wait for Russia to reopen, or change countries. The wait for Russia could be six months or it could be six years. No one knew what to expect.

It was suggested that Kazakhstan would be a comparable country to work with. Rob and I decided to forgo our referral from Russia, and pursue a referral from Kazakhstan. Back to dossier building – all the while knowing that the payoff was going to be great. A completely new dossier had to be built, and we went after it with a vengeance.

The day we were set to send the dossier to Hands Across The Water for review, I kid you not, we were called and told that Kazakhstan was following Russia’s lead and not accepting any new dossiers until the process had been re-examined. Two months of work and paper chasing were now put on hold indefinitely.

It was suggested that we select China or Guatemala as our new country. Given that no real news had been received indicating when Russia was opening up, Kazakhstan was just as stalled. Rob and I were going out of town for the weekend, so I told them we would talk about it, and let them know the following week.

As we spent our weekend in Denver, we talked and decided that maybe Guatemala was our destiny. We decided that we weren't afraid of chasing paperwork down, so we should just start down the path towards Guatemalan adoption. It was a somewhat easy decision, and at no time did we feel sorry for ourselves – we just wanted to know what we had to do next.

I got back into my office Tuesday morning, and before my first cup of coffee, Theresa called and said a referral had been received by HATW for an older child (2 ½ years), and that if Rob and I wanted to accept, we had first choice. I asked Theresa to email me any pictures she had, and Natali's beautiful face appeared on my computer. We immediately said "YES!!!" and went to work on our THIRD dossier.

Natali came home 7 ½ months later. During the filing process, Guatemala "fired" all of its PGN lawyers and hired all new ones with no experience. This delayed our process by maybe 2 months. We visited her 3 times, and on our 4th trip, brought her home.

If we had waited for Russia or Kazakhstan, or not been able to change our mind, we would have missed out on a child that has transitioned into our home flawlessly. She is happy, smart, funny, beautiful and loving. We are truly blessed with her as our daughter.

God meant for Rob, Natali and I to be a family – we just had to go down a couple of different paths to be ready for each other. Hope and excitement were always the primary feelings felt. This process can definitely teach you that patience is a virtue – and greatly rewarded in unimaginable ways!