



## OUR CHINA ADOPTION

By Randy Lynch, Kipling & Clark

My wife, Beverly, and I decided to adopt a baby from China in February, 2000. We chose to adopt from China for several reasons. As a result of my academic background and many years of focusing on the Pacific Rim in the travel industry, I had developed an intrinsic interest in Asia. In addition, my wife and I have friends in New York that were facilitators for Chinese adoptions. Working through them we felt comfortable with the entire adoption process in China. With all things considered, it seemed logical, and almost preordained that we adopt a baby from China.

From the day we started our paper work documentation to the day we departed for China, a full seventeen months transpired. About four weeks before our departure we were sent a picture of the baby girl we were assigned. Her Chinese name was Mei Qao Guo, and she was born 9/14/2000. September 14th is also our wedding anniversary, as well as the day after my birthday—a propitious sign! We decided to name our daughter Zennia, with a nickname of Zen. A friend suggested the name of the flower "Zinnia". We liked the name but changed the spelling to "Zennia" to evoke the spirit of her Asian Heritage. Zennia was abandoned the day after her birth at the Zhanjiang Hospital in Zhanjiang City. Zhanjiang is located across from Hainan Island in southwest Guangdong Province.

Once we received our final papers and interview dates with the U.S. Consulate in China, we flew directly to Hong Kong then transferred by train to Guangzhou. We would spend a total of five days in Guangzhou before leaving with Zennia.

Because of its location adjacent to the U.S. Consulate in the Shamian Dao Island section of Guangzhou, the Four Star White Swan Hotel is truly the epicenter of adoptive parents' activity in China. Every morning, at the lavishly prepared breakfast buffet, one sees dozens of new adopted Chinese babies with their proud American parents. It's a unique experience to witness this wonderfully positive group dynamic.

Shamian Dao Island itself was a blessed retreat from the hectic intensity of other areas of Guangzhou. The island became a British and French concession area after China's defeat in the Opium Wars. Many dilapidated colonial buildings in the area are being re-furbished to their original character. Despite the stifling air pollution, it's still a fascinating area to wander around from the hotel.

Being July, we expected hot, sultry weather. The level of air pollution, however, was more severe than any other Chinese or S.E. Asian city we have visited. The combination of an ever increasing number of auto traffic and industrial wastes mixed with the hot, humid climate made any sort physical activity a major effort.

We were told by our facilitator that we would be introduced to Zennia the day following our arrival. However, after checking in at the hotel and starting to unpack, we heard a knock at the door of our room - THERE WAS ZENNIA! To our total surprise, the local facilitator had arranged for Zennia to be delivered to us a day early. Both Bev and I had talked about the possible emotional reaction to first seeing and holding our newly adopted daughter. The reality of meeting Zennia, however, was surreal - no big emotional outburst. We were simply transfixed by this once in a lifetime experience. Although Zennia was ten months old, she was extremely tiny and cried with a weak voice. The combination of being raised in an orphanage and being fed formula of rice milk with sugar had given her a fragile and weak appearance. Despite her impaired condition, Zennia beamed an infectious, beautiful smile. It truly was love at first sight.

After finalizing all of Zennia's documentation with the U.S. Consulate, we arranged for bus transportation from Guangzhou to Hong Kong. Our bus journey developed into the "bus ride to hell". Without any source of formula for her feedings, Zennia began crying that ran into a two hour high pitch wailing mode. The crying would only end once we checked into the Hong Kong Island Shangri-La and Zennia jumped into the large king size bed - freedom and comfort at last! After overnighting in Hong Kong, we departed for Chicago the following morning via UA's non-stop flight. With all the attention that the UA flight attendants were lavishing on Zennia, the thirteen hour flight was relatively stress-free. Upon landing at Chicago, the Captain surprised us with an offer to take a picture of Zennia in the cockpit—a perfect conclusion to our journey!

Despite the lack of sleep and the radical change in our lifestyle, Zennia has brought us joy and happiness beyond belief!

