

JESSE

From 1A

"I asked, don't you mean 2000?" Kim recalled, "because we were expecting a baby 18 months old. She said no. We were very surprised, but very glad."

The Hughes went to Russia for the first time on April 5, 2002 to meet Jesse and found him with blue medicine all over his face because of a case of chicken pox.

But, they didn't care how he looked. It was love at first sight.

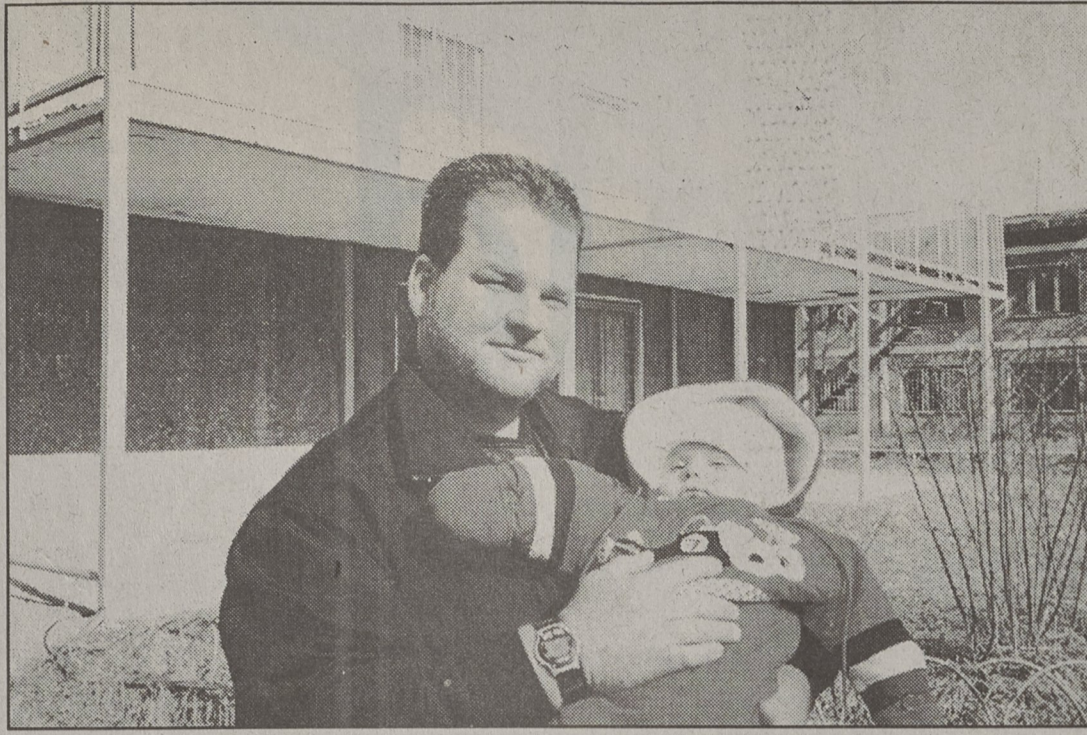
"We didn't care how he looked or what he had wrong with him," Kim said, "because we knew he was the baby that God intended for us. He was chosen."

And, the bonding between parents and son was instant.

"The first time I picked him up, I put him up to my face and he was grinning," Kim said. "I never heard him cry."

"Everybody says he looks like her or me," added Jeff. "They know he's adopted but they can't get over how much he looks like us. People that don't know us would never know."

Unfortunately, because of adoption rules the couple could spend only about three hours a day with the child and could not adopt him on the first trip. Because



Jeff and Jesse Hughes outside orphanage in Siberia

"We want him to know that he was chosen by God for us and that he grew in our hearts."

Kim Hughes

of his illness, they couldn't take him off the grounds of the crowded orphanage.

Leaving him that first time was almost more than they could stand. It was like leaving their own baby in a foreign country. The plane ride was especially tough because they saw other couples with their adopted children.

They returned to Russia in early May to find Jesse very ill with a respiratory infection. The adoption was approved on May 7 in a court in Kemerovo, Siberia but because Russia was celebrating three major holidays they couldn't catch a flight back to the U.S. They finally landed in New York on May 14, two days after Mother's Day.

While in Russia they feared Jesse's disease could be serious but were able to get clearance from a doctor there to start him on antibiotics.

Jesse was still weak and coughing when he got to his home off Dixon School Road near Kings Mountain. On his first trip to the pediatrician he weighed 10 pounds and was 24 inches long and the doctor said he was in the 10 percentile for children his age. Now, three months later, he weighs 22 pounds, is 28 inches long, and looking at him anyone can tell he is no longer in the 10 percentile. He is a typical "All-American boy" who is crawling, pulling himself up to tables and cabinets and beginning to say words like "daddy" and "mommy," "me-maw," and "bye-bye."

The trips to Russia were bittersweet in a way for the Hughes. Of course, they couldn't wait to see Jesse but at the orphanage they also saw some deplorable conditions.

The orphanage was located

in an old building, with many babies in each room and no curtains on the windows. In the afternoon, babies were irritable because of the hot sun shining through the glass. They provided money to buy material for curtains, and older girls who also lived at the orphanage made curtains that were hanging on the windows when they made their second trip in May.

"There were children there from age one week to 17 years," Jeff noted. "On their 17th birthday their care ends. They say they try to find them jobs or try to help them get in school, but I wonder."

The cloth that was left over from making the curtains was used to make clothes for some of the children.

The Hughes, members of their church, Bethany Baptist in Grover, and friends and neighbors also provided over-the-counter medicine for them to take back on their second trip.

"You're not supposed to take it," Kim said, "but we had medicine strategically packed in every piece of our clothing."

Water was so scarce, they said, that about 30 children took baths in the same tub of water.

"The second time we went over there Jesse had some type of respiratory problem and his fever was so high and he was so sick," Kim said. "We doctored him for three days and wondered if we hadn't gotten him when we did if he had died."

"We wondered if we should talk to the translator about getting him some

medicine, because we were afraid that they might make us come back home without him. But we were so concerned for him we did it anyway. She contacted the doctor and brought us some medicine. When we left Siberia it was the most wonderful feeling you could imagine."

The area where Jesse lived was very poor, Jeff noted. His natural mother listed as the reason for giving Jesse up was that she was "not able to financially provide for him," Kim said.

"It's a real poor area," said Jeff. "It's awful the way they live. It's like an old communist building with 15 families on a hall sharing one bathroom."

It's hard for the Hughes to explain the feeling they had when they first laid eyes on their son. They had seen pictures of him, and their pictures were sent to the orphanage in Russia. They were told the agency tries to match up children that look like their adopted parents.

In this case, they did an excellent job.

"To see him in person...it kind of melted you," Jeff said. "But seeing the environment they were in was real sad. They did the best they can but just knowing how they lived was really sad. It was hard to come back home the first time."

"We left knowing in our hearts that we were leaving our baby in Siberia," Kim added. "I had waited my whole life for the second when I would see my baby, and we had to come home without him."

Communicating with adoption officials in Moscow was easy because they had translators, Jeff explained, and he feels like that was one reason the adoption process went quicker than expected. But communicating with people in Siberia was tougher because 99% of them did not speak English and, of course, the Hughes didn't speak Russian.

They had to do a lot of pointing for things they wanted to buy and at night stayed in their hotel room and lived on "cheese and bread, Coca-Cola and water," Jeff said.

They had a TV, but it didn't do them any good because all the programs were in Russian. At their hotel in Moscow, which was located across the street from Red Square, there were plenty of programs such as CNN broadcast in English, and there were many

McDonald's restaurants.

When they boarded the plane this time, Kim said the feeling was just the opposite from the first trip.

Stewardesses couldn't wait to see the baby they'd heard so much about on previous flights.

"When we landed in New York it was overwhelming," Kim said. "When we touched the ground he was an American citizen."

"When we landed in Charlotte there were about 30 people waiting for us. It had been 22 hours since we left Russia and it was 54 hours when we finally went to bed."

The past three months have been the most rewarding of their lives, and it gets better every day, they said.

"I don't know how we ever lived without him," Kim says. "The adoption process was chaotic at times but you wouldn't go back for anything."

"I know all kids love their daddies and mommies, but he has both of our undivided attention," she added. "He holds onto both of us."

Each day, it seems, little Jesse is learning something new.

"He loves to do everything but sleep," says Jeff. "It breaks his heart when he has to go to bed."

Asked what his dreams are for his son, Jeff simply said, "I want him to turn out to be a good person, and be happy."

The Hughes are glad they took the international adoption route. They've often heard about parents in America adopting children, and later have the natural parents want them back. They're confident that will never be the case with Jesse. The birth certificate that was issued May 7 in Siberia lists them as the natural parents.

Jeff says if they were younger, they would consider adopting another child. They said they would definitely adopt Jesse's sister if for some reason her natural parents can't keep her, and they hear about it.

"We'd go right back and get her," he said.

They would welcome the opportunity for Jesse to know his natural sister and eventually, his parents.

"We definitely want him to know that he's adopted, and when he's old enough we'll tell him everything," Kim said. "We also want him to know that he was chosen by God for us and that he grew in our hearts."

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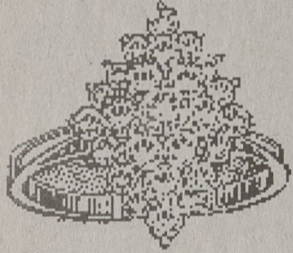
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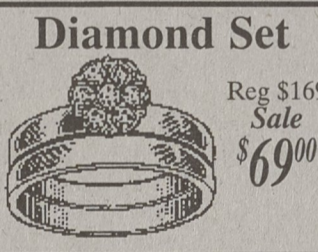
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BRIEFS

Demo executive committee to meet

The executive committee of the Cleveland County Democratic Party will meet Monday, August 19 at 7 p.m. at Jackson's Cafeteria in Shelby.

The group will discuss the September 10 primary and elect the House, Senate, and Judicial committees for the November elections.

For more information call Betsy Wells at 739-1585.

Hunt manager of bank at mall

Robert L. Hunt has been

elected a vice president and appointed Managing Officer of the Cleveland Mall office of Carolina National Bank.

Hunt is a native of Lawndale. He is a



HUNT

graduate of Burns High School, the University of North Carolina, the North Carolina School of Banking, and the East Carolina University School of Commercial Lending.

the 22-year veteran of the banking industry is a resident of Grover. He and his wife, Cathy, have four children and attend First Baptist Church. He is President of Hearts and Hooves, and is a member of the Kiwanis of Shelby, the Masons, Shriners, and the Board of Review for the Boy Scouts of America.

Carolina National Bank, a branch of First National Bank of Rocky Mount, VA, has offices in Forest City,

Bostic and Shelby. Area students make honors list

Area students were recently named to honors lists for the spring semester at Limestone College in Gaffney, SC.

Robin Mathis Scoggins of Kings Mountain was named to the dean's list. She earned a grad point average of 4 on the college's 4.0 scale.

Pam Wylie Anderson of Grover was named to the honor roll. In order to make the honor roll, students must earn a grade point average of 3.75 or higher.



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ELECT CHARLIE HORN DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

FISH FRY

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Coldwell Banker Horn & Associates
213 S. Dekalb Street, Shelby
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