

Adoption Story

A mother's Story of Adoption of James Lee and John Chandler Badham  
1970 Orphanage Hospicio de San Jose  
Manila, Philippines

By Terri J Badham  
1828 North 775 West  
West Bountiful, UT. 84087

## Adoption Story

From the time I was a little girl I had always said I was going to adopt some babies, but it might never have happened if I had been able to simply and easily conceive.

After four years of fertility testing and procedures I still had not become pregnant. We had completed a home study for adoption in South Dakota before being transferred to another Air Base and then another home study in California before receiving orders to leave immediately for a tour of active duty in the Philippines. David accepted my obsessive desire for wanting children; although on his own he probably would never have actively sought adopting children. I knew I was meant to be a mother. I just didn't know how or when.

David was assigned to the hospital at Clark Air Base near Manila. He was to be there for two years without his wife. Not long after he left I found out I was pregnant. That little fact made it possible for orders to be changed to include my joining him in the Philippines. It was during this time I remember having a most unusual dream. David and I were shopping. We walked down a street of little stores and shops. We entered one, which was filled with cages, each with a baby inside. The cages were so distinct and clear in my mind. The bars were round metal pipes about the size of pencils. They looked as if they had been painted with the same ivory color over and over, layer upon layer for many years. I picked out two babies from their cages. Carrying one in each arm I left the store with David and we appeared back on the street again. As we walked down the street, the babies grew up in my arms until their feet touched the sidewalk. They then turned into birds and flew away. The dream was so disjointed and abstract that I shelved it as one of those crazy insignificant dreams.

As soon as I arrived in the Philippines I was hospitalized. The pregnancy was determined not to be viable and despite medications, bed rest and other precautions, on December 10, 1970 a procedure was done to terminate the pregnancy.

The disappointment of the adoptions falling through and then the miscarriage made me even more aggressively search for a baby. Focusing on this seemed to help me handle the pain and disappointment. I checked out every lead I heard. I remember one adventure we paid a little boy to save us a place on one of the windowless buses called "rabbits". They are probably called that because of the speed they traveled through the narrow winding roads of the Philippine mountains and jungles. We sat next to local folks. One carried a small pig and another, a basket of live frogs with their feet sewn together to keep them from hopping away. There was also the common sight of several men carrying their prize fighting-roosters under their arms. Likely they were on their way to some "Cock-fight". It was a common sport for men in the Philippines. We found our way to hospitals with dirt floors and private homes, where mothers with sickly babies tried to sell their infants for quick cash. If allowed, I might have taken many, but at that time the US government only allowed you to return with two. I had to be selective and wait for the Spirit to direct me to which would be mine.

## Adoption Story...page 2

We had heard about a Jewish lady, married to an American businessman, who was serving as the President of Getty in the Philippines. They were helping to support a Catholic Orphanage in Manila. We met with this Jewish lady whom we referred to as Mama Hagens, a woman short in stature, but strong in will. She took us to Hospicio de San Jose. We spent the afternoon in the Hospicio nursery holding most of the 20 or 30 babies and toddlers, and that many more older children of pre-school age. They hungered for attention; hugging and clinging, even to us, total strangers to them. The blind children would stroke your arms and try to feel your face. None seemed afraid of us. They all wanted to be held. I remember the Sister's warnings "Do not fall in love with the children. You must not. It will hurt too much to leave them." It was already too late for that warning. We asked for the baby boy who had come to the Orphanage on Christmas Day and was less than a week old. We already had a name because of discussions during the past pregnancy. The name would be John Chandler. The names combined to mean God's gift of Light.

The Orphanage had never before allowed foreigners to adopt, but especially not non-Catholics. The Sister's in charge tried to point out the reasons why we probably would not be considered as appropriate prospective parents. Even as much as I wanted a baby, in my heart I knew we could not tell them we would raise the child Catholic. We knew that was what they wanted us to say. I did promise that we would raise our children in a religious atmosphere. We would teach of God and Jesus Christ, faith, prayer and the things taught in the Bible. We would not change our religion, nor could we lie and say we would. We had done all we could do. It was now in God's hands.

We made two or three more visits to the Orphanage. Each of those visits left us unsure that we would ever be allowed to get a baby from the Hospicio. But in March of 1971, almost three months after our first visit with the babies, we were allowed to take John Chandler (Chad), to our home just outside Clark Air Base, about an hour away. I'm sure the influence of Mama and Papa Hagens made the difference. I don't think our words would have been enough to sway their decision, but through them God helped us produce a small miracle.

### Adoption Story-page 3

I must admit it took me some time to adjust to a baby. I had no family around. I didn't have many friends there yet. David worked irregular hours or was sometimes temporarily assigned in Thailand or other remote areas. We didn't live on the Air Base. I had to walk a mile to catch a shuttle bus. Then ride another 20 miles to for grocery shopping and any familiar American needs, including medical help. Even drinking water was obtained on Base from huge storage tanks and carried in containers to our home. The outside water heater had to be lit one hour before you needed hot water. Diapers were cloth. We had a wringer washer and hung cloths out on a line to dry. Luckily they dried quickly, because we had a heavy rain every afternoon. There were no air conditioners in the homes, so it was important to do all work in the cooler morning hours. I hired a local girl to live with us during the week so I would have some help with house chores and childcare.

I kept visiting the Orphanage weekly. I knew there was another child for us. David said, "Look for a little girl. If we can only have two children, then we should get a boy and a girl". I agreed. That was the logical choice. It's a funny thing about logic and the heart. They don't necessarily function as a team. A baby boy, born on the same day my pregnancy ended, December 10th, haunted me. The infant seemed exceptionally bright and responsive. The Sister's would say, "See his dimples are like yours. You should take this one". During the months I visited James, that was the name the Hospicio gave him, although Baby Pradas was the name pinned to his shirt when he was left at the turning cradle, had lost a notable amount of weight. His head was becoming covered with large festering boils. The baby I had at home at the same age, was trying to feed himself, crawl around the floor, and pull himself up to furniture. James was doing none of that. He didn't seem aware that he even had hands. He never used them or put them in his mouth like other infants. The only thing he could do was rock on his stomach. A trick for which he seemed very pleased about. If you held him up, under his arms, he would not uncurl from the fetal position. I couldn't even make him stretch out his legs to try bearing weight. I worried at nights about this baby. I mentioned my concerns to my husband. He reminded me I was looking for a girl. One day I realized I couldn't leave this smiling, dimpled face. Without my asking, he would likely spend his life in this Orphanage. The way he was failing to grow made me decide not to wait I asked Sister Felicitas, "Could we have this baby?" To my surprise, the Hospicio called us the next day to come pick up the baby. I didn't have another bed, so I made one up in a drawer from a dresser and sat it on the floor beside Chad's crib. I tried to prepare everything I thought I might need. Then I had to prepare to tell David that tomorrow we could go pick up another son.

David went with me to pick up James. He was pleasant with the Sisters and with Mama Hagens, but I knew he was upset, even angry with me. He did not understand why I felt this strongly about this baby. I reminded him, that if the baby's health problems were too serious the U.S. Government would not allow us to adopt him any way. I suggested "We can keep the baby for a month, with out telling our families, while we have him checked out medically and take time to work with him. We should be able to determine how serious his health problems really are." He agreed to that, but still barely spoke to me for that month. James weighed only 12 pounds at 8 months. His ankles were so weak, that he literally was trying to walk on the inside ankle of his feet. One of the doctors thought he might have permanent and lasting walking problems. He also appeared to have a slight heart murmur. I wonder, now, if David was afraid to bond to a child that might have to be returned.

I remember thinking this new baby has been in the Orphanage with very little attention for a long time. He will just be happy to have a little extra attention. I was very wrong on that guess. This was a child who had survived because he competed for attention. He would not let me hold Chad without demanding I held him too. I spent that next month on the floor with my babies. That was the only way I could hold them both at the same time. I was blessed to have Mona, our house girl, because she was with me, I could catch the bus and get to Base for the shopping. I always took one baby with me. James was strong willed. I remember working with him one full afternoon trying to get him to hold a graham cracker in his hand and move it to his mouth. It took another full afternoon to help him decide to try getting on his knees, and many more days, even weeks to build up the muscles to support weight on his knees and legs. Each step, he determined, he would not be pushed into. However; it was the competition with his sibling brother, Chad, which made him want to accomplish each new step. James was soon motivated by everything he saw Chad do, and followed the way he did it. They both choose to travel like little stink bugs, on hands and feet, without crawling on their knees. They both walked the same month.

Our Heavenly Father loves every little Spirit. I was so very blessed to be a part of the miracle that brought them here to the United States, to grow in the Gospel, to accomplish the missions of their lives. Some things have been great, some have been small, all have been important for a purpose. The fact that four other children were later born into the family, also taught sharing, sacrifice and teamwork.

In the year 2000, I sent a letter to the Philippines, asking them to start a "mother Search". The boys were over thirty now. I believed that finding out more about their roots could be helpful to them as individuals and as parents. When I sent the letter, I did it quickly, with very little thought and no real expectations. I just had an inner feeling that it was time, and to just do it. As chance, or the micro-management of the Savior in our lives, would have it, the letter reached and touched a social worker in the Philippines named Terry. She returned a letter to me saying simply, "Mother Search has begun".