

# 'God Took Care Of Us,' Fisher Family Recalls With Thanksgiving

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**LEBANON (Lebanon Co.)** — Thanksgiving took on a whole new perspective for the Fisher family of Lebanon this year.

It was the first Thanksgiving they celebrated with their energetic 20-month-old daughter Katelyn.

Last year at this time, Katelyn was in China — a baby who had been abandoned when she was about five months old.

"We don't know how old she really is or any details about her birth. The doctor assigned a birth date based on a medical examination," Susan said.

Katelyn's plight is not unusual in China, where the government penalizes urban women for giving birth to more than one child. In accordance with the culture, a boy is desired because he will provide for the family when he grows up. Whereas girls marry into other families.

Generally baby girls are abandoned at birth.

"It's unusual that her mother waited until she was five months old to place her on the steps of an orphanage. I'd like to believe that her mother kept her a few months to give her a better start," Susan said. "In reality, I suspect that she kept her until she became pregnant again and gave her away before authorities found out."

Whatever the reason, Susan, her husband Terry, and 7-year-old daughter Tara, are delighted to claim Katelyn as part of their family.

During Thanksgiving season, the family recounted their jour-



**Terry and Susan Fisher with daughter Tara, 7, recall traveling to China to adopt Katelyn, who had been abandoned on the steps of an orphanage.**

Tara, wearing "I'm a big sister" sweatshirt accompanied her parents to China. When officials first introduced the Fisher family to Katelyn, she ran into Tara's arms, much to her big sister's delight.

"It was a full 20 minutes before I got a chance to hold Katelyn," Terry said.

"And we got a video to prove it," Susan affirmed.

to the Wailing Wall, Tiananmen Square and other points of interest. They were delighted to attend a Chinese church in session. Although no translator accompanied them, the Fishers recognized the tune to the audience sang as the Christian hymn, 'O Come All Ye Faithful.'

Although the adoption was finalized both in the United States and in China, the process of U.S. citizenship is still in progress. Recently the laws were changed to enable citizenship to be assumed whenever adoption is finalized, but this change was made after Katelyn was adopted. The government is still trying to determine how to handle cases such as Katelyn's.

The Fishers said it costs between \$17,000-\$20,000 to adopt a child from China.

According to Terry, the price of adoption should not deter prospective parents.

"God will find a way," he said. "God took care of us every step of the way," Susan said. "We have had so much good luck compared to some other people who have gone through the adoption process."

The Fishers highly recommend Asian adoptions, but Terry cautions facetiously, "Someone in the family should be very good at paperwork."

Susan confirmed his statement by producing stacks of paperwork detailing the process.

Although people think adoptions are expensive, Terry points out that fertility treatments are extremely costly too.

The Fishers said they understand that China receives 1,000 requests monthly for adoptions.

The Fishers keep in contact with many of the families who traveled with them to China. They report that it seems every

ing Adoption Day annually and to pursue some Chinese culture events.

"We even have other family ties to China," Susan said.

Terry has an uncle who taught English in the province where Katelyn was found, and he married a girl who grew up in that province.

When Katelyn is older, the Fishers hope to revisit China with her. Susan keeps detailed information about the adoption to share with Katelyn.

Both Susan and Terry grew up on Virginia farms and were graduated from Virginia Tech. Susan works as a Penn State supervising agent for the Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program and Terry works for Kauffman's Animal Health.

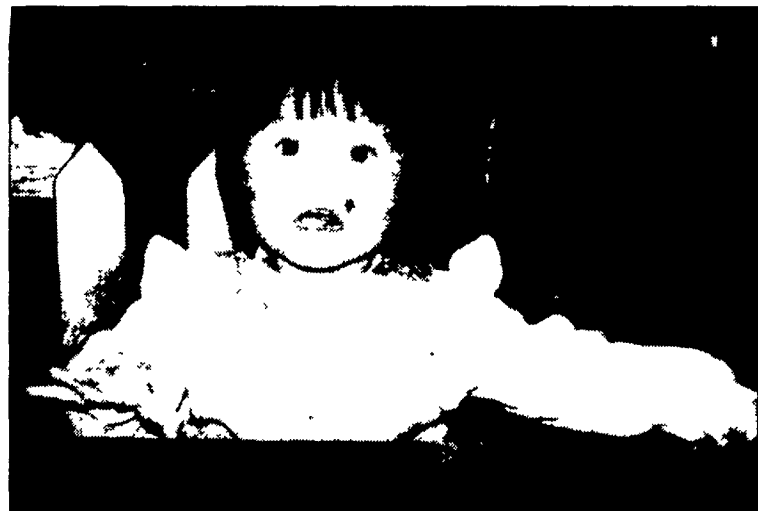
Katelyn shows no signs of her tumultuous start in the world. "Unless you count the terrible two's as a side effect," her mom said with a grimace.

When the family found Katelyn at the orphanage she was well ahead developmentally of other children her age. A fact that the Fishers found surprising after having been warned that the opposite would probably be true.

Now the active 20-month-old has an extensive vocabulary and never sits still.

"It's hard to believe we haven't had her a year. She seems like she has been part of our family forever," Susan said.

"We are so thankful."



**Katelyn at 20 months continues to amaze her parents and sister with her cute antics and resilient spirit.**

Katelyn's plight is not unusual in China, where the government penalizes urban women for giving birth to more than one child.

ney to China to bring home the diminutive Katelyn.

Tara, their natural-born daughter after a difficult pregnancy, is said to have prayed fervently for a baby sister. About this time, Susan said, "It seemed that lots of people who had adopted Asian children kept appearing in our lives."

The Fishers decided to pursue a foreign adoption.

Fifteen months elapsed from the first meeting the Fishers attended at Bethany Children's Services until they held Katelyn in their arms. After the introductory meeting, stacks of paperwork, finger printing, interviewing, attaining passports and visa, and attaining a house study approval, the Fishers traveled with a group of 30 other U.S. parents to China.

"We were bouncing off walls," Susan said of the family's emotional response. "She was so cute, and very social."

Katelyn was dressed in an outfit designed to place her on a potty chair without removing clothing.

"In China they start sitting babies on potties at nine months of age," Susan said. A custom that she did not continue.

The process required the family to travel 13 days in China, from Dec. 8-21, 1999. Unlike many adoptees, Katelyn was healthy and did not require medical care. She did not cry for two days, and then, according to her father, only when the realization hit her that if she cried loudly, she got food faster.

Travel went smoothly and the family enjoyed sightseeing jaunts



**Tara is quite proud to be the big sister, and likes to recall that it was her arms that Katelyn ran into the first time they met her.**

