

Our Story

By Dianne and Tom



Every adoptive family follows the same process, but no two families follow the same path. There are always unique 'hiccups' along the way, regardless of the agency you choose, the country you select, or how careful you are with your paperwork.

For us, there was never a question of what adoption agency to choose. I had done research on the internet and talked to some friends who had adopted, both internationally and domestically. There are other good adoption agencies out there, but ATI just felt right for us. Adoptions Together was always forthright and honest about where we were in the process and what we might expect.

Russia was still developing new rules and policies regarding international adoptions. There were undertones of anti-international adoption in Russia, as well as political issues that fed into the media hype, both in Russia and in the United States. Adoptions Together and other agencies found ways to work through these issues, although at a slower pace than usual.

Everyone tells you that your life will never be the same after that 'one' phone call, and that's an understatement!

It was another typical Monday afternoon in the office. I had stayed in frequent contact with Irene. I wasn't surprised to hear her voice on the phone, but I was very surprised at what she said. She asked me if we would want to consider two siblings, a boy would be 5 at the time of placement and his sister would be 3½.

Once we received our referral, everything went very quickly. We received our referral on February 12, 2007. We traveled to Russia on April 13, 2007, to meet two little ones who we hoped would soon be ours. Our first visit with the children went extremely well, and we each felt that we connected in a small way with both children. We knew that we were ready to take the next step, although we were advised to 'sleep on it' and not do anything until the next morning. We awoke on Tuesday morning and there was no doubt that we were very ready to sign whatever papers were necessary to keep the momentum going. We spent the morning meeting with various officials and signed more documents. We learned very quickly how top notch the ATI folks in Russia truly are! They were totally focused on us and made us feel like we were the only ones that mattered. When you care about the work you do and know the end result is a family where there once was none, it comes through in your efforts.

Needless to say, this trip went very well and we anxiously awaited a call from Irene as to when we would return for court. Our court date was set for May 21, just one month from the day we returned home from our first trip. This second trip was quick – we flew out on Saturday and returned home on Wednesday. We briefly visited with the children before we went to court and they genuinely remembered us and were very happy to see us. Of course, the feelings were very mutual!! The judge was very sober and business-like, and we anxiously waited for her final decision. We cried tears of joy to hear the translation that we were now the legal parents of Victor and Natasha! What an exciting day! That evening, we had an enjoyable dinner with our translator. It was a nice way to celebrate and relax after everything that led to this momentous event.

Almost as exciting was the call that we would leave for our third trip the following Wednesday to bring the children home! The two caregivers who brought Victor and Natasha to us from the orphanage were very nice and helpful, and we could see how much they genuinely cared about the children. We were met at the train station in Moscow by the ATI coordinator. She took us to our appointments and walked us through the US Embassy, making us feel like diplomats for a day. The next day, she met us for a visit to Gorky Park, which Victor and Natasha were thrilled with. She also took us to view many of the beautiful Moscow subway stations – it was like visiting a museum. Tom and I didn't know how the children would react to airplanes and the long flights home, but we all adapted quickly to our new situations. We left home on May 30 as a hopeful couple and came home as a family of four on June 10!

Our adoption journey wasn't typical, but I don't know that any of them are. Every story has its high and low points, but when all is said and done, you will have the child or children that are meant to be with you. The highs and lows temper each other and anxious moments are diluted to mere memories when you hold your child in your arms in your home.

