

*Getting Hai – adopting my son in Vietnam*  
*Melissa McVicker*

It was almost one year ago that I stepped off the Cathay Pacific flight in San Francisco and traveled through immigration and customs with my new son, Timothy Hai, from Vietnam. We had known one another for 17 days, and I was deeply, deeply in love.

About a year earlier, Hai was nothing more than a distant dream for me. I had thought about adopting for many years and particularly about international adoption, since I spent 3 years living in Asia from 2000-2003. But it wasn't until I read a New York Times article about China changing its adoption rules that I decided I better "move it" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/20/us/20adopt.html?partner=permalink&exprod=permalink>). What the article said was that as a single woman, I was no longer eligible to adopt from China. It was at that time that I decided I needed to do more research on what countries did allow single women to adopt.

Through my research I found an adoption consultant here in the San Francisco Bay area, and a local agency in Los Altos, CA. I learned about the newly re-opened adoption program in Vietnam. During my time in Asia I had developed a deep affinity to Vietnam and the people, food, culture and landscape. It had become one of my "favorite places" in Asia. It just seemed right that there was a little boy or girl in Vietnam that needed me for a mom.

And so I began the paper work to get together my home study and dossier for the Vietnam adoption authorities. When I think back to that time, it seems I was always running to a notary or to my local copy shop! I chose Carolina Adoption Services as the agency I worked with in Vietnam. They guided me through the assembling of all my paperwork, and then kept me from going crazy during my (relatively short) wait.

It was August 31, 2007 when I got the call from Trudy Tobias, my coordinator at Carolina, that she had a "little boy" for me. His name was Nguyen Xuan Hai ("Spring River" in Vietnamese) and he was 9 months old. He'd been in the orphanage since he was about 15 days old. I got 5 pictures and lots of medical information. I remember my heart racing when I opened the email, and I ran into my next meeting at work and blurted out to my boss "It's a BOY!" I don't think anyone will ever forget that meeting.

On October 5, 2007 I boarded a plane with my very best friend and flew to Hanoi. Two days later, on October 8 we got in a van with 5 other families at 6:15am and drove for 4 hours to the Tuyen Quang Sponsorship Center in Tuyen Quang, Vietnam. We traveled over dirt roads that were covered in 3 feet of water to get to the orphanage. I remember when we pulled up thinking "this is it, there's no turning back now. Oh, please, just let him be a happy kid".

To my delight, when I watched the nannies at the orphanage with Hai, my friend and I quickly started referring to them as "Hai's harem". He had all the ladies charmed, everyone wanted to hold him and have their picture taken with him. As I recall, we went through about 60 Polaroid instant photos that day, and gave away all but 5 or 6. I like to think that those photos are still up in the orphanage today, reminding the nannies of Hai.

In the year since that day, Hai and I have truly become a family. He calls me “Mom”, and grouches at me just like any 2 year old does with their mom. His favorite place to sleep is in my arms, and my favorite thing to do is watch him eat, which he does all the time! He’s the only kid I know that likes the food channel better than cartoons!

My journey to adopt in Vietnam may be over, but the real fun is just beginning. I can’t wait to see what happens next, now that I’ve “got Hai” and he’s got me.

*Melissa McVicker adopted Timothy Hai McVicker on October 8, 2007 from Tuyen Quang Vietnam. They live in Mountain View, CA and spend their days watching the food channel. She keeps a blog of their adventures at: [www.gettinghai.blogspot.com](http://www.gettinghai.blogspot.com)*

