



of the National Council for Adoption, an adoption think tank based in Washington, D.C. “You don’t have that same fear when the birth mother is 7,000 miles away,” he said.

But even if these fears did not exist, some people would still go to China to adopt a child. Most people want a baby or a young toddler, and the competition for American infants is stiff. China offers an almost limitless supply of babies.

“If you want to adopt overseas,” Pierce said, “you can probably bring a healthy child home under age 2 in six months. ... Guaranteed.”

Navigating bureaucracy

New mothers are quick to tell of their labor, of the special recollections they have from the birth of their child.

Morrison has her memories, too: 19 months of documents, questions, phone calls and meetings.

Once Morrison decided to adopt a baby from China, the deluge of paperwork and the drain on her bank account began.

“Talk about bureaucracy,” she said.

First, the FBI took her fingerprints to check her criminal record. There was a home study by Adoptions for the Heart, for which she had to write an autobiography.

She had to have her birth certificate notarized, a financial certificate from her accountant to verify her net worth, proof she paid her taxes, a physical from her doctor, a letter from her bank verifying how much money she had, even an affidavit that she was single.

Seh also needed police and child abuse clearance from the state and approval from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

All the documents had to be notarized. Then she had to prove each notary was truly licensed. “I had to get notaries of the notaries,” she said.

All of this made up her application that she sent to China. Then came the wait.

“I’m trying not to drive myself crazy,” Morrison said in June.

Word finally came in August, when a package arrived from the adoption agency with a picture of Emily and a medical report. It was like getting a birth announcement.

“Finally, it’s coming,” she said in September, as she readied herself to take the trip to China in October.

Morrison had waited about 16 months to find out who she was adopting. The process can take up to 18 months.

She spent more than \$16,000.

Miller, who works with Adoptions from the Heart, said domestic adoptions through her agency can cost from \$5,000 to \$14,000. The state picks up the cost of adopting a domestic special needs child, one with a medical condition or emotional problem.

But the wait and the money didn’t matter to Morrison.

At the Notary Court of Maoming in China on Oct. 23, Morrison and eight other families filled out final pieces of paperwork to adopt their children. Morrison could see nine babies waiting in the arms of their foster mothers.

One of them was Emily.

No regrets

Just three days earlier, Morrison had lifted off with the other families from Philadelphia International Airport, destined for China and their promised children.

“Everyone is excited and a little nervous,” Morrison wrote in a journal she kept during the trip. “We are all probably overpacked, and we’re all sure we packed the wrong things. But the reality of having our daughters in a few days overshadows all doubts and fears.”

The group flew to Hong Kong and then took a bus a few short hours north to do paperwork in Guanjou, the capital of Guangdong province and south China’s busiest seaport. Then, they all flew west to Zhanjiang and took a bus north to Maoming, where the new parents were to meet their children.

“We had never seen such poverty,” Morrison wrote of the Chinese countryside, with its shacks and farmers working their small fields by hand. “I realized then that I would never feel guilty about taking Emily from her country.”

Morrison was one of the first parents quickly ushered into a side room at the Notary Court. A woman she had never seen before placed a baby in her arms.

“Her foster mother smiled and tried to get Emily to hug me, but that was obviously asking too much,” Morrison wrote in her journal. “Emily stared at me very intently and as I smiled, she realized that her foster mother had gone and she began to cry.”

The whole experience, going through the paperwork and the home study, the wait, traveling to China and waiting some more, had been emotionally draining, Morrison said.

This was the point where the tension broke. “It was wonderful and frightening and exciting and exhausting; all at the same time,” she said.

Before Morrison knew it, she and the other parents in her group were circling Philadelphia, waiting to land.

Morrison was the first of the parents off the plane, and she had a cheering section of eight people waiting for her, including her mother and her aunts and uncles. They all clapped as they saw her carry Emily through the gate.

“When I came up the walk, I could see all of these people’s faces,” Morrison said. “I knew they were there looking for babies.”

Emily is home

Back in Bear, Morrison is discovering motherhood.

Emily, who will be 15 months old on Thursday, had a cold when she first returned from China, and a week later she developed a rash. It only took a week for her to have her first tantrum, and she has perfected a fake sneeze to get her new mother’s attention.

On a recent afternoon, Morrison held her with confidence. The girl was asleep on her mom’s left shoulder, and mother and baby looked as if they had always been together.

“She was worth it,” Morrison said. “I never thought about the money. It never bothered me at all. Whatever it took.”

