

# Family finds love in Korea â€”three times

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WILLOW PARK—The Skaggs family see their tale as a love story—but one with some tears at the beginning.

Overjoyed at the birth of their son, Carter, two years earlier, Mike and Libby Skaggs, members of Hulen Street Baptist in Fort Worth, eagerly planned to expand their family. But their dream was sidetracked by devastating news.

The Skaggs, who adopted Abby as an infant, celebrate her graduation.  
(PHOTO/Courtesy of Skaggs family)

“We learned we would not be able to have any more children biologically. That was a season of grieving for us,” Mike Skaggs recalled.

God’s plan for the couple soon became apparent. “We had always thought we would adopt some day, and when we couldn’t have another child by birth, it seemed clear what we were meant to do. God very clearly was telling us to adopt,” Libby Skaggs said.

That decision required research. “We looked at a lot of agencies. Our living room floor was covered with adoption agency packets,” she recalled.

She learned about Dillon International from a volunteer with the agency’s area representative program who shared her positive adoption story and the joy her son from Korea had brought her family. “Next, we attended a pre-adoption workshop and were very impressed with the caring staff. We walked away knowing Dillon was the agency for us.”

Founded in 1972, Dillon International is a licensed, nonprofit international adoption agency, headquartered in Tulsa, Okla., that has placed more than 5,600 children with families in the United States. This year, Dillon joined Buckner through an affiliation that makes it possible to provide adoption and humanitarian aid services to children living in the United States, Russia and Ethiopia, as well as Dillon's established programs in South Korea, China, India, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong and Vietnam.

"Once we decided to move forward with plans to adopt, it became a season of hope and excitement for us," Mike Skaggs said, adding that the adoption process also was a rollercoaster ride of emotions. "Some people compare the wait of an international adoption to a pregnancy. But the emotions are very different because with a pregnancy, you have that child with you all the time. We had no idea what was going on with our little girl or little boy on the other side of the world. Our case manager fielded some very anxious questions from us as we waited."



After adopting their daughter, Abby, as an infant, the Skaggs decided to adopt a second time from Korea. "We named him Dillon because we loved the name, and Dillon International had become such a big part of our lives," Mike Skaggs said. The Skaggs have since adopted another son from Korea. They brought Hudson home in September. (PHOTO/Courtesy of Skaggs family)

God's involvement in their adoption process was demonstrated in some amazing—and amusing—ways, Libby Skaggs remembered. "After we completed our adoption application, I wrote in my prayer journal that I could not stand to wait for the referral of a child longer than six months, or

I'd just go insane. It was six months to the day when we received the call about Abby."

Her first response to her daughter's referral photo was laughter. "She had such chubby cheeks," she said. "You immediately feel that across-the-ocean bond."

Fifteen weeks later, the couple traveled to Korea to meet 7-month-old Abby at Eastern Social Welfare Society, Dillon International's sister agency in Seoul where she had been cared for since birth. During their time in Korea, the couple experienced the world that had nurtured their daughter by rocking and feeding babies at the babies' home.

Abby's homecoming was a special time for her big brother, too. "I remember going to the airport to meet her. They were the last ones to come off the plane. Tons of people were there, and we had a big 'welcome' banner," recalled Carter, who was 5 years old at the time his baby sister came home from Korea. "I gave her a stuffed piglet. It was really cool."

Although there were some adjustments for Carter as he learned to share the limelight with his baby sister, it was immediately clear Abby was the child God meant for their family, Libby Skaggs said.

Thrilled with Abby's adoption, adding a little brother to their growing crew seemed like a natural step, so the Skaggs began the process to adopt their son. Mike Skaggs, a Christian school principal, and his wife, a nurse, indicated they were open to adopting a child with medical needs. Thus, they waited only three months for their son's referral. "He has some medical and developmental special needs, some known prior to coming home and some that were diagnosed later," Libby Skaggs said. "Dillon is a wonderful addition to our family. He has a great sense of humor and is the most affectionate child. Watching him blossom is a joy to us."

"We named him Dillon because we loved the name, and Dillon International

had become such a big part of our lives,” Mike Skaggs added.

The active family of five recently decided it was time to grow again. They entered the process to adopt another son from Korea through Dillon International’s Waiting Child program, and 22-month-old Hudson arrived home in September. “He is the perfect fit for our family. We are so glad we stepped out in faith and pursued his adoption,” his new mother said.

The Skaggs family is passionate about honoring Abby and Dillon’s Korean heritage. “When we adopted Abby and Dillon, we became a Korean-American family. We embrace their heritage and celebrate it with Korean art, Korean food, and participation in Dillon International’s heritage activities,” Libby Skaggs said.

Dillon International offers heritage camps and weekends for adopted children and their families to learn more about the culture of their birth country, workshops to educate adoptive parents on questions and concerns they may encounter as their children grow, and birthland tours to provide adoptees with firsthand experience of the country where they were born. “I love the Dillon International philosophy that adoption is a lifelong journey that requires education and support,” Libby Skaggs said.

The family—with Carter now 13, Abby, 8, and Dillon, 6—attends the agency’s Korean Heritage Camp in Tulsa at least every other summer. “It helps us stay in touch with Korean culture and our kids have friends from around the country as a result of the camp,” Mike Skaggs said.

The camps also offer the family an experience that is hard to duplicate elsewhere. “There is not a lot of ethnic diversity in our small suburb. At camp, all the families are like ours. We’re the ‘normal’ family instead of the ‘different’ family,” Libby Skaggs explained.

As her family continues to travel their adoption journey, they do so with joy and a sense of gratitude. “Adoption was God’s plan for our family, not a

consolation prize,” she emphasized. “It is a privilege—not a second choice at all.”