

Dear Birthmother,

Our names are Margaret and John. We live in the Southeast, in a city that has wonderful educational and cultural resources, with easy access to the mountains and the beach. John manages a restaurant that we own, and Margaret has a master's degree in early childhood education. She has taken a break from teaching to be a full-time mom to Insley, our 2 ½- year-old daughter. We adopted Insley in February, 2006. All three of us are eager to bring another child into our home and our hearts.

Adoption is both a choice and a blessing for us. Margaret's father and youngest brother have a hereditary disorder that causes hand and leg muscles to deteriorate. Margaret does not have this disease, but doctors cannot tell us if she could pass it on to our biological children. We have decided that we are unwilling to take the chance of passing on this painful disorder to our children, and so we have chosen to create a

family through adoption.



Insley can't wait to welcome a little brother or sister.

Now that we are parents, we realize the enormity of a birthmother's love and selflessness in choosing to place her child with another family. We want to assure you that we would give your child a wonderful life with love, security, and opportunity. We will always remember, and tell your child of your enormous love for her as we have done with Insley and her birthmother.

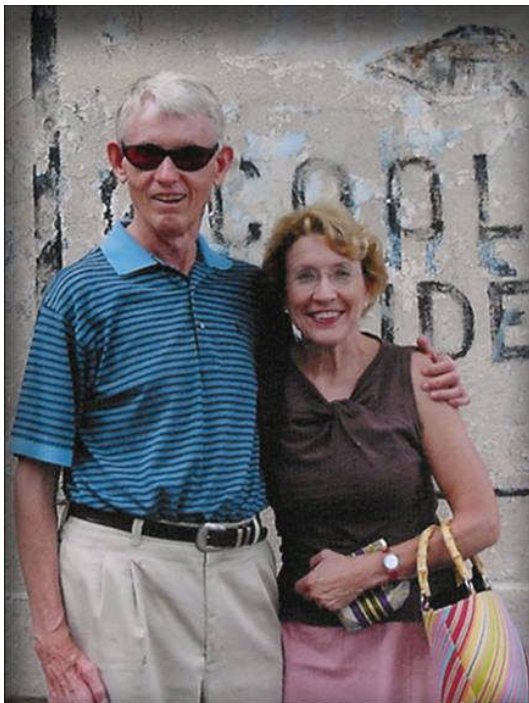
Margaret: I am the oldest of three children. I always felt like the protector of my two younger brothers, Chapman and Stephen, when we were growing up. Now that we're all adults, we are the best of friends. We all get together regularly, at my parents' home in the mountains or their timeshare at the beach. Chapman and his wife, Katie, just had their first baby. Holding her, hours after her birth, made me realize, once again, how much I long for another child. There's a new baby in John's family too. His brother Mike just had a baby. Our new child will grow up with cousins from both sides of the family.



My parents are very excited about our adopting again. They live just minutes from us, and we see them almost every day. My dad says he doesn't want to miss any of the "baby action."

I have the most wonderful memories of childhood. I grew up in the same town where we live now. We

spent our days building forts, playing kick the can, running in and out of the houses of our friends. We spent our summers in the mountains, often bringing a friend along. Our mountain home is a condo with a golf course and club with lots of activities for children.



A couple of eager grandparents, Lawrence and Brenda



Lots of cousins await the arrival of a new baby.

I remember catching tadpoles at the lake. I can't remember why I wanted to hold the slimy things, but I do remember our all-time high of catching 105 tadpoles in one day. We sometimes got to go there in the winter. One year the lake was frozen and (after my dad checked it out to be sure it was safe) we walked all the way across the lake and back. It was magical to walk on the lake we usually swam in. We came back to the condo and drank hot chocolate and snuggled together in my parents' bed.

Our house was the place our friends liked to gather. It was safe and my parents were always welcoming. My mom was a teacher when she married my dad, but she stopped teaching when I was born. She has always devoted herself to her children. Her parents instilled a deep love of family in her, and it's evident in all that she does. She visits my grandmother, Momma Jane, every day. She cares for all of us, seeing a need, and quietly

filling it. When I was growing up, she put a note in my lunch every day — even when I was in high school. She has a great sense of humor and loves to make all of us laugh. When she drove carpool, she always used her bus driver voice with the kids. She has tried it out on Insley though she's too young to get it yet. But Mom delights in making her giggle in many other ways. My heart fills with love when I watch both of my parents playing with Insley, knowing the joy she gives us is being shared with them as well.

My dad took over a family-owned business and then sold it and retired when I was in



My little brothers, Stephen and Chapman, are terrific uncles.

middle school. He has struggled with his health for many years — but “struggle” doesn't paint the right picture. He has always seen his physical limitations as a challenge, not a disability. He plays golf, walks, and used to snow ski — in spite of the doctor saying that such physical activity wouldn't be possible. I admire him so much. And so does our community. I am always running into someone around town who stops me to tell me how wonderful my parents are.

I was raised with a strong faith in God. We had family dinners every night, and we always said a prayer before we ate. John, Insley, and I attend church regularly. I was raised to understand that you teach by example. John and I believe that children learn more by watching their parents' actions than by listening to their words. We were fortunate to have wonderful role models in my parents and his mother, and we want to give our children that gift, as well.

When I was young, my oldest brother, Chapman, was on a soccer team that traveled out of town for games. The whole family had to go to his games. I didn't always like it. I was the oldest and thought I had better things to do. But my parents were insistent that this was family time. And they were right. I have great memories from those trips, cheering for Chapman at the games, playing with all the other kids, just being together as a family. My parents could have given in to my whining. It would have made their lives more pleasant. But good parenting means following through for a child's long term benefit — even when it's not the easiest choice.

The winter holidays are family time. My whole family, about 30 of us, gets together for what feels like endless food at Thanksgiving. We spend the day cooking, eating,

watching football, talking, and laughing. We used to travel to other towns, alternating which family hosted the dinner. But now that my grandmother, Momma Jane, is getting older, we always have it at my parents' house, so she doesn't have to travel. John and I are planning to host it at our house this year. We're thrilled to have everyone over. Since each family brings a dish, we don't have to do all the cooking. Last year we started a new tradition that our new baby can participate in, too. On Thanksgiving morning, we



Margaret with her third graders.

walk in the "Turkey Trot," a walk/run for the whole community. There are games and ribbons for the kids after the event. And, quite importantly, we burn off some calories in advance of sitting down to the mountain of food on the Thanksgiving table.

When I was in high school, I had a math teacher who used to tease me in class. I was humiliated by his ridicule. That was one of the reasons I became

a teacher. I wanted to create a safe, encouraging learning environment for children. I taught elementary students for seven years: kindergarten, first, and third grade. I loved the beginning of each school year, getting to know my students and finding just the right approach for teaching each child. I adore seeing a child's face light up when he/she accomplishes something he/she didn't think possible. It was hard to watch some of the kids leave school each day, knowing they were going to a difficult home life. But what a blessing it was to be able to give them a safe and loving haven each school day.

As a mom, I get to use my teaching skills each day with Insley. I love reading with her, and she loves to read. Our favorite book is "Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born" by Jamie Lee Curtis. It brings tears to my eyes because it perfectly characterizes how we felt when we first saw Insley at the hospital. We read a lot of books about adoption in our house. It's such an easy way to talk about her birthmother and how lucky we were to adopt her.

We go on outings to the library, the children's museum, to the playground, or over to friends' houses. We work on art projects, have tea parties with the dolls, play ball, or make music. Every day is a teaching opportunity with a child. And honestly, I'm not sure who's learning more, Insley or me.

I can't imagine growing up without my brothers. And John feels the same way about his brother, Mike. Having a sister or brother means having a best friend. It's someone to talk with, dream with, and laze around on summer days with. A sibling is a companion in exploring the world and testing boundaries. Insley doesn't know what a sister or brother will mean to her when she's in middle school or away in college, but she knows she

wants a baby brother or sister now. I melted when I watched her gently touch the toes of her new-born cousin, while she sang Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. She is eager to have a sibling to share her world. She insists that her new brother or sister will be named "Frog"— and in spite of our protests, she's certain he or she will love that name. We'll work on that.



We have a lot of special books we like to share with Insley. We expect she will read them to her little brother or sister very soon.

John is a remarkable father. He is involved in all the child-raising activities, from midnight feedings to doctor's visits, to learning how to fly a kite. He has no qualms about indulging Insley in her imaginary play. I often overhear her assigning John the role of mommy, while she plays the baby. It's awfully hard to keep the two of them from hearing me laugh while I listen to John talking in a high-pitched "mommy voice." Anything for his little girl!

I met John when he moved to our town when we were both in seventh grade. We were friends throughout our school years. After graduation, John joined the military. He wanted to go to college, and that was the only way he would be able to afford it. When he returned from service, we began to date. We married five years later at my parents' home in the mountains and this year celebrated our eighth anniversary.

John is an extraordinary listener. He is sensitive and caring. He makes me feel special and safe. I admire his determination and his strong work ethic. He is intellectually curious, always eager to learn new things. He's patient, generous, fun-loving, and, by the way, a marvelous cook. He's my teacher in that respect.

We love to travel together, to the beach, the mountains, the Cayman Islands, Aruba, Utah, Colorado, and Disney World. We enjoy the water, scuba diving or playing in the waves with Insley. We love to snow ski.



John with his mom, Nancy.

We enjoy having friends and their children over for a barbeque and then roasting marshmallows over the backyard fireplace. Sometimes my parents babysit and we go out to the movies or a restaurant. But nothing beats a lazy evening in our pajamas, curled up on the couch, reading and snuggling with Insley.

John: My older brother, Mike, and I were raised by my mother, Nancy. My parents divorced when I was very young, and I don't have much contact with my father. My mom worked hard to give Mike and me everything we needed. We spent a lot of time together as a family, hiking, going to the lake, and camping. We even camped when we went to Disney World. I remember that trip to Disney World perfectly. I was so upset when I was riding the roller coaster and my sunglasses went flying off — never to be found again. I was

crushed. And then I was touched — when my big brother bought me a new pair with his own money to cheer me up.

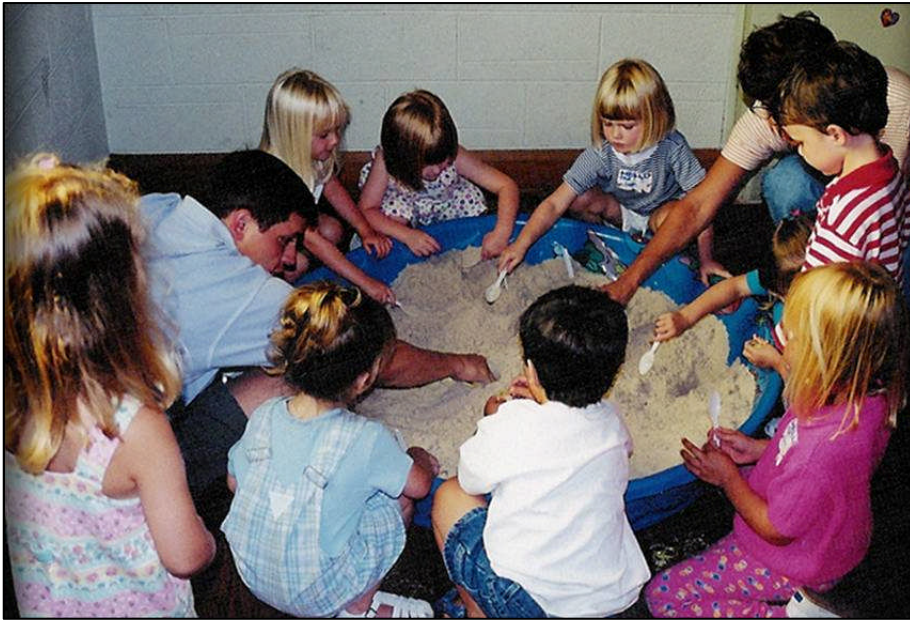
Growing up, we knew that our mom adored us. I was active in sports, and Mom and Mike were my biggest fans. They were at all of my games, cheering me on. Through the years, my coaches were important male role models for me, and my mom understood that and encouraged it. She has all of my school and sports photos framed and hanging on a wall in her home. The collection is expanding as she adds pictures of Insley to it.



Margaret and John with his brother, Mike, and Lisa.

When I was in middle school we moved to the town where Margaret and I still live. Mom took a job in the school cafeteria so she could be there when we got home from school.

I learned a lot from her, the importance and dignity of hard work, dedication to family,



and patience. I want to teach my children the values with which I was raised. I want to give my children a loving home where expectations are clear and achievement is admired. I was so touched when Margaret told me that my mom's face lit up when I was

John has always enjoyed working with children at church.

called up to receive my college diploma. Mom cried with happiness, and with pride. I'm grateful for all her sacrifices and all her love. I want to be that kind of generous, supportive parent to my children.

I always imagined that I would be a teacher, too. When I was in college, I worked with children at our church, and I loved watching them learn. It made me feel wonderful that the kids trusted me and wanted my praise. I was flattered and humbled. It reminded me how important my behavior was; it brought to mind the teachers and coaches who were role models to me.

I took a detour from education to business. Margaret and I thought it would be difficult for both of us to find teaching jobs in the town where we wanted to live. I began to work in restaurant management, with the dream of owning my own restaurant one day. In 2006, I realized that dream. We bought a restaurant that does its biggest business at lunch, so I can be home in the evenings with our family. As the owner, I have the flexibility to leave for a doctor visit or a school assembly. Though Margaret doesn't work in our business, she's always interested in what I do and supportive of my work. I love it when she and Insley stop in for lunch, or just to say hello.

Margaret is a natural as a mother. She's the most thoughtful person I know. She is generous and kind, not just to her family, but her friends as well. Last year a friend's husband was deployed to Iraq, right after the birth of their child. Margaret immediately stepped in to help. She brought over dinners, babysat while her friend ran errands, and invited her to our home for meals. She's always thinking of others. And that's never more evident than with Insley.



On our back deck with Insley and Buddy and Riley, our two child-friendly dogs.

One evening I came home from work, and I noticed that Insley had her nails painted bright red, but only on one hand. I was puzzled, but imagined that Insley must have gotten fidgety before Margaret could paint the nails on the other hand. After dinner, Margaret turned to Insley and said, “Show Daddy your right

hand.” Insley smiled broadly and held up the hand with painted nails. It was then I realized how Margaret was teaching Insley to distinguish between right and left.

And that’s how it is in our home. There are hundreds of ways that Margaret is teaching, always through play and fun. It’s clear to everyone who is around them that Margaret cherishes her time with Insley. And I can’t think of anything that would make her happier — except another child. We want to hear our kids giggling together as they conspire to play a trick on Mommy and Daddy. We want to watch our kids shooting baskets in the backyard. We want to take them on family vacations, make memories, and then listen to them reminisce about those memories as they get older.

Margaret and John: We recently moved into a new home. We wanted more room for the larger family we hope to have. We have a big fenced-in backyard, perfect for kids’ games, and for our two dogs,



Our new home is in a wonderful neighborhood with lots of children.

Riley and Buddy. Our dogs love kids. They are so gentle. They let Insley climb all over them, with no complaints. Every morning, Buddy waits outside her door, waiting for her to wake up, so the playing can begin.



This is the bedroom that awaits the new baby.

No one would wonder whether or not a child lives in our house. In the driveway is a riding Clifford dog and a new Big Wheel. (There's also a basketball hoop, but that's really for the big boy in the house right now.) There are family pictures on every wall and a child-sized chair next to the couch. In the bathroom there's a sticker reward chart for potty training. And most telling of all — there are stray Cheerios that magically appear scattered around the house every day.

We have four bedrooms, one of which is waiting for our new baby. We just painted it and have set up all of the baby furniture. Our favorite room in the house is the play room. It's right off the kitchen, with green walls and a blue ceiling. There are two big windows and a soft carpet so everyone can get down on the floor to play — even grandmas and grandpa. There's a child-sized table and chairs in the center of the room with a craft project always underway. There's a tea set, stuffed animals, and a book shelf crammed with books.

We love our neighborhood. We live across the street from a park with a playground and ball fields. There's a great mix of young families and more mature families. It seems that when people move in, they're here to stay. We love looking out our windows at the mountains, and knowing that we're a manageable drive to the beach. We love that some of our dearest friends are friends from our childhood.



Insley at the lake with her cousins.

We try to spend as many weekends as possible at Margaret's parents' home in the mountains. We play on the beach, canoe in the lake,

swim out on the floating dock, jump on the floating trampoline, and yes, catch tadpoles. We are both learning to fly fish. We are so grateful for this idyllic retreat just an hour from home, where our kids will be able to try all kinds of new things, play safely outside, and enjoy some unstructured play in our very busy world.

Margaret's parents also have a home at the beach in South Carolina. Margaret takes Insley there every few months, and John tries to join them for at least two weeks each year. The entire family meets there at least once a year. We boil shrimp, play on the beach, and just enjoy each other's company. We can't wait for the next gathering, when we hope to have our new baby and Chapman and Katie's new daughter join us.



We think this is the perfect time to bring another child into our family. We have moved to a spacious home, John's business is established, and Insley is in preschool two mornings a week. Margaret will have alone-time with the baby, time for special activities just for the two of them. But just as special will be the time spent as a family, time when the four of us can play in the backyard, go to the beach, or play a board game and eat popcorn.

We hope that we are the family you choose to raise your precious child. If you would like, we will be happy to keep you informed of your child's progress through the years, with letters and photos. We will cherish your child and raise him or her to understand your great love and generous decision. We will encourage imagination and exploration. We will be generous with our kisses and hugs. We will respect and honor the enormous responsibility you have given us.

If you have any questions about us, our attorneys Steve and Joel Kirsh would be happy to answer them. You can call them at 800-333-5736.

With warm regards,

Margaret and John