



OUR CHINA STORIES

我们的中国故事

Stuy family Utah

Lan was born and raised in China. The girls are her adoptive daughters. Brian is a Utah native. Together, Lan and Brian help other parents of adopted children research their children's early lives in China. They recently revamped their website and launched a crowd-sourced effort to collect DNA from adoptees and potential birth parents in China.

Stuy, Meikina Adoption place: Guangdong Province, Dianbai SWI Adoption date: April 1998 Age at adoption: 8 months

My name is Meikina Stuy, I am eighteen years old and I live in Lehi, Utah with my two younger sisters and parents.

Growing up I have always been the big sister to my younger sisters, and as siblings usually do, we sometimes argue and fight. Other times we have some of the best times of our lives. I can remember both of the times when my parents were telling me that I was getting a sister. When adopting Meigon, I was five years old and didn't really know what was going on. I knew I was getting a new sister, and I couldn't be sure if I was excited or nervous or maybe even both. I remember sitting in a room with my Dad waiting for her to come out, and when they walked out with her in their arms and her crying, something inside of me melted. I was overwhelmed that I was getting a new sister and I just wanted to comfort her. She was sitting on my Dad's lap and I looked at her and grabbed her hand and she looked at me and I knew right then that we had a connection.

From that day on, she and I have always been partners in crime until that one night at the dinner table when my Dad asked, "How do you feel about getting another sister?" By this time I was 7-1/2 years old, and Meigon was 4. We were both very excited: Meigon because she was going to be an older sister now and me because I wanted another sister.

Meilan's story was a little different. The first day I met Meilan, she wasn't crying at all. She had this pouty face that never seemed to vanish. She and I have had our difficult moments, but in the end she and I always seem to work it out. Being a big sister has its

ups and downs, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love being a sister, and even though it's tough sometimes being the example, in the end it all pays off.

Stuy, Meigon

Adoption place: Guangzhou SWI, Guangdong Province

Adoption date: March 2002

Age at adoption: 18 months

My name is Meigon Stuy, and I am 15 years old. I was adopted from Guangzhou, when I was eighteen months old. My father named me Meigon because he wanted to name me Beautiful Gift. I know that Mei means beautiful in Chinese, but I have never been able to find the Chinese meaning for gon, so I am not sure of that part. I like the spelling of my name though, because it is different from the other Megans of the world. I enjoy reading, writing short stories, and drawing manga. I am taking Japanese next year so that I can hopefully understand my anime shows in the original language. I have been taking Chinese since fourth grade, and speak and read it fairly well. I am going to China on a study abroad trip this Summer. It is the first time I have been away from home for so long, and I am a little nervous. But I will have some good friends with me. I am excited to go.

Growing up, my parents took me to a lot of FCC parties. I never really liked them, because the parties were not very fun. When I was younger the other Chinese children made me feel like I was among my people, but now I have my own friends and so it doesn't really matter anymore.

When my father was dating my mother, they visited a lot of orphanages on different trips. I usually went with my father on these trips, so I have been back to China many times. I remember one of my favorite memories was hiking on a hot day on the Great Wall in Beijing. We were all very hot and tired, and my dad found an ice cream vendor, and got us each a treat. At the bottom of my ice cream I found a small plastic monkey. I thought that was very cool. China had a lot of cool stuff. Another trip I went with my mom and dad alone to Xi'An. We ate dinner along the street, such as chicken on a stick. It was delicious.

All of these experiences showed me that China is very different than my life in the U.S. Some of these differences are good and exciting, others not so much. I hated the smell, for example, when we walked past toilets. I hated going to the bathroom in China, because usually the toilets were squat toilets, which I found very gross. But overall, I love China and find it very interesting.

My parents have asked me if I am interested in finding my biological birth family. I have always felt that this was not very important for me. I feel that I am not connected to them in any meaningful way other than genetics. My parents and my sisters are my family, and I don't feel a need to search for others.

China is part of my history, of course. I was born there, I have visited there many times, but I don't feel it is my home. I feel a connection to China, more than just a country, but it is like a distant echo in my mind.

Stuy, Meilan

Adoption place: Luoyang SWI, Henan Province

Adoption date: February 2005

Age at adoption: 3 years

My name is Meilan Stuy. I am 14 years old. I was adopted when I was three years old from the Luoyang orphanage in northern China (Henan Province). My parents met me while doing research in my orphanage.

Since my mother is Chinese, my parents adopted me domestically in China, and then had to apply for a visa to bring me home. This took a long time, so my mother stayed with me while in China, and my father flew over and visited a lot. Finally, when I was almost 5 years old, I was able to come home to Utah.

My favorite memory from China was going to a children's park close to my mother's apartment. There was bouncy balls, water features to swim in, and other play activities. It was always really hot. I remember being in the orphanage, and there were teenagers that came and played with us. I also remember being spanked when I didn't go to bed right away.

My parents were able to locate my birth family through doing some research. We have talked a little about it, but I don't feel a strong need to see them. I don't see them really as my family. I really see my mom and dad and sisters as my family. My parents have always said it is up to me to decide if I want to meet my biological family. Maybe one day I will change my mind, but for now I am happy with the way things are. I do want to go back to China to visit. I have only gone back one time since coming home. I would love to see the Great Wall, the Terra Cotta Warriors, and some other stuff that my family has seen before I came home. I am taking Chinese in school, and love learning it. I spoke Chinese before coming home, but I didn't want to speak it once I got home, so I lost all of it.

Stuy, Longlan **Adoptive mother**

I know that everyone in my family here in the United States has a lot of pictures and videos to remind them of their wonderful childhoods. I don't have a single picture or any video to remind me of my childhood in the 1970s in the southern part of Guangdong province. But the memories that I have from my childhood have always stayed in the deepest part of my heart.

One of the best memories that I have was when my older sister gave me a ride on her bicycle through the towns and villages around my home. We went to another village to visit my grandmother. I spent every summer vacation there. Most of my time there was spent trying to catch the fish and play in the water in the river beside the village, or looking after the water buffalo on the hill for my uncle with other friends my age. I loved my grandmother, who always tried to make delicious food for me.

I remember my grandmother was always very thin and worked so hard to take care the family. She lived with my oldest uncle and took care of my cousin from the day he was born because my aunt had died the same day she gave birth to him.

I learned from my mother that my grandmother was 16 when she married my grandfather, and she was 17 when she had her first child. She had 10 biological children over her entire marriage. In that time, even though life was very difficult, the traditional idea was that more children bring more happiness.

My grandmother watched five children die in her arms. Life was terribly difficult and my grandparents did not have money for the hospital when one of my aunts or uncles got sick. My mother was the oldest in the family, and she is very appreciative that she survived. My grandmother always adored my sisters and me. We visited every summer. My mom grew up in a very small village surrounded with foothills and rivers. There were only a few old households, and everyone knew each other. When my mother was 24, she met my dad, who was 32, through an Introducer. "Four months later, they decided to marry. She believed my father was a good person that she could trust. Another reason was she did not want to marry any men in her local area because she did not want to start her new family in the same place she had grown up. There were too many sad memories of what she and her family had been through. My dad was alone for years already because both his parents had passed away when he was about 24. He had been fighting for his own life for many years until he married my mother and they started a new family together.

As I remember, during the years I was growing up, everyone in the village or the villages nearby liked to call my dad "The Dragon King," and everyone knew about him and his name. As told by my mom, my dad was good at building. Most of the young men in our village liked to follow him and learned from him about how to build, so, late on he created his own construction team even he got his farm in our village need take care. And I also heard so many stories about how well my dad treated the people who needed help in the village, how the apprentices followed him for his construction team and how honest he was, always. But I always knew there was one person in the world who hated my Dad. That was my mom. There were many times my dad could have spent the money his construction team earned to take good of the family first, but he didn't and always helped and put others first, leaving his hungry family behind. Even today, every time we walk around our village, my mom always says, with pride and confusion: "The most of rich contractor today in our village, all have learned how to build from your Dad, but how come your Dad was the "poorest" contractor in history of the area?"

In 1962, my oldest sister was born. It lit up my mother's life when she arrived, because most of the time my mom stayed at home in the village by herself while my dad worked in the city to build with his construction team. My mom had to take care of my oldest sister by herself most of the time, and she was also very busy taking care of the farm. Then, after a miscarriage that my parents believed was a boy, my mom got pregnant again! In 1966, my second older sister was born. But she didn't bring much surprise to the family because my dad wanted a boy and she was another girl! In 1969 my mom gave birth to her third surviving child in our local hospital, and it was a girl again. My third older sister was the healthiest baby ever in the family. She weighed 7 pounds and had beautiful long, thick black hair when she was born. "No one believed she was a newborn baby," my mom always says when telling us the story about when we were born, "She looked like a two month old baby." In 1970, at midnight, in late summer, my mother walked herself in the darkness to the local hospital. Around 4 or 5 a.m., as soon as I was born, my mother packed me up and held me tight in her arms. She walked in the rain and darkness in pain back to our home because she was very concerned about the three young girls that she had left. I weighed only 2.2kg, a little tiny hungry kitty wrapped in her arms, and I was the lightest baby in my family's history. Because my father still hoped to have a son, my mom gave birth to her fifth surviving child in 1972. It was a girl again! That was my younger sister Mei. In 1974, my mom gave birth to her last child, also a girl. Our youngest little sister didn't make it. She died from sickness in my mom's arms when she was about 1-1/2 years old.

That's the story about how the "Five Golden Flowers" were created in our family.

In the late 1970's, China started a family planning program to try to control the population. In 1980, China started the One Child Policy. In 1984, one of the new rules of the OCP stated that rural families were allowed to have a second child after four years if the first child was a girl. It was during this time that my three older sisters got married and started their new families. It was a hot time for the one child police. My oldest sister married her first love, a boy from our village who went to high school together with her. They had their first boy, my nephew, in 1985. Four years later, in 1989 my oldest sister had her second and last child, also a boy.

In China, people always say the OCP was only aimed at the poor families who have no money, no power, and no relationship with the people that worked in the government. For example, in January 2014, there was news about famous movie director Yimou Zhang finally having received a fine from the Wuxi City Family Planning Bureau of 7,487,854 yuan because he had two boys and one girl in his second marriage. It is and was very common that people who either have money or power could always escape the OCP rule to have extra children if they wanted. So, while my oldest sister and her husband had no money and no power, they both were from the same area and had relationships with those who worked at the Family Planning Office. Thus, even though their first child was as boy, they were able to have a second child four years later after their first boy was born.

Both my second and third older sisters got married about the same time, and both of their husbands were also from our local area, but different villages. Both of these sisters delivered their only children around the same time in the same year, and both were girls. Both of these sisters were happy with one girl. As far as I know, all of my older sisters have never complained about not being able to have more children.

My sisters were part of a very large and growing part of Chinese society. In 2000, 55 million couples were recorded as being “single-child” families. This number grew to 90 million in 2007, and 176 million families in 2015. Whereas during my mother’s child bearing years most families had many children, by the time her daughters began building their families, most were satisfied with having just one child. While horrible methods were sometimes employed to enforce the OCP, the change in attitudes of most Chinese to how many children they want is a very impressive accomplishment. Last year when I went back to China, I attended my niece’s wedding. She was 22. Last month when I arrived in China, I was able to hold and play with her little boy, the first child of my niece. He was 4 months old. When I asked my niece if she was planning to have a second child, she answered “No.” She said she already felt pressure of “too much work” and “too expensive” to raise a child in China now.

Before I left China to come home, my other niece was in the middle of planning her wedding. She told me that she is enjoying her “life of two” very much so far, and both of them were very busy doing their family business together. As a result, she said, she is not planning to have any children soon.

During my research across China over the past decade, I have often seen the Family Planning pictures posted everywhere in the countryside, and sometimes in the towns and cities. In the advertising, there is often talk such as “It’s great to just have one child”, or “Boy and girl are the same,” “The Family Planning is a basic state policy of our country,” or “Delayed marriage and delay childbearing, fewer and healthier births,”...etc. I don’t know how much those words and sentences in the Family Planning pictures have changed people’s minds to consider having just one child, but when I look at the change that my family from the generation of my grandparents till today, the new generation of my nieces, there is a big difference in attitudes!

I believe the old generations (my grandparents and my parents), most of them felt like they could find their living place, their “refuge,” in the intergenerational succession. So, children meant everything to them for their whole life. They always tried to have as many children they could. Today, the new generation is more considering of what kind of life they prefer to have for themselves, and they figured out that their future living place doesn’t need to rely on their children anymore.

When I was reading the news and people’s blogs online about China, I have learned the number of “DINK” (double income, no kids”) couples is going up and up every year. I know two of my old friends, both of whom have been married over 10 years. They are still enjoying their “life of two” today.

Today I am sitting by the computer, looking at the information of the 32 potential birth families that we located. They have turned in their DNA samples and we are awaiting the results. Of these 32 birth families, one of the children given up was the first child in the family, and this girl had a special need. One of the girls was a third child. As far as I know, all the rest were second children in their families. In every case that I know of, the reason was to try and get a boy. The recent changes in the One Child policy would not have changed the outcome for any of these families, because they already had an older daughter and were already allowed to try for a second child (with the hope that the second child would be a boy). It seems these birth families are happy with how many children they have now, but regretted what they did in the old days, "giving away" their daughter for another chance to have a boy that the family needed.

On Oct. 2,9 2015, there was much excitement for the Chinese when the news came out about that the One Child policy had changed to allow families to have two children. Below were some common comments posted on social media by people inside China about the news:

"Many of my friends, don't even want to get marry, so forget about having children. Even if they have an opportunity to have two children now, most of them don't even want to have children at all. This generation are all spoiled children of the family, and there is no hope from them. 'There is no need to live so tired,' that's what they said."
"Poor us! We have no chance to pregnant again if we kept waiting. The Family Planning is aimed at people like us who have no money. The people that have money can have as many children as they wanted, hopefully free-for-all will start earlier, even just started on the ages."

"In a few years, even if the government pays money for the family/people to have more children, the family' people won't even want to do it! We will see!"

"Even allow to have two children now, but there aren't many family/ people want more children, because you can give birth but not be able to afford to raise more children now." Etc.

Winter just came, Spring won't be far behind. How much hope that the two children policy will bring or change the families in China in the coming new year? We will have to look towards the future and see.

Stuy, Brian **Adoptive father**

It is fair to say that no name evokes as swift reactions in the Chinese adoption community as the name Brian Stuy.

The father of three adopted daughters from China, Brian and his wife, Lan, who is from Guangzhou, have made it a life's work to conduct research for families who hope to learn more about their children's earliest days. In the course of conducting this research,

they have found birth parents, recorded lengthy interviews with orphanage directors and analyzed abandonment patterns in many provinces. Their work has led them to question much of the central story that propelled so many people around the world - the U.S. in the lead - to adopt children from China.

Brian is not shy about his views, which have been quoted extensively. He believes that most healthy babies could have found families within China. He has been outspoken about what he sees as a system rife with corruption. He is confident that many, if not most, Chinese adoptees will want birth family information at some point in their lives and he believes that parents should seek it out for them, before, as he says, "the trail gets cold." Not everyone agrees. His critics say that Stuy is too quick to cry corruption and that he is impatient with adoptive parents who do not share his views. His fans applaud him for asking hard questions about how China's adoption system works. Here, Brian talks about what led him to adopt from China, about his Mormon faith and his decision to leave the church, and about why he still believes that China's efforts to control its population growth made sense.

For more on Brian's views, you can visit his site: <http://research-china.weebly.com/>



Meikina (left) was adopted at 8 months old, in 1998; Meigan (right, next to her mom) at 18 months old, in March 2002 and Meilan (center) at 3 years old, in 2005. They are pictured here with their parents, Lan and Brian Stuy, of Salt Lake City.