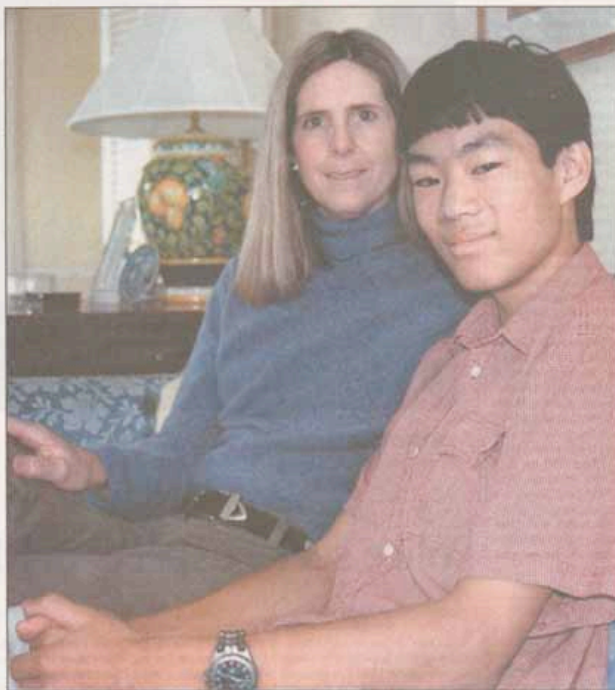


FAMILY TIES



Weston's Sara Hunter and her son John will be on Channel 56's "A Family to Call My Own" tonight. (Dec. 29, 2001)

TV show spotlights adoption

Weston family's story will be featured tonight

By Stacey Hart
NEWS STAFF WRITER

WESTON — With a documentary about international adoption in her portfolio, writer and film producer Sara Hunter is better equipped than many to talk about the joys and trials of bringing children into a family.

For that and two other big reasons, Hunter will take part in a two-hour special airing on Channel 56 tonight at 8 called "A Family To Call My Own: Finding Love Through Adoption." The special, sponsored by Jordan's Furniture, presents stories of children in the foster care system wanting permanent homes.

Hunter and her husband Andy know what it's all about. They adopted two children, John, 15, from South Korea

and Abby, 14, from the United States. Both were only months old at the time of their adoptions.

"It's a real important show because it shows really positive stories of families who have come together through adoption," Hunter said. "Often what makes the news about adoption is the sensational story that isn't particularly representative of what our family went through, which was forming a family through adoption."

"I had always wanted to (adopt) since I was a kid," Hunter said. "I actually thought I'd adopt 12 kids, but once we adopted two close together, we said 'this is about perfect, this is about what we can handle.' But I had always been really interested in adoption and I think Andy was ex-

ADOPTION, Page B4

Local family featured on TV tonight

ADOPTION, From B1
cited about it too."

Looking for an adoption agency in New England to handle the American side of the adoption, Hunter and her husband found Wide Horizons For Children in Waltham. According to its Web site, it is the largest private, non-profit adoption and child welfare agency in New England, and among the largest in the United States.

"We were really excited about the Korean program when we applied," Hunter said.

The Hunters became more excited when they received a picture of John three months before he arrived. She said they even had a baby shower and placed his picture up for everyone to see.

"His (John) arrival on Oct. 30, 1986 was probably the most exciting day of our lives, going into Logan with all our family and extended family, seeing this baby come off the plane and just look at you," Hunter said.

Adoption was always discussed around both John and Abby because Hunter and her husband were so proud of it. They even had videos of both children's arrivals into their lives.

"I think we were saying the word adoption before they had any idea what it meant," Hunter said. "I'm sure it gradually sunk in, different things they were ready for at different times. They've always known."

Hunter said her son even jokes with his friends about being adopted. "It's nice that we're in a society that's pretty open about adoption," she said.

"I'm glad I was adopted," her son John said. "I don't really remember, but seeing the video is kind of cool. I guess that's all I really remember."

Hunter believes she was chosen to help with the

two-hour special because people at the television station were aware of a documentary she produced about five years ago. The documentary follows a child from Seoul, Korea to the open arms of his new parents waiting at Logan Airport.

Because Hunter and her husband had adopted John from South Korea, and Hunter was a writer and producer, the Holt Agency, the largest adoption agency in Korea, allowed a film crew into Seoul. Hunter and her crew were also allowed into the home of the foster family where the baby was staying.

"That is what made the footage rare because usually you're not allowed in with cameras behind the scenes, but because I was an adoptive parent, they let me film," Hunter said.

For the same reasons, Wide Horizons For Children put Hunter in touch with an Ipswich family who was looking to adopt a baby.

"It was a really special documentary in that it hadn't been done before, but also we had had such a positive experience adopting John and I wanted to show what a Korean adoption was like," Hunter said. "It's a really special process in Korea because unlike other countries where babies are kept in orphanages, there are between 700 and 800 families in Seoul that take care of babies in homes while the papers are being passed."

She also wanted to see what type of care her son had gone through during his first four months of life.

The infants are given great care and much love right from day one, according to Hunter.

"The baby we found was in a modest apartment with a grandmother and a sister, a brother, and a parent who were holding him all the time,

taking care of him," she said.

While in Seoul, Korea, making her documentary Hunter called the couple back in the United States to tell them how adorable the boy was and the incredible care he was receiving.

"It's so awful when you're on this side of it and you don't know what's happening across the ocean," Hunter said.

Hunter expected to fly back to Logan Airport along with the baby to continue documenting the trip, but instead found out she would be the baby's escort home about five years ago on Feb. 14.

"Suddenly I was part of the film instead of just directing it and asking questions, so it didn't turn out how I thought," she said.

Hunter said the documentary was an unbelievable process because while trying to be the objective producer, she also became close with the parents of the adopted boy.

Her 17-minute documentary, *Born Journey*, is sold on various adoption Web sites, along with her own.

"People show it to their parents and say this is why we want to adopt or they'll watch it and say we definitely want to adopt from Korea now," Hunter said.

Born Journey won the 1996 Gold Award for Family and Children's Documentary Short Subjects at the Charleston Film Festival and the 1997 Bronze Award for Family Short Subjects at the Houston Film Festival.

Part of her documentary will air during the "A Family To Call My Own: Finding Love Through Adoption" special.

Hunter said sending infants to the United States is "a tough loss for Korea, but certainly our gain."