



noes, and Bill even went white water rafting through the jungle (along with Sterling and the boys).

May:

Our Town ran May 14-17 and was, by all accounts, a success. Lots of people came to see it, which made us all feel that the hard work had been worthwhile.

However, there was a catch. When Bill asked one of the ladies he eventually cast in a lead role to audition, she extracted a promise from Bill to audition for her play, Love Letters, to run in June. "Just because I'm a new director, and I want to feel confident that someone will show up for the auditions," she said. It didn't occur to Bill that he would get the part.

Of course, he did. Rehearsals started May 19 or 20. The first work out for the Dragon Boat races was the Sunday after that. Of course, we showed up. Gwendi had her first swimming lesson (really!) on May 30.

June:

Love Letters ran June 11-15. It is a very good little drama, meaning that it is the type of play that should be performed in a theater that seats around 100

people. This is exactly what they did. The premise is that a boy and girl meet in third grade and remain best friends (primarily through correspondence, as they rarely live near each other) as long as they were both alive. After the first dies, the other receives a box containing every letter he ever wrote to her, and the play consist of his rereading all the letters.

We do hear her side of the correspondence because she is right there on stage rereading every letter she ever wrote to him. How this can happen is not explained and, actually, while you are watching the play, you don't think to question it. Anyway it is a very good, thought-provoking, and riveting play.

July:

We submit application to adopt another child. Gwendi continues swimming lessons. Sarah continues watercolor class. We go to a 4th of July party. Bill goes to the gym regularly.

August:

Gwendi continues swimming lessons. Sarah decides Gwendi needs to see Grandma and Granddad. They leave for California August 25, visit friends and relatives there and in Colorado, and return home September 15.

September:

Sarah and Gwendi return home to learn that Bill is training for the MacLehose, a 100 kilometer (63 mile) endurance event. They join him after a "family walk" that ends at a Thai restaurant in the beachfront village of Shek O. Then someone twists Bill's arm to try out for another play, The Fantasticks. He does, and he gets a part, leading him to phase out the MacLehose training.

October:

Gwendi starts pre-school! Sarah is a little stunned. The popular wisdom here is that you have to be on a waiting list for at least two years before you can get into any educational establishment. Accordingly, last May or June, Sarah talked to the lady who runs the playschool that is connected to the same church where she had been taking Gwendi to playgroup (for 9 mo. to 3 yr. olds).

Then, around September 15, she talked to the lady again and

said, "how's the waiting list?" Well, when she was told, "Would you like to start on Monday?" her heart stopped beating! Sarah decided Gwendi could start the first of October. She goes for 2½ hours, 3 days a week, and just loves it. Sarah starts another class in Chinese classical painting.

Gwendi also has her first traditional Halloween. Trick-or-treating in our apartment complex. She concludes that this is an OK tradition, even if the background is a little unclear.

November:

The Fantasticks runs November 19-23 to rave reviews. Sarah and Bill attend a traditional Hong Kong wedding banquet, with the 17-course meal, loud gongs, 6 complete changes of outfit by the bride, toasts by the tipsy groom at each table (20 tables!) etc. etc. We also watch someone else's play, specifically that of our friend newspaper columnist Nuri Vittachi, who has put together a one-woman show with its star, who is also a columnist.

We also see the touring show of Cirque du Soleil, called Allegria, which is the most amazing show ever put under a tent. If this show ever comes to your town, you MUST see it.

December:

Vacation planned in Singapore and a "quiet, family Christmas."

MAYBE A LITTLE REST, A LITTLE FUN, A LITTLE TIME FOR REFLECTION ON THE JOY OF LIFE. Gwendi, Sarah, and Bill wish that—and more—for you and your families this season.



First Costume Sewed by Mom

KRITZBERG

YEAR(S) IN REVIEW - 1994-1996

To all those who have not "really" heard from us for two years, we apologize. It has been the center of the cyclone, albeit a very nice cyclone. While that's no excuse for not communicating with our valued friends and relatives, it's the best we have to offer. We hope you will accept our apologies and enjoy this brief update.

THE BEST KEPT SECRET OF 1994

...It all started in January 1994, but even as late as Christmas that year, we still weren't confident enough to share with you what was really the biggest project in our lives.

We had contacted the Hong Kong Government Department of Social Welfare in January and in July submitted our application to adopt a child. We spent the last half of 1994 going through the home study/approval process. Not terribly strenuous, but lengthy. It seems the Social Welfare Department wanted to be sure they were making no mistakes before they turned one of their charges over to us.

1995, January:

We arrived home from a wonderful trip to India, and learned that we had been approved as prospective adoptive parents to a child born in Hong Kong. We were in a pool with other "PAPs" and would be matched with a child — in due time.

February:

Then it was "hurry up and wait" for us — something Sarah was familiar with after her years in the National Guard. Not much else was happening, although Sarah signed up for several classes at the YWCA to keep her mind off the obvious. These included a Classical Chinese Painting (a continuing interest) and a creative writing class.

Then, on February 25, we received a call from the social worker.

In we trooped to her office to learn that a 1-year-old girl had just been released for adoption and would we like to be her parents?

We met Ng Ka-Man the day before her first birthday, February 28. And of course, it was a match.

March:

Ka-Man came home for good on March 8. We decided to name her Gwendolen Yao-Qin. We changed her Chinese name because "Ka-Man" is a Hong Kong name that doesn't really

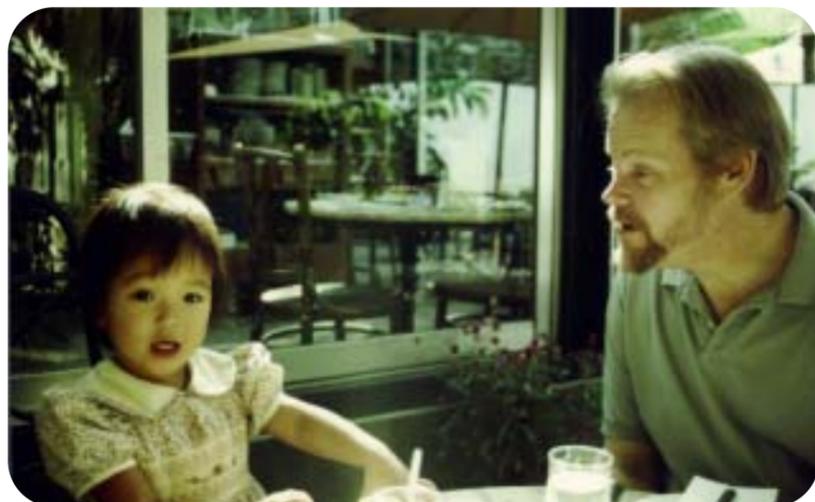
mean anything (the Cantonese equivalent of "hey you").

Sarah did some research into how Chinese names are traditionally chosen and came up with Yao-Qin, which means "beautiful folksong." We have been assured by those who should know that it is a very pretty and auspicious name. We are using the Mandarin version because we think it both sounds and looks better than the Cantonese version, "Yiu-Chuen."

April:

Sarah is in crisis. This baby does not want to be left alone for a second, and someone has to cook dinner! Not only that but wash the clothes and iron them and pay the bills and all those other "housewifely" things that actually constitute a full-time job in Hong Kong — even if you don't have children. When she finds it virtually impossible to even find an occasional evening babysitter, she gives in to the inevitable.

Here in Hong Kong, many, many people hire "domestic helpers"



Her Majesty, instructing Daddy on a point of etiquette

helpers" Sarah has resisted the idea, but now she decides to take the plunge and hire a full-time helper.

Meanwhile, Bill auditions for another American Community Theatre production. He lands the role of Herbie (Mama Rose's manager) in *Gypsy!*, and begins a heavy rehearsal schedule.

May:

... and it's time for Dragon Boat practice to start again. A Dragon boat is a very shallow, long, narrow, boat paddled by 16 to 22 team members in time to a drum. Traditionally, these boats are raced in connection with a Chinese festival commemorating and honoring an official who died in protest of corruption in government. (We wonder if this festival will be permitted after 1997.)

Bill and Sarah have participated in these races since 1993 and saw no reason why Gwendolen shouldn't enjoy them too—from the shore, that is. As far as we could tell, she did.

Grandma and Granddad also came to visit this month. Of course, they came along to race practice and their visit inspired a family trip to Lantau Island (part of Hong Kong) to see the big Buddha at the monastery there. We really enjoyed their visit; and they and Gwendolen enjoyed getting to know one another.

June:

The pressure of trying to hold down a job and rehearse a musical and practice for an athletic event builds. After ignoring a cold for too long, Bill sees the doctor. She puts him on antibi-

otics and it doesn't go away. She give him more antibiotics and he develops an ear infection. She gives him more antibiotics and the ear specialist puts a tube in his ear, quipping that he's never done that for anyone over the age of six before. Bill gets better manages to keep his job and put in seven excellent performances of *Gypsy!* Sarah and Gwendolen go to the Dragon Boat races alone.

July and August:

Summer in Hong Kong. Hot and wet. Gwendolen and Sarah spend their days singing in the hot rain (in bathing suits) and playing at the PPA, where they have lots of toys . . .

September:

The Big Day arrives. Bill and Gwendolen and Sarah go into the Supreme Court (it's a small territory — the Supreme Court



handles adoptions) as a couple and a baby, and come out officially a family of three. Celebrations are held. Pictures are taken.

October:

Now that Gwendolen is officially ours, we take her to California so that we can show her off and so that she can become an American citizen. We visit relatives. We visit friends. We visit U.S. Immigration. Gwendolen gets a Most Important Slip of Paper, along with a new passport. After a whirlwind, three-week vacation, Bill has to fly back to Hong Kong.

November:

Sarah and Gwendolen stay in America for three extra weeks, including Thanksgiving

December:

Home to Hong Kong and Christmas time has arrived. Parties to go to, presents to wrap, and we don't know what else, but it all passes in a whirl. Santa Claus presents Gwendolen with a Little Tykes kitchen, complements of a very nice little girl who had outgrown it. For the first time, we have American servicemen to a holiday dinner.

This is a community service that a lot of expats get involved with. Hong Kong is an R&R port for the U.S. Navy, and there is a feeling (at least among the homemakers here) that the best R&R is a home-cooked meal served in a family home. So every time a ship comes into town, a telephone tree gets going, and some servicemen get just that. As I said, we did it for Christmas dinner. Before, when we were only a couple, we just hadn't felt that we had that much to offer.

1996, January:

During January we are primarily occupied with 1) keeping warm — it does occasionally cool off in Hong Kong, but because the local mythos is to the contrary, heating devices are never installed in homes. Many people buy space heaters for every room, but we have never had the storage space to hide them away for the other nine months. We just wear lots of clothes and blankets — and 2) with our landlord's antics. We've been in conflict with the landlord since September 1994, and do not resolve the conflict until March. This is a long, involved tale with limited amusement value, but the climax was approaching and suf-



"Ho, Ho, Ho" — Which, In Cantonese, means "good, very good"

fice it to say we were preoccupied.

February:

Chinese New Year — here in Hong Kong, the public Christmas decorations undergo a metamorphosis around January 1, shedding the Santa Clauses and incorporating symbols of the three virtues (long life, prosperity, and scholarship) or the animal of the upcoming year.

These decorations stay up until the end of the Chinese New Year's celebrations, with the result that the city is strung with gaudy nightlights for as long as three months. The first four days of the Lunar New Year are public holidays, traditionally spent visiting friends and relatives according to a strict protocol.

There is nothing else to do for those four days (everything is closed), so we Westerners either travel or also spend the time visiting, albeit without the protocol. The highlight for us this year, as it was last year, was a gathering and hike hosted by friends of ours who live out in the New Territories (Hong Kong's answer to "the boondocks"). This was one of the coldest Lunar New Years on record, so the hikers found extra incentive to walk fast and arrived for dinner in record time.

Gwendolen's second birthday was February 28, and after a great deal of soul searching regarding how to celebrate her first birthday at home, we settled on

a family dinner followed by cake and presents. It was perfect. Sarah started another watercolor class.

March:

Bill held auditions for Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," which he directed and which was performed in May.

Gwendolen went to the auditions just to be with Daddy, but after she saw the ladies pantomiming breakfast preparations, she just couldn't resist an audition of her own. Unfortunately she did so during a break in the formal proceedings, which disqualified her from serious consideration.

Rehearsals began almost immediately. After casting the play,

Bill started in on Sarah to play organ for the "town choir" and also to provide some musical instruction. She reminded him that her daughter generally demanded her full-time and undivided attention, and also that she didn't play keyboard nearly so well as she does clarinet, but somehow she agreed to it anyway. While all this was going on, we were also getting ready for our vacation and our move, both of which happened in April.

April:

Easter, Bali, and we move. For those of you who already threw away the envelope, our new address is:

82 Kennedy Road, Flat 701
Bamboo Grove
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Yes, we spent Easter in Bali. The local American Women's Association put together a "family tour." The idea was not to put us on a lot of buses, but to get us to a nice hotel in an exotic location with a lot of other people with kids (hopefully our kids' age) without our having to do all the planning, etc., and convincing our best friends who have kids our kids' age to go the same place at the same time.

So we joined the tour and, as it happened, our best friends with a daughter Gwendolen's age (and two older boys) joined also. We had great fun.

Bali is everything you've heard about it (everything—exotic dances, beautiful beaches, pushy hawkers, volcanoes), so we spent time on the beach and in the pool, looking through the tide pools, shopping, watching the dancers, climbing volca-



"Up the Mountain Again, Slowpoke"