

Guatemalan gift makes parents of Knorrs

MIKE GARCIA
Copy Editor

If you were to look at Diane and Jeff Knorr's baby apart from them, you'd say this couldn't be their son. Looking at them together, though, you might second-guess yourself.

Little Pablo recently arrived from Guatemala, but has lived in the Knorrs' hearts for months.

Jeff, an English instructor at Clackamas, and Diane, who was communications director for the Lake Oswego school district, decided on adoption after four years of trying to have a baby didn't work. It didn't take them long to realize that a child is valuable whether it is conceived or adopted.

"We decided it's more important to be parents," Jeff said. So the couple entered the world of adoption agencies. They became attracted to the tiny Central American nation of Guatemala. According to Jeff, 60% of Guatemala's 10 million residents are 16 years old or younger.

Diane and Jeff soon learned about Pablo, who was born in December of 1996. Both of them remember the day they got the call—May 8, 1997.

"We were thrilled," Diane said. "It was an incredible moment, just to get the phone call." Soon they were corresponding regularly with the boy's caretakers and receiving photos from Alma Ruiz, the orphanage director.

And before long they were finally saying to themselves, *This is our son.*

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It only takes a few minutes of conversation with the couple to realize that adoption is not a quick and painless way to have a baby.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] will have paperwork ready for anyone who decides to adopt, Diane advised. This is good, though, because it discourages those who are not really serious about providing a child with a good home.

The Knorrs had to prepare a dossier, or file on themselves. Two sessions of home study with a social worker were required. The couple needed written approval from the social worker; they had to solicit family and friends for letters of recommendation and support. They wrote autobiographies.

Both had to turn in financial reports. These were supported by work-history verification from their employers. All the paperwork in the dossier was to be notarized and the notarization verified by the state. Everything had to pass through the hands of the Guatemalan Embassy in San Francisco.

Pretty complicated, Jeff said, considering "for most people, to have a baby all you have to do is get in bed."

Unfortunately, the process was further complicated by mistakes and miscommunication. Most Guatemalan adoptions take from three to six months after the prospective parents file the dossier, Jeff said. The Knorrs waited for a year.

"People kept asking us, 'Why don't you switch countries?'" Diane said. "But we couldn't do that. He was our son. If it had taken three years, he's absolutely worth it."

"It's exceptionally trying at times," Jeff added, "in a lot of ways—emotionally, psychologically, physically. But once you get that picture, the thought of bailing out is never an option."

"It just makes it that much sweeter when your child finally comes home."

During that time Jeff visited Guatemala three times and Diane went twice. Diane's first trip, which was meant to be ten days long, stretched to two and a half months, lasting until Jeff's arrival last December to celebrate Christmas and Pablo's first birthday.

"It was a very cool experience," Diane said, "but Spanish is a very hard language." Despite living in Spain in 1990, the Knorrs are far from being fluent speakers.

Jeff and Diane were the ticket to Pablo's first trip outside the orphanage walls. He "woke up in a Costco-like store [in Guatemala] with big eyes," Jeff laughed.

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Finally, on the 8th of this month, one year exactly after his parents received "the phone call," Pablo came home to Oregon.

"There were days I wondered if he was ever coming home," Diane said. "Now, sometimes I still can't believe it."

This little boy is an American now, but his parents will never let him forget where he came from.

Pablo's birth mother is Honduran and probably impossible to find, Jeff said, and the only description anyone has of the father is "a six-foot-five guy from Texas." So Pablo will probably never know his birth mother or father. But Jeff said they will keep in touch with Ruiz, who was "like a foster mother to him." Pablo will at least have this connection to his life as an infant.

"And we'll teach him everything we know about Guate-



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

Darling little Pablo Knorr spends some quality time with his dad, English Instructor Jeff Knorr. Jeff and his wife, Diane, adopted the Guatemalan lad this year.

mala," Jeff added. "That includes regular trips; as he gets older he'll appreciate that more."

Don't think the Spanish-language cassettes are going to gather dust at the Knorr household, either. The Knorrs have already committed to becoming bilingual.

This is the first baby, adopted or not, that the Knorrs have had, so there's a lot of learning to do. For his part, Pablo is adapting well, Jeff said. He's made the transition well and is already enjoying life to its fullest.

So far the little boy's most unique habit is blowing kisses. He does it with a romantic flair of the hand that would probably take an adult a couple of hours to master. Jeff laughed when he remembered Pablo blowing kisses to a couple soldiers in Guatemala. The soldiers were barely able to continue marching solemnly with their surprised smiles.

Life with Pablo has been everything his parents hoped for, they said.

"It's a dream come true," Diane said. "When you dream about being a parent, this is what you dream about. It's heaven; it's great."

But does that mean they're ready for another round of adoption papers?

"In the future, we definitely want a brother or sister for him," Knorr said, "but [laughing] it's not in the immediate future."

Shy Salal plants' beauty hides home remedies



TIMOTHY BELL / Clackamas Print

The leaves of a Salal shrub glisten in the garden.

SLADE SAPORA
Contributing Writer

As you are walking into the garden space it is often the large, bright, showy flowers that catch your eye and quickly draw your attention. But there are many subtler blooms that often go tragically unnoticed within the native garden.

One such plant has been blooming for several weeks now. Salal, *Gaultheria shallon*, is not what comes to mind when picturing a typical spring flower. First off, Salal is an evergreen shrub that often dominates our damp forest's understory with its thick green foliage and many tangled stems.

Secondly, Salal has tiny white flowers that are normally passed by without even a single glance. This does not mean that they are unattractive—they are actually quite the opposite if you stop, stoop and look—they are just compact.

You can find this shrub located in several spots in the native garden. The best patch to get up close to and really take a good look at is located on the southeast corner of the garden, right where the paved plaza meets the lawn. Another nice patch of Salal is situated under the two pine trees in the center of the garden.

Salal has oval-shaped leaves, that are a dark, leathery green and grow to about the size of your palm, or smaller. The leaves also have a slightly serrated edge, more noticeable to the touch than to the naked eye. The flowers are small, pinkish-white, bell or urn shaped, and congregate on the ends of thin branches, each flower having its own separate stalk to dangle from. Usually, there are anywhere from 5 to 15 flowers in a grouping, forming what looks like a small horizontal chain.

As the season winds on, Salal's flowers are transformed into wonderful dark purple berries. Salal is in the same family with Blueberries and Huckleberries, the Heath family, and Salal berries are just as edible and delicious as the former. Salal berries are in massive abundance during the summer months, and are quite a bit larger than our native Huckleberry.

It is for these reasons that Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest harvested large quantities of Salal berries, and prepared them in a variety of ways. The berries were used as a thickener and sweetener for other foods, and more importantly they were dried and stored for later use.

Native Americans dried the berries by pounding them into cakes or large loaves, which were then set on top of fern-fronds or other large leaves to dry. Once dried the cakes were wrapped in Skunk Cabbage leaves and stored away as a winter food supply. Dried Salal cakes dipped in fish or seal grease were considered a delicacy by many Northwest peoples.

In some tribes, pure Salal berry cakes were set aside exclusively for the Chiefs to feast on, while the other cakes, mixed with bitter Elder or Oregon Grape berries, were given out to the less fortunate commoners. In modern times these plump fruits have been used in jams or preserves. When

camping, I prefer them freshly picked, squished with a fork and spread across a stack of hot pancakes. Yum.

The leaves also have a number of simple, but effective medicinal uses. A dried leaf tea works well as an anti-inflammatory to the throat, urinary tract, sinuses, and lungs. If you dry the leaves and then grind them up into a powder, you can apply this topically (on the surface of your skin) to any sort of cut, scrape, boo-boo or insect inflicted bite or sting you may have.

Salal's abundance, both in nature and in cultivation, make it a prime candidate for use as home remedy. Herbalist and author Michael Moore states that "[Salal] has almost disappeared in use as a healing plant, and needs reintroduction."

All in all, Salal is a very useful plant with a rich and colorful history. Get out to the native garden and take a minute to have a closer look. You may be surprised by what you normally pass right by. Enjoy.

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(503) 659-1800

Fax# (503) 659-3989

E-mail: rhonda@linkport.com

2403 SE Monroe, Suite B, Milw. OR 97222