

WWW. OCTOBER 1, 2010

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Scott Simon's journey home

The host of NPR's Weekend Edition shares his family's experience with international adoption

BY JOANNE ZUHL
STAFF WRITER

Scott Simon will be speaking in Portland on Oct. 4 at the Newmark Theater in Portland's Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets are available through the PCPA box office. The event benefits Journeys of the Heart Adoption Services in Hillsboro. More information on Journeys of the Heart is available at www.journeysoftheheart.net.

There's an inherent — and appropriate — discomfort in asking someone you've never met before about the lengths to which he and his wife went to conceive a child. But Scott Simon isn't exactly a complete stranger. As the signature voice and personality behind NPR's Weekend Edition, Simon is a regular guest in homes across the country every Saturday morning.

Indeed, the fact that he and his wife, Caroline, could not conceive is probably not news to many of his listeners. Simon has talked openly about, and emotionally celebrated, the growth of his family through adoption, how he and his wife came to focus on China, and the response they received when they returned home a very different family than had left.

His new book, "Baby, We Were Meant for Each Other: In Praise of Adoption," is a collection of essays on adoption, beginning with the story of the Simons' adoption of daughters Elise and Lina from China in 2004 and 2007. It includes an essay on Portlander Thomas Lauderdale of Pink Martini, a friend of Simon's and, by Simon's estimation, one of the most brilliant people he knows.

Simon will be in Portland for one night, Oct. 4, for a speaking engagement at the Newmark Theater in Portland's Center for the Performing Arts. The lecture is

based on his new book, and proceeds will benefit Journeys of the Heart Adoption Services based in Hillsboro.

Simon has taken home journalism's most prestigious honors, including the Peabody, the Emmy, The Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award and more recently, the Studs Terkel Award, to name only a few. He has covered 10 wars and penned multiple bestsellers, both non-fiction and novels, often featuring his beloved Chicago Cubs. His writings have appeared in nearly every major newspaper in the country, and his face is becoming almost as well known as his voice in guest commentaries on the major networks.

But at home, he's just "Baba," father to Elise and Lina, ages 7 and 4, respectively.

Joanne Zuhl: *You write about you and your wife going to great lengths to conceive a child. What made that such an imperative, to go through the full extent of biological extremes, before choosing adoption, when you had that option every step of the way?*

Scott Simon: It was something that we knew intellectually was open to us every step of the way, but I guess it took us looking across each other over that field of numbers that we came to terms with it.

There is a whole field of truisms that we know but don't really act on because

we get distracted. The reflex reaction that my wife and I had, that of Abraham-and-Sarah style of begetting, turned into going to the fertility clinic. What can I say? You live and learn.

J.Z.: *I know you've said, in essence, that your family was not created as a statement about adoption or China's reproductive policies, but you have become outspoken about the situation there. That it's leading to the fact that young Elise and Lina were in need of a home. Can you talk about that?*

S.S.: To emphasize once again, my wife and I didn't adopt from China because we thought its "one-child" policy was so reprehensible that we wanted to take a child out of it. It was the most expeditious program going at that point. And you look for signs. My wife had fallen in love with New York's Chinatown, and we thought that was a sign.

We have adopted two little girls who are our daughters and they are Chinese. And therefore I feel we have a particular responsibility to pay attention to China, and to pay attention to the circumstances that delivered them into our lives. And that blessing in our lives began with the tragedy. We don't know the particulars; of a birth mother who felt she was unable — that it was illegal — to keep her female

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