

Adoptee from South Korea faces deportation from U.S.

By **GOSIA WOZNIACKA**
Associated Press

PORTLAND — More than three decades ago, a 3-year-old South Korean boy and his sister flew to the U.S. to become the adopted children of American citizens, but their life together didn't last long.

They were abandoned by their American parents, sent into foster care and separated.

A family adopted the girl, and got her citizenship. The boy, who was eventually named Adam Crapser, wasn't as fortunate: The parents he had were abusive, and never sought the green card or citizenship for him that they should have.

Now, at 39, after struggling with joblessness because of his lack of immigration papers, homelessness and crime, Crapser, a married father of three, is facing deportation because he's not a citizen.

"The state abandoned him when he was a child," his attorney, Lori Walls, said. "Now the U.S. is throwing him out."

A deportation hearing is set for April 2.

Federal immigration officials say they became aware of Crapser after he applied to renew his green card two years ago: his criminal convictions, ranging from burglary to assault, made him potentially deportable under immigration law.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement wasn't aware of Crapser's childhood adoption history when it decided to pursue his deportation, agency spokesman Andrew Munoz said.

U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, and Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, are proposing a stand-alone, automatic citizenship bill for adoptees like Crapser.

"It was not his responsibility to fill out that immigration paperwork," Merkley said. "He knows no other country."

Advocates say thousands of adoptees don't know they aren't citizens until they try to get a job, register to vote or apply for a passport.

The federal government does not track the citizenship status of international adoptees or how many have faced deportation. The State Department says it is aware of adult adoptees who are in immigration removal proceedings.

Adoptees who didn't become citizens are lawful permanent residents — but they lack the documents to prove it. Their stories about deportation to countries as diverse as India, Russia or Brazil are detailed on advocacy websites.

Since the 1950s, American couples have adopted nearly half a million children from other countries; about 100,000 of those children came from South Korea. For years, it was the parents' responsibility to seek citizenship, but many did not.

In 2000, lawmakers made citizen-



Korean adoptee Adam Crapser, left, poses with daughters, Christal, 1, Christina, 5, and his wife, Anh Nguyen, in the family's living room in Vancouver, Wash. on March 19. Crapser, whose adoptive parents neglected to make him a U.S. citizen, will face an immigration judge and could be separated from his family and deported to South Korea, a country he does not know.

"America promised me a home. I implore this country to keep its promise. If not for me then for my children, so they won't have to grow up without a dad."

— Adam Crapser

ship automatic for international adoptees, but the law wasn't retroactive. It excluded adoptees 18 or older at the time. Crapser wouldn't have met the criteria.

Many of them remained stuck in legal limbo. A provision that would make citizenship automatic for all international adoptees regardless of age was added to a Senate immigration bill several years ago.

But when reform stalled, the provision did, too.

Seven years after Crapser and his sister were adopted, their parents abandoned them. The foster care system separated Crapser, 10 at the time, from his sister, whom he was dependent on, according to orphanage records.

The boy bounced through several foster and group homes. When Crapser was 12, he moved in with Thomas and Dolly Crapser, their biological son, two other adoptees and several foster children.

The next four years, Adam Crapser said, the couple choked, kicked and hit him and the other children every day, slammed them against walls, set dogs to attack them and burned them with hot objects.

"Everything I did was wrong," he said. "As far as humiliation goes, I have been there."

His father also used racial epithets to address him and forced him to

forget Korea.

"He always told me I'm American, and that I need to let go of my past," Adam Crapser said.

In 1991, the couple was arrested on charges of physical child abuse, sexual abuse and rape. They denied the charges. Thomas Crapser's sentence included 90 days in jail, and his wife's three years of probation.

Because students at his high school teased him about the abuse, Adam Crapser said he dropped out of 9th grade.

He became homeless and slept in a shelter or the back of an old car while working several fast food jobs and finishing his high school equivalency diploma at night.

The Craspers had not obtained U.S. citizenship papers for him.

Over the next few years, Adam Crapser struggled alone, and also got into trouble with the law.

Once it was after he broke into his parents' home — it was, he said, to retrieve the Korean Bible and rubber shoes that came with him from the orphanage — and later it was for stealing cars and assaulting a roommate.

Because he lacked a green card to prove he could work in the U.S., he opened a barber shop and an upholstery business — something he could do without immigration papers.

He said his parents withheld his adoption record for years, so it wasn't until 2012 that Adam Crapser submitted a green card application — which set in motion his path to a deportation hearing.

Adam Crapser said he takes full responsibility for his crimes, but he has "done his time" and changed his life.

"America promised me a home," he wrote in his court declaration. "I implore this country to keep its promise. If not for me then for my children, so they won't have to grow up without a dad."

BRIEFLY

Iran nuclear talks stumble after missing deadline

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — With even a vague outline of an Iran nuclear deal eluding their grasp, negotiators headed for double overtime Wednesday night in a marathon attempt to find common ground for a more important task — forging a final deal by the end of June.

Iran and six world powers had cited progress in abandoning their March 31 deadline for the basic understanding that would prepare the ground for a new phase of negotiations on a substantive deal. But as differences persisted into late Wednesday, the State Department announced that Secretary of State John Kerry was postponing his departure and would remain until at least Thursday morning.

The talks — the latest in more than a decade of diplomatic efforts to curb Iran's nuclear prowess — will hit the weeklong mark on Thursday, with diplomats from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany scrambling to reach a framework accord with Iran.

"We continue to make progress but have not reached a political understanding," spokeswoman Marie Harf said in announcing Kerry's decision.

Iraq declares victory over ISIS in Tikrit

TIKRIT, Iraq (AP) — The government declared victory in Tikrit on Wednesday over extremists of the Islamic State group, and it warned the militants holding other Iraqi provinces that they would be the next to fall.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi walked triumphantly along a street in Tikrit, carrying an Iraqi flag and surrounded by jubilant forces.

Across the border in Syria, however, Islamic State fighters made their deepest foray yet into the capital of Damascus by infiltrating a Palestinian refugee camp, according to opposition activists and Palestinian officials.

Iraq's victory over the extremists in Tikrit was seen as a key step toward eventually driving the militants out of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city and the capital of Nineveh province.

Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi announced the victory, saying security forces have "accomplished their mission" in the monthlong offensive to rid Saddam Hussein's hometown and the broader Salahuddin province of the militant group.

Family says their pizzeria won't cater gay weddings

WALKERTON, Ind. (AP) — An Indiana woman whose family owns a small-town pizzeria says the state's new "religious freedom" law supports the restaurant's right to deny service to any same-sex couples who might ask them to cater their wedding.

Crystal O'Connor of Memories Pizza says her family would serve a gay couple or a non-Christian couple at its restaurant in Walkerton, which is about 20 miles southwest of South Bend in northern Indiana.

But O'Connor said that the restaurant would say no if a gay couple asked it to provide pizzas for their wedding.

O'Connor says the business reflects her family's Christian beliefs. She says her family agrees with Indiana's new law that prohibits any laws that "substantially burden" a person's ability to follow his or her religious beliefs.

Arkansas calls for changes to religious-objections bill

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson backed away Wednesday from his promise to sign a controversial religious-objections bill, bowing to pressure from critics that included his own son and some of the state's biggest employers, who say the legislation is anti-gay.

The Republican governor said he wants the Legislature either to recall the bill from his desk or pass a follow-up measure that would make the proposal more closely mirror a federal religious-freedom law.

Hutchinson said his son, Seth, was among those who signed a petition asking him to veto the bill.

"This is a bill that in ordinary times would not be controversial," the governor said. "But these are not ordinary times."

Hutchinson initially supported the bill and on Tuesday, his office said he planned to sign it into law. But a day later, his position had changed, after the political firestorm that has ensued in Indiana.

New Jersey senator indicted for corruption

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bob Menendez, the son of Cuban immigrants who rose to become one of the highest-ranking Hispanic members of Congress, was charged Wednesday with accepting nearly \$1 million in gifts and campaign contributions from a longtime friend in exchange for a stream of political favors.

Menendez predicted he would be "vindicated" and, in a defiant statement before reporters and cheering supporters Wednesday evening, said, "This is not how my career is going to end."

"I am not going anywhere. I'm angry and ready to fight because today contradicts my public service and my entire life," he said.

A federal grand jury indictment accuses the New Jersey Democrat of using the power of his Senate seat to benefit Dr. Salomon Melgen, a wealthy Florida eye doctor who prosecutors say provided the senator with luxury vacations, airline travel, golf trips and tens of thousands of dollars in contributions to a legal defense fund.

The indictment from a grand jury in Newark contains 14 counts — including bribery, conspiracy and false statements — against Menendez and also charges Melgen, a political donor to Democrats.

The criminal charges cloud the political future of the top Democrat — and former chairman — of the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee, who has played a leading role on Capitol Hill on matters involving Iran's nuclear program and U.S. efforts to improve ties with Cuba. Menendez said Wednesday he would temporarily step aside from his role as top Democrat on the committee.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., thanked Menendez for stepping down and said he "should not be judged until he has his day in court."

The indictment will almost certainly lead to a drawn-out legal fight between Menendez and a team of Justice Department prosecutors who have spent years investigating his ties to Melgen. It will require prosecutors to prove that a close and longtime friendship between the men was used for criminal purposes and is likely to revive the legal debate about the constitutional protections afforded to members of Congress for acts they take in office, which Menendez has already signaled as a possible line of defense.

The indictment marks the latest development in a federal investigation that came into public view when federal authorities raided Melgen's medical offices in 2013.

In exchange for gifts, prosecutors allege, Menendez sought to smooth approval of the visa application process for several of Melgen's girlfriends, worked to protect a lucrative contract and intervened elsewhere.

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