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## BRADLEY'S BIRTHDAY WISH

By Margurita Mei

I don't think I'll ever quite forget that last spring in Providence, it will always be a memory that surfaces when I think of turning points and roads not taken. For it was a time of transition; our family of four had come to the realization that there was more to self-sufficiency on five acres than what was depicted on the pages of The Mother Earth News. Somehow, the ideals we had adhered to in the '70s didn't comply with the responsibilities of raising a family. Lack of money and isolation prompted us into thinking that it was time to take a more conventional outlook on life than securing our family's future with just a small parcel of good earth in the mountains of northern Utah. These matters seemed considerable, but what I recall most about the spring of '80 was the birthday wish of my six year old son whose words put all my concerns into a broader perspective.

Bradley's birthday caught all the elements of a Kodak color snapshot. There were the pointed party hats, the string-hung balloons, the unrestrained children stomping and tearing in one door and out the other and there was Brad's first bicycle that his dad had transformed from a rusted old frame he had found out in the barn. Yet, among ourselves we recognized that this had become our farewell party as neighbors and friends stopped by to wish us well on our next venture.

The decision had been made to head back East, as they referred to it in Utah, to Chicago, where hopefully we could offer the children social and financial security. For the boys had known change. They had to become adaptable in the six years that we traversed the country from city to town to farm to town, seeking that one "Utopian" community. We all had to work out within ourselves what we had come to know as an experimental lifestyle. And it was time

for change again.

Brad had always been an intuitive and sensitive child, continuously asking me to interpret what he had seen on the news with questions like, "What is a hostage?" and "Why are there wars?" I knew he understood our predicament and was aware of our indecisiveness and was experiencing some uneasiness of his own about the move.

When it was time to sing Happy Birthday, blow out the candles and make a wish he said, "Wish? What do you mean wish? Is this going to come true?" "Honey, just make a wish and hope it will come true," I said. He sat with his arms crossed and a puzzled look on his face that seemed to detach him from the excitement and eagerness of the children around him. "I'm not ready," he said earnestly. "I have to think about it." We opened presents, shared cake and ice cream and said our good-byes.

Later that evening Bradley came into my room, climbed over a half packed cardboard box and sat on the edge of my bed. He lowered his head and said, "I finally thought of my wish, mom." Then I brace myself for what I thought had been a silent complaint up until now. I was certain he would ask why it was always homemade presents and that he wished he would have gotten the red dirt bike that we had looked at in the hardware store. I waited to hear that he wished we could stay in Providence rather than move again. But he voice no complaints. He raised his head slightly and in a sincere, quiet voice he said, "I wish we could have peace in our world and everyone would be free and there would be no wars and everybody would have food and a house and everybody would have money and be happy." He paused a second and asked, "Is that a good wish mom?"