

Once upon a time.....

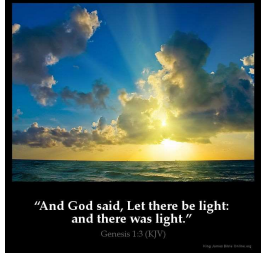



*A mother and daughter's reflection on the journey of adoption, disability and finding a voice with Augmentative Alternative Communication.*  
Batin and Sonja Carpenter

**The power of words...**

In the beginning was **the word**...  
God **spoke** and the world was created!

This is our story of the power of words...



**What is communication to us??**

'To be is to communicate' or as ISAAC put it;  
*"Communication is the essence of human interaction and learning.*

*Communication is a basic human right and essential to our quality of life as a social species."*

- God spoke and the world came in to being - the power of communication.
- Relationship - to communicate is to be in community.

**I am passionate about all people having a voice.....**

- Personal experience
- Professional perspective









**Batin's beginnings...**

I was born in Pitsanalouk in central Thailand.

When I was about 18 months old, I was found, by a bus stop, in front of Pitsanalouk Hospital.

We believe that initially I was cared for by family. As I grew and my disability became more apparent, my family may have found it difficult to look after me.

They may have been very poor and probably thought I would be well looked after in the Hospital

**I was born in Thailand.**

"I don't remember, but I imagine my Mum, in Thailand, pregnant with me."



"I imagine, I was born in Hospital and my Mum gave me kisses."

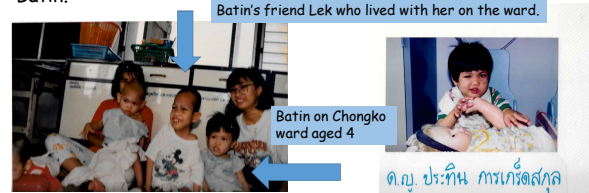


As part of the adoption process, they searched for family, but could not find any.  
I visited Pitsanalouk Hospital, after I was adopted.



### Pakkred Children's Home

I went from the Hospital to a large government run institution on the outskirts of Bangkok, in Pakkred. I lived on a ward with about 60 children with cerebral palsy. Andy and Sonja worked as volunteers on the ward and met Batin.



Batin's friend Lek who lived with her on the ward.

Batin on Chongko ward aged 4

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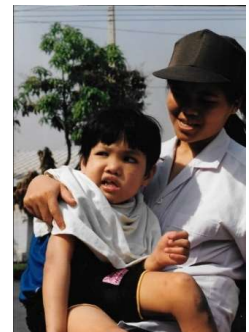
หนูจะไปส่งกฤษณะ

Batin in her early years at Pakkred

### Pakkred Children's Home

"In the big children's home it was not very nice. The carers did not have a lot of time and were not always very nice to me. I helped feed other children. I slept on the floor"

Photo: Batin with one of her teachers, 5/6 years old)



"I remember going from Pakkred Home to Rainbow House. It was a small group home run by the Christian Care Foundation for Children with Disabilities (CCD). I made new friends. The Thai couple who ran Rainbow House were called Wasan and Jariya. I was happy there. From there I went to live in Wales with Sonja and Andy who adopted me".



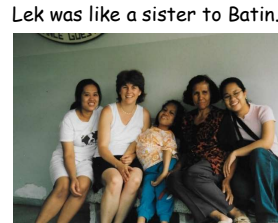
"Sonja and Andy came to adopt Batin. Sonja and Andy signed papers and a passport for Batin"



"When Sonja and Andy came to collect me from Thailand they brought presents. Friends and family had given gifts to welcome me into my new family. I remember getting a tape recorder with music, The Lion King story book and colouring things."

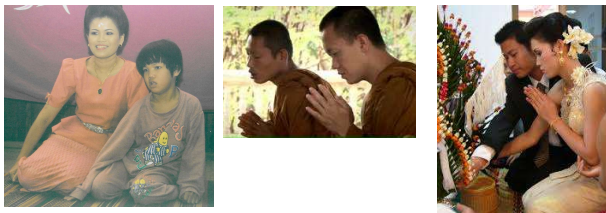


We visited Batin's friend Lek in Thailand. Lek lived in the Children's Home with Batin until her family took her home to live with them in the North East of Thailand.



Lek was like a sister to Batin.

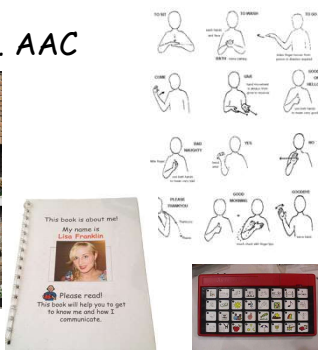
"I remember going, with Sonja and Andy to my Thai teacher's wedding in the countryside. I got dressed up and my Thai friends put make up on me. The monks came early (5am) in the morning to do the wedding blessing."



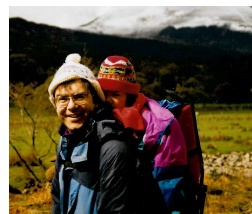
"I remember going on holiday in Thailand, to the beach (Hua Hin). I saw a horse on the beach and I played in the water. I remember having cuddles with my new Mum and Dad. We went to the airport and travelled to Holland to visit family and then to Wales, my new home".



### Wedding...adoption... AAC



### Moving to Wales...



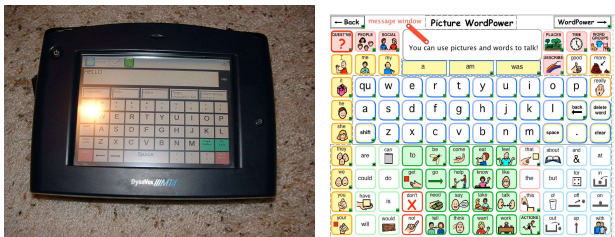
"After a few years of living with Sonja and Andy, May, my new sister from Thailand came to live with us. We went together to collect her from Thailand. I have 3 sisters now - Amy (14), Hannah (18) and May (24)."



### Batin's first 'devices'...



### MT4- Dynavox with WordPower



### Device review (2012/13) Accent and minspeak



### Helping hands along the way...

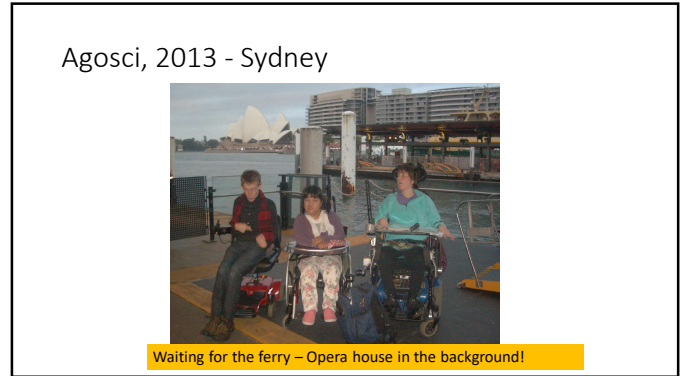
- Big Mouth Camp, Melbourne, 2008
- Model, model, model
- Introduction to PODD



### Agosci conferences..

- 2009 - Canberra
- 2011 - Adelaide
- 2013 - Sydney
- 2015 -Brisbane
- 2017- Melbourne





What Communication tools do I use?

- I can say some words, like yes and no and some Thai words.
- I use signs.
- I have a communication book called a PODD.
- I text, and I write notes.
- I have a device called an Accent.
- My parents, my sisters and support workers help me with my device. I can do most of the programming myself.

What is it like not being able to talk and using a Device?

- I sometimes feel frustrated.
- When you use an accent device, you use pictures and words to make sentences.
- There is a lot to remember and learn.
- That makes it hard and slow to talk.
- When I use my device, write notes or text messages, it is clear what I want to say. People do not have to guess.
- It can still be hard and takes time.

**The lows...the challenges**

- Getting everyone on board
- Wrong assumptions
- It takes time and effort
- Technical hitches
- Environmental challenges
- Overcoming personal challenges

## The highs...celebrations

- **Big Mouth Camp** - setting us, as a family, on a road of MODEL, MODEL, MODEL... and letting the whole family have a go.
- **Agosci** - support, new knowledge, new friends, role models and inspiration to keep going.
- **Supportive organisations/professionals**, over more than 20 years that invested time and energy in to Batin and our family to help access and use communication systems
- **The laughter and joy** it brings when Batin uses her device with humour and spontaneity during family times
- The times when Batin has been able to **communicate accurately** something that is bothering her, which others have not told us and she has not been able to get across without her device.

Finally...



**To be is to communicate - to communicate is to be in community**

**Using AAC - no secrets or magic - you just have to do it!  
Take time to listen, take time to model....**

**Developing and using our communication skills in whatever shape or form is a lifelong journey**

*Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs 16:24*



Thank you for listening to our story