

## Escort Story

Reported by Terry Bobbitt, American Airlines Flight Attendant and AAI escort

*Michael's Journey Home....*

*March 3, 2011*

*In all my years of escorting children for Airline Ambassador's Children's Escort program...never has a child so left his footprint on my heart...as sweet Michael Lucien.*

*I first became aware of the medical needs of Michael when he was one year old. I offered to fly down to Haiti and escort him to Atlanta where he would receive the surgeries needed for intestinal reconstruction.*

*Sweet Michael quietly went from the arms of his mother to me without a moment's hesitation as his Dad began diligently showing me everything he has packed for his child to take on the medical journey. Mom and Dad and a family friend are with Michael at the airport for his send off to the States, and mom has a single tear rolling down the beautiful brown skin on her face. "I promise" I told her, "I will take care of your little boy and bring him back to you when he is ready." And through a translator, she understands my message as she gently nods her head 'yes' in simple trust of the handing off of her precious child.*

*So, together with Michael and the carefully packed bags Dad brought to the airport in Haiti that day, I journeyed along with my flying child as he made it one step closer to his healing.*

*That was almost two years ago in which Michael's medical miracle began...through Airline Ambassador, Childsprings International, many doctors and nurses and especially his loving host families...he has touched many hearts...transformed many lives along the way to his road to recovery.*

*The day came for Michael's return home...leaving the families who loved him as their own and returning to the arms of mama and papa who have missed much in his young life... yet eagerly await his arrival!*

*Naturally, he clung to 'his sisters' and loved on mama Nancy...and cried...but somehow this baby knew he was to go into my arms and say 'good bye' to the only people he truly knew to be his family. As I stood watching the exchange of love between this family and Michael...my heart yearned to see the happy ending for them all...Mama and Papa in Haiti and Michael's adoring host families, and of course, for Michael.*

*I held Michael through security and into the gate area in Atlanta to be seated and just rest...quietly at first he cradled into my lap and then, a deep deep whimper came from the very center of his heart. A whimper that spoke without saying a word..."I so desire to be back with my family."*

*Once seated on the flight...this journey to his homeland was upon him and suddenly he began telling me about his pictures and one by one, we went through each person who cared for him. Each host mama and host papa and the sisters and brothers he came to know as his family were talked about with such delight!*

*"Do you know..." he asked, "who told me I have a special place in her heart?"*

*"Who?" I asked!*

*"Mama Claire!..." He said with eyes open wide and a smile on his face!*

*"Mama Claire said I will always be in her heart!" he continued on.*



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*He told me about the zoo and all the animals at the zoo...showed the pictures and mimicked the animal noises as we looked through each one. He explained how he built castles in the sand and jumped into the water when they vacationed at the beach. "Look!" He said with excitement. "That is ME....at the beach! I had SO FUN!"*

*"I love my toys..." he said as he pulled out his light saber toy from his Elmo backpack...*

*"Look, this is my light saber and here is how you turn it on!" he told me...*

*"Do you want to try it?" as he handed me his toy!...bringing me back to my own days of 'playing light saber' with my boys when they enjoyed such toys!*

*"You fly this plane, and I will fly this plane..." as he handed me his plastic plane from the Elmo bag he brought along... and so we began to 'fly our plastic planes' around seats 7A and 7B at 37,000 feet in the sky...with much laughter...landing on the purple crayon colored 'runway' drawn on notebook paper...and 'filling up with gas' with the white crayon.*

*Such a creative way to enjoy the toys he carried along with him!*

*Halfway home as we landed in Miami...and Michael was able to walk again. And...slowly, we made out trek with bags in tow through the terminal and onto the sky train where it would take us to our final flight to see his parents back in Haiti.*

*Michael was a delight to those who were blessed enough to meet him that day...the 'captain Mike', who invited him to come to the cockpit and 'fly' the plane, the passengers who curiously asked about his story...and ME! Yes, he is a dearly loved little boy and I was lucky enough to return him to his mama and papa as one of many who will be forever changed by the miracle of his story.*

*Michael will tell you his favorite bible verse...he told me...*

*Jeremiah 29:11 For I have plans for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future.*

*Yes, God does have plans for your life, Michael...Yes, He does!*