

- A nonprofit membership organization inspired by the spirit of traditional Kazakh communities
- Dedicated to building a bridge to Kazakhstan
- A Kazakh cultural resource



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News from the Aul

Volume 2, Issue 1

Winter 2006

Zhailau camp 2006 to be held August 14-19 in New Hampshire, Special Programs Planned

The Kazakh Aul of the US is delighted about our upcoming second annual Zhailau retreat. This year the retreat will be a 5-night *all inclusive* summer heritage camp for families located at the wonderful Geneva Point Center on 200 acres of Lake Winnepesaukee waterfront in New Hampshire. Zhailau 2006 promises to be a special time devoted to celebrating the wonderful culture of Kazakhstan, to providing an opportunity to bring children and families together, all while taking advantage of the wide range of recreational programming and facilities that the Geneva Point Center has to offer. Most importantly this 5-day camp is a wonderful opportunity for families to come together, to relax together, to eat, to play, and to celebrate our children's birth culture – together.

Last summer, our Zhailau retreat weekend was jam-packed with activities over 1 ½ days. An advantage to having a longer retreat this summer is that we will have more unstructured down time when families can relax with one another and/or take advantage of all the wonderful recreational activities. Mornings will be devoted to Kazakh culture activities and afternoons will be “Aul open time” when families can decide their own activities from among the many that the Geneva Center has to offer, or not – if you just want to hang out, or take a nap, you can!

As usual, and in keeping with Kazakh tradition, cultural activities will be centered around our authentic yurt that we will raise together as an aul. We are privileged to have Almaty native Daniyar Baidaralin return to guide us, provide his wonderful lectures on Kazakh culture, and show his beautiful traditional artwork. We are also excited about the prospect of having Asylgul Dalabaeva come from Almaty to participate as a special guest teacher for traditional crafts and dombra. Provided that the US Embassy in Almaty grants her a visa, Asylgul will be joining us this summer.

Asylgul grew up on an Aul in Kazakhstan, and now lives in Almaty, where she works as a senior architect. Her hobbies include painting, sculpture, traveling, and playing the dombra. Asylgul is excited about our Kazakh Aul here in the U.S., and is especially touched by our mission to provide Kazakh cultural education to children and families. Asylgul wants to help our Aul by taking part in helping our children learn about their rich heritage. At Zhailau, she plans to play the dombra for us, give small-group dombra lessons, and conduct traditional Kazakh craft workshops for the children. Asylgul is already buying felt to bring for the crafts activities, and her planned crafts projects for the children include making small traditional style dolls, ornaments, and felt bags. We are thrilled to say the least, and fingers crossed that her visa process goes well.

Another special guest teacher will be Caroline Owens, of Owens Sheep Farm in New Hampshire. Caroline is an experienced felter who regularly conducts felt making workshops for children. Caroline will be leading toy felt yurt-making workshops.

Additional activities will include Kazakh games, traditional Kazakh ceremonies, cooking, and movies on nomadic culture. Also, the Geneva Point Center cooks have promised to prepare some Kazakh traditional dishes for our group. We will eat 3 buffet-style meals together each day, and please note that Geneva offers a vegetarian option at each meal.

During afternoon Aul open times, participants will be able to select from any number of the many recreational activities available at the Geneva Center including waterfront activities on three beaches supervised by certified lifeguards, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboat, fishing, two playgrounds, on-site and off-site hiking, arts and crafts, and sports such as softball and tennis (equipment included).

Geneva staff will organize special scheduled activities for our group, including a water carnival, nature hikes, canoe/kayak lessons, and a canoe trip. We have scheduled most of these optional activities during afternoons for people to choose during open times over the course of the week. In addition, a whole-group activity will be offered each evening.

For more information, including Zhailau rates and downloadable registration materials, please visit the Aul's website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org.

Letter from the Administrative Executive Director



Greetings!

This season's letter brings a wide range of news from the Aul and there is much to share, both promising and challenging. On a happy note, we are delighted and proud to be organizing a Zhailau this summer that is a genuine Kazakh heritage camp for the entire family. Save the dates if you can make it and read more about our plans on page 1.

Along with our excitement about Zhailau, we are disappointed that the August dates preclude the participation of many Aul families in the south. To all Aul southern families who are unable to attend because their children are back in school in early August, please know that we will make every attempt to schedule 2007 Zhailau during July or early August.

In the last newsletter, I informed you that we were hoping to bring over Kazakh children and professional artisans, musicians, and craftsmen to participate in our upcoming Zhailau camp. Unfortunately, we were not able to raise the funds necessary to bring about this dream, and therefore our Zhailau this year will not be as grand in scope as we had previously hoped. Nonetheless, as detailed on page one, a talented young Kazakh woman named Asylgul Dalabaeva will hopefully be joining us, and together with Daniyar Baidaralin and the rest of the Aul board, we look forward to a very special Zhailau 2006 in New Hampshire with many exciting cultural events planned.

On a solemn note, due to other demands, Zhanat Baidaralin is unable to participate in Aul activities for the time being. As I write in the article on Page 3, we are all tremendously grateful to Zhanat for all the wonderful things he has done on behalf of the Aul. Zhanat's son Daniyar continues on with the Aul and has agreed to serve as interim Volunteer Cultural & Artistic Director.

As you can imagine, it's been a challenging few months here at the Aul base. Happily, the spirit and driving force of Zhailau and Nauryz is keeping us going, fueling our passion for the Aul, and giving us wonderful things to look forward to. Please come join us if you can. And, if you cannot, we know that you as an Aul member will be with us in spirit.

On the Almaty front, Leila Bassenova has been working on developing a Kazakh division of the Aul and will continue to support us. As members may recall, Leila got married one week before she came to our Nauryz festival in 2005. Her latest news is that she has quit business and started a career in architecture, which is her original field of training. In addition, she maintains her commitment and dedication to our Aul. We wish you all the best with your new venture Leila, and thank you again for sending the yurt and all its beautiful accoutrement!

This month's newsletter focuses on a range of topics, including helping you and your family establish traditions to commemorate Nauryz—the Kazakh New Year. Daniyar Baidaralin gives us tips both small and large on ways we can celebrate the holiday in our homes, no matter where we live (see page 4). On page 6, this issue's "Spotlight" article focuses on Daniyar.

A highlight of the current issue are excerpts from an out-of-print book called *Stories of the Steppes: Kazakh Folktales Retold* by Mary Lour Masey. Please read the story on page 8 about the unusual and memorable way we were able to obtain permission to reprint her work. Also, don't miss Mary Lou's wonderful introduction to her book in which she provides an excellent summary of the unique cultural perspective of the Kazakh nomads (see page 8). On page 10, one of Mary Lou's translated Kazakh stories, *If You Know a Story, Don't Keep it to Yourself* is excerpted. Many thanks to Jack Masey for giving the Aul permission to reprint Mary Lou's translations in this and future newsletters.

A warm welcome to our newest members, and to everyone, my best wishes for a wonderful new year. Nauryz Kuttuh Bolsyn!

- Susan

Welcome to the Newest Aul Board Members

We are pleased to announce that Karen Myers of Lexington, MA and Sara Libou of New York, NY are the latest additions to our board of directors. Karen joined us in December and Sara in February. Both are very busy single moms who work full-time, and we are very grateful that they have found the time to generously donate to the Aul.

Karen is mom to Zachary, a neat 4-year-old boy from Mongolia, and works as director of corporate and foundation relations for a hospital in metro Boston. In addition, she has a doctorate in Slavic cultural studies and speaks fluent Russian. Karen has translated letters for the Aul, and actively donates her expertise, interest, and passion to our board conference calls. When she adopted Zachary in 2003, she stayed in a Mongolian Ger!

Sara is mom to Lauren, a sweet and lively 5-year-old Kazakh girl. Sara works for Verizon online services. Sara has many years of volunteer experience and possesses a commitment and passion for helping others. Now that Lauren is getting older, Sara feels that she has more time to share, and through her desire to return to volunteer work, is now an active board member of the Aul. We are lucky to have her experienced, dedicated, and enthusiastic participation!

Zhanat Baidaralin Takes a Leave, Daniyar Baidaralin to serve as Volunteer Interim Cultural Director

Due to the demands of work and life, Zhanat Baidaralin has taken a leave of absence from the Aul and is unable to participate in our activities for the time being. The inception of the Kazakh Aul of the US was his idea, and Zhanat's passion really fueled the start of this organization. We are tremendously grateful to Zhanat for all the wonderful things he has done on behalf of the Aul, including making the connection with Leila Bassenova in Almaty, and for all his wonderful cultural guidance and inspiration. We wish him all the best in his endeavors, and we look forward to the time when Zhanat is able to return to our Aul.

Above all, we are most grateful to Zhanat for his cultural guidance to his son Daniyar, who continues on with our Aul as Volunteer Interim Cultural Director. Since the inception of the Aul, Daniyar has worked tirelessly to provide cultural programming, wonderful graphics, informative articles, and has made himself available to answer questions for our members. We are tremendously thankful and pleased to have his ongoing participation and dedication to our Aul.

Yurt Repair and Maintenance 101: Volunteers needed April 30th

The Aul is learning firsthand about some of the challenges the nomads may have faced. Daniyar Baidaralin discovered last summer that the yurt's wood was infested with wood-eating bugs. After some debate about the source of those bugs (Daniyar is convinced they are American bugs, while Norm Remmler thinks they are Kazakh bugs), Daniyar set to work by himself on the labor-intensive job of treating the wood and getting rid of the bugs once and for all.

Daniyar reports that he caught the problem fairly early and the insects ate maybe 10-15% of the wood. Now after all the pesticide treatment, each piece of wood must be painted by hand. This is a big job and Daniyar cannot do it alone.

Let's work together as an Aul, and together with Daniyar, repair the yurt. The work will go much faster in a group, and together, we can make it a fun Aul event.

We need 2-3 people who have experience with painting. Weather permitting, we will gather at the Baidaralin's house in Cranston, RI on Sunday, April 30th at 1pm. In case we need a second afternoon, or a rain date, the back-up day will be Sunday May 7th at 1pm. If you are interested in participating, please email Susan at ssaxon@kazakh-aul-us.org.

Can you conference call?

If you have 1-2 hours every other week (sometimes weekly, as needed) in which you would like to connect by phone with other KZ parents and participate in furthering the mission of the Kazakh Aul of the U.S., please consider joining the board.

Our regular meetings are conducted via telephone conference call, so your location in the U.S. does not matter. In fact, we *need* people from around the country to participate!

Together, people from a wide range of states can communicate the unique needs of members across the country. The Aul needs your help to fulfill our mission and to better meet the needs of our members.

Please consider donating your time to the Aul.

For more information, please contact Heather O'Toole at heatherotoole@charter.net or Susan Saxon at ssaxon@kazakh-aul-us.org or (401) 486-4023.



Nauryz

By Daniyar Baidaralin & Susan Saxon

There is a legend in Central Asia that every year during the night between the 21st and 22nd of March (the spring equinox), the wise elder Kadyr-Ata walks across the Earth. Kadyr-Ata brings people happiness and wealth, and he also possesses special magical powers. At three o'clock in the morning, Kadyr-Ata opens the door to the sky and lets Spring come to the world. At this time, he breathes life into the earth; in essence he renews the earth from its death-like winter state, and brings it back to spring.

When Kadyr-Ata breathes life into earth, he also signals the Light Spirit to return from underground, where the spirit had been hiding from the cold of winter. In traditional Kazakh lore, the Light Spirit represents the sun and springtime. When the Light Spirit gets the signal from Kadyr-Ata, he returns to earth and fights the Dark Spirit, the symbol of the cold winter. The Light Spirit brings spring and new life to the Steppe, and makes the Dark Spirit run far, far away.

For the Kazakh nomads, the arrival of spring was a time for great celebration. Life was hard for nomads on the Kazakh steppes, and Nauryz marked the end of the difficult winter season and the beginning of spring renewal. With spring came the beginning of a new year's cycle of life, the time of year when the nomads happily said goodbye to harsh winter weather, welcomed warm weather, and rejoiced in the birthing season of their valuable livestock upon which they depended for food and their very livelihoods.

Nauryz symbolized the birth of a new year's cycle of life and Kazakhs came together in their Auls to celebrate as a community. Nauryz was an Aul celebration because throughout the year, families worked together on behalf of their village. The Aul provided vital community support that kept families alive during harsh times and the Aul as a whole welcomed spring and celebrated the easier times that came with the New Year as symbolized by Nauryz.

Nauryz symbolized the birth of a new year's cycle of life and Kazakhs came together in their Auls to celebrate as a community

The roots of the holiday are ancient, and it is believed that the roots of Nauryz began at least 2000 years ago, most likely in Persia. *Nauryz-Meiram* (*Mei-rham* means "holiday" in Kazakh) is celebrated mostly in Muslim countries, but it is not a religious holiday. Nauryz is a traditional celebration of the spring equinox celebrated today by many nations throughout Asia and Europe, including Russia, Ukraine, Japan, and China.

In modern Kazakhstan, Nauryz is truly a social event. People gather together at their main city squares, where holiday organizers erect yurts, stages, and trading tents where crafts and goods are sold. Food is cooked on open fires in huge pots, and people dress festively. Throughout the day loud music is played and national singers and dancers perform their arts. Above all, it is a time for people to spend time with their friends and family, to meet new people and to make new acquaintances.

As evening approaches, when most elders retire to their homes, Nauryz organizers often stage a huge open-air disco show. Pop musicians of Kazakhstan and invited guests from other countries (e.g., Russia, Ukraine, Turkey etc.) perform, and the music may last all night long.

There is a traditional belief that people will spend their new year in a manner similar to the way they celebrated Nauryz. So, in the spirit of the season and a desire to have a comfortable year, people work hard to clean their homes, they wear their best clothing, and they cook a lot of good food. Indeed, the Nauryz table has important symbolism: the more food you have on your table, the better and more sufficient your life may be in the coming year.

According to tradition, the number "seven" has a magical meaning and it is good to have seven dishes on your table. At the Nauryz table, all the dishes have to be homemade and not bought in a supermarket, for the food must be made very carefully and with great love. You never cook common dishes for Nauryz, only special holiday foods. Above all, everyone in the family has to be involved in the preparations – in this way everyone gets to feel the importance of this annual event.

There is a special Nauryz meal called *Nauryz-Kozhe*, but it is not easily replicable in the States. It needs ten types of meat (including horse meat as a major component), seven types of milk products (including sheep's milk & Kumys), and three types of grain. *Nauryz-Kozhe* takes about ten hours to cook and is the king of all Kazakh cuisine.

Kazakhs are usually very conservative in the use of their best possessions, but on the occasion of Nauryz, people can't resist the joy of the holiday and exhibit all their best possessions. Families take out their special carpets, table cloths, blankets, pillows, and whatever is special to them. People decorate their homes with these treasures and take great pleasure in the holiday.

In years past, Nauryz also was also a day for sweethearts, similar to Valentine's Day here in the west. Young people prepared special presents for their sweethearts. Girls invited their boyfriends to their homes and treated them with a special dish called "Awakening."



Kun Batys (Sunset). Acrylic painting by Daniyar Baidaralin.

NAURYZ

Continued on next page

Nauryz (continued)

Awakening was prepared a special way, intended to increase a man's power and help him win traditional sport contests such as a horse races or wrestling. In turn, guys would bring their girlfriends presents, like sweets, jewelry, or cosmetics.

It is hard to overestimate the meaning of such gifts. Years ago, when this tradition was actively practiced, there were no malls or large markets in Kazakhstan, and people were unable to buy things whenever or wherever they wanted. It was not unusual for a young man to save money for an entire year just to order a present from Uzbekistan, China, Iran or Russia to please his sweetheart. These presents were viewed as very special and in turn, were kept for one's entire life and passed through the generations, as a memory of that beautiful time.

In addition, for young unmarried people, there was a game on horseback called "Kyz-kuu" (chasing a girl). The girl rode a very fast horse to escape a bunch of guys who tried to catch her. The winner was the lucky guy who kissed the girl on her cheek while riding at maximum speed.

Nauryz is a great day for national sports in Kazakhstan. In modern times, people in the countryside organize traditional games. Most of the sports are on horseback, and there are many variations. There are also ground sports, such as wrestling, archery, and tug-of-war. Most Kazakh sports are actually ancient warrior trainings, so the play often gets very rough, and only well trained adults are allowed to participate.

For boys and girls there are many games and activities, such as puzzles, memory contests, hide and seek, chasing, and swinging on traditional "Alty-Bakan" swings. There is also a traditional Kazakh game called "Asyktar", which is similar to what Americans know as marbles. Asyktar is a major children's game, played with bones from the feet of sheep.

Nauryz is celebrated in every school in Kazakhstan, and has been since the downfall of the former Soviet Union. I remember the very first Nauryz in my school. We put insulation on the ground of our court (it was still pretty cool outside) and covered it with Kazakh rugs. Each grade decorated its own corner and every grade tried to organize a better table than all the others. It was almost a competition – whose table was richer! One of the grades even erected a real yurt right in the court of our school.

In many schools, the decorations are not as traditional or costly as we had in ours. Usually schools organize Nauryz art exhibitions, music contests, talent shows etc. Schools are decorated with paper Kazakh ornaments, painted rugs, "Nauryz" banners, and it is tradition to have a lavish holiday meal.

Ideas for celebrating Nauryz in the American home

There are many simple things that families can do in their own homes to commemorate Nauryz. You can infuse as much Kazakh culture as you want or are able. Remember, Nauryz is about welcoming spring, so even just getting outside to commemorate the change of seasons is a way to welcome the holiday. Here are some suggestions:

- Take some special time together as a family to talk about the meaning and legends behind Nauryz.
- Decorate your home with special things you brought home from Kazakhstan
- Decorate your home with drawings in honor of the holiday. Children or any family members can draw anything with a Kazakh theme, such as yurts or horses
- As a family, cook a special dinner that includes Kazakh dishes, and if you are feeling ambitious, cook seven homemade dishes.
- As a family, play games outside in the nice spring weather. Play the Kazakh/American games of hide-and-seek, tug-of-war, or just go swing on some swings. Indoors, play a game of marbles or a memory game.
- Visit friends and family and tell them about Nauryz
- Talk to your child/ren's teacher(s) about Nauryz and share Kazakh culture. For early childhood classrooms, toy felt yurts, traditional clothing, photographs of nomadic culture, and Kazakh-themed coloring pages have been successfully used.

Above all, Nauryz is a family holiday. It's about spending time together with family and friends, taking the time to connect with those who are important to you.

Nauryz Kuttuh Bolsyn!
(pronounced Now-RYZ Kut-TUH Bol-SYN)

Have a happy Nauryz!

If someone wishes you a happy Nauryz, it is proper to reciprocate with the following phrase:

Birghe Bolsyn!
(pronounced Bir-Geh Bol-SYN))

You have one, too!

Spotlight on Daniyar Baidaralin

By Susan Saxon

Daniyar Baidaralin is the Aul's Volunteer Interim Cultural and Artistic Director, but don't let the "interim" part of the title mislead you—Dan has been an invaluable part of the Aul ever since its inception. Indeed, Dan's multiple talents have been instrumental in every cultural aspect of the Kazakh Aul of the US, Association for American & Kazakh Families. Here are some examples of Dan's work on behalf of our Aul:

- Every graphic that the Aul uses in our materials and on our website was designed by Daniyar
- Dan does the artistic design for every Aul event and performs most of the labor behind the designs, such as making authentic benches for seating in the yurt, decorative flags for the yurt's encampment, toy stick horses for children's horse races, the Shanyrak, and many others things for which there is not enough room to list here
- He lectures on Kazakh nomadic culture at Aul events
- He writes information articles for the Aul's newsletters
- He writes the *Ask Daniyar* newsletter column
- He makes himself available to answer Aul member's Kazakh culture questions

Daniyar Baidaralin is the Aul's Volunteer Interim Cultural and Artistic Director, but don't let the "interim" part of the title mislead you—Dan has been an invaluable part of the Aul ever since its inception.

Dan is a professional artist who was trained and grew up in Almaty. He came to the U.S. in 2003 to join his parents Zhanat and Vera, and his younger brother Bakhtiyar, who had immigrated here in 2001. Currently, he works full-time as an interior designer for a firm based in Rhode Island. As time permits, he volunteers his time and dedication to do all he does for our American Aul.

Dan has said that being part of the Kazakh Aul of the US has helped him become truly aware of his own identity as a Kazakh man. In his own words: *"If you are a Kazakh person living abroad, you will dream about your motherland every night for there is nothing stronger for a Kazakh than his native land. In old Kazakh tradition, seniors tried to return to their place of birth, to be buried where their eyes first saw the daylight. Even though I physically left my motherland, my heart will always stay there."*

"For me to save my inner peace, it was very important to follow the mission of our Aul. By connecting with my little compatriots and their families, I developed a deep love for my nation and culture, that I miss so much here in this beautiful country. The life with the Aul somehow completed myself and I became whole."

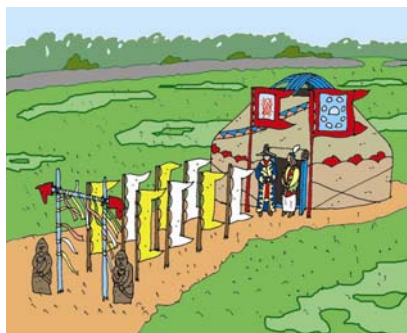
"Doing research on Kazakh culture for the Aul helps me move toward a deeper understanding of my own heritage. Thank you everybody for making this happen!"

As you can see, Daniyar is a thoughtful and insightful person who, through his immigration to the US and work with our Aul, has been able to more fully connect to his own Kazakh identity. For me personally, working closely with Dan has been both an honor and a joy. In addition to his many talents and dedication, he is a good and caring friend, one of those rare people who is at once honest, intelligent, and kind. Daniyar is a truly multi-talented and mature 27-year-old young man, and we as an Aul are incredibly lucky to have him with us.

Thank YOU, Daniyar!



One of Daniyar's graphics



Daniyar's design for Zhailau



Daniyar giving a talk at last year's Nauryz Festival in Massachusetts



Under Daniyar's direction, here is the yurt at last summer's Zhailau.



Ask Daniyar

Our Ask Daniyar column is a regular feature of this newsletter devoted to your questions about Kazakh culture. Daniyar Baidaralin is a 27-year-old Kazakh man, born & raised in Almaty. He currently lives in Rhode Island, & is excited to answer your culture questions. Please submit your questions to Dan at askdaniyar@kazakh-aul-us.org.

Hi Daniyar,

We returned from Kazakhstan with our son in October. His first name (which is now his middle name) was "Gani". Do you know the meaning of this name?

All the best,

Susan and Sean Daley
Brookline, Mass.

Hi Susan and Sean,

Your son carries a proud name of Gani Muratbaev (1902-1925). He was a first generation Kazakh Comsomol (Soviet Organization for youth). Having aristocratic origin, he joined new social movement against Russian Tsar's power. Back then, many young and passionate Kazakhs believed that the Communist Party will bring people happiness and freedom. That was before Stalin came to power. That was time of great changes, hopes and development, when people were building new Soviet Country. Gani Muratbaev did a great deal of educating people, bringing knowledge to auls, liberating peasants, fighting children's crime. Even though he died too young (22), Kazakhs still respect the memory of Gani, there is a monument in center of Almaty.

The name Gani has Arab origins as many other Kazakh names. Turkic nomads intersected with Arabs during Arab Conquest in 9-10th centuries. Since then many Turks adopted Islam and many Arabian names.

The translation of name is "wealthy, rich". As most of Kazakh names – this one is a wish-name. whoever named him Gani was wishing him to become a rich, wealthy person. Same time they named him after Gani Muratbaev, to honor our nation's hero. Keep an eye on him – maybe he will become a big businessperson :-)

The right pronunciation of his name might be difficult for an American throat. The "G" in the beginning is actually specific Kazakh letter. I don't know how to describe it correctly, you might get an approximate sound of it if you try to say "G"- "H"- "R" simultaneously as a one letter. It probably sounds awful-))) But this is the best description I can give you in writing. Ask me if you see me some day, I will show. The easiest way to say it will be "Ghani."

I hope that will help you.

Hi Daniyar,

My son Michael and I want to know how tall the average Kazakh man and woman would grow. Michael is not as tall as the other children in his class and this is on his mind. He is helping me to write to you. He is a Kazakh boy from Karaganda.

Thank you,

Ann and Michael
Maine

Hi Ann and Michael,

Very interesting question, typical for a Kazakh boy. This is a common issue during a growing period. For genetic reasons some of the nomadic people in Central Asia have little delays in their formation process. Back in my school in Almaty we had a very international complement of pupils. And, you could clearly see how some of the Kazakh kids had 1-2 years delay in their physical formation. Please, let your son know, that there is nothing to worry about – it is simple a matter of time for him to grow up.

If he is not a naturally small man (which could be a possibility for a person of any nationality), he will grow up a little bit later than most of Caucasian, Spanish or African American kids. However, he won't be tiny, like many Asian kids – Kazakhs are much more heavy boned and muscular than the rest of Asians.

There is no average height for all the Kazakhs. There are very tall and big people, and there are tiny people. The heights vary from region to region, from city to village, etc. However, the most common height for a Kazakh man will be between 5'-3"/6'-0". Proportions are usually stocky, body type muscular.

Kazakh women are usually smaller than men are. Most common heights are between 5'-0"/5'-6". Proportions are between stocky and trim, body type muscular. Again, there are thousands of exceptions.

Also, make sure you tell your kid's doctor that Kazakh kids might have a longer period of maturation. Usually doctors should know that about Asians anyways, but who knows.

Your kid also might meet another peculiarity during puberty. There can be another delay with that, too, and it is usually perfectly normal. Don't panic. During this period, it will be best to make your kid do some sports.

Actually, sports have a very special place in the life of Kazakhs. It is a natural cure for many health issues for Kazakh kids. We Kazakhs genetically evolved in a very harsh environment, so we are designed to bear a lot of physical load. We need it, like we need food and air - it is a necessary factor of our lives. Without enough load our Kazakh bodies can start to malfunction for no visible reason.

Therefore, my advice for all of the parents of Kazakh kids – GIVE THEM AS MUCH SPORT AS POSSIBLE. That will prevent many, many issues. Please, take in account their different genetic code. Kazakh kids need much more physical activities than the average American kid. The more, the better.

There is another good reason for Kazakh people to have a lot of sport activities in their lives. Approximately around thirty years (depending on life style) many Kazakhs, men and women, start gaining very dense and thick fat, that is extremely hard to get rid of. This is a genetically coded ability to accumulate extra organic matters to survive in harsh times. Contemporary American life is very far from being harsh, so this unique ability starts working against its owner. And only sports can prevent that.◊

Journeys to Kazakh Folktales: My Search for the American Author of *Stories of the Steppes*

By Susan Saxon

I have looked high and low for well-translated Kazakh stories in English to share with my daughter, and one book alone stands out, an out-of-print volume published in 1968 called *Stories of the Steppes: Kazakh Folk Tales, retold by Mary Lou Masey*. I recently decided that I wanted to share this gem with the Aul, and so I began a search for Mary Lou to obtain permission to reprint her stories in this newsletter.

I became an online sleuth. A web search for the publishing company went nowhere, but I was able to track down one M.L. Masey in the U.S., in New York City, a person purported to be in her 70's. That seemed to be a likely age for Mary Lou. There was also another Masey in New York, a man named Jack, who was a few years older, and for whom there was a phone number. Hoping that he might be Mary Lou's husband, I called and left a message for Jack, saying that I volunteer with a nonprofit organization and explained a bit about the mission of the Aul. Incredibly, Jack Masey called me right back and couldn't have been more kind. He indeed was Mary Lou's husband and he very generously shared their unique story that at once is exciting, dramatic, and tragic.

Both Americans, Jack and Mary Lou met on a blind date in 1959 in Moscow, at the height of the Cold War. They both worked for the U.S. government at the new American National Exhibition in Moscow, he as the Design Director, she as a Russian- and English-speaking guide. In his role, Jack represented the US Information Agency (USIA), supervised the exhibition, and designed exhibits. History was made at the American National Exhibition, for it was the site of the infamous Nixon-Khrushchev "Kitchen Debate," when the two leaders argued the merits of the American lifestyle while standing in an exhibit of a modern 1959 American kitchen, surrounded by reporters who captured the entire event on film.

Jack and Mary Lou married 6 weeks later in New Delhi, and together they traveled extensively throughout the world, wherever Jack's job with the USIA took them. In 1963, Jack was put in charge of a traveling American exhibit on graphic arts that visited four cities in the former USSR, Yerevan (Armenia), Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), and the opening city was Alma-Ata (now known as Almaty). Since she spoke fluent Russian, Mary Lou was hired as an American guide for the exhibit. They spent four weeks in Alma-Ata, and Jack says that Alma-Ata was their favorite stop on the tour, despite harassment by the KGB.

Not surprisingly, "Russians from Moscow were running Kazakhstan," said Jack. "We were attacked daily in the Soviet-run press, but the people knew what was going on. We had incredible experiences in Alma-Ata, we were mobbed by enthusiastic crowds. We loved the food. The friendship was wonderful."

The exhibition was provocative to the Soviets because it was comprised of American poster design, advertising, fine arts, and lithography. Much of it was abstract. "The Soviets couldn't deal with it. They were into communist neo-realism. And here we come with this American nutty stuff," said Jack. "We were very suspect and the Ministry of Culture in Moscow was nervous about us. And we reported to them. They assigned a group of Russians to 'help us out,' but they were really there to watch us. We were attacked in the press as CIA agents....we were amused by the whole thing."

During this time, Mary Lou knew that she wanted to write books for children, and it was in Alma-Ata that she developed her interest in Kazakh folk lore. Mary Lou loved Kazakh culture because of its richness and *Stories of the Steppes* grew out of her newfound affinity. Mary Lou's excellent translations of Kazakh stories from Russian remain the seminal work in English on traditional Kazakh folktales.

Sadly, Mary Lou passed away in 1991 after a long illness. Jack feels that were she alive, "Mary Lou would love" that our Aul members are enjoying her work, and so with Jack's permission, excerpts from her book are reprinted in this newsletter. With sincere gratitude to Jack for his generosity and kindness, please enjoy Mary Lou's work.

In this issue of the newsletter, we begin with Mary Lou's introduction to *Stories of the Steppes*, followed by a short story called *If You Know a Story, Don't keep it to Yourself*. Make sure you read Mary Lou's introduction below, for it does a great job of cohesively describing and summarizing key aspects of Kazakh history and nomadic life which provide a necessary perspective from which to understand and appreciate these stories. When I read this introduction, I am reminded of things Daniyar and Zhanat have taught us about Kazakh culture. Finally, it is important to note that while these Kazakh stories come from a long nomadic tradition, they may not appeal to everyone. Nonetheless, they are a rich cultural resource and in sharing them with our children, we are connecting them to their long ancestral storytelling traditions. Please enjoy this special insight into our children's heritage.

Introduction to *Stories of the Steppes: Kazakh Folk Tales* by Mary Lou Masey Reprinted with Permission

Perhaps nowhere on earth has the telling of tales meant more in the daily life of a people than it has among the Kazakhs, who for centuries have inhabited the vast, arid steppes of northern Central Asia. An essential part of any ceremony or event in the life of a Kazakh was the time for stories and songs, accompanied usually by the strumming of the *dombra*. With their great propensity for absorbing and adapting every yarn and old wives' tale that came their way, these nomadic Turks have produced an extraordinarily rich and varied folk lore.

...In retelling these stories for children, I have tried to preserve the vigor and flavor of the originals rather than give a literal translation. I hope they will be as entertaining for modern readers as they were for this very different people, long ago. Kazakh folktales, like those of all peoples, were transmitted orally by wandering poet-singers, known among the Kazakhs as *akyns*, who improvised an embellished as they went along. No real attempt to write down Kazakh folktales was made until the nineteenth century, when Russian scholars for the first time turned their attention to the folk lore of this remote and recent acquisition of their empire.

"The songs of the *akyns* are streams of heavenly water," say the Kazakhs, "and the listener is chalk, greedily drinking them up." The presence of an *akyn* was cause for much excitement in the aul. Men, women, and children alike would gather after work with the herds, to drink kourmiss and listen avidly to the storyteller's seemingly inexhaustible repertoire.

INTRODUCTION continued on next page

Kazakh folktales reflect the Turko-Irano-Arabic tradition of their settled neighbors to the south. A number of Kazakh tales are based on the *Arabian Nights*, on the *Shahname* of Firdausi, Persia's national epic, and on tales from India. Some tales borrow motifs and figures from Russian folklore. Thus, among typically Kazakh figures, we find the *baba-yaga*, *bogatyr*, and magical self-playing *gusla* of the Russians, and the *div*, the *peri*, the *shaitan* and the *jinn* of the Arabs and the Persians.

...In their fairy tales the Kazakhs have traditionally expressed their yearning for a better life—rich pasturage for all, and gardens blooming magically in the desert. The stories reflect the overwhelming immensity of the steppe, and man's constant striving to overcome his helplessness in the face of it. In the satirical tales of everyday life, the Kazakh displays an often ferocious wit, sharpened by his life of hardship. Here the Khan, the Sultan, the mullah, the judge, or *bi*, and rich men in general are favorite objects of ridicule for their dishonesty, cruelty, and greed. The Kazakhs seem to delight in portraying villains as hysterical tantrum-throwers who, when thwarted by the simple but righteous hero, are likely to fly into a rage, sob bitterly, or take to their beds, sulking. The hero himself is generally a man of the people, sometimes an unusually bold and skillful thief, or a fool who is not as dumb as he seems. An outstanding example of the hero of the satirical tale is *Aldar Kose*, a charming fellow known as the "Beardless Mocker." The adventures of *Aldar Kose* are masterpieces of folk satire and are popular in the folk lore of other Turkic peoples.

Little is known about the Kazakhs before the Russian conquest. Their ancestors were among the many, predominately Turkic, tribes who rode with the Golden Horde of the Mongols during the Mongol domination of Central Asia in medieval times. Kazakh khans and sultans traced their descent from Ghengis Khan himself..... It is generally believed that the Kazakhs first emerged as a people in the 15th century, in the chaos following the breakup of the Mongol empire. From the 18th century onward, constant inroads were made on Kazakh territory by the Russians, who, by 1858 had gained control of all of Kazakhstan.

...A word about how the Kazakhs lived, and about nomadic life in general, should be helpful in the enjoyment of these folktales. From time immemorial, nomadic tribes have roamed the steppes of Central Asia. Two thousand years ago, wild horse-breeding nomads, called Scythians, roamed the steppes with their herds, drank koumiss, raided, looted, and waged war, much as the Kazakhs did until very recent times.

For obvious reasons, nomadic life has always centered around the finding of grazing lands for the livestock. Because pasturage could only be used at certain times of the year, the migrations of the Kazakhs were carefully planned so as to follow the seasons, sometimes covering as much as a thousand miles in a year.

In winter, they pastured their animals in the sheltering woods or valleys. On a pre-arranged day in early spring would begin the long journey to summer pasturage on high land, near lakes and rivers, or on mountain slopes. The traditional dwelling of the Kazakh, the yurt, a collapsible lattice framework covered with felt, was perfectly adapted to the nomadic way of life. A summer yurt could be assembled in less than half an hour, and when collapsed, carried by two camels with ease. A sultan's "palace," or a rich man's yurt was made of fine embroidered felt—white, the symbol of wealth and status—and was often so large that thirty camels were required to carry it.

The territory these intrepid nomads roamed was vast and rugged, a veritable Asian Wild West. The steppes of northern Kazakhstan rolled in an unending undulating sea of feather-grass. Southward, the grasslands became semi-desert, and the patches of grass were interspersed with acrid smelling wormwood and wiry saltwort. Still farther south were the sandy wastelands, with their silent, eerie thickets of saxaul, the tree of the desert. Below the barren Kazakh steppe lay oasis regions, made fertile by century-olds systems of irrigation. Here, on rivers and at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, stood cities rich with treasure brought by caravan from India and farther East. To the south, the snow-covered peaks of the Pamirs, and to the east, the Tien-Shan, disappeared above the clouds.

To survive such a forbidding land, the Kazakhs had to develop a fierce and warlike culture. Famed for their superb horsemanship, these rough-riding nomads kept the steppes in a constant uproar, battling each other over grazing lands, as well as foreign invaders who tried to conquer them. In lean times, they thought nothing of raiding their rich neighbors in the towns. Blood feuds between various clans often lasted for generations.

Wild animals were a constant danger to the flocks. In winter, the steppe snowstorm was especially feared. But the chief enemy of the Kazakh was the dreaded *dzhut*—the freezing over of previously thawed snow, making it impossible for the herds to find fodder. The Kazakhs say, "A hero can perish from a single bullet, a rich man from one *dzhut*."

The world of the Kazakhs was fraught with other perils as well, for they believed that the steppes and the deserts, the forests and the mountains were inhabited by a multitude of demons and spirits, harmful to man, and responsive only to the shamans. Although the Kazakhs were technically Moslems, these Turkic shamanistic beliefs accounted for the larger part of their religious outlook. The Kazakhs did not follow Moslem religious law, but their own customary law, and it was on the basis of the latter that the judge arrived at his decisions. Nor did they veil or seclude their women, who, despite such customs as bride-purchase and polygamy, led independent lives in comparison with their Arab and Persian sisters.

A freedom-loving people, the Kazakhs had always fought bitterly to maintain their nomadic mode of existence. Only the most destitute among them would ever condescend to practice agriculture. Their khans and sultans might prefer the more luxurious life of the towns, but the vast majority continued to roam the wilderness, despising the settled life, and displaying nothing but contempt for their city-dwelling neighbors. While the fabled towns of Samarkand, Bokhara, and Tashkent rose and fell & rose again, life in the steppes went on as unchanged.

Today the Kazakhs no longer wander with their flocks. Under the Soviets, who are not particularly romantic about nomads, special brigades have been established for the pasturing of the herds and flocks, and the rest of the people are settled in villages and on collective farms.

©1968, Mary Lou Masey

If You Know a Story, Don't Keep It to Yourself

From Stories of the Steppes: Kazakh Folktales Retold by Mary Lou Masey

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One day a bridegroom rode to his wedding, accompanied by his friends. That night, as was the custom, the time was to be passed in telling stories.

Evening came. The bridegroom's friends, the bride, her parents and her little sister all told their stories. But when it came the turn of the bridegroom, he refused. "I don't know any stories," said he. He did not wish to waste the spring evening, which was short enough as it was, swapping tales with his mother— and father-in-law. He wanted to be alone with his bride.

The wedding guests were astounded. The bride's parents and her little sister were very unhappy.

There was nothing for them all to do but go to bed and let the bridegrooms spend the rest of the evening with his bride. But the bride's little sister could not get to sleep. She was dying to hear the stories which, she was sure, the bridegroom must be telling in secret to her sister. She got out of bed and crept to the yurt in which the young couple was sitting. Suddenly, what did she see but two spirits tiptoeing quietly toward that very yurt.

"Tomorrow, after the wedding," whispered one spirit to the other, "the wedding party will set out for the bridegroom's aul. Along the way, I will turn myself into a stream. It will be very hot, and the bridegroom will come to take a drink of me. The minute he does so, I will turn him into a bug!"

(This was the spirit of the Story of the Bug.)

"Very good," said the second spirit, "and in case that fails, I will turn myself into a golden knife in a silver sheath, and I will lie on the road at a day's journey from you. When the bridegroom takes me in his hand, I will cut his finger, and he will turn into a knife!"

(This was the spirit of the Story of the Knife.)

The two spirits tiptoed off into the night laughing to themselves.

The bride's little sister realized that the two spirits were out to get revenge on the groom, for he had dared to know them and not share them with the wedding guests.

In the morning was the wedding. At noon, the newlyweds loaded the bride's dowry onto camels and set off to go from the bride's aul to the groom's.

The bride's little sister, who knew what was going to happen, begged them and begged them to take her along. But the groom absolutely refused. So she took the fastest horse from her father's herds and rode after them.

The day was hot and the caravan began to keep an eye out for water. The bridegroom rode ahead looking for a well or a brook. Soon he caught sight of the stream. He went up to find out whether the water was good for drinking and whether he should lead the caravan to it. When the bride's little sister saw this, she spurred on her horse, raced past the bridegroom and jumped into the stream to muddy the waters so that he could not drink. The groom was furious. He scolded his sister-in-law, but she paid no attention.

The caravan went on. The day passed. Suddenly the bridegroom saw something shiny on the road. There lay the golden knife in its silver sheath. He rode to pick it up, but again the bride's little sister spurred on her horse and raced past him. She grabbed the knife, and broke it into little pieces. The bridegroom was even more furious. He scolded his sister-in-law.

"What has gotten into you, you wretched little girl?" he cried. "Why are you behaving this way?"

"No matter what I do, you scold me!" answered the bride's little sister. "It's no wonder I behave badly."

When the wedding party arrived at the bridegroom's aul, the first thing the bridegroom did was to tell his parents about the terrible behavior of the bride's little sister. The old man called the maiden to him and asked her to account for herself.

"Very well," said the maiden, "now I will tell you everything."

When they all learned how she had saved the bridegroom from the two mischievous spirits, everyone apologized and brought her presents and did their best to make it up to her.

And the bridegroom never scolded his little sister-in-law again.

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The Kazakh Aul of the U.S. gratefully acknowledges its donor base, including the following members who graciously donated during the past quarter. *Thank you so much!*

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 Bisordi Family
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A warm welcome to the following new Aul families:

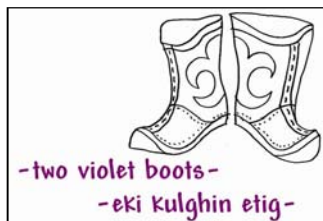
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Kazakh Aul of the U.S. Gifts for Sale

Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book

by Daniyar Baidaralin & Audrey Englander

This book was a hit when we presented it at Zhailau. Your whole family or friends can enjoy counting to ten in Kazakh using Daniyar's transliterations in English. And, any child will enjoy coloring Daniyar's wonderful graphics! We've improved the book since the summer in that we added a spiral binding (as opposed to old fashioned staples). Produced on the Aul's own color laser jet printer with front and back covers of heavy card stock. \$12.00, plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.



Kazakh Aul of the U.S.'s Nauryz 2005 Home DVD

by Edward Bogushevsky

If you attended our Nauryz Festival in April, if you want to see what it was all about, or if you are interested in learning more about the founding of our Aul, you may want to purchase our home DVD. We call it our home DVD because it is not a slick professional production. Nonetheless it is a heartfelt keepsake that commemorates the last Nauryz festival and includes the ancient dance of the Light and Dark Spirits performed by the Baidaralin brothers, a video collage of the entire festival from the raising of the yurt through gatherings inside the yurt, and interviews with Zhanat Baidaralin and Leila Bassenova about what it means to them to be working to bring culture to their young compatriots in the U.S. Edward Bogushevsky initially made this film for Kazakhstan television, but he has graciously provided an English language version for our Aul. English, Kazakh, and Russian language, with English subtitles, \$15.00, plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.

Give the Gift of the Kazakh Aul of the US

An Aul membership is a great way to share Kazakh culture and community with your family and friends. For each gift recipient, please send us all the important details, and we will happily send each person a personalized gift card. Annual memberships cost a minimum of \$40.00, and more information is available on our website at www.kazakh-aul-us.org or contact info@kazakh-aul-us.org.

All proceeds from the sale of the Zhailau Kazakh Counting Coloring Book, Nauryz Home DVD, and Aul memberships will go towards the support of the Kazakh Aul of the U.S. Please mail checks or money orders payable to the Kazakh Aul of the U.S., 247 Cypress St., Providence, RI 02906.



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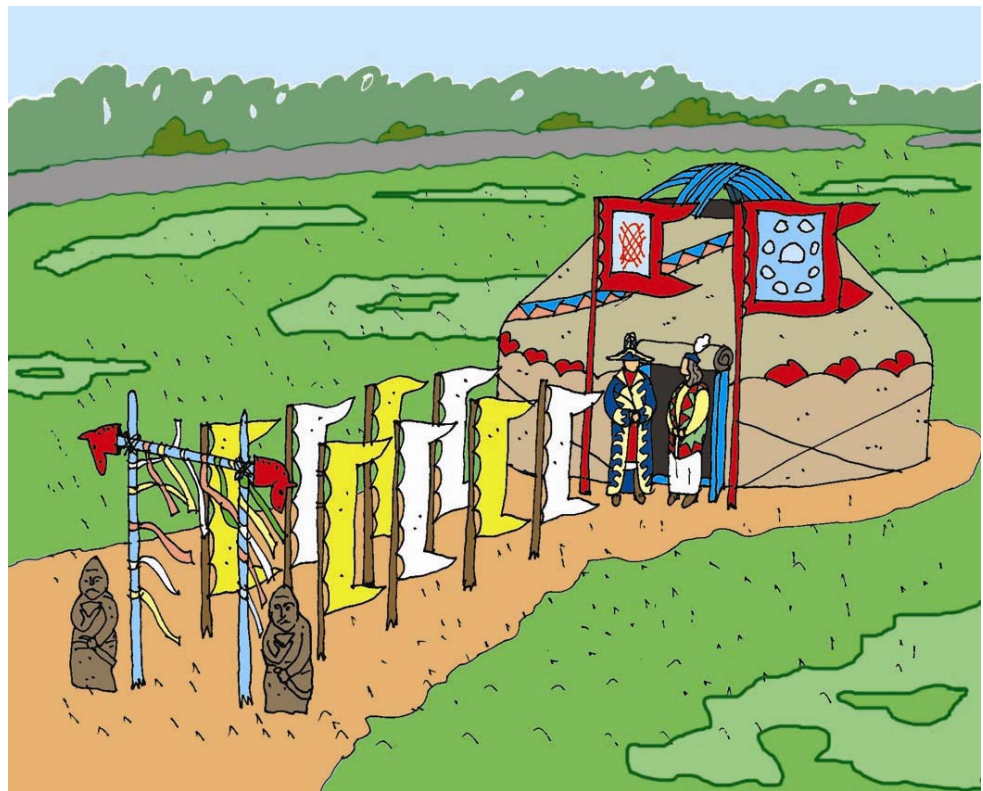
Our Mission

The Kazakh Aul of the United States, Association for American & Kazakh Families, aims to establish a cultural center dedicated to educating and enriching the lives of children from Kazakhstan who were adopted by loving American families and who are now growing up in the U.S. Together with their families, children will participate in Kazakh heritage camps and cultural education, to develop a deeper sense of knowledge and understanding of their birth culture, how they fit into both the Kazakh and American worlds, and to develop skills that in the future may be used to contribute to both their mother-countries, Kazakhstan and the U.S. The Kazakh Aul of the United States will serve as a cultural bridge to bring together the children of the two countries, helping them be citizens of the world and thereby promoting cross-cultural understanding that will sustain through the generations.



Zhailau 2006—Our Summer Kazakh Culture Camp for Families August 14-19th in New Hampshire

*Information plus much more inside, including Nauryz, Aul news,
and a Kazakh folktale*



Kazakh Aul of the U.S., Association for American & Kazakh Families

Board of Directors: Audrey Englander, Sara Libou, Karen Myer, Heather O'Toole, Susan Saxon

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