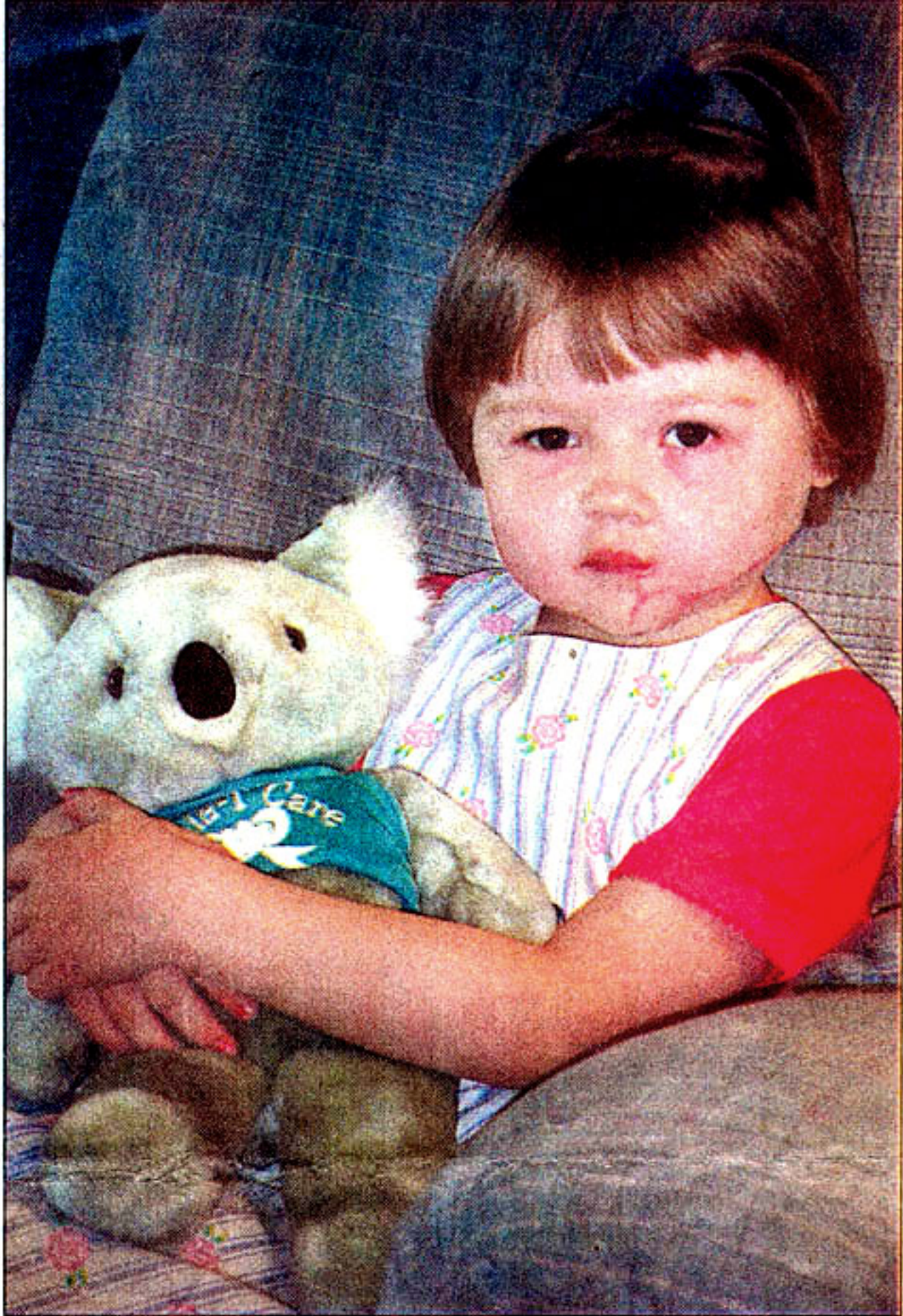


ANGEL VOLKOVA, a Russian girl who fell into a broken mirror, will be going home Wednesday after spending six months in Oshkosh having corrective plastic surgery.

Below, Angel plays in the home of her host family Katya and Mert Fulwiler after arriving in Oshkosh in early January.

Going —home

Angel's
grandmother
thanks Oshkosh
for generosity



After turning tragedy to hope, 3-year-old Angel Volkova's Oshkosh journey comes to an end next week. Because it's been an emotional journey, her family still has trouble finding the right words.

Helen Volkova, Angel's grandmother, said only two words come close: "Thank you!"

Angel and Helen will leave for their Orel, Russia, home Wednesday after spending six months in Oshkosh, where the girl underwent corrective plastic surgery to repair facial injuries from a 1998 accident.

Volkova said she'll spend her last week in Oshkosh reflecting on and thanking the community for the generosity that made the visit and surgeries possible. "There are so many children in the world in need of help and so few get it. This community welcomed us and I wish more were as lucky as we are."

Angel and her grandmother arrived in Oshkosh during the Christmas season. Since then, Angel has undergone two surgeries to repair facial muscles and to remove deep scarring received from a falling mirror.

Everything that's happened since the accident is nothing less than miraculous, Volkova said.

Oshkosh resident Marina Bratley and employees of the Cut Above

Salon worked to bring the girl to Oshkosh through fund-raising projects after plastic surgeon David Janssen agreed to do the surgeries for free.

Additional medical staff members also provided free services, and free hospital stays were offered by the Mercy Medical Foundation.

Neighbors have provided emotional and financial support to the Volkovas, while school children welcomed Angel with gifts.



When the Volkovas get back to Russia, Oshkosh's generosity will continue. After the community learned the family spent their savings to bribe officials into letting them come to Oshkosh, service clubs and others provided money to help the family get back on its feet.

Those who helped — through money, care and gifts or through

cards and support — will not be forgotten, Volkova said.

"When we came here, I had good feelings that everything would work out, and it has. Our future isn't so dark now — there is some light."

The Volkovas are hopeful of spreading that light in Russia.

Volkova said she learned much about the spirituality and humanity of the American people and plans to apply those traits in her life.

Even at her young age, Angel is aware of how special Oshkosh and area residents are, Volkova said.

Although Angel had no interest in learning the English language or participating in American culture upon arriving, Volkova said her granddaughter since has made friends with local children and has tried to speak with them in English.

With that as a start, Volkova said she'll continue to teach English to Angel so one day the girl can read the cards, articles and other remembrances to get a better appreciation of what was given to her.

"I myself have been given a sense of love and giving, and I'm going to bring this feeling to Russia," Volkova said. "When you receive, you want to give — your feelings, heart, soul — everything."

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