

Refugee Mother Regains Child

U.S. Couple Loses Fight

Des Moines

Saying "someone must be hurt," the Iowa Supreme Court ruled yesterday that a 4-year-old Vietnamese refugee must be given up by his American family and returned to his natural mother.

The court said the John Nelson family must return Doan Van Binh to his mother in Great Falls, Mont., although the family believed it had adopted him legally and had waged a painful year-long custody battle.

"He'll always be my son. He's a beautiful little guy. We were hoping for a miracle," said Nelson, public relations director for a Lutheran college in tiny Forest City, Iowa.

"We'll accept the decision. We're happy we've had year and a half with Ben," said Nelson, who has two other children. He said Binh — known as "Ben" — would be told when he returned from preschool classes.

Binh's mother, Doan Thi Hoang Anh, arrived as a refugee in this country Aug. 5, 1975.

Known in Great Falls as "Miss Anh," she has four children with her. She is training to be a nurse's aide.

"I am exciting and nervy and so happy I don't know the word you can use for how happy I am," his mother said in rapid, broken English on hearing of the decision.

"Under the undisputed facts, two good homes are available to Binh," said the opinion written by Chief Justice C. Edwin Moore.

"Under this record, someone



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Doan Van Binh was held by his adoptive mother, Bonnie Nelson, in Iowa

must be hurt," he wrote.

Anh and her seven children escaped capture by the Communists in the final days of the Saigon regime after her husband was killed. Binh was one of the last children removed in "Operation Babylift."

Anh had taken her children to the Friends of Children of Vietnam Orphanage in Saigon and asked that her children be gotten out of the country to safety.

She refused to consent to adoption of the children, the opinion said, and got the Denver ad-

dress of the orphanage organization to trace her children if she survived. After she arrived in the U.S. she began to search for her children. She found four in a private home in Denver. An infant remains with a family in France. The last child is still missing.

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