

Cory's Wish



Two years ago, while at Loma Linda Children's Hospital for our annual "Operation Santa Claus" visit, I had the opportunity to meet Cory Klinkenberg. My first visit with this unique and scared little boy will forever be imprinted in my memory. I walked into a room and saw a young boy so ill it seemed he would not live to see Christmas. I felt so completely foolish and profoundly sad that the toys I brought seemed so inferior in comparison to his immediate needs. He was on life support at the time and was not able to move. He could not shift enough even to see me clearly, his eyes were completely bloodshot, he was pale, and he had lost all of his hair. The severity of his illness gave him an almost lifeless appearance. Yet, these toys were intended to brighten this child's day. Sadly, with nothing else to say, I touched his hand and wished him a blessed Christmas. What I really wanted to do was to hold this little boy and comfort him. I left his room numb from the experience throughout the remainder of the afternoon, as I entered one room after another, leaving toys for the children of the pediatric intensive care unit; the image of that hopeless boy was still in my mind.

I rationalized that perhaps I was still reeling from the memory of losing my own daughter Jessica, just two years ago. This precious boy was Jessica's age; she too had been on life support just before her death. However, at the time there was no "Operation Santa Claus" and the present regular visits from the Debbie Chisholm Memorial Foundation was not yet a reality. I remember the long hours of waiting in the room next to my daughter's bed. There were often lonely moments and I am so thankful that visits are now possible for both parents and the children involved. I see now that my meeting with Cory Klinkenberg was part of a greater plan. In the future I would have an opportunity to see him once again through my own participation in fulfilling his wish through D.C.M.F.

I arrived at Cory's home to discuss his wish for a computer. I did not realize at the time that this was the same little boy I had encountered in ICU at Loma Linda Children's Hospital. As we discussed his wish and the circumstances of his illness, His mother Kimberly relayed to me how much he had been through. This young man had been on life-support four times as a result of treatment for his cancer, his heart had sustained permanent damage as a result of this and his eyesight was deteriorating as well. As she was explaining these circumstances to me the image of the little boy I had met during "Operation Santa Claus" flashes before my eyes. I told Kimberly of my visit as part of D.C.M.F with "Operation Santa Claus" to Loma Linda Hospital and about this little boy that had so profoundly touched my heart. As I described what I saw that day, Cory's Mother confirmed that this was in fact her son. Yet at this moment in his life he was in remission so the frail child named Cory looked wonderful to me even though his battle would still be a long arduous one. Today, he still faces several surgeries on his eyes in an attempt to restore his vision, and his heart remains permanently damaged as a result of his treatment for cancer.

After our first visit, Kimberly called to tell me that Cory felt a special bond with me that he could not explain. I told her that I had experienced the same feeling on my first home visit with them. I am convinced that God allowed Cory and I to meet again under happier circumstances so that memory would become a positive experience. Not only was the D.C.M.F. able to grant Cory's wish but I feel like it is a promise fulfilled at the end of a rainbow.

I would like to say - God bless you Cory and thank you for the wonderful experience of seeing you again, after all was said and done I am not sure whose wish was best granted yours or mine. Cory received an IMAC computer with all the trimmings, and several games to keep him busy while he recovers at home. The computer will also assist him during home schooling until he is able to return to public school. I wish that everyone, even if only once, could experience the joy and peace that I did in this very special boy.

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