

TESTIMONIAL RESPONSE BY DOUGLAS COFFEY

I have been asked many times what gave me the idea to build a hospital for children. It actually was a promise rather than an idea. I'll share that promise with you in this testimony.

I had a younger sister, Donna. She was a wonderful girl, kind, loving, and an excellent student, a classical pianist, had wonderful friends, and was full of life, most of all a very devoted Christian. When she was eighteen years old she was diagnosed with arthritis. After several tests her doctor prescribed a drug, a new drug for this condition. A few months later Donna developed uremia; a condition that indicates the kidneys are not functioning. Donna was rushed to the hospital. More tests and x-rays were performed on her. The doctors concluded that her kidneys were not going to respond to treatment. She had to be put on peritoneal dialysis to prevent her from dying. Donna was in complete kidney failure. Over night my sister's life had changed dramatically.

Donna had to have her dialysis treatment twice a week. Peritoneal dialysis treatment takes from 6 to 8 hours at a time. Between treatments she was not allowed to drink water, even a mouthful could be fatal. Over a period of a year she gradually lost considerable weight, and her body was not functioning well. We asked the doctors for a transplant. The answer was a firm no. She had too many complications, and it may hasten her death. It was decided to put her on a new kidney dialysis machine. The response showed a marked improvement. She was livelier, and more physically well then in the past year and half. During this time the family and her husband kept asking the doctors to put her on the list for a kidney transplant. The answer was always a no. They again stated that Donna had too many complications including an additional diagnosis of Lupus. The disappointment and Donna's struggle continued.

Months passed, and one day Donna had a massive stroke. Donna lay in a coma for 28 days. Her eyes remained open during this entire period. The family stayed with her on rotation taking turns moving, and messaging her limbs, as well as speaking to her. The doctors told the family to let her pass on, because if she did recover she would be a paralytic for life. On the 2 day Donna's fingers moved. A few days later her hands and arms moved as well. Donna then mumbled a few words; she then smiled when we talked to her. Three weeks after this the Toronto Kidney Foundation had its annual ball. Donna attended with her husband, and she danced one dance with him. All in attendance cheered, and clapped. The doctors said it was "truly a miracle" that she had recovered enough in so short a time span. Again, we all pleaded for her to be put on the transplant list. The answer from the doctors was still a no. A kidney transplant that could help someone else would be a waste.

As time went on Donna's condition worsened. Donna would sometimes say, "I am going to die." We could always cheer her out of this thinking. Her marvelous sense of humor allowed her to laugh often at things that would make other people cry. She would often comment on how beautiful she looked with no teeth, her limbs hopelessly deformed to the point she could only shuffle when she walked. She would say, "I'm only 25 but I look 50":

After more than three years on the kidney machine it was becoming less effective. Once again we pleaded for a kidney transplant with the same negative response from the doctors. One day she telephoned me, and asked me to come over to see her. Her voice was not more than a whisper. I left my office and went to the Toronto Western Hospital. The nurses had put her in a quiet room. She was sitting on the edge of the bed. She didn't weigh more than 65 pounds. Donna looked at me, and said "Douglas, I'm going. I just wanted to see you. God wants me now". There was no doubt in my mind that Donna would pass within days.

All day I suffered the frustration of not being able to do anything to help her. I remembered the Martyrs Shrine about 80 miles north of Toronto, and drove there on the weekend. I had heard that many people who went there had prayers answered. Not being a strongly religious person at the time I wasn't sure what good it would do, but I decided it might help.

The church is very old named, after several French Catholic priests who were martyred by the local Indians in the 16th century. I stayed two days, and during this period I learned to pray again. I said "God, if you help my sister receive a kidney transplant, I will build a hospital for you". I have no idea why I said such a thing, because I have no knowledge of hospitals, nor was I connected to them in anyway. I left Sunday evening, and drove back to my home in Toronto.

The next day, Monday I went to my office as usual; about 9:15 am my secretary came to me, and said the hospital is calling you. I realized that they were calling to tell me Donna had passed away, and what arrangements was I going to make. I lifted the receiver, and said hello. The nurse asked if I was Donna's brother I said yes. The nurse said she was calling to tell me they had found a kidney donor match over the weekend, and that Donna was in the operating room receiving her new kidney now. We will call you back when she is in the recovery room.

After this event my sister recovered, and lived a normal life. Which is a miracle. The greatest miracle was that Donna to date is the longest surviving kidney recipient in all of Canada over 30 years in total. Even her doctors who were not Christian said she had someone or something guiding her life. My sister did pass away two years ago. Donna was a wonderful person, and a wonderful Christian person. All who knew her said she was truly an inspiration to them

Now, is the time for me to keep the promise I made. Due to the circumstances surrounding my sister Donna's life it must be a Christian hospital. A hospital built by all Christians setting aside any differences that may come between us. Certainly doctrinal issues have their place in the individual churches, but hopefully these issues can be put aside... We must come together in the body of Christ to make this hospital for the children a reality here in La Paz.