



We Couldn't Walk Away

By: Barbara Schwartz Davis

Dedicated to Toni Jones for her heartfelt love for children.



One can see Connors' heart in his eyes.

My husband, Michael, and I adopted our son, Connor on May 4th, 2002. Our story should be told because it is too remarkable to not be shared.

In the past we had taken care of many children as foster parents and decided to have one through natural birth. To our surprise we found we could not have children easily. At first, we were very sad, but then I realized we could imagine a different outlook.

Rather than choosing to dwell in our sadness, we began to see it as an opportunity to change the path of a child who may not have been chosen. Our desire to be a family was stronger than the obstacles we were facing. Perhaps our destiny was to be there for a child whose life could be forever changed if we stepped forward.

The call came on Valentine's Day, 2001. I had my fax machine on and in the middle of the fax it stopped and the call broke through; an odd occurrence because the fax machine does

not normally work like that. It was a State of California adoption social worker, Toni Jones who is now retired. She had news of an available little boy. She told me his name was Cat. Now, there's a unique name for a boy. I figured his birthmother either loved animals or thought of this little guy as a rock star. My husband was out of town the day of the call. I had two beautiful young girls as foster placements living with me at the time. When Michael called and asked me the name of the boy we were to meet a large white cat filled the screen of the television as I said his name. The girls and I couldn't believe our eyes and sat laughing in astonishment at what seemed far more than a coincidence.

In our conversation, Toni Jones, Cat's social worker explained that he had special needs. This news did not frighten us given our extensive experience housing children from difficult situations for years. We knew the past should never be a deterrent to believing that a child can persevere, grow, and develop into a healthier state.

We set a date to meet Cat and found our excitement was hard to contain. We didn't want to get our hopes up too high. Although adopting through the foster care system can be trying at times, we didn't let our fear be a deterrent.

Upon our arrival, we were surprised to see the cross street at the foster home was the same as our last name, Davis. We happen to live by a subdivision called Peacock Gap. At the home where we went to meet Cat, there were live peacocks in the backyard. The feathers of the peacocks were spread around in a colorful mosaic of blues and greens. There were so many synchronized signs leading us to our son, it left us wondering if perhaps it was meant to be.

Upon entering the home Sharon, Cat's foster mom, directed us to him. She and her husband had changed his name to Connor. He was lying on the floor and was not very active or playful. In fact, he was rather fragile looking, lacking energy, and very quiet. When I picked him up, I immediately began to cry. Unlike healthy infants, he felt very stiff and not full of life. He would fall forward when we tried to sit him up. When I asked Sharon what was wrong, she explained the doctors thought perhaps he had Cerebral Palsy.

As we visited, she explained how she wasn't able to get him the help he needed. She lived far away from top-notch medical facilities. Also she housed so many other children she did not have the time or resources to see Connor received proper support. Sharon and her husband were exceptional foster parents. Not only had they adopted children with nowhere else to call home, but they continued to support other children in need.

Michael and I wanted to see if we could feel a closeness to Connor, so we decided to take him to the park to get to know him better. Beneath the clear sky, we sat with him in our arms. We held his hand and could sense the warmth of his heart. He seemed to be reaching for a way to let us know who he was. He had a sweetness to his spirit that felt genuine, a softness in his nature that needed protection.

We knew, at this point, we could not walk away.

We were deeply concerned that if we did not get the help for him NOW, he would simply remain ill, possibly be shuffled around foster homes, and lose out on having the intimacy, attention, and health care that he needed. We decided to become his foster parents because we lived close to San Francisco where some of the best medical care would be available for Connor.

We respected the foster parents in their hopes for this fragile boy and felt obligated to step forward. What many people don't know, because we hear so many negative stories about foster homes, is that many of us work together as families helping children, not children we have given birth to but those in need. Our network of families is like a chain intertwined together committed to making a safe world for young people and providing a soft landing into loving arms. He was not in good health, so we used the old-fashioned cure ... ~ Good Loving, Good Food, Positive Thought and Prayer ~.

Our first goal with Connor was to help him build strength. Sharon had tried hard to feed him but had some complications getting him to respond. We solved that problem, believe it or not with music and good nutrition. We discovered that Connor woke up every morning around 3:00 a.m. crying. He seemed to be hungry and unsettled. I used singing to calm him when he was feeling frustrated. "You Are My Sunshine" became a family favorite. I sang lullabies about a horse with wings flying in the sky to Connor to uplift his mood. Even though babies can't talk, I know he was listening intently because as he began to speak he sang the song "Unforgettable," by Nat King Cole, which I had played for him continuously at bedtime on our old fashioned record player. Although my husband and I felt exhausted at times, we kept being supportive and being there for him. We spent many nights into the wee hours holding and comforting him. It soon became very obvious that he was becoming very attached to us and love was the key. We were deeply affectionate and attentive to his emotional needs which enabled him to feel safe and cared for. We gave him soy milk and did our best to soothe his fears. WIC, a federal nutrition program, was available to us and helped us tremendously. This saved us an expense so that we could budget for other needs.

To get him to a healthier state, we worked with local organizations recommended by his pediatrician. We pursued and sometimes insisted on getting services & tests suggested by professionals. These agencies were new resources for us. We worked with Golden Gate Regional, Children's Services, and Easter Seals. They funded physical and speech therapy, advocacy support, and recommendations for problem solving. We made sure we followed up with suggestions and services available.

To learn about what is available for families, in adopting or fostering a special needs child, the Department of Social Services or the Department of Developmental Services will provide a list of resources they offer. Our perseverance paid off when Connor's personality

started developing and the listlessness in his spirit began to shift. If we did not agree with a recommendation of one doctor, we trusted our intuition and advocated for what we thought could best serve this child's needs. Connor's skull was deformed and even though some medical experts did not think it would work, we convinced them to try a new treatment, consisting of a special helmet. It took numerous phone calls to convince the right people and save enough money for the procedure but eventually we did. After the doctor placed it on his head they refused to take any money. They were so happy to be a part of his healing that the doctors performed a random act of kindness for our son.



Barbara used humor and performing arts to uplift Connors' spirit.

Remember, you must be Resilient! If your instincts tell you differently, don't take no for an answer. Pursue the treatment that is best for your child.

This special helmet designed at a medical center in San Francisco, successfully reshaped Connor's skull. He gradually built muscle tone in his legs that had previously been weak. We took him to swim at a local community center as often as possible. He enjoyed floating on his back and kicking his legs. As you can see Connor had many medical difficulties to face. We are not quick to believe in labeling children with a diagnosis that is not definite. We too were unsure of his status but also saw a boy with incredible potential. There was a look of determination and eagerness to his disposition. He had shown great improvement in his physical abilities. I believe he was so thrilled with feeling better that he went forward by leaps and bounds.

The home he was in prior to ours did their very best but his needs were quite extensive and went beyond their available time. It is possible that Connor sensed this and felt alone. Once he was in a home where he got more attention, he changed. Just like a plant some children need more fertilizer than others and he is one of those little plants. It is possible that when he was an infant his environment lacked the bonding he so craved and his nature was affected. Now he has filled that emptiness with feelings of warmth and security.

There is more to this story than practical solutions. There is a part that I hesitated to share for fear of harsh judgment or misunderstandings from others. I have been an intuitive person since my teen years. I am able to see things outside of the physical realm and sense feelings and thoughts on a finite level. As a young person, when I shared this ability with my parents, I was quickly whisked off to mental health professionals who misdiagnosed my abilities, putting them in a box with a psychiatric label. I believed in myself and knew they were wrong. I saw proof time and time again that what I could see were not hallucinations or craziness but rather a gift. As I got older I learned how to put this gift to work helping young people. Throughout history people who have this gift are referred to as empaths and true visionaries.

Herein is the remarkable moment in time that I observed Connor. You can choose to believe it or not. At age 71, I no longer want to keep it a secret. Hopefully this truth gives others insight to the unexplained experiences that can present themselves.

Reflecting back to a night where Connor was peaceably sleeping in his crib, I remember waking up and seeing with my own eyes a silhouette of his body in far better health rising from where he was laying. At that moment, I remember looking at his face and watching this miracle unfold. His body in the crib still had weakness. This strong silhouette gently went back into his body and within a short amount of time he became stronger. I originally was told he might never walk or talk but my husband and I both decided to believe in possibilities never expecting a blessing to manifest in this way.

One of Connor's original nurses who came to our home to check on him was stunned at his progress and questioned us on how this could be happening?

To the amazement of doctors and social services after that night, his health improved dramatically.

My consistent prayers and visualization of his body to become stronger were answered. One day I felt the time had arrived. Connor was ready to walk. I asked him to put the strong legs that God had given him and walk. He did.

Our goal was to move mountains for this boy, and he has responded with remarkable strength. The day before Valentine's Day 2003, two years after we originally met Connor, we took him skiing for the very first time. He successfully participated in a sport which I'm sure many people would have thought not possible. Connor was profoundly taken with himself and proud of his accomplishments. That night before he fell asleep, he looked into our eyes and said, "I love you."

Since then Connor has now grown into a young man. He enjoys a service dog, named Toby, who gives him confidence. He continues to strive to live his best life. Yes, he has his struggles, as would any young man. That's all a part of life. We continue to put together the pieces and are building a life together as a family.

This story was an Unexpected Blessing, Finding Love for our son and his newfound family, unveiling remarkable moments in time. It reminds us all to be open to the potential and magnificence of miracles. There is so much more to life than what meets the natural eye.



Connors' Celebration of Love!

About the Author

Barbara Schwartz Davis



This dynamic author has a vibrant and colorful personality. Her talents and gifts serve a purpose deeper than meets the eye. Her commitment to help young people find soft landings into loving homes is nothing short of incredible. Her lively appearances on television, podcasts, and speaking engagements are filled with love and empathy. Her articles featured in the National publication “Fostering Families” inspire others to come forward and support the betterment of life for others.

Barbara has life experiences in the foster care system and awareness of the hardships these young people face which inspired her to create “The Children I have Loved,” which can be purchased online.

Alongside her loving husband Michael, son Connor, and fur baby Toby she never gives up on her dreams. Barbara’s unique charm captures the hearts and improves all the lives she touches.

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