

Evelyn sat around the hospital waiting room for awhile. Then she got up and nervously paced the waiting room floor for awhile. Then she decided to go to the coffee shop across the street and look at a cup of coffee for awhile. And, finally, at the end of two hours, she was back in the hospital on the inter-hospital phone checking with the nurse to see if David was out of the operating room. The nurse said, "No, not yet. We expect him any minute now."

So Evelyn again sat in the waiting room, paced the waiting room floor some more, went across the street and stared at some scrambled eggs and a cup of coffee for awhile and, when three hours had passed, went back into the hospital and called the operating room again. "No, no—not yet," a cheerful-sounding nurse said. And Evelyn hung up the phone wondering, *Why are they still in there? Oh, dear, she thought, you're just being an overly-concerned mother. Doctors can never tell you to the minute how long an operation is going to take.*

So Evelyn sat down again and started to follow a habitual plan that was fast turning into a ritual—which ended up with her waiting another hour and then calling the nurses for another report. At the end of five incredible hours (each of them seemed like a lifetime to Evelyn) she *finally* heard that David had been wheeled into the recovery room. After having silently condemned herself—saying things like, "I should never have done this."—David's mom breathed a sigh of relief and sat down in an exhausted heap to wait until the nurses came to get her—so that she could sit by David and be with him the moment he awakened.

A COMPLICATED OPERATION

Evelyn must have drifted off for a moment. Suddenly she felt someone touch her shoulder. She looked up and saw Dr. Cogan. For a split second, she panicked and said, "Something's *really* wrong—David's *blind!*"

"Evelyn," Dr. Cogan said, smiling. "Everything's O.K. I know it took a long time, so I think I'd better tell you what I discovered."

Dr. Cogan sat down and told David's mom about the complicated operation he had just performed. "It seems that since David was born, a vein in his right eye has been looped around the main eye muscle. So," Dr. Cogan explained, "every time we worked with David with eye exercises, the muscle would gain strength and the vein would straighten out. But without persistent and consistent exercises, the muscle would weaken and would pull David's eye to the side a bit."

That was the most complicated part of David's operation. Of course, there were less important things—requiring surgery on both eyes—that Dr. Cogan had also done. But the extremely delicate work involved in unlooping the vein from the muscle and then suturing the muscle back properly was what had taken Dr. Cogan and David such an extraordinarily long time in the operating room.

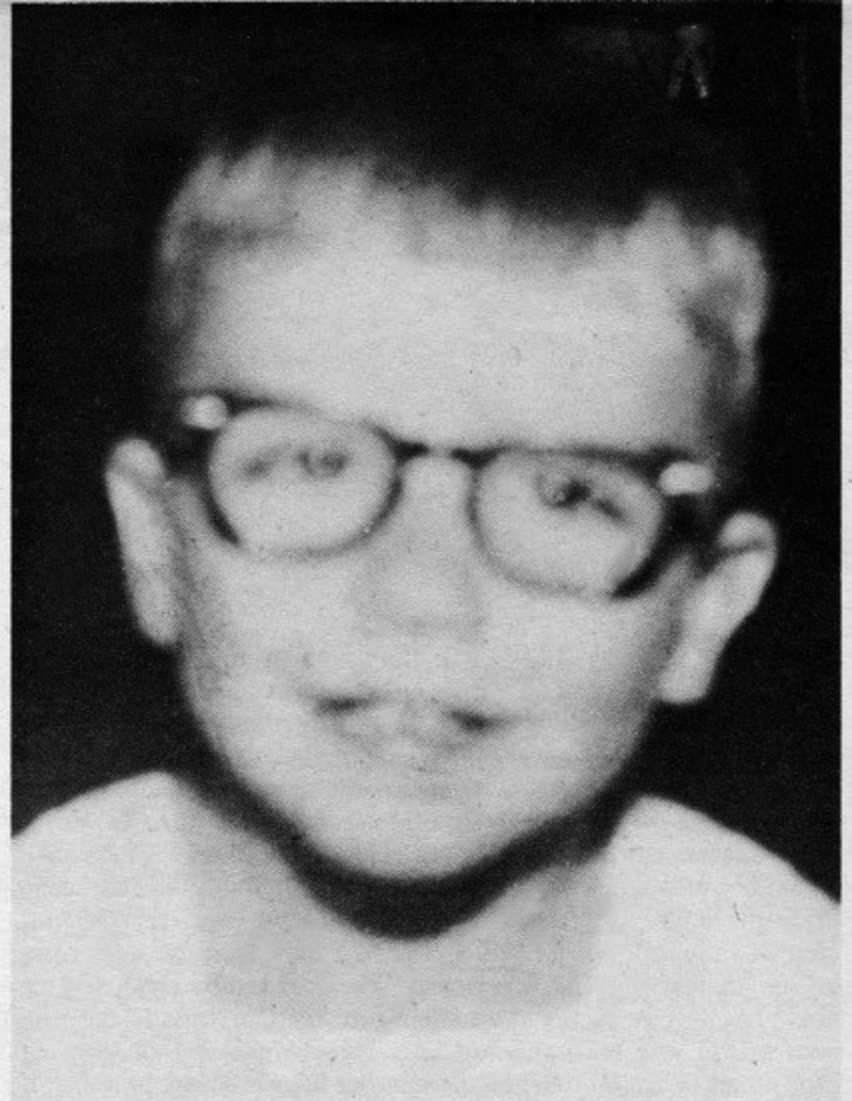
"It was quite a complicated operation," the cheerful Dr. Cogan went on to say, "and I feel it will take a bit longer for David's eyes to heal than I thought would be necessary. But"—he reached out and placed his hand on Evelyn's shoulder—"David is going to be O.K."

Evelyn was so relieved that she almost wept. But then she remembered David lying in the recovery room and thought of the terrible moment ahead when he would awaken and not be able to see.

As if reading her thoughts, Dr. Cogan said, "David won't wake up for five or six hours. Why don't you go home, rest for awhile and come back here later on, so that you can be right beside him when he wakes up?"

"I CAN'T SEE! I CAN'T SEE!"

When Evelyn returned to the hospital, David was lying on the bed in his room. The sheets were drawn up to his chin and all his mother could see was a big, white bandage with some brown hair sticking out the top of it. Evelyn sat beside David's bed and there, in the half light, she remained for a long hour, looking at her son as he slept.



David at four—wearing the corrective lenses he wore for two years as a child.

"If I live forever," David's mom recalls, "I'll never forget the moment when David awakened. He moved slowly and then rather quickly. I placed my hand firmly on his arm to make sure that he would feel my physical presence. He moved his head slowly from one side to the other."

"Mom—Mom," he said in a soft, little voice.

Suddenly I felt his body tremble. He was in an absolute panic.

"Mom!" David almost shouted, "I CAN'T SEE! I can't see!"

"It was that split second I had so feared—David becoming conscious and thinking for a moment that he was blind. I held his arm tightly. I leaned over and said, in a soft but firm voice, 'David, remember?—remember what I told you before you were operated on? You're in the hospital. You've had your operation. I'm here and everything is all right.'"

Suddenly Evelyn felt the incredible tension in David's body relax.

"Oh," he said, almost like a person drifting off into a peaceful sleep. "Oh, yes, that's right."

Evelyn was so relieved that she almost wept for joy. But containing herself, she remembered that keeping David awake now, and getting him into as good a mood as possible, was absolutely vital.

"How do you feel?" she asked David.

"Oooh," David moaned thoughtfully, "I feel all right, but it's so dark, Mom." He paused for a moment and then he said, "and I cannot—I cannot move my eyes."

"It's all right, David," I assured him. "It's going to be difficult, yes, for a few days—but you're going to be O.K. The doctor told me so."

Evelyn sat there for several hours with David, chatting with him and watching him intermittently fall asleep and awaken and fall asleep again. About midnight, it looked as though David had fallen into a deep sleep. The nurse, who had peeped in from time to time to see how things were going, suggested to Evelyn that she call it a night and come back the following morning.

"I'll take care of him," the nurse said reassuringly.