

DAVID'S TRAGIC ILLNESS

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Somehow, the thought of leaving her son with this competent, but somewhat detached, nurse filled Evelyn with a longing to be totally capable of caring for David herself in this crucial moment. She longed to be the one to sit by his side and care for him in his time of crisis.

"I CAN'T EVEN WATCH TV!"

The next three days were agony for David Bruce Cassidy—both physically and mentally. But the physical pain was especially bad. It was like a constant throbbing through both of his healing eyes. David's head was bandaged almost like an Egyptian mummy's and every time he moved, his head ached with the pressure of 20 headaches!

After six days, David was able to go home—but he still had huge bandages on his eyes and he was not allowed to walk or move about. As Evelyn led him into their house, she told him exactly where they were. "Here are the steps. This is the door," she said to him.

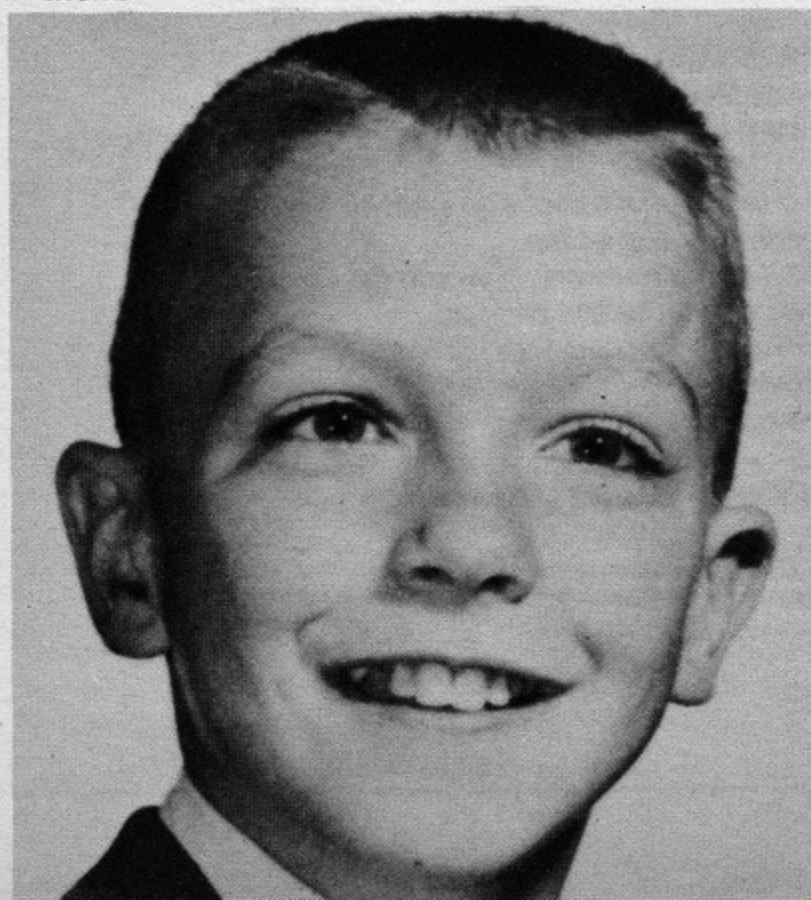
Inside, she put him on the living room couch. The shades were lowered to keep any light from hitting David's eyes, for it would be a while before he could even look at things in ordinary sunlight. David lay on the couch in the half dark, smiling.

"Gee," he said after a moment, "I can't even watch TV." And he laughed. It was then Evelyn knew that her son David really was O.K.—after all.

After being home for seven days, Evelyn drove David to the Doctor's office for what they called "the great unveiling." But they were disappointed. The doctor removed some of the bandages, and then said that they couldn't all come off for two more days. So, two days later, back David and Evelyn went.

"It was like a movie," Evelyn says. "I sat there and watched the doctor slowly unwrapping David in this dark room. As he did so, he gave instructions. 'David,' he said, 'I'm going to do this very slowly. When I finish taking the bandages off, you're not going to be able to open your eyes. But that's all right—you will be able to open them very shortly. The first thing you'll be aware of is a *feeling* of light in the room. The impact of these first light waves will be a bit painful, but don't let that bother you.'"

Before his operation, David hated to have school pictures taken—for he felt his eyes looked "crooked" in them.



Evelyn looked around the darkened room. Over in one corner was a tiny light—like a night light. She thought, *Well, it'll amaze me if David can be aware of a tiny light like that!*

At that moment, the bandages were completely removed. David winced a bit and said, "There is a light in this room—and I don't like the *feeling* of it!"

The doctor smiled and said, "Well, don't worry, David—you're going to learn to love it."

Eyedrops were administered and dark wrap-around glasses, which completely shut out all sunlight, were placed over David's eyes. Evelyn was given a packet of eyedrops she was to administer at home from time-to-time and was told that in four or five days David's eyes would be opening and then he should start to take his glasses off in the evening and gradually get used to the light again.

It was actually two weeks before David's eyes got near to normal—and for David this was the most difficult part of his whole ordeal. Though his eyes were healing very well, any light rays that hit the tender surfaces were very much like sandpaper being rubbed on a wound. The impact of light on David's eyes was so excruciatingly painful that for awhile Evelyn worried if he would ever take those dark glasses off for good. But somehow he weathered this most difficult storm and was soon able to go about without wearing the glasses at all.

For two months David continued exercises and treatments, and finally the day came when the doctor telephoned Evelyn and said, "Evelyn, we're finished. David is A-O.K. I'm releasing him today."

After she hung up the phone, Evelyn sat down. At last she felt the long-held-back tears of joy rolling down her cheeks as she sat there thinking—*After all these years, after watching all the terrible things David has had to go through, finally—at last—he can see!*

At that moment, David walked through the doorway. Evelyn quickly and deftly moved her hand across her face so that he wouldn't see her tears. She sat there smiling at him and he smiled back, not noticing that his mom was joyously looking right into his clear, sparkling hazel eyes.

An Emerson High school picture taken of David after his operation.

