

Wish Granted

Any time I see a pregnant woman my involuntary first thought is, 'thank God that's not me' which is very quickly followed by an over whelming desire to give her all my money and a tub of ice cream. Some women have magical pregnancies. They love the ultrasounds, the baby's movement and the miracle of birth. I had the opposite experience. My babies made me terribly ill every day from the moment they were conceived. I cried every day willing the experience to be over. I say that Logan's very first gift to me was arriving 10 weeks early relieving me of my pregnancy misery.

Rewind 15 years to when I first noted the impressive value individuals with intellectual disabilities brought our high school community. I knew then that this is the group I would dedicate my career to supporting. I also knew at that time that all my children would have special needs.

I was not the dreaming type. I never gave that much detailed thought to future events. It felt more like consciously acknowledging an eventual certainty. I knew that I would get married, but I never considered what my future husband would be like. I knew I would live on a farm, but I never thought about where the farm would be located. I knew I would have children, and I knew they would have special needs. And for whatever reason, if I could choose the diagnosis, I would choose Down syndrome.

So when my husband to be and I had our 'pre marital deal breaker conversation' I listed by 'deal breakers'. That is to say we each listed what we knew to be absolutes in our lives if we were to achieve inner happiness.

- #1 I will always live on a farm, never in the city.
- #2 I will always own a horse whether we can afford it or not.
- #3 And, I have to adopt my children.

The first two points were of no surprise to him but the third gave him pause. Not because he had any issues with adoption, but because it was a point I had never made before. All my kids were going to have special needs and the odds of me baring them myself was so slim that to adopt was my solution. Collin and I got married and got excited to start our family. We planned for me to carry our first child and that we would adopt the rest.

Fast forward to June 2011, 15 years later, to Collin and tucked into our little curtained corner in the NICU holding our 10-day old, 10 week premature, baby boy for the first time. Some of his tubes had been removed and the swelling and bruising that resulted from his traumatic birth had subsided. As we held tiny Logan he made his first effort to force his eyes open and look up at us. I remember the moment he locked onto me and what I felt deep in my chest, this is not a new baby, his eyes have seen more then mine.

That evening Collin and I rode the elevator to the parking garage in silence. As he helped me into the car he said, 'I have to say it out loud'. I finished his thought, 'I know, the baby has Down syndrome'.

There was no real weight to the statement it just fell in line with what was the normal flow of information at that time. Our morning updates would go something like, 'Logan had a good night. He weighted 4.3lbs this morning. The doctor was in. We will continue the caffeine shots for now. You can give him a bath if you want. There as a shadow when they scanned his brain last night. They'll look again a few days'. And she would continue with her duties.

The next morning following Nurse Carol's routine morning update I ask, 'how do we go about seeing a geneticist'? She was surprised to say the least, 'why do you need to see a geneticist'? I just replied, 'oh, the baby has Down syndrome'.

She looked at us, then looked at Logan. She looked at his chart, inspected his face, his hands and his feet looking for any of the common traits shared by people with Trisomy 21. As she looked I commented, 'I ve already looked, he doesn't have any.'

When she'd finished, she looked at us and with nothing but kindness and said, 'when babies are born this early, they don't look like babies, they look more like fetuses. He does not have Down syndrome he is just premature'.

We persisted, 'all the same, can we see a geneticist anyways'?

A week or so later when Logan was moved to the Level 2 Nursery we did see a geneticist who after considering his file, checking him over herself and asking a few questions found herself on the fence, 'to be honest I cannot make a determination one way or the other. We will have to do a DNA test to find out for sure'.

During he 30-day period as we waited for the results Collin and I talked back and forth about what our future would look like if Logan did have Down syndrome. The facts were that Logan was over all in very good health. His heart, lungs and other vital organs were all in good condition, not always the case in people with Down syndrome or premature babies. We were very lucky. Despite Logan's dramatic entry into the world he was healthy; no matter what the DNA test revealed.

When the results arrived, Logan had been moved to our local hospital. As we sat with him, we noticed the nurses quietly asking the other parents to leave the nursery. And then came the portable privacy curtains. I looked at Collin and smiled, 'Oh boy, confidential information coming our way'.

As the pediatrician went over her report and the results to other tests I interrupted her, 'what about the Down syndrome test'? '

'I am getting to that' she softly replied.

A few moments later she said, 'and the test for Down syndrome came back positive'.

'Okay. Do we get to keep you as our pediatrician'? I asked.

Confused she gently persisted, 'You understand what I said? Logan has Down syndrome'. In hindsight I believe she felt we were in shock, which was a fair assumption.

I just confirmed, 'yes, but we already knew that. Can we keep you as our pediatrician'?

Puzzled she just said, 'yes, you can keep me as a pediatrician'.

It was the moments following that exchange, as I snuggled our baby boy, that I realized against all odds Logan had chosen us. My wish had been granted.