

*From the Vicar's Desk*



Part I of II—[Chestnut!]

The doctor walked into the small hospital room of Diana Blessing. She was still groggy from surgery. Her husband, David, held her hand as they braced themselves for the latest news. That afternoon of March 10, 1991, complications had forced Diana, only 24-weeks pregnant, to undergo an emergency Cesarean Section to deliver the couple's new daughter, Dana Lu Blessing.

At 12 inches long and weighing only one pound-nine ounces, they already knew she was perilously premature. Still, the doctor's soft words dropped like bombs. "I don't think she's going to make it," he said, as kindly as he could.

*"There's only a 10% chance she will live through the night. And even then, if by some slim chance she does make it, her future could be a very cruel one."*

Numb with disbelief, David and Diana listened as the doctor described the devastating problems Dana would likely face if she survived.

She would never walk. She would never talk. She would probably be blind, and she would certainly be prone to other catastrophic conditions... from cerebral palsy to complete, mental retardation, and on and on. "No! No!" was all Diana could sob.

She and David, with their 5-year-old son, Dustin, had long dreamed of the day that they would have a daughter & baby sister to become a family of four.

Now, within a matter of hours, that dream was slipping away.

But, as those first days passed, a new agony set in for David and Diana. Because Dana's underdeveloped nervous system was essentially 'raw', the lightest kiss or caress only intensified her pain, so they couldn't even cradle their tiny, baby girl against their chests to offer the strength of their love.

All they could do, as Dana struggled alone beneath the ultraviolet light, in the tangle of tubes and wires, was to pray that God would stay close to their precious little girl.

There was never a moment when Dana suddenly grew stronger. But as the weeks went by, she did slowly gain an ounce of weight here and an ounce of strength there. At last, when Dana turned two months old, her parents were able to hold her in their arms for the very, first time. And two months later, though doctors continued to gently, but grimly, warn that her chances of surviving, much less living any kind of normal life, were next to zero, Dana went home from the hospital, just as her mother had predicted.

Five years later, Dana was a petite, but feisty, young girl with glittering, gray eyes and an unquenchable zest for life. She showed no signs whatsoever of any mental or physical impairment. Simply, she was everything a little girl can be and more. But that happy ending is far from the end of her story.

*(Continued in 2 weeks.)*