

A Review of

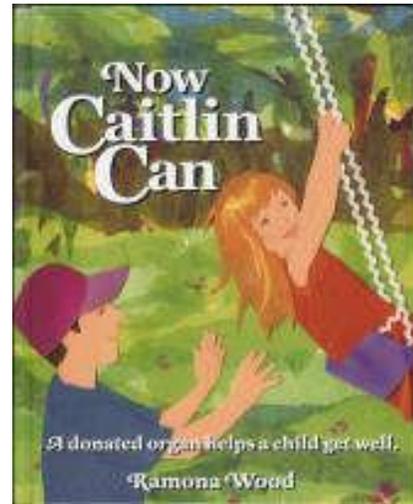
Now Caitlin Can

A donated organ helps a child get well

Author: Ramona Wood

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient, and ten year old, Carol Anderson, Jim's granddaughter

So how does a 62 year old heart recipient go about reviewing a children's book about a kidney transplant? He goes to his ten year old granddaughter, Carol Marie, and they read the book together while he takes note of her reactions to the book, of course! The book review comments that follow are a combination of our reactions during that shared reading event, as we alternated reading its pages.



This beautifully illustrated and touching story of a baby, Caitlin, who comes home from the hospital after birth with a defective kidney, is told through the eyes of her brother, Freddie, as he deals with all the mysteries of seeing his baby sister dealing with this life threatening illness. Each procedure and scene is described as told to this small boy, from the doctor's office visit to the many in home situations as the family struggles to keep their daughter alive through her first five years. Eventually a kidney transplant succeeds in restoring her to a normal child's life, able to play and eat like her big brother. The care and concern that we see in this story for a brother to his failing sister is very moving, especially to a young reader, but I felt that concern too as Carol and I read this story aloud.

Carol is no stranger to the transplant concept, having been guided to an understanding of her own grandfather's heart transplant story, an event that took place one year before her own birth. But this story really caught her attention and she took special note when it described how Caitlin was not able to eat "normal foods" like her brother. Carol noticed (even when I missed it..) the picture of Caitlin's fifth birthday party with a cake made of birthday candles on a stack of "formula cans" to further illustrate the limitations of her eating and how family worked to make her feel normal. Carol got very quiet again when Freddie could go swimming, but Caitlin had to just watch because of her tubes not being able to get wet. When Caitlin gets a fever that threatens the pending transplant and nobody seems to be able to do anything to resolve it, Freddie prays and the fever goes down to save the day. Carol knows the power of prayer herself, so this struck a cord in her heart also.

I repeatedly found myself stopping to explain the medical scene that a paragraph described, only to find the author had done an excellent job of giving her young readers an even better explanation in the very next paragraph. The story is emotional, true to life with simple descriptions of the events affecting a family and their children that come to a happy ending with Caitlin's successful kidney transplant. Based on my Carol's reaction

to our shared reading, I would strongly recommend this wonderful storybook to young readers (and their families).

Amazingly, this book is based on actual life events. That real transplant story ending is told on the final page, brought to life with photos of Caitlin, Freddie, both her family and the donor's family, along with their son, Mark, the accident victim and eventual donor. As Caitlin prays on the final page: "God, remember to thank the people who gave me a kidney and helped me feel better. And thank you for the best birthday I ever had." Who could say it better?

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, a heart recipient since Oct. '94, retired from Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a nationally recognized public speaker and author. His book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.