



Ben

Ben always had the perils of life stacked against him. Born with a windpipe deformity he had an operation at 4 hours old he had an operation to connect his oesophagus to the back of his throat. At 3 months he stopped breathing, turned blue and I had to give him mouth to mouth. Apparently due to his condition, which highlighted the need for a second operation, this time to have his aorta sutured to his breastbone to take the pressure off his trachea so that he could breathe normally.

Ben, at the age of 10 years required a further operation to correct a severe case of scoliosis where his C7 vertebrae formed a wedge. It meant once again going to Camperdown Children's Hospital (third time lucky) to have a section of rib inserted above and below the defective disk to fuse it permanently in position.

As the day for surgery approached, I waved good-bye to Ben not knowing it would be for the last time, as my wife Elayne drove off in the family car taking Ben to Camperdown Children's Hospital for his surgery which was to take place on Monday, the following day. At noon Monday I head off from work to be with Elayne for when Ben was to come out of recovery. Walking into the recovery room, my world fell apart. Elayne was on her own in the room her face saying it all. In preparing Ben for his back operation his aorta tore. One can only imagine the horror that followed within the theatre with doctors being scabbled across the adjoining two theatres that were operating at the time. What made matters worse was this outcome was unexpected and they did not have a heart-lung machine on stand-by. While they tried to maintain his blood pressure, the heart-lung machine had to be filled and primed and unfortunately that meant Ben went without blood to the brain for 12 minutes before he could be connect.

This resulted in Ben being on a ventilator in ICU from mid-day Monday with Elayne and I at his bedside hoping for a miracle. Hope eventually evaporated when Doctors conducted an EEG, dye test and a series of reflex tests to confirm Ben's was brain dead. We both said as one that we wanted to donate Ben's organs and tissue. Regardless of our immense grief Elayne and I knew we had the ultimate power to spare other families from the pain we were experiencing by donating Ben's organs. We signed the papers to release Ben for organ & tissue donation at 4pm on Tuesday afternoon. It was a further wait until 6am Wednesday morning before we could walk beside Ben to theatre for the retrieval process. Hours later we were shown to a quiet room where we were able to cradle Ben and say goodbye to our son, our little mate, Our Donor Hero.

Thankfully Donor Heroes Night gives us along with thousands of other Donor Families the opportunity to celebrate our loved ones as "Donor Heroes" and reflect on what their gifts of life has achieved as seen in our 2021 Donor Heroes Night posting on Donor Families Australia Facebook Page.

