

## **The Sunshine Boy**

**By: Sheila S. Hudson**

“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.” The lyrics float out of the oxygen-filled room and down the hall. Sometimes loud and often not clear, the message is unmistakable. Andrew is serenading again.

Therapists, nurses, technicians, and doctors are all treated to a sample of Andrew’s repertoire. Short though they may be, renditions of “Jesus Loves Me,” “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “C is for Cookie,” and “You are My Sunshine,” never fail to bring a smile. The gruffest physician is cookie dough under this toddler’s spell.

Andrew has pneumonia. At the tender age of 2 years 1 month, he has spent too much time being poked and prodded for lung problems, ear infections, sinus infections, bronchitis, and finally asthma. With all his health crises, he remains remarkably lovable, compliant, and good-natured. Now with a nose tube, an IV, and a monitor, and each breath a labor -- Andrew sings.

Andrew’s tea-colored eyes smile for him as he waves a “Hi” to everyone who enters his hospital room at Gwinnett Medical Center. His loving nature endears Andrew to the staff as they attend to his breathing difficulties.

Ever since Andrew can remember whenever he experienced a breathing attack, his mother (my daughter) would cradle him and sing, “You are My Sunshine.” Now that he is verbal, Andrew sings back.

No matter that he isn’t comfortable, that he has a monitor on his toe and a cast containing intravenous antibiotics on his arm, or that a mask conveying oxygen is taped to his small angelic face. Andrew motions to the characters on television and reaches tiny arms out to those of us who minister to him.

And through it all Andrew sings. He is off key and the words are sometimes unrecognizable. The tempo needs work and you couldn't say he is actually carrying a tune. No matter. What he lacks in rhythm he makes up for in vibrato and great gusto. Andrew sings not because of the beauty of his sounds, not for an audience, certainly not because he feels good, but because He CAN. Andrew's music comes forth as naturally as water issues from a bubbling spring, a pure innocent expression only a two-year-old could manage.

With no notion of secular versus sacred in the musical realm, Andrew sings, "Jesus loves me, e-I-e-I-o" followed by "C is for Cookie" with a rousing chorus of "This is the day that the Lord has made."

Angelic music gurgles forth like laughter and becomes a melody of the heavenly genre with words a celestial choir might envy. For Andrew's song is not about tunes or words but about spreading "sunshine" equally distributed -- weather or health notwithstanding.

I marvel at this wonderful little boy that I am privileged to grandparent. He is a mystery from heaven full of the beauty of the Father. Andrew is teaching me unconditional love for others no matter what their gender, race, station in life, opinions, or beliefs. His life is a lesson of acceptance and trust, commitment and joy, love without strings. He teaches in his crinkling smiles and blowing kisses, by repetition flavored with hugs and "I love yous."

I watch Andrew nap – a blond cherub swathed in hospital sheets. His innocent brand of enthusiastic love is contagious. A fair-haired, angelic-faced two-year-old missionary as guileless and pure as the One who gave him life.

Andrew's stay in the hospital was mercifully short. His sojourn there taught me not to take the simplest things for granted. In a moment, my peaceful kingdom can evaporate and all

that's left is the love I've managed to spread and the relationships I've fostered. Like sunshine opportunities come to me every day, it's what I do with them that matters.

When Jesus took a small child on his lap, he announced to all those around that in order to enter the kingdom we must become as little children. Children are accepting, trusting, and eager. Children are easy to laugh and even easier to love. Children are not impressed with what you **do** but what you **are**. Andrew and my other two grandsons are not interested in how much money I make but how much time I make for them.

Jesus said a little child would lead us. I think he already has.

How our world would change if we loved each other recklessly, accepted each other unconditionally, and served each other unselfishly. The world would beat a path to our doors and adopt "You are my sunshine" as their theme song.

Andrew would be pleased. And so would Jesus!