

Wrinkled Face Becomes A Joyous Miracle

For the first time in 15 years, Ruby Sauls looked at herself in the mirror, "and there was an ugly woman."
"My face was wrinkled and my hair white. The last time I could see in the mirror, my face was smooth and my hair black."
It didn't seem fair. Mrs. Sauls had endured years of blindness and undergone three corneal transplants — two of them unsuccessful — to stand in front of that mirror.
"I had been almost 15 years without seeing me — I wanted to see me," she said. "When I saw that I had more wrinkles than a piece of crepe de chine, I cried."
But Mrs. Sauls' disappointment was brief. The wrinkles saddened her, but the simple fact that she could see them was a joyous miracle.

to my sight and didn't know it was going."
She and James had three children — Joyce, James Jr. and Jack — and then adopted two more — his cousin, Dorothy Shalloup and her cousin, Reba Jones.
"As the family grew, the farm we had in Wayne County was just not large enough," she said. "We saw an ad for a farm near Bowdens for sale — 120 acres. We bought it."
"You've heard of people who had nothing. Well, we had less than that. We were wagging' with all that we could wag in those days."
When their youngest son, Jack, went to high school, Mrs. Sauls went to work. Eleven years later, her failing eyesight began to overtake her seemingly boundless energy.
"I went to the best eye

completely blind in my left eye, and the right one was going fast."
Because eye tissue is so fragile, it will only tolerate stitches once every two years, Mrs. Sauls explained. In 1971 she went to McPherson Hospital in Durham for a second transplant on her left eye.
"When they took the bandages off, I could see the doctor's hairline, and I just thought this was the answer to all my prayers," she said.
But six weeks later, her body was trying to reject the second transplant.
"You talk about a kick in the teeth," she said. "We tried everything. I went to McPherson every day or every other day for weeks and weeks. I had cortisone shots in my eye. Finally it got to the point where it didn't hurt so much.

decided to transplant it instead."
"As bad as I wanted to see, I'd try anything," Mrs. Sauls said, and her faith was rewarded: "Everything went absolutely perfectly on the third one. There was no pain. I could see."
"When I walked out of the hospital, I could see well enough to count the hairs on my arm. I could see birds fly and I could see trees."
"I could see the blades of grass, and I wanted to lie down in it and roll down the hill for joy."
Most importantly, she could see her granddaughters for the first time as they danced in a recital. Once again, she could see James,

"the most compassionate man that has ever been — I've had 48 years with him, so I know what I'm talking about."
Today, with the help of thick glasses, Mrs. Sauls still has 20/20 vision in her right eye, and she plans to have the left one transplanted again.
She drives, speaking "everytime I get the chance" to recruit eye wills, so that others can experience the miracle of restored sight as she has.
"It's not that the public is selfish — the public is uneducated," she said. "Give your eyes — once you're dead, it won't hurt and somebody can see.

"You can't know what it means to a blind person. I'm so grateful that I can see.... If heaven's any better than that, I can't stand it. Lord."
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Mrs. Ruby Sauls

"I just cannot describe in words what it's like to be blind 15 years and then see," she said. "I don't thank the Lord for what I look like — I thank the Lord that I can see."
Mrs. Sauls' blindness is caused by corneal dystrophy, a hereditary disease in which the cornea deteriorates gradually until vision disappears. Although Mrs. Sauls didn't realize she had corneal dystrophy until 1968, she suspected something was wrong long before.
"Every once in a while people would remark on things they could see that I couldn't," she said. "I realize now that I could never see what everyone else could see, even as a child."
Mrs. Sauls, now 66, received a hint of the problems to come at age 22, when she and her husband, James, bought their first house in Wayne County.
"We had to have an examination for the insurance," she explained. "The doctor told me, 'You'll be blind in 30 years.'
"We'd just bought a farm, we had an 18-month-old and we were expecting another one. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that doctor was crazy — I had too much to look forward to."
For years, she lived a normal life. "It wasn't difficult, because I had adapted

doctor in Goldsboro," she said. "He told me, 'There's nothing wrong with your vision. Go home and put bigger light bulbs in the sockets.'
"I came home and tried, but (when I read) my words ran together. I cried and I cried."
Her job, processing patients' insurance at Duplin General Hospital, became difficult.
"Those insurance policies are mean as a snake," she said. "They start out with great big type, but they trickle down to fine print. I knew my days of bluffing were over. I could only see what I could see."
One morning in 1968, she awoke with her left eye completely bloodshot. She didn't know — she couldn't see it.
The doctor in Goldsboro diagnosed the disease as corneal dystrophy and sent her immediately to Duke University Hospital for a corneal transplant.
"It went haywire right away," she said. "There were 25 stitches and 25 knots in my eye. It felt like they were made of rope."
"When I came home, it was agonizing pain, and it went on like that for six weeks. It was infected."
Despite more surgery to restitch the new cornea, the transplant failed. "I was

"I could see well enough to get around. With a magnifying glass I could read my Bible and my newspaper. I just thought the portals of heaven had opened."
Although the second transplant gave Mrs. Sauls incomplete vision, it lasted for about five years.
When her left eye began to fail, Dr. John Moore at McPherson Hospital wanted to do another transplant. By this time, new techniques had made the operation simpler and less painful.
In 1979, just as he was about to begin the operation, Moore found her right eye to be worse than the left and he

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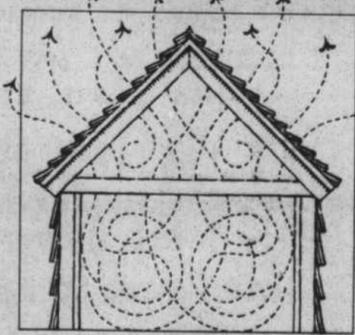
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