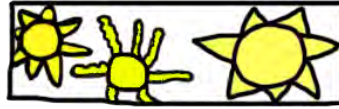


Kids With Courage - “Kids For Saving Earth” - Clinton’s Chapter

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*Thousands of kids around the world
keep Clinton Hill's dream alive!*

There's a tree on a small hill by Sunny Hollow Elementary School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Not a large tree—just a little ash. It's not a tree that would win a blue ribbon, or that someone passing by would even notice.

Planting the tree was sixth grader Dan Springrose's idea. He and his classmates did it in memory of their friend, Clinton Hill, who died of a brain tumor when he was only eleven. Now they call the place where they planted the tree “Clinton's Hill.”



*Clinton Hill
Founder, Kids for Saving Earth*

But that's not the end. It's only the middle. And you need to hear about Clinton from the beginning.

When Clinton was a toddler, he loved his Big Wheels cycle. He'd spin it in circles and fly off cardboard jumps. In the morning, he'd bounce into bed with his parents, Tessa and Will, wake them up, and squeak, “It's me! It's the bed-jumper. And the foot-snuggler.” Then he'd rub his cold toes up and down their legs.

Clinton loved to talk. By the time he was six, if he couldn't corner you to listen, he would walk up and hit you. It wasn't an angry hit. He just wanted you to know he was there. And he wanted you to listen—right now!

He'd follow you around, tugging at your sleeve, as he spilled over with imaginary stories of space travel and Star Wars heroes. His dark eyes sparkled. He'd tell you that he had magical powers and then throw his arms around your waist, or pull your head down and give you a hug.

As he grew from a toddler into an active little boy, Clinton played Wiffle Ball with his dad. He also played all the other kid sports: baseball, basketball, soccer. But he never really cared much if his team won or lost. He played for fun and to be with his friends.

Clinton often asked his dad, “Why are people so mean to each other?” Clinton thought that people should be kind and helpful to everyone, no matter who they were, and give everybody a chance. In spite of weird looks, he yelled “Hi!” to some strangers in the shopping malls. He cracked original jokes, such as: “What’s round and red and you can wear it?” Before you could come up with an answer, he’d shout, “A pimple!” And then he’d bound off laughing. Clinton drew posters and wrote songs about nature.

He worried about pollution. When he saw a documentary about an endangered species of penguins, he cried. He asked questions about dolphins, too. Would they be around when he was an old man? Was there only a little time left for the Earth if people didn’t change? He told his dad, “Kids will be the ones to teach the adults to take care of the Earth.”

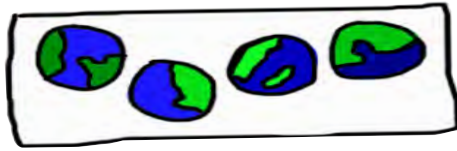


Clinton decided, “We can help people change. People are the pollution solution. I’ll be a defender of the planet. To keep the world healthy and beautiful.”

One day Clinton told his mother, “I want to start my own club. I want to call it ‘Kids for Saving Earth.’” He talked with his friends at school and started making plans. At school, he dreamed about his plans. He often behaved in an absent-minded way, his glasses slipping down his nose, as he stared into space. If the teacher or anyone else scolded him for not listening, he would reply, “It’s just that what is going on in my own mind is so much more interesting.” But while Clinton worried about the Earth’s future, there was another clock ticking away inside his brain.

In the fall of 1988, he began to show strange symptoms. He’d wander out of his bedroom at night and walked down the hallway with a disoriented look on his face. He developed headaches and began to vomit.





Tessa and Will grew concerned. They decided that Clinton needed to see a doctor. After a CAT Scan at the hospital in December, 1988, they received the shocking news: Clinton was diagnosed as having a malignant brain tumor.

The doctor put him in the hospital that night for tests, and two days later performed a delicate brain operation. In spite of many hours of surgery, the doctor was able to remove only 75 percent of the huge mass in Clinton's brain.

The family remained positive. They fully believed that Clinton would recover. His father, Will, says, "He always kept his sense of humor- through everything." Clinton never doubted that things would turn out okay. After all, he was the kid with magical powers! A few days after his first surgery, he woke up in the middle of the night and wanted a bath. After the bath, his mom got his clothes ready to help him dress. She said, "Okay, Clinton, I'm going to put your underwear on now." Without hesitating, he answered, "I don't think they'll fit you, Mom."

He began chemotherapy, a process of drinking a solution of chemicals every six weeks to kill the tumor and keep it from spreading. Each time, the process would cause him to vomit and feel "crummy." His dad recalls that Clinton didn't make a big deal out of it. He'd say something like, "Well, if I drink it today, I'll be able to go to the carnival by Sunday."

Clinton seemed to recover quickly from the surgery and the chemotherapy. He wanted to start his club. By now, he had decided that it should be an international club. His mother smiled and told him to wait until he was completely well. "We never thought he would really die." she remembers.

Clinton returned to school full time. He had grown thinner. But even with deep hollows in his cheeks, he kept grinning. He thought that his problems were not so bad as those of a friend whose parents were getting a divorce. He grew anxious to get his club started. One evening, as he sat reading a copy of "Boys Life" magazine, he found an advertisement in the back for a button-making machine. "What a great idea," he thought . "I could make buttons for my club." He must have felt some sense of urgency, because he snatched his magic markers and drew a poster of a green-and-blue-and brown Earth. Under and around it, he wrote "Kids for Saving Earth, the pollution Solution. **Please give a contribution. Any Amount. Put in a cup, please. Thank you.**"



Then he interrupted his parents' dinner party and passed a cup to collect money for the button machine. He collected \$4.50. As Tessa and Will tucked him into bed that night, he told them in a tired voice that he might need their help to keep the club going. They promised to help.

Clinton's parents wanted the best treatment available for their son. They packed up their family and moved back to Houston, Texas, for a few months, where Clinton received a second diagnosis at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Unfortunately, after many tests, the doctors determined that the tumor had grown. It meant a second surgery for Clinton in February, 1989.

Clinton accepted the news calmly. He knew he had to go through it. The second operation went well. "He was phenomenal in the recovery from the surgery," his dad remembers. "He was at home in just a few days. And he never lost his faculties. He was always alert and maintained his sense of humor. Like the time when he was out flat on the table waiting to receive the radiation. He tried to get the doctors to radiate his bubble-gum."

Clinton always bantered with one particular doctor, Dr.Woo. One day, when Dr.Woo came into the room, Clinton asked, "Do you have a joke today?" Dr.Woo's eyes wrinkled as he answered, "Do you have to have a joke everyday?" Then Clinton replied, "You're the only doctor who comes up with any jokes. The rest are jokes."

As a result of the radiation, Clinton lost hair on both sides of his head. But he looked himself in the mirror with a sly grin. "I've got a mohawk now," he told his parents.

Back in school, he simply wore a baseball hat. Once, as he waited in a line to buy a 25 cents snow cone from the PTA, he overheard two boys whispering. "Will you loan me a quarter if I show you something neat?" One boy said. The second boy nodded.





Pointing at Clinton, the first boy said. “That kid over there has a mo-hawk.” Overhearing the conversation, Clinton tipped his hat so all could see his hair. Everyone laughed, including Clinton, and the first kid got his quarter for a snow cone.

Clinton continued to improve. At the same time, his parents researched every possible cure they could find, including changing his diet and using positive thinking and visualization. The whole family was convinced that Clinton would fully recover. They set out for a much needed vacation to Colorado and California.

Their week-long vacation expanded into four weeks as they continued on to the Grand Canyon and Disneyland. While they drove along, they sang “Zippety Doo Dah.” Each day was more wonderful than the last, simply because it was so great being together. Clinton added his usual dose of homemade humor. “What’s red, yellow, and green and makes you scream?” He threw out his arms. “A traffic light!”

When they returned home to Minnesota, Clinton, Will, and Karina grabbed the Wiffle Ball and headed for the backyard. “Clinton could really smack that ball,” his dad remembers. By September, Clinton could still hit, but he stopped running around the bases,” Will says. “He grew tired. His legs wobbled beneath him.” Clinton’s dad pauses, clears his throat, and then continues. “Soon we didn’t go out at all.

“This was a special kid,” said Paul Tesdahl, principal at Sunny Hollow School. “In those last months, you knew he was hurting. He’d miss a few days of school, then you’d see him in the hall, and he would have this big smile. He’d say, ‘hey Mr.T, how ya’ doin’?’”

On Thanksgiving Day, Clinton sat with his family and they shared with one another all the things they were grateful for. When it came his turn to speak, Clinton said, “I’m grateful for my family and all my wonderful friends.”

Four days later, on November 27, 1989, the kid with magical powers slipped away. His father, Will, was with him at the end. He doesn’t like to talk about it. He isn’t certain exactly which moment Clinton died. He just sort of slipped away, like a puff of smoke.



The funeral was attended by many of Clinton's friends, teachers, and adults. As his parents pulled themselves together following the funeral, they set about fulfilling their promise to Clinton to keep his club going.

Tessa and Will went to Sunny Hollow Elementary School and began formally organizing Kids for Saving Earth. Target stores, a large chain of department stores based in Minnesota, heard of their plans and adopted the project. Adults met with kids, and kids brainstormed what they wanted to do. The fourth-grade KSE club raised \$50 and bought an acre of forest in the Children's International Rainforest in Costa Rica so it couldn't be destroyed. They also adopted a whale.

Clinton's parents designed club buttons from Clinton's drawings and handwriting, made stickers, and printed T-shirts. They began a newsletter for kids. Clinton's parents wrote a song and a promise using Clinton's ideas and words.

Target Stores financed a massive mailing to inform other children about starting their own environmental KSE - Kids for Saving Earth - clubs. New clubs sprang up all over the United States and Canada. A child from the Soviet Union wrote for information on how to start one over there.

Clinton's friends went to the United Nations Youth Environment Forum in May, 1990, and told the 2,000 children there about Clinton's dream. They gave T-shirts to every child present, and the audience sang their song. When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, Rasia, visited Minnesota in June, 1990, KSE sang their song and presented them with buttons and T-shirts.

It started small, with the simple dream of a ten-year-old boy and a cup with \$4.50 in it. And a hill with an ash tree on it. Now there are thousands of members, including chapters in such faraway places as Ireland, Costa Rica, and the Soviet Union. There's a newsletter that has reached over thirty-five million people. Letters pour in everyday with reports from club members around the world.

KSE kids are recycling and influencing parents to make changes. They're marching in parades, collecting litter, and planting trees across the country. They're adopting endangered species, saving beaches, fighting in their communities for clean air....And that's only the beginning.

