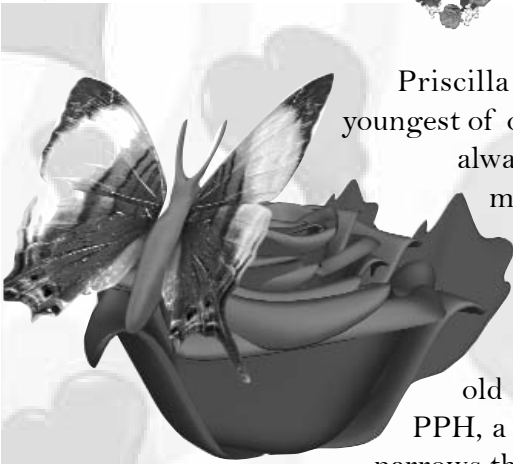


Part I: Priscilla



*P*riscilla is the reason this book exists. This remarkable young lady had Primary Pulmonary Hypertension (PPH), and she was the apple of God's eye. Our family has been through a great deal, and like many others, sometimes we just didn't know how to respond to our circumstances. My prayer is that you will contemplate what Jesus has done in your life, so that you will be able to share your testimony with others. Putting God first is important, so to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, be all the glory and honor for every word spoken. May our story touch and change your life. It certainly changed ours.



Priscilla A. Soto (Garcia) was the youngest of our three children. Priscilla had always been uniquely different and much more independent than the other two. She was always active in school and very energetic.

Priscilla was just 21 years old when she was diagnosed with PPH, a rare disease that progressively narrows the blood vessels, which makes it difficult for the lungs to function properly. PPH eventually causes high blood pressure in the vessels and eventually leads to heart failure. The blood pushing in from the right side of her lungs to the right side of her heart was simply not able to put enough pressure on the left side of the heart. Instead, the blood continually hit the right wall of the heart and returned to the left, causing it to expand like a balloon that can burst! Normal pressure in the heart valve is 30, with the fatal point being 90; Priscilla's was 140.

This disease affects two out of one million women, although men and children can get it as well, just a different type. The disease has many possible causes including genetic or familiar predisposition; immune system disease; and heart disease caused by smoking, liver problems, exposure to mold, or even phen-phen, a drug used in diet pills. We believe that either the diet pills or ORTHO EVRA, the birth control patch, caused Priscilla's PPH, though we never knew for sure. While doctors told us they didn't know the cause, I always thought it was because they never did the research. We believe she was especially chosen for such a time as this even though we don't know why.

At the end of this book, I will tell you more about PPH, and show you the mistakes we made so you can learn from us and help your loved one live longer. I will also share how our relationship with Jesus Christ helped us get through this tragedy, when all we wanted was to die with her. So please read on and see what the Lord has done for us because He can do the same for you. After all, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! God bless you.

October 2001 Priscilla became pregnant for the first time. She was the most beautiful pregnant lady I had ever seen; she was energetic, vibrant, and happy, and she always dressed sexy, complete with full makeup. She had the perfect pregnancy and gave birth to her beautiful baby daughter Bryana, the love of her life, in July 2002. She was healthy the first six months after giving birth, except for feeling a little winded while caring for the baby. She thought she was just out of shape.



When Bryana was 8 months old, Priscilla came to visit us. She wasn't eating much, and she looked pale and tired. "Mom," she said, "For a couple of months now my heart's been beating fast, I've had difficulty breathing, and tunnel vision. I get tired just chasing after Bryana, and I feel faint when I go to pick her up from the floor." Then she grabbed my hand and put it on her heart so I could feel how fast her heart was racing. It scared me, and I told her to see her doctor as soon as she got back home. She made an appointment, but the doctor had to reschedule twice, and I finally told her, "Baby this needs immediate attention. Tell the doctor that you need to be seen soon." So, in February 2003, her regular doctor told her she was just recuperating from having the baby and that she was going to be fine. A couple of weeks passed, and she still felt horrible and kept getting worse. She started having more difficulty breathing. So, in March she went back to her regular doctor, who in turn referred her to a cardiologist. He ran extensive tests on her and diagnosed her with PPH.

Following is Priscilla's story of, and reaction to, her diagnosis in her own words:

"I see the doctor's office door close as he sits down on his rolling chair, scan reading my medical records. All that was going through my mind was "Oh my Lord, Please let this be good news." I could honestly say that this memory was the most terrifying moment in I have ever experienced. Not knowing what he is about to say, will it be good news, will it be bad, is it going to be curable? The Dr looks at me, as if he is thinking of the best way to put it in words, so he could explain the situation. His look wasn't too assuring. "I can't help it anymore, just spill it Doc!" I thought to myself. Then all of a sudden, here he goes "Ma'am it seems as if we have a very serious issue going on, me, along with other Cardiologists, and Pulmonary physicians, we have come to the conclusion that you have Primary Pulmonary Hypertension, causing the right ventricle of your heart to be severely enlarged..." As he is continuing to explain my condition, his face begins to blur while his words fade into the air. I can't concentrate on a single word he is telling me focusing on anything is impossible for me to do, at this moment.

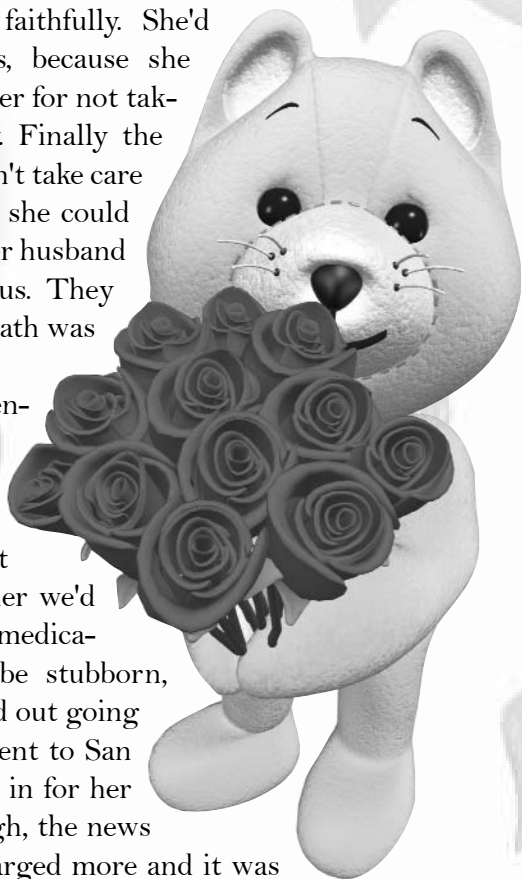
All I could envision is that from now on every aspect of my life will be so different not only by living my daily routines, but my view on the world around me as well. Powerless emotions flooded my heart as I scream inside, "I am only 21 years old, I still feel like a newly wed, and I have a baby girl, God!" My life is meant to end so soon? My husband is to be without his wife? And, my daughter, my baby, is her life destined to be alone without her mommy, why would she deserve any of this? I felt so much fear and anger towards God because I just couldn't understand why He'd let this happen.

For awhile I have realized that life is so fragile, and living in bitterness would do nothing but keep me from enjoying life's finest moments. I have decided to live to life's fullest and try my very best to make my husband's and babies world a pleasant one. Building up precious moments and memories is the most important ingredient to create satisfying memories.

She Was Diagnosed With PPH

After her diagnosis, her doctors started her on blood thinners to keep her blood from clotting. The first year she took the meds faithfully. When she began to feel better, however, she wouldn't take her meds as faithfully. She'd ignore her Coumadin classes, because she knew the nurses would scold her for not taking her medications regularly. Finally the doctors told her that if she didn't take care of herself and take her meds, she could die prematurely. But she and her husband didn't think it was that serious. They were young and in love, and death was incomprehensible.

After I talked to her extensively about this, I convinced her to get re-evaluated. "Get back on track," I scolded. "The doctors and I only want the best for your life." Together we'd stress the importance of her medications, but she continued to be stubborn, until one day she almost passed out going up the stairs in her home. I went to San Antonio to help, and she went in for her re-evaluation. This time, though, the news was worse. Her heart had enlarged more and it was



on the verge of irreparable damage. So, the next step would be to administer Viagra or Flolan intravenously. She resisted the treatment, however, because the IV made her look ugly and disabled. After all, what young, attractive woman at 23 wants to be walking around with tubes in her chest and an oxygen tank hanging on her? We cried and begged her to let the doctors perform the treatment because we wanted her to live as long as possible. None of us cared what she looked like, and her husband and baby needed her, so after extensive crying, she finally said, "ok."

This was a serious procedure. She was hospitalized in the ICU for her evaluation. In November 2006, the doctors administered medication through an IV to see which meds her body could handle. Since she was hospitalized so close to Thanksgiving, she begged her doctor to let her go home. He was hesitant to release her, however, even for the holiday because if she suffered a heart failure while at home, she would never make it back to the hospital. But she insisted that she needed to be with her family. "What if this is the last Thanksgiving I'll ever have?" she pleaded.

The doctor smiled and replied, "Ok, if you promise that you will rest when you go home."

"I'll make sure of that!" I yelled.

"Promise me, Priscilla," said the doctor.

"I promise," Priscilla assured. "Now can I go home?"

"Yes, you may," He replied, with instructions for her to be back the very day after Thanksgiving.

We returned to the hospital November 29, 2006, and everything started off well. The doctors began the procedure by inserting the tube into her chest for the Viagra or the Flolan. But at 1:20 a.m. on November 30, while she was being treated, the right side of her heart failed. That was when I received a call from the doctor at the hospital, who told us to get Priscilla's husband there as fast as we could. So I told her husband to go ahead and take off, and I'd catch up. "How is she?" I asked upon arriving at the hospital.

The doctor told us that for awhile she'd been doing fine except for minor complaints about dizzy spells and nausea, but we thought that was from the side effects of the medication. And he said this would happen because the medication was very strong. But now, things didn't look