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**Chapter Six**  
**Five Months Old,**  
**Pressure Support Trials**

♥ **March 18, 2005 at 09:03 AM CST**

Beautiful Day to All,

As this week has been relatively uneventful, which is a very good thing sometimes, Daddy has slacked from his periodic updates. But I like to touch base before the weekends. Blake spent the week feeding and growing. The doctors called for little changes in his ventilator settings and wanted to see some promising weight gain from our little guy. Being a good boy, Blake respected the doctors' wishes and enjoyed his increases in milk. Blake is nearly 7 lbs. now and we look forward to updating everyone Monday that he is over the lucky 7 mark. Next week, we may see some ventilator trials and oxygen weaning. We will be working our way off the ventilator soon...

I wanted to send out a big thanks to Aunt Lee Ann and Uncle Brian Payne for graciously hosting Kimberly in their home this week as she is taking a one week vacation from the Ronald McDonald House. Once you have stayed 45 days straight it is required to check out for a week before getting back on the waiting list and into the House again. We really appreciate your generosity and warm hospitality 'House of Payne'. See their pictures in the gallery. Our families have really come to our rescue in these past months. Big thanks to everyone again...

Blake has been enjoying his crib I hear. I look forward to seeing him this afternoon. Daddy will be making his usual 'Milk Run' and getting into Houston this afternoon. The three hour + drive goes by quickly as I'm going to be with Kimberly and Blake. But not so quickly it seems on the way back. Last weekend was better, as my good friend Paul gave me a ride back as he was returning from visiting family in Friendswood. Thanks again, Paul.

Well, enjoy this great spring weather and take extra time to spend time with your families. Precious moments are a gift...  
Good weekend to you all.

God Bless,  
*Chad*



♥ **March 21, 2005 at 08:33 AM CST**

Monday...Monday...

It always comes too soon. Hope everyone enjoyed all the sunshine this weekend. Blake had one of his better weekends. Besides the regular suctioning from his E.T. Tube (breathing tube) and occasional diaper change, Blake got lots of rest and milk. Daddy held Blake for 6-7 hours and could not believe his eyes. Blake enjoys laying on his belly on your lap over the donut. He fell fast asleep each time. He could have stayed there all day, except that Daddy could not feel his legs any more after 3-4 hours. Our little boy is getting so big. As predicted...Blake is 7 lbs. 4 oz. and growing. The doctors are happy to see his progress over the past week.

We'll see if the doctors start weaning the O2 this week, or even start some pressure trials. We know this will be a slow process, but it sure would be good to see Blake start his way back toward nasal canula. Blake getting bigger and storing calories will be important.

Blake is looking forward to his first Easter. Mommy already bought his outfit and surely will decorate the room some. Don't worry...we'll take pictures.

Here's to a good week...for everyone.  
So glad it's officially Spring now,  
*Daddy*

♥ **March 25, 2005 at 08:20 AM CST**

Good Friday to All,

Hope I catch everyone before the Easter weekend starts, in order to wish everyone a great holiday. I will be joining Kimberly and Blake this afternoon. These early spring days are giving us hope and strength. Soak up those rays and enjoy the egg hunts and kites.

Yesterday was a busy day in Houston. Blake had a high temperature over night and through the doctors into concern mode for possible infection. His blood test showed increased bands which is also a sign of possible infection. This time Blake had to have a lumbar puncture to test if there was any sign of meningitis. This was Blake's first such stick, and I don't think he wants any more like that. But once it was over, Blake took a long nap in Mommy's arms. We are praying that all the tests will be negative, or at least reveal minor concerns. We would appreciate any help in this department through the weekend. Thanks for always rallying behind our son with thoughts and prayers at such moments.

Mommy is back in the Ronald McDonald House again. There was an opening Tuesday morning so Kimberly loaded her stuff and set up camp there. Special thanks again to the Payne's (Lee Ann & Brian) for there generous hospitality. Lee Ann stayed with Kimberly last night...surely remembering those college days in San Antonio as 'roomies'. I understand Lee Ann has passed her licensing in pacifier holding. Watch out grandparents...just kidding.

We will send updates over the weekend as we hear more results. We hope everyone drives safely, and enjoys family time this Easter. Special prayers and thoughts go out to all the families affected by the explosion in Texas

City. Many of our families and friends have connections directly or indirectly to workers in the refineries. Please say a few prayers for all affected. This will be a very difficult holiday for many families. God Bless.

Love to you all,

*Chad*

PS I wanted to send out a special greeting to our dogs, Domino & Pocono. Mommy and Daddy miss you so much, and think of you each day as your picture is in the crib with Blake guarding him. Enjoy the ranch with Grandma and Grandpa Johnson and your mommy and daddy Sneaker & Whoopie. Sending treats for the holidays...

**♥ March 26, 2005 at 07:51 PM CST**

Just a quick note to let you all know that a few of the youngest of Blake's cousins started their own fundraising efforts today. Brooks, Kristen and Jessica decided to become entrepreneurs! The idea started out as a car wash in the Van Essen yard but quickly changed to a lemonade stand because the sun was shining bright. As it turns out, the neighborhood was VERY thirsty and the kids raised QUITE A BIT!! Thanks to a local policeman for his \$5.00 contribution. Each sale was accompanied by a small story about their cousin Blake and how proud they are of him. WAY TO GO Little Cousins!! Check out the latest picture in the gallery. Look for a posting for the next lemonade sale!!

AND if you are interested, Blake is having an awesome weekend with Mom and Dad. Look for an update from Chad next week. Have a blessed Easter holiday!

XOXO ,  
*Aunt Becky*

♥ **March 29, 2005 at 08:01 AM CST**

Good Monday...I mean Tuesday morning,

Daddy stayed an extra day in Houston with Kimberly and Blake for the Easter weekend. Hope everyone had a great one...

Good news from Houston, Blake is clear of infection and off antibiotics! The I.V. line was removed Sunday morning just in time for Easter. Mommy and Daddy were so relieved. With concern of infection out of the way, Blake will now be starting his pressure support trials again working his way towards nasal canula and off the ventilator hopefully. Monday Blake took the first step with a 1 hour trial. For these trials, Blake has to start his breaths himself and the ventilator supports him with 15 units of pressure to keep his lungs somewhat inflated. This pressure support keeps Blake from having to completely inflate his lungs each breath. Slowly all the supports will be lowered until Blake is breathing on his own. Good Luck Son!!! Keep doing your best!!!

Blake would like to wish Grampa Johnson and Cousin Catch Happy Birthdays! Catch's birthday is today, and Grandpa celebrated yesterday. Make good wishes...

Hope everyone checks the latest photos. We posted a couple of Easter pictures from the weekend. Yes, Blake's hair is coming out brown...curly eye lashes too. Daddy still thinks it will be blonde before all is said and done. We'll see.

Have a great week...we will keep everyone updated as to the pressure support trials. Time for rally caps!!!

*Daddy*

♥ **April 01, 2005 at 04:27 PM CST**

Good Friday to you all from Mommy Kim,

Hold on to your seats, Blake hit 8 lbs 1.6oz last night!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
I can't believe it either. Grandma Kramr and I were remembering the day we were so excited he made it to 5 lbs. We have had a good week. Blake has been doing 2 hr pressure support trials everyday this week. The plan is to continue 2hrs this weekend and hopefully next week Blake can try for 4 hours. You go boy!! We are so proud of our son! Keep up the prayers, we are hoping he can get off the ventilator. If not we will have to consider the trach. Please keep praying for our son, Blake.

This morning Grandma Kramr and I walked in his room and Blake was in his swing. He looked so cute. Blake is taking a nap now so he is ready to be held by daddy tonight.

I want to thank Grandma Kramr for staying with me the last 2 nights. I also want to thank Jason Lewis for visiting yesterday and providing me with a little comedy. I needed it. I didn't mention the first time Jason visited he became a licensed pacifier holder too. Blake wanted to thank you for your time.

It's a beautiful windy, sunny day!!! I hope you all are having a sunny day also. Go out and enjoy it! Have a wonderful weekend.

Love,  
*Kimberly :)*

♥ **April 04, 2005 at 09:02 AM CDT**

Monday Report,

Blake is not slowing down anytime soon, over the weekend Blake topped the 8 lb. 6 oz. mark and continues growing and feeding. Pressure support trials of two hours continued well, no signs that Blake even knew that he was being tested. Four hour trials most likely will follow this week. Keep up the good work son!

Thanks Grandma and Grandpa Johnson for visiting Sunday, always bearing little pick 'me ups, such as treats, music, books for Mommy and Daddy as well as a new outfit for Blake. Watch later for a red Pooh outfit, which Grandpa Johnson wanted to rename (P for H) after a diaper session with Daddy yesterday. Blake enjoyed the visit and promises to look cute in his new overalls.

Mr. Chung also stopped by to say 'Hello' before heading back to the Galleria for more ice skating. We appreciate the visit.

A special shout out to Kathleen and Heather for stopping by with some of Heather's scout troop Saturday morning to visit the Ronald McDonald House. They donated lots of cookies for the families and intently listened to the RMH tour guide as they were introduced to the wonderful services of the RMH. The playground and painted cows were the 'bomb'. Thanks again for the generous donations.

Daddy drove back into Austin this morning and is feeling the 1-hr. leap forward somewhat. Leaving Kimberly and Blake was a little harder this morning as the sun did not show itself as early. Leaving Houston brings out the emotional side of Daddy, and feels somewhat like jumping overboard from a cruise ship. The tide pulls at my heartstrings as I'm not sure exactly where the Captain will be taking this ship. We pray Blake is being steered towards healthier days. As the sun rose behind me this morning I was reminded of the moment Daddy proposed to Mommy...on the deck of a Carnival cruise ship watching the wake behind the ship. Blind to where the ship was heading, we set off our journey together. Kimberly, you are an Angel! Hold strong as you watch over Blake. Your strength and caring are an inspiration. I Love You!

Keep up the prayers for Blake, and have a great week.

Love to you all....and blessings.

*Daddy*

♥ April 08, 2005 at 08:46 AM CDT

To continue the Friday reports....Shout out to all you Blake-sters!

First things, first...Congratulations to Charlie and Leslie Derrisaw on the birth of their son Jaxson Cooper Derrisaw. Jaxson entered the world at a healthy 6 lbs. 14 oz and 20 inches long. We hear big sister Kaylei is very happy to have a cute brother. Congratulations out to Grandpa and Grandma Derrisaw too. From one father to another, Charlie...Say goodbye to your golf handicap, but hello to unbelievable moments with your son. Again...Congratulations!

Kimberly's best friend from Austin, Lee Ann Hoffmann, is making a day trip to Houston today for a visit w/ another good friend Jennifer. Lee Ann and her son Adam...you have all read Adam's curiously funny messages to Blake...are on their way now to the big city. Prayers for a safe trip to and from. Lee Ann surprised me again last night with a meal left at our mailbox. 'Gator-Chicken' was a wonderful surprise to find after a long day which included finishing our taxes. (By the way- having that extra dependant this year- NICE!, we finally didn't owe money.) Back to point...Thank you Lee Ann for all the support and humor. We are very lucky to have such friends. Enjoy your visit with Blake.

No word yet as far as the results from Blake's head MRI this week. Blake had the MRI Wednesday night. We expect a neurologist to review and comment today, as to the findings. Our prayers obviously are for good news from the doctors. Please say a brief prayer for Blake today, let's hope for a very good day all around. I look forward to updating everyone with the results. The pressure support trials are back on track today, and Blake is in the middle of a 4-hour trial. Mommy is very glad to have Blake back on schedule. Blake was easily enduring the two hour trials last week, so going to four hours is a good thing. You go Blake!!!

A special thanks to all 'Blake's Buddies', you know who you are. We will be announcing more information in the coming months. Some of you may not know you are one...in particular Tanya Berry. Thank you for your generous support. And thank you Bruce Loethen for gathering the beautiful flowers. As I said, more information to come. (building a little suspense ...'Blake's Buddies', hummmmmmm?)

Have a great day, and a better weekend!

We love you all!

*Daddy*

♥ **April 14, 2005 at 02:08 PM CDT**

Daddy Update...

I'm here in Houston today, and looking forward to a long weekend with Kimberly and Blake. Sorry for the lack of updates lately, but we have been unsure of the next step for Blake this week. This morning the team got together for a care conference to review Blake's MRI and discuss the next few weeks. We had been expecting the potential for surgery this week.

The MRI confirmed what had been seen in previous head ultrasounds, but obviously more detail. The corpus callosum, the central portion of the brain that connects the right and left lobes, is smaller than normal. The best the doctors could predict at this point, is that Blake may have some developmental difficulties. No one can say if these will be very minor or potentially severe. Actually, there are lots of us with the same brain

formation that are completely normal, and do not even know that they had this condition until some other incident reveals the occurrence. So for now, we are not going to stress this one. If something comes about...then we will deal with it later.

The rest of the conference was spent on discussing the more immediate concerns. Blake has been having more residuals during his feedings, meaning that he is not digesting as quickly for some reason. One reason may be his hernias. Another may be that he has a constriction in his intestines somewhere along the way. The neonatologist wants to watch how Blake is doing over the next week or two. The doctors may also do some tests to see if there is any constricting other than the obvious hernias. We will keep everyone informed as to the doctors' plans. Rest assured the team is being very thorough.

We also discussed the VSDs, the holes in Blake's heart ventricles. This will be another surgery later...as we have discussed before. The doctors want to continue the pressure support trials and see if they can wean Blake from the ventilator. There is the reality that the VSDs may keep Blake from breathing without the ventilator, as the flow from the heart may over-circulate the lungs...and limit the lungs from working well without oxygen support. But for now, Blake will keep up the effort to increase the durations of the trials, and try to breath without the ventilator. Let's pray for Blake to be successful. He is certainly giving it his best effort. You go Blake!!!

So in short....no surgery this week after all. We will continue pressure support trials- 6 hours today, and 8 hours a day over the weekend. Blake is continuing to get bigger, 8 lbs 10.5 oz last night. His primary nurse Sandra has him again tonight, and brags that Blake has been a very good baby for her.

We hope everyone has a great weekend, and we apologize for the delay in the updates. Keep the prayer chain going, several hurdles still ahead...but as Mommy said..."look at how far he has come!" How true...

Take Care Everyone,  
Love and Blessings,  
*Daddy*



♥ **April 15, 2005 at 02:04 PM CDT**

Good afternoon everyone,

It is nice to have Chad here for a long weekend. Blake & I have missed him. Blake did such a great job on his 6 hour trial yesterday that the order continued for 8 hours today!!! Great job, Blake!! Chad & I switched off in holding Blake during the trial. He seems to love sleeping on his belly.

We were told this morning that the cardiologist still believe we can hold off on the VSD (ventricle septal defect) surgery. Hopefully hold off until Blake is about 1 year, unless problems occur. Blake had another

abdominal ultrasound this morning. Hernia surgery is still on hold for the weekend, but could possibly be next week???? The doctors re-evaluate everyday during rounds.

We hope to have an enjoyable weekend. It's nice to have the family together-Chad, Blake & I. We are just missing Pocono & Domino. We miss you 'girls.'

I wanted to let everyone know if you haven't heard. The March of Dimes Walk America is Sunday, May 1, 2005 9am at a location near you. I hope to walk at the University of Houston location if Blake allows. If you are interested you can register at [walkamerica.org](http://walkamerica.org). If you decide to walk you are helping fight a national crisis: premature birth. Today 1 in 8 babies is born prematurely. The money you raise will support March of Dimes research and programs to find answers to what causes premature birth and what can be done to prevent it. March of Dimes has touched you if...you've received a polio vaccine shot, you're aware that alcohol, drug and tobacco use during pregnancy can lead to fetal alcohol syndrome, low birth weight or mental retardation, your baby or someone you know was cared for in a NICU, your baby received surfactant therapy, you know that women of childbearing age should consume 400 micrograms of folic acid to prevent birth defects.

I encourage you to participate in Walk America in your city or town. I hope everyone is able to enjoy the sunshine this weekend with your family.

Love you all,  
*Kimberly* :)

