



Eric

Doris Herold Lund

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This is the bestselling story of Eric, a boy with leukemia who refused to give up living—as told by the person who was with him through it all, his mother.

Eric was seventeen when he heard the doctor's verdict about the disease that wanted his life. At first he and his family could not believe it. Eric was the picture of everything a youth should be—a champion athlete, a splendid human being, vibrant with energy and loved by all who knew him.

The doctors could promise little. They would do as much as was medically possible. Eric had to do as much as was humanly possible. But if the odds were not good, they were good enough for Eric. Given the choice between life and death, Eric chose to live.

Eric Details

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Author : Doris Herold Lund

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Jenny says

I picked this book up over 20 years ago because the title was the same as my best friend's name. I had no idea when I picked it up that it would become a book I would read over and over again. It is both uplifting and heartbreak. I have never tired of reading it and hope I never will. The courage of this young man and his family is one that moves me every time I read it. I try to pick it up again to read when I am reminded by events around me about how precious and fragile life is. Be sure to read with a box of kleenex nearby, you WILL cry!

Jim Barber says

One of the most powerful books I've ever read. I first read it in the mid 1970s and have reread it several times through the years. Loved the way this young man lived his short life with gusto and all of the great support he had. The book begins with a quote from G.K. Chesterton that was on a blackboard in Eric's room during the last years of his life and that I have tried to remember for most of my life: "We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Nmzachary says

The narrative nonfiction book Eric, by Doris Lund, was about a tall, thin teenager named Eric Lund who lived with his family in Connecticut. He was an excellent soccer player who always wanted to exercise and stay physically fit. He was also very independent and almost never wanted his parents' help. Therefore, although he was fairly friendly, he also would become infuriated whenever his parents interfered with his life. Despite that, his mother, Doris Lund, constantly wanted to assist him. She was always very concerned about him, even though he was seventeen and would become a legal adult very soon. One day, when she noticed mysterious red marks on his legs, she took Eric to the doctor, despite his resistance (he had wanted to go to the local school field and run). After some blood tests, he was diagnosed with leukemia (cancer of the blood). At that point in time (1967), the survival rate for leukemia was about ten percent.

From that point on, the book took many turns. A few months after Eric was diagnosed, he was taken to a top hospital: Memorial. After a few days of being there, he was allowed to be an outpatient, meaning that he could live normally and just go to weekly tests. However, he did have to take many medicines to try to combat the cancer. Those had many side effects, including eye color changes and nausea. Eric was able to go into remission, but he would always come out of it. As Eric continued to come out of remissions, his condition worsened, and the number of drugs available that might cure him decreased (when Eric was on a certain drug and it did not provide him with permanent remission, it was deemed ineffective for him).

Therefore, he had to become a full-time patient at Memorial. The doctors and nurses there were kind to Eric and he befriended many of them. He could still enjoy himself there. He also enhanced the usually monotonous hospital life by having friendly conversations with other patients and creating amusing posters and comics. The atmosphere at the hospital was actually quite charming, since other patients mimicked Eric (or he mimicked them). When many of those patients died, however, Eric became less and less joyful.

One defining characteristic of Eric was his fighting spirit. He kept saying that he wanted to fight the cancer, that he was determined to beat it. He even fought through a situation when he was delirious, had a 106

degree fever, and a platelet count of zero (platelets are parts of blood that help it clot to allow a person to stop bleeding). At that point, his father, Sidney, and his brother, Mark, gave Eric double platelets. His older sister also donated platelets. Many of Eric's friends also donated to help him since he was so popular (as a soccer player and for his charming personality). These people, especially his family, were set on Eric being able to live. That caused them to continuously help Eric, both out of that situation and for the rest of his life. However, his condition continued to worsen. He ended up obtaining more and more passes to leave the hospital because he was going to die. His fate was determined. He simply decided to live his life to the fullest, planning many celebrations with his friends and going out with a nurse of his, MaryLou. They were together until Eric died, which was about four years after he was diagnosed. Everyone who was close to him realized that he had still lived a very full life since he had treasured every moment during that last few months of his life.

This book was enjoyable at times. Reading about Eric's severe struggles was immensely interesting. During the last roughly hundred pages of the book, the story's intensity grew significantly. Eric was constantly in tough situations, and it was interesting to see if he would come out alive. It was also pleasing to see that Eric lived a very full life, having many of the experiences of people that live for a more normal amount of time. He showed the world what can be done with opportunities, and his mother communicated this message to other readers and me through the book. The Afterword also added a fine touch; I learned that the survival rate for patients with leukemia grew by about five hundred percent in the fifteen years that elapsed between the publication of the book and of the Afterword (it went up from about ten to fifty to sixty percent). However, I was unhappy with the fact that Eric died at the end. Readers always want the main character to triumph in their struggles. Additionally, I was not impressed with the fact that the book meandered in the middle. Nothing very exciting happened during that time. It seemed as though Eric's condition was not changing radically enough to be very interesting at that point; it was normal for him to go in and out of remission. Spending half the book on just normal, everyday happenings only detracts from the book. Therefore, I would only recommend this book to patient readers who can take an unhappy ending. Additionally, people who read this book should enjoy reading just about a person's life experiences. If they need constant action and change, this book is not for them. Since I am someone who enjoys books with much action and exhilarating endings, this book did not make the top of my list of most favorite books. However, if the book had been exciting throughout, and if Eric had survived, this book would have been near the peak of that list.

Jackie says

Powerful, moving, heartbreak account of a mother's memoirs of her son, Eric and his battle with leukemia. While she explains the treatments Eric receives and its devastating effects on him, it is written in layman's terms and easily understood.

In recounting her experiences, and Eric's, I felt her helplessness and pain watching her child suffer; Eric's bravery and honesty was inspiring.

It's been over thirty years since I read this book and I still think of Eric, and Doris too.
This is an excellent book.

Patrick says

This book changed my life. It was the first book I read without being forced to, after High School, and gave

me my first glorious taste of the power of the written word. It moved me to tears several times, and I immediately read everything I could get my hands on. Doris Lund was a mother of a son with cancer, who wrote the most moving, loving, true, story of her and her son, through his achingly haunting short life, with a grace and dignity I have rarely seen since in nonfiction. I felt I was at once eavesdropping in on their privacy, yet saving shreds of hope, and I felt a mingling of our tears. I had never openly wept over a story, and this was new to me, and yet so eye-opening to me as a young adult, opening my mind and my talents as a writer. I wanted to write a book that could make people feel, I wanted them to live my words, be my characters, and feel because of me. Thank you Doris for opening my heart to compassion for strangers, and opening my mind to the wonders of reading the written word.

Debby says

The true story about a 17-year-old who finds out he has leukemia. Details the fight he went through in the next four years to overcome the disease and to become a man. Eric's last years are seen through the eyes of his mother, and explain in some detail the struggles he went through to live life to the fullest in the short time he had. Shows the way he was able to touch the lives of those he met. He continued to be an outstanding soccer player for U-Conn and to work toward his college degree.

This was a beautiful story of love, courage and fear. Similar to "Death Be Not Proud" in the attitudes toward death and disease, it proves once more that life is worth the effort to those who know their time is short. Fairly quick and easy reading.

Amanda says

I love this book. I have read it multiple times, and own multiple copies (to give to other people to read). The first was a copy given to me by my 6th grade teacher, who allowed us to take one book from his classroom library.

This is a powerful and terribly sad book. The first time I read it, I just remember liking Eric and his personality so much. When I read it later in life, it gained more meaning, as I read it again after losing a family friend to lung cancer. The details seemed so much more familiar, and the emotions as well. I struggled with his death, and it helped me to read an account that touched on the same struggles. It also inspired me to become a frequent blood donor.

I recommend this book to anyone. And now, as a teacher myself, at least one copy always sits on my classroom bookshelf.

Linda says

One of my all-time most memorable books. I first read this book when it came out in the 1970s, and in fact, read and reread it then (I was in middle school at that time). I think it had some impact on the naming of my first child.

I do still think about Eric Lund from time to time. His mother wrote this book so well, that her son is unforgettable.

(Later addition to my review): Little did I know when I wrote this review about a year ago, that 6 months ago, my own young-adult son would be diagnosed with cancer, and would be treated at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, where Eric Lund was treated in the early 1970s. I re-read this book right away after my son was diagnosed. I did not know that that book was preparing me for this unwanted role in life.

Renae says

I first read this book when I was around 14 years old. It touched me so deeply then, and even today, at the age of 36, I have never forgotten it. Doris Lund tells the story from her heart, and you feel like you are a part of her family as she takes you through their struggles. You feel the pain of each family member and at times it's heartbreaking. Eric's story has taught me we should live life to the fullest. Eric certainly did that. He is an inspiration to people everywhere. I'm sure he's got a special place in heaven.

Nanci says

I remember reading this book for the first time as a teenager (I'm now in my 50s), and have read it at least five times altogether. I had to ultimately laminate the covers of my paperback copy because it was so well-read. It is a loving portrait of courage, humor (my favorite scene is the I.V. scene), and resilience written by a mother, but also shows her own courage in standing by him and loving him through it all, as only a true mom can.

Although I had decided to be a nurse at age 4, long before I read this book, it only confirmed my desire to become one. I think even as a teenager I recognized that there were many lessons to be learned in caring for patients, especially those like Eric. I never knew when I first read it that I would go on to work with oncology patients, and later become a hospice nurse, but I think it was in part because of reading this book that when the opportunity arose I knew I had to take it.

While I have misplaced my copy of the book over the years it remains one of my favorites and I'm reminded that I need to get another copy and read it again.

Nida says

I cried...

Deborah Moscoso says

I know this is an old book, but I had not read it. I was overwhelmed with story; what this whole family had to suffer made my heart just ache.

Mardi says

I read this book when I was approximately 13 years old and it was fascinating.

Kat says

Basic Plot: A heartrending account of a young man's battle with cancer, as told by his mother.

I had to teach this book as part of a course I taught my first year. The class was about heroism, and I see why this book was chosen. While he was certainly no superhero, he battled a force that is so difficult to defeat in the world we live in that it has killed thousands upon thousands. I don't usually read biographies, especially ones that I know are going to rip out my heart, that kind of self-punishment is not really my thing, but this was a book that I did enjoy, even though it ripped out my heart and stomped on it a few times for good measure.

Annie Edmonds says

This book has stuck with me since I was a teenager. I remember how it touched my heart and I do believe it is the reason I love reading books. I realized that you could be taken away from your life even for just a little while. When Eric is diagnosed with Leukemia as a teenage boy he doesn't except that fact that it could kill him. He fights with the courage of a lion. This is a book I would give any teenage girl or boy to read. It always been one of my favorites..
