

# Court Officer Recovering from Organ Donation Says She'd Do It All Again for Dad

By Jonah Bruno  
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

"Do you want to see my scar?" asked Erin Corcoran, matter-of-factly, as though she was offering to show me her new cell phone.

The scar, a little less than half an inch across, stretches from the base of her chest, down the center of her stomach to her belly button and around to her right side, just above her hip. It's the badge the 35-year-old senior court officer sergeant will wear the rest of her life, a reminder of the gift she gave her father last summer.

She gave him 60 percent of her liver.

"It think it's an absolutely wonderful thing and the most generous thing that's ever happened to me in my life," James "Jimmy" Corcoran said of his daughter's sacrifice.

Janet Corcoran, Erin's mother, said it was "awful; it was terrible" having her daughter and husband on the operating table at the same time, but she knew long before then that Erin would go ahead with the surgery.

"She has confidence in herself; she's strong; and there's no one in the world more important to her than him," said Mrs. Corcoran.

Though her liver quickly regenerated to 90 percent of its original size, Erin still can't drink alcohol, and the doctor wanted her to avoid doing sit-ups and not to get pregnant for a while.

"I'd give up everything for him," said Erin. "He's the best father a girl could imagine. I'm the luckiest girl in the world."

Mr. Corcoran — a 59-year-old retired cop who spent 31 years on the force, including 12 years in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office — suffers from a fairly common, but little known disease, called hemochromatosis.

Hemochromatosis (HH) is also known as iron overload disease or genetic iron poisoning, and destroys organs. It is a hereditary disorder that mainly affects people descended from British Islanders and Northern Euro-

peans. As many as one in 100 Americans has the disease and one in eight is a "silent carrier," who, like Erin, doesn't show any symptoms, but with the right mate, could pass the disease on to her children.

For Mr. Corcoran, HH has meant diabetes, a heart condition, and most recently, liver disease.

He says he would "probably not" be alive today if it had not been for his daughter's generosity, but he had to be convinced taking an organ from one of his children was right.

"I didn't want to do it," recalled Mr. Corcoran. "Then [the family] ganged up on me.

"You do nothing that would possibly hurt your kids, but after talking to

[Erin] and the doctors and everything, we went ahead with it."

Despite their father's initial reluctance, both Erin and her brother decided last January they would do whatever they could do to help, and both got tested to see who was the better match.

On August 31, when Erin and her father went to Presbyterian Hospital for their operations — Erin pointed out that former President Bill Clinton was there recovering from a heart attack at the same time — the doctors realized they had gotten to Mr. Corcoran just in time.

"They said once they saw it, [the disease] was much farther along than they thought it would be," Erin said. "I don't know what the time frame would be, but it would have been a rapid decline within months, I would

imagine."

Erin had to miss work for nearly four months. She came back in early December, but her gun, in its holster, pressed up against the still-sensitive wound. The pain was too much and she had to take another few weeks off. Finally, just before Christmas, she came back.

The people on the 11th floor, where she mans a security desk, were all happy to see her, and during our interview last week several judges and other court employees stopped to welcome her back and give her hugs.

"She's our hero, or heroine in this case," said one judge.

With her surgery scheduled, Corcoran discovered a little-known Office of Court Administration program that provides paid leave for employees recovering from organ-donation operations. Without it, her recovery would have been overshadowed by stress, and she says she is grateful for the help.

Corcoran has been a court officer for more than 15 years and was still a teenager when she first put on the blue uniform. But she attended John Jay College at night, eventually earning a degree in criminal justice.

She now studies law at Brooklyn Law School, also at night, and the school accommodated her recovery, allowing her to reduce her course load and by providing recordings of classes she missed.

This semester she's taking an extra class — to make up for what she could not do in the fall — in addition to an internship at the Brooklyn DA's Office. She hopes to take the Bar exam 2006 and possibly become a judge's law clerk, so she can continue on in the court system that helped save her father's life.

Today, instead of being hooked up to a machine in a hospital to keep him alive — or not being alive at all — Mr. Corcoran is enjoying his retirement on Florida's beaches.

And despite being bedridden for a month and having to do extra work to stay in school, Erin said if her father needed another organ, she would do it all over again, "in a heartbeat."