

# A Mother's Love



## Melissa Garrett

Friends since childhood, Melissa and Andy Garrett began dating their junior year at Gregory Portland and quickly became high school sweethearts. After years of dating, the two tied the knot in 1989, two months before Melissa graduated from college. For the next thirteen years of their marriage it was just the two of them. Then in early 2002 Melissa found out she was pregnant.

By all accounts Melissa's pregnancy had been a smooth one. She went through the first trimester with no symptoms of morning sickness and was progressing without any of the common ailments that plague women throughout their pregnancy.

Then in July of 2002, approximately ten weeks before her scheduled due date, Melissa began to feel ill. Nausea coupled with intense back pain caused her to visit the doctor. Because her symptoms were not out of the ordinary, Melissa was sent home to rest and took the next two days off work. However, following her return to work on a Monday, Melissa began to once again have back pains. Finally, during the early hours of the morning on Wednesday she checked herself into the emergency room where she was diagnosed with HELLP syndrome.

HELLP, an obstetric complication characterized by hemolysis, elevated liver enzyme levels and a low platelet count, occurs in approximately 0.2 to 0.6 percent of all pregnancies. Once diagnosed with HELLP, Melissa was told she would have to deliver her baby. Because the syndrome caused her blood to lose its ability to clot, she was given ten units of platelets in an effort to reduce her risk of complications during the caesarean section. Since it requires approximately six whole blood donors to produce one transfusable unit of platelets, sixty blood donors were needed to make Melissa's single transfusion possible.

Coleen Rose Garrett was born on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002 weighing 3lbs 6oz. She spent the next four weeks in the NICU at Doctors Regional Hospital. "We were in there so long we saw a number of babies come and go while we waited to take Coleen home," said Melissa.

Then on August 16<sup>th</sup> Coleen, weighing in at 4.5 lbs, went home for the first time. Since then she has continued to thrive and has had no health complications due to her early delivery. Now a rambunctious, outgoing four-year-old, she has dreams of one day becoming a singing ballerina. "Before Coleen it was hard to ever imagine what life would be like as a mother, now I couldn't imagine life without her," said Melissa, "and I wouldn't trade that for the world."



Coastal Bend Blood Center

*Giving so that others may live*