

Vicki and I (Continued)

By April, 1956, Vicki could be fitted with braces and shoes. Bit by bit, I had helped her to stand and move her legs.

"I want to walk!" Vicki would say. "I will walk!"

At the end of July, Vicki took her first real step, then two, then three, and we began counting them day by day.

Soon, braces and all, Vicki was getting cocky enough to try on my high-heel shoes and clump around. She never gave up. Even when I saw she was getting tired and picked her up, she squirmed in my arms.

"Put me down!" she would say. "I want to walk!"

I remember the Christmas we passed a street-corner Santa Claus who asked Vicki what she wanted most.

Vicki didn't hesitate. "Roller skates."

Santa smiled at me. "You just get them for her," he said. "Put them away in the closet. I'll say a prayer for her, and you pray for her. I know that some day she's going to be able to use them."

Those must have been meaningful prayers. Nowadays, Vicki only wears braces at night to help

strengthen her legs. By day, she wears ordinary shoes and walks on her heels. The spasticity is still there, but when she exerts a strong effort she can control it considerably.

Recently, Vicki was given the privilege at her school of crowning the statue of the Blessed Mother in church. She was dressed all in white. As she was admiring her finery in the mirror, she smiled and said: "You'll see, Mom! I'm going to walk straight down that aisle without a stumble."

MY LOVELY little Vicki—the abandoned child who would "never walk"—came down that middle aisle without faltering, and everyone's eyes filled just as mine did!

Soon Vicki will become my third adopted child, joining Gina and Michael. The Kennedys will have a full house! The young girl who broke down on the job and sobbed, "I want a baby!" is just a faint memory now.

Instead, the need I felt has been answered by the love of all those babies—and especially, I think, by Vicki, the one who needed me most.



Very much on the offensive here, Vicki (left) is now well enough to participate in such playful hassles as these.

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