

The Watermelon Girl



The medical field has come a long way since leeches and bloodletting were a common technique to treat certain ills of the body. We should be grateful that we live in a time that is, relatively speaking, more advanced in prescribing cures that will help us to heal whatever ails us. But even in the recent past, it was not always so.

One of our young ancestors, my wife's first cousin, Donna Marie Del Colliano, found herself in the national spotlight at a tender age. She had been diagnosed with nephrosis (a kidney disease) about a year previously. When her doctors determined that watermelon juice might help her condition, her parents tried to acquire the fruit, but in New Jersey it proved to be unavailable at the time. They made a public appeal and a local politician was able to locate a supply in Florida which he had flown to Jersey.

By now, the eyes of the country were watching the progress of "the Watermelon Girl" and, for a time, she appeared to be improving. Unfortunately, in September of 1953 she was found in a coma. Though she was put into an oxygen tent, her condition continued to decline and she died a few hours later from nephrosis and anemia. She was five years old.

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