

CHAIN OF LOVE

"How do you account for your remarkable accomplishment in life?" Queen Victoria of England asked Helen Keller. "How do you explain the fact that even though you were both blind and deaf, you were able to accomplish so much?"

Ms Keller's answer is a tribute to her dedicated teacher. "If it had not been for Anne Sullivan, the name of Helen Keller would have remained unknown."

"Little Annie" Sullivan, as she was called when she was young, was no stranger to hardship. She was almost sightless herself (due to a childhood fever) and was, at one time, diagnosed as hopelessly "insane" by her caregivers. She was locked in the basement of a mental institution outside of Boston. On occasion, Little Annie would violently attack anyone who came near. Most times, she generally ignored everyone in her presence.

An elderly nurse believed there was hope, however, and she made it her mission to show love to the child. Every day she visited Little Annie. For the most part, the child did not acknowledge the nurse's presence, but she still continued to visit. The kindly woman left cookies for her and spoke words of love and encouragement. She believed Little Annie could recover, if only she were shown love.

Eventually, doctors noticed a change in the girl. Where they once witnessed anger and hostility, they now noted an emerging gentleness and love. They moved her upstairs where she continued to improve. Then the day finally came when this seemingly "hopeless" child was released.

Anne Sullivan grew into a young woman with a desire to help others as she, herself, was helped by the kindly nurse. It was she who saw the great potential in Helen Keller. She loved her, disciplined her, played with her, pushed her and worked with her until the flickering candle that was her life became a beacon of light to the world. Anne Sullivan worked wonders in Helen's life; but it was a loving nurse who first believed in Little Annie and lovingly transformed an uncommunicative child into a compassionate teacher.

"If it had not been for Anne Sullivan, the name of Helen Keller would have remained unknown." But if it had not been for a kind and dedicated nurse, the name of Anne Sullivan would have remained unknown. And so it goes. Just how far back does the chain of redemption extend? And how far forward will it lead?