



The Day Donny Herbert Woke Up: A True Story

Rich Blake

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Donny Herbert was a hardworking Buffalo city firefighter who, in December 1995, was searching the attic of a burning house when the snow-laden roof collapsed. For six minutes he was without oxygen. A beloved husband, a father of four boys, a neighborhood fixture who was always willing to lend a helping hand, Donny fell into a vegetative state that lasted nearly a decade. His prognosis was poor, and while he could open his eyes, he was unresponsive to the world around him. Donny Herbert was, for all practical purposes, gone. Until one day, in April 2005, when he woke up and spoke almost nonstop to his family and loved ones for nearly sixteen hours.

The Day Donny Herbert Woke Up is the story of this remarkable moment, which was covered by the press worldwide, from the *New York Times* to the AP newswire. For his wife, Linda, who had held the family together for years, who had prayed nightly for Donny's recovery, it was a miracle. For his doctors and nurses, it was a medical mystery. For his sons—including his youngest, with whom he had never before had a conversation—it was a blessing. After his remarkable day, Donny Herbert fell into a deep sleep and never experienced a comparable moment of clarity. He died, in February 2006, from pneumonia.

Written by Linda's cousin, *The Day Donny Herbert Woke Up* makes the reader wonder: Was it an experimental drug cocktail or an act of God that brought Donny back? Linda believes that each contributed to the miraculous day when he woke, but more than anything, she credits Donny himself—a man with the strength to will himself back into his family's lives, if only to remind them one last time of how very much he loved them. This is as much Linda's story—none of perseverance and faith—as it is of a remarkable husband, father, and firefighter.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Day Donny Herbert Woke Up: A True Story Details

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From Reader Review The Day Donny Herbert Woke Up: A True Story for online ebook

Amy says

Donny Herbert, a Buffalo NY firefighter with a severe brain injury, made national news in April 2005 when he suddenly became responsive after years of being minimally conscious for years. Rich Blake, a Buffalo native, has not only presented a moving story of one man, but also a tribute to South Buffalo, Father Nelson Baker, and the powers of love and faith.

Suzka says

To be certain, the story is remarkable. But the writing was pretty choppy (particularly when putting it into the company of the last few books I've read, all of which have been beautifully composed.) If this hadn't been on this book club's list for March, I don't think I would have been drawn in by the jacket. Still, it was surely a most extraordinary experience for this man and particularly his family.

Kenneth says

A true story of faith, hope, and love. I would recommend this to all of my firebuff friends, Catholic friends, and new Yorker friends.

Laurie says

A sweet book about a family dealing with the loss of their father to a tragic accident, which left him in a semi-conscious/vegetative state for over 9 years before he miraculously woke up and spoke to them for one day. Paints a good picture of life as a fireman, the Catholic community of Buffalo, and the strength and courage required to support and love a person through such a traumatic injury

Amy says

It was a great story but there was too much in the book that could've been left out. I didn't need to know the history of the churches of Buffalo, or their priests, or even street name etc. The actual story about Donny was incredible and made me cry. I wish the author focused more on that instead of everything else. I almost didn't make it past the first few chapters as they are very slow and not interesting. I'm glad I finished it. I think a different author, one outside of the family, probably would've told the story better. I felt like it was written for the family and not for any old reader. Overall, great story. Donny sounds like he was one hell of a guy.

Christina says

A fascinating true story, very slow and uninteresting at the beginning, but it picks up and becomes very compelling. As a mother, of course, it made me ponder how I'd manage my family and life with my husband comatose for over ten years. It certainly is a miracle when Donny Herbert wakes up and spends a day or so with his family, completely and totally "there" before passing away a few months later. Puts life in perspective.

Penny Long says

This book was interesting but left me with questions. I would have preferred, not unlike one of the previous reviewers, to have had more content as to what was said during Donny's waking hours. The book also didn't go into why Donny's wife did not allow Donny to stay with her inlaws when it became too much of a task for her to handle. I would presume this would have made their relationship very awkward. There wasn't much written about this huge decision, possibly because it was painful but still, I, as a reader, thought this left a huge gap in story and kept me wondering about how this relationship played out and what feelings Donny's wife had about her decision and the role the inlaws had in Donny's life after that decision was made.

The book is worth reading just because of the circumstances I believe.

Michael says

This book is really interesting to me because it is about one of my best friend's father, Don Herbert, a Buffalo NY firefighter who awoke from a coma-like state in 2005 to talk with his family after 10 years of disability. More than anything, Don (Jr.) is my great friend, i remember that he was travelling in China and India when the story broke international news, and he came home!! Imagine being half way around the world and finding out your dad woke up from a 10 year coma and was talking!!

Jennifer Hall says

This book would be very meaningful for those that knew and loved Donny Herbert, a young firefighter that was trapped in a vegetative state following an injury he received responding to a fire. For an outside reader it was a bit too much. Too contrived, too in depth. While I really was glad that Donny was able to wake up and talk to his family I wish the book were more centered around the injury and awakening, and less about everything else.

Catherine says

Donny Herbert, a Buffalo firefighter, suffered traumatic brain injuries when a roof collapsed on him in a fire in December of 1995. He remained in a vegetative state for close to ten years and then suddenly one day awoke from his coma and was able to communicate with his family and friends for sixteen hours before once again declining. His story was nothing short of a miracle. That seemed to be the only explanation. Rich

Blake's writing style was a bit dry and too journalistic for my taste. His prose fell from the storyline a few times, which felt unnecessary, and became an annoying tool in order to pad out the book. But I thought Donny Herbert's story was interesting and worth telling.

Kathy says

Even though I knew exactly what would happen, the author did an amazing job of telling the true story of Donny Herbert and I couldn't wait to turn each page. Donny was a fireman in Buffalo, NY who was badly injured on the job in 1995 and spent the next ten years in a coma. In 2005, he "woke up" for sixteen hours and was able to communicate with his family, including his four sons, the youngest of whom didn't even remember the sound of his dad's voice. At certain points, the story ventures into some pretty weird Catholic mysticism but having been raised Catholic, it didn't startle me as much as it would a non-Catholic. No matter how you look at it, Donny's story is a miracle.

Shanwow says

I enjoyed this book but i felt like there was something missing from it. It was a very touching story but I think there was a little too much back story. I also think If this book was written by Donny's wife or the children that it might have felt a little deeper emotionally. I was expecting to cry my eyes out. I reared up a little but I think the emotions of the event would have been better captured by a close relative. This book is not necessarily a light topic book but it is easy to read.

Anne says

This book was OK--definitely a quick read (I read it in about 3 hours). I know Donny Herbert was only awake and talking for 16 hours, but I expected there to be more about his conversations/revelations during that time in this book. It was a lot of his biography, describing the life of his family before and after the fire, etc.

TheRLPL Rice Lake Public Library says

Patron Review:

About a firefighter who is in a coma for 9/10 years (can't remember exactly) and wakes up for one day before passing away. It's a good reminder to take advantage of every day. His (Donny's) family, friends, and coworkers remained very dedicated to Donny in the years he was in a coma.

Christie says

I liked this book, I don't know if I could say I really liked or loved this book. I can say that I loved the story of Donny Herbert and I think there are a lot of untold miracles in world of science. I guess when I started this book I thought it was more about what Donny did and said when he was awake. However I did enjoy hearing

of his life and the life of his family. Linda is an incredible women as was Donny an incredible man. This story is one of heartbreak, love, faith, and hope. I hope by reading this book my mentality recently will become more positive and follow in the Herbert way.
