

# A COMMUNITY OF CARING

STORIES OF CARING AND COMPASSION AT UNC HEALTH NASH



## Hope Restored Through Compassion and Surgery

For Anita Forbes, 77, having peace of mind relied on finding answers for her worsening colon condition. After receiving conflicting diagnoses, and undergoing multiple failed procedures at various hospitals, that peace was deteriorating along with her health. She knew she didn't have much time left—Anita needed a miracle, so she turned to UNC Health Nash for help.

"In January 2023, I had surgery on my colon at another hospital," she said. "I was losing blood, but they couldn't figure out where it was coming from. There was a kink in my colon, and they thought it was cancer, but the doctor decided he didn't want to mess with it."

Anita's body was growing weak. She didn't have the energy to perform daily tasks, and would eventually need assistance to walk. She was finally rushed to an out of area hospital where she would be admitted, but there was no doctor who thought they could help her.

That's when Anita was referred to Nash Surgery, a general surgery practice that sees patients through the entire consultation, treatment, and post-surgical process. More specifically, she was referred to Steven Grant, MD, who specializes in

laparoscopic colon surgery.

"When I got the referral, I'd never heard of Dr. Grant and I didn't want to go," said Anita. "I felt like I wasn't human anymore because of the treatment I had received elsewhere."

Initially she thought to cancel the appointment, hesitant to trust a new surgeon. She'd become unsure if she wanted to try again, even beginning to think she was done trying altogether. Now, however, she believes the referral was meant to be.

"I told him over the phone how I'd been treated up to that point, and he insisted he wanted to ease my fears," she said. "He wanted to meet me and shake my hand. He listens when you talk, then he talks, and I like that. By the time we were through our first talk I was ready for surgery. I was that impressed!"

Dr. Grant worked to calm her stress by properly investigating her cancer scare. While thankfully it was not cancer, Anita would need immediate surgery to remove diseased tissue. He focused on making her feel comfortable about the procedure, giving her time to understand and ask questions. He then introduced her to his team members, which out of the many surgeries she'd been through had never happened before.

The day of her surgery, Dr. Grant was sure to tell his team that Anita "is a human being," with "family that love her and want to see her get well." He reminded them that "she is not just another body." Right before going under, Anita wanted him to know that she'd been praying for him since the day they met, because she knew that he truly cared.

Fortunately, Anita's surgery was a success.

"I wasn't afraid when I went to surgery, because I knew God had everything under control," she said. "After the surgery I was happy and relieved. The others had only given me a couple months left, but I didn't have to worry about that anymore. I just celebrated my 77th birthday, and I owe that birthday to Dr. Grant."

While Anita was recovering at UNC Health Nash, Dr. Grant continued to show genuine concern. He visited often to check on her progress, and even took interest in her puzzle book hobby. He made sure she had everything she needed, including a hot cup of coffee when hers went cold. When her brother passed away, and she could not go be with her family, he stayed with her for a while, and made sure she had someone to talk to.

When he released her, he made sure she knew she was still his patient. "He said, 'You are still under my care, and if you need anything, you pick up the phone and call me.' That is simply amazing,

and speaks volumes about the type of person he is."

Anita went home with a renewed hope in life. She's spent time treating herself to feel good about living again, has gotten back to working around her house, and is focused on staying fit.

"When you've felt so low for so long, and the people who were supposed to be helping you weren't giving you any help, you get to where you feel like you're about the size of an ant," she said. "But it didn't take long for that to change. Dr. Grant treated me like my life mattered. He's a fantastic surgeon, and I knew that I could trust him. As a matter of fact I've teased him a little bit about being my guardian angel. And at the time, he really was."

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- Anita Forbes



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