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Father reveals how he came to love the daughter with Down Syndrome he had asked his wife to abort

- **Heath White, a pilot and FBI agent, said he had always sought perfection - and a Down syndrome child did not fit into that picture**
- **But his wife refused to have an abortion and Paisley was born in 2007**
- **A few months later, he was making her laugh and he realized she was just like every other child - apart from that she was his**
- **He wanted to show how proud he was of her so they began taking part in marathons and road races together**

A father has revealed in a brutally honest interview how he came to love the daughter with Down Syndrome that he had tried to get his wife to abort.

Heath White, a pilot-turned-FBI agent from Waskom, Texas, said that his five-year-old daughter Paisley - one of three children - is now 'the light in the darkness' and an inspiration to his family.

But this was not his sentiment in 2007 when he learned his wife Jennifer was carrying a baby with Downs, which was totally at odds with his image of a perfect family.

Speaking to **ESPN**, he explained that he had always aimed for perfection - playing for sports teams throughout college, achieving a 4.0, enrolling in law school before coming a pilot - and the girl threatened to ruin that.



A father's love: Heath White has revealed how he wanted his wife to abort their daughter, Paisley, who has Down Syndrome. In a brutally honest interview, he revealed how he came to love her

'My main concern was what people would think about me - what weakness inside me caused that,' he said. 'Learning you're having a child with Downs is like experiencing a death, that's what I felt like. Like I was getting a broken baby.'

He explained he did everything he could to try to force Jennifer to have an abortion and, while she said he was never abusive to her, she acknowledged he was not supportive.

She described her own turmoil that the love of her life didn't want the child that she knew she wanted so much - and she made it clear to him that it was the baby or a life without them.

Paisley was born on March 16, 2007, joining her big sister and her parents. But while he smiled in photographs, White said he did not feel connected to his daughter.

He remembered how his mother commented that the little girl looked like she didn't even have Downs - and how he felt it was a lie.



Expecting: The couple, who already had one daughter, are pictured before Paisley's birth in March 2007



New addition: Jennifer said the minute she began feeding Paisley for the first time, she knew she was perfect

It was only months later that he realized Paisley was no different from any other child.

'The turning point - I had her down and I tickled her and she laughed and giggled at me and tried to push me away,' he remembered. 'Her laughing

and smiling and reacting with me, that's when I realized she's just like any other kid - she's my kid.'

'I felt like there was a death - like I was getting a broken baby'

Heath White

He realized that he wanted to show the world just how proud of being her father he was.

Before her birth, he had taken part in competitive races for years, but stopped when she arrived. He realized it was something they could do together - him running and pushing her in a special stroller.

Their first race took place just before her first birthday and they continued to achieve medals over the next five years - taking part in nine marathons as well as numerous 5K and 10K races.

'It was just me and her, nothing between us,' White said. 'Looking back on the pictures of running with her, that's a good memory.'



Inner battle: He said he immediately saw his daughter had Downs and could not bond with her



Realization: But he said when she was a few months old, he tickled her and she laughed and pushed back - and he realized she was like every other kid. 'She's my kid,' he said



Happy together: He said he wanted to show how proud he was of his daughter so came up with a plan

Footage from the races shows Paisley giggling with glee and waving to spectators - or simply sitting back and enjoying the ride - as her father carries them to the finish line.

As she turns five, he has now decided to let her run for herself - and knows she will have no problem doing so.

'Everything I've tried to accomplish, it was never going to be perfect. But my love for Paisley is perfect'

Together, they ran 321 miles in races - which is significant as Down Syndrome is the 3rd copy of the 21 chromosome.

The couple went on to have another girl and are again pregnant - with their fourth daughter.

When Paisley was 18 months old, White began writing a letter to Paisley, he shared with ESPN, detailing his conflicted feelings about her birth and how he now loves her beyond words.

He said that, while he knows the letter could upset her in the future, he hopes it also shows her just how much he loves her - and that it tells other worried parents that they are not alone.



Team: For years, they ran marathons and road races together, with White proudly pushing Paisley



Joy: He said that when she was five, he realized she no longer needed him to carry her places



'Nobody knew the way I felt before she was born, and if I can keep one family, one person from having to live with the guilt and almost making the mistake that I almost made, it's going to be worth the pain that Paisley will feel later in life knowing the way that I felt,' he said.

He added that while he has not read the letter to her yet, he does plan to.

'It was just my way of repenting,' he said. 'Chances are that she never would have known the way I felt before she was born. That could have been my dirty secret that I kept with me forever.'

'But I didn't want it to be a secret, I wanted her to know that she was everything to me... My love for Paisley is perfect.'

Jennifer White also spoke of the change she had seen in her husband.

'Initially Heath had said, "I don't want to take care of somebody for the rest of my life",' she told ESPN. 'I think now he looks at it and says, "Oh my goodness, I may not get to take care of her the rest of her life".'