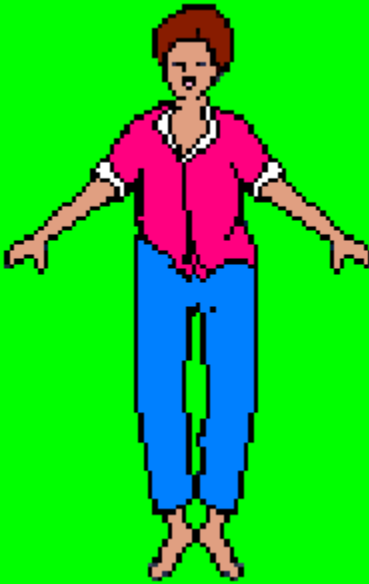


Beckybooks

Encouraging Stories for All Ages

Get Up and Dance!



**Rebecca
Bryant
Hervey**

**A personal
chronicle of
God's wonders
and miracles
in the life of
one of His
adoring...yet
fallible
children.**

Get Up And Dance

By
Rebecca Bryant Hervey



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For information:
CHINABERRY TREE PUBLISHING
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Table of Contents

Note: Page numbers in document may not correspond to page numbers in viewer.

A FOREWORD	Page 5
One~DO THE HARD PART FIRST	Page 7
Two~BEAUTIFUL JESUS	Page 17
Three~GET UP AND DANCE	Page 33
Four~MOVE TO NACOGDOCHES	Page 49
Five~MY FRIEND HARRY	Page 66
Six~VISIONS	Page 72
Seven~TELL HER I SAID “FOLLOW ME	Page 76
Eight~LITTLE BLUE FLYING CAR	Page 93
Nine~FURRY ANGEL	Page 104
Ten~DADDY, ARE WE THERE YET?	Page 108
Eleven~HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW	Page 112

A FOREWORD

It is my sincere hope that in reading this book, “Get Up and Dance”, you will find it more than interesting and entertaining, but that you will also realize what a fantastic personal relationship can be had with this King of Kings, Jesus. This is not a story I’ve written, it’s a true and honest chronicle of some of the miracles and wonders, along with my own failures and fumbling, through which God has carried me. He is not ‘a god far off’, but one who desires to rule and reign in our hearts, and this reign of His is not a doleful aspect. We have been given the privilege of hearing His voice! Of obeying Him... or not obeying him. To not obey Him is what we should be concerned about. To distrust Him or to willfully disobey can sometimes bring severe consequences.

I urge you to walk into the realm of His Kingdom; proclaim Jesus as your King, and live and move and have your being in Him, if you have not already done so. He will constantly teach you, reveal His will and His ways to you... and most likely have you dancing for joy when you really give Him the reign in your heart and life. We are not born to simply be religious. We are children and heirs with God’s only begotten Son when we live in Him and He reigns in us! He gives us the authority to use His Name! Think of it!

Life is not meant to just ‘happen’ day by day. There is a purpose for you. There is power over the adversary. There is healing and forgiveness. God doesn’t intend for you to suffer and be in pain or confusion; He wants you to believe in Him and get up and dance!

Rebecca Bryant Hervey

Chapter One

DO THE HARD PART FIRST

That was my father's advice anytime I was faced with a big, tedious job... such as washing dishes when it was my turn. Being the 9th child of a large family, the sight of a sink full of dirty dishes was almost insurmountable to me... until my father suggested I get the hard part out of the way and enjoy the rest. So... I scrubbed the crusty pots and pans in fresh, sudsy, hot water and got them out of the way. Beginning again with fresh water for the glassware and dishes wasn't such a chore.

Therefore... allow me to get the dark, crusty stuff done first, if you will. I have some things to say that many women can relate to, who, like myself, wish they'd had this insight to begin with. This will be no big news to those who've known me for many years. My foibles and escapades are likely well-remembered, and all I can say is... I've grown through them all. I can't pose as a sweet, faultless, religious lady... in fact I wouldn't want to if I could. I could more easily have been the Woman at The Well. I am a grateful example of God's grace and mercy... and purpose.

For my having been such a noodle-head I might place the blame on my loving-but over-protective parents, but I know they did the best they knew how for me. Vigilantly sheltering me from 'the facts of life', they hoped I would remain innocent... not realizing this was also keeping me quite ignorant. That seems to be how parents were in their day, and I was born in a time when folks didn't talk about births... not even allowing a small child such as myself to witness a calf being born to the cow in the barn, never mind talking about how births came to be!

Again, I could place the blame on the men in my life who helped to make it the jumble of mistakes it was for so

long... but that takes two, my dear, and I was very susceptible to lies and flattery.

I'd rather tell you than have you find it out from some one else, some other way. I have to have mercy on Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and even Bill Clinton... because their sins only serve to show me the weakness that dogged me for most of my life. Being human, we all have weaknesses. That is no excuse, but it does give some sort of a reason. When your weakness pertains to ignorance and desperation, it gets the upper hand all too often. I'm not here, though, to dwell on the weakness of these men, but that someone else might learn something good from my confessions.

I didn't know the difference between lust and love... and I wanted so desperately to be loved. Don't we all? And at age fifteen; locked in the smoldering gaze of hazel eyes in the dark mysterious face of a romantic sixteen-year-old who played a guitar and sang sweet country love songs right into my soul... I thought I had found the love of my life. No one could tell me this was not the real thing; or that this same young man thrilled countless other young girls'... and older women's... hearts. Finally I'd been forbidden to even go near this young lothario, and was only allowed to date one particular boy... who said he'd been 'called into the ministry'.

Well, that was fun, being able to date! And we could have remained good friends, I suppose. We kissed and cuddled, and even discussed marriage about four years into the future... but I was still entranced with my romantic guitar-playing singer of love songs. My knight on a white horse! Well, okay... he was a country boy from a large and not too prosperous family, and it was his stepfather's plow mare "Molly".

Sensing the danger that, to them, was obvious... my mother and a sister-in law moved with lightning speed to get me married to this "respectable young preacher-boy" before

something drastic happened to me. No discussion. No instruction. No preparation. No, I couldn't live at home one more year and finish high school. The only explanation from my sister-in-law was that Mama and Daddy needed some time in their life to just enjoy one another, and I was making problems for them. They simply woke me on the morning of July 14th and informed me that I was getting married that day! Over my tears and cries of protest and frantic pleas for some alternative... anything!... they left me no choice. In 6 days I would turn 17, and my young husband turned 18 five days after that. I don't understand why we were so naive and helpless that we'd go along with this, except that we were afraid not to. We were raised to obey our parents, after all, and one of my burly brothers and his equally burly wife drove us to the courthouse and stood as witnesses at the wedding. Another brother had taken my parents to his home near Houston so that we newlyweds could have some privacy at home. They came home unexpectedly, alas, after only two days, to find us in a very embarrassing situation... and after that we were ordered to find a place to live in town where jobs were available.

Within two weeks I was pregnant with our first child, and it was anything but a happy marriage. He joined the Air Force, and was overseas more often than at home... most of it voluntarily. Our first little girl was born only the night before he left for Japan, nine months and eleven days after our forced wedding. He refused to even go to the nursery and look at her through the window. Not two years later, our second child was born two weeks before he left for a 22 month stint in Germany and there'd been another tour of duty to Japan in between. You can imagine how little time we actually spent together in less than four years and that not happily. During this time my precious mother had died, as her doctor had warned that she would. The rest of the family strongly urged me to get a divorce from my young husband who was openly unfaithful and cruelly cold to me... yet one night as I contemplated this, I heard that 'still, small voice' warning me that if I ended this marriage I would regret it to the end of my days.

What did I know... spineless and naive and approval-hungry as I was? (Not to mention young and pitifully immature.) I listened to my family instead of that voice. What else could I do, I thought, with two babies, no high-school diploma? At that time, my spouse was legally allowed to take from me the little car I'd bought with earnings from my first job. How could life be so cruel? And why did God seem to keep prodding me to remember a time when I'd visited a Pentecostal church as a teenager... and in horror at what I saw, rejected this thing called "speaking in tongues". There was a great lack of love there that night, it seemed, and a lot of judgmental condemnation for my innocent little smear of Tangee lipstick and the gold ring and watch for which my parents had sacrificed so much. Any time I'd feel the urging of the Holy Spirit after that, I'd defiantly say "No!" to God.

Under the persistent urging of the same burly sister-in-law who had escorted us to the courthouse, I visited a lawyer and began divorce proceedings. I worked as a waitress in a little cafe next door to where we lived. Still inside me was the hope that my 'one true love' would come and prove to be what I hoped he would be... but instead, along came a young sailor looking for a date. Again... "Burly"...(don't think I'm kidding! She was an Army sergeant in WWII) insisted that I really ought to go out with him, because she thought he was cute.

Would she have thought he was so cute if she'd known he was going to get me pregnant, marry me, and then proceed to abuse and eventually rob my daughters of their innocence? It seemed that all I'd ever known in my life was controlling people! I was past fifty years old and in my third year of college before getting a grip on life and learning to become independent of other people's opinions.

After thirteen years of trying to make things work out right and not kill myself, I faced divorce once more... crying out to God that He had let me down! He cut off my accusations

when He made me know that He had been with me all along ... had walked with me and protected me... and that it was now time for me to turn around and walk with Him. This led to total surrender... as much as I then knew how. Within ten months the Holy Spirit had led me into a “hippie Christian coffeehouse” where I knelt to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. No.... I wish I could say that I received instant deliverance from ignorance and naivete’, but it didn’t happen.

I was desperately in need of a loving mate... a husband who could help me hold together this rebel band of hurting and wounded children. Four years from that time... while I had not dated but worked nights to support my children, along came John. Wow! He looked like a combination of Andy Williams, Clint Eastwood, and Henry Fonda, and was as much fun as Dick van Dyke. He loved my kids. Claimed to love the Lord. Seemed to love me. Told me he was thirty-nine like myself... and married me on the spot when I said I would not allow him to live in my home without marriage. Oh! “Of all the things I’ve ever lost, I miss my mind the most!”, as goes a current song. I knew nothing, absolutely nothing about this man.

The marriage was certainly different from the others. We were ecstatic! I felt I’d found a love even more perfect than what I had fantasized about. God seemed to bless! That part is still difficult for me to understand. We were soon teaching at a Christian School. And then at another one! God gave me dreams and visions about trips we were to take, and the actual faces of people we would minister to! Yet, amid all this wonderful life, little things began to leak, like ice cream melting at the bottom of a bag... that this paradise was not real. He was not 39, but 48. Well, no matter, but then, I’d find letters from both his supposedly ex-wife and then his wealthy alcoholic girlfriend... This man did not truly love me. He was using me, as he apparently used any woman who trusted him. Nor was he ever divorced from his first wife, who also loved him and wanted him to come home to stay.

Oh, I kept waiting and praying and nagging for him to make things right, as he so tearfully promised to do... but one night he went berserk and probably would have killed me had not a homeless man he had befriended, then brought home to feed and shelter, been there to distract him. It's a hair-raising story of my escape with my friend Susan in her little Buick Opel, bouncing over the sage grass desert outside Taos, N.M. There was no need for a divorce. I had never been legally married to John, but since I so violently, by now, hated bearing his name, I took the name of my rescuer and lived with him for a few years.

My faith and trust in God had been all but destroyed by now, not to mention faith in any human being. I seemed to be swallowed up in an avalanche of misery, hopelessness and confusion. Was there really a God? I wasn't sure any more! But I prayed to know... I prayed to whatever Good Supreme Being there was, to please help me sort things out. I had to begin taking medication to stop the grand mal seizures that had begun a few months after finding out that John was not my legal husband. Sometimes the medication worked, and sometimes I'd have seizures anyway. I would ask this Supreme Being to make me know if He really had a son named Jesus... and then to let me know Him in His goodness.

An elderly lady I met in a health-food store in Trinidad, New Mexico began inviting me to her little home for tea and cookies, and she also began sending me home with magazines to read. So many people get "Unity" confused with "Unitarian"... and the two are so very dis-similar. These little Unity magazines were filled with page after page of testimonies and stories of God's works of love in their lives, and about His Son, Jesus Christ. The Unity people even allowed me to call them 'collect' when I needed someone to pray with me, which I did several times that year. I'm leaving out a lot of detail in an effort to make this story short, but without those people praying for me and keeping me encouraged, I don't know how I'd have

made it through. Gradually I became secure once more in faith... and wiser... and less afraid than ever to speak of my love for Him. I'd sometimes watch Dr. Robert Schuller on TV, and promise myself that someday I would go on his program and tell how his encouraging words bolstered my bedraggled faith and helped me to hold on.

This Joe, who had saved my life by distracting John back in the desert, was a good man, I believe, who was tormented by a cruel past and had also lost all hope. He might have had a chemical imbalance. He was born with one eye missing, as though it had been removed at birth. Nearly blind and unable to work or get help, he would rage against me and everyone I loved and trusted... but never did he harm me physically. He sought refuge in his colorful abstract drawings, and in his unrelenting drum-playing. He was very good at both but would never allow anyone to display his work. I had to leave him because I could no longer bear his angry rages, but I left with him several Bible commentaries and a concordance to help him with the endless questions he asked me about God. Needless to say, Joe had never known Him, and doubted that God even cared... if, in fact, "she" even existed, he would say.

Joe didn't harm me physically, but drove me emotionally once to a point of placing a friend's little 38 revolver to my head, and pulling back the hammer. Suddenly, thoughts of my grown children popped into my mind, and I knew that if I took my life, they would blame themselves for not being able to help me.

I hid the little gun and walked out into the woods. We were in deep east Texas by this time. I angrily cried out to God. "What in the world am I supposed to do? Where is a place for me? I can't die.... I can't live!" And I kicked a little mushroom that stood in my path, sending its cap flying into the weeds.

“Put that back!” came the voice I had always recognized as God’s voice. “What?” I complained. “What? I can’t even kick a mushroom? What have I done wrong now?” “Pick it up”, said the voice, “and look inside”. Curled inside the soft, intricately formed protective cap of the mushroom was a tiny millipede, apparently hibernating. I tried to figure out why this was so important, and the voice of the Lord said, “Now replace the cap”. I did so, like a naughty child who’d been caught kicking the family cat, still wondering what God was trying to show me. And He filled that in for me with...”Never destroy something just because you don’t know the reason for it’s existence.”

He meant my life. I got the point... but I’ve also never kicked another mushroom. Every mushroom I see growing in the woods serves to remind me that my existence means something to my Creator. It is not for me to end my life. That choice belongs to Him. When I finally left Joe, my life began to be blessed with more abundance than I’d ever had, and a job that was easy for me to do... helping to care for a heart patient who was dying with diabetes. The Lord had told me, when that job ended, that in five years I’d meet the man He had chosen for my husband, and that we would serve Him together. This was confirmed to me by at least two people in the years that followed, and in the fifth year I met my friend Reed Hervey. Never suspecting that marriage would come of our friendship, we enjoyed many happy hours as neighbors and friends just talking and praying, and taking his elderly mother for drives in the mountains and especially to restaurants. His mother Christine dearly loved dining out!

Reed was 44 years old and had been divorced for a couple of years. I was 57 and had a son-in-law just 3 or 4 years younger than Reed. I had eleven grandchildren. His son Matt was still in high school and was one year older than my oldest grandson. Our friendship was pure, and lots of fun. He was baptized in the Holy Spirit not long after we met, and

we loved to attend Charismatic meetings together, especially since he'd lost the closeness with his Baptist friends now because of that.

We didn't care about the age difference. It really didn't matter to us, and few suspected it. After all, we were just friends. I had been coloring my hair for many years and neither looked, dressed, nor felt my age. Reed's hair was softly graying, and even white at the temples. He wore suspenders to keep his trousers in place on the portly figure he described as a 'fireplug'. One day, as he sat at my word processor, writing sermons he thought would 'preach', he stopped and gave me a wry smile. "What is it?", I asked. He said..."Awww, I was just thinking that you're everything I've ever wanted in a wife, and we've been friends for about a year now. If it wasn't for the age difference in us, I think I'd ask you to marry me.", to which I replied..."Well, don't let THAT stop you!"

He was never an amorous suitor... just that same friend who was so warm and fun to be around. We laughed a lot. Joked about going on tour as a comedy team called "Olde and Gray". I'd be 'Olde', and Reed would be "Gray". As I now write this, we still have fun. I'm both old and gray now, since I stopped coloring my hair and I'm heading for my 65th birthday. I'm also chubbier than when we met. He's a bit less chubby, and works at a used car lot. I spend lots of time writing in my computer, and he spends lots of time making my stories and articles into books. Until we find a publisher we just keep on making booklets to share with anyone who wants them. Sometimes someone will give us an offering for them. Many people have appreciated the things I write, some are offended. Ah, well... the Lord told me to obey Him and let the chips fall where they may.

I had not wanted to reveal so much of my past... but now that I have I feel relieved. Jesus has taken one scarred and broken vessel that some saw simply as a cracked pot, and He has made me into a new vessel that can be used, but I'm determined to stay broken before Him until He moves me into that place of many mansions.

Chapter Two

BEAUTIFUL JESUS

You may wonder how I came to be such an outspoken child of God, however errant at times. It's a long story but I'll try not to bore you. It began when I was three years old... maybe very close to four. My little neighbor and I were the only children in the Sunday School class that day, and our teacher was not there. Instead, we were being taught by dear and precious old family friend, Mr. Rainwater. It was in a little church called Bethel, just outside Idabel, Oklahoma.

I said Mr. Rainwater was "old". When you're not quite four, just about every adult is old! But he was grandfatherly. Many's the time I remember falling asleep leaning against his big chest at tent meetings. This particular morning, he chose to teach me and my friend "Junior" our first memory verse..."Jesus wept." John 11:35. He sat on the dais in front of the pulpit with us and made us feel very special. He had to explain what 'wept' means... and to do this, he related, a bit out of context perhaps ... that Jesus was weeping because people couldn't see that He was the Son of God, and would not let them live in His heart. I was so touched that I wept also, and I said, "Well.... Jesus can live in my heart!", and with that I had invited Him in.

I knew well the song, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so..." having learned it from sisters, from my mother and grandmother, and we sang it in Sunday School. Jesus was as real to me then as He is now. It's just that I know a lot more about Him now. He isn't there simply because a little child had pity on Him for His weeping. He's there because He is King of my heart and my life. He has dwelt in my heart since that very day. He's been my Friend and Confidante... but it really was not until a life-crisis at age 35 that I realized He had to also be Lord and Ruler of my life.

As the one holdout in Sunday School when I was nine, I bowed to the pressure of a well-meaning teacher and allowed myself to be baptized. I did not know the true meaning of the act... it was only for her persistence that I satisfied this dear lady's ambition to have her entire class baptized. As I came up from the baptismal waters the Lord spoke to my heart... telling me that this is not all there was to it. I knew it, but didn't share it with anyone, and I really didn't know what else there was that He spoke of. It was a big milestone for everyone to see me baptized. Yes, Jesus lived in my heart, but I knew nothing of 'dying' to Him and allowing Him to rule me.

I could always talk to Jesus about anything and everything I wanted to know... it's just that when He said certain things to me I did not want to hear it! In my teen years I had a close friend in school whose parents were Pentecostal. She went to the Baptist church with me quite often until her mother began to insist that I attend church with them from time to time.

Just turned fourteen, I wore the faintly tinted lipstick Mama had finally allowed. Daddy was always concerned about bad breath, and had given me a stick of Doublemint gum to chew so I wouldn't offend. For Christmas, my parents had sacrificed to buy the birthstone ring I wanted, and as a surprise they'd bought a used watch and had it inscribed on the back, "To Rebecca with love, Mother and Daddy."

When I soon broke the fragile band that held it on my arm, Daddy bought the dearest expansion band of little gold hearts to replace it. In 1949, all this treasure cost Daddy over a week's wages, and I wore them gratefully.

I wanted to fall through cracks in the floor when these religious people in that church, including the teenagers, pointed accusing fingers at me and actually sang ugly little songs about 'lipstick-wearing, gold-adorned, gum-chewing Baptists'. Even

my friend and her sisters joined in! Then some people shouted... even screamed... in ‘tongues’ and sang, and some of them fell on the floor. I was horrified! On the way home my friend’s mother asked me what I thought of their church. I told her it was the craziest place I’d ever seen and I’d never in my life darken the door of one of those churches again!

After I’d spoken those words, though, the Holy Spirit whispered to me...”Don’t reject everything you saw or heard here tonight... there is something I want you to receive.’ Oh, I knew He was referring to the ‘tongues’. Mama had warned me about that! But I told Him then, and occasionally throughout the next twenty-one years, that I would never speak in tongues! No, no, no! (Don’t say ‘never’ to God!)

I’ve already chronicled the disastrous events of the twenty-one years of saying “NO” to God, but I don’t think I mentioned the chronic bronchitis and hay fever that plagued me for most of those years. A heat stroke one Fourth of July at age twenty didn’t help anything... I was told that my temperature was 108 degrees all that night. In the morning I awoke to find a dear old Catholic nun sitting beside my bed, praying... where she’d been all night. As a Baptist, I didn’t know then how to be grateful to her.

I wanted life to be simple. I’d simply attend church and sing in the choir. I took my children to church when they were babies, prayed over them at home in their cribs, asking God to bless and protect them and keep them for His Kingdom. I loved them so very much! However... the choices I made and was forced to make did not result in a happy home life for my precious babies. The horrors and indignities and disappointments in their tender lives could, without a doubt, be traced back to my saying “NO” to God. It was my choice not to receive more of Him; my choice not to be more intimate with Him. My choice not to walk His way prevailed... until one day in a Disciples of Christ (Christian) church where my children

and I had attended for a year. The church had been holding a prayer vigil for an upcoming evangelistic event. During that event a lady I only remember as “Olga”... (not to be confused with the Olga I later met in New Mexico... stood and gave a challenge to those who were not satisfied with their spiritual condition.

I certainly was not happy with my spiritual condition! During the second marriage, a neighbor had given me a “Ouija” board. She said it was fun, but it took two people to play it, so she never used it. She told me “You have to really believe in Ouija or he won’t tell you anything.” I thought it was a joke... a harmless game... so I took it home. My two older daughters and I played with it. It really did give us information! It told us that the reason my nephew’s car would not start one night was because a gas line to the motor was broken. My nephew went skeptically out to check, and found that “Ouija” had been correct!

One night when there was a snowstorm between Texarkana and Dallas and my husband was almost three hours late getting home from Dallas, the board spelled out that his truck had slid off the highway and it was nearly three hours before he got help to get back on the highway. He was furious when we greeted him with the news that we had already been told where he had been. I think his fear was that the board could also tell us other secrets about his actions. In a year or two I was to break the Ouija board over my knee, build a fire in my back yard, and burn the ‘toy’ I found to be totally demonic.

It was that same year, while I was crying out to God; even yelling at Him for not protecting me... that His voice within stopped my complaint. He told me it was time now to walk with Him, rather than simply depending upon Him to walk my way. I said to Him, even then, that I knew what He wanted was for me to speak in tongues! I couldn’t see why this was so important! I still didn’t want to do it, but I did concede that He

could lead me into it. And His leading brought me to that Christian church where people loved and helped me, and where Olga challenged me to stand and open my hands, open my heart, and say, “God, I want everything You have for me.”

Smooth, isn't He? Of course! I wanted everything that He had for me! I just didn't happen to be thinking about speaking in tongues that day. It was certainly not a practice in that church, but it seems that from that day on that was the subject that had everyone buzzing! My niece, who had received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit two or three years earlier, became much more persistent about it. She said, “Aunt Becky, don't you believe God is worthy of the highest praise possible?” Of course I did! “Well, you can't praise Him as much as possible in your human tongue. You need the Holy Spirit to give you a language from God so you can praise Him in a more excellent way!”

That got to me. I did want to be more intimate with Him. I did want to praise Him more. But I did NOT want to speak in tongues. And I still told Him so! But as I drove home from a prayer group meeting one night, I said, “Lord, I do love You, and I want to praise You, but You know how I feel about speaking in tongues. (I was deathly afraid of losing control and doing hysterical things such as I had witnessed as a teenager.) “Will You please just give me a way to praise You without speaking in tongues?” Ah, He is so good and so patient! Almost immediately I heard a song in my mind, and sang it out, there in the privacy of the car. “You beautiful Jesus! My wonderful Lord! It's like heaven to trust You, believe on Your Word. If faith can move mountains, help me to believe... to drink from the fountain, Your blessings receive.” It just seemed like the most wonderful song I'd ever heard, but just about the only place I could really sing it was in the shower where I wasn't coughing or hoarse from chronic bronchitis. My lungs were not strong, either, and I definitely didn't want to sing it in front of an audience. It became my private praise to God, and more verses came.

A week or so later I tried to share it with my friend Cass, who lived with us temporarily, but there was no power or anointing in my voice. She was totally unimpressed, though she didn't say so. God had done another smooth move; He put Cass in my path without my knowing she had received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I only knew her as a young woman with a toddler, who needed a place to call home for a while since her marriage had broken up. I probably would not have offered her refuge in my home had I known there was even a touch of Pentecost in her! Her parents attended the Disciples of Christ church, where I was then a member, and she was so fascinating with her unique singing voice, her guitar, and her open confession of love for the Lord. She encouraged my daughter Kathleen to visit a coffeehouse with her... a hippie-type Christian coffeehouse, where Kat soon was baptized in the Holy Spirit!

Though I never heard her speak in tongues, Kathleen's demeanor seemed to have changed. She learned to play a few chords on Cass's guitar after I'd told her I would buy one if only she could play it. That year I was only able to spend \$25 each on my children for Christmas. The guitar would have to come under that limit. God gave Kat a dream, which she eagerly told me about the next day. In the dream, she and I arrived at a certain pawn shop downtown just before it opened. Now, Kat and Cass had been guitar-shopping and found this one that was soon to be released... a nice Yamaha... in this pawn shop; priced unbelievably low at \$25.00! But back to the dream...

In her dream, as we arrived at the east corner of the curb in front of the shop, a large red car pulled up at the south corner. In it sat two rough-looking men, and one was wearing a red shirt. He had black hair. She somehow knew they were coming for the guitar, so we rushed to get out of our car and to the door of the shop before they did!

Well, sometimes I'm skeptical, and sometimes I'm gullible. This time I didn't know which way to be, but my little

girl wanted that guitar, so I went along with her as she rushed to get ready and drive downtown so we could be first. I don't even need to re-write what happened. It was just as the dream told her it would be.

The shop had not yet opened. We practically slammed our bodies against the glass to make sure no one got in before we did! Then the shopkeeper opened up and we rushed inside, saying we'd come to get that guitar and here was our cash. The men who rushed into the shop behind us seemed angry and disappointed, declaring that they had come to buy that guitar, but the shopkeeper told them that it was already sold to us, since we'd been there before them. Kat learned more chords on her guitar and used it for the glory of the Lord.

Several years later, she was on a volunteer mission in Reynosa, Mexico, playing her guitar for the orphan children there, when one teenage boy asked her to give her guitar to him! That Yamaha was her treasure... but the boy assured her that if she gave him this one, the Lord would give her a better one. She knew the Lord wanted her to give it to him, so she prayerfully gave it up. And what the boy had told her is exactly what happened ... not immediately, but in a few years she was able to buy a valuable Martin guitar, far better than what she gave up, for one third of its value. She was about twenty years old at that time. Now, about 25 years later, she still has that wonderful guitar.

The day we bought the first guitar, however, was only a month before her 16th birthday. All in the world she wanted, she cajoled, was for me to attend just one of the nightly meetings at the Christian coffeehouse... the night of her birthday. I came up with several excuses not to go, but her pleas could not be ignored... so I told her that I would take her there, but would not go inside! I hated "hippies and holy-rollers", and didn't even like her being there, so she'd have to leave the door open so I could see what was going on. Wouldn't you know... a sudden

rainstorm just happened to blow in, and the wind blew out the candles they were using for light!

Kathleen came out to the car to tell me that if I wanted to see what was going on I'd have to come in, because they had to shut the door. Most reluctantly, I followed her inside where this small group of teenagers and a couple of hippie-looking men in their 20's sat on the floor in a circle where they'd been praying. As I closed the door and tried to sit down without being noticed, a chorus of "Thank You, Jesus!" rose from every mouth. It gave this Baptist lady the 'willies'! No one spoke after that for what seemed an hour but was probably 3 or 4 minutes. Embarrassed, I had to break that uncomfortable silence that seemed to be focused on me. I simply had to say something, and what I said was anything but what I meant to say!

"Can anyone tell me exactly what this Baptism in the Holy Spirit is?", which was met by another chorus of "Thank You, Jesus!". Each member of the group then explained to me what it was to them personally. Then the apparent leader of the group, a Viet Nam veteran, told me that although he had been raised in church, fallen into drugs and street-fighting, then received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, it was definitely for him a closer walk with God. Looking into his pale blue eyes, I seemed to see Jesus. Not that the man was Jesus, but that Jesus was in him. With his full beard, haystack of sun-burned hair, and sandal-clad feet, it wasn't hard to imagine him as one of Jesus' followers. They called him Jerry.

The moment Jerry said the words, "closer walk with God", I remembered the night less than a year earlier when the Lord said that I had to turn around and "walk with Him". No question about it, I had to receive this thing I'd been fighting against in order to walk closer with God. Still, I held up a skeptical hand. "There are some questions I need answered... First, I want to know if this is really real. And if it is real, is it of

God? Third, does God want me to have it? Then, if it is real and if it's of God, and if God wants me to have it... and if I speak in tongues, can I stop when I want to?" Jerry just gently laughed at me as he said, "Wow... don't you trust God at all?"

"Okay then, I know I have to have it, how do I get it?" And Jerry answered with his funny sense of humor that was refreshingly un-religious... "Well, you could wait until Sunday and come to church over here at the Assembly of God, and you could wait 'til they have altar call, and go down and have people lay hands on you. You could tarry a long time. Some folks will say, "Let go!" and others might say "Hold on!", and maybe you'll get it and maybe you won't. If I were you, I'd just get down on my knees and tell my Father I want it."

Well, Jerry didn't know that I had done exactly that the day before in my bedroom! And I had not known what it was when I received it! The Holy Spirit had been urging so strongly, and the hunger for Him was so great that I'd been setting aside about an hour a day for months to be alone with God and pray. That day I had told Him... "I know You're not going to give up until I receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit... so go ahead! Pour it out on me!", and I began to softly weep because of God's anointing coming over me. Then the weeping turned to laughter, and then I cried because I was laughing, and so on until I became embarrassed to be acting this way in the presence of God. I got to my feet, pressing my hands over my mouth to suppress the giggles, and tried to apologize to God, but I staggered against the wall, saying "Abba, Dada!"

Little did I realize those were my first baby-talk words in the heavenly language. "Daddy, Daddy!", "Abba Father". So the Lord used my daughter Kat to get me to where I could go ahead and receive what He had for me, and I ruefully remembered Olga's challenge. This was what He had!

Barely inside the coffee house I knelt right there on the

floor and began to beg and plead and cry for God to baptize me in the Holy Spirit, and nothing was happening. But then this big hand gently touched my shoulder and this soft, deep voice suggested, “Hey... ya don’t hafta beg Him for it! He wants ta give it to ya!” Someone in the circle suggested that I just begin saying “Hallelujah”, which is the universal word for praise unto God... in every language on earth, they told me! Sometime after about the tenth or twelfth Hallelujah there came forth from my mouth a language that sounded like what I described as “Hawaiian fruit salad”. It was beautiful, and delicious in my mouth! And as I spoke in this beautiful tongue I knew that I was confessing to God my most recent sin... the lust in my heart for a man I’d recently met who said he was separated from his wife.

God took care of that. I never saw the man again except in a grocery store, where he immediately escaped from my presence! Thank God! I found that I was also instantly healed of that chronic bronchitis and the many allergies that plagued me during all those years of rebellion. My heart was filled with song! The group sang joyfully with me for about four hours... I who had not been able to croak out an entire song for a long time. Then I explained to them about a song the Lord had given me a few weeks before... and that I hadn’t been able to sing it very well. As I began, the song burst out of me in a voice I’d never dreamed of. I’d never even known what ‘anointing’ meant until then. My lungs were healed! My vocal chords found abilities they’d never used. I was not shy about singing in front of strangers. In fact, there was no stopping me!

I sang the entire song that night in the voice of anointing that is still in me almost 30 years later... “You beautiful Jesus! My Wonderful Lord!..... If faith can move mountains, help me to believe; to drink from THE FOUNTAIN, Your blessings receive!” That was the last time I ever needed the Teldrin tablets that had helped me to breathe for the past several years. They were twelve-hour capsules, actually, and I had been taking them every four hours, every day, just to get by.

The following Sunday morning would have found us at the Christian church, except that I could not walk. It wasn't from the arthritis that had plagued me for several years... God had healed that! It was simply that there seemed to be no connection between my brain and my legs! God was getting my attention. I explained this to Kathleen; that they'd have to phone a friend to get them to church because God was telling me to get down to the coffeehouse and have Jerry pray with me! I'd already given God every excuse I could dredge up for not doing this. I had barely met this Jerry, who would most certainly think I was crazy. He was probably at church like everyone else. The coffee house was probably locked, etc, etc..

My daughter repeated these reasons and more... adding that Harry was the only one who had the key and he definitely would be at church. But my children left for church when their friend came, and there I was, kneeling beside my bed, unable even to crawl anywhere. I kept hearing God say, "Go!", until finally I whined... "Well, okay, I'll go if You'll just let me get up and walk!" Immediately I was able to walk. I dressed hastily and hurried to the car to drive the five miles to the coffee house, grumbling all the way. Halfway there a rusty blue Volkswagen van crossed my path, headed in a totally different direction. "Now you see, God? There goes Harry! I can't get into the coffeehouse because He has the only key." "Go!"

I kept going, crying and blubbering so hard by the time I reached the coffee house I was glad no one was there. The door opened at my touch. A long-play vinyl album had been left on 'repeat', and Mahalia Jackson sang over and over for about 45 minutes about the love of God, and how "His Eye Is On The Sparrow", and about His "Amazing Grace." I was stillcrying uncontrollably when Harry returned to ask if he could help. When I told him the reason for being there, he said it must not be God because Jerry didn't even come there on Sundays, but went to church with his parents clear across town. I said, "I have to wait for Jerry." and Harry said, "Lotsa luck...",

and I bent forward with my face on my knees and kept crying out loud! That's all I could do!

In a little while, someone tiptoed into the coffeehouse. A hand gently touched my shoulder, and a deep, soft voice asked, "What's the matter, sister?" "What are you doing here?" I asked Jerry, "God told me to come down here and have you pray for me, but everyone else (Kathleen and Harry) said you wouldn't be here today at all!" He explained that after lunch with his family he just wanted to get out and ride, and ended up there, somehow. He listened to my outpouring of confessions, and prayed for me. Pointing to a classic print on a calendar nearby, he said, "I guess that lamb is you, huh?" It was a picture of Jesus reaching down to rescue a strayed lamb that was in danger of falling further from safety. Yes, that was me.

When we'd finished praying I said to Jerry and Harry, "Now I have to be baptized!" I told them about the time when I was nine that I'd gone through the motions without actually knowing what it meant. They agreed that it was a good idea and that the pastor of the church nearby would be happy to do that if I talked to him about it that evening or sometime. "No! I mean right now!", I insisted. "But the baptistry isn't even filled," they protested. "There wouldn't be time to heat the water and fill the baptistry"... but I cut off their protests. "I have to be baptized now... today... in the lake... and the Lord has told me He wants you to do it.", I said to Jerry.

He said, "But sister... do you realize this is the second day of February, and it's 52 degrees outside? Do you have any idea how much colder the water is in the lake?" I said that it didn't bother me how cold it was... unless he just didn't want to do it.

The conversation led to us getting into his car along with Harry. He stopped by his apartment for dry clothing for both

of us... as I had not thought of anything so practical. We drove to a point at the lake that was one of my favorites, where a small cliff jutted into a point above it, sheltering it from the wind. I honestly do not remember whether we even removed our shoes. Harry and Jerry prayed again, and Harry read some appropriate Scriptures. Then Jerry led me into the icy water, saying “Lord, we need witnesses to this baptism. Please send someone to witness!” As if on cue, three white cars filled with teenagers appeared on the cliff above us and parked to watch what was happening.

I had prayed privately to the Lord, “I don’t want to fail You ever again. If I’m ever going to turn my back on You and not serve You, I’d rather die. You are the One who knows, so if I’m going to fail You again just let me literally die in this baptismal water. Let that be my grave.” And as Jerry let my limp body down into the water, he seemed in no hurry to bring me up again. I was satisfied that Jesus knew I’d fail Him again and was going to let me die. I was at peace with that. Before my breath was gone, however, Jerry slowly stood me upright.

He explained that he sensed I wanted to die if this was not real, so he was in no hurry to bring me up again until I was sure about my commitment. Oh! There was rejoicing! Not only the three of us there on the sand rejoiced, but the teenagers in the cars above us cheered and honked their horns! They drove as an escort all the way into town, waving and smiling! We never learned who they were or how they came to be there that day.

This seems to be the end of this chapter. I will say that I did fail the Lord several more times, and yet He still loves me. He still chooses to use me... one of those weak and foolish ones, to confound the wise with His wonderful Grace. His purpose is greater than anything we can imagine, and His love never fails.

Chapter Three

GET UP AND DANCE!

A hospital is a place for healing, all right, but little did I know what part I would play in healing except to be a Nurse Aide. Having to support five children after the divorce that set us free was serious business. Through a Godly counselor, I'd found training in that field and was soon earning \$.65 an hour. That was no typo. Sixty-five cents an hour! My ex-husband was told by the judge to pay me \$90 per month for child support, so we squeaked by. Even after I got a few raises, our income was barely enough to pay for basic food and shelter, and gas for the old Rambler I had.

You may notice that I mention here that I had five children to support. Years earlier in that marriage, it seemed like a nice idea to give a little boy a home, while providing a brother for Robbie. He loved his three sisters, but constantly clamored for a brother. For the next 12 years, until the brother turned 18, and Robbie left home... they fought like young bulls. Though we all tried, and I guess he tried too, the little boy could never find a 'bonding' with us. It isn't his fault... considering the horrible things that secretly went on in our family up until the divorce... but he chose a different way of life, and not a good one. Every few years he would write or come and say that he'd like to get together again, but the nest was gone. He wanted his family back together again, as we were publicly seen to be since we adopted him as a six-year-old. He became combative with me at times for this reason, and I just had to let him go. This is why, if anyone wonders, I've chosen to leave him out of the story.

At the end of my training period, I seem to recall earning as much as \$1.17 per hour, but it seemed to disintegrate before food-buying time. I tithed faithfully to the little chapel we attended on Sundays, and by God's grace we made it

through. One nice thing about it, I didn't have to worry about being overweight! When the car quit on me, I walked the four miles from the hospital to home when I got off work in the mornings, having caught a ride with friends or taking a cab to work for the 11 to 7 shift. Someone had estimated that a nurse aide on that particular wing walked approximately ten miles while on an 8 hour shift.

All the above is just to lay a foundation for the things I'm about to tell you about God's work through my willingness in those days. I hadn't been a Spirit-filled Charismatic very long when my father, who was about 87, was stricken with gout in his right knee. He was also emotionally stricken, because this independent old man had always been able to overcome just about everything that ever tried to get him down and had only been sick two or three times in all his life. His landlady phoned me one day between my weekly visits to him, saying that he was crying, and asking her to call me. What? My father crying?

But he was. Needing to go to the bathroom, he'd been unable to get out of his chair because of the pain and stiffness in his knee... and he'd sat there and wet himself.

He only asked for a washcloth and a pan of warm water to clean himself up, and I helped him rise from his chair to go into his bedroom to change clothes. It was heartbreaking to witness his helplessness. I asked God, in the most timid way, I suppose... to bring healing to my father and relieve that gout.

This is how the Lord did just that! Going through training at the hospital to be a Nurse Aide, we also had to go through a few weeks of dietary training in the hospital. During a break, I saw a few books in a rack on a low table, and sat down to inspect one entitled "Dietary Management for Gouty Arthritis". In that few minutes I had found the key to my father's healing! I hurried to inform him that the foods he'd eaten all his life... and his favorites, at that, were causing purines

to build up in his system, and that if he could forego pinto beans, coffee, oatmeal, turnip greens, chocolate and a few other foods for a while, he could probably walk again.

He mulled this over thoughtfully, then looked at me helplessly and said, “My God! What am I supposed to live on... ice cream and mashed potatoes?” I said, “Wouldn’t it be better than this, Daddy?”, and he agreed. That is all he ate for two weeks. Mashed potatoes and ice cream. The gout in his leg cleared up and never again appeared, though he lived to be past 91. After the two week diet he ate anything and everything he wanted once more. He credited me with saving his life, but I kept telling him that God led me to that book!

My next experience with healing was on a Sunday morning when arthritis in my hips and knees prevented my getting to a standing position without horrible pain. A few years earlier I’d been outside raking leaves on a frosty morning, heard the phone ringing inside and ran up the frosted steps to answer it. As a child, I was never able to do the splits in gym class, but I did the splits on those steps that day! As a result, arthritis developed in my joints and tormented me every year when the weather got cold until that day when I was 35 years old.

This was during the time God was really working on me to receive more of Him, and I was as cooperative as a wild mule about some things. One thing was believing that Oral Roberts was genuine. I would never watch him on television! Never!... until that Sunday morning when I could only crawl around the house and try to get the family off to church with a friend. I had managed to crawl up on a loveseat before they left, and was watching something on TV, I can’t remember what. The next program... after I was left alone, of course, was the dreaded Oral Roberts program. It would hurt too much to get down and crawl to the TV to turn it off, so I just tried to ignore it, but this preacher kept pointing right at me through the screen and declaring, “God wants to heal YOU, today!”

I had so much stubborn pride in those days! If a cat or dog had been there to watch me, I would not have done what

I finally did. I wanted so much to be free from this crippling pain that I managed to crawl the few feet to the TV and place my hand on it, “as a point of contact”, as the man urged. I ventured one index finger on the top of the TV as he prayed the prayer for healing. Nothing happened. I was still in pain, and on top of that, I had humiliated myself by thinking that anything would happen!

I didn't get mad at Oral Roberts, I got mad at God! Whimpering and sobbing, I was going to crawl back to my bedroom and stay there! “God! Why do You let that man get away with such fraud? Why did You let me be so humiliated and disappointed?” On the way to my room I passed Kathleen's door and heard her radio that she had left on to a rock and roll station. That also angered me, so I turned in to her room to get rid of that noise, and noticed that she had even forgotten to take her Bible to church. More anger! It seemed the angrier I got the more I would hurt! I was really giving the Lord a piece of my mind, when about an arm's length behind my left ear I heard an audible voice. He said, “If you believed I would heal you, get up and dance!

I knew Who it was, but didn't want to believe it. Picking up Kat's Bible from her nightstand, I held it tightly in both hands, and finally ventured...”L-L-Lord... was that You?” I'd talked with Him all my life, but I'd never heard His audible voice. Then it came again, just as before. “If you believed I would heal you, get up and dance!” Me? A Baptist? Dance? GOD telling me, a Baptist, to dance? But I obeyed. Slowly and painfully reaching a standing position, I held onto the bedpost and began to wiggle and dance to the music on the Rock and Roll station, of all things! In a split second, my joints were free from the painful swelling! I could dance, though I didn't quite know how to do the Mashed Potato or whatever they were playing.

In grateful awe, I thanked my Lord, and asked Him to forgive my unbelief. I knew I'd been healed by His miraculous

Power! Little did I know that in a matter of weeks I'd be giving this testimony behind the pulpit of what I'd always called "One of those crazy holy-roller churches"! But this one was different. It was filled with the most loving and worshipful believers, more than half of them dressed in jeans and T-shirts while they spoke in tongues and cried out their love for Jesus.

Then I've already written about the miracle of healing I experienced as I knelt in the coffeehouse sponsored by that church, and spoke in the 'tongues' I had fought the Holy Spirit about for twenty one years. How I loved giving my testimony to anyone who would listen, and sing for them the song of praise the Holy Spirit had given me... in my newly anointed voice! But not everyone wanted to hear it. Some refused to believe a word of it and flatly told me not to mention it to them ever again. This was my own flesh and blood family. My siblings. I couldn't be angry with them, hadn't I been the same way for twenty one years, myself?

Working in the hospital, my compassion for the sick and helpless sometimes overcame my shyness about sharing what God could do. Actually, as a hospital employee, I'd been told with all the other trainees that if any of us were caught praying out loud with any patient whatsoever, it would be the end of our employment there. Still, when an elderly black lady lay moaning in pain night after night in a room on the wing where I worked, I prayed to the Lord to heal her. My praying was not in her presence, but at home. I'd been told that this woman hated and distrusted white people and would become hysterical when any white person except the doctors came into her room. In the hallway outside her room, I opened her chart to read that she had suffered with this condition for eighteen years and that it was a mystery to the medical profession. She was brought in regularly for cleaning and first-aid for the huge sore on the calf of her leg, which had never been healed in all those years. Nothing helped.

My compassion for her grew. “Lord, please heal that woman”, I prayed. And I shared with one of my black co-workers my concern. I was told that the woman suffered from a voodoo curse that had been placed on her eighteen years ago, and the terrible sore had been there ever since. Well, I was not versed in dealing with curses, but the Lord was! When I prayed again, He told me to wait until after the 3 a.m. rounds, when the woman would be sound asleep, and to walk into her darkened room with some anointing oil on my fingers. I was to touch just the sheet that lay over her, very softly, so as not to waken her. The Lord told me that demons were dancing gleefully all over her bed, and I was to tell them that I was not afraid and that they had to leave, in the Name of Jesus... then turn my back on them and walk deliberately and confidently out of the room.

Old Scaredy Cat me?? I wouldn't even walk through a darkened room in my own house with out turning on the light! But I steeled myself and did exactly what the Lord had told me to do... even to walking deliberately out of the room. Confidently? I was shaking like a leaf inside!

Then came my weekend off, and when I returned on Monday night the woman's room was vacant. I asked the black nurse... “Did Mrs.— get well, or die, or what?” Her eyes got big as she told me, “Girl... you not gonna believe this. That leg was healed up smooth as a baby's behind next morning! She's gone home!” Yay! Jesus! I never did tell anyone about it except a new convert who later worked on that same wing with me.

This woman was an acquaintance, but I never thought of her as a friend. She had so many problems I could not dream of anyone standing up under such a load. She could not bear them alone, so she shared them constantly with anyone who would listen... on and on and on... with her homemade cigarette smoke curling under your nose. She was so nearsighted she had to get close to see whoever she was talking to! We'd

been in training class together. She had to support herself and six troubled children and a mentally-ill husband. It wasn't that I didn't feel for her... I just didn't see what I could do about it. I had problems, myself... and besides, I hated the smell of those cheap cigarettes and the sound of her incessant complaining!

I never went to work at night without first praying, "Lord, PLEASE keep me from having to work with "Jenna" tonight." (This, of course, is not her real name.) He was ever faithful! Not once was she my partner on a night shift! I was definitely grateful...but one weekday morning at a ladies' prayer meeting, I felt a need to pray for Jenna. Ooops! I slipped and told the Lord that if using me was the only way He could help her, then I was willing to be used!. Oh, dear! He quickly took me at my word.

That very night Jenna and I were assigned to the same side of the same wing! Better watch what you pray! It wasn't that we couldn't work well together. She knew her business as well as I knew mine, but at break-time there she'd go, rolling a cigarette with this red tin thing she carried wherever she went. Then she would light it, move close so she could see me, and begin again her tale of woe. I tried excusing myself to go the restroom hoping to escape, but there she'd be, waiting at the door when I came out. How grateful I was when morning came!

A heavy rain was pouring down outside, but at that time my car was still usable. I was ready to get in that car and scam!... but Jenna called me back so loudly there was no pretending I didn't hear. She was highly upset.

She'd been trying to phone her husband at home and wake him so he could come and pick her up, but there was no answer. The older children had probably left for school, but there were two babies who needed someone to look after them. Where was "Jack"? For an hour or more I waited while she

attempted to get him on the phone. Finally I offered to take her home myself, even though I lived a few miles in the opposite direction. Her complaints continued, and before we arrived at her house she declared to me that this was the last straw. She was going to kill herself when she got home. I told her that if she really meant that, she must phone me before she did anything. Bitterly she said, “Hell, I don’t know your phone number and if I did, I don’t have a thin dime to make the phone call!” I didn’t stop to ask why she needed a dime if she had a phone at home, but reaching into my purse I found a dime and a scrap of paper on which I wrote my phone number. I wrapped the paper tightly around the dime, and commanded her...”Phone me before you do anything drastic!” Then I drove myself home, hopefully to sleep.

Two and a half hours into my sleep, my daughter Cindi awoke me saying “There’s a crying woman on the phone and she says she has to talk to you! She says her name is Jenna.” I really wasn’t prepared for what came next. Jenna had driven back to the hospital in her husband’s car after waking him from a sound sleep. He had not heard the phone ringing when she tried to call. Through angry tears, her words were determined. “I didn’t call you to help me,” she said. “I called you to ask you to call the authorities after I’m gone, and make sure they take good care of my kids and put Jack in a mental hospital, that’s all. Promise you’ll do that for me.”

She told me that she was not at home and refused to say where she was hiding. Finally I became so angry with the devil I yelled into the phone, “Satan! I bind you in the Name of Jesus!... and now Jenna, in the Name of Jesus you tell me where you are!”

In a weak and defeated voice she admitted that she was hiding in a phone booth beneath some stairs back at the hospital, near the front entrance. She said she’d already be dead by the time I found her because she was going to swallow the entire

bottle of tranquilizers she held in her hand at that moment. Again I yelled, "Satan, stop what you're doing, right NOW! You are bound by the Blood and the Name of Jesus!" Then I heard nothing more from her, so I hung up the phone, hurriedly threw on a shirt and some jeans and got in my car. On the way to the hospital, I stopped and picked up my pastor's wife, telling her the story as we went. When we ran inside and found Jenna sobbing in the phone booth, we had to laugh at the devil! The bottle of deadly pills she threatened to swallow remained tightly gripped in her hand... halfway to her mouth. Her arm would not bend! She could not move her head to get close to her hand. In her other hand she still held the telephone receiver as though it were frozen to her skin.

Ignoring onlookers, the pastor's wife and I supported Jenna's limp body out to my car, and we decided to take her to the home of another church member to pray together and minister to her. I'll call the pastor's wife Ellen, and our other friend Pat. Pat took over immediately, praying for Jenna and giving her verse after verse of liberating Scripture... and to our shocked surprise, Jenna began to curse us! It wasn't the devil cursing us, it was a frustrated woman who had been born a Catholic, she said, and had been searching for the reality of God all her life, even to having been baptized in seven different churches! We were no better than she was, she railed, so why did we know God and she didn't?

Gently, Pat explained the simplicity of salvation to Jenna, and then laid her hands on Jenna's head to pray. She was interrupted by Jenna rushing to the bathroom. Now this isn't storybook stuff. Religious people might be offended. But Jenna spent probably an hour in the bathroom, emptying her bowels as she had not been able to do in years! She told us afterward that she'd been dependent on stool softeners, laxatives and enemas for more years than she could remember. She was never able to have more than one bowel movement a week, even with all that. She came out of that bathroom

delivered, is what it was! And she knew it! She was lighthearted and happy! She even joked, “Boy, I was really full of it!” Then she received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and was ready to go home and face anew the challenges there. She became a regular church member, along with her children who received Jesus also.

And then there was the Gypsy Spiritualist! I had, during the course of work, met the pastor of a small church on the other side of town. I’ll call him “Jeb”. He was one of those people who had rounds in the entire hospital, performing a certain therapy as assigned. One night on his rounds, he noticed the little dove pin I wore on my uniform and asked if I were a Christian. He said that he and his wife were pastoring a very troubled church where people prayed for God to do something, then blocked His path... being too religious for Him to be free to work on their problem. He said that God had even gotten sick of their griping, so that one fine rainy day the ceiling fell in on them during worship time! He thought that was funny, and so did I. We shared some of our mutual beliefs and observations. He told me about his wife and two small children, and soon he asked if I would bring my family and become a part of their church because he needed help! For one thing, he had no one to help him replace the tiles from the fallen ceiling, since all the males were too old to climb up on a scaffold, and all the women were too modest or religious to wear jeans and get up there. I wasn’t. I did. We both caught flack for my being up there in pants, so I asked the old biddies if they’d prefer that I wore a dress up there so they could see what was under it. They huffily made an exit.

I was so on fire for the Lord in those days, I didn’t care what anyone thought. In fact, I’m pretty much the same now. I knew the Lord could do miracles, but I wanted to see an instant one. In my prayers I asked the Lord for one of those ‘snap-of-the-finger’ ones. Of course, when I realized it was in front of me, I panicked.

It was one of those night-shift times when things were pretty calm. We were told that the only important thing to remember was to check on the patient in room 321, who was likely to expire at any moment, and record the time of his death and then prepare his body for the funeral home. As best I recall, this man was only about 37 years old, but he was dying of leukemia. No one could explain to me why a blood transfusion was in progress for this man, since an enormous hematoma... a huge blood-blister, as I saw it... was pouring out the same blood into dressings as fast as I could change them. Still, I was told to keep the dressings dry and try to keep him comfortable... record his vital signs... just ordinary care.

Well, I'd take care of all that, and sure as I'm telling this, 'something' would cause me to walk right back into room 321! It was embarrassing, especially when the dying man began to notice it, and would look at me warily. After four or five of these times when 'something' would draw me back in there, it occurred to me that this was my chance to see a 'snap-of-the-finger miracle'. I hurried to check his chart and find out if this was going to be easy or hard. Hopefully he would be a Christian. When I read the word "Spiritualist", my hopes wavered.

Then the Holy Spirit... that 'something' that had been drawing me into the room, drew me in once more. This time the man raised his head weakly and looked at me again. Of course I can't use his name, so I'll say "Mr. Brown". "Mr. Brown?" I began... "I, uh, know that your condition is very... uh... serious, and ah... I.... just want to say I'm going to put you on my prayer list". (Whew!) Then he spoke..."Ohhh,... I'm... so ... glad. I've... been hoping... someone would pray... for me", and with the strain of the effort, collapsed back onto his pillow.

I myself could have collapsed, but I whispered to him about my belief and knowledge of God's healing power personally, quoted the Scripture in the book of James about having the elders come and pray, and the prayer of faith would

save the sick. I told him that my pastor worked right there at the hospital, and if he'd like, I could call Brother Jeb and have him come and anoint him with oil and pray that prayer of faith. There was no reply. I figured the effort of answering me might have finished him off... but when his wife came the next day he was able to tell her everything I had said. She was there waiting for me when I came on duty that night. Every inch the kind of Gypsy lady I'd seen in magazine features; she had a commanding presence... and when she commanded the presence of my pastor Jeb, I just knew I had goofed badly and we were both going to lose our jobs!

That, however, was not the case. Her husband, she said, had told her all I had told him, and she wanted me to get that pastor down here to pray immediately. She said, "If God will just keep him alive until 7 o'clock in the morning, I'll be glad, because we have a son who's coming in to see his dad, and it would be wonderful if his dad could just live until then". I told her I'd get in touch with the pastor, and assured her that if God could heal her husband, then He could certainly keep him alive until morning!. This is the same thing Jeb told me when I called and wanted him to rush down there right away. He explained that he was on the fifth floor doing therapy and it would be about 3 hours before he could get down to third where we were.

Meanwhile, the blood transfusion continued to drip uselessly into his veins and seep out into the dressings. It made no sense at all, not even to the nurse who was only following doctor's orders. Mrs. Brown slept restlessly in a chair as her husband continued to breathe. Jeb arrived shortly after three a.m. I procured a small amount of mineral oil from the Nurse's Station for anointing. We asked the Lord to sanctify the oil for this use, then proceeded to quietly pray that this man be totally healed and made whole... not simply until the morning came. Mr. Brown then made Jesus Lord of his life. Having done this, Jeb proceeded on his rounds, and I on mine. The only change I noted was that the dressings no longer needed changing,

even though the blood was still dripping into his veins. The nurse dismissed it with..."Poor man most likely ran out of blood. He'll be gone soon."

After completing all my last-minute duties of checking vital signs, recording them in the charts and such, I hurried to room 321 to find Jeb had already walked into the room. The patient was propped up on an elbow, talking happily with his son! We didn't interrupt, but smiled at one another and went our separate ways. At eleven p.m. that same day, I came into the Nurses' Station for the usual report just a few minutes late, but all I could hear in the chaos was, "Mr. Brown!..this!, and Mr. Brown!... that!" Not being able to get a word of sense out of anyone, I slipped out of the room and down the hall to check Mr. Brown's chart for myself. I read, "At 10:20 a.m. student nurses entered pts. rm. to change linens. Pt. (patient) rose from the bed and walked across rm. Sat in chair by window. One student nurse cried, "Mr. Brown! Mr. Brown! Get back in this bed and lie down! You can't get out of bed, you're dying!" To which pt. replied, "Well, it doesn't look like it to me!"

And indeed, he was no longer dying, but was dismissed 2 or 3 days later, fully healed... and saved. He was at the hospital about a year and a half later, sitting beside his wife, who was dying. She had not received the healing that Jesus offered, nor His salvation, because she did not want to abandon the other spirits in which she believed. Mr. Brown looked as healthy as could be, as indeed he was, to the Glory of Jesus Christ who had healed him.

There were other healings and deliverances during my three years at that hospital, but none so dramatic as Mr. Brown's. My faith was strengthened with each miraculous thing the Lord did. I certainly no longer fear satan's powers. I know the antidote to his spells. Just one thing... the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We must use that Name with the authority He gave us.

Chapter Four

MOVE TO NACOGDOCHES

It was early in 1974 that I heard these words from the Lord. I'd been baptized in the Holy Spirit for a little over three years. I'd been divorced from my second husband several months more. I'd left my job as a Nurse Aide at a local hospital in order to supervise my children better, and was working as a waitress in a diner, along with daughters Kathleen and Cindi, and even my son Robbie. Rob, at 14, bused tables until 3 a.m. and then slept in the station wagon I'd just been able to buy, until Cindi and I got off at 6. Kathleen came on her shift as we got off. We were all very close. No great problems, except paying bills and having enough left to live on.

We had friends in and out of the house like family. Young people, mostly. There had been a great move of the Holy Spirit in Texarkana a few years back, and when it cooled, my house was like "Mom's place" to several teens and those in their 20's who dearly loved the Lord. We had an antique piano, circa 1876, that had been hauled hither and thither since I was 14 when my father had paid \$50 for it. It was so beautiful, even though grossly out of tune, and there were those whose touch could still make it sound heavenly. About ten years earlier I had sanded it down to bare wood and repainted it oyster white with gold trim on its sculptured wood decorations. Sometimes, as we sang the lovely old hymns of faith and love, with the heavy wooden front removed to reveal a miracle of wires, wooden hammers, colorful felt, shining steel and brass.... it seemed we could hear angels singing along with us. I still believe we did.

In the Fall of '73, Cindi was not yet 16 and her trust in the Lord was strong. She had one problem... she needed a winter coat, badly! The one she'd worn since she was 13 had become too small, so she mentioned her need to me, wondering if we could manage to buy a coat for her. Sadly, I had to tell her that we didn't have the money... but we could pray and ask the

Lord for one. That is what we did... and within a few days our friend Harry dropped in around suppertime.

Harry was a disabled vet from the Viet Nam war, probably about 26 years old. He loved and trusted the Lord even though government doctors told him he was a walking dead man because of so many elements missing from his blood. He had also been a heavy user of drugs, and he knew it was for that reason that his blood was so depleted. Several times he tried to tell the doctors that God had healed him and he didn't want his disability checks. He felt fine! He looked healthy. But every time he had a checkup he was told that his blood was still deficient of several elements necessary to live. However, this part of the story is not about Harry, although God had raised him from the dead the year before, and he went on to marry, have a son, and live until that son was about 18 years old!

Memories come flooding back so fast, it isn't easy to stay on track... forgive me! Such wondrous things God has done! Now, about Cindi needing a coat.

Harry had dropped in at suppertime, and we drifted into the living room afterward to talk, but Harry kept pacing the floor and finally asked me to come outside with him. He wanted to ask me something privately. "Becky...", he began, "The Lord keeps impressing me that one of your kids needs a winter coat. Which one is it?" It startled him when I laughed! Then I explained that Cindi was the one who needed the coat, and she and I had been praying for several days for the Lord to provide it for her. We praised the Lord together, then he took Cindi to the mall and let her pick out a coat at his expense.

This was the kind of relationship we've had with the Lord for nearly thirty years now...though we've all gone through some tunnels and valleys and rocky places where our faith dwindled down to a mere string. Thankfully, that string was the scarlet thread... the Blood of Jesus, holding us safe.

Now, since I've titled this chapter "Move to Nacogdoches", I'd best get back to the subject. We had already moved twice since that evening on the front porch with Harry offering to buy a coat. It had probably been two or three months since I'd refurbished a cheap little duplex with the help of my closest friend Mike, who was engaged to a beautiful girl named Becky. Mike had that decorator instinct, and would show up at the door bearing rolls of wallpaper, with orders to 'put this here, put that there', like a big brother, though I was old enough to be his mother.

It was on my knees at the prayer altar at church one night that I told Mike the Lord was telling me to move to Nacogdoches. "No!" he practically screamed the word. "You can not go! I need you here to pray with me and help me be strong! I can't make it without you!" But after he bowed his head and cried out to the Lord about it, he raised his head to me oh-so-slightly and whispered, "What does the word 'expedient' mean?" When I told him the word meant 'very necessary', he tearfully conceded that I had heard God, because the Lord had told him that it was expedient for me to go.

There had been visions and knowledge of a small house sitting at the front edge of a large patch of East Texas woods. It was an unpainted board-and-batten exterior, with nothing over the front door but a little 2'x4' shelter, and the 'porch' as I could see in the vision, was in need of repair. Though the Lord didn't show me the inside, I knew there was a fireplace. I knew the house sat on a slope within sight of the highway, but about the distance of a city block away from it. A driveway leading to the house was nothing more than a sandy lane... so deep in sand that I could literally feel it hot around my ankles as though I were walking barefoot in it. I knew there was a woman in her 60's just down the road who desperately needed to know that God loved and cared for her.

On this vision and the command from the Lord to move

to Nacogdoches, I left Cindi at her grandmother's and the boys with their dad, and took Kathleen with me because she wanted to go and visit friends there. She was 19 years old. I remember it was the month of April, because my new Reader's Digest had a fascinating article about natural foods that could be found growing in the wild. Good thing! It would help keep us from starving! I think the article was written by Euel Gibbons.

Kat and I were late getting the house emptied and the car loaded. We didn't arrive in Nacogdoches until around 3 a.m. She had not yet learned to drive, so she slept while I drove... but oh! I was tired, and very sleepy. "Thank goodness we're almost there!", I thought, as I drove past a sign reading "Nacogdoches ...10 miles". And it seemed that in the next blink of my eyes I was reading a sign that said "Nacogdoches.... 5 miles." Had I blacked out? How had I stayed on the road? My only reasonable conclusion was that an angel must have driven the car for me for about five miles as I slept. This startled me into staying awake to get into town and find a place to park the car ... and perhaps to sleep until daylight.

Kat had contacted her friends, who lived in a rural area outside the city... a place called "Shady Grove". The friends agreed that we could stay a few days with them, provided I didn't freak out over their smoking marijuana. Well, I said if they didn't freak out over my reading the Bible it would be okay and I'd be very grateful. God had healed all my allergies the night I first spoke in tongues, all except one.... Any time that I was anywhere near marijuana smoke or even the seeds or leaves of the dried plant, my left eye would itch and weep, and if I was around it very long, both eyes would swell until they looked like ping-pong balls! That was how I could know when my children had been indulging in that drug and could confront them with my knowledge. It helped. But it didn't do any good in Shady Grove!

We had a night's rest, freshened up, and then drove into

town to answer an ad about a Nurse Aide job in a nursing home. We were both hired on the spot, although Kat had no experience in this area. When asked for our address, I said that we had just arrived and had no money to rent a place. I know it helped that we expressed our faith in God and said that we were there on His leading. The owner was an elderly Pentecostal lady. The manager, who was the son of the owner, replied that we probably had noticed a white house on the corner just as we turned in to their driveway. As a matter of fact, we had noticed that it was for rent. He offered to let us move into it and pay him out of our salaries on payday. (Smooth leading, Lord!) It was an unfurnished house, but we had with us some weird little folding chairs that we thought were camel saddles but turned out to be East Indian labor chairs. They were comfortable, but had a large hole in the center. It was fun to watch young men jump out of them in alarm upon learning that they were originally made for birthing babies!

We also had a card table and some sort of sleeping pads, I can't remember just what. Before long we had more company than we knew what to do with! My older daughter Gayle and her husband Joe were living in Lufkin, not far away, and one day they arrived with their belongings... and a tiny baby raccoon Joe had 'rescued' from a falling tree. Kathleen had brought her mother cat... a calico with white feet and face, which we'd rescued from the street the previous Christmas. She named the cat "Blue" because she said it was just about the only color the animal didn't have on her. Kat has a penchant for naming animals, just as her mother does. There was, temporarily, a puppy she had named "Noah" because 'there was no dry land around him'. Soon, not because of the puddles he made, but because he had chewed a large chunk out of the pedestal of my lovely maple dining table, Noah went somewhere else to live.

Well sir... Blue just happened to be nursing kittens when the raccoon arrived, far too young to be without its mother. The raccoon was named "Rocky", though it turned out to be a

female. Three of Blue's kittens were snow white, the fourth was tortoise-shell... close in appearance to Rocky. A lady adopted the fourth kitten, and Kathleen artfully convinced Blue that this newcomer was one of her own. She loved and cared for that baby raccoon; fed it and litter-trained it along with her three white kittens!

If you can believe that... there's more. A friend named Jerry decided we needed a watchdog, and he just happened to have a female German Shepherd named Tamara that needed a home. Fortunately, Tamara was extremely gentle and intelligent, and she fell in love with that tiny raccoon, even to trying to mother it! In about a month we had a little chihuahua-sized harness on Rocky, and she rode in elegant dignity and safety holding onto Tamara's matching red harness. No other dog dared come near to get a closer look, because Tamara's bristles would rise and she'd give a ferocious growl.

I could write an entire chapter on our critters themselves, but enough is enough for now. I will say that Rocky had an affinity for peanut-butter crackers, and would come running anytime that treat was even mentioned. She became such a nuisance in months to come, plugging the sink or bathtub and turning on the water to play in, which would have been fine if she had ever learned to turn the water off! She slipped through a doorway one day while being baby-sat by Gayle's friend, and off she went into the wild to be what she was born to be.

In all the time we worked at the nursing home, we did not locate the house in my vision. We did, however, minister much healing, salvation and deliverance which was received by at least six patients at the nursing home. A paralyzed 72 yr. old black man with no family gradually rose from his bed and walked down the hallway on crutches as we gave him hope and encouragement. Two women were delivered from demonic possession and set free to live as normally as one can in a nursing home. A forty-six year old black man, also without family,

who'd been paralyzed from an injury learned to trust the Lord for healing, and we learned later that he'd been sent to a place where he could be rehabilitated. He had such a sweet spirit, and was so humble... Not an ounce of bitterness did he ever show. A few patients who had never known Jesus as their Savior came to love and accept Him, and when we went back later to visit them they'd all gone to be with Him. Six of them, to be exact.

My recollection of the months we spent there is shady... it's been a long time, but I remember that the children's father had brought the boys down to visit for Thanksgiving... along with an entire meal for me to prepare. The weather turned cold, so we heated the house with the oven turned on high and its door open. Oh! That electric bill must have been something... but we were never contacted about it. Maybe they thought it was caused by a short in some wiring. I do recall being told by the Lord on the first of the month... obviously December, to give notice that we'd be quitting our jobs and vacating the house on the 16th of that month. Well, He had told Kathleen the same thing, so we did just that, still not knowing what was next, or where this mysterious little house might be.

Around that time I had a dream as I slept on my little pad in a corner of the bedroom. In the dream there was some mention of a place called "Chireno", and I heard the Lord saying "Contact Daniel Hanes". I remember asking, "Is that H-a-y-n-e-s?".. and a hand seemed to push a leather Bible toward me with the named engraved in gold..."Daniel Hanes". Now, I have completely avoided using the man's real name here, and in case there really is a Daniel Hanes, please forgive me. There's no connection.

Sometimes we'd attend a little Charismatic meeting here and there. At one meeting, when it was ending, a man stood up and announced, "We need to form a circle of prayer and really

pray for Dan Hanes... he's going through a real hard time." When they finished praying, I hurried to the man who'd announced the need. I told him God had given me a dream and told me to contact Daniel Hanes, and wondered if he could tell me how to do that. Yeah...right! He saw me as a single 39 yr. old redhead in jeans and T-shirt, trying to find a man. No information, but he did say, "He's in the phone book, that's all I can say."

I didn't know the man had a wife and two small children. I knew absolutely nothing about him except his name, and that he had his name in gold on a Bible, maybe. At the nursing home, I used the pay phone in the hall to dial the number of Daniel Hanes. A friendly female voice answered; throwing all my confidence in tatters on the floor. "Uh...uh... Mrs. Hanes?" I stammered. "Yes?" "Mrs. Hanes, I don't quite know how to say this... but I had a dream telling me to contact a Daniel Hanes. Do you, uh, live in... Chireno, by any chance?" "Yes, we do," came the cheery reply... and "Are you a Christian?" to which I answered, "Yes...." "Spirit-filled?" to which I responded positively. And she said brightly, "Well, then, come on out to see us! We're used to this sort of thing!"

At another meeting, this time at a ranch house; I stood and sang a song, a cappella. The next day a young man named Johnny who'd been at the meeting appeared at our door, saying that he was greatly impressed with the song. I sensed this was not entirely his reason for coming... maybe it also had something to do with me having two attractive single daughters? But it was I that he talked to, mainly, and never came to the purpose of his visit. He'd go out the door to leave... I'd follow... we'd keep talking about dogs, or pets, or whatever... and he'd come back in because it was rainy and cold. We could never seem to stop doing this, until about the fifth time he came back in he said, "Okay, Lord! I give up! I'll tell this lady what you told me to tell her in the first place."

What the Lord had for him to tell us was that on Dec. 15th he was moving out of a really neat little house he was renting in Chireno, about 18 miles out of town. He did not know that we'd be looking for a home on that very day, and that we had no idea where we'd go, since we had not yet found the little board-and-batten house by the woods. The thing was, he explained, his landlady was such a nice lady, and he wanted to rent the house to someone nice, and he still had half a month's rent paid up, to which we were welcome, providing of course, that we were at all interested. The main thing was, the Lord told him to come to us about it!

Trying to keep my composure I said, "Well, tell us something about the house." "Like what?", he asked. "Well, like... is it painted on the outside?" "Well, no, Ma'am, but it looks nice, anyway." "Does it have a fireplace?" "Oh, yes, Ma'am, a really great fireplace!" "Are there a lot of trees nearby?" "Wow! Only 189 acres of trees!" We kept going. "Does it have a roof over the front door?" "Uh... not much, but it's big enough to keep you dry while you find your key.." "And the front porch needs a bit of repair, does it?", I asked, and he finally caught on. I knew as much about this place as he did, apparently. He was fascinated. "How much else do you know about it?"

"Well", I went on. "The mailbox is across the highway and about the distance of a city block from the house... and the driveway is so sandy that if you walk in it barefoot the sand comes up around your ankles.." "Yeah!", he was really amazed now... and when I told him about the elderly lady down the road, he said, "Now... that is my landlady. A really sweet lady... a retired teacher. But she has arthritis in her hands, real bad, and she's not feeling very good right now. Hey... if you move out there, be sure and tell her about how God can heal her..."

And that is how I came to live in the little house of the vision. Johnny himself helped us move out there. He took us

to visit with Dan and Sheri Hanes. Kat moved back to Shady Grove with her friends. Cindi came to live with me in Chireno, and the boys continued to live with their dad, who would bring them to visit occasionally. December through February, I think it was, Dan Hanes would drive up to my door just about every morning asking me to come and pray with him and his wife Sheri. Cindi was enrolled in the local high school and quite happy there. The Hanes' marriage was in trouble. Not from any lack of love. Not from any infidelity, but because God was putting them through a trial of their faith and commitment to Him. They had been quite wealthy and never wanted for anything... until they met some people who'd been baptized in the Holy Spirit and witnessed to them about how wonderful and how real it is. Their response was that if God would show them some "5th Avenue Charismatics", (rather than poor or less-than-upper class people who spoke in tongues) then they'd believe and receive.

Well, God showed them, and He baptized them in the Holy Spirit, and then He sent them, as it were, out into a type of wilderness for a season. Despite their appearance of affluence... a large new brick house, an expensive car, fine furniture, etc.... the Hanes' were going through a severe trial. You'd think I was the one suffering if you compared my two hastily handmade quilts with Sheri's \$300 bedspreads. My wardrobe consisted of blue jeans and T-shirts, mostly, while Sheri wore garments from Neiman-Marcus. Yes, they owned all these material things, but they had no income. I can't remember the fine details of how, once in a while, they managed to get money for meager amounts of food, but they did. I know that Dan's brother sometimes sent them money, so maybe that was it. It was, however, a very humbling experience for Sheri to have to chop up bits of inexpensive wieners to feed her toddler in lieu of baby food, and send her daughter to school in costly dresses she had obviously outgrown. In spite of appearances, they were no better off than I, except that in the Spring they could plant a garden.

Cindi's faith, coupled with my own, helped us get by. I remember when we were totally out of anything ... I mean our cupboard was as empty as Old Mother Hubbard's... Gayle dropped in unexpectedly with a bag of groceries. It contained a can of coffee, dried beans, margarine, fresh carrots, corn meal, potatoes and toilet tissue. It was a lifesaver. I could make a thin soup with the potatoes and carrots. Thanks to Euel Gibbons I could find wild onions in the yard, along with some tiny 'weeds' called cleavers that were said to contain more nutrients than even my favorite leafy green veggie... spinach! With these finds added to the soup, it really wasn't bad. I made fried cornbread with the meal and some water from the well. We were very careful not to waste any food, so I'd pour any leftovers into cornmeal mush that I cooked for Tamara when the dog food was all gone. Tamara loved it!

Unfortunately, the dog was pregnant after a quick escape through a window screen back at the white house in Nacogdoches, and a passionate encounter with a huge Rottweiler who'd been romancing her from outside. In February she gave birth to about nine puppies, all fat and healthy, and we had no trouble finding homes for them as soon as they were weaned, which would find us back in Texarkana.

Meanwhile, back at the Hanes', Dan and Sheri were having a terrible time. The Lord would give me Scripture passages to write down for them, Dan would pick me up in his Cadillac after Cindi had boarded the school bus, and we'd pray and talk for hours until there was nothing more to say, and Dan would deliver me back home. One of the last times I was in their home, I told Sheri that God had given me a vision. In it, I had seen her with the baby in her arms, and a suitcase in her hand. With the other hand she was leading her little girl, and holding plane tickets to her Father's home in another state. She was planning to leave Dan! Sheri screamed at her husband, "You told her!", but Dan had not told me, and we both calmly assured her of this. Then she asked me to pray for them.

We knelt there in their dining room, hands on one another's shoulders as I prayed a prayer that flowed from my lips supernaturally. It was not a prayer contrived in my own mind, and when it was finished Sheri said to me... "An angel gave you that prayer to pray. I didn't have my eyes closed, I was watching... and the most beautiful little angel you could imagine, just about four feet tall, was holding a scroll and reading the words of that prayer to you as you spoke it!" I couldn't deny that, even though I had not seen the angel. Sheri was not one to make up things like that. She made the decision to stay with Dan and trust God that things would eventually work out for the best, which of course they did.

I never mentioned to them that we were as near starving as they were, nor ever asked them for a penny. In February I was overdue with the rent money, which was \$75 a month; and nearly out of propane for cooking, which would require \$10. I needed to pay my electric bill, which was \$15. I had written a list on a scrap of paper, detailing my needs to the Lord. I had to have exactly \$100 to take care of these bills. My station wagon had already been repossessed by the car dealer from which I'd bought it. Hearing Dan's car in the front yard when I didn't expect him, I quickly turned the list over and poured myself a cup of coffee. I was not dressed to leave the house, still wrapped in my chenille robe, but I invited him in for coffee.

Sitting at my kitchen table, he seemed a bit tense. One hand remained in a fist as he used the other to hold his cup. After a while he said, "Becky, I want to ask you a question... I know you have expenses here and you have no job or any visible means of support... how do you pay your bills?" I said, "Funny you should ask.", and I turned over the list. I told him that I was depending upon the Lord to provide what I required... exactly one hundred dollars.

He seemed to have difficulty with his words... “Sheri and I received a check from my brother for \$1,000, and we asked the Lord how to tithe on it, since we’re not churchgoers right now”, and his left fist opened up. Five \$20 bills popped out on the table before me! “We thought the Lord said to give it to you, but I just wanted to be sure.”

With this petition answered, I wrote out checks for the propane and electric companies, and a deposit of \$25 to the bank, then went down to the highway to mail them. I’d planned to pay the rent next... but in the mailbox was a much unexpected letter from my father. He was living alone in Texarkana, ever the independent old Georgian, but his letter brought floods of tears to my eyes. He wrote, “Not doing well. Need help. Think I might wake up dead one of these mornings. Love, SHB” He never signed “Dad”; always his initials.

Cindi notified her dad that we needed to return to Texarkana, and he agreeably arrived with a trailer to hold our belongings we’d accumulated. I folded the rent money into an envelope and stuck it far in the back of the mailbox, trusting that the landlady would find it, but also notifying Johnny that it was there in case she didn’t.

My father was past 91 years old, and suffering greatly from lung cancer and kidney failure. He could not afford hospitalization and the doctor callously informed me that I “had to let go of him some time”. I tried to keep him comfortable, fed him as nutritiously as possible, and he did get stronger for a while, but I couldn’t keep him happy. My children still had to stay with their dad and grandmother because they made him nervous. He wanted the house cleaned, but grew angry if I made noise and woke him up, and didn’t want me making noise while he watched TV, which was almost constantly. One day I reacted to him in anger for the first time in my 39 years of life! He had risen from his chair and burst through the bedroom door brandishing his cane because I didn’t get off the phone when he told me to.

I dropped the phone and ran outside... and was thoroughly disgusted with myself for it. However, my dad weighed a muscular 197 lbs; still walked a mile a day for exercise, and was very strong in spite of his illness and age. I hadn't wanted to try to wrestle with him and that cane!

When I returned to his room he was lying on his bed, looking angry and still determined to rule. His steely blue eyes stared at the ceiling as I let loose my vehement words. "You hateful old man! It didn't hurt you for me to be on the phone with my daughter! You won't even let my children come and visit with me and I can't leave you! I'm sorry you're sick, but you're the most unforgiving old man I've ever known. Anyone in your life who has ever done you wrong is still on your list of grudges. You have no mercy! You asked me once to pray for you because you had no assurance of your salvation. Well, I'll tell you why!!!

You don't have any assurance of salvation because you're lost, dying and headed straight for hell! How can you ever expect God to forgive you if you won't forgive even one person on this earth you think has wronged you? Huh? You better learn to forgive, Daddy, or you are lost, lost, lost!" And with that I slammed his bedroom door, grabbed a change of clothing, and phoned a friend to ask if I could spend the weekend with her.

After reaching my friend's home, I then phoned my niece to tell her to come and look after her Granddaddy because I couldn't any longer. I never saw him alive after that. My niece had quickly put Daddy on a plane to stay with one of my sisters in another state, as he requested. She and her husband, a minister, managed to find a doctor who put him in a hospital and gave him relief from pain. My brother-in-law led him in forgiving those who'd wronged him and asking for forgiveness and salvation for himself. I wrote him a letter, apologizing for my fury, asking him to forgive me. I told him about a man I'd

met, named John, whom I would probably soon be marrying. After my sister read the letter to him, she tells me that he relaxed and looked at her and said, “Pray she’ll be happy”, and then... “I’m ready to go now, if I just knew how”.

Almost immediately his eyes closed, my sister told me... not in death, but in a 3-day coma in which he seemed to struggle and wrestle with all his might. Then, his eyes opened and focused on something he saw up toward the ceiling. Whatever it was, she said, made him smile the most beautiful smile! Was it Jesus? Angels? Or was it my mother, who had loved him with all her heart, ushering him into that heavenly realm? Whatever it was, with that smile he breathed his last breath. At his funeral, I leaned over to kiss that glory-touched, still-smiling face and say to him, “I’ll see you later, you little rascal.” That funeral held absolutely no sorrow for me, only gladness. My father was no longer lonely. No longer in pain. No longer bitter. No longer unforgiven... and no longer lost.

Chapter Five
MY FRIEND HARRY

God really did raise Harry from the dead, but few believed it. Even his friends laughed at Harry for his childlike belief that God talked to him. His testimony drew rude laughter one evening even in the Christian coffeehouse when he said, “You know... God takes such good care of me! I started out the door today with my shoes untied, and the Lord said, “Harry, stop and tie your shoes.”

I believed him. God has always talked to me, ever since I was three years old and invited Jesus to live in my heart. I asked the Lord if He really did tell Harry to stop and tie his shoes, and He answered, “Who else cares enough about him to keep him from tripping on his shoelaces and falling?”

It wasn't because Harry was Mexican that so few took him seriously, but it could have been his appearance; and his stature. He was only about 5 ft. 2”, with enormous brown eyes above a black walrus mustache. Dustin Hoffman could portray him very easily in a movie, with seventies style haircut and bell-bottom jeans. He was an Army veteran, but still childlike. Very sincere and very serious about his love for Jesus. When I first met him he carried a huge Bible around with him, and in his tattered jeans, flapping shirt and sandaled feet, he tried to go around telling druggies about a ‘new way to get high’... by letting Jesus make them new and filling them with Himself. Some believed and were born again.

Harry made me his confidante... told me that God was going to raise him from the dead. “He told me so, Becky! If you're ever around me and I die, just call our pastor and he will come and pray for me, and God will raise me up, I know He will!” He made me promise I'd do that. I hoped I'd never have to.

Sometimes he would phone and wake me from a sound

sleep at nine or ten in the morning, knowing I'd been at work all night at the hospital. "Let's just go for a ride", he'd plead, "and talk about Jesus". I drove my car this particular day. We stopped at an intersection where I'd had a startling vision and a very strange spiritual encounter just a few days earlier. It startled me when Harry abruptly asked the question. "Becky. Have you ever traveled in the Spirit?"

"Like how, Harry?" "Well, like you know you're in your body, but you're ministering to someone in some other place?"

A week earlier, I would have had to answer that I had not; but I now shared this experience with him. "Well... believe it or not, it was right here at this intersection, Harry, if this is what you're talking about. Just a few days ago. I was driving my car and no one was near me, but I began to hear a little child crying, like it was terrified... "Daddy, No! Daddy, No!", and I knew that it was not here, but somewhere in Kentucky or Tennessee." Harry bolted to attention! "Which was it? Kentucky or Tennessee?" to which I answered that I thought it was Tennessee, but I wasn't sure. "What did the child look like? How old was it?" I told him that I couldn't tell whether it was a girl or a boy, because it was wearing little shorts and a T-shirt, and had beautiful brown eyes and sort of wavy brown hair. I had a feeling it was a little boy. In fact, it looked a lot like Harry himself. "Well, what happened?" he demanded.

I said that the man he called "Daddy" was driving the car with one hand and reaching back trying to push this little child out the window from the back seat, and I stopped my car and prayed. "God! Show me what to do if this is real!" then I began to bind satan in the Name of Jesus and demand that he stop making the man do this. I demanded that the man be brought back to his senses. At that, the arm that had been pushing the child reached back and embraced him, and pulled him into the front seat beside him. "End of whatever that was", I said. Harry's large eyes were practically bulging, and his

face was white. “What color was this man’s arm?” “Well, it’s strange you would ask, because the child looked Mexican, sort of like you, and the man’s arm was freckled, with reddish hair on it.’

Then came the real shocker... Harry shouted, “Becky! That was my sister’s little boy! The man was her husband! He was on drugs, and the devil was making him be jealous of the baby and try to destroy him! You stopped him!” “In Tennessee?” I asked... trying to keep my lower jaw from falling off. “In Tennessee.” Harry nodded. We were in Texarkana, Texas, at the time.

In a year or so my friend Mike would take me on a trip to a recording studio near Ft. Smith, Arkansas. He suddenly pulled into Little Rock and wouldn’t explain where we were going until we reached a building where some men stood around cars, talking. One of the men had light red hair and freckles. Mike waved to him and pointed to me, and the man ran to greet me with great enthusiasm. I had no idea what was happening, but then he told me his name and hugged me half to death! You’re the lady who stopped me from killing my little boy!”, he shouted. “Harry told me! You saved my baby!”, and I knew I had met the man in the very strange encounter at the intersection. He was attending Teen Challenge and getting his life straight. He had given his life to the Lord and vowed to live for Him. I assured him that it was Jesus who had done the miracle... I only did what the Lord led me to do.

Even though Harry believed he was healed from all the damage drugs had done to his blood, he sometimes became ill and had to stay in the hospital for a few days. His immune system was practically non-existent. He lived in an apartment in back of the coffee house where we worshipped and sang almost every evening, and people prayed for one another. Love flowed in that place! Real, joyful, Godly love. We never wanted to leave when the evening was over.

On one occasion Harry's landlady had sprayed his apartment for roaches while he was away. He came home and smelled the strong fumes, but tried to sleep anyway and couldn't. Around 10 or 11 p.m. he phoned to tell me the fumes had made him sick, and ask me if I had a place where he could sleep that night. It just so happened that my boys were spending the weekend with their dad, and their room was not occupied. He could sleep in either of their beds. The room was downstairs, next to the kitchen. My bedroom was upstairs.

In the morning when I awoke, I wrapped myself in a chenille bathrobe and went downstairs. Remembering Harry's admonition to call the pastor if he died, I peeked through the panes of the French doors to see if he was breathing. Funny I'd do a thing like that. But Harry was not breathing. I was trained to observe sleeping patients at the hospital... to note the rise and fall of their chest; the color of their lips and skin. Harry's chest was deathly still. His lips were bluish and his skin colorless on the white pillowcase.

Walking slowly into the kitchen I said to the Lord... "Well, Harry said this might happen. I'll just trust You", and I picked up the phone to call his pastor. Several times I tried, and no one ever answered the phone. I prayed very calmly, "Lord, if You could raise him up with the pastor praying, You can raise him up with me praying, and I put him in Your hands. I believe You can do it. In Jesus' Name... Amen".

I made coffee, fried bacon for two, and was just about to crack the eggs in a pan when Harry appeared at the kitchen door. "Becky... sister... Sit down. I have something to tell you." "I'm frying eggs, Harry, I can take it standing up".

"Look at me, Becky, I'm serious! Sit down!" Setting the frying pan off the burner, I sat and listened as he told me of falling asleep and finding himself in this long, dark tunnel... hearing the sounds of rushing water, and of coming out of the tunnel into a blinding light! He felt so good there! No pain!

No worry! He knew He was in the Presence of Jesus, and he begged to stay, but the Lord told him, “No, my son... there is more for you to do. You must go back.” And in spite of his protests and pleading, he was ushered back into his body, and there he was telling me about it!

Who believed our report? Hardly anyone. That’s okay, Harry knew it; and I knew it. God is able, and He did it. Case closed. A couple of years later Harry insisted that I play the organ at his church wedding... even though I could only play in the key of C, badly, by ear, and didn’t know the entire melody of the Wedding March! Yes, he lived to marry and become the father of a beautiful little son, and finally, when that son was grown, Harry got to go all the way and be with Jesus. That’s what he wanted more than anything else.

Chapter Six

VISIONS

Visions from God have been nothing new to me since I first received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. They have led me down difficult paths at times. Not all were as quickly and easily fulfilled as the one I'm about to tell.

In Houston, Texas, in 1976 I was given a vision that was short and very clear. As I lay down for a nap after a day of teaching kindergarten, there appeared to me only the left side of a man's face. The face was red and beefy, as though the man consumed a lot of alcohol and lived a pretty rough life. I knew without asking that this man was called "Bob", and that he was fifty-six years old. I also knew that he needed desperately to know that God loved him. Not just 'loved everyone', but loved him... just the way he was.

Reaching sleepily for a piece of paper on which to sketch the half-face, I noted that the paper was a tract explaining God's unconditional love. "Good!" I said to myself. We then asked around the neighborhood and our church if anyone knew of a man named Bob who looked like this sketch. No one did. We had an appointment to minister at a downtown Houston rescue mission. Whoever was to minister also had the responsibility to bring food for the people who came in from the streets. I had turned two loaves of bread into plenty of tuna salad sandwiches and peanut-butter and banana sandwiches.

On our way there, where a tangle of freeways and ramps made it impossible to stop, I spotted Bob sitting alone on a rail beside an overpass. There was no doubt that it was him, with his red, puffy face and forlorn expression. In his hand he gripped a small brown paper bag that looked as though it held a bottle.

John knew how to maneuver around the off-ramps and return streets and back to where we could park our car and

walk to where Bob sat. Approaching him quietly so as not to alarm him, we smiled and said “Hello”. He tried to ignore us, but we told him we had something to tell him. “I’ve heard it all before”, he said. “I don’t think so...” I ventured. “God told me your name was Bob. Is that right?”

“Hell! Anybody can read that on my shirt!” he retorted, as he moved to reveal the name “Robert” embroidered over the pocket. He snorted in disgust as I told him God had sent us to tell him that He was loved and treasured by God and His Son Jesus Christ. “Yeah? What else did He tell ya?” he sneered. “He told me that you are fifty-six years old...” I began. “Hell! Anybody can make a pretty good guess just by lookin’ at me!” he interrupted.

“Okay”, I persisted. “He told me something else.” “Oh, yeah? Whatsat?”

His swollen red eyes filled with a sudden rush of tears as I told him that God told me that Bob really wanted to know if he was loved by God, just the way he was. “Oh, yeah! that’s what they all say. You religious nuts are all alike...” but he stopped his protest when I showed him the sketch of his own face on the tract in my hand. He snatched the tract from me and held it to his chest. After a moment of profound silence he looked up. “Where’d you git this?” he asked. I told him that God had given it to me in a vision and I had quickly drawn it on this piece of paper so I wouldn’t forget what he looked like. “He told me to tell you, Bob, that He does love you very much.”

The defense melted away as tears escaped his eyes in rivulets. “Okay... what now?” We explained that we didn’t know that we were going to see him today. We’d been looking for weeks, but on this particular night we were on our way to share food, song and good news at a nearby rescue mission. Humbly, Bob walked to our car and rode with us to the mission, where he was filled in many ways. We never saw him again,

but it wasn't us that he needed. He needed to know the God who loved him so much that he'd given him proof by having his picture drawn on that tract, bearing Bob's name and age.

Chapter Seven

TELL HER I SAID “FOLLOW ME”

The vision I saw with my eyes open or closed looked very much like a cosmetics ad, and had it not been so persistent I would not have believed God was showing me this beautiful young woman’s face for a very good reason. She had dark blue eyes; shoulder length brown hair, and bright red lipstick on a flawlessly beautiful face. A royal blue satin ribbon adorned her shining hair. What, Lord? Who is she? “Tell her I said, “Follow Me.” was all I heard from him... and then, “Matthew 6:26”.

I knew the verse by heart, but I looked it up to make sure. “Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (KJV) and in my copy of the NIV, “ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”.

This was the message. I knew what the recipient-to-be of the message looked like. Where was she? What was her name? As I fell into bed after a rigorous day as a kindergarten teacher and bus driver at a little Christian school near Houston, TX, I was prevented from sleep by another vision. Brilliant blue sky. Sparkling river. Red mountain cut in half to make way for a highway and a railroad. I reached for a pencil and paper to make a sketch of it, and then went to sleep. Later, I showed the sketch to John... the man I thought I was married to that I wrote about in the section called, “The Hard Part”. John was a bigamist, as I was yet to learn; a very charming and artfully deceptive companion. We married in May of 1975. Life seemed so wonderful! He was a good counselor and surrogate father to my children, who loved and trusted him.

By September of that same year we were installed as teachers in this wonderful little school. John taught second grade and also drove the school bus.

It was now May of 1976, and the end of the school year. He took one look at the sketch and declared without a second thought, "That's north of Durango! I know, because that's where I grew up!" We immediately prayed about these visions, and we asked the Lord if we could spend the summer in Durango. I know I heard Him say, "Go... with My blessing." We notified the school's owners that we were going. They protested strongly, somehow knowing we would not return. They argued that we were the best teachers they'd ever had and could not manage now without us. But we had heard God. I shopped at a nearby clothing store, picking out vacation wear for a summer in Colorado. A pretty pink T-shirt caught my eye, and without noticing anything in particular about the design on the front except that it was a train, I bought the shirt. Trying the things on later at home, I looked more closely at the cute little train and the depot beside the tracks. A sign over the door of the depot read "Durango".

My daughter Kathleen and I had known somehow in our hearts for two or three years that we were going to live in Colorado. I'd even bought a used station wagon to get us there, but the story of that will appear in another chapter. John and I had little money for traveling, and we wanted to be thrifty, so we found a bargain at a local store... small cans of pure honey for \$2 each. I think we bought about two dozen of them. We also stocked up on trail mix, a nutritious snack composed of shredded coconut, dried fruits, and nuts. It really was delicious. It seemed adventurous to live on these along with peanut butter, whole wheat bread and apples.

We still had plenty of money for gas to get from Houston to Durango... until we had radiator trouble in the town of Pueblo, Colorado. We had even spent one night in a motel after I kept

seeing this disturbing vision of a Disney-like rat with big tennis shoes and a raft oar, smoking a thing that looked like a marijuana cigarette. This rat was also wearing a life jacket. I told John that I must be suffering from fatigue to keep seeing such a thing and asked to rest for the night in a motel. The motel was in Raton, New Mexico. Raton is Spanish for “rat”.

As we pulled into Pueblo with a steaming radiator, the \$80.20 we had left was decimated by the \$77 repair bill. Fortunately, we had some gas left, used the remaining \$3.00 for more gas, and kept going until we reached Durango at 3 a.m. We had been on the road for three days, even trading some of our honey and trail mix for hamburgers and coffee, and except for that one night in Raton; sleeping in the back of the station wagon. Adventurous? Yes, until we pulled into the parking lot of what was then a Sambo’s Restaurant. I thought we’d just settle in and go to sleep, but no! John went in to spend our last two dimes for a cup of coffee! At three in the morning? Aauugh! I cried out to God to put some sense into this man! He had proven already to be one of the most exasperatingly stubborn men I’d ever known.

I curled up beneath the quilts as the car cooled more and more, and cried myself to sleep. Durango nights, even in June, are pretty cold! At daylight John came back to the car, grinning like a schoolboy! He brought me a styrofoam cup of coffee and said he’d been talking with a very nice young man named John M. I guess it’s best not to mention the last name without permission. I couldn’t have cared less, anyway. I was furious with him! But John went on to say that he had also talked with the manager of the restaurant and was hired to repaint the entire interior of the place. One of John’s talents was painting. He had many gifts. Another was the gift of deception, but we’ll let that go for now.

My contribution to the three days of painting was to re-letter all the words on the doors. Being an artist and familiar

with small brushwork, my efforts were satisfactory. At the end of the third day, we had almost \$300. John had found a free campsite just up the hill, run by a jolly group of rafters who called themselves the “River Rats”. On the front door of their establishment was the image I’d seen when I thought I was going nuts... the life-jacket-clad rat with the tennis shoes and oar... and the marijuana cigarette in his Disney-like hand. These men were very kind to us. We talked with them about Jesus, and even shared some of our provisions with them. They let us use their shower and park our station wagon beneath their juniper trees, where we slept. Eventually we gave them one of our dogs. I forgot to mention the flea-bitten puppies John had brought home on a wild impulse back in Houston. He named the male pup “Buster” after a dog he’d had as a child, and I named the female “Sanka” so she would ‘let me sleep’. These puppies were to figure in yet another ‘vision’ and a message to deliver.

As John cashed our paycheck from Sambo’s, he declared that I simply had to experience Silverton, and ride the little narrow gauge train that would take us there. To confirm this, that night in the station wagon as I lay on my pillow, I did indeed experience in a vision the entire trip on the little train from Durango to Silverton. I was astonished at the brilliantly colored beauty I was shown, and kept on exclaiming to John that this was unreal! It could not be so! But he assured me that it was all real... even the seven or more waterfalls and the masses of tall blue wild flowers.

In the vision I stood up in the train car to better view all the wondrous sights, and nearly got my nose taken off by a sheer rock cliff that jutted all too near the window of the train! I jerked my head back in alarm, even knowing this was only a vision. I seemed to smell the cinders and smoke, and that aroma was wondrous to me. The trip in the vision ended in a beautiful little mountain valley town from a hundred years earlier... populated by people from both the 1800’s and the current

year. And so, I went to sleep. In the morning I was awakened by the very real and nostalgic sound of the Denver and Rio Grande Western, wailing mournfully at the depot... and stirring within me an unexplainable flood of tears. I laughed, even as I cried, because the train whistle and the smell of the coal smoke brought back so many sweet memories of my childhood in Oklahoma... accompanying my daddy to the cotton gin beside the railroad track in Idabel, and hearing the train's clanging brass bell and mournful whistle, and the engine that puffed and clacked. It said to me..."CHOctaw County, CHOctaw County, CHOctaw County"... although Idabel was in McCurtain County. No matter, I was too young to know what a county was, anyway.

It was time to leave the warm quilts and pillows in the station wagon and dash to the shower rooms even amid still snow-laden surroundings. Time to get on the real train, where I experienced for the second time the glory of the Colorado paradise between Durango and Silverton... exactly as it had been in the vision, including the shock of being only inches away from that rock cliff as I leaned a bit too far out the window!

Stepping from the train, I became one of the people I'd seen in the vision, not dressed in period style, but in polyester slacks, and synthetic-leather shoes very inappropriate for the mountains. We were hungry, so we dropped into the nearest cafe and enjoyed, as much as the food, the music made by a toothless old man at a rinky-tink piano playing ragtime songs. Yet I still wanted something.... cherry pie ala mode! This restaurant did not serve that, but John suggested that we might find such at the Imperial Hotel next door. He'd been talking endlessly about this place, anyway. Memories from his childhood, but not only that. The young man named John M. that he'd talked to in Sambo's had kept remarking to him that we really should come to hear him and his sister in a play in which they acted and sang with other traveling young folks... in the dining room of the Imperial... where else?

Reluctantly I followed him into this place, thinking they'd better have some pie and ice cream or I wasn't staying! I was still in a bad mood over arriving in Durango and having John spend our last twenty cents on a cup of coffee at three in the morning! From the menu we selected hot cherry pie. It came with a huge scoop of vanilla ice cream... exceeding my highest expectations!

On a small stage nearby, we were entertained by a group of beautiful young people, one of whom was this John M. They were all dressed in Gay Nineties bathing suits and singing "By The Sea, By The Sea, By The Beautiful Sea" and when they finished, they all exited 'stage left'. After a while, the lighting changed. A most beautiful young woman with bright red lipstick and a royal blue ribbon in her hair appeared alone on the stage. I guess I ate my dessert, I'm not sure. I watched, unbelieving, as she stood there in her lovely blue dress, singing "Ten Cents a Dance". I grabbed John's arm and whispered, "John! That's her! What do I do now?" Since he had not seen the vision, I had to explain to him that the girl on the stage was the girl we had been sent to with the message from the Lord. He suggested we pray that the Lord would direct her to our table when the play was all over, coming off 'stage right' while the rest of the group exited 'stage left', which is exactly what happened after their last song was sung.

We had read, on the back of the menu, the names of the players in the cast. There was John M... and there was Jane M., his sister. She was the girl in the vision and the girl on the stage before us. Why should we be surprised? But my heart was in my mouth as the girl wandered uncertainly off the stage, right toward our table as the others disappeared from sight. I had written on a napkin... Jesus said "Follow Me", and the reference to Matthew 6:26.

"Jane...?", I could barely speak, my heart was pounding so! "Oh, Hi! Do I know you?" she smiled. "Well, no, but

we know you... sort of..” and I asked her to sit down, which she did. I told her that God had sent us all the way from Houston, Texas to deliver this message to her without even telling us where she was. I told her that He had brought us to this place and time just to give her these words. As she read the words she recognized the Scripture reference and said that God had been dealing with her along these lines, but she’d been afraid. This message was her answer! God would take care of them as they obeyed Him! She and her brother John were working their way through college... I remember she mentioned Chinle, Arizona. Her brother John believed they should concentrate on doing Christian musicals rather than the secular plays they were doing. Jane had feared that the work John chose would not bring in enough money for their college studies.

She thanked us very sweetly for bringing the message to her, and I guess she kept the napkin on which I had written it. We never saw her again, although we spent a few hours shopping and doing the ‘tourist thing’ around the pretty little town.

Arriving back in Durango we learned that we’d had a phone message from my youngest daughter, Cindi, who’d been seeing the young preacher named Tommy, to whom we had introduced her. They’d been dating for three months or so and had decided to get married that very week, and wanted us to be there for this occasion. No matter that we’d tried to get them to do this very thing while we were still in Houston! I had even made her wedding dress from some lovely homespun cloth she’d spied at a flea market on Westheimer St. in Houston. We gladly packed up our little bit of belongings and drove 17 hours straight, or was it 21? to reach Houston the day before the wedding!

She was beautiful! Tommy was overcome, as he’d been the first time he laid eyes on her. He and Cindi knelt at a small candle-lit altar for prayer, and her lovely veil caught fire from

a candle. Tommy wasted no time in beating out the flames with his hands, then kissed his bride, to the sound of suppressed giggles and happy sniffing. As I write this, Cindi and Tom look forward to their 24th anniversary in June of 2000, their bustling, loving household happily crowded with five sons and one daughter, ages 22 down to 3 years.

As for the puppies; why John brought those dirty little pups home was a mystery... and a frustration, to me! He said he had stopped at a garage sale and this lady was giving away puppies. She told him that a beagle had entered her yard, mated with her registered Spitz female dog... resulting in these pitiful pups. One was solid white like his mother; the other had sort of orange-colored spots. At first sight, though, they were just grayish brown and ugly; covered with grass and all sorts of filth.

Dogs were not allowed inside the little trailer we lived in, and John knew that! I spread newspapers in the bathtub. The stench of the filthy little dogs was unbearable! I had nothing to deodorize them with, but I did have a bottle of peppermint oil. Maybe that would overcome the smell so I could bear to clean them up! I rubbed a few drops on the back of each of the puppies, and what happened then was a revelation. Both ticks and fleas began to eject themselves from these pups as fast as they could! The fleas fell over dead or dying. The ticks climbed frantically up the walls of the shower! I removed both papers and puppies, washed the ticks and fleas down the drain, and filled the bathtub about 3 inches deep with warm water and dish detergent. The rest of the insects floated to the surface. I kept rubbing the puppies and making sure they were pest-free before rinsing them and cuddling them in a towel.

Awww.... they were so grateful! Happily licking my hands and wagging their tiny tails they melted my determination to reject them. As John had anticipated, they became a part of our entourage. Buster and Sanka. Little could I have guessed they'd become fuzzy and adorable missionaries!

The wedding over, with Cindi happily settling into Tommy's apartment as his wife, Kathleen opted to join us in Colorado. Now there were three of us sleeping in the back of the station wagon, with me in the middle.

We returned to the River Rats Campground, paying \$2. a night now for the privilege of parking our vehicle and using the showers. The pups made themselves at home there and quickly made friends. Kat soon found a job in Durango... or should I say, a procession of jobs. Thanks to her efforts, we didn't starve. She worked in a local restaurant for a while, and also for an artisan who taught her the craft of silver jewelry-making. The three of us made use of a wonderful little hand-powered mechanical saw John had been manufacturing and selling. He taught us to make marvelous little planters, wooden birds, chipmunks, and other unique decorations from pieces of wood we scavenged along the way. We parted with these quite reluctantly in exchange for money to buy food and gas. I made crocheted ski caps and scarves and sold them to a lady in a gift shop. It would not be the last time we would visit the River Rats.

The pups, now about three months old, were the cutest bits of fluff and energy you could imagine, but also a bit of a nuisance when we had to make stops to let them out for a while. Buster looked every bit of his Spitz heritage, and so did Sanka except for the pretty orange spots she inherited from her beagle sire. They usually drew an admiring crowd wherever we went. But our real reason for being back in Colorado was not for a vacation, though we loved it.

Even before I'd met John, the Lord had given me a vision of mountains, with rocks scattered in pastures where something looked like grazing sheep. I heard Him say, "Outback", and immediately jumped to the conclusion that He would someday send me to Australia...until I came across a National Geographic magazine with the words on the cover... "Sangre de Cristo... the outback of America". The accompanying photos

indeed looked similar to pictures I'd seen or imagined of Australia, but there it was. American Outback! Sangre de Cristo happened to be the name of the mountain range in this particular part of the Rockies, where we 'just happened' to be!

He had also impressed me with "San Cristobal", for which I searched in atlases and maps of the entire world. I can't remember how I knew that the one I was to find was near Colorado, but of course, there it was. A tiny spot on the map, up near Taos. A vision God had given me of San Cristobal showed a narrow opening off the main road, where the dirt road was thick with dust and deeply carved into ruts, with weeds growing on both sides of this road. There was a chapel. A bell tower. Small adobe houses lined the field, almost every one with a fence made of sticks surrounding the yard, and a rough, weathered wooden cross in each yard.

It was difficult to convince John that I simply had to find this place. He complained that Taos was too far up the mountain and he didn't think the station wagon would make it, etc. etc. But months later, as I persisted in asking local people about San Cristobal, one aged man and his son told us exactly how to find it. He directed us to an old highway, and told us to watch closely on the right side for a narrow opening in the fence where there was a dusty little road. He said he didn't know of any children up there, nor why anyone would want to go there, but that was San Cristobal. He told us that a lady named Olga was the caretaker for the chapel.

Olga answered our knock on her door with great friendliness! It was as though she'd been expecting company. She invited us in for tea and cookies and slices of fresh orange; and in her broken English, quizzed us about our purpose for being there. We told her of our quest to find the place where the children played on a hillside. By that time we had traded off the old station wagon and bought a 1971 red Volkswagen bus with a bed in the back. For running water we could press

a little pump connected to a water jug beneath the sink. Sometimes we kept fruit and sandwiches in a little cooler there. This at least looked more respectable than the battered old white station wagon with blue window curtains!

We asked to visit the chapel, and perhaps meet the priest. She said the priest did not live in the village, and the chapel was locked, but she kept a key. There had been no need to lock it, she explained, until someone came in one night and stole all their santos. We entered a sanctuary that felt something like the Holy of Holies. We recognized the awesome presence of God in that place. Bare and immaculately dust-free; handmade wooden benches stood in neat rows. An altar was covered with an intricately handmade lace cloth. On each side of the wall were empty built-in shelves where their santos, or images of the saints, had stood. Olga waved away our sympathetic looks with her hand. “It does not matter that they took our santos”, she laughed. “They could not take away our Lord!”

We again entered Olga’s home and talked with her for a while. She wanted to know why non-Catholics did not honor Mary, the mother of God. Being tactful was very important. I stood on my knees before this diminutive Spanish woman whom I knew to be my sister in the Lord. At eye-to-eye level with her, I began to explain that Mary was God’s servant, as were we, and only an instrument of His will and His plan. She did not come to be worshipped, but to bring forth God’s only begotten Son. She was married to Joseph and became the mother of several more children, therefore was no longer a virgin, as some Catholics insist she was. Her divine role was to bring forth the Son of God. Olga seemed to accept this, that we loved Mary for what she did, but that we didn’t believe she herself was divine.

Leaving her house we marveled at the accuracy of the vision. We had seen the adobe houses with wooden crosses in the yards, and had asked Olga about their significance. She

replied that she didn't know, and said she had never taken particular notice of them. She informed us that the little stick fences were made of 'latillas'. We proceeded on to the curve, where we had to stop for a moment as a man had backed his vehicle into the road and was urging his son to hurry or they'd be late. The man asked if he could help us, and we said we were interested in seeing the place where the children and animals were. I explained to him that I had seen them in a vision and God had directed us to San Cristobal.

He, like Olga, had questions. His little son, who was eight years old, came out of the house and stood listening as we tried to satisfy his father's curiosity. The man was not exactly rude, but definitely critical of our mission. We spoke of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and how He had sent us out to this place. He cut off the conversation abruptly with the words, "I am Jewish." As we drove away he gave his son a little hug, and he sighed at the boy's question... "Dad, who is Jesus Christ?"

As for the children... the place where they lived was just a few hundred feet ahead. We used the heavy brass knocker on an ornate wooden door. I seem to remember that the outer walls were covered with ivy. Our knock was answered by a very pleasant, dark-haired teenage girl who introduced herself as "Cecilia". She was well-trained in greeting guests, and called upstairs to inform the houseparents of our presence. She guided us up a wooden staircase and introduced us to a couple who were at once cordial and suspicious. The woman told Cecilia to bring us refreshments, even though we protested that we'd just had tea and cookies with Olga. Within minutes, Cecilia appeared with steaming mugs of mocha, and homemade rolls buttery and warm from the oven, topped with honey and cinnamon. She said she had made them herself. We wondered why, in this remote location, were people so prepared for guests?

Upon hearing of our vision, the lady and her husband said that perhaps we were mistaken. Yes, children were usually around, and yes, they played on the hills with ducks, chickens, geese and goats and an assortment of small animals, but they were not there that day. They gave us the name of some acquaintances of theirs and suggested that perhaps we'd like to visit them instead, but all I felt compelled to do was tell them that Jesus loved them... very much. I told them of His saving and delivering power that was available if they called upon His Name and followed Him. They were not interested, and as Cecilia showed us to the door, she herself apologized and was very kind to us and our purpose. Years later, just before John exited my life, we heard of this couple once more, living down in the city of Taos, not far from where we lived in a borrowed trailer house... and it was rumored that they were cocaine addicts, very thin and frail, and that their faces were very drawn and hopeless looking, with dark, dark circles beneath their eyes. I felt no need to go near them.

There had been a small vision...or should I say a very brief one... of some people fishing in a small pond somewhere in Colorado. It seemed urgent to me that we find where this was, and John got tired of my persistence. Probably my imagination, he protested. But as we drove along a mountain road following signs advertising a garage sale (he was addicted to garage sales) there was a woman and some other people near a small pond to the left of the road. They were fishing. I convinced John to stop and let the puppies out on the grass at the right side of the road, and as she spied these adorable fluffballs, the woman stopped fishing. She dropped her rod and reel and ran over to our car. She was obviously drunk, and overly friendly. She was so excited over seeing the puppies, and insisted that I come with her to her cabin where her husband and some friends could see the sweet little things.

Seeing there was no putting her off, we shrugged and followed her as she carried both puppies in her arms. We

were ushered into a cabin filled with cigarette smoke and alcohol fumes. People were sitting there playing cards and drinking, and were far gone enough to not feel a need to be polite. I think the lady's name was Gracie... I'll let that suffice. Her husband asked us where we were from and what we did. We told him we were going wherever God led us and telling people about salvation through Jesus Christ. Loud guffaws met this response, and the man said we were out of our minds to think there was a God who cared about such as he. An amazing thing happened at that point. Gracie leapt from her seat and reprimanded her husband for being so rude, and told him with the voice of authority that there certainly is a God, and that she used to know Him. She began to cry as she lifted a Gideon Bible from a bedside table and opened it. She read from it, lifting her voice with passion, and preached salvation and God's love to the three lost people in the cabin!

We didn't have to say a word. As the people in the room gave her their attention, she continued to declare to them the Word of God and His love. I gave her a hug, silently picked up the puppies, and tiptoed away with a prayer in my heart for Gracie and her captive audience. Had it not been for those cute little puppies, this might not have happened. What do you think? We kept them with us for several months more. It's hard to remember, because this all happened so long ago. I had it all written down in a journal, but when John finally went berserk in Taos under the pressure of my insistence that he make our marriage right, I became angry with God and tore up the journal. In my fury and helplessness, I told Him not to torment me anymore with dreams and visions because they had led me to being abandoned in Taos, shamed in this bigamous situation. God had not abandoned me, even though in months to come I would question whether He was a figment of man's imagination and not even real... even after all He had shown me!

By the way, we went on to locate the house at the top of

a mountain via a dusty and rutted road. I need to say at this point that one of the visions I'd seen months earlier made me feel as though I were actually flying over acres and acres of dandelions in bloom! I wasn't expecting to see it fulfilled that day, because there were no planes around. The friendly people in the house explained that the garage sale had been the day before, but welcomed us in to rest and share their eagle's eye view of the surrounding mountains and skies. I picked up an old pair of military binoculars to look through, but they were very heavy, and even as I held them to my eyes they pointed downward toward the valley... toward acres and acres of dandelions... just as though I were flying in the air above them!

Chapter Eight

LITTLE BLUE FLYING CAR

It was in Taos, New Mexico, on the steep, winding road to Angelfire, in 1982. Being September, no one was up there skiing, of course. My friend Susan had just handed her car keys to our friend Joe and told him to take me for a ride to settle my nerves. What a ride!

Of course I had known for years that I was married to someone who was still married to his first wife. I kept hoping against hope that he would keep his word to me that she did not want him back and he would certainly get the divorce and make our union legal. Denial comes in real handy sometimes when you really don't want to face something. I also learned that he had a petite and pretty girlfriend in California with whom he kept regular contact and sometimes met for an afternoon tryst in a nearby, out-of-town motel. How would this sound if the facts got out to the churches we'd worked in, and the people to whom God sent us with messages?

As it turned out, most of them... and even my family... chose to believe John over me when I told them the truth. He might have even brought Joe home from his aimless wandering to be our guest with this in mind. Sort of a trick of transference of affections? I'll never know. Joe was kind, appreciative of being included in our meals of pinto beans, potatoes and cornbread. The monotony didn't bother him. John remembered regularly to bring Joe a package or two of his favorite pipe tobacco. Susan allowed Joe to live in her vacant camper trailer not far on the other side of her mobile home.

Joe loved to talk! He liked to quiz us about our belief in Jesus. He himself said he was a "contemplative Catholic"... meaning that he didn't attend any church but liked to argue about the difference in religious doctrine. It was friendly

argumentation. “Conjecture”, I called it, but I enjoyed it because I could tell him about my personal relationship with Jesus and hope that he, too, would find such a relationship with Him. Sometimes our talking lasted long into the night, and John began to go to bed earlier and earlier, sometimes sullenly.

Then came the night of our school’s Parent/Teacher meeting. Susan and her little girl were ready. I was ready. All John needed to do was get up from where he was napping and comb his hair... but he was sullen and wouldn’t even respond to me. Finally, to all my urging and calling, he replied, “I am not going.” We had gone through a lot of arguing that day about his procrastination about making our marriage legal. I had told him that I could not go on with this farce any longer and that he had to do something. In fact, three days earlier, on Monday evening, God had spoken to me that on Thursday evening John would go berserk and leave me. He said it would be frightening but I would not be hurt. I knew it was the Lord who said that, and I shared it with my daughter Kathleen; with Susan, and with Joe. No one believed good ol’ John would do such a thing! It must be my imagination!

True to what the Lord had said, it happened. Susan was getting impatient to have us there on time. I told her John was pouting and wouldn’t go. She said, “Come get in my car and we’ll go without him.” I picked up my purse and sweater, called a ‘Bye, then”, to John and got in Susan’s battered little blue Opel. Before I could close the car window, John was out of our little trailer in a flash, his eyes wild and flickering. He had definitely gone berserk. He yelled and demanded that I get out of the car. He said I had to go with him. I asked, “To where?”, and he answered that we were leaving this place, that I was his wife and he was taking me with him. He held the rusty blade of an old saw to my throat.

He had reached his arm into the car and grabbed my purse straps, but they were wrapped around my arm. I couldn’t

get loose, and he couldn't take the purse. John was yelling, Susan was trying to help, but what could she do? Out of the corner of my left eye I saw movement beyond Susan's mobile home. It was Joe, headed out to the arroyo for a walk. "Joe!" I screamed as loud as I could. "Joe! Help! John's gone crazy and he's going to hurt me!" Well, Joe didn't get in a big hurry. He just removed his pipe from his mouth, and holding it in his hand, sauntered up to John and offered, "Hey, Buddy. Got a problem? Wanna talk about it?" With this, John panicked more. He was very much afraid of this man who worked out with homemade weights every day to keep his boxer/wrestler build. Letting go of the purse-straps, and loosing my arm, John ran away. None of us saw the purse go flying out into the darkened yard. I assumed that John had it.

Susan, still at the wheel of her car with the motor running, yelled, "Hang on, Becky!" We took off across the sagebrush-covered high desert land, bouncing and careening here and there until we came to a part of the road where we could enter. She took me straight to the school, where the pastor was waiting to start the meeting. I found him and explained what had happened. Instead of believing me, he became angry. He told Susan to take me to his home until the meeting was over, and leave me with his teenage daughter. He would deal with me "as a pastor should", when he got home. Susan hadn't had time to leave me there before the daughter urged us to get out of there as fast as we could. She told us that her father might beat me, because that was how he disciplined her mother, his wife.

We drove back to Susan's home and found that John had left in a hurry, taking my cat with him. It was just a stray that had taken refuge with us, but he knew I was fond of it. That didn't matter so much, but I thought I had lost my purse with all the cash I owned, which wasn't much. By next morning's light, Joe had spotted something laying in the driveway near my trailer... my purse! John had certainly not

seen it fly from my arm when Joe frightened him away, or he would most definitely have taken it with him.

Thinking I had no money at all, Susan and Joe pooled some of theirs and decided I should stay in a motel in town in case John came back. Alone at last, I cried myself to sleep, if indeed I slept, and dreaded leaving that safe harbor to go back to reality. Someone said they'd seen John's car on the way to Farmington, New Mexico. Assuming that I was now safe, I stayed at the trailer the next day... but a few hours later a Police car arrived, led by John in our old Buick. The two policemen believed whatever John had told them also, even though he directed remarks toward them that anyone who tried to help me could be badly hurt. They stood by, armed and ready, as he ransacked our belongings and packed everything he could into his car. Even my box of paints and sketch books, even the handmade set of cobalt bowls he'd bought for my birthday. Some of my clothes were missing from the closet when he left. I knew from experience that he would sell these things to support himself as he wandered from state to state, evading anyone who might search for him. I let him take them... anything and everything he wanted, just to have him out of my life!

There were lots of mixed feelings, and among them was immense relief. The years of worrying about being discovered in this embarrassing situation had ended. I had reveled in the faithfulness of God to lead us and use in His work, giving me dreams and visions and leading us to their fulfillment. I had kept a daily journal of all His wonderful works in our lives, up to the night He told me John would go berserk and leave. But I felt that my life had now ended. Here I was in this bare desert, no way of getting a job, no way of going home to my children, no way to hold up my head.

By the time John and the policemen finally left, I was shaking with indignation and shock. Susan watched me with concern. Joe merely stood by, puffing on his pipe, in case I needed help.

I won't deny I felt something for Joe, but a lot of it was pure compassion. Here was a healthy, strapping man who could do most anything... if only he could see. He wore a black leather patch over one eye, but never told anyone that the eye was found to be newly missing when he was handed over to his parents at birth. No one knew why there was a small puddle of fresh blood where the eye should have been. Yes, he had one sighted eye, but he told no one that his vision was very faulty in that eye and he needed glasses. Susan and I both spoke to him about God's healing power, and how He could restore sight to Joe, but he only waved us away, saying that he didn't believe in such stuff.

I only learned the sad details of his near sightlessness when we visited his mother in his hometown about a year later. I learned some results of his problem just following the encounter with John and the policemen when Susan told him to take me for a drive in the mountains. Neither Susan nor I were aware that Joe had never driven a car and knew nothing of how to do so! He managed to put it in drive and find the mountain road to Angelfire as Susan directed, and did fairly well until we got there. It had rained some, but at that time it was just misty, and I know you'll think I'm lying or imagining things when I tell you that the rainbow that was the largest I could imagine... ended in the front seat of the car we were in. I saw it's colors on Joe's face. He saw them on mine. The entire front seat of that car shone with the beautiful lavender, coral, yellow and lime hues of the end of a rainbow! Although we couldn't feel it, we were touching it with our hands.

I was ecstatic! Joe was trying to act unimpressed... or maybe he was worried because he didn't know how to put the car in reverse and turn it around. He got angry when I tried to tell him how... and finally when he figured it out by himself we headed back down the mountain on that narrow, winding, cliff-lined road. Actually only one side of it was cliff-lined; the other side had a beautiful view of the tops of tall pines and

spruces....just their tops. I knew Joe was driving too fast. The speedometer read nearly 45 miles an hour, and the signs posted all along the road allowed only about half that speed, or less. Joe was already disgruntled from his embarrassment with the turning, so I kept quiet and prayed. I knew from past experience not to argue with an angry man while he's driving the car you're riding in!

Had it not been for a small pile of stones at the foot of the cliff beside the road... if Joe had not over-corrected when he hit it.... we might have made it just fine. But the stones threw the car out of control, and Joe turned the wheel far to the left. Out we sailed over those treetops! The next day the man who drove the wrecker to bring it up reported that it had gone out forty feet over the treetops, and then descended about 50 feet to the ground.

It's amazing how fast one can think in a few seconds! I did not mind dying. I'd been so near it several times I no longer feared death. To my thinking, I was with a friend, and if this was how God wanted to take me out I was ready. Calm a baby in a cradle... until we hit bottom, having been gently aided in our descent by the branches of the thick forest of evergreens. Even then I didn't panic... I just needed to relieve myself pretty urgently!

Joe had not panicked, either. What did life mean to him, a vagrant who'd left his loved ones behind long ago and felt he meant nothing to them anymore? He looked at me as I looked at him and we both asked simultaneously, "Are you okay?" Obviously we were fine, except that my right thigh had a bruise from the door handle I was leaning on. The poor little blue Opel, however, sat just inches from a large Ponderosa pine by the driver side door, and about three feet from a mountain creek in the front. I managed to open the door on my side and we crawled out, each running to hide behind a bush for a few minutes. Thus relieved, we scrambled up the steep

mountainside and found the road. We didn't know it at the time, but we were eight miles from the upper edge of Taos.

It was still daylight when we began walking. Still wearing what I had put on for the PTA meeting the night before, I was dressed like any respectable kindergarten teacher. I wore cork-soled, wedge-heeled sandals without backs. Very comfortable. Not so comfortable two hours later when the sides began to tear apart from the constant down-hill walking. The rest of the trip... without shoes, wore my hose down to nothing but a big hole on the ball of my foot, soon replaced by blisters of the same size. Occasionally, a car would drive past us, and we'd wave frantically to them for help, but no one stopped. Another storm was brewing; it's booming thunder and flashes of lightning seeming to follow us as we walked down the mountain in the now darkened wilderness.

After walking those eight miles, mostly in the dark; our relief and joy were unspeakable when we spied the lights of an open fast-food store just yards away! We ran as best we could, to find only a teenage boy sweeping up just prior to closing the store. He was there alone, and I know we were a frightening sight, but we managed to convince him that we meant no harm; we just desperately needed to use the phone to call for help. It was eleven o'clock at night. We had left with Susan's car that afternoon around 3. Within a half hour of our distress call, Susan and her teenage son had come to our rescue in their truck. Oh! The rejoicing that God had spared our lives! Even spared us from the storm, because the very second we stepped inside the fast-food store; the storm broke loose with a vengeance. As we waited, I inspected the blisters on my poor feet, covering an area about two by three inches on each foot. Miraculously, by the next morning, the blisters were entirely healed.

I was alternately thankful to God, and bitter. For too long, the bitterness won out. I tore up the journal I had handwritten so carefully that had detailed all our miracles,

dreams and visions from the day John and I left Houston to arrive at Silverton six years earlier. I made a fire of dead wood and dry grass there on that land the next day, and tried to burn the pages, but the fierce mountain winds whipped them away and scattered them to God knows where. No matter, they are engraved in my memory, and refreshed now by the Holy Spirit who is inspiring me to write about them.

The following night, Susan and Joe made a celebration dinner, thankful that we had been saved out of that nightmare even though her little car was totaled. After dinner, Susan brought out a bottle of Scotch whiskey she saved for special occasions. I am not a drinker and had never tasted Scotch, but I figured that after swallowing some bitter quinine medicine for years as a child recovering from malaria, I could swallow anything. I did. I downed two glasses of Scotch on the rocks. Susan sent her children to bed, and she too, fell asleep while lying down with her little daughter. Joe and I were left alone there in her kitchen.

We went to his camper. The inevitable happened, beginning a five-year relationship that could have brought the death of me, but instead woke me up and grew me up. It ended with my having left him, reconciled, and back and forth until I had completed 2 1/2 years of college that began by my finding refuge in a crisis shelter in Pueblo, Colorado. I will forever be grateful to the women who worked in that crisis shelter, and to those who supported it. I had hit bottom ... and there my feet found a solid place where I could push myself to the top! I was a college sophomore going to summer classes on my 50th birthday! What fun! There's a lot of frustration in going to college, too... but it helped teach me to face reality. I highly recommend it for anyone of any age.

I majored in Speech Communication, worked hard at losing my Texarkana 'twang', only to be brought back to Texarkana to marry this "country boy" whose speech would

make a Speech professor do a back flip! That's okay. He's genuine. I wouldn't change him for the world. When he can't understand something I've said, I just 'translate' it into what we call "Lost Prairie-ese" for him. Lost Prairie is the place where he grew up, just south of Texarkana, on his father's farm. He also grew up in the city, for when the crops were laid by and school began, they lived in a little house in town where his mother loved to be near her clubs and friends. I joke that he knows every other person in town, and its almost true! He didn't have the life of wandering and moving and never having a place to truly call 'home', the way I did, but he does love to travel. We believe that someday the Lord will have us traveling together, telling folks about our King, Jesus, and how to enter into His Kingdom. And maybe I'll tell them about the little blue car that flew.

DADDY, ARE WE THERE YET?

Tell me, if you've ever traveled with a child having the capability of speech, how many times you've heard the question. "Are we there yet?" And if someday, before God's throne we're going to be called to account for all our words, I wonder how many times I'll be faced with having asked God that same question.

In all my fallibility, I still want to arrive 'there'. I keep hoping I'll get 'there' soon! I'm not talking about the end of my journey; it's the wanting to know that I have, if not 'arrived', at least accomplished something to fulfill His purpose for my life! Life was so simple back in those days as a little girl who had invited Jesus into her heart, much as a toddler would 'vite' a friend to a birthday party. I suppose I was 'there', then. I just knew that Jesus loved me and wanted to live within me, and I gave Him free reign to do so.

I knew nothing of Scripture except that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And I learned, of course, that Jesus wept... but I didn't know that it was because of the unbelief of His closest friends, who called Him "Lord" but didn't realize that He indeed was God, and that nothing was impossible to Him.

Now I know Him ever so much better! I know that He has guided me in green pastures and beside still waters all my life. He has snatched me from the perils of my own unfortunate choices, and filled me with His Spirit. Countless blessings and miracles have been mine... and yet sometimes I keep asking Him, "Daddy, am I 'there', yet?"

It's my belief that God put certain giftings in me when still in my mother's womb and that it's His intention for me to

use those gifts and multiply them for His purpose. Perhaps this is why my older sisters taught me to read and write at a very early age. I love words, and the things that can be done with them for the good. Yes, I realize that words can also do worlds of damage, and I've been guilty of that myself. The Bible says, in James 3:5 "...the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"

It's the desire of my heart to kindle good fires, not destructive ones! And I desire strongly to use my gifts for exactly that... but sometimes I get the heart before the course, so to speak. I forget that I'm "there" every day that my heart is in accord with my Creator's heart. I forget that "there" is the condition of being in love with Him and trusting Him day by day; and He has to remind me of that. "There" is being covered by the Blood of my Savior who died for me on the cross, and resting in that.

So, sometimes when I get 'religious' and start to push myself to accomplish some great thing, I am reminded of the story of two of Jesus' closest friends, Mary and Martha. Martha, as you doubtless know, was concerned with being efficient and accomplishing something. Her sister Mary was simply so enthralled with her Friend and what He could teach her, that she ignored her sister's pleas for help in the kitchen and remained at Jesus' feet. Jesus scolded Martha for her busyness and told her that Mary had chosen the best thing to do. He knew them well, and loved both of them, as well as their brother Lazarus.

And this is why He wept... they should have known that He didn't have to be present in body when their brother died. He was there when it counted. He knew the power of God to raise Lazarus from the dead. And that's how I want to be "there"... to be constantly aware of who Jesus is and that nothing is impossible to Him, and as He said... to them that believe. "Daddy... are we there yet?", and our Abba Father

says to us, “You are “there” when you live in awareness of who I AM, and when you give yourself... your love, your trust, your praise, and the control of your life... to Me”.

Don't worry about projects you can't finish. We aren't promised that there will be a tomorrow. Don't give yourself high blood pressure trying to be something you can't quite attain. Don't kill yourself trying to get “there”. Just be “there” by living one day at a time in full trust and obedience to Him. As long as we remember to do that, there's no need to ask “Daddy, are we there yet?” It's interesting to look back at those days when I simply trusted that Jesus loved me and would answer my questions simply because I learned to listen for His voice. I was “there” and didn't even know what the term meant!

Where is “there”? I believe that it is “in His Kingdom”. Read Mark 10:14 and 15, and tell me if you do not agree. “...Let the little children come unto Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

Then look what happened next... He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. That's what He desires to do with us... put His arms around us and bless us. We need to be as little children. Let Him take us in His arms, trustingly. Let His kingdom come on earth... in us... as it is in Heaven. That's the only way to get “there”!

Chapter Nine

FURRY ANGEL

Believing in angels is really nothing unusual. I believe I've seen several of them throughout my life... and not one yet resembles the beautiful golden-haired one with silken wings that was pictured on my Grandma's favorite funeral parlor fan. It was a truly beautiful sight someone had painted... with these two little children crossing a dangerous bridge and the sturdy feminine angel guarding their steps. A lovely thing to imagine, and perhaps there are some angels who look just like that.

When I met the angel I want to tell you about I was not a child. I was a grandmother several times over. There was no bridge, no silken wings. There was, however, a beautiful face with a strong, friendly gaze... and a thick coat of fur. I somehow knew it was an angel the moment I stepped off the city bus in the growing dusk, because it was there when the door opened, and fell in step beside me as I walked. Without coaxing, this beautiful creature walked very closely and protectively at my right side. I felt so safe and loved, and yet in awe of it.

There was an interview at a local college and it was important that I be there. Not having a car, my ready solution was the city bus system, with its friendly, guardian-type drivers. They knew me and sort of looked after my safety as I crossed back and forth across the town of Pueblo, Colorado. I seldom rode the bus alone after dark, and a friend had cautioned me to be careful, to which I cheerfully replied..."Oh, God has angels looking out for me. I'll be safe."

Little did I expect my angel to look like a sturdy and dependable Malamute dog... yet instinctively I knew he was no ordinary dog. He seemed to appear out of nowhere the moment I stepped off the bus... then he fell in step beside me. "Well, hello there!", I greeted him. His blue-eyed gaze was steely,

yet kind. His banner-like tail barely wagged... just enough to signal there was nothing to fear. I talked to him as to another person all along the six blocks we walked to the college, where I thanked him for being there. I then entered the front door; leaving him outside, never looking back to see where he went.

The interview over, I wrapped myself against the cold new barrage of snow and opened the front door. It was past 8:30, and the bus would be at my stop at 9 p.m. Normally I would have panicked, with the city lights being obliterated by the flurries of snow, and me afraid of the dark, but there he was, my guardian angel! Assuming nothing, I didn't talk to him. No "Come on, boy!", though I wanted to pet him, call him 'Buddy', even hug him for being there; but his regal bearing seemed to forbid such familiarity. Yet this strong fearless friend once more fell in step beside me.

I told him that I suspected he was no ordinary four-footed friend, but an angel sent by God to protect me. Surely, just the sight of a near 100 lb. creature such as this would discourage anyone from getting too near! His expression gave no indication that I was correct or otherwise... just a slight pulling closer to me as though to protect me from the cold!

There was no bus in sight when we reached the stop but I felt safe and secure standing there with my friend remaining close by my side. After about fifteen minutes had passed, the bus arrived a bit late because of the snow. The driver greeted me with a smile. "Hey! Who's your friend?" I explained with as little detail as possible that he was 'just there when I got off the bus'. But the driver said, "Ma'am, there was no dog or anyone else waiting when I dropped you off. I've been worried about you ever since, being out this late at night all alone."

"Maybe he's my guardian angel", I replied. "Stranger things have happened", he agreed with a nod.

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

There are so many instances of the Lord's protection and care over us, I forget to write them down because some other wonderful thing He has done catches my attention! There was a time, just before the Lord sent me to Nacogdoches, Texas.... Kathleen and I were attending a special prayer meeting for the pastor's wife, who'd been diagnosed with lymphatic cancer. That was more than twenty years ago, by the way, and she's still living and healthy as far as I know.

I'd just bought the nice big white station wagon that was to get me to Nacogdoches. It seemed to be a good car although it was ten years old.... I just forgot that the rear door lock didn't always work automatically. In my rush, I stashed my purse with \$70.00 , which was all the money I had, under the front seat. I pushed the button that automatically locked the doors and went inside the church to pray. My friend Mike knelt beside me, and as we all prayed, I suddenly realized the danger of leaving my purse in the car. Mike's cousin, whom I'll call Albert, was nearby; a teenager, whose mother was a friend of mine. She had seven children and had very recently lost her husband to cancer. I whispered to Albert that I'd like him to go out to the car and make sure the back door was locked because my purse was in it. He obediently went outside. I didn't see him again.

Reaching into my purse an hour later, I immediately noted that my wallet was gone! I thought to myself, "Oh-oh! I didn't send Albert out there soon enough!" Kathleen suggested we drive over to Mike's home, where he and his wife sat down to pray with us. We asked the Lord to show each of us a picture, or a vision if you will, of the person who had taken my wallet. I prayed mostly for my driver's license and Social Security card to be returned to me, not thinking there was any chance of recovering the money from the thief. Almost as soon

as we prayed, I was shown none other than a likeness of Albert, himself. I raised my head to look at Mike and Becky. They nodded their heads in solemn confirmation that God had shown them the same likeness.

Kathleen listened to us, then said, “Hey, I don’t know who this ‘Albert’ person is, but I’m seeing a kid with stringy blonde hair, about seventeen....” and we knew we’d all been shown that Albert was the thief.

I couldn’t tell his mother! She had too many griefs already!! I simply committed the matter to the Lord and asked the others never to mention it to anyone. I knew Romans 8:28 quite well, and depended upon it for this. “All things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are the called according to His purpose.” The following morning, in my mailbox, I found the Social Security card and driver’s license as I had requested in prayer.

Four or five years later, my son Robbie told me of a new job he had, and that my friend’s son Albert was his roommate at a nearby apartment. For the first time, I warned Robbie not to leave any money where it could be stolen, and I told him of the incident when Albert took my \$70.... all the money I had in the world, and I never mentioned it to anyone. It wasn’t long before Robbie thanked me for telling him about this, because it saved his life. He and Albert worked at a local newspaper office together, and got off work around 2 a.m. As they exited through the back door into a dark alley, Albert suddenly slammed Robbie up against a brick wall and called for one of his friends to hand him a 2x4 that was lying on the ground. He was cursing, and accusing Robbie of stealing \$40 from his room at the apartment. Just as Albert raised the board to slug my son with it and probably leave him dead or dying there in the dark, Robbie requested that Albert allow him to ask one question... He said, “Albert, first of all, I didn’t take your money... but why would you kill me over \$40 when a few years ago you stole \$70

out of my mom's purse... all the money she had in the world... and God showed her it was you, yet she never said a word to you or anyone else?"

Albert's hands went slack, the 2x4 dropped to the ground, and he and his friend walked away leaving Robbie unharmed. Praise the Living Lord!

.....

And the station wagon, oh, yes!!!

Yesss.....I had bought it on credit from a used car dealer who was said to have mob connections. Stupid thing to do in the first place, but I didn't have the kind of credit where I could buy a car just anywhere. It SEEMED to be a good car, and exactly what I needed, but when I drove it to a service station to have the oil checked I was informed that the pistons were packed with such thick, dirty oil that they had to get a long handled tea spoon to dig it out! The attendant replaced it with the thickest oil he had, but almost immediately the pistons began their incessant tickatee- tap beat... all the way to Nacogdoches. It got us there, anyway!

When the Lord began speaking to me about Chireno, and about Dan Hanes; Cindi and Kat and I were attending a meeting at a place called "The Jesus Church". During prayer, I heard the Lord speak to me... "There is a young man named "James", (I actually don't remember his name), who has something on his heart that he wants to do. He is three rows behind you and seven seats from the right. Get up and tell him that I will enable him to do that which is in his heart to do." I didn't ask why or wherefore... I just did what I was told.

The following day, this "James" appeared at my door. He acted as though I knew that the Lord had told him to overhaul the motor of my station wagon! I had not the slightest inkling that was so! Nevertheless, the boy and his father took

my vehicle to their garage, overhauled the motor, and returned it with four brand new tires!

Sadly for James, he'd been smitten with my beautiful teenager, Cindi. He thought that was why the Lord had him take care of our car, and that Cindi would become his bride. Cindi, however, hadn't the slightest interest in the boy. She said she already knew she'd marry a man with brown eyes. Well, for the record, four years or so later she married a handsome man with the blackest hair and the darkest brown eyes!!

That isn't all... God had sent me to Chireno to live by faith... only on what He provided. He did not provide money for the car payment. I don't know why! Maybe someday it will fit into the puzzle. Honesty is still the best policy, but I was more honest than I needed to be. I wrote a letter to the car dealer, telling him that I didn't have the money for the upcoming payment but would pay him as soon as the Lord provided. I also informed him of the wonderful things my friends had done to the car. (You could probably have sold me the Brooklyn Bridge in those days!) Uh-oh!!!!!! Within days, a tow-truck drove into my driveway. A large, tough-looking man emerged wearing a gun on his hip.

I had been working furiously trying to restore my landlady's property to what it had once been... a nice little yard edged with rocks and logs, and filling it in with rich soil from deep in the woods. I had used the ample space in the station wagon to haul in load after load of this wonderful dirt. Tired, sweaty and disheveled, I was totally unprepared for this encounter. The last load had just been shoveled out and I'd hoped to go inside and rest.

When informed by the man with the gun that my car was being repossessed I tried to protest. I pleaded for mercy. I objected..."You can't get blood out of a turnip!" The big man

touched the gun on his hip ever so slightly and replied..."No, but we can get it out of people." Need I say more? Miles from anywhere, no one would even have heard a gunshot, or if they had they'd assume it was a hunter. I hurried to remove the car keys from my ring, even apologizing for the dirt, which he said would sift out on the way back. He even allowed me to remove the spare tire that had been given me by Cindi's dad. Would he indeed have shot me? I've no idea, but hooked to the tow-truck, off went all my ability to go anywhere independently.

I was alive and unharmed, for which I thanked the Lord as soon as the door shut behind me in that little house to which He had sent me. Leaning against the door in great relief I began to praise Him in tongues, joyfully! And the more I praised Him, the more joyful I became! Somehow this was a part of His plan. He had known this would happen. Did it have anything to do a few months later with the man named John coming into my life, driving a white station wagon of the same year model, but a different make? I tell you, not everything makes sense to me, but He keeps reminding me that His ways are not my ways, and my ways are not His ways. All I can do is try to be obedient.

There was an instance a year or two later in which I felt it absolutely impossible to obey what I heard the Holy Spirit telling me. John and I were attending a tent meeting in Houston. It was a wonderful time, with the Lord's presence greatly in evidence. A local pastor was preaching, and it was at that time that I heard the Lord instruct me in no uncertain terms to tell this preacher to get his house in order, for He was being called home that very week. I came up with every objection possible, even offering God an alternative... let me just tell the man's son... or let someone he knows and trusts tell him! No deal. On the following Thursday the man answered God's home-call in a violent wreck on the Houston Freeway system. His death was a great shock to all his family and friends. Apparently no one had told him to get his house in order.... I deeply regret

not obeying the Lord. My greatest thought had been for myself. “What if I tell this man this terrible thing and it doesn’t come to pass?” I’d be a laughing stock, and worse, a false prophet, so I kept quiet.

I know this... the incident emboldened me to go to Colorado with the message for the young woman in Silverton... and before that, to find the 56 yr. old man named Bob and tell him that Jesus really did care for him.... just as he was. The possible consequences of being obedient to the Lord’s commands are not such awful prospects as seeing what can happen when I do not obey. The more I obey Him, the bolder I become, because this realm of His Kingdom far surpasses anything this earth has to offer... or threaten.

It isn’t that I was never bold before. I wasn’t afraid to minister to the lost and demon-tormented, but that preacher in Houston was a man of God who should have been able to hear God for himself. When, as a nurse aide back in Texarkana, I encountered situations where I could face down demons, I was almost fearless because I was confident of the power in Jesus’ Name. One night two young black men had brought a teenage girl to the emergency room in a catatonic state, from which they were unable to rouse her. They were frightened, and they would not leave her side even to allow her to be examined.

The girl was admitted to a room where my friend Jenna was working. Jenna knew it to be a spiritual thing, and she was terribly frightened by the presence of the two young men. She came running on tiptoe down to my end of the wing, crying “Becky-Becky-Becky! You’ve got to help! Come quick!” I closed the chart in which I was writing and followed her, arming myself in the Lord with His Blood as my cover as I went. I smiled at the two young men and patted one on the shoulder. “How about you guys waiting outside the door here while we get her into a gown, and then you can come back in?” No

problem! They stood patiently outside the door while Jenna and another nurse began to undress the girl. I didn't touch her. I stood at the foot of her bed, staring straight at her unblinking eyes, and spoke silently to the devil. I commanded him in the Name of Jesus to turn her loose. I told him he had no right to have power over her and he couldn't keep her.

In seconds the girl's head lifted from her pillow as the demons spoke spitefully back to me in her voice. "I guess you know we have control of her through the power of voodoo. She is in a catatonic state...." and I cut that off with "In the Name of Jesus!" I honestly don't remember whether I spoke it aloud or not. Immediately the girl left the catatonic state and was able to dismiss herself from the hospital. She left with her two friends as quickly as they had come in.

Back at my end of the wing, on another day, the hospital personnel were having difficulty with a retired military man who had simply come in for a heart catheterization and had gone berserk. As he had lain there in the lab, the memory of his own son dying, perhaps in that very spot four years earlier, had thrown him into unspeakable terror. He was sent to a room on our floor to be admitted to the hospital. He would allow no one to touch him, even to take vital signs or bring him water. His poor wife sat embarrassed and confused near his bed. She swore he had always been a gentle and sensible man, and she did not know what was happening to him. When anyone dared come close to him, he would spit at them, snatch watches off their arms, throw things at them and curse loudly.

Jenna seemed to be my "spiritual dispatcher" around there... calling me to help in such situations. She pushed me into the man's room and said, "Do something!" He had just snatched another aide's watch from her arm and flung it across the room, daring anyone else to come near. Fortunately he was held in bed by a Posey belt, a safety strap he could not unfasten. I stood at the foot of his bed, looking straight into

his eyes speaking in my mind “Jesus, Jesus, The Blood of Jesus” over and over. His head rose from his pillow, his neck straining until the veins stood out like cords. Our eyes locked in combat; his own growing darker and darker and then glowing like red coals. After just a moment of this glowing, he relented and collapsed on his pillow with the defeated comment...”Whew! Much more of that and it would have burned my eyeballs out!”

After speaking with his wife I learned the reason for his terrible fear, and about the loss of their son. The son, a grown man himself, had died during his own heart catheterization. When the staff would need to tend the man, I’d stand at the foot of his bed, silently repeating the Name of Jesus, and he would be docile and treatable. Actually, nothing was wrong with him except the fear of death. The spirit of fear, which certainly didn’t come from God, had overcome him until the Name of Jesus drove it out. He became more tranquil with medication and was dismissed soon after this. Since I thought I had finished writing this book weeks earlier, and had more or less put those things in sequence, these things I’m adding now will go back and fill in here and there. I’ll try to keep them understandable.

There’s no magic to it. Faith in the Name of Jesus is what it takes. To have that faith I believe one must have an intimate relationship with Him, and preferably be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps there have been others who had such a love and such a walk with Him who were not baptized in His Spirit, but I don’t know of them. It takes obedience to His call, “Follow Me”. For me, it helped greatly that I’d heard Him speak and I had known His healing both in my own body and in other people around me.

His Name, and the mention of His Name, has caused demons to obey without my speaking aloud, as I’ve said. I was a guest at my sister Mary’s home one year. Her family was gathered all around, having a happy time for my nephew’s

birthday. That particular nephew was passed out drunk and drugged, but we just ignored him. Mary's youngest son had received a Ouija board for Christmas. I refused to touch it or acknowledge that it 'worked'. The drunken nephew's wife had been happy to instruct him in it, however, and was trying very hard to make it work. "What's wrong with this thing?", she cried out. "It's always worked before!" I only sat smiling as I silently bound and rebuked the demon that would have moved the planchette beneath their hands. The 'game' was abandoned since no one was able to make it work.

At another time and another place... summer in Farmington, New Mexico, John and I had ended our visit with some friends there and decided to stop at Baskin Robbins Ice Cream place for a treat on the way home to Colorado. We drove past the block where we knew it to be, but we didn't see it! Again, we drove around the block and didn't see Baskin Robbins, though we looked diligently! Well, then we drove one block past it in one direction, turned and went a block past where we were sure it was, all to no avail. What had happened to Baskin Robbins? John said, "One more time! I know it's there!", and this time it was in full sight, right where we'd been looking. We parked the VW bus and went right in. I was wearing a blue chambray shirt on the back of which I had embroidered a sunrise and a figure like Jesus wearing a white robe and spreading golden wings, underneath which I had stitched the Scripture, Malachi 4:2... "But unto them that fear my Name shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings..." (KJV)

I suppose it was this shirt that caught the attention of the man who walked in right behind us, because it took him no time at all to begin speaking to us. He was troubled, and needed to talk with someone who was close to the Lord. He explained that he was a Baptist pastor, and had rented a room in a motel in order to hear from God. He was being dealt with, actually, about receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and wanted to discuss it with someone who knew what it was all about. We

followed him to his motel, and there we shared with him what our experience with the Lord had been. We assured him that it would be a step up for him spiritually, but that it might cause problems in his church community. I told him how God had baptized me in the Spirit, healed me, and given me songs to sing. I sang one of the songs for him then, and he began to cry his heart out to God. So this was why we didn't see Baskin Robbins the first three times we passed it! God's timing was holding us back. We left the man with peace in his heart.

Not all of our errands were dramatic... some were just sweet reminders to people that the Lord had them on His mind. We carved those little wooden sparrows and gave to several people, but a couple of items were different. One was simply the block letter A, cut from a thick piece of pine and inlaid with a tiny piece of mirror above the crossmark. I knew that it would be a gift for someone named "Alice", who needed assurance that she was important to God. I sanded it carefully and wondered where I would find a triangle shaped piece of mirror less than two inches tall to fit into it. Well... as Kat and John and I walked past a building under reconstruction in Durango, we had to go around a trash can filled with broken glass and mirrors. On the concrete, in front of my feet, lay a shiny piece of mirror glaring in the sunlight. Picking it up, I was thrilled to see that it would fit into the A and complete the gift. We carried the gift around in our vehicle, just waiting, and as we waited I also cut out a piece of pine in the shape of a descending dove... five inches by six inches. This was also carefully sanded, waiting for I knew not what.

We met a young woman whose name was Ann, and I wondered if perhaps I'd heard the name wrong, because she seemed like someone who needed reminding also. However, her need was more practical. She and her husband invited the three of us to live in their home and help out in exchange for room and board for a few weeks. Help out?

Kat and I washed dishes continually for four days running! Any time the clean dishes Ann had on hand ran out,

she'd buy more at garage sales! There was a roomful of them besides what was in the kitchen! We cleaned the house, did mounds of laundry and helped gather eggs.

I don't remember all the things we did, but we had to leave when we'd finished all that because Ann's sister Alice was coming to visit and they needed the room. I'd kept the letter A in my suitcase, and now removed it and set it on the dresser there. Alice was stunned to see it, and told us how her Grandpa, the only person she felt had ever loved her, had made one just like that for her when she was a little girl. It was a joyous thing to tell her that her Heavenly Father had ordered this one for her because He loves her so much.

The wooden dove shape was so easy! With tourist season not quite upon them, people in shops in Durango could sometimes be seen standing outside their doors. Most were friendly. We were looking through the window of a jewelry shop at some beautiful handmade silver rings inlaid with coral and turquoise. There were several necklaces with ornate crosses. We had no idea the man standing nearby was the shop-owner, eavesdropping on our "ooh!'s and aaah!'s" He took a few steps forward and introduced himself. He was happy to acknowledge that he was also the craftsman of most of the pieces.

He confided that he was a Catholic and had recently been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The descending dove was something he loved to use as a subject in his work, and he expressed the desire to find someone who could work with wood and cut out a ... you know already.... 5"x6" piece of soft pine in that shape so that he could inlay it with stones and silver. He also was stunned when we led him to our car at the curb and smilingly handed him the thing he had asked for.

This led to his hiring Kat for a while as a trainee in his shop, and he taught her some of the elements of jewelry-making.

Since that time she has met others who've given her instructions in that craft, and her nimble fingers produce some beautiful things. Later, she was hired at a wonderful eatery called "Mr. Rosewater's", where she baked bread, among other things, and sold their wonderful sandwiches. At closing time, the end pieces of beef and ham and cheese that would otherwise have been thrown away became our midnight meal. Kat was a great help in our travels. Gradually she made friendships of her own and made a life for herself. She enjoyed playing her guitar in local nighteries, and singing either by herself or with some of the other interesting troubadours. I'm sure that she could write her own book about some very interesting people and adventures!

I've written about the demise of my union with John... no need to go back to that. My husband Reed and I are so very, very happy with God as our Guide. We have moved and moved, and moved again. I think sometimes it was the Lord's guidance and sometimes our own restlessness or ambition... but six years ago He began to talk to us about a little two-room house in which we would live. We set out on our own to find that house... and also a little white church, to which Reed had seen a vision of a pastor giving us the key.... to no avail. We drove up into NW Arkansas and all up and down Hwy 71 looking for it. At one time we were forced to live with my daughter Gayle and her family; God bless them for their hospitality! Instead of attending church with them, though, we felt drawn southward to a little town where Reed had lived years earlier.

One weekday, just out of curiosity we drove through the town, and past this little white church beside the highway. It seemed almost deserted, but we decided to visit it the following Sunday morning. Two or three cars were parked beside the entrance to the church, so we parked there also and walked in. A pretty and friendly lady met us and welcomed us, giving her name but not mentioning that she was the pastor's wife. We took a seat in a rickety old pew while a short,

overweight man played beautifully on the little spinet beside the podium. Two or three young women sang specials, danced around joyfully, and then sat down.

The pianist rose and welcomed us, and it became apparent that he was also the pastor of the church. He asked us if we ministered, and when we both nodded he gave us liberty to do so! Just like that! We introduced ourselves; I sang one of my original songs a'cappella and gave my testimony. Reed followed with a sermon! The congregation amounted to no more than twelve people, and they seemed delighted that we had come to their church that day. So delighted, in fact, that the pastor slipped \$25 into Reed's hand and said the church would like to buy our Sunday dinner. He suggested a nice cafeteria-type restaurant in a nearby town. We returned for the evening service, and were offered the key to the church as pastors! Of course we declined the honor, but allowed that we might be willing to serve as associates.

There was no salary, but eventually we moved into what had been the church fellowship hall... a room 12 ft by 30 ft with one small window that faced the highway; converting it into a usable apartment. We had to build up the threshold at the outside entrance to the hall in order to keep it from flooding everytime it rained. One member's son-in-law donated \$1000. to buy whatever it took to cover the dark brown paneled walls of the sanctuary with some nice white paint. Reed did most of the painting himself, and I helped as much as I could. He also tore out an old toilet from a defunct restroom, installed a new toilet plus a shower stall, replaced the toilet in another restroom and made them into "Ladies" and "Men's" restrooms once more. We hauled off load after load of junk that had been stored in the church... some of which was used appliances that the donors thought the church might repair somehow; blemished sacrifices... which is covered pretty indignantly in the first chapter of Malachi. We obtained permission to sell the rickety and dangerous old pews to a craftsman who was delighted to

cut them into rustic benches and sell them. The church voted to obtain a loan to repair the leaking roof over the church, and things went pretty nicely for a while. We made large satin banners to cover the gaping hole that had been cut out for a baptistry and never covered.

The Spirit of the Lord was in great evidence. People were healed, including the pastor himself. More people came in, and at one time we could count forty heads! That was the day they had chosen to ordain Reed and myself as bona-fide ministers of the gospel. A day of celebration. During all this time, (nine months) we were not on salary but depended on the Lord to prompt someone to meet our needs. It was a time of great faith-stretching! Our basic needs were met in the sweetest ways. Then, came the time when the Lord instructed us to move on. We will always love the people we met there, but will remember the time with a tinge of sadness because they did not, at that time, accept the Lord's message to let Him change them from their old traditional ways and be led into new paths by His Spirit.

By the end of summer that year, Reed and I were looking for a small house to rent. We'd given up all thoughts of finding that little two-room house in someone's back yard, and it didn't even cross our minds when we talked to his friends on Hickory Street in Texarkana about a rental. The two ladies were sitting on their front porch, and they waved when we slowed down to say hello. "What are ya'll doin' around here?", they asked. Reed replied that we were looking for a house to rent and asked if they knew of any. "None but the one behind us", came the reply. He asked if we could keep our two small dogs there, and they replied in the affirmative, "But no cats!", since the former tenant had allowed his three huge cats to run rampant in the house for eight years. Carpet had to be replaced totally in one room, they said. The big cats had clawed all the window frames and made shreds of the shades. The house only had two rooms, with a tiny kitchen at one end of the living room; a small

bedroom and a bath, with a washer and dryersqueezed into a space in the hall. We already had a chain-link pen for our two toy poodles to play in, and there was yard space left over.

For the deposit, we offered to clean the place ourselves and pay for the remaining carpet to be cleaned. The rent was \$300. We'd been living in it for about two weeks before it even dawned upon us that this was the little white house in someone's back yard that we'd looked for years earlier! We could recognize it because a friend who came to our house often had described the house to us about four years earlier.

Still....never content with what we had, we continued to dream and yearn and look for something bigger and better.... alas. We borrowed money against the bank stock that was to be Reed's inheritance someday. We had asked the Lord to allow us to borrow it so that we could plant it as seed in the Kingdom of God. Everything went smoothly for a time. We loved blessing folks with our money and belongings. We had bought a used motorhome in our desire to travel and encourage people, but still yearned for a nicer, newer and much more expensive one. The Lord told us one week to give it to a certain family member... and to also give him the Ford Bronco we pulled behind it! You'll think it strange, but it delighted us to obey! We were very happy with the little red economy car we soon found at, of all places, a garage sale!

Still... we thought we needed something in which to travel... at least a nice conversion van with headroom and seats for fellow-travelers. It seemed the Lord led us right to it; we paid cash for it and had just about decided to keep the little red car for me to drive. We had, however, decided that we just might sell it for \$3000 if anyone asked. Ta da! It's a long-time friend on the phone, saying that she'd been praying for a car exactly like her daughter drove, only with an automatic drive. That was our car, same make, same model, and same color... only with automatic drive. She had no job and was in marital

difficulty with no freedom even to go shopping or leave the house on her own. She offered to pay us the \$3,000 in monthly increments of \$100.00 “somehow”. I relayed the message to Reed as she spoke. His eyes met mine, and we knew we were going to sell it to her... or, as the Lord directed later that day, “Give it to her, or I’ll get the \$3,000 out of your pocket some way.” Again, that really tickled us, because to us, it was the same as giving the car to the Lord. Now three years later she still drives the car and has become more independent.

After a year in the little white house, one of my grandsons and his pregnant teenage bride came to us in desperation. We talked to them about living for the Lord and reaping the blessings of the obedient as outlined in Deuteronomy 28. They expressed the desire to do so, but their situation was so desperate that they were living in first one place and then another, with no car, no job, and no hope. Much as we now loved our little white rented house, we clearly heard the Lord instruct us to move into an apartment complex where we had lived earlier... into a large, two-bedroom apartment where the young couple could live with us and be encouraged and guided into being mature and Godly.

Gleefully, we shopped garage sales and discount shops for just the right furnishings... which would be left in the apartment for the young couple when we had helped them for six months and moved out. It turned out to be a larger project than that, possibly because of our own zeal and ambition. After moving to an apartment above the newlyweds, we rented another apartment at their earnest plea for a couple of their friends who had many difficulties, and another for my son and another grandson who needed a ‘leg-up’ on life. We helped them to live a better life-style than they’d had, encouraging them in the Lord and also nipping at their heels when they went astray.

The two grandsons enrolled in a school where they could study to get their GED’s. Both proved to be excellent students

with very high IQ's, which was evidenced in their test grades. The married one and his wife completed one semester of college, and welcomed their beautiful baby son. They are now a military family, soon to be stationed in Alaska. Everyone was helped to some extent, though not up to our expectations for them at the time. God is the judge of what was accomplished, though, and not ourselves. The other couple did learn some helpful facts about married love and life, of which they were totally ignorant and fought constantly. We see them now and then at their jobs and they seem more contented.

We believe we should have left the spacious apartment upstairs when the grandson and his wife moved away. The then-current renter of the little white house had suddenly died, leaving a vacancy just at that time. Instead, we struggled to pay the higher rent, and not being able to do so, just prayed our hearts out to have the Lord set things straight for us! After another year of fruitless struggle on our part, the little house became vacant once more, and when we were notified of it, we knew that we must move back into it.

This is where we now reside, and “will reside until the Lord scoops us out of here bodily”, as we like to say. It's just a tiny house with a tiny yard, but it's in a very loving neighborhood. We know this is where we belong and will not any longer yearn for bigger and better things. A big pecan tree and a neighbor's sweetgum tree provide dappled morning shade. Mockingbirds serenade all day long, and we've even learned to tolerate the messy starlings that would decorate our car if we didn't watch where we parked.

We don't actually own a car, but the Lord has taken care of that. Reed has a job as a used car salesman... a title he has always disdained. His employer furnishes a very nice vehicle for getting to church, doing our shopping, and, of course, for Reed to get to work. We don't even have any car insurance to pay. We find great fun in watching the Lord transform us from what we thought we should be into what He created us to be!

Borrowing on his inheritance has brought problems no one concerned could foresee. The value of the bank stock plummeted far below the amount we had expected to inherit, leaving us owing other family members nearly \$100,000. “But God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we are able..”. We have had to learn to be frugal, and to enjoy the things we have instead of looking for something better. We still love to give, but we also know the danger of helping butterflies emerge from their cocoon without developing as God intended. Butterflies, and humans, need to develop through a process that strengthens them for living.

Sometimes this kind of miracle is what is necessary instead of instant gratification. It has done wonders in ourselves! We have our eyes so much more on the Lord now, and not on what He can give us other than what He promises in His Word. Should He choose to lighten our burden and someday overflow our basket and our storehouse, that will be wonderful, too, but His Presence and the availability of His power are worth far, far more than any earthly thing.

The Story Of The Chinaberry Tree

In a swing under a Chinaberry tree in Oklahoma, tiny Rebecca Bryant spent hours with her new Friend, Jesus. As a 3 yr. old she had told Him that He could live in her heart.

She grew up far from the Chinaberry tree, but the memory of those special times as she sat in the swing, talking to Jesus, has never faded. Such times gave inspiration to these stories she writes today.

Her hope and prayer is that you will be inspired to trust Jesus as your Friend and Lord, and put complete confidence in Him to see you through all the days of your life.

Find a secret place and talk to Jesus... He will always meet you there!

It's no accident that this book has come into your hands.
It's what God wanted.

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