



Miracles Unaware

Winnie Long

Commentary by Charles and Barbara Middlebrook

Miracles Unaware

Winnie Long

Published by



©2011

Miracles Unaware: Winnie Long © 2011
Commentary by Charles and Barbara Middlebrook
Published by Missions Press
www.foursquaremissionspress.org

Various translations of the Bible have been used for the scriptures quoted in this book, including:

- NIV (New International Version)
- NASB (New American Standard Bible)
- NLT (New Living Translation)
- KJV (King James Version)

Graphic Designer: Wyce Ghiacy
www.visionfocusdesign.com

Printed in Columbia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank all those who helped me with *Miracles Unaware*. Bob Hunt of Foursquare Missions Press has assisted me through the whole process of writing such a book. He has encouraged me personally and given me resources and gone way out of his way to help me through the entire process of getting *Miracles Unaware* completed.

Barbara Middlebrook was a key factor in giving me encouragement and validity to the miracles outlined in the book as she aligned them to miracles found in the Bible. Barbara's candid approach as to what I needed to do to make *Miracles Unaware* a believable book was a key factor in the writing of the book.

John Enterline was so important in underwriting *Miracles Unaware* and making it an easy book to read. His prompt responses to my needs and personal encouragement were greatly appreciated.

Dr. Paul Risser and Dr. Robert Flores personal kindness and encouragement kept me going with the book when at times I felt it would never be completed.

Missions Press employees who have worked with Bob Hunt on *Miracles Unaware* that I may not even be aware have shown the true love of the Lord. I am very appreciative of all these behind the scenes folks at Missions Press and what they have done for me in getting *Miracles Unaware* completed.

Last, I want to thank my husband and family and especially my daughter-in-law, Amy, who helped me with many technical aspects. Also my granddaughter, Alexandra, and my assistant, Vicki Lopez, who helped me with my manuscript typing.

A genuine thank you to all.

Winnie Long

DEDICATION

Miracles Unaware is dedicated to my mother, Reverend Eleanore A. Giles, and her Tuesday Morning Prayer Group. During her 76 years of life, my mother never held a secular job, never wrote a check or understood the most basic business matters. In spite of this, she and her prayer group, some of whom never finished High School, can take credit for all my business accomplishments. Without the prayers of those ladies, I know that I would not be where I am today.

Those ladies earnestly and diligently prayed long hours for my various business endeavors. They didn't know the specifics for which they prayed, but they knew that they wanted God to bless Sister Giles' daughter and help her in her business. I would give my mother prayer requests about various deals or situations in my business. She and her prayer warriors would go to work, praying for me, never stopping until God answered their prayers.

With my mother and her prayer group behind me, my sales were always successful. I often felt that I had a secret weapon that was unfair to other realtors. People often told me how lucky I was, but I know that it wasn't luck — it was my secret weapon, the Tuesday Morning Prayer Group.

Whether you choose to believe that my success was due to my secret weapon or not, I know without a shadow of doubt that I wouldn't have written this book had it not been for those ladies. My mother, Eleanor, fondly known as Sister Giles, and

her prayer group were unlikely helpers. With their lack of education, missing teeth and poor English, some didn't look as though they could help me with my business deals. But God is available to all who call on Him and He can give you all you need, and more.

How fortunate I was to have my secret weapon, those ladies whom the world would look at and not believe they were capable of helping anyone. God chose to answer their prayers and He blessed me abundantly.

C.S. Lewis, the great British writer, states in his book, Miracles: "I use the word miracles to mean an interference with nature by supernatural power."

One only needs to turn to the first five books of Bible to see that God's miracles were so varied and frequent, occurring daily. The author of this book wants the reader to see that God interferes in our lives on a daily basis, if we allow Him to do so. Note: Deuteronomy 11:1-7.

Commentary by Charles and
Barbara Middlebrook

FOREWORD

Having been their pastor for well over 20 years, I have been privileged to know Winnie personally behind the scenes of the miraculous testimonies she will tell. Being a highly successful Southern California real estate broker and investment manager, she and her husband Mel have experienced many wild roller coaster rides while maintaining a faith anchored in the Lord. She has always exuded vision, daring, perception, and reliance on God. For years, I have seen firsthand how much she cherished her parents and the examples they set for her.

Among her own experiences with miracles, Winnie will tell in the book how she was the only child born into the family of Pastor and Mrs. Giles, ministers who felt the most unusual and, dare I say, the most unappealing call of God—to pastor churches that had been closed or had reached the bottom financially and numerically. God gave them the incredible grace to restore churches to health, and then move on to the next similar challenge. It is easy to see that this could only be done at great sacrifice to this family of three. They were truly “*unsung heroes.*” But to accommodate such a calling, *miracles would be essential, not only for their fruitfulness—but for their survival.*

God blessed Winnie exceptionally so she could bountifully care for her parents in their old age and also empower her and Mel to be generous Kingdom benefactors.

Dr. Paul Risser
Author of *An Eye For Miracles*

INTRODUCTION

Wow! Another miracle is happening. The fact that you're reading this book is a miracle. Who would have expected that the poor preachers' only child would be chosen, by God, to receive a life of fabulous, fantastic, unbelievable, abundant miracles?

Miracles do happen! Even though you weren't aware, you may have been the beneficiary of miracles today. My goal is that, through reading the stories of my miracles, God would reveal miracles that He has done for you.

Look deeply into events that have occurred in your life. Some may seem to be just occurrences or good luck. But if you look closer, you may see the miracles with which God has blessed you. Not only those in the past, but also those in the future. So watch for your miracles and the miracles that happen to those around you. God loves to surprise us with His abundant blessings.

I can't wait to share some of my life's miracles with you. The following stories are true and relate to actual events that have occurred, in my life, over the past 66 years. In them, God's immediate involvement can be clearly seen. Some appear to be major miracles and some appear to be minor, but all are miracles from God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I	Lake Arrowhead 1950	1
Chapter II	Entertaining Visitors Unaware	4
Chapter III	Lost in the Woods	6
Chapter IV	A New Home	8
Chapter V	Sunday Afternoon Stroll	10
Chapter VI	High School Ditch Day	12
Chapter VII	A Special Birthday Gift	15
Chapter VIII	A Nice Young Man	17
Chapter IX	Lights Out	20
Chapter X	The Perfect Job	22
Chapter XI	The Bug and the Flood	24
Chapter XII	A Baby	27
Chapter XIII	The Nightmare	30
Chapter XIV	Permission to Cross the Bridge	34

Chapter XV	A Needed Friend	38
Chapter XVI	Summer Fun or Disaster	41
Chapter XVII	The VW Bug	44
Chapter XVIII	A Lasting Ride	46
Chapter XIX	10 x 16 = One Little Green Boat	49
Chapter XX	Maui and the Jewels	52
Chapter XXI	The Greatest Miracle	58
Chapter XXII	My Best Friend Joe	64
Chapter XXIII	Captain	72
Chapter XXIV	Car Jack	75
Chapter XXV	Rescue Surprise	77
Chapter XXVI	A Not-So Merry Christmas	80
Chapter XXVII	The Priest	84
Chapter XXVIII	The Dream	87
Chapter XXIX	Unexpected Miracle	92
Chapter XXX	Not The End	99

ANNOTATIONS

At the request of Mrs. Pauline Long, Barbara and Charles Middelbrook (see Vitas listed in the Appendix) have contributed comments based upon scriptural passages and stories. These annotations, which are presented at the end of each chapter, are meant to give a biblical basis for the modern day miracles Mrs. Long shares. God has always worked among His people as a God of signs, wonders and miracles.

Hebrews 1:1-4 (NIV)* “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name that he inherited is superior to theirs.”

* NIV refers to the New International Version, a translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER I

Lake Arrowhead 1950

My grandparents owned a beautiful two-story cabin nestled in a remote, mountainous area of Arrowhead, California. It was so much fun to stay at the cabin, because it was so private, with no neighbors nearby. A winding private road ran down the side of the property to a beautiful open courtyard that led to the front door and a side kitchen door. There were trees all around adding to its beauty and making it a wonderful place to stay.

I was eight years old and grandmother, mother and I were staying alone at the cabin during the week. We all had such a good time at the cabin. Tomorrow, grandfather and father were to arrive for the weekend, after working at their jobs in the Los Angeles area.

We had a wonderful day on Thursday and we went to bed early. It was a beautiful, moonlit night and all at once there was a lot of noise, banging and other strange sounds. My mother and grandmother were terrified. Since we were in such a remote area, we didn't know who could be trying to get into the cabin at two in the morning. They ran to the phone to call the police for help, but the line was dead. Then, they did the only thing they could do, they prayed for God's protection.

I was told to stay in my room, which was directly over the kitchen, and not to leave. I was terrified beyond belief. After a

Miracles Unaware

few minutes, I got out of bed and went to the side window of my room that overlooked the courtyard. Because the kitchen was so small, my grandmother had put a small table against an unused kitchen door. I was directly over the kitchen and my room also overlooked the unused kitchen door.

I pulled back the curtains, a little, and I couldn't believe what I saw. There stood two of the most beautiful, large, short haired, silver gray, identical dogs that I had ever seen. They were walking back and forth, slowly, on the little porch leading to the side kitchen door. These incredibly beautiful dogs were guarding our cabin! My grandparents had owned the cabin for ten years or more and had never heard of or seen any such beautiful dogs in the area.

The next day we learned that two men, who had been imprisoned for murder, had escaped. The police had been searching the area in the general vicinity of our cabin. They found our phone lines had been cut and it was believed that the sounds that we had heard in the night were the escapees attempting to break in. What a terrible situation it would have been, with two women and a young girl alone in the cabin, if the men had gotten inside.

My parents and grandparents asked the police about the dogs. No one knew of any dogs in the area that looked like those I had seen on that frightful night. Over the next several months, we continued to ask about the dogs. No one ever remembered seeing any such dogs. Where did those dogs, never seen before or after our ordeal, come from?

I believe that those dogs were angels, in the form of beautiful guard dogs, protecting two women and a young girl in answer to prayer. They were God's wonderful miracle to us. There is no other explanation for those two dogs being on the back porch of the cabin that Thursday night.

The beauty of the animals and the forcefulness of their presence remain in my mind clearly to this day, fifty-nine years later. God saved the lives of my grandmother, mother and me when He performed our true miracle, a miracle unaware.

Commentary

See Zechariah 2:5 and 2 Kings 6:15-17. Theologically speaking, one would see these as Theophanies, which means that God (or His messengers) appears to human beings in some visible form (e.g. a burning bush, angels, etc.).

CHAPTER II

Entertaining Visitors Unaware

My grandparents had a beautiful home, located in the middle of an upscale neighborhood, filled with gorgeous, extremely expensive crystal, artwork and antiques. Grandmother's clothes, her jewelry and her appearance were breathtaking. She was a beautiful and elegant woman, both inside and out. Her spirit was one of love, giving and dedication to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

One summer day in June, Grandmother, who was an always an elegantly dressed woman, was alone in the house, except for her maid, Fannie. The back doorbell rang and when she answered the door, there stood a disheveled, dirty man. The stranger asked for a glass of water.

In such a situation, what would you have done? Would you have called the police; slammed the door; told him to get lost? Not Grandma Winnie! She invited him, this filthy stranger, into her home. She sat him at her elegant table, adorned with doilies and expensive china, and had Fannie prepare lunch for him.

The man ate the food, thanked Grandma, and left. He was never seen again. Where did this man come from and where did he go? Why did he go to Grandma Winnie's door, in the middle of this development of fabulous custom homes? Why had no one, other than Fannie and Grandma Winnie, seen him?

Entertaining Visitors Unaware

Grandma Winnie have experienced a miracle and entertained an angel? Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Hebrews 13:2. (NASB) "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." As examples, see: Abraham (Genesis 18); Gideon (Judges 6); and Manoah's wife (Judges 13: 6,7).*

* NASB refers to the New American Standard Bible translation of the Holy Bible, from which this scripture is quoted.

CHAPTER III

Lost in the Woods

One time, when I was ten years old, we were back at the cabin at Lake Arrowhead. What great times we had there, especially the long walks in the woods. It was great, I was old enough to go places on my own and not have my mother watch me all the time. There was a wonderful trail that I had walked many times with my father and grandfather. It was a little scary, but oh so much fun.

One beautiful day, I told my mother that I was taking our cocker spaniel, Ginger, for a walk. I put Ginger on a leash and off we went. The woods smelled so good, the scent of pine was everywhere. I decided to take the scary trail since it was such a fabulous day and because I felt so grown up.

Ginger and I did very well until we came to a place in the trail that had washed away in the last rain. With no trail to follow, I did the best I could to go the way I remembered the trail to go. Soon I realized that Ginger and I were lost, deep in the forest.

The weather began to change and it became cloudy. After two or three hours, I was cold, hungry and becoming frantic. I thought that I should go down to the lake where there would be people who could help me, but I only got lost deeper in the woods.

I became more and more frustrated and afraid as raindrops began to fall. By now, I had been lost for six hours or more. The only thing that I could think to do was to pray, so I prayed that God would help me. As I finished praying, I dropped Ginger's leash and she began slowly walking through the woods. Numb with cold and fear, I picked up her leash and followed. At this point, I was sure that I was going to die.

As we walked along, it seemed to me that we were going deeper and deeper into the woods. After about an hour of following Ginger, I saw the lake and knew that God had answered my prayer. Snakes were plentiful, in that area, but none were seen that day on my Ginger-led trip to the lake.

Was it just the dog's nature, to find her way on a path that she had never been on, to save me? Did an unseen angel, in the form of an animal, cause Ginger to follow it down the trail?

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Psalm 23 shows God as the shepherd who protects, provides and guides. His all-seeing eye is always upon us (see Psalm 32:8). Winnie realizes this even at the young age of ten.

CHAPTER IV

A New Home

Trinidad, Colorado, was a different place for a young, seven-year-old, California girl to live. Being the only child of poor preachers was often a challenge. Since my father was a Pentecostal preacher in a small Catholic town, none of the kids liked me or wanted to play with me.

It was worse for my parents. We lived in very small rooms behind the little church at which my father was the pastor. There was no carpet on the wood slat floors and there were no bathrooms in any of our rooms. The closest bathroom was in the church, and that really wasn't a bathroom either, it had only a sink and toilet (no tub or shower).

It wasn't a very nice place to live. To illustrate this: One night, while using the church's bathroom, my mother fractured her ankle when the wood floor gave way.

The church was built next to a large, concrete, flood channel that was right behind our rooms. The channel was at least eighteen feet deep and little or no water ever flowed through it. It was frightening to look out the windows, from our little rooms, and see it.

My father tried for almost a year to find a place to rent before he eventually met a man who was willing to rent us a house. It was a big, three-story house, in disarray, with no heat and low rent.

To us, compared to our small rooms by the channel, it was fabulous. We closed off the first and third floors and lived in the middle floor. There was a bathroom, with a tub, that was a great delight to all of us.

We had only been in our new home one or two days when a terrible, torrential rainstorm arrived. The lightning, thunder and torrential rain were frightening to see and hear. The storm continued for twenty-four hours and all electricity was lost. It wasn't safe to leave the house because all the streets were flooded.

When the rain finally stopped, and it was safe to go out again, my father went to check on the conditions at the church. What a surprise he found! The church was fine but our former home, the rooms behind the church, were gone. The normally empty, eighteen-foot-deep, drainage channel had overflowed and taken our rooms with the flood.

With no electricity, no radios, and the speed of the nighttime storm, we would have never known what hit us. We would have been washed away, while sleeping, by the flooding in the storm channel. There would have been little chance that we would have survived.

Was it just a coincidence that, after looking for almost a year for a place to rent, my father found a place just two days before the storm? Could it have been a coincidence that our small rooms, just behind the church, were destroyed two days after we vacated them? Is this another miracle unaware?

Commentary

Romans 8:28 and Luke 12:6,7 certainly are excellent background for the story shared in this chapter. Surely, God has His eye on this young family and worked all things together to protect them and show His great power.

CHAPTER V

Sunday Afternoon Stroll

When you are twelve, it seems that you always have a crisis and you need time to think about it. This was the case on a warm, spring, Sunday afternoon. We were in Montalvo, California, where my father pastored another small church.

There was a hill, about four blocks from our church, and going up on the hill seemed as though you were a thousand miles away. On this particular day, I was very depressed over a not-so-good, puppy love affair.

As I followed the path, I began to feel better and to notice the view of the homes below. I was enjoying myself so much that I was in a trance-like walk, enjoying the view and the deep blue sky.

For some reason, I stopped and looked down and there, in the dirt sunning itself, was a huge rattlesnake. I quickly turned and ran for my life, down the hill and the four blocks home.

Why, when I had been walking in an almost trance-like state looking at the view, did I suddenly stop and look down? If I had continued on, in my relaxed, automatic walk, I would have stepped on that snake. I couldn't have missed it because it covered the entire pathway from one side to the other. I would have been bitten and would have died before I could reach home.

Sunday Afternoon Stroll

What brought me out of the trance? Was it a coincidence or could it have been God's miracle to save my life; a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Psalm 91, often cited as one of the most favorite scriptures of believers everywhere, tells us that He is our refuge and will protect us even when we are unaware of the danger. Especially note Psalm 91:11-13 and Luke 10:19.

CHAPTER VI

High School Ditch Day

It was a cloudy day in late February. To me, as a high school sophomore, school was very boring. Sandy, one of my boyfriends, had already graduated and had a nice new car. His father was also a Foursquare Pastor whose church was nearby. Since he lived nearby, Sandy would often pick me up and take me to school along with some of our friends.

On this particularly dreary Tuesday, the thought of school seemed worse than ever. So, as the instigator of a plot, I suggested that we ditch school; the plan was to go to some nearby mountains to enjoy the scenery and just hang out. The others, two boys and a girl were quick to agree. Off we went, never making it to school that day.

We had a great day! When we left to return home, Sandy let me drive his beautiful new Chevrolet. Can you imagine a fifteen-year-old, without a license, driving that new car on winding mountain roads? The radio was blaring and the other kids were laughing and joking loudly above the sound of the radio.

Wow, what a great day! No school, driving a fabulous new car and with great company, what could be better? I was driving along very well until we got to a one-way bridge. It was there that I panicked and hit the guard rail, scratching the car.

Tears began to well up in my eyes as I realized that I'd scratched Sandy's beautiful new car. I looked back at Sandy and

he comforted me. He was such a sweet and considerate person who never complained, even once, about what I had done.

A short time later, we were on narrow roads going up a remote mountain. None of us really knew where we were, but we were having so much fun that no one cared. As the day wore on the weather got worse. It became cloudy and started to rain. Soon the roads were wet and, at about 2:30 in the afternoon, we were coming to our senses and started thinking about finding our way home.

The rain came down heavier and heavier and it got very, very cold. Soon, the rain turned to ice and the side of the road, that we were on, became narrow and slippery. Before we knew what was happening the car skidded around two or three times, barely missing an extremely sharp, unguarded drop-off.

When the car came to a halt, we were only inches from going over the edge. Slowly, cautiously, we were able to turn the car around, find the main road and the way home.

Why did the car stop just inches from the steep drop-off? If we had gone over the edge, on this remote road, we probably would have sustained severe injuries. And, of course, we weren't wearing seat belts fifty years ago.

No one would have thought to look for us, on that back country mountain road. Was this a coincidence or was it God's protection saving my life? Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

In Isaiah 65:24 (NIV), God tells us: "Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear." God knows the*

* NIV refers to the New International Version, a modern translations of the Holy Bible.

Miracles Unaware

dangers that we face, even if we face them because of a wrong decision on our part.

“His eye is on the sparrow and I know He cares for you” is a portion of a song that the great African-American musical star, Ethel Waters, sang so often in Billy Graham’s Crusades.

God saw Winnie, and her friends, at the point of disaster. He reached out His hand, not only to stop the car but to also enable them to get back to the main road and home.

CHAPTER VII

A Special Birthday Gift

Camp Cedar Crest was a blast! It was so neat to be away from home and the mountains were so beautiful. Cedar Crest is a church camp, but listening to the preachers was not important to me at all. To me, this was an opportunity to find enough boyfriends to last me until the next year, when camp would come around again. At (almost) sixteen, boys were the most important part of my life. Here, at camp, I had a different date for the church services every night that we were there. How could it be better?

I had a wild streak, but never did anything too wild. I seemed to have the ability to break the rules and not get caught. We found a beautiful, “out-of-bounds” area where there were streams, lush vegetation, and, best of all, no one else knew about it.

This particular year, while still at camp, I was turning sixteen. Camp, this year, had been so much fun, with lots of boys and loads of fun doing things I wasn’t supposed to be doing. I always sat in the back row of the big tent, where services were held, holding hands and talking throughout the service with my current boyfriend.

On Thursday, my birthday, I was late coming to the service and all of the back seats were filled. I saw some of my girlfriends, sitting near the front, waving at me to come and sit with them.

Miracles Unaware

It was time for the service to start, so I quickly went to the front and took a seat. Since I was with the girls, and not with one of my boyfriends, I didn't talk or act silly.

Although I don't remember what the preacher said, I had a strong feeling, during the altar call, to go forward. I had been in many, many services with many, many altar calls, but this was the first time that I had ever gone forward.

Before I knew it, I was in front of everyone, kneeling at the altar crying. I felt God's love and it was so strong. I had always felt self-conscious, but this time I wasn't aware of anyone around me, only the presence of Jesus. I was filled with His Holy Spirit and felt God's love, protection and guidance, from that night on, throughout the rest of my life.

Why wasn't I with a boyfriend that special birthday night? Why did I, who was always so self-conscious, sit at the front of the tent where I had never sat before? How did I have the nerve and the loss of self-consciousness to go quickly to the altar in front of everyone? Could it have been God's divine purpose for my life?

Could it have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

God gave Winnie the best birthday gift she would ever receive. He knows the day, and the hour, when our hearts are soft, tender and receptive to Him. Winnie could have said "No!" when the Holy Spirit spoke to her heart. He helped her to make the right decision.

Acts 2:36-41 tells the story of Peter's preaching a tremendous sermon and of how the Holy Spirit brought conviction to about 3,000 of the men in attendance. Winnie experienced the conviction and yielded to it that night.

CHAPTER VIII

A Nice Young Man

As I grew older, I had fewer boyfriends. For many years, I dated a nice young man whom I had met when my father pastored at Montalvo. The young man's name was Howard, and he joined the service at about the same time my parents and I moved to Bell, California.

While Howard was overseas, I corresponded with him daily and, whenever he got leave, he would take me out. Howard and I had a lot of good times together and we liked each other, but we never really had a serious relationship or made commitments to one another.

I occasionally dated various young men, one of whom lived in Santa Clarita, California. The distance between Bell and Santa Clarita was too great and the driving times too long, so we broke up. I missed having a boyfriend and the fun of going out.

My parents had minister friends who wanted me to meet some "nice young man." I had no interest at all. I missed my last boyfriend a lot. As a preacher's kid (PK) I learned that, if what I did could adversely affect my parents' ministry, I had to do what my parents wanted regardless of whether I liked it or not. Because of this, I could not refuse to meet the young men that my parents' pastor friends had found for me.

Such a meeting was arranged with a young man named Milford (I soon changed his name to Mel). I didn't want to meet

Miracles Unaware

the young man and when I saw him I wanted to go out with him even less. But, being a true PK, I had to go out with him. The situation continued to worsen when Mel really seemed to like me and asked me out again. Being a good PK, I had to accept. The date was so-so, but he kept calling me to talk. Unfortunately, when he called each night it was at eleven o'clock. Soon I began to look forward to his calls, he had a nice car and wasn't bad to talk to.

I hated to stay home Friday and Saturday nights. I would do almost anything to get out of the house, even have a date with Mel. It wasn't long until Mel and I were together every weekend. The relationship wasn't anything serious, but it did get me out of the house.

When Howard came home on leave, his aunt told him that I was seeing Mel. Howard, who had never asked for any commitment, suddenly became very jealous and gave me an ultimatum: it was either him or Mel. I told Howard that I wanted to date both of them, but he stuck to his ultimatum. I never liked to be told what to do by anyone, so I told Howard that I wouldn't stop seeing Mel.

Now Howard was out of the picture. I only had Mel, and, when I didn't see him, I missed him. Mel started to become a part of my life that I didn't want to lose and he obviously loved me very much. Mel was loving, kind, considerate, loyal, and, in general, a very nice young man.

Less than a year after my decision not to date Howard exclusively, Mel and I were engaged to be married. Later, Howard married a candle lighter in my wedding.

Why did Howard, who had never asked for a commitment, suddenly ask for one? Could God have had His hand in it and changed circumstances to provide me with a wonderful, lifetime

husband? Is God in control of circumstances or do things just happen?

Howard and I had dated other people, on and off, for seven years, Why the change in Howard's character at this time? Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

After we have committed our hearts to Jesus, in accepting His blood-bought salvation, then receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the next important decision, for most people, is in choosing our spouses.

Marriage is used as a strong analogy for our relationship with God.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This reminds us He has great plans for us, if we yield to Him.*

Psalms 37:5 (NLT) "Commit everything that you do to the Lord. Trust Him and He will help you." God makes so much better decisions, for us, than we can ourselves. Winnie and Mel found these passages, from the Psalms, to be true. As a result, they have enjoyed a lifetime serving God together.*

* NIV refers to the New International Version, and NLT refers to the New Living Translation, both modern translations of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER IX

Lights Out

Camp Cedar Crest continued to be a part in my life. Mel and I even attended Camp when we were engaged. On that trip, Mel had to work, so we drove up late on Monday night. The winding road going up the mountain was empty, with only an occasional car coming down the mountain.

We were about half way up the mountain when, without warning, the car's lights went out. There was no moon; it was complete and utterly dark! We panicked and Mel immediately stopped the car on the edge of the road. There was no shoulder, or anywhere else to pull off the road, and we were afraid that we would be hit from behind and killed.

Mel restarted the car and, what a relief, the lights were on again. But after we traveled just a few feet the lights went off again. Mel and I were terrified and didn't know what to do. Although Mel is a great man, with many abilities, he is not mechanically inclined.

The road was so winding that you could easily go over the side and drop hundreds of feet down the mountainside. We started to pray because neither one of us knew the cause or what to do about this dilemma.

The way that we made it up the mountain was to drive until the lights went out, then stop and turn off the engine. After a few minutes, we would start up the road until the headlights

went out again. We did this over and over until we reached the top. To this day, neither Mel nor I know how we made it up the mountain safely. Miraculously, no cars came up the hill to hit us.

Where were all the cars that should have been traveling up that road? Even on a Monday night, it should have been busy since it was the main road to Arrowhead. Could God have held all of the cars back so that we would not be hit and would reach the top safely? Why didn't even one car pass us in over an hour? Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Psalm 84:1 expresses the loving message, from the Lord, reminding us that even as a loving parent takes care of his or her children, so God gives good gifts to His children. It seems well expressed, in Psalm 5:12 (NIV) "For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield."*

* NIV refers to the New International Version, a translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER X

The Perfect Job

Thank God! High School was almost over. I hated school but was able to carry an “A minus” grade point average. College wasn’t even a consideration for me primarily because my citizenship grades were not that outstanding. This was due to my being a girl who frequently liked to break the rules. I was excited to join the work force and to get into business.

Los Angeles County examiners came to my school to give tests that would qualify us to become County Workers. Rockwell and federal government representatives also came to give us job placement tests.

I passed the test and was hired to work at an aerospace facility in El Segundo, California. My job was to be the secretary to a Captain and a Lieutenant Colonel. The Colonel was in the Air Force and, while on a mission, was the only survivor of a four-man crew.

It was so exciting; one of my duties was to take minutes during high-level personnel meetings. But there was a catch, the cigar smoke. It gave me headaches and nearly killed me, but I was very happy and excited to be part of such important meetings. I even had a Secret security clearance. I did very well working for the second-in-command of the entire facility.

While other girls, right out of high school, went to the typing pools, why was I given such an important job? Why was I selected and quickly promoted? Could God have given me favor in the eyes of my employers?

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

CHAPTER XI

The Bug and the Flood

Our little VW Bug got us around very well and we thought it was great. Mel and I lived in the city of Bell, California, and I drove the Bug to work every day, from our home in Bell, to my job in El Segundo.

I had only one problem with the car on this Friday morning. I was very pregnant and could barely get the seat back far enough for my stomach to fit behind the steering wheel and for my feet to reach the pedals.

I usually left home at about 7:20 AM, to get to work by 8:00 o'clock. The freeways weren't that near the office, so I took side streets. I had to drive through Watts, so I locked the doors and stayed on the main road. I never had a problem.

This Friday was another rainy day and the rain came down heavier and heavier. My windshield wipers did the best they could, but I could hardly see. I wouldn't dream of missing work, so I continued on while it rained harder and harder. The streets began to fill with water and I had to drive very slowly. I was sure that I would be late for work that day.

Then lightning struck and, in all of Watts, the street lights went out. This was not fun. I became concerned as it continued to pour, afraid that I would be late or stuck in Watts. There were

The Bug and the Flood

no cell phones forty-six years ago, so I was unable to call work and tell them that I would be late. I was now closer to work than I was to home, so I had to keep going.

Cars much larger than my VW Bug were stalling everywhere. I was terrified that water would come in my doors or even overflow the car. I couldn't get out; I was too pregnant to navigate through the high water on foot.

I finally turned onto a side street, but it wasn't much better. It was now after 10:00 o'clock AM and I really didn't know what to do in the dark, driving rain. I was inching my way through high water, going from side to side, because there were cars stalled everywhere. There were no police, fear set in and I began to cry and ask for God's help.

Somehow, the little Bug kept going, the doors were sealed tight and no water came in. I found the high spots or drove to the side enough to get through. At noon, I arrived at the office, four hours late. I was cold, shaken and needed to use the restroom, but my VW and I were safe.

Why did my little VW Bug keep going? Why didn't it stall when other, larger, more expensive cars did? How did I know to find the high places and side roads that got me through? And most amazing of all, with all of the distress, why didn't I go into labor since my due date was only two weeks away?

Could God have intervened, in answer to my prayer, and kept the little VW Bug going. Did He lead me to the high spots and passable streets? Could He have protected me physically, assuring that I wouldn't deliver the baby?

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Miracles Unaware

God certainly had His eye on Winnie during this trying time. Psalm 139 focuses on four of God's great attributes: Knowledge, Presence; Power and Holiness. Verse 5 appears to point to that rainy fear-filled day that Winnie describes. God guided and protected her. He enclosed her in His divine presence.

CHAPTER XII

A Baby

When I became pregnant, I never missed a day of work at my aerospace job, even though I was very nauseous. I would make coffee for my boss and then run to the restroom to toss my breakfast.

At work, there were several women who were pregnant at the same time that I was pregnant and, for some reason, I was the largest at the earliest stage. After nearly eight months of pregnancy, I finally told my doctor that I felt so much bigger than the others, but I hadn't gained much weight. The doctor took x-rays and found, to our surprise, that I was having twins. He told me to stop working immediately. My Lieutenant Colonel boss had three girls and he was very understanding. I will never forget him for his kindness.

With only eight weeks until my due date, I got busy preparing for twins. About a week after I left work, I went into labor and was taken to our Kaiser Hospital. My pain wasn't severe and soon I delivered twin boys: one four pounds four ounces and the other five pounds nine ounces. Mel and I were delighted.

I was taken to my room and soon the pediatrician, who was a Catholic, came in to see me. She told me that I should call my

Miracles Unaware

priest for last rights because the largest twin probably wouldn't live. Joy turned to despair.

My family had just gone home to rest, after being with me all night, and here I was exhausted, alone, and mentally numb. Our new baby might die at any moment. As if that wasn't enough, some unusual things had happened to me personally after the birth that concerned me and my doctor.

I telephoned my mother and she called my grandmother who immediately called Angelus Temple Foursquare Prayer Line. At this point in my life, I was unable to pray but God had others, on standby, praying diligently for me and my babies. People that I didn't even know volunteered their time and were on duty to approach the throne of God on our behalf.

I had named my sick baby, Rory, and at eight AM, on Friday, March 8, 1963, the doctor took him to try to take an x-ray. He wanted to see why Rory's lungs were failing.

It was a cold March morning when they whisked Rory across the parking lot to the Radiology Center, which had just opened for the day. Due to Rory's condition, time was of the essence and they quickly placed him on the cold, metal, x-ray table. At the shock of the cold table, Rory let out a huge scream.

While the prayer warriors of Angelus Temple prayed, Rory was x-rayed and it was normal. Rory had begun to breathe deeply and his color returned immediately.

Was he healed by a cold metal x-ray table? Were the prayers of those prayer warriors heard in heaven? Did God instantly heal Rory, thereby saving his life? Could it have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

James 5:13-16 reminds us of the importance of the fellowship of believers. We pray for each other and come alongside each other to help in time of need. Winnie was too weak and too concerned to reach out in faith to the Lord, but the Community of Faith prayed on her behalf.

Galatians 6:2 reminds us that we are to bear one another's burden...that is God's will for His church.

CHAPTER XIII

The Nightmare

I began to feel better and the twins, Richard and Rory, were doing fine. In fact, Richard had lost one ounce while Rory had lost only eight ounces. Best of all, Rory was not put back in an incubator after his x-ray. Richard, on the other hand, was kept in an incubator because of his small size, even though he really didn't need it.

Great grandparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends all came to see the twins three days after their birth. Everyone was so excited to see the identical twin boys.

The church had a baby shower planned for the Friday night of the day the twins were born. The shower was planned well in advance but the twins arrived five weeks early, surprising us all. What wonderful gifts I received, at a baby shower that I couldn't attend, and they were all twin boy things. I imagine that there was a lot of shopping and exchanging going on that Friday. Every gift was so special and fitted each boy perfectly.

Sunday had been a great day for everyone. I was to stay in the hospital one more day and, because I wanted to rest Sunday night, I was glad to be alone. About three in the morning, I got out of bed to go to the restroom. It was there that I noticed that

I was bleeding; non-stop, heavy hemorrhaging so severe that I called the nurse. The nurse came in, got me into bed and called the doctor. When she could not wake him, she started to panic. The nightmare had begun.

The doctor was physically exhausted, after being on duty for many, many hours at the hospital. Other nurses came in to help me while the head nurse ran to help wake the doctor.

After twenty minutes, he arrived looking very tired and frustrated. I was losing so much blood that I was about to pass out. The doctor didn't know what to do except to put pressure on the artery to hold back the flow. The minute he let go, the torrent of blood started again. I knew this was the end and that I was going to die. The nurses encouraged me to stay alert and not pass out. This terrible scenario continued for five dreadful hours.

Since this was a Kaiser Hospital, rather than one doctor handling your case, you saw many doctors. There was one that I liked and that I had often seen during my pregnancy. As luck (or rather God) would have it, this particular doctor came on duty at 8 o'clock AM that morning, to relieve the exhausted doctor who was caring for me. That doctor's only treatment had been to hold the artery to cut off bleeding, which he had done for four hours. The nursing staff, who I am sure omitted no details of what had been going on, brought the new physician up to date. The new doctor literally pushed the first doctor out of the way, ordered instruments to be brought to him, and immediately took over.

My husband was called, he in turn called my parents and they called my grandmother. Grandmother called the Angelus Temple Foursquare Gospel Prayer Line once again.

Within twenty minutes after the new doctor took over, I was taken to surgery and told that, to save my life, I must have

Miracles Unaware

a complete hysterectomy. Due to the severe blood loss I had experienced, I was in a semi-conscious state. Even in that state and condition the thought of the complications of a hysterectomy, plus the fact that I couldn't have any more children, was devastating.

As I was put under anesthesia, I firmly believed that I was about to die. But my grandmother's prayer warriors wouldn't accept my death. During the surgery, I had a dream where I saw a large wheel. I was on one spoke of the wheel, the devil was on another and Jesus was on the wheel ahead of me. Satan was trying to catch and kill me. At first I was afraid, but I soon realized that Satan could never catch me, and cause my death, as long as Jesus kept the wheel going. From the life experiences in this book, you can see that Jesus was in control of my life there, and from that time on.

Another miracle occurred when the surgeon found the ruptured artery just above the uterus. It had been sutured, in the delivery room, with stitches that dissolve. This time, the surgeon used regular stitches and they held. I had been in good health, and, with four blood transfusions, I very quickly and fully recovered. And, best of all, no hysterectomy was required.

Was it a coincidence that the doctor, who saved my life, showed up exactly when I needed him? Did I have a drug-induced dream during surgery or did I have a supernatural experience when I saw Jesus and the devil fighting over me? Was this another miracle unaware?

Commentary

This memory, or miracle, remains so vivid in Winnie's mind because it was so real and impressive. Paul, the Apostle, tries to describe his experience, when he was taken up into the third heaven,

and of the wonderful revelations that he received and found difficult to put into words (see 2 Corinthians 12:1-6).

Some experiences are so precious that they are “better felt than telt.”

1 Peter 1:8 (KJV) tells us, in part, that these experiences are: “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”*

One only has to read through the prophets to realize that God gave those visions that included themselves. God was impressing on Winnie’s unconscious mind that we are in a spiritual war, but He is the one who will deliver us. 2 Corinthians 10:4 (NIV) tells us: “The weapons that we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”*

* KJV refers to the King James Version of the Bible and NIV refers to the New International Version, a modern translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XIV

Permission to Cross the Bridge

It was a busy Friday morning and the three-month-old twins took a lot of effort. I bathed them, put cute outfits on them, fed them, and was just about to put them down for a morning nap when the phone rang. It was about my grandmother who been at my home a week ago to see the twins. The caller told me that she had a massive stroke. Grandmother had been rushed to Glendale Hospital, from her home in Bell, where she was alive but still unconscious. I ran over to my neighbor's house and told her my problem. Thankfully, she volunteered to watch the twins until my husband could get home.

My grandmother and I were very close, maybe closer than I was to my mother. Grandmother was a woman of God and a very special person. She had prayed earnestly that she would live to see her twin grandsons, Richard and Rory, who were truly children from God. I believe that they were given to our family as a very special blessing.

Grandmother Winnie was not only a God-fearing woman, but, as I mentioned earlier, she was a physically attractive woman. She kept herself up well, never leaving her bedroom

until her make-up, hair and clothes were perfect. She kept her weight where it should have been, had her hair and nails done weekly and wore drop-dead-beautiful, expensive clothes. Although she was not as flashy as her gorgeous sister Lottie, she could turn heads even in her seventies.

When I arrived at Glendale Hospital, Grandmother was in the Intensive Care Unit, hooked to machines. Grandmother Winnie was the backbone of the family and we were all beside ourselves. Although I was only twenty one years old, I had been raised in a pastor's family and had experienced a lot of life at an early age. I was aware of the ways of the world and really quite mature for my age.

The doctor came to talk to my grandfather and our family. We were told that there was no hope. She was alive only because of the machines. The doctor told us that, because of Grandmother's condition, we would have to make the decision to turn off the machines. What a decision! Without the machines, she would die.

We decided that each of us would go in to see her, one at a time, for the last time. I was the last to go in to see her. She looked beautiful, her hair was perfect and her hands were lovely. Grandmother's nails had been polished just the day before and they were striking, with their perfectly applied, pinkish-red nail polish.

I learned, at an early age, that our help comes from the Lord in times of crisis and trial. I don't normally handle injury or sickness well, but I went over to my grandmother and took hold of her beautifully manicured hand. She looked as though she was sleeping. As I said earlier, there was a strong connection between my grandmother and me. As I held her hand, I prayed and there was a strong, powerful force, which I know was God's Holy Spirit, upon me.

Miracles Unaware

There were nurses in the room as I began to speak. I spoke out loud, in a heavenly language, with my other hand raised to heaven. I'm a very self-conscious person. I never would have done such an unusual thing on my own, had it not been for the power of the Holy Spirit upon me. Although unintelligible to others in the room, the language that I was speaking was a conversation between my grandmother and me.

Grandmother told me that she was in a beautiful valley of lush green with a stream flowing through it. There was a small bridge over the stream, with more beauty to behold on the other side. She told me that she had been invited to cross the bridge but she was hesitant to leave her family.

There was no fear, only peace and joy, all around the two of us. It was as though there was no one else in the room with us. In the unknown language, I told Grandmother to cross over the bridge. We would all be all right and we would see her soon. Grandmother was a fighter and had suffered physically for many years. The fact that she even considered staying with us shows what type of person she truly was.

I stopped speaking in the unknown language and the room came back to normal. Our conversation was finished. I walked out of the room, to my family, and told them what I had experienced.

My godly father walked into Grandmother's room. He soon came back and told us that he had seen her spirit ascend to heaven when she died.

I know that what we had just experienced was a gift given to me by my caring and loving Heavenly Father. Death is not to be feared when you know Jesus, but it is an exciting event for the departing as well as the living Christian.

Are we all crazy and emotionally deranged? Did that hospital room become a preamble to the throne of God? Did

my father imagine that he saw Grandmother's spirit depart? Or was it God's special miracle that allowed me to commune with my beloved grandmother, through His Holy Spirit, and my father to witness that glorious event? Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

What a lovely and soul-searing miracle Winnie shares with the readers of this book. Psalms 16:15 (KJV) "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." The Lord used this godly grandmother over and over throughout her life. Then He gently released her from pain and worry, taking her to be with Him in heaven for all eternity.*

Romans 8:26,27 (NIV) "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us in groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.*

God allowed both Winnie and her father a very special experience. Note 1 Corinthians 14:2 (NASB): "For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God: for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries."*

* The scriptures quoted were taken from various translations: King James Version (KJV); New International Version (NIV) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

CHAPTER XV

A Needed Friend

The twins were such a handful even though I loved them so much. They were healthy, smart, little boys who got into everything. I bathed them, dressed them in matching outfits, fed them, and did my housework every day by ten o'clock AM. I had no car, no money and no friends nearby. I was very, very unhappy, lonely and frustrated.

Mel worked long hours trying to make ends meet. There was never enough money for anything extra. I mowed the lawn, did all the household chores and took care of the twins. What I wanted to do was to work outside our home and be in business. I was twenty-two years old and wanted to conquer the world, not take care of babies. Those days were, perhaps, the worst days of my life.

My parents told me that good mothers didn't work outside the home. I tried to be a full-time homemaker, but I just didn't like the idea of staying home. I was a young, sharp woman whom, I believed, could do so much more with my life than watching babies sleep and washing dirty diapers.

As my frustration grew, so did my weight. After ten o'clock in the morning, I had nothing to do but eat and watch soap

operas. When I played with the twins, they seemed more interested in each other than they did with me. It was obvious that they didn't need me to play with them. I began to cry a lot and became very depressed.

There was a family, next door, with a seventeen-year-old son in high school. His parents worked long hours and he was lonely when he came home from school. One day, he came over and asked if he could play with the twins, now two years old, cute as can be and totally identical. The answer, of course, was yes. This gave me an opportunity to do whatever I wanted without having to be constantly aware of what the twins were doing.

This handsome young man took the twins into our back yard each day and played with them for two hours or more. Soon, this was a ritual, which gave me something to look forward to each day. In order to keep him coming back every day, I had to do my hair and makeup so that I wouldn't seem like such a mess and scare him away.

One day, I could no longer take the frustration and loneliness caused by staying home all the time. My parents came over and found me in a closet, with the door closed, rolled up in a ball, sobbing uncontrollably. They finally agreed with my husband and me that I was not helping the twins in my current mental state. They further agreed that I could get a job and that nursery school would indeed be better for both the twins and me.

After three years of staying home, I quickly found a part-time job. Now I could work and still spend time at home with the twins. I lost weight quickly and once again became the normal, happy Winnie that I was before the twins were born. Everyone was happy. The twins loved daycare and Mel was happy because I was happy.

Miracles Unaware

To honor my godly parents, and the traditions of motherhood forty-plus years ago, it had seemed important to me to stay home with the twins. I don't think that it really made any difference in the twins' lives. The miracle is that, during my three horrible years of staying home, God sent this young man to give me a reason to live.

Why did this wonderful young man want to play with my babies every day? I watched him playing with them; rolling a ball, putting blocks together and playing with their little cars. Since it wasn't a normal thing for a teenage boy to do, I believe that God gave him the desire. I believe that this young man saved me from a nervous breakdown and that God had orchestrated the entire situation.

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

According to Romans 8:28 (NASB): "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

God had a plan for Winnie, perhaps totally different from the plans He had for others she knew, that was surely different from the plans that her family had for her.

Perhaps the teenager was an angel unaware, sent as God's messenger to help at just the right time. As it states in Hebrews 13:2 (NIV): "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it."*

*The scriptures quoted were taken from various translations: New International Version (NIV) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB), both modern translations of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XVI

Summer Fun or Disaster

We lived in Bell, California, during the summer of 1966 and, with no air conditioning, the hot summer days were really getting to me. Thursdays were the best day of the week for me because one of my neighbors, who had a car, would take her daughter, the twins and me to Mother's Beach. It was the best of both worlds; I could cool off and also have the company of another mother.

One had to be very creative to be the mother of twins and still maintain your sanity. The twins, who were three years old, were always full of energy so I figured out a way to relax, sitting in my beach chair close to the water.

I tied a rope around each of the twin's waists, just long enough to reach the shallow water. The other end was tied to my beach chair so that, at all times, I had complete control. The twins didn't mind because it gave them lots of freedom to play in the water and sand. What fun this was for both the boys and me, we were so happy at the beach together. I believe that this routine that went on for several weeks was the best of my time alone at home with the twins.

On this particular Thursday, it was an extremely beautiful day. The water was warm, the sky was clear blue and the temperature was perfect. One of the mothers, who brought her children to the beach almost daily, had nine children. Talk about organization, she was the master!

On this great day, we were all getting ready to leave at the same time, even the mother with her nine children. There was a lot of confusion, all of us packing up to go home. All of a sudden, I realized that my darling, my three-year-old Rory, with his blond hair and blue eyes, was missing.

I really was a good mother, watching my boys very, very carefully. I panicked. I still had Richard, but Rory had gotten loose from his rope and was gone. I began calling out Rory's name, loudly, and asking Richard, where was his brother? Richard got upset with me and, of course, didn't know where Rory had gone.

Did someone kidnap Rory or did he go into deeper water and drown? We got the lifeguard and all of the mothers stopped what they were doing to help me search. How could this great day turn into such a nightmare?

One of the mothers kept Richard while I frantically searched for Rory. God answers prayer and God was my only hope to find my son. Some of the other mothers began to leave and I still hadn't found Rory.

I began to really pray. As I was praying, I was becoming hysterical, since it was beginning to get dark by now. I walked away from the others, down by the water's edge, praying in God's Holy Spirit to find my son.

I walked quite a long way from the others toward a pier. I looked up and there, looking over the edge, was a cute little blond boy looking as though he was ready to jump into the water. I ran to him and thanked God for saving Rory's life.

There was no one around. If he had jumped, no one would have seen or helped him.

I would never have thought to look for Rory so far from our usual beach spot. Was it a coincidence that I had walked such a long way? As I walked, I was earnestly praying to God for help and guidance. Could His Holy Spirit have led me to Rory? Now Rory had been saved twice by God, once at birth and again today at the beach. Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Little Rory was lost to his frantic mother, but not to God. His eye was on this precious, little three-year-old who was seeking adventure. God sent His angels to keep charge of him until Winnie was led to him. Psalm 91:11(NIV) "For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go."*

* NIV refers to the New International Version of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XVII

The VW Bug

Taking care of the house, active twin boys and my husband was a big job. I usually slept like a log. Mel was exhausted, working long hours to make ends meet. He left the house, to go to work, at 4 AM each morning.

I got my best sleep between 4 AM and 7 AM, so I never woke up or heard him leave the house. It was raining that February morning and, at exactly 4:15 AM, I woke up and sat straight up in bed. I had a terrible feeling that something was very, very wrong.

I never wake up very easily and I can't think straight until I have two cups of coffee. But this particular morning I was wide awake, alert and fear gripped me from the inside out. I had no idea why I felt this way; all that I could think to do was to pray.

There were no cell phones in those days and I didn't want to wake my parents just because I had this weird feeling. I began to pray fervently, like I have never done before. I asked God for His guidance, help and protection. The house was dark and still, except for my heart that was pounding wildly. After twenty minutes or so of prayer, I became calm and fell back asleep.

When Mel arrived home from work that evening, I told him what had happened to me that morning. Mel is very protective of me and he often kept bad things to himself so as not to hurt or upset me.

He told me, after I had shared my experience with him, what had happened to him at 4:30 that morning. He was in our VW Bug, in the fast lane of the freeway, going about seventy miles per hour. The freeway was wet, from the rain, and was virtually empty that early in the morning.

Suddenly, a large car, in front of Mel, spun out and spun around several times, just missing Mel and the little VW. During the car's spins, Mel could do nothing, not knowing which way the car would spin. Mel said that he was sure that his life would end, at 4:30 in the morning, on that wet freeway. Finally, the spinning car stopped, just inches from our little VW.

Was Mel just lucky that he didn't get killed? Did I just happen to wake up and decide to pray at that particular moment? Or was this another divine miracle, on that dreary February morning, where the Holy Spirit woke me up so that I could intercede prayerfully for Mel's protection? Could this have been another miracle unaware?

Commentary

Ephesians 6:18 informs us that we should pray, both in our own language and also in the Spirit. Mel was surely protected through Winnie's prayers and supplications.

How wonderful that we can not only receive the blessings of God's presence, while we pray, but that through our prayers we release God's protection over our loved ones. Peter and Paul often

urged believers to pray for one another, in our own understanding and the gift of intercession that the Spirit imparts to us.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Lasting Ride

One afternoon, Mel and I were in the little VW taking a ride just to get away from the house. Mel was very depressed. It was hard to make enough money to support the four of us.

Although getting Mel to share his feelings is never easy, I knew that I had to find out why he was so unhappy. His job, in a credit agency in Los Angeles, was all right, but it didn't pay much. In order to make more, he would have to become a manager, and becoming a manager meant moving to Texas, Arizona or Florida.

We were both young and all of our relatives and friends were in California. Mel really didn't want to move and he really didn't like his job that much. We were completely frustrated. Jobs were hard to come by in those days and, with the expense of the twins, Mel definitely needed a better job. We really didn't know what to do.

I asked Mel, "What would you do if you could do anything that you wanted to do?" Of course, his answer was football, baseball, basketball, any kind of sports. Unfortunately, although

he loved sports, Mel didn't have the talent or the ability to make a living playing professional sports. He didn't have contacts to get him into coaching or sports administration either. So that option was out!

After talking it over, and trying to figure out what to do, we began to pray. As we drove around in our little VW, we cried and prayed for God's guidance. Eventually, the idea of teaching and coaching at a school came to us. But how could Mel quit his job and go back to school to get a teaching degree?

This was at the same time that I was going crazy at home and wanted to go back to work. But God had a plan for our life.

Mel's aunt and uncle owned a dry cleaning business and they wanted to retire. Since they wanted no down payment and allowed us low monthly payments, it wasn't long until we were able to buy the business. I went to work and Mel quit his credit agency job to run the cleaning business. This allowed him to go to school to get his teaching degree.

Talk about long hours and hard work. Life was not easy before but now it was impossible. We had full days: getting the kids up, fed, dressed and to daycare; keeping the house clean and meals made; and Mel studying and going to school, full time, while running a business. All this created an extreme stress on us all and was almost impossible.

At 3:00 AM, Mel went to work at the cleaners, then to school at 6:00 AM. At school, he studied for two hours, went to classes until early afternoon and then drove to the cleaners to work until 7:30 at night. Then he came home for dinner and went to bed. He did this over and over again for three long years.

Those years took their toll on Mel. Only God could have given him the strength and stamina to carry that heavy load.

Miracles Unaware

Under that stress, no family could have made it physically, mentally and emotionally, if it weren't for God. He sent us on this path that began on the ride, in our little VW Bug, and changed our lives.

The day that Mel graduated from college was the best day in our lives. Mel went on to enjoy his teaching and coaching careers for over twenty years, until he retired to manage our investments.

This was surely a miracle unaware.

Commentary

As we read about this memory, we can remember many such crossroads in our lives. 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB) "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." This passage reminds us that in these situations, God is very near to us and we find His grace is sufficient and His power is perfected in our weakness.*

James 1:5,6 (NASB) "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." This verse also speaks of not trying to work out seemingly impossible situations, but to turn to God and He is eager to give us the wisdom we need.*

* NASB refers to the New American Standard Bible, a modern translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XIX

10 x 16 = One Little Green Boat

We had gone on vacation with our friends Wanda and Larry Shelton and their three young children. Our twins were nearly ten years old and we had our new baby, Chris, with us. The Shelton children's ages were approximately six, nine and ten. The weather was nice, the kids were great and everyone was having fun.

What a great time we were having on our Lake Shasta vacation! How we all crammed into our sixteen foot motor boat is still a mystery to me. We all loved driving the boat and skiing on beautiful Lake Shasta.

The cabin that we rented was much smaller than advertised, but we fit all ten people into a two-bedroom, 650 square foot cabin. We moved mattresses around and Wanda and Larry found that the laundry room made a great guest bedroom, with its open bathroom nearby.

The evenings were so breathtakingly beautiful that we decided to go on a sunset cruise in our little motorboat. We enjoyed a nice dinner and then the ten of us, once again,

Miracles Unaware

managed to find a seat in the little green boat for our sunset cruise. After a few tries, Mel started the boat's motor and off we went into a gorgeous sunset.

As we started our cruise the sun immediately disappeared and there was no moon or visible stars. I never remember seeing a night as dark and as black as that night. In the darkness we realized that we were in the mountains, on a deep, dark, lake with only a few life jackets and six small children.

Fear crept through all of us. Wanda couldn't swim and we had the baby, Chris, too. Even if we could swim it was so dark, and we were so disoriented, that we didn't know the direction of the closest shore.

The children were so frightened that we never heard a peep out of any of them. Mel turned off the motor because there were a lot of rocks in the lake. If we hit one, the boat would sink. Here we were, ten souls, stranded in a small boat, on a pitch black night.

We were in a remote area and we couldn't see any lights on the water or on the shore. Frozen in fear we had no idea what to do, so we began to pray to the Lord, earnestly and respectfully. We asked forgiveness for risking our lives, and those of our families, and that He would save us from drowning or floating away where we could not be found.

After our prayer, Mel remembered that we had a ski on board. He found it and began to paddle. We had to do something! All of this disaster occurred within five minutes of leaving shore, but it seemed as though hours had passed. As Mel paddled, our worst fear happened; we hit something big and hard! Mel insisted that he would go overboard, into the water, to assess the situation.

Wanda was silent with fear and I protested against Mel, and now our friend Larry, jumping into the black, icy water. Both

Mel and Larry took deep breaths and jumped into the water, up to their waists, that is. It appeared that we were on a shallow, hard surface. Mel, an astute boater, realized that we were on a launching ramp, with our boat squarely in the middle. In the blackness of the night, Mel and Larry pulled the boat out of the water and we all got out of the boat safely.

Was it a coincidence that we floated onto a launching ramp, positioned just right to pull the boat out of the water? Could the angels of the Lord, in response to our prayer, have placed our little boat safely on the launching ramp? Who kept the little children quiet and calm during our sunset cruise?

Could it have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

The story Winnie related reminds us of Paul, the Apostle, in Acts 27 and 28. Paul was under arrest, on his way to be tried in Rome, which meant that he would have been chained to the officer in charge of the expedition. The ship ran into a terrible storm, which was quite common during the months the ship traveled to Rome.

God had spoken to Paul already and told him that, although the ship would be lost, no harm would come to anyone on the ship. God surely sent His angels to protect the Longs, the Sheldons and their young children. Again, we must think of Psalm 91:11,12 and God's protective power.

CHAPTER XX

Maui and the Jewels

Vacations are always fun, but they are even better when shared with family and friends. We were enjoying one such vacation with my cousin Lee, his family and his friends, the Smiths. Christian family and friends are a blessing from God. We talked and laughed together and had a wonderful time.

Our youngest son, Christopher, had a friend that I wasn't too sure about. I felt that he was not a good influence on Christopher. We were leaving for Maui and, as always happens when we tried to go somewhere, my real estate business got extremely busy.

At the last minute, I realized that I had forgotten to take my good jewelry to the safety deposit box at the bank, and now it was too late. I didn't want to leave the jewelry at home since Chris' friend knew that we would be away. There were some things that had been missing in the past and I suspected Chris' friend had taken them. So, I gathered up all my jewelry and put it in my purse intending to take it with me to Maui. It was my intent to always keep it with me and to never leave it in our Maui condo.

Snorkeling in Maui was a must! In 1979, Slaughter Beach was a somewhat hidden, out-of-the-way, private beach that you had to crawl down a hill to get to. I had my purse with all my good jewelry, my wallet and money, travelers' checks, Mel's wallet, my rings, watch, a small keepsake gold coin necklace and some other things in it. To be sure that no one would steal my purse while we were snorkeling, I put it in the car's trunk and off we went. It was hard to crawl down the steep cliff to the beach and I could barely make it even though I only had my swimsuit and a towel. I felt secure with all my jewelry, money and valuables locked in the car's trunk.

It was a great snorkeling day! We snorkeled and swam, looking at all the fabulous fish in the crystal clear blue water until we were completely exhausted. It became windy and the sand that had gotten into my tangled hair and swimsuit ground into my body. As we headed for the car, Mel and I were two dripping wet, sticky, yucky messes. Our hair was sticking straight up and I had no makeup on my sandy face.

When we got to the car something about the trunk didn't look right. When we opened it, to our amazement, it was totally empty. My purse, with all my jewelry, our wallets with our drivers' licenses and the golf clubs were gone. Mel and I were physically exhausted from our fun and the emotional strain of the loss was almost too much. Here we were with only our towels and swimsuits. Fortunately Mel had the car keys.

Since there were no cell phones in those days, we were told to go immediately to the police station. Our vacation had just started and here we were with no money, credit cards or identification, and no way to get money without them. Cousin Lee loaned us sixty dollars and we headed for the Lahina Police Station, crushed and feeling violated.

Miracles Unaware

It was embarrassing to go into the police station dressed and looking as we did. What messes we were, wearing only swimsuits and towels. I didn't know if the police would believe us without identification. My cousin Lee was a Police Captain in Fullerton, so they knew that we were telling the truth when Lee vouched for us.

The police told us that there was a gang of burglars working Slaughter Beach, waiting for people to leave things in their cars. Since the area was remote and the parking area couldn't be seen from the beach, it was the perfect setup for burglary. A look-out could hide in the thick foliage and watch for police and people returning to their cars. The police told us that it was highly unlikely that we would ever see our things again.

It was very likely that the thieves were on a plane already, on their way to Honolulu to unload my jewelry. So many special items were in my jewelry. One piece was a beautiful ruby ring that I had borrowed from Mel's mother, just for that trip.

The police took our report and I gave them a description of some of the items. They suggested that I might check the Wailuku pawn shops, but they didn't think that anything would surface anytime soon. What a start to our vacation this was. This was our third day on Maui and we were scheduled to be there for almost a month.

Our next job was to cancel all of our credit cards and get replacement traveler's checks. Fortunately, I had made a list of all of my credit cards and their information before I left. I had given the list to my bookkeeper and I had left the traveler's check information with my son. Returning to the condo, we set all the wheels in motion, cancelling the cards and checks. We also notified the California DMV of the stolen licenses.

The day's experiences had left us totally devastated, physically exhausted and at our wits' end. My cousin Lee and his

wife Barbara, and our friends the Smiths all began to pray for us and our situation. We could feel the intercession of their prayers in our behalf.

The prayers continued for the next two days and the gloom began to lift. Although it had been a huge loss, God is good and He allowed me to keep my wedding rings. Fortunately, I had them on while we were snorkeling. It was my most expensive piece of jewelry and it had a lot of sentimental value.

We had spent two days after the burglary visiting every pawnshop on the island. I specifically remembered my relatives' and friends' prayers asking God to restore what was lost and to give me peace.

That peace came through their prayers. Three days after the burglary, we received a telephone call from a lady in Napili. She told me that she had found my purse and wallet. She called the phone number in my wallet, reaching my son who gave her our number in Hawaii.

She told us that she had been jogging and had found my purse with our licenses, checks and credit cards still in it. It was a relief to get back our licenses, credit cards and checks, even though we had already canceled them.

Why had the thieves not taken the checks and credit cards?

The next year, in Maui, we once again met Cousin Lee and his family. We now owned a condo together and it was exciting fixing it up. We heard about an auction in Wailea and decided to go.

There weren't very many people there and we were able to sit in the front row. We had just had dinner and were happy and relaxed as the auction began. The first items were all jewelry. There was a beautiful ruby ring and a sapphire ring with diamonds. The first up for bid was the ruby ring and it appeared to be worth well over a thousand dollars.

Miracles Unaware

I started the bidding with a bid of one hundred dollars. The auctioneer wasn't very happy with that low bid; he wanted to set the tone for the entire auction. Someone bid one hundred fifty and I bid another fifty. There were no further bids and the auctioneer finalized the sale at two hundred. The same thing occurred with the sapphire ring and I got it at an unheard of low price. Both rings were of higher quality and value than I had paid for them.

God quickened my mind and I remembered my friends' prayers from the year before; that God would restore what was lost. Could it be just a coincidence that I got those fabulous rings for such a paltry price, in Maui, the same place I had been when I lost everything?

The second year after the burglary, I went to a swap meet in Kahului. I was looking to replace a small gold coin similar to the one that has been stolen. I found just what I had been looking for, at only twenty dollars. Again prayers were answered and I have worn that coin for over twenty years.

A few years later, I was on Front Street, in Lahina, where a new jewelry store had just opened. The Vietnamese owner was anxious to make his first day successful and very superstitious that he must sell his first customer, me, at any cost. I bought a very large, most beautiful pearl ring for only two hundred fifty dollars. The ring should have sold for at least ten times that amount. How did I happen to be in his store on just the right day and at just the right time? Could the Holy Spirit have guided me? God had restored what was lost and He has given me so much more.

I have become good friends with that Jeweler in Maui. Each year, he has something special for me at an unbelievably low price. God has a way of rewarding those who are good to His

people. It seems that every time I go into his store, it fills with customers by the time I leave.

My jewelry collection continues to grow every time I go to Maui, and now far exceeds the value of the jewelry stolen all those many years ago. I remember the prayers of my friends and their asking that what was lost be restored. My Maui experience is a definite miracle: I will never be convinced otherwise.

Was all that happened to me a coincidence, or was it from God? I don't believe that it was a coincidence; I believe that it was a miracle unaware.

Commentary

Luke 15:4-6 is good background story to consult to remind us that, after we seemingly have suffered a loss, we should actually rejoice. We know that the Lord will step into the situation and make His presence and power known.

God had a plan to return the lost jewelry, and even more, to Winnie. Surely not only Winnie and Mel rejoiced, but their family and friends did also. He takes care of His own.

CHAPTER XXI

The Greatest Miracle

It has been one year since I began writing this book. God has allowed me to witness a situation that is prompting me to write this chapter and, although this chapter is out of order, I believe it needs to be written now, and only God knows why.

Wow, were we happy! Richard, our most helpful son and eldest twin (by three minutes), announced that he and his wife, Kathleen, were expecting a second child, a son. Big brother, Jason, was three years old and loved by all. It had been a very difficult time for Richard and his wife. Kathleen had experienced death, up close, with the quick and untimely death of her beloved father three years ago. He was only in his fifties when cancer took him in a very short time.

Kathleen's family experienced a tremendous loss with the passing of her father. Since the family believed in and acknowledged God, as He often does, He sent them a surprise replacement; their first son, Jason. Now Kathleen was working and life was exciting, waiting for the new baby. I have seen this many times—is it a coincidence or is it God's miracle for the grieving family?

Then, in the eighth month of pregnancy, came that terrible day. A late test showed that something was terribly wrong. A second test was performed and Kathleen was quickly sent to specialists for more testing. It was confirmed that the baby was abnormal. Its head was oversized and it had spina bifida; a congenital defect where part of the spinal column would not be closed. The doctors predicted that the baby would be a vegetable, without any control of bodily functions or the ability to think or speak. The wonderful life that Richard, Kathleen and Jason had was crashing down around them before their eyes.

Kathleen was seen by specialists and nothing could be done. Arrangements would have to be made for special care, probably institutionalization. Richard was sick with worry. He would accept what God gave him and he would take care of his son, trying not to institutionalize him. I cannot put into words the depth of pain felt by both sides of the family and of the tears that were shed.

Christian friends rallied to our side. They prayed and held us up before God. The plumber that Richard uses in our business is very busy, but he left his business to run itself so that he could spend many hours praying with Richard. God gave Richard a Christian brother to help him face this terrible situation.

The delivery date was only two weeks away and the enormous grief, caused by this terrible situation, began to weigh on me personally. It was not the loss of a child, but the effect it would have on Richard, Kathleen, little Jason, and the extended families. It also hurt me deeply because I don't like to be around sick or handicapped people because I feel so sorry for them.

Mel and I went to a lovely outdoor restaurant in La Quinta, California. While there, a family, father, mother, teen aged boy

and a severely handicapped daughter, came into the restaurant. The daughter appeared to have many of the same abnormalities that the doctors were telling Richard and Kathleen that their baby would have. The girl could not speak and she sounded like a puppy crying.

The mother tried to comfort the now almost-grown, handicapped child while her older teenage brother ran to the car to get equipment that she needed. None of them could enjoy the beauty of the mountains, the warm sun, have a friendly conversation or enjoy the delicious food. Suddenly, before anyone could eat, the father had the food packaged and they all left.

Was this the life that Richard, Kathleen and Jason had to look forward to? The reality and the similarity of the situation was so heavy on my heart that I stayed home from work the next day, which was something I never, ever did. I began to pray for my son's family like I have never prayed before.

I loved my life and those things which God had given me: we lived on the water in Huntington Harbor; we had a large yacht tied to our dock; we had two Mercedes in the garage; and we had vacation condos in Maui and Palm Desert. I loved my work and had built a very successful company, but the more that I prayed the more none of these things mattered. I realized that many peoples' lives wouldn't be the same after this baby was born.

I agonized in prayer until I reached the point where I was ready for God to take my life, if only Richard's son would be normal. I gave my life to the Lord, then and there, for Richard's son. I wanted to spare Richard's family the misery of living all of their lives with a seriously disabled child.

Kathleen was very close to delivery and arrangements had been made to deliver the child by caesarian section. There were

specialists of all kinds in the operating room, each with their own assistants.

Richard was allowed to be present and he said that the room was full of top medical professionals who had established the fact that a seriously disabled baby would be delivered. The air was tense as Mel and I gathered in the waiting room with the family, expecting the worst.

Prayers had gone up to God from our family, many friends and different ministers who knew us personally. I really didn't have the fear that I had that day when I had offered my life in Richard's son's place. As we waited for news of the baby, God's presence was with us.

After a short time, Richard came running out of the operating room yelling, "The baby is normal, he's fine!" "Hurry, come with me and you can see him in the elevator. They're taking him to the Nursery." The next thing I knew, we were all in the elevator looking at our new baby, Aaron. He was perfect and wasn't even in an incubator.

To this day Aaron is physically and mentally perfect. He had one visit to a specialist, when he was about eight weeks old, and all was as it should have been. In fact, at ten years of age, he is the number one star on his sports teams and he gets straight "A's" in school.

How could this have happened with today's modern health care? All of the tests and special care were paid by Kathleen's health insurance, through Orange County where she worked. How could so many tests have been wrong and so many specialists misdiagnose the matter? Were all of the specialists wrong, did they all make mistakes?

Why had they been so adamant about the condition of the baby? Why would they all have shown up at the hospital for the delivery if they didn't believe in the accuracy of the tests? Could

Miracles Unaware

the test results have been correct and could God have healed that baby prior to delivery?

Why did God not take me immediately after I had offered my life for Aaron's, sparing Richard's family from a lifetime of sorrow? It's now ten years later and I'm still alive and Aaron is still in wonderful health. Now I know the reason. Only in His time will He take my life, or anyone else's life.

The biggest miracle of all cannot be disputed. It is that a ten-year-old boy is alive and well. Multiple doctors did not make mistakes on multiple tests. God is the giver of life and the healer of a now ten-year-old boy. There is not even a question or doubt in my mind that this is a true miracle from God. It was and is a miracle unaware.

Commentary

Winnie relates a miracle that we all can understand and appreciate. There is always so much excitement and anticipation when a baby is expected. Loved ones and friends begin to think of names and buy gifts for the little one.

When the doctor has to tell the expectant couple that their baby appears to be abnormal, and the couple has to wait several months for the birth of the baby, it makes such an announcement doubly hard to take. Luke 18:27, as well as other scriptures, boldly states that nothing is impossible with God.

In Matthew, chapter 6, and particularly verse 6:6 (NIV), we are told: "But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you and pray to your Father secretly. Then your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you."*

* The scriptures quoted were taken from the New International Version (NIV), a modern translation of the Holy Bible.

Winnie has mentioned Camp Cedar Crest several times in this book. We remember a chorus that we used to sing around the campfire at Victory Circle, "Steal away softly to Jesus. To Him let thy heart be outpoured and the father, who sees in secret, will give thee a precious reward."

God didn't want to negotiate with Winnie about her life, versus the baby's condition. He just wanted her to know how it felt to surrender to His will. He saw her sincerely offer up in secret and rewarded her with the birth of a healthy baby.

CHAPTER XXII

My Best Friend Joe

My real estate business was growing. As a result, I was so busy and stressed that I knew I needed help. Busy, in real estate parlance, doesn't always mean that you're making money. In addition to being very busy, my office with over fifty agents was very difficult to manage. Although I didn't have the money, I decided that I had to hire a manager. I began to look around and, as I looked, I prayed.

Real estate agents were coming to me wanting to place their licenses with my company, Long Realty. One such agent was Doralee, who was well known and successful. Normally, a broker takes all qualified, experienced agents but, for some reason, I turned down her request. At the time, I didn't know why, I just didn't accept Doralee.

It wasn't too long after that one of the local brokers and his wife parted company and the wife kept their office. I had one or two business dealings with the husband, Joe Hayek, in earlier years. So, I called Joe and asked him if he would come to my office and discuss the possibility of becoming my office manager.

Joe came to see me and I told him that I really didn't have much money to offer, but I would be pleased to have him as a manager. Amazingly, he accepted the very small salary and came to help me.

Joe was worth a hundred times more than the small salary I paid him. He worked seven days a week for ten to twelve hours per day. The agents loved him and he became a personal friend to many of them. Joe also became my confidant and the best personal friend I have ever had; caring personally for me, my family and our business.

After about twelve years, business in general became very difficult. Joe and I were exhausted and I was nearly broke. During those hard times, one of our agents, Joan Barnes, would come in after hours. Joan, Mel and I would pray over each desk and its occupant. Then we would join hands and pray, specifically for Joe, in his office.

Money was tight. It worried me because I knew that I would have to let Joe go. I couldn't afford to pay him, but at the same time I knew that he needed money to live. God answered our prayers and I didn't have to let Joe go. He and Terri, one of our agents, started their own small company. When a manager leaves there are often hard feelings between the manager and the broker. There weren't any hard feelings between Joe and I and we have always been friends.

Joe and I both wanted to go to the Palm Springs area and slow down. Joe had grown up in Palm Springs and Mel and I loved the desert environment with its warm weather. Joe was thrilled when he got a job managing a large mobile home park in Cathedral City. We liked the area so well that we sold our home in Huntington Beach, bought a home in La Quinta and commuted to work four days a week.

Miracles Unaware

Joe, Mel and I became very close and we always had lunch together every weekend. Joe helped us so much; he was always there for us. He helped us move furniture or anything that we needed with his little cream-colored pickup.

Although we knew that Joe believed in God, we thought he was a non-practicing Catholic. We never discussed religion although Joe knew that Mel and I were Christians. When Mel and I were in the desert, we attended Desert Chapel and, since the Chapel was very close to his home, we invited Joe to go to church with us. It wasn't long until it became a regular occurrence. Joe would go to church with us and then we would all go to lunch.

Soon Joe accepted Jesus as his personal savior and he began to read the Bible intensely. I have never seen anyone study the Bible like Joe did, it was truly amazing.

Mel and I had just returned from our annual month of vacation in Maui and we were anxious to see Joe and tell him about our trip. When we called him, he told us that he was having difficulty seeing at night and he wouldn't be able to see us until the next day.

Joe was very concerned about his eyes but he had no insurance or money to consult a doctor. Mel and I decided to give Joe the money that he needed the next week. But it turned out that Joe didn't need our money, he got insurance through the Downey Board of Realtors. When Joe saw the doctor, the news wasn't good, he was going blind. It came on so fast! Over a period of four to six weeks, and several laser eye surgeries, Joe had completely lost his sight.

One weekend, with Mel's mother and aunt in the car with us, we drove to Phoenix for Mel's cousin's funeral. When we reached Palm Desert, I felt that we should call Joe. But it wasn't

until I spoke with him that I realized that he was totally blind. He was also alone and out of food.

Mel and I had taken Joe to the market two weeks earlier, but he had finished that food long ago. Joe never asked for anything or complained. On this occasion, I asked him, "What can we do for you?" and he replied, "A big cheeseburger, fries and a large shake would be great." We got him the cheeseburger, fries and shake and then went to the market and got him enough provisions for a few days, until we could make plans to give him more help.

Joe wasn't only my best friend; he was a good friend to many others. One close friend was Terri, whom he had been in business with after working for me. Terri loved Joe as much as Mel and I did, but as a single woman she was very busy earning a living. She had no idea how bad off Joe really was, and, when she found out, she helped Joe and his daughters tremendously.

Joe's neighbors at the mobile home park soon realized the seriousness of his condition. One man, in particular helped Joe to get disability insurance and the financial aid that he needed. With his help, Joe went to the Braille Institute, in Palm Springs, so that he could learn to function on his own.

Joe was always upbeat and never complained. His many friends rallied around him and each helped in a different way. One such friend was Joan Barnes, our agent friend who had prayed with us years earlier and who had been with us when Joe was the office manager.

Joan owned a small apartment building and, although I knew that Joan's apartment never had vacancies, I called her to see if she had an apartment that Joe could rent. Amazingly, someone had just moved out and Joan rented the apartment to Joe at a reduced rate that he could afford. Joan kept track of

him assuring that he was always all right. He lived three years in Joan's apartment and never had a complaint.

Three years after Joe became blind, he became ill and was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He never complained, and, within six weeks of his diagnosis, he died. Joe's daughters could never understand why he was not hysterical or even upset when he was told he was dying from cancer?

Joe's funeral was very large for a single man who had been blind for over three years. Friends came from Hawaii and all over. Joe's older cousin spoke and it became clear that he had prayed, for many years, for Joe to know the Lord. I spoke and then others did as well. There was no doubt that Joe's cousin's prayer had been answered and that Joe knew the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior.

Can you find miracles in the life of my friend Joe?

1. Why didn't I accept Doralee, who was Joe's first wife, as an agent? She was well qualified and I could always have used a good agent, especially when business was bad. I had never, or had very rarely, refused to accept a new sales agent. Could it have been God's Holy Spirit telling me not to accept Doralee? If I had accepted her as an agent, Joe wouldn't have wanted to make her uncomfortable and wouldn't have accepted my offer to be the office manager. Is it a coincidence or does God really prepare solutions and paths that we should follow?
2. Why did Joe accept the office manager's position for such a low salary? When God put Joe and me together, in a sales deal years ago, we had learned that our personalities fit. Was it so that, someday, He could bring us together again?

3. Why did Joan come back to the office, on a routine basis at eight o'clock at night, to pray with Mel and me? Knowing that Joe needed prayer, could God have spoken, first to Joan, and then to us? Does God have us pray for situations that we will face in the future? Was it just a coincidence that Joan wanted us to pray especially for Joe when he had no special need at that time?
4. Did Joe and Terri's business just happen when it did, or could God have planned the timing to correspond with our needs?
5. Was it a coincidence that Mel and I ended up in Palm Springs at the same time as Joe, or was this part of God's plan for our lives? We went to church for years in Santa Fe Springs and never invited Joe to join us. Why did we ask Joe to join us in Palm Desert, where he accepted the Lord? Could it have been God's divine direction?
6. Why did Joe have such a hunger for the Word that he read his Bible so much? Was it because God allowed him to hide His word, deep in his heart, because He knew that Joe would eventually lose his sight?
7. Why did I call Joe, when we had a car full of people, on our way to a funeral? Was it a coincidence that Joe's friend Terri and his mobile home park friends helped Joe so much? Or did God give them the desire and knowledge to help Joe?
8. Did God have His hand in keeping Joe's membership in the Downey Board of Realtors, so the he was able to purchase health insurance before seeing the doctor?

Miracles Unaware

9. Why did Joan have a vacancy just when Joe needed an apartment? Why would she accept less than the market rate when she, as a single woman who had just lost her husband, needed the rental income? Could the Holy Spirit have influenced Joan and told her to do this act of kindness?

10. Why wasn't Joe afraid when he found out that he had stomach cancer? Could it have been because he has God's Word hidden in his heart and peace from God?

God answers our prayers in miraculous ways: Joe's cousin's prayer was answered resulting in Joe's salvation; Joan's prayers were answered for Joe's life; and my prayers were answered for a wonderful and capable office manager.

It has been less than sixty days since I wrote that my best friend, Joe Hayek, had died. Our loss has been great, but the prayers that have been answered and the miraculous things that have occurred give me peace. I know that Joe is with our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. It was and is a miracle unaware.

Commentary

Winnie poses so many questions about Joe, her friend and colleague, which were surely answered through miracles. The Psalms especially impress upon us that God moves to perform His wonders in mysterious and wonderful ways.

As the good shepherd did in John 10, God went onto the highways and byways to find him and bring him to salvation. God's eye was on Joe to save His lost sheep.

God used various means to accomplish Joe's salvation. He graciously used Winnie, Mel, Joan, Terri, Joe's cousin and, I am sure, many others over the years. The Lord also allowed Joe to face many trying circumstances until he finally looked up into the face of Jesus, with eyes of faith although blind physically

Luke 15:1-7 relates an earthly shepherd rejoicing when he finally finds his lost sheep. The passage tells us that all heaven rejoices when one sinner comes to know Jesus as His personal Savior. Paul, the great Apostle, writes in his testimony of his own conversion in Acts 9 and 26, that the Lord kept following Paul and finally confronts him on the road to Damascus.

There is a famous poem by Francis Thompson, titled, "The Hound of Heaven." This poem describes a man who ran away from fear throughout all of his life, but the Hound of Heaven kept following him.

Finally, the man stops running, turns to confront his fear, only to find that it was the Holy Spirit who longed to bring him to Jesus. The man then accepted Jesus the Christ, not as someone to fear, but rather as someone who loved and cared for him. Joe did the same thing and one day found not only peace here on earth, but also eternal life.

CHAPTER XXIII

Captain

A real estate brokerage is very stressful. God blessed me with a wonderful husband who is quiet and very self-contained while I, on the other hand, am an emotional woman who needs lots of attention. When we come home from work, Mel and I are very tired; but I still need emotional attention. Since my children are all grown and active, with children of their own, I thought that a pet was what I needed. But, since Mel isn't crazy about dogs or cats and we travel a lot, any pet that we got would have to be special. That means that it must be: able to travel; easy to care for; not bother Mel too much; and able to put up with me giving it too much love and attention.

When I shared my need for a pet, and all of the associated problems, with my friend Joan Barnes, she surprised me by coming over to my house and praying. Joan's prayer was that God would direct me to the right pet. Since Mel didn't want a pet, I knew that I needed Joan's prayers. Joan prayed and tried to help me find the correct pet by evaluating the available dogs. None were right for Mel and me, so Joan continued to pray.

About that time, one of my daughters-in-law, JoEllen, wanted a new dog for her children. JoEllen found some miniature schnauzer puppies that we might like. She didn't tell me that the puppies were halfway to Las Vegas until two and a half hours later, when we arrived at the breeders' home. The puppies were so cute. Both JoEllen and I picked out little black, male schnauzers, and then off we went for our ride home to face Mel and Rory, JoEllen's husband.

Mel grudgingly accepted the puppy. Since the only reason that Mel accepted the puppy was because he is very nice to me, I thought it would be a good idea to have him name the puppy. That would also help when the puppy misbehaved and might keep Mel from giving the dog away. Since the puppy loved cookies, we lived at the ocean and our last name is Long, Mel named him Captain Cook E. Long.

Usually, I love animals too much and therefore they don't love me as much. Captain, however, was a loving pet and I was his favorite for the first half of his life. Then, for some reason, he chose Mel to be his favorite person for the latter part of his life.

Captain had his puppy moment and, as with all schnauzers, he had a loud, strong, barking voice. He loved to ride in the car and, for the past twelve years, he was a loving traveling companion. Captain has seen more apartments in his lifetime than most commercial brokers. For instance, on a trip to see apartment buildings in Bakersfield, Fresno and Sacramento, he rode with us for twelve hours.

Could Joan Barnes' prayer for the right pet have caused a miracle that led us to find such a true and loving pet? I believe that is the case since I would have never considered a schnauzer as a pet. In fact, I didn't even know what a schnauzer was until

Miracles Unaware

my daughter-in-law took me on that two-and-a-half-hour-long trip to see the miniature schnauzer puppies.

Prior to completing this book, Captain, then twelve years old, suddenly became ill and within two weeks we had to put him to sleep. Mel and I were heartbroken and I personally cried for one whole weekend. In his death, another miracle occurred. Now that I am older, I need to exercise and can't seem to do so. One day, Mel, who never shares his feelings, told me how hard it was to take his daily walks without Captain. Now I am walking daily with Mel and both of us are getting the exercise that we need. Since Captain died, I haven't missed a day walking with Mel.

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

Winnie relates a story that will interest many people because of the natural love that most have for animals. Winnie questions whether such a seemingly insignificant event could be a miracle. If one looks into the scriptures, one will find many miracles that do not appear to be overwhelming, but they still come from the hand of God. We thrill as we read the story of the healing of the leper, as well we should, but we often overlook small miracles such as those in Jesus' parables.

In Matthew 6, the Lord Himself tells us about miracles that are often overlooked, such as how the creatures of the earth are fed and how we too can depend on Him for provision and protection.

Matthew 6:7-11 is also important to read. Winnie's little dog was given to her, by God, to help fulfill a need that she had. He loves to give good gifts to His children (see Psalm 37:4). These special little miracles are called, "God's little love notes."

CHAPTER XXIV

Car Jack

It was a winter day and I was hard at work. Mel and I have offices at different ends of our building so we don't always know what the other is doing. On this particular day we had already returned from lunch and, around four in the afternoon, I realized that Mel was not in the office. I presumed that he had gone to the bank, or on some errand, in our beautiful, sparkling Mercedes-Benz that Mel had just had washed that morning.

Mel had gone to the drugstore, in Downey and parked his car away from the other cars so that it wouldn't get damaged. There was a young man walking alone looking at Mel. As Mel got out of the car, the young man came up to him and said: "Give me your keys." To which Mel replied; "You're crazy, get away!" Then the young man hit Mel in the face, pushed him down and attempted to get Mel's keys.

Mel jumped back up immediately after he was punched. To say that he was angry would have been an understatement. His glasses were falling off and he had fire in his eyes. The area they

Miracles Unaware

were in was remote, not safe and Mel was afraid that the young man might have a gun. Although he doesn't remember what it was, Mel screamed something that caused the young man to turn around and run away. Mel and the car were saved.

Was it just a fluke that a sixty-year-old man could scare away a determined young thief? Or did God give Mel a divine presence that terrified the young man? I choose to believe that God gave Mel a supernatural appearance that terrified the would-be thief.

Mel survived the incident with only a slightly bruised eye and a bruise on his face. Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

This event that occurred in Mel's life shows us the protecting hand of God. The Bible tells us, in Psalm 34:7 (NLT), "For the angel of the Lord guards all who fear Him, and He rescues them."*

Be sure to read 2 Kings 6:15, about Elisha and his frightened servant. We see in the book of Daniel, that God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions so that they could not hurt Daniel. Even the heathen king realized that it was the power of Daniel's God that saved him.

The much-read story of Paul being taken by ship to Rome (Acts 27:22-24) tells us that God protected both Paul and all of those with him on the ship. We have heard testimonies by missionaries who personally encountered God's protecting hand when an angel came to their aid. Mel's experience's outcome was surely a miracle from the hand of God.

* NLT refers to the New Living Translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XXV

Rescue Surprise

What a great time we had with our friends, Bruce and Linda Covington, at the little mountain cabin in Big Bear. It had snowed and snowed and through it all we enjoyed our wonderful friends and the gorgeous, snow-covered mountains.

Early Sunday evening, in order to be sure to make it to work on Monday morning, we headed down the mountain. There was a break in the weather as we piled into Mel's van and decided to take the back way to avoid Sunday traffic.

We were all very happy and relaxed, enjoying the heavy snow and the way that it covered the tree branches. Suddenly, as we turned a corner, it began snowing again, heavily. Our happiness turned to caution as Mel's van began to slip and slide with each turn. We passed a few other vehicles that were proceeding cautiously and some that had skidded off the side of the road.

Miracles Unaware

We could no longer see through the heavy snow and soon caution turned to fear. Because our van was slipping and sliding, we couldn't turn around. So, we proceeded forward as best we could. It was so cold, pitch black, and the snow so heavy that we couldn't see anything.

Soon, there was no traffic and fear turned into terror. We realized that with vehicles slipping, sliding and skidding all over, we could be hit from the back, side or head on. If we tried to pull over, or off the road, we might slide down the mountain and never be found.

We approached a small hill and no matter how hard Mel tried, the van wouldn't go up the hill, it just would dangerously slip and slide.

We were stuck and alone, in the middle of a mountain road, and we had no way to contact anyone (this was before cell phones). The cold was becoming unbearable. All we could think to do was to pray. There was no embarrassment between friends as we all prayed that God would protect us, even in our foolishness.

We should have checked the weather forecast and left earlier. At least, we should have told one of our grown children that we were heading home. No one knew where we were and we could literally freeze overnight.

We could be hit by another car, trying to get up or down the hill, in this snowstorm which was now a blizzard. Because the battery was dead, the two men would get out of the car every few minutes to watch for vehicles that might hit us from the front or back. We were shivering, crying, praying, and feeling that our lives might end that night in those freezing mountains.

We all heard a strange sound. Our husbands got out of the car and waved their arms to stop a tiny car that was inching its way up the hill. When the car stopped, we saw a young girl

inside who was sobbing and appeared to be scared to death. She had only one chain on her car and told us that she couldn't get the other one on. As a result, the car was barely moving in the blizzard.

She didn't know that there were two women with the men who stopped her, but she was so frightened that she stopped anyway. She told our husbands to get in the car with her so that she could close her car and keep warm. When Linda and I got out of the van, we saw the relief on her face when she saw us.

Somehow, Mel and Bruce got the other chain on the tiny car and all five of somehow squeezed into a car meant for only two people. We started up the hill and were able to inch back to Big Bear, to warmth and safety.

Was it just a coincidence that the young girl, in her tiny car, showed up just after our prayers? Was it a coincidence that the young girl had no fear of the two men standing in the middle of the road in a blizzard?

Could it have been a coincidence that the weight of four extra people, in that tiny car made for two, gave it sufficient weight to provide the traction necessary to make it move?

Perhaps the young girl was an angel and this was a miracle unaware.

Commentary

The classic definition of the word miracle, as noted in the "Introduction" of this book, was made by C.S. Lewis, the great British writer who states in his book, Miracles: "I use the word miracles to mean an interference with nature by supernatural power."

God was in every seemingly strange thing that happened that day. His ear is ever turned to us (see Psalm 146:1-2 and Isaiah

59:1) and nothing is outside His scope or ability to use even a tiny car and a terrified young lady. The little car, through the power of God, became “The Little Car That Could.”

CHAPTER XXVI

A Not-So Merry Christmas

It was the Christmas season of 1998 and I was busy with the year-end closing of my real estate business. The season also meant attending wonderful Christmas gatherings and preparing for Christmas itself, which is a big deal at the Long household.

One of our favorite get-togethers was the annual Christmas dinner at our church. Mel and I attended the dinner and had a wonderful time. We stopped by my parents’ house on our way home to see my mother because she hadn’t been feeling well.

When we got there, both of my parents were hysterical. Mother had fallen and, when my father couldn’t get her up, they called the paramedics for help. Mel and I stayed with them for an hour or so until they calmed down.

It was about five days before Christmas and mother had just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She was experiencing so much pain that my father couldn’t take care of her anymore, as evidenced by the fall and his inability to get her up again.

Not-So Merry Christmas

Mother didn't want to go to the hospital and, when my father and I called an ambulance, she protested being taken. My father also had cancer and had taken a serious turn for the worse. Mother was admitted to the hospital after the fall and my father was admitted the very next day. Christmas now seemed remote to me.

My mother soon slipped into a coma and my father was so ill that he couldn't even go down the hall to see her. Consequently, my time was spent going between their two rooms.

As a charitable donor to the hospital, I was shocked when they told us we had to move mother to a rest home. It was just three days before Christmas and, even worse, there was a pouring, torrential rain. Mother's doctor told me that the reason that she had to go to a rest home was because she only had a few days to live and the hospital didn't want another death statistic.

There I was, dealing with the critical illnesses of both of my parents and, since I was an only child, without any relatives to help.

I was so busy with my business, the weather was terrible with flooding from the continuous rain and now, with Christmas only three days away, they wanted me to find a rest home for mother. If that wasn't enough, I had three sons, looking forward to Christmas, that I had to take care of. But amazingly I was all right and handling everything, which I believe is a miracle in itself considering the tremendous stress that I was under.

We lived about thirty minutes from the hospital and would stop by each morning before going to the office. It was December 22 when I went to the Nurses' Station and was told that mother was being bathed. I waited a few minutes and then

Miracles Unaware

entered her room. I knew the minute that I entered her room, she was dead. I called the nurse and she confirmed it.

Preparing a funeral, at Christmas in the pouring rain, is not fun. I wanted to bury my mother before Christmas so that the family wouldn't have the funeral hanging over us on the day that she loved. She died on December 22 and her funeral was on Christmas Eve, in the pouring rain. We were amazed at all of the people that attended, in such poor weather, and on Christmas Eve. My father was even at the funeral even though he was very, very ill.

What are some of the miracles in this tragedy?

1. The fact that I felt compelled to stop by my parents' home on the day that they were so ill and needed me.
2. Mother was given a bath before she passed. Knowing my mother, that would have meant a lot to her.
3. Mother died before I had to move her to a nursing home.
4. I didn't crash-and-burn under the stress.
5. I wore my favorite suit to the funeral, the one I had worn on the day she died. It was made of black leather and I felt that I looked very nice in it.
6. I had the best year and made more money in my real estate business than ever before or since.
7. The greatest miracle is that, before I arrived at the hospital on the morning of my mother's death, she had visitors.

One of the older ministers and his wife, who had attended Life Bible College with Mother, had gone to see her. They had no idea how ill she was or that she was in a coma.

They told one of the other ministers, who told me later, that they prayed with Mother. They said that she had raised her hands and prayed out loud with them and what a nice visit they had with her.

There is no question that this was a miracle; that a woman who loved Jesus deeply came out of a coma, raised her hands, prayed out loud and then, after her bath, passed away. Since she was a woman who devoted her life as a minister to the Lord Jesus Christ, God gave my mother a special death.

Was this a series of coincidences? I don't think so at all. Indeed, I believe that these were a series of miracles unaware.

Commentary

The story that Winnie tells in this chapter is a mixture of simple and profound miracles. God cares for His people with a tender compassion and He moves to comfort and sustain them, even ahead of the worst situations, since He knows all things and prepares His people for difficulties to come. John 16:20 tells us that He turns our sorrows into joy.

Psalm 116:15 (NASB) reminds us: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones." How lovely is the word picture of Winnie's mother, coming out of a coma to raise her hands and pray with her friends? The old song, often sung in the past, asks the question, "Does Jesus care?" Over and over, throughout the verses, the chorus declares, "Oh yes He cares, I know He cares; His*

* NASB refers to the New American Standard Bible translation of the Holy Bible.

heart is touched by my grief. When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares.”

CHAPTER XXVII

The Priest

My father lived only four months longer than my mother. Knowing that he might live for some time, his Oncologist put him through a tortuous weekend of morphine overdoses to enable his body to accept morphine until he died. During this horrible weekend, doctors wouldn't see him. He was tied to the bed and acted like a madman to the extent that he ripped off all his clothes.

My Christian friends told me to sit quietly by his bed and to read the Bible to him out loud. As I read God's Word to him, his terrible thrashing stopped. But when I stopped reading, it would start up again.

That weekend may have been the worst in my life. Soon my father's resistance to the drug waned and it kicked in as it was supposed to do. Throughout the rest of his life, until his death, he was reasonably free of pain.

My father and I became extremely close in those last four months. Whenever I thought that I couldn't take anymore,

someone would visit him and I would feel better. Throughout it all, I continued to read God's Word to him.

One night, at about 10:45 PM, I went to the hospital to visit my father. Since everyone at the hospital knew me by now, I was able to visit him at any time. I was often in and out at odd hours and was familiar with the routine on his floor. On this particular night, Mel and I had been out and we stopped by the hospital to see father before heading home.

The minute that we got into the elevator, we sensed that something was different. The entire floor was very quiet with no screaming, moaning or crying. When we got to the Nurses' Station, we knew that something had happened; although, to this day, I'm not sure what it was. There was an odd atmosphere on that nursing unit. One of the nurses said something about my father doing something, singing (Father couldn't carry a tune) or praying maybe. One nurse was grasping a cross around her neck saying that "the priest," meaning my father, had blessed her.

The looks on the faces of all of the nurses were full of peace and serenity. I believe that the Holy Spirit took control of my father that night and that he was used by God in some supernatural way that only those who were present could understand.

Truly, on that night, my father was a High Priest of the Lord. Through him, God gave peace and freedom from pain to what was ordinarily a very critical hospital floor; a floor where seriously ill patients were normally in severe pain and dying.

Everyone, the patients, nurses, janitors and all of the other workers in the hospital, had been touched by the special power of God. The odd feeling was all around. Was it a coincidence that the nurses were clutching crosses and no one was crying?

Miracles Unaware

Did the Holy Spirit bestow on my father a special blessing that was felt by all?

Do supernatural things occur through God's Holy Spirit? I believe that if you were to have asked any of the patients, nurses and staff, on that hospital floor that one special night, the answer would have been, "Yes!"

Why did merely reading the Bible out loud, in the presence of my father, calm his drug-tortured body? Could there truly be power in God's Word itself?

Could this have been a miracle unaware?

Commentary

The story of the home-going of Winnie's godly father, only four months after the death of her mother, is amazing. What a divine privilege God gave her father to be a minister of God's presence even as he lay dying.

1 Peter 2:5-9 tells us that we, as believers, are members of a holy priesthood. The Word of God had power beyond all human understanding and we are told to preach it, live it and share it and its power that is beyond our human imagination.

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB) teaches us; "For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

* NASB refers to the New American Standard Bible, a modern translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Dream

It was an early spring day; Mel was teaching school, my eldest sons were in college and my youngest was in junior high school. I was depressed, so depressed that I couldn't even go to work that morning.

I owned my own real estate office, Long Realty, and it had been very successful with nearly sixty agents working for me. Having a lot of agents at that time meant that I had a tremendous overhead. The real estate market had fallen and we were in a full-blown recession. My agents weren't selling and the overhead was growing as we attempted to find qualified buyers.

I had purchased several apartment buildings at the top of the real estate cycle, and they were now causing a serious, negative cash flow. In the good times, when the money was flowing, we had purchased a beautiful waterfront home. We believed that the home, and the fact that we could afford it, was

Miracles Unaware

another miracle. But on this particular day, with its large mortgage payment, it was just another heavy weight to carry.

I was trying to maintain my good credit and I would spend several hours each day negotiating with my creditors to lower payments or forgive balances due. The pressure was almost unbearable, but the fact that my creditors worked with me was another miracle.

To have worked so hard and then see it all disappear was very upsetting. I was mentally and physically exhausted and the burden of my sales agents, my failing business and my family was too big for me to handle.

I was so depressed and stressed that I just sat down on my bedroom floor and started to sob. I could no longer deal with the situation at hand and, as I cried and prayed, I lost awareness of things around me.

After a few minutes, I started to pray and ask God to please help me. I had prayed daily for help, but this day I needed more than any other day. I believe that the Holy Spirit came to minister to me that day, to comfort me on one of the lowest days of my life.

I loved boating and had recently enjoyed some wonderful “bareboat cruises” with Christian friends. I knew how important the anchor was because, if you went to sleep and your anchor didn’t hold, you could float out to sea or be dashed into the rocks. Often, on sailboat trips, I would wake up during the night and the boat would be in a different position. The boat could only go so far on its own when it was anchored and it was always safe because the anchor was secure.

I was in a deep sleep, or possibly a trance, that morning when I began to see my life as a little sailboat. Jesus was my anchor and with Him I could go a little this way or a little that way, but I was always safe because my anchor, Jesus, was holding

me in place. As with the little sailboats that I had been on, you would only go so far unless the anchor didn't hold or was pulled up.

I had been in fierce storms at sea, in a small sail boat where you couldn't see ahead or behind you. The wind would gust to where you could barely stand up and the rain poured down like a heavy fog. The sound of the wind and waves was terrifying to the point that you had to be inside with all of the doors and portholes tightly closed. The little sailboat would twist and rock and dip and sway, to and fro, but we were safe because our anchor held.

I was now in a serious storm of my life and I was twisted, tossed, turned and swirling around. All of my efforts were doing no good and only my anchor, Jesus, was hope for my future. It was as if Jesus spoke directly to me, telling me that I was all right and that I would be safe. The anchor would hold, no matter how hard the fierce storm of life was for me.

Jesus had me anchored and wouldn't take up the anchor until it was time. Then my life would go where it was supposed to go and how and when it was supposed to get there.

My crying ceased and a tremendous calm came over me. I knew that I was going to make it. This assurance was in contradiction to the fact that nothing had changed. The economy was still terrible, my bills were still huge and I had absolutely no money; all of this because He told me to trust in Him, Jesus, my anchor.

In the years that followed that day, and the experience of all of the severe stress and pressure on my life, I have never forgotten that dream. It has kept me going through many fierce storms in my life.

Could this dream have been a modern-day vision? Could it have been a miracle from God, or was it just a dream? I choose

to believe that it was a vision from God, like those He gave to the Prophets in Old Testament days.

In the years since that time, many things have changed. I had tossed and turned and swayed for many years after the dream, but today, about twenty years later, Jesus has released the anchor. As a result, I have traveled through life's calmer seas where blessings have been plentiful.

There have not been any problems with creditors, for the past several years, and I have ample money to do whatever I want to do in my life. I may encounter another storm at any time, since life is like the sea; there are always storms, some small and others fierce.

God's timing is not always our timing, but through it all He has so many wonderful surprises for us. He will take us where we never dreamed possible, if we allow Him to be our anchor.

My credit is now flawless. It's hard to believe that I made it through the last recession with my good credit intact, after losing over one million dollars during the hard times. I lost a very large apartment building through foreclosure, but the loan was never reported to the credit agencies since it was carried by an individual.

A second property was purchased by a physician just prior to foreclosure. I had a Christian partner in the property and he paid the buyer ten thousand dollars out of his own savings to make the sale. This dear friend never once asked me to repay him, thus saving me from any problems with my credit.

My Christian attorney miraculously negotiated with the lender in the third property that I lost, and no foreclosure has been shown on my record. This was a true miracle.

Who could have had three properties foreclose and none of them reflect on your credit? I choose to believe that this was not

just a coincidence or some fancy footwork by some sharp attorney. It was a true miracle because I will need my good credit in the future.

It was a miracle unaware.

Commentary

God's word doesn't cease to be true because we are past the time of the Early Church. Hebrews 13:8 (NIV) tells us that, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." It has been said that faith that can't be tested, can't be trusted. The scriptures often speak of testing our faith.*

Winnie uses the terrific illustration of a boat that can't be moved because it is thoroughly anchored. Hebrews 6:18-20 (NIV) tells us, "So God has given us both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie.*

"Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can take new courage, for we can hold onto His promise with confidence. This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the line of Melchizedek."

* NIV refers to the New International Version, a modern translation of the Holy Bible.

CHAPTER XXIX

Unexpected Miracle

It was early October and, as usual, I was very busy running around like crazy. My best client, Mr. M, called and asked if he could come to my office to go over all of the promissory notes that we had accumulated doing business over the past twenty years. Both Mr. M and I had some notes and he wanted us to go over them together.

I was glad that he called before coming to my office so that I could get my own files in order. I immediately called my best assistant, my wonderful husband Mel, and asked him to help me sort through things. I told him that we would place special emphasis on the file that contained all of the old promissory notes.

Mr. M liked the income that we paid him for the use of his money that we used to build our business. In fact, the money that Mr. M loaned us over the years helped us to keep our good credit

rating during hard times and the recession of the 1980's and 90's. Now we had enough cash to pay him off, but we kept the interest-only notes as a kind of "thank you" for what he had done for us during the bad years.

Mr. M and I had developed a strong bond through our years in business and through a mutual belief in, and love for, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Although I was a Foursquare girl and he a devoted Lutheran, we both loved the Lord and looked for His guidance in all that we did, in life as well as in business. I firmly believe that Mr. M was a miracle himself. The Lord had blessed him abundantly and he, in turn, blessed the Lord through tithes, offerings and by donating each Wednesday to his church.

Occasionally, both we and Mr. M were sloppy in our record keeping, but Mel had no doubt about how much we owed. We had all of our paperwork, but it wasn't in one place; it was floating around between Mr. M, Mel and I. That wasn't a problem since we trusted each other one hundred percent.

When Mr. M arrived at my office, at one in the afternoon, we took our files, locked ourselves in the conference room and gathered around the large conference table. Then, the three of us began the arduous task of going through the maze of old promissory notes.

Because the dollar value was substantial, we tried to remember the details of each note and where its substantiating paperwork was in our files. Between Mel's good memory and Mr. M's and my paperwork, we began to get things in order.

Wow, what a job! Even though we were exhausted and occasionally frustrated, we were able to gather all of the notes into one super-note by 9:00 o'clock that night. We also found, through our paperwork, three smaller notes to other people.

Finally, all questions were answered, either by someone who remembered what the outcome was meant to be or by a physical,

substantiating document. We had completed an almost impossible task, especially since it involved large sums of money.

I don't know why Mr. M chose that particular time, after twenty years of our working together, to finally put all of that paperwork in order. If it wasn't for Mr. M., we never would have pressed to get all of those notes straightened out. I wondered why he had chosen to do it at that particular time.

Mr. M had a derogatory mark on his credit report. He would call me almost daily to discuss what he could do about it. Mr. M hadn't done anything wrong; the problem was created by a bank error. I did all that I could to help him and was to the point of tears from the frustration of dealing with the lenders. At times, those lenders were impossible!

Although I gave up because I couldn't think of anything more to do, Mr. M didn't. He stood in long lines to gain public information in hope of showing that the problem was not his error. Although the monetary value wasn't significant, if not resolved, the situation could cause problems later. Finally, through Mr. M's hard work, the error was corrected. I felt so good about all that Mr. M and I had accomplished, even though it had cost us such an incredible amount of time and effort.

After everything was in order, Mr. M left for an extended vacation in his motor home. Five months later, in February, Mr. M suddenly returned, much earlier than he had planned. He had become very ill.

At that time, Mel and I were very involved with Mel's mother who was in her last days. She had suffered a lot of pain and had a very difficult death. At this same time, Mr. M was starting his walk to meet his Lord and Savior. Within a period of five weeks, Mr. M went from a vibrant businessman, active senior citizen and great husband, to his death. In fact, his death was so quick that he passed before Mel's mother.

The speediness of Mr. M's death was a shock, particularly since he hadn't experienced any earlier health problems. Just prior to his death, Mr. M carried a First Trust deed on a property in Klamath, California. It was driving him crazy because the payments were always late, and short. Once before, he had foreclosed and trying to re-sell proved to be a nightmare. He certainly didn't want to go through that again. Miraculously, the entire note was paid off, in full, before he became ill.

What a year that was for Mr. M! All of the problems that had been haunting him, for the past twenty years, were resolved in the year before he died. As a result, he was happy, he had cash in the bank and no longer had any of the business problems with which he had struggled for so many years.

Mr. M was a dear friend and his passing was a great personal loss to both Mel and me. At this mutually sad time, Mrs. M was a great comfort to us as I hope that we were to her. Since Mr. M's death we have gotten to know his wife, who was a farm girl, and, to this day, she doesn't crave worldly goods and possessions.

Mrs. M wasn't involved in any of her husband's real estate business until after his death, when she had to be. Since then, she has become an astute business woman, asking the right questions, double checking all figures and, unlike her husband, always keeping her paperwork in perfect order.

God chooses the most unlikely people to bless with worldly goods and possessions. Mrs. M is an example of this and her goal is to build her estate so that, upon her death, she can leave more money for the Lord's work.

God chose this farm girl and blessed her with the wisdom and knowledge she needed to handle this large estate, which is now larger than it was when Mr. M passed on. Mrs. M loves to be a good steward and to give generously to the Lord.

Here are the miracle questions:

Miracles Unaware

1. Why was Mr. M so intent on getting his affairs in order at this particular time? Could God have given him this desire?
2. Could he have known that his death was imminent?
3. Why were all of those notes, which were on properties that he had owned for many years, and weren't yet at their due dates, paid off just before he died?
4. Why did Mr. M work so hard to clear his credit report at this time? Could the desire to clean up all his financial matters have been given to him by God so that his wife wouldn't be burdened with the problems?

Mrs. M needed clear credit to proceed with her portfolio growth and only Mr. M knew exactly what the problem with the credit report was all about. Could all of this have been a miracle that would allow Mrs. M and me, the executor, to have a much easier job settling the estate?

I believe that God gave those miracles to Mrs. M and even more to me, personally. Mrs. M is a wonderful Christian woman and I know she believes that I am honest. However, her personality is such that she needs to see things in writing, to balance all of the figures and to make sure that everything is correct. On the other hand, Mr. M and I worked on a verbal trust basis, with the paperwork secondary to our mutual trust and agreements.

If Mr. M had not gotten everything in order, that October afternoon, I believe that Mrs. M never would have understood how things had been put together.

I further believe that she would have wondered if Mel and I were being completely honest with her. In that case, she might have felt compelled to bring in auditors. That would have caused us undue stress and would have been very costly to Mrs. M, Mel and me.

Was it just a coincidence that all of the M's real estate problems were solved before his death? To me, the year before Mr. M's death was a double miracle orchestrated and directed by the Lord for the benefit of both Mrs. M and me.

A very dear pastor and wonderful man wrote a book entitled, "God Works the Night Shift." This book has meant a lot to me. It describes how God works all things for our good while we sleep, eat, work and play. The author also believes in miracles similar to those that I have related in this book. God is working miracles for us and setting the stage for miracles that will occur now, tomorrow, and twenty or thirty years down the road of our lives. It is so exciting to see all of the miracles that God is doing for us.

KEEP YOUR EYES AND MINDS OPEN AND GOD WILL REVEAL TO YOU ALL THE MIRACLES THAT HE HAS DONE FOR YOU IN THE PAST... AND IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE MIRACLES IN YOUR LIFE THAT ARE HAPPENING TODAY.

Commentary

The miracles related by Winnie in this chapter raise questions for all believers. Jesus said, although we live in the world, we should not be part of the world. Winnie aptly applies this truth to both believers and business. We must not divide our lives into

Miracles Unaware

compartments but realize that God cares about every detail of our entire lives.

This chapter also clearly points out that God isn't governed by time. He knew before the foundation of the world what trials we will face. One cannot but wonder if one of God's angels had whispered to Mr. M that it was time to get his house in order and prompted him to begin the lone and complicated task (see 2 Kings 20 and its story about Hezekiah).

Winnie's exhortation, at the end of this particular chapter, is good for all of us to keep uppermost in our minds. We should always keep our minds, eyes and ears open to recognize God's hand in our lives.

CHAPTER XXX

Not The End

For the past few months, I have believed that it is time to finish and close this book, “Miracles Unaware.” It has proven to be as difficult to end as it was to start.

But wait! How can I finish this book when miracles are still happening every day? God’s miracles will never end for you and me. Although this is the last chapter in “Miracles Unaware,” it isn’t the last chapter in my life or the last of miracles in my life.

The more difficult your life is, the more miracles you will see...if you just look for them. Although it may seem odd, some true miracles are not seen as miracles until many years later. So keep your minds and eyes open for both past and present miracles.

Our way of life, as we have known it for many years, is drastically changing. Each of us is being affected in different ways. It is so exciting to know that God is preparing circumstances to occur in your life that you can believe are just

Miracles Unaware

coincidences, or you can choose to believe that they are God's ordained miracles.

Our adversary, Satan, is also real. He wants us to believe that our miracles are not true miracles from our Heavenly Father, but are just circumstances or coincidences. God has given us freedom of choice and a mind to think things out for ourselves.

Recently, after a day working in Denver, I was on a crowded flight from Denver to Orange County, California. I was quite upset that I couldn't sit with my husband. I wound up in the middle seat next to a woman, about my age, who was in the window seat. We began to talk and complain about the airlines and, during our conversation, we suddenly realized we had mutual acquaintances.

We continued to talk non-stop, from Denver to Orange County. She told me about two near-death accidents exactly one year apart to the day and, although she wasn't a practicing Christian, she touted both accidents as miracles.

In the first accident, while in Newport Coast, she was hit head-on by a drunk driver reportedly going over ninety miles per hour. After much difficulty prying her out of her car, no one expected her to live and surely never be able to walk again. Her prognosis was very serious, and, if she were to live, she was expected to be totally paralyzed. The miracle was that she fully recovered to her original, before the accident, condition.

One year to the day later, she was in Fort Collins, Colorado. She and her sister were crossing the street, on a green light, when a car ran the red light and sped through the intersection. They were both hit, at full speed, by the speeding car. The driver never stopped.

Again there was no hope that she would ever recover, or even live. And, again, she recovered and went back to her job as a school teacher, with no brain damage.

As I began to share a miracle or two of my own with my seatmate, she said that she was absolutely convinced that God had His hand on her and that those close calls were miracles. She also said that, although she wasn't a practicing Christian, God had kept her alive for some reason. Maybe the reason was so that she could sit next to me, on that crowded flight, to encourage my beliefs that miracles do occur routinely, not only to me but to all of us.

Look for your miracles. Although they may be hidden, if you open your eyes and your mind, you will begin to see what you may believe are just circumstances, but are really miracles that God sends us. He watches over us and gives us miracles to help us along our daily walk.

Don't miss seeing your miracles. The excitement of knowing that we have a loving God, who doesn't give up on us and is truly in control, is both thrilling and exciting. Start looking for your own miracles today and don't be surprised at what you find.

Could it be a miracle that I felt that it was now, after almost nine years of writing *Miracles Unaware*, that I should finish this last chapter? Just when the economy and our way of life are facing major changes and we all need miracles in our lives.

I believe that God chose just the right time for "Miracles Unaware" to be written and completed. He did this so that others could see what miracles God has given them and they can be excited about their future and the miracles God has in store for them.

Miracles Unaware

Commentary

Winnie has invited her readers to join in an exciting and interesting journey. We agree completely about the need for all of us to listen and see what God is doing in our lives and the lives of others.

We are surely in the “Last Days” that the Prophets and the Apostles wrote about. For instance, many Muslims are turning to Jesus because of visions, dreams and miracles that they are experiencing. God has promised these things will increase as the time grows short. We should not only recognize them in our own lives, but share our testimonies with others, as Winnie has done.

Winnie has helped us all to realize that the Book of Acts continues today. God has promised that, as believers, we would see signs, wonders and miracles. And these would increase as the end of all things is coming closer in view. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

APPENDIX

VITAS

Education:

Barbara C. Middelbrook: Diploma from Life Bible College; M.A. from Mount Vernon Bible College; attended two years at Ashland Theological Seminary; M.A. (Theology and Ethics) at Azusa Pacific University, School of Theology.

Charles W. Middlebrook: B.Th. from Life Bible College; M.A. (Reformation and Renaissance History) from Ohio State University.

Ministry Experience:

Both Barbara and Charles are licensed and ordained by the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. They were Youth Pastors from 1956 through 1958; Senior Pastors (at Yazoo City, Mississippi, and Columbus, Georgia) from 1961 through 1971; taught at Mount Vernon Bible College (in Ohio) from 1971 through 1978; and taught at Life Bible College, from 1982 until they retired in 2005.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pauline W. Long, known as “Winnie” to family and friends, was born in 1942, in Glendale, California. Her parents were ministers of the Foursquare Gospel and pastored only very small congregations throughout their entire ministries.

Winnie met and married Milford (Mel) Long. They were an unlikely couple. During her youth, Winnie had been a rebellious young woman while Mel, on the other hand, was a stable young man. Winnie bore twin sons and then, ten years later, she bore a third. Their three sons married wonderful daughters-in-law and have blessed their parents with four grandsons and a granddaughter.

In spite of having no formal education, Winnie became a well-known realtor and business owner. She and Mel reside in a lovely ocean-view home in Newport Coast, California where

they enjoy their family and friends. In addition to working four days a week in their property management business, Mel and Winnie have traveled extensively, visiting more than sixty countries.

ABOUT THE PRESS

Missions Press is a unique Gospel printing and resource ministry located in Anaheim, California. The vision of Missions Press is to offer free culturally effective evangelistic and discipleship materials to the mission field—over 175 million pieces to 111 nations since 1981. For more information, visit us at **www.foursquaremissionspress.org**.

Missions Press also trains and resources children's workers globally through its Children's Gospel Box ministry. Learn more at **www.cgbox.org**.

On these pages, write down YOUR Miracle Unaware!

*Are you aware of the miracles
that make up your life?*

Winnie Long's life is full of God's touch; big and small. Inside this testimonial book, she shares how God intervenes miraculously – even when we are not aware. Her stories are personal, often humorous, and always inspirational.

You will come away with a new appreciation for the miracles in all of our lives. Learn how you can walk in a closer awareness of the everyday presence of God.



Winnie Long is a successful business woman and real estate investor. She and husband Mel have 3 grown children and 5 grandchildren. They reside in Newport Coast, California.