

Part XVII

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

TESTIMONIES OF GOD'S PROTECTION

God has always protected and had his angels looking out for me. There have been times that the devil would have loved to destroy my loved ones and me, but God had everything under control. He is always in charge of our lives and He steps in right on time even when we don't know that we are in danger. I have several examples of how His love and protection covered me, especially in recent years. I call them *close encounters* because they are times when I came close to hurt, harm, danger or even death, but God delivered me. His presence and protection is a very huge part of my lifelong testimony and I can't thank Him enough!

#1

THE NIGHT, THE BUCK AND THE CALL

I remember on a Sunday night, I was driving down a dark winding back road. Suddenly, my cell phone rang, but I did not recognize the phone number. I answered it anyway and when I did, I heard the deep, strong voice of a black man loudly questioning, "Where are you?" I was surprised and shocked! I pressed the phone closer to my ear and because, I was thinking, "*What the heck?*" but then my foot automatically came off of the gas pedal. At that moment, in a split second, a deer ran right across the front of my headlights. This was not any ole' small deer, it was a huge buck!

It all happened so fast and that buck with a huge rack of antlers crossed our paths at the same time. When I heard the deep voice of the man, all I had time to say was, "what?" and instantly that big buck was dangerously in my path!

Driving a car is probably the most dangerous thing that the average person does every day. According to State Farm insurance company, for every 169 people driving, one of them will collide with or be killed by a deer on the road. In my state, the Illinois

department of transportation reported over 15,000 crashes in the year 2014. This was a close encounter with death and I give all the credit to God for being with me during that time.

The black man on the phone said, “Oh, I’m sorry, I must have the wrong number.” Actually, he had the right number. His call saved my life! If that had been my husband or one of my kids calling me, I would not have taken my foot off the gas pedal and I wouldn’t have seen that buck. He saved my life! If I had hit the deer, he would have definitely come through my windshield. That incident left me in a daze. I was stunned immediately after it happened and for miles, all I could say was, “*Wow, what the heck just happened?*” I have thought about it ever since that night. Even though that was a close encounter, my God was even closer. The black man asked, “*Where are you?*” but God knew where I was all the time!

***For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee,
to keep thee:***

Luke 4:10 (KJV)

#2

FALLING ASLEEP AT THE WRONG TIME

I was 21 years of age when I married my high school sweetheart and as I mentioned earlier, he also lived on a family farm. We got married in 1977. When it comes to farming there’s not much else as dear to my heart! Despite how your life turns out, you have to find some good memories to focus on. I like to reminisce about the good times and things that made me smile back in my younger days. But even when we can’t find anything good to focus on, there is always something good that God has done. Just like the Bible says in Philippians 4:8, we should *think on these things*.

As a farm girl I used to start my days early, especially because I worked the day shift. There was always a lot happening at Memorial Hospital. Working on a surgery floor, caring for the patients all day, kept me very busy! After work was finished I would go back home and help out on the farm. My husband was working the evening shift at the St. Louis Chrysler plant, which was actually about 30 minutes away in Fenton, Missouri, but during the day, he worked on the farm. We were like a tag team of farm workers; wherever he stopped I would pick up when I got home from work.

I used to climb up in that big John Deere tractor. It was the 4240 enclosed cab model. I remember one evening after work I was determined to finish the field that I was mulching. I was tired because I had been working at the hospital all day.

It was getting pretty late, close to midnight, but I was determined! I just had to finish that field. It was a cool night so I had the heater turned on inside the cab of that big comfortable tractor. One minute I was making progress and the next minute I was sound asleep!

I don't even remember falling asleep, but I woke up very suddenly and was startled! I was so shocked to see that I had been asleep that I quickly jerked and turned the steering wheel of the tractor very hard all the way to the left! As I did, I looked out the window of the tractor and saw a steep drop off to the pavement. It was on to a lower road. Without even realizing it, I had turned the tractor steering wheel to the left, just in the nick of time! The dirt that I was traveling on was getting very soft. Another fraction of a second and the weight of the tractor would have caused the dirt to give way. This would have sent the tractor over the embankment with me in it!

Going over that embankment meant that I would have slammed hard onto the pavement below. That incident scared me so badly that I wasn't even sleepy for a while that night! I drove that tractor back to the farmhouse as fast and carefully as I could and I parked it!

At the time I was attending a Catholic church where I had always seen images of Jesus still nailed to the cross. The incident in the tractor helped me to realize that He was not still stuck up there but it's hard to think any different when they show Him to you like that year after year. According to the Bible, He was on the cross from 9 a.m. until about 3 p.m., that's only six hours. After that, I know exactly where He was. He was in that tractor with me and I had no idea that He was there, protecting me from another close encounter with death and danger! Every time I think about it I say, "Thank you, God – thank you again!"

He will never let me stumble, slip, or fall.

For he is always watching, never sleeping.

Psalm 121:3-4

The Living Bible (TLB)

#3

TRAVELING TO ARKANSAS

After my grandpa retired from the railroad he and my grandmother decided to move to Arkansas. Someone told them that the fishing was good there and for that and some other reasons they packed up and moved. For over 20 years they lived comfortably just outside of Greenbrier. I loved my grandparents dearly and when I grew up I would always try to drive there for a visit every chance I got.

Sometimes, when we get in our cars with a destination in mind, we think that we've got it all figured out. Some people pray before they set out and some don't. I think people should always pray before going on trips because we really never know exactly what dangers are out there on the road. Whether walking, riding or driving, I believe that we should always pray and ask the Lord to keep our paths safe and guide us when we leave our homes.

***For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will,
we shall live, and do this, or that.***

James 4:15 (KJV)

Sometimes after working all day at Memorial Hospital, I would get off work; pack my things and head to Arkansas. On one occasion I decided to drive at night to avoid a lot of traffic, make better time and so I could be there in the morning early to greet my nana and gramp.

The drive from my house to theirs took about seven hours and for a long time we had to travel on a narrow two-lane road. It was a familiar road and I had taken that trip with my husband Dan plenty times before. Things always went very well. One day I went down with my sister and like always on the surface there seemed to be no cause for panic or alarm. We set out from southern Illinois towards Arkansas in my brand new pickup truck. I was excited about the drive and my sister was snug and comfortable in the passenger seat.

Around 3 a.m. in the morning I started to get tired, but I had always been a pretty good driver, so being confident in my abilities, I told myself that I could make it. I figured that if I just sipped on my tea and listened to some good music I would be okay. One minute I was bobbing my head and singing along and the next moment I had slowly slipped into a light sleep.

When I woke I was in the middle of the road only a few inches away from the car traveling in front of me! I was so close to his bumper I didn't even see the trunk of his car, all I saw was his back window! To make matters worse, in trying to avoid getting rear ended by me. Another car was coming from the other direction that was coming fast directly in front of him! It scared me so badly that I slammed on the brakes and pulled off to the side of the road.

The driver of that car was probably very mad at me. I think he had moved to the center of the road because I was riding his bumper and about to hit him. My carelessness put the driver in front of me in danger and in a fraction of a second we could have all been killed!

I woke my sister up and had her drive until I got some sleep. I never told my sister about that incident. I guess when she reads this book she will find out about her close encounter with death and how God saved her life without her even knowing it. At the time I didn't even realize that it was God who saved my life again! I was thinking that I was just lucky, but I was wrong; luck had nothing to do with it. That is another reason why every day that I am alive I say, "Thank you, God!"

***... it is high time to awake out of sleep:
for now is our salvation nearer than
when we believed.***

Romans 13:11 (KJV)

#4

GOD KNOWS BEST

Every year, weeks before I set up all of my fireworks stands, I make it a point to visit every location that I'm planning to use so that I can pray. I have to check out the areas so I can know whether to set up at any particular location or not.

Whenever I arrive on site, I pray for safety and for everyone, including my potential customers. I ask God to cover us because there's always a lot on the line and a whole lot at stake during my events. Anything can happen at any time, so safety is always first.

One of my locations was at a four way stop in the city of Alorton, IL. One year I went to check it out because I had sold fireworks there the year before and it turned out to be a pretty good location. I arrived at the four way stop like I had done before and started

to pray on the parking lot. After a couple of minutes the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “NO!” I didn’t understand why He said that so I said, “No, why not God?” Because of previous success at that location, I wanted to hear only the answer that I wanted to hear; so much so that I said it in a tone of voice that sounded like I wanted to argue with God.

I said, “God, I was here last year, why can’t I be here this year?” He just said, “No!” Again I asked Him why, but that time He didn’t answer. I wasn’t happy, but I left that location and went a half a mile down the road to another spot. I got out of the car, began to pray and asked God could I set my fireworks stands there. The Lord said, “Yes!”

Fireworks season came in a few weeks later. Even though the lot that I originally wanted was still sitting there vacant and looking like the best spot for my business, I went ahead and set up on the lot that God told me to.

My Alorton fireworks stand opened for business on that lot. A friend named Ruth and I jumped into my pickup truck and drove out to check on it. Ruth’s cousin was the manager of the Alorton fireworks stand and I wanted to check and see how she was doing and to see if she needed more fireworks.

Once I saw that everything was fine, I went back to the truck and waited, but Ruth began a long conversation with her cousin. I was in a pretty good mood, but it seemed like she would never stop talking and for some reason, I started feeling impatient. I sat in the pickup truck and started yelling, “*Ruth, come on and get in the truck!*” “***Get In Ruth***”, “***Get In!***” I started the truck and began revving the engine with one of my feet on the gas pedal and the other foot on the brake. I needed her to stop talking and come on, so along with the engine noise I kept yelling, “*Ruth, get in this truck now!*” The more I yelled, it seemed like the more she and her cousin talked. But I kept on yelling for Ruth, saying, “Stop talking and Get in now!”

All the while I kept on revving that engine, even though I had no idea why I was acting that way. All I know was that I felt a strong urge to leave and leave right then! I don't know if they just ran out of things to talk about or she got tired of my mouth, but Ruth finally left her cousin and got inside the pickup truck.

Ruth didn't understand how I felt and when we drove off the lot Ruth asked me "What was that all about?" I said, "I don't know!" I couldn't explain it; all I knew is that we had to leave right then! When we got to that four way stop in Alorton I made a left hand turn near the lot that God told me I could not use. Within seconds after I made the left turn I looked in my rear view mirror and was shocked at what I saw: There was a high-speed police chase going on and the suspect crashed into several of the vehicles that were behind me at the four way stop. The crash killed six innocent people and the man that the police was chasing also died. All of the cars in the accident at the four way stop either spun out of control or got hit and landed in the exact spot that I wanted to place my fireworks stand. That accident left me shaken up for quite a while. Even today when I think about it, all I can say is "Wow!" What a close encounter, and what if I hadn't listened to God? He got us out of there just in time!

I had no idea there was going to be a police chase and I definitely never thought that it would be heading right for us. There are some things that only God knows. I thought I knew which spot was best for my fireworks but I found out that *God knows best!*

When the crash was finished there was a pile of cars sitting in the very spot that my fireworks stand would have been. When we pray, we usually want God to say, "Yes" to everything we want, but God saved us that evening by saying, "No!"

I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for.

Jeremiah 29:11

Good News Translation (GNT)

HOLY CHICK-! & DUMPLINGS

I love to prepare meals with pressure cookers. I love how they cook and how simple they are to operate. When you use a pressure cooker there is less clean up, your foods come out more moist, the kitchen doesn't get as hot as it does with regular pots, and pressure cookers get the food done in much less time than it usually takes. I feel like I'm an expert at using them, but this has not always been the case.

Back when I was newly married I told my mother and father-in-law that I was going to make them a big pot of chicken and dumplings for dinner. They seemed to be happy that I had offered and I was determined to do a good job. On the day that I was supposed to cook, I got home from work late in the afternoon. Knowing they liked to eat around 5:00 p.m., I had to hurry and get dinner on the stove.

In my haste, I loaded up the pressure cooker with more chicken than I should have. I sort of knew not to overfill the cooker, but I did it anyway, mainly because I was in a hurry. By nature, I'm a person that doesn't mind taking chances and I'm sure that, along with me being in a hurry, played a big part in the mistake that I made. I gathered all of my ingredients: the stock, the pepper, salt and all of my other herbs. Because I wanted to make sure they had a pretty good amount of food and also take a little for myself, I skinned almost double the amount of chicken than I was supposed to and stuffed it in the pressure cooker with my herbs. I then placed it on medium heat, and locked the lid.

All the while, I knew I had overstuffed that pressure cooker, but time was a factor. The only other thing that I could have done was made two batches, but I didn't have time to use the pressure cooker twice. I was in a hurry and convinced myself that nothing would go wrong. I remember saying to myself, "Awe, it will be okay."

Now that I think about it, the heat under that pressure cooker might have even been a teensy bit higher than it should have been. My time was running out so I stood next to

the stove and got busy chopping and dicing up the carrots, onions and celery. The chicken was starting to smell good, but I noticed that the steam wasn't coming from the cooker as strong as it usually does. I ignored that and kept working. I was making pretty good time, cutting the vegetables, when suddenly I was stopped!

It was as if someone went behind me and pushed me across the kitchen away from the stove. It was so odd that I was almost in a daze and had to sit down in a chair at the table. I kept trying to understand what had happened and why in the world was I sitting there when there was still a lot left to do. I hadn't even made the dumplings yet.

I sat over there for a brief moment. For some reason it was hard to get up from my chair. I just kept sitting. Before I could even make an attempt to get up the pressure cooker exploded violently! The thick metal lid blew off, went straight into the air and landed on the floor in front of the stove. Scalding hot chicken broth and hot grease was blasted onto the stove, the counters, and the cabinets and all over the floor. I looked up and saw it even dripping from my kitchen ceiling! It all happened so fast and loud, I said, "Holy ---!!!" That was the only time that anything like that has ever happened to me.

For months I asked myself how in the world I escaped such a dangerous close encounter. How did I end up sitting far away from the stove? Who pushed me and how did they keep me sitting down? What if I had just tried to jump up anyway *before* the pressure cooker exploded? I was a Catholic, I didn't know much about God except that every time I walked into a Catholic church, He was up on the cross.

I was so busy in the kitchen that I wasn't thinking the way I should have been. When I overstuffed the pressure cooker I blocked the vent that is supposed to release the steam and that's what caused the explosion.

I cleaned the chicken drippings up and saved as much of the chicken as I could. I finished the dinner, still shocked and thinking about how I sat down and couldn't get up. My mother and father-in-law did enjoy the chicken and dumplings, even though it

had less chicken and broth than I usually serve it with. It wasn't until after I got saved that I realized why I couldn't get up from that chair. That day, when I could not get up from the table, God sat me there for my safety. I had no bad burns. I could have been badly scarred! That scalding broth landed on everything, except on me! "Thank you God, for your love and protection!"

***The Lord will protect you from all danger;
he will keep you safe.***

Psalm 121:7

Good News Translation (GNT)

#6

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM!

There are many close encounters with God that people experience every day but take for granted. Recently, I was thinking about a dental root canal problem that I was having which left me in intense pain. It caused swelling in my jaw for which the dentist gave me antibiotics. Because of the situation he referred me to an orthodontist. I scheduled the appointment, but I began to pray over the situation, commanding the devil to leave and I spoke healing in Jesus' name. Then, after thinking about it more I decided that I wasn't going to allow them to do that root canal. I'm sure that they were fine dentists and it wasn't that I didn't trust them, it's just that I trusted God even more and I knew that He could heal me! While in prayer I asked the Lord to heal the tooth area and He did. Since I was not having any more pain I canceled the root canal appointment I that had with the orthodontist. It has been over two years since I had that issue. I asked Jesus to come in and get to the bottom (the root) of the problem and to this day I am fine! No pain! No root canal, no problem!

Psalm 30:2

New International Version (NIV)

***Lord my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.***