



MIRACLES STILL HAPPEN

BY PEGGY RETHERFORD

May 30, 2009 began as many other springtime Saturdays for me and my husband, Tom. We spent the late morning hours doing our yard work for the week. At around 11:30 a.m. as Tom was putting the weed-eater back in the garage, he stated he did not feel well and was going to go in the house and cool off.

Something did not feel quite right to me after he went inside, so I followed him after a few minutes and found him sitting on the couch, sweating profusely and feeling sick. Tom had no known health problems, so my first thought was he simply got too hot before he stopped working. I brought him a cool rag, a cool drink and some saltine crackers. He suddenly jumped up and ran to the bathroom and things went from bad to worse in a very short order.

When I followed him into the bathroom, he

was sitting in the floor and could not get up. He was having difficulty breathing, his skin was a terrible yellowish-gray color, his chest was hurting and he had lost the use of his left arm. I called 911 immediately and this is when a chain of miracles began to occur. Obviously, the following details came together over the course of days or weeks, but when linked in chronological order, they make quite an impact.

When I began the 911 call, there was no ambulance physically in Knox County. However, by the time I ended the call, one had just reported back in (Miracle #1) and it was sent directly to us. Upon arrival at the Knox County General Hospital there were two highly skilled physicians — and a well trained nursing staff present (Miracle #2). Dr. Walters was the ER Physician on duty but Dr. Ashburn was also there on rounds. They recognized

the severity of the heart attack and called for a helicopter, which was only 15 minutes out (Miracle #3). The plan was to airlift Tom to Saint Joseph in Lexington.

The hardest part until now had been being relegated to the waiting area while they stabilized Tom for transport. Finally, they said I could sit with him until he was flown out. We were able to exchange “I love you’s,” and then Tom looked at me and whispered, “Baby, I don’t think I am going to be able to hang on.”

Trying to lighten the mood I said, “I’m sorry, but you don’t have a choice.”

He then said, “Something is wrong with my head.” His eyes rolled back and he lost consciousness. The next thing I knew I was back in the hallway and medical personnel were coming from every direction. This is where everything became surreal.

Tom survived two major heart attacks and 34 electrical shocks

I have been a Christian since I was 13 years old, but I have always been reserved in demonstrating my faith. I sit quietly in church and very seldom say anything publicly. However, at this point in time, I hit my knees — unashamed in the middle of the hallway — and I very loudly begged God to save Tom’s life. I didn’t care who saw me, I didn’t care who heard me, and I didn’t care what they thought of me. I knew at that specific point in time, only God could bring Tom back to me.

My family finally managed to drag me to a less crowded part of the hallway but I was still on my knees praying. My daughters, Stacey and Samantha, were down there with me. By this time, most of my family had made it to the hospital as well. I could hear other members of my family praying and our pastor, Dennis Chestnut, was now also in the mix. Then I began to hear something else bleeding through the fog.

“Charging,” then “Clear,” then a horrible “Zapping” sound.

It finally dawned on me they were shocking Tom’s heart. This went on, and on, and on, and on. I started to read the expressions on my family’s faces (two of them are RN’s). There were too many shocks. Each time I heard the sequence, I knew it was going to be the last time they tried, but I kept saying over and over again, “God, in you all things are possible.”

Finally, Dr. Walters called me out and stood before me. My logical mind had already tried to prepare me for what he was going to say, but my heart refused to go there until I heard him say the words. He said, “We got him back, but he is not very stable. We are