

50 QUIET MIRACLES

That Changed Lives



WILLIAM G. BORCHERT

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Editor's note

The stories in this book are based on actual experiences. The names and details have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved.

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*To my loving wife, Bernadette . . .
the miracle of my life.*

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Acknowledgments

I WISH TO thank those who have so generously contributed their wonderful “miracle” stories to this book so that others may share the reality of God’s presence in our lives.

Introduction

MANY YEARS AGO as a young seminarian, I found myself kneeling amid the silence of a candlelit chapel as dawn approached asking myself, *If God were really here, why don't I feel His presence?*

Glancing around at the bowed heads of priests, nuns, and other seminarians, I became a bit envious, believing they had found some special connection to the Almighty that a sinner like myself could never find. Feeling spiritually inadequate, I left that religious life behind.

Still, I would often dream that perhaps someday I might witness a real miracle and my faith would come alive. I would then be as certain of God's spiritual presence as I was of the physical world surrounding me.

The problem for me was that miracles had to be awesome events, always accompanied by claps of thunder as someone rose from the dead or a crippled child walked or someone riddled with cancer or AIDS was suddenly pronounced cured by a bunch of doctors standing around totally baffled and confused.

I had no idea that God is constantly performing "quiet

miracles” every day in the lives of each and every one of us. If you’re anything like I once was, then you’re missing the soft whisper or quiet breeze while waiting for the thunder-clap. You’re brushing aside these experiences as mere coincidences, when in truth, this is God doing something for us that we could not do for ourselves.

Quiet miracles come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. They can be unexpected phone calls, chance meetings, a much-needed bank check, or a missed plane reservation that would have ended in disaster. They can be small enough to simply produce a warm glow or dramatic enough to create awe and wonder. And if we allow ourselves to look beyond the glow and focus on the wonder, we will recognize that, at that moment, we are in the presence of God.

That’s what this book is all about: the stories of ordinary people experiencing out-of-the-ordinary encounters with something greater than themselves and coming to realize it’s their Higher Power pointing them in a new direction, bringing someone special into their lives, solving a seemingly hopeless situation, or bringing calm into the middle of a raging storm.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable miracles involved a drunken stockbroker named Bill Wilson as he lay in a sanatorium fearing insanity or death. He reached out and begged a God he had little faith in to help him. Suddenly he felt the presence of God “as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through” and peace in his soul. His desire to drink left him. Bill went on to cofound the fellowship

of Alcoholics Anonymous, which continues to save millions of lives all around the world from the disease of alcoholism.

It is hoped that these stories of God's miracles, big and small, may help to renew or reinforce your belief in a Power greater than yourself when you have been shaken by the worries and woes of the world around you. Perhaps they can provide tangible and meaningful evidence from the experiences of ordinary people that can help shore up the dikes of your faith so that you can begin to doubt less and hope more.

It has done that and more for all those who have shared their stories—anonymously but forthrightly—to make this book possible. I thank them for their great gifts.



I
God Calling

HE WAS EMBARRASSED, for some stupid reason, that his wife might see him on his knees praying, so Hank went into the bathroom and knelt down next to the commode. It wasn't an altogether unfamiliar position since less than three months ago his alcoholic drinking led him there quite frequently.

His Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor had been suggesting for some weeks now that the twenty-nine-year-old unemployed advertising executive start each day on his knees asking God to help keep him sober—and then thank God each night for another day without a drink. This morning was the first time he was following that suggestion. It felt awkward and a bit hypocritical since Hank and his Higher Power had only recently become reacquainted in the rooms of AA, and he hardly knew what to say. Also, he didn't want his wife, Sandi, to catch him at it, so it was a quick "Please, dear God, keep me sober today. Thanks." And then he hopped in the shower.

This wasn't the only big decision Hank had made this particular morning. He had been anxious and fearful about looking for another job since his reputation as a drunk was

pretty well known in his industry, especially when someone would call one of his former employers. But with a wife and three children and a huge pile of debts, he had to find employment somewhere. So this was the day; with the help and urging of his sponsor, he had raised enough internal courage to finally go and start searching.

It turned out to be one of the most difficult days Hank had had since putting down the booze. Despite his highly recognized advertising skills and achievements, the problems his drinking had caused seemed to be the only thing people in the business remembered. He found a lot of doors closed in his face—most of them politely, but closed nevertheless.

Even his old drinking buddies who worked at various ad agencies around town were unwilling to lend a helping hand or put in a good word for him. He found them to be mostly fair weather friends now that he was no longer buying them scotch on the rocks. After a long day of rejection, Hank was ready to head for home and then to his local AA meeting.

There was a tasty-looking chocolate layer cake on the kitchen table when he entered the house. It was just what the doctor ordered—a nice big slice with a glob of vanilla ice cream to soothe the nerves and take away that familiar craving he was beginning to feel deep inside. Sandi walked in just as Hank had the cake knife in his hand and was ready to serve himself. She stopped him, saying rather huffily—or at least it seemed that way in the mood he was in—that she had baked the cake for her Al-Anon meeting that night and didn't want it cut.

Sometimes it doesn't take much for the disease of alcoholism to raise its ugly head, especially when you're only three

months sober. Sandi's remark was the straw that seemed to break the camel's back on this terribly disappointing day.

Hank suddenly remembered that his brother-in-law had left four cans of beer in the kitchen cabinet after visiting over the weekend. He walked angrily to the cabinet, yanked open the door, grabbed a can of beer and popped it open. He yelled at his wife that he had had enough turndowns for one day and maybe he was better off drunk.

As he put the can of beer to his lips, the telephone rang. For some reason, he lowered the can and stared at his wife, whose eyes were filled with tears. The phone kept ringing. Finally, Hank picked it up. His sponsor was on the other end. He said he was on his way over to pick Hank up to go on a Twelve Step call with him to help another sick alcoholic.

The can of beer fell from Hank's hand. His eyes were also now filled with tears. He says he suddenly felt the presence of God all around him—the same God he had asked that morning to help keep him sober.

He knew it was God calling.



2

Saved to Save

IT WAS A VERY GLOOMY, rainy Monday afternoon as Martha, a forty-three-year-old housewife, sat in her bedroom finishing her fifth glass of wine and staring out at the hazy San Fernando Mountains that surrounded her lovely California home.

The large *Vogue* calendar on her dressing table read April 28, 1988. Next to it was a framed picture of her and her husband, from whom she was estranged after twenty-two years of marriage, mainly the result of frequent arguments about her drinking. So here she was alone and filled with self-pity while her three “selfish” children were off doing their own thing and not caring a whit about her welfare.

To get her mind off her problems, Martha went into her closet and dug out an old UCLA yearbook, the last one her picture was in before she dropped out of college to get married. As she paged through it, her depression grew worse. She saw the face of a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl, a girl full of promise, full of health, full of hope. There, next to her picture, was a scribbled note from one of her professors that read

“Martha is by far the most promising actress ever to come to UCLA from the state of Montana.”

She closed the book and looked into the mirror. Staring back was a face lined with regret, with dark shadows under puffy red eyes, with lips that curled down in a grimace rather than upward in a smile. The pain inside was overwhelming—the pain of failure as a wife and mother, as a would-be actress, as a human being. *What more is there to live for?* she thought.

Martha went into the bathroom and opened the medicine cabinet. She grabbed the bottle of sleeping pills her doctor had prescribed for her just the other day. She went back and sat in front of the mirror again. Then she swallowed the whole bottle of pills and chased them down with another glass of wine.

Suddenly, as she heard a loud clap of thunder outside and the rain pouring down harder, she was overcome by fear. Suddenly she no longer wanted to die. *Dear God*, she thought, *what have I done? Please don't let me die.*

She ran to the phone on her night table and called her dearest friend, Betty, a lady who had been trying to get her to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for almost two years. The line was busy. She began to panic. She dialed her oldest daughter's apartment, but there was no answer. Her hands began to tremble and her face was wet with perspiration. She decided to call the police.

As she reached again for the phone, she heard the front door downstairs open and close. She rushed into the hallway. It was her youngest daughter, Annie, nineteen, who still lived with her. She had come home to get some clothes she had for-

gotten to bring to the cleaners. Martha screamed down at her, "I took some pills. Please, Annie, help me. I'm going to die!"

Annie half carried her mother to the car and sped five miles across town to the nearest hospital. By the time they arrived, Martha's right lung had collapsed and her liver and kidneys weren't functioning properly. It was touch and go for almost a week as her family reunited at her bedside to give her support.

The prayers of her family, many friends, and relatives, and the grace of a loving God, finally pulled her through. Martha and her husband did divorce the following year, but by then she was active in AA and much stronger physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She was able to handle the big changes in her life and move on.

While the divorce settlement left her comfortable, Betty, her AA sponsor, strongly suggested she find a job in order to keep busy and productive. Since Martha had some background in personnel work before having her children, she found a job with a major corporation working in their Employee Assistance Program, helping those with substance use problems. After a few months, the company decided to send her back to school to advance her knowledge about the various problems she would face in her new position.

She enrolled in addiction education at her old school, UCLA. Her first day back at the university, Martha found herself, strangely enough, in a suicide prevention workshop. While the instructor was speaking, she happened to glance down at the date on the worksheets she had been given. The date was April 28, 1991. It suddenly occurred to her that this

was the exact date and almost the exact time of day that she had attempted suicide three years earlier.

Martha's eyes filled with tears. She knew it was no coincidence that Annie had come back that day to get the clothes for the cleaners. She knew it was the intervention of her Higher Power. She sat there overcome with gratitude to God for saving her life so that she could now help save others. As she turned and looked out the window, she noticed it wasn't gloomy or rainy like it was that day three years ago. Instead, the sky was blue and filled with sunshine—and she felt a glow inside. She knew she was in the presence of God.



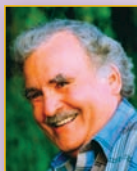
MANY OF US DREAM of witnessing a real miracle, an awe-inspiring divine intervention that changes the course of our lives and heightens our belief in a personal and loving God.

Yet, we are often so fixated on the idea of an awesome event that we somehow overlook the quiet little miracles that happen to each of us every day.

The miracles collected in *50 Quiet Miracles That Changed Lives* come in all shapes and forms, from unexpected phone calls to chance meetings. They are small enough to simply produce a warm glow and dramatic enough to create awe and wonder.

A father of five witnesses his burning home being saved by bearded strangers with fire extinguishers, who put out the fire and then disappear. A diamond miner in South Africa barely avoids a deadly crash when he is pushed out of a packed elevator at the last minute. A chance meeting leads a woman to the apartment of her closest childhood friend, now dying of AIDS. She helps her friend regain spiritual strength and becomes a surrogate mother to her friend's child.

If we allow ourselves to look beyond the glow and focus on the wonder, we will recognize that, in moments such as these, we are in the presence of God.



William G. Borchert is the author of *The Lois Wilson Story* and the co-author of *Sought Through Prayer and Meditation*. A former partner at Artists Entertainment Complex, he was nominated for an Emmy in 1989 for his screenplay of *My Name Is Bill W.*

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