

Life does not end for a woman after the death of her husband. There may be mountain-top breath-taking moments in her future, possibly even passion.

**The Wonderful Widowhood World:
If You Give Friendship with God a Try**
By Judy Towne Jennings MA PT

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The Wonderful Widowhood World...

If You Give Friendship With God a Try



Judy Towne Jennings MA. PT.

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Chapter 2:

“NO PROBLEM”

2010

October

God provided a multitude of mini-miracles throughout the intense last three years of Dean's life. Lest there be any doubt that I was being held together by the hands of a Supreme Being, He orchestrated a mighty miracle during the last few days of Dean's life.

Two weeks after the occupational therapy evaluation, I heard a loud thump coming from Dean's room early one Friday morning. Somehow, I knew this was serious, maybe the beginning of the end. He was sprawled on the floor beside the bed. How he got over the protective railing attached to the bed, I would never know.

For three years, I had been able to handle all his symptoms from the perspective of an efficient physical therapist. Whenever he had another problem, I would effectively 'fix' it. Not this time. Seeing him lying in an awkward position on the floor with fear written all over his face, forced me to react like any other wife. I panicked!

Although he was in no pain and fully alert, something was drastically different. When I tried to help him sit and get to his knees, just as we had done many times before, he had no strength in his legs. They were like two noodles as soon as he tried to bear any weight.

A rational person would have called the EMT's for help. Being utterly irrational at that moment, I somehow muscled a 200-

pound man back into bed. My mind kept saying, "He shouldn't be on the floor! He shouldn't be this weak! If I can just get him back into bed, everything will be okay. He will be normal! This will all go away!"

Once in bed, he did relax and fall asleep. Not so for me. As I sat at the kitchen table sipping a cup of coffee, trying to calm my nerves, I realized I needed answers and made the decision to call the emergency squad.

When the results of X-Rays and lab work came back, the doctor pulled me aside to tell me that he had checked every orifice and system for the possible cause of Dean's overwhelming decline in function, and he could find nothing. He was sorry to tell me that he felt it was an advancement of the disease. The doctor admitted Dean so that I could get arrangements made for more help at home.

Dean seemed to respond to the fluids and rest on Saturday and was able to converse with family. Unfortunately, on Sunday he was bed-fast, glassy-eyed, and unable to recognize anyone who came to visit. When I returned at 6:00 AM on Monday, I could not wake him. The doctor agreed that Dean was in a coma, and needed a hospice unit. He was transferred later that day.

Dean and I had prepared for this inescapable event. Earlier in the summer, we had discussed final arrangements. Both of us felt that donating his brain (and body) to the research division of the University of Cincinnati was a good idea. Maybe exploring the monster at work in his body would help develop a treatment for the next person.

Unfortunately, I procrastinated and didn't have him sign the papers requesting the donation. When I presented all of my Power of Attorney papers to the Hospice Unit head nurse on Tuesday morning, the nurse informed me that body donation

could only occur when the donor had given his written permission to do so. Therefore, my power of attorney was null and void in this situation. After exploring options with the social worker and the Head of the University donation program, I was devastated. I realized that I had a significant problem. Without his signed permission, his body would be sent to a funeral home and put into a holding vault for upwards of 6 months. It could take the donor program committee that long to determine whether to accept him or not.

The alternative was to use a local funeral home and forget the donation plan. Either option felt like a kick in the gut. This was a dilemma that I had not anticipated. Even though I had been methodical with every phase of Dean's care for five years, the procrastination with the final arrangements made me feel utterly worthless as Dean's caregiver. There was apparently nothing I could do to "fix" this problem.

In the past, it seemed that God had done His best work when all hope was lost. As I sat in the alcove next to Dean's room wondering what I was going to do, our pastor walked around the corner and said, "Guess who I am talking to in the next room?" I was surprised to see him because I had not seen him arrive.

"Who?" I asked.

"Dean," he exclaimed.

"No Way!"

"Yup, he is wide awake."

"What a miracle! Let's get those papers signed," I exclaimed, as I rushed toward the room.

When I walked into Dean's room, he was resting comfortably with his head elevated on the pillow. Although his eyes were closed, his breathing was normal. Amazingly, he looked

relatively healthy for someone in a hospice bed. As I leaned toward him, he turned to look at me and smiled.

I put my hand lovingly on his arm, "Sweetie, you are awake! Can you sign these papers for the donation program at the University?" I asked as I laid the papers on his bedside table.

"Sure!" he responded as if he had been patiently waiting for me to ask.

Breathing a huge sigh of relief, I left to find the social worker and nurse while the Pastor continued to visit with Dean. He was still alert when the three of us entered his room. When I placed the pen in his fingers, he could barely hold on to it, and he apparently was not able to see well.

"Where do you want me to sign?" I moved his hand with the pen to the line.

"Am I on the right spot?" He asked.

"Yes, go ahead and sign."

As he put the pen down on the table, the social worker asked, "Do you know who you are?"

"Certainly, I am Dean Allen Jennings," he responded emphatically.

"That is good enough for me," she commented and signed the form as a required witness.

Fully aware that Dean had not had food or drink in three days, the head nurse inquired of his needs, "Mr. Jennings, are you hungry?"

"Nope. I am just fine," he answered emphatically.

"Are you thirsty?"

"Nope. I am just fine."

With that, he closed his eyes and gently slid back into the depths of the coma. Dean lasted five more days but never again regained consciousness.

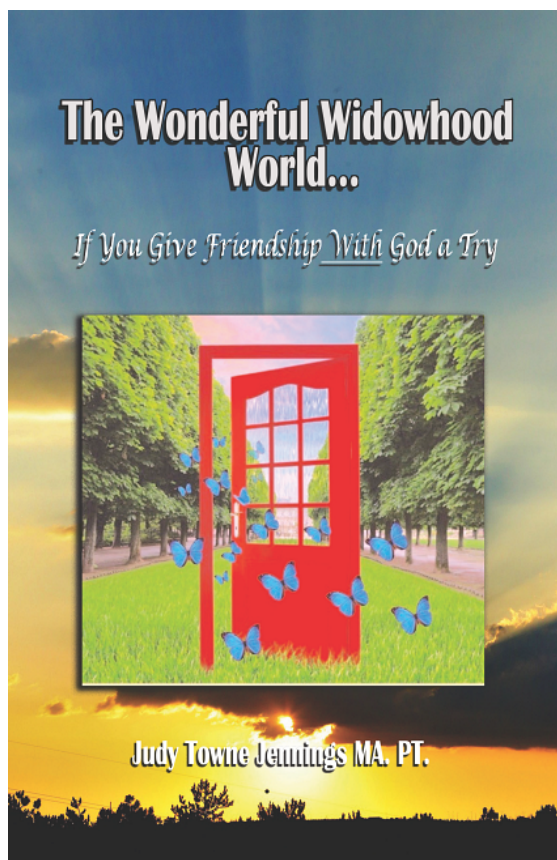
Having thought about this sequence of events in-depth, I feel certain that Dean's spirit knew I was in deep trouble.



"God, I think You said to him, 'Sorry, Son, your work is not quite done. You have one more, big task to do. Your wife is in trouble. You need to sign the release form.' "

And Dean responded, "No problem!"





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