

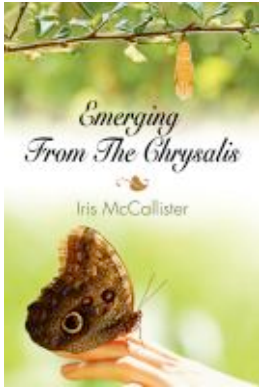


Emerging From The Chrysalis



Iris McCallister





Have you ever felt stuck in life? ***Emerging From The Chrysalis*** contains nine stories of real women of different economic backgrounds and ethnicities who have struggled through every kind of adversity to become successful. They overcame deformities, abuse, torture, rape, child loss, homelessness, and many other hurdles. You will cry as you cheer them on, and recognize yourself in their struggles. This book is an inspiration for everyone.

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**EMERGING
FROM THE CHRYSALIS**

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Chapter 1 - ELEANORE

Although it has been at least forty-five years ago, I remember the first day I met Eleanore. Her stepdaughter was my current best friend and she was the new step mom. I can't remember ever hearing Angela or any of her siblings say anything negative about Eleanore. I can't remember anyone ever saying anything that wasn't nice about her either.

You see, Angela and I were about to advance to high school. We were engrossed in planning our seat position on the daily seventeen mile bus ride to school. Then one day out of the blue, Angela announces that her father had re-married.

Angela hadn't said much about her mother who had walked out on their family. Her mother was there and then one day she wasn't. Although their dad owned a local gas station and small grocery, Angela and her siblings were usually dirty and unkempt. In the poverty stricken area where we lived, those circumstances were more normal than unusual.

But something nearly miraculous happened. In fact the change was apparent before the announcement. Angela and her siblings started coming to school clean and with their hair combed. From lack of dental care, Angela's teeth were completely rotted in the front, but she shared with me that she was getting new dentures before school started. Yes, there were big changes at Angela's house.

Angela was really a beautiful girl with her olive complexion and her deep brown eyes. Her hair was the color of milk chocolate framed around her tiny little face. She was so petite that even as a teen she could have passed for a child. The only thing that spoiled her looks was her teeth. With new dentures, she would be perfect!

I was very interested in seeing this new mother of hers. A woman who could affect such a change in this family must be totally amazing. Angela's dad was quite a catch. Justin not only had his own business,

but to us girls he was handsome. Now, he was married and we all wanted to meet the lucky woman.

It was only a week or so until I had that privilege. My dad was making a gas and grocery run and I asked if I could go with him. I pretended that I needed to speak with Angela. So I accompanied my dad and strolled into the store while he pumped the gas. There were a few of his cronies sitting there chatting when I got inside, but no raving beauty. Instead behind the counter was the ugliest woman I had ever seen.

This woman was shorter than I and weighed about ninety pounds. She had a big hump on her back and her breast bone was more a curve of bone instead of the fleshy look that most women have. I noticed quickly that there was not a tooth in her head that was not rotted in her broad smile. Her hands were so twisted that I wondered how she could use them. Her brown hair was thin and stringy. Although I hadn't seen her before, I assumed that she had been hired to help with the store.

When I finally found Angela in the back, she asked me if I had met Eleanore. I said not yet but I was anxious to do so. She grabbed me by the hand and we ran back into the store. It was there that she introduced me to her new mom. This hideous creature who had made such a difference in this family was Eleanore? I am sure that shock registered on my face, but I was as courteous as I had been taught to be.

I couldn't ask Angela any of the questions that I longed to ask her. It would be rude. She totally adored this woman and I was pondering how Justin could have fallen in love with her.

Summer passed much too quickly and we were soon freshmen at the high school. We continued to share our secret hopes and dreams, but it was Angela who blossomed and not I. Her new dentures changed her appearance completely. The scrawny and dirty little kid was now a beautiful young woman. She was dating and I was not. I was really happy for her albeit a little jealous of all the attention that she was getting.

I continued to go to the store throughout my high school years. And I grew to love Eleanore. In fact I barely noticed the flaws in her physical appearance as her personality was right out of a movie.

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Eleanore never met a stranger. Everyone that entered the store, whether they were a tourist or a local, became a lifelong friend of Eleanore's.

She eventually got dentures herself, but she really didn't need them to look beautiful. Throughout the years, my mind has wandered to those teen years and how this woman changed not one family, but an entire community. She taught me a very valuable lesson. Yes, the adage "Don't judge a book by its cover" is true. If you can't get past the covering, you will never enjoy the delights held within.

I am so glad that Justin saw what I didn't...for Eleanore is truly one of the most beautiful women that I have ever met.

Why do some people struggle
Why do some people succeed

How can others soar
How can others sink

Is it all of a great eternal plan?
Everyone could be saved but we shun the light of god

Lack of our self worth draws us to the dark where no one sees

Why do some people struggle
Why do some people succeed

How can others soar
How can others sink

...Aberdeen...

Chapter 8 – POLLY

I met Polly Miller in 1975 while living in South Carolina. I am not sure of the month or the day but it wasn't long before she started impacting my life.

Polly was the happiest woman I had ever met at that point in time. She was a very petite young woman, but her presence was impressive. She was always smiling. It wasn't a closed lip smile, but a broad one that exposed two rows of even white teeth. And when she spoke, there was almost an underlying laughter that hung in the air. As a matter of fact, I do not think I remember her ever frowning.

When you coupled that ready smile with hair the color of apricots and twinkling cerulean blue eyes, you had the ingredients for the beauty that she was. However, you automatically realized that her true beauty was unfathomable.

I was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in December of 1975. By the time I was baptized, I had regularly attended the sacrament meetings since the beginning of August of that year and had acquainted myself with many of the ward members.

Soon after I was baptized, I was given a calling of Primary librarian. As the librarian, I learned about the Primary program for the children. I would be there every Tuesday to hand out the teaching materials to the teachers. It gave me the opportunity to familiarize myself with more of the church teachings on a basic level. It also gave me an opportunity to know the children. If one wants to get to know a neighborhood, meet the children and make friends with them.

Polly was the Primary President and Doris Leeds was her counselor. They were best friends as was their husbands, who served as counselors to the bishop. Whereas Doris had sons, Polly had three little girls. And although her oldest daughter was from a previous marriage, her husband treated them all with great love and care.

Polly and Doris were very methodical and patient with me as they taught me the curriculum for the children. In fact they were as tolerant

of my mistakes as they were of the children's. There was not a question that I could come up with, that they didn't take time to ensure that I understood the answer.

Throughout my first year of church membership, I served diligently with these two women. Sometime during that first year, I was also given the stewardship of visiting them as a Visiting Teacher. Each month my visiting teaching companion and I would go to their homes and give them a spiritual message as well as find out if there were any needs in the family.

I loved going to Polly's house as she would allow me to help her fold clothes. I think she planned the laundry for the day that we were coming. Folding laundry came so naturally and somehow bonded us as sisters. I have never forgotten that experience as I was very shy and this simple personal inclusion allowed me to get to know her on a personal level.

By the middle of the second year, I was released as Primary librarian and asked to teach Cultural Refinement to the Relief Society Sisters. The thought of this terrified me, but Polly assured me that it would be a good experience for me to learn about women around the world.

I dove into the calling and sure enough, it was a great experience to get to know about other women like myself throughout the world. The Relief Society met on Wednesdays so it gave me another opportunity to get to know the women in the ward. After a while, I began to feel comfortable with the sisters and could actually hold a conversation with them as well.

At the beginning of October of that year, Polly and Doris were released from their callings in the Primary Presidency. It was very hard for Polly as she loved the children. She had just learned that she was pregnant with twins, so she consoled herself in the fact that she would be busy with the pregnancy.

The Primary organization was holding a Halloween carnival for the children. It would be complete with a haunted house for the older children and a fishing pond for the toddlers. I had bundled up my two little ones and had them already at the church when Doris arrived with her children and Polly's four year old daughter. This was very peculiar as those two women always did everything together.

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The following is a synopsis of the trial for these two women.

When Doris arrived to pick up Polly's two daughters to take them to the carnival, the eighteen month old daughter had slipped out the door. No one knew that she had left the house. As the driveway was on a hill, it was impossible to see behind the car. Doris put the car into gear and began to back down the driveway. It became evident immediately that the baby was behind the car.

Doris stopped the car of course. But when the two moms got to the toddler, she was bleeding. Doris wanted to drive Polly and her baby to the hospital. But Polly asked her to take the children to the carnival as they needed to be there. She did not want the other children to miss the carnival. Against her own wishes, Doris followed Polly's direction.

Polly had her pre-teen get into the back seat of the car and then handed her bleeding baby to her. As they sped to the hospital, big sister cradled baby sister in her arms as gingerly as possible. Shortly after they arrived, the little one was pronounced dead.

As a visiting teacher, I wanted to do something for their families. I made food and took it over. I folded clothes. I felt so helpless and yet so full of love for this family that I loved so deeply.

The night of the viewing, the tiny little casket was sitting just in front of the first row below the podium. Polly sat directly in front of it with her arm around Doris as she consoled her. I, in all my naivety and sparse understanding of the principles of the gospel, was somewhat bewildered. Why was Polly consoling Doris? Shouldn't it be the other way?

I remember sitting in the row behind the two of them watching and learning. I am not sure why I was allowed to sit so close as usually that is a place relegated for the family. But I was sitting on the second row behind the two of them. Polly turned slightly to speak with me without letting go of Doris.

Polly in her characteristically cheerful manner said to me. "Iris, she has her first pair of training panties on." I couldn't believe that she was smiling and not bawling as I would have been doing. She explained that she was getting ready to potty train her little angel but had not yet begun. One could see the little ruffles that peaked out from beneath the dress that adorned the baby girl.

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Then she said the second most powerful thing to me that I have ever heard. "Iris, I have one of my children in the Celestial Kingdom. Now if only I can get the others safely there."

That single phrase made a dynamic change in my path through life. I am sure she had her private moments of suffering, but to the rest of the world she was steadfast and joyful.

I continued to help her fold clothes through the months ahead. I would ask to help with other things but I don't remember her ever needing help. She was busy helping me. We talked about her pregnancy and the twins. She called me the day that she found out that both were boys. She was so excited to be able to give her husband not only one son, but two!

May 29th. I will never forget the date, as that was also my daughter's birthday. Polly called me from the recovery room. They had delivered her little twin sons. Both of them were dead. Both of them!

Polly had called to tell me that she now had three babies in Heaven. I couldn't see her of course, but I could hear her cheerful voice on the other end of the phone. She was always so brave. Again, she steered me down a path that I would never have chosen on my own. This simple act had locked in the simple truth that she had shared with me when her daughter had died.

She had shared with me a testimony of faith in Christ. She had shared with me a testimony that there is life after death. She had shared with me a testimony of joy in the midst of adversity.

My family was a military family and in 1979, we received orders to move to Germany. It was a sad and yet exciting time. I had grown to love all the new friends that we had made and I would miss them. I wasn't sure if I would ever see any of them again. I would especially miss the woman who taught me so tenderly and yet so firmly about the surety that God lives and loves each of us.

But life has an interesting way of bringing you down many paths that intersect from time to time. And so it was with us. We had moved to Maryland in 1985 because my husband was now stationed at Ft. Ritchie, Maryland. We loved it there and made many friends as is the way of life for a soldier and his family.

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The following year, we decided that we would take a vacation as we had not done so for many years. When our children were asked where they would like to go on the vacation, they unanimously echoed Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

I had just learned that I was pregnant with twins. So we packed all of the camping equipment into the station wagon. Next into the wagon, came the six children and a renewed excitement of going back to the place we loved as much as ever.

As we camped in the park on the beach, so many memories ran through our heads. We all had memories of this or that person. One of our dearest friends had met us there with her two children and was able to update us on the status of this or that person. It was comforting to learn that things were progressing without us.

A few days later, to my surprise, we ran into Polly and Daniel and their little brood. I couldn't believe my eyes. And yet, she looked the same as she had some seven years before. Not only did she have her two daughters that we remembered, but had added at least three more children. Several of them were sons that were almost as tall as their mother.

Some months later, when I lost one of the twins that I was carrying, my pain was lessened by the example that I had been reminded of during the summer.

I have never told her how much I love her. I hope that if she sees this in print, that she will know that she changed my life. I will ever be changed by Polly for the good.

I love you Polly.

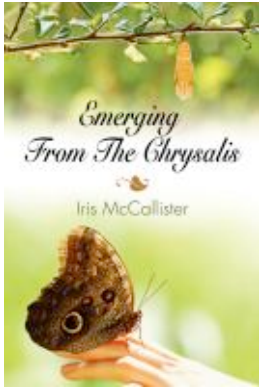
NOTES TO CHAPTER

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has organizations within the church that meet the needs of children, teens, men, and women. The Primary Organization is designed to specifically to teach children about Jesus Christ, His gospel, the Book of Mormon (another witness of Jesus Christ), and Joseph Smith. The program is designed specifically to teach children from four to twelve years of age.

Visiting teaching is a program designed to serve the women in the Church. The women consider themselves part of a sisterhood and belong to the Relief Society Organization. Joseph Smith received revelation from God declaring that the women should organize themselves into a society of sisters that would care for the general welfare of one another.

Typically two sisters visit with sisters that have been assigned to them and bring a gospel message to uplift them spiritually. They are to listen and offer service when needed. The visiting teachers report to the Relief Society president of any needs of the sisters they visit. Often the visiting teachers will cook meals or perform other compassionate service when their assigned sisters are sick or suffering. If the sisters are unable to give the needed service, the President of the Relief Society will determine the extent of the need and inform the Bishop. The Bishop will then decide how the help is to be provided.

A ward is the term given to a group of Latter Day Saints in a geographical area under the stewardship of a Bishop. The Bishop is called and sustained by the membership of the ward.



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