



Second chances

by Marlo E. Schuldt

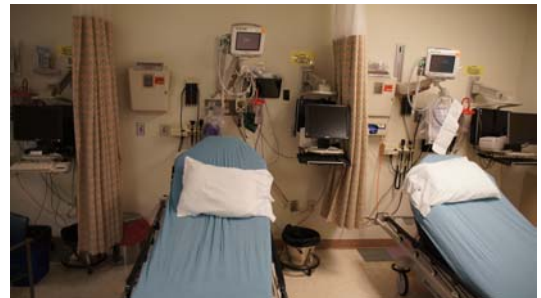
Each day you are given 24 hours to spend as you choose. How will you spend today?

My life was probably about the same as many others this past December. We were getting ready to put up our Christmas tree and trying to find perfect presents for all the kids. We were searching for white elephant gag gifts for the annual party. Our kids were flying in from New York which would make this a special Christmas because we'd all be together.

The unexpected events of December 14, 2011 changed my life. The ten days I spent in the hospital were some of the most physically challenging and painful experiences of my entire life. My positive outlook on life plummeted as the medical facts were revealed:

- Serious hemorrhaging and passing out at home. Yes, I was the stubborn one who thought I could handle it at home.

- My pulse hit "0" when I passed out a second time in the emergency room.



- My first night was spent in the ICU. They bragged about having a very exotic liquid smorgasbord. It was an **ALL you HAVE to drink menu** of one item - "Go Lightly." Menu titles are deceiving.
- Preliminary examination revealed a large malignant tumor in my colon.
- *I had cancer.* Prognosis unknown.

More Tests and Waiting

A colonoscopy was needed to determine a more precise diagnosis.

I should have had a colonoscopy years ago. I might have avoided this whole painful and costly experience! If you are fifty or older, don't be dumb like me, get the test!

Helping Someone in the Hospital?

Days and nights become long and lonely. Visiting a relative or friend is a nice break and helps them pass time.

Wait a couple of days before visiting a friend in serious condition. Give them some time to regain their strength. Most of us don't want to be seen when we look and feel really awful!

Smile when you talk!

Keep your visit short! I tired easily from talking since it quickly depleted my strength and oxygen reserve.

It was helpful and encouraging to hear from others who've been through a similar experience and survived since they understood my plight.

Never tell someone, "I know how you feel" if you've not had the same experience. We know you can't know how we feel and it makes us feel you are minimizing what we are going through.

Follow up later. Most of us don't leave the hospital magically healed. Some of our greatest battles, depression, and discouragement occur at home when we are not surrounded by caring nurses and dedicated caregivers.

Make a visit, send an e-mail or make a phone call. This means a lot when the road to full recovery is long and arduous.

It was a wonderfully healing and strengthening experience when friends, relatives and our software users sent their love, greetings and told me they had included me in their prayers.

The Power of Small Acts of Kindness

My oldest daughter appeared one day with her kids to put Christmas decorations up on my wall. That helped so much since I spent many long nights staring at my "wall of encouragement" that cheered me up when I was in pain and couldn't sleep. It also reminded me that I had to be a positive example to my grandkids.



One-on-one visits. One afternoon my daughter from New York appeared in my room. It was so special to spend some time alone talking to her. Something we have not done since she was a little girl. It's good to feel appreciated and to be a dad again for a few minutes.

Our garbage disposer stopped working just before I went into the hospital. My surgeon forbid me from lifting or straining. Thankfully my oldest son installed the little monster with my wife's help.

My youngest son came to see me at the hospital. He presented me with the latest Asus tablet which helped distract my never ending fight with pain and the fear of what lay ahead. His optimism was most welcome and healing.

My daughter-in-law offered to smuggle "Spike," my little beagle, into my hospital room to help lift my spirits. We decided that might not be such a good idea if she got caught.



My sister made a special trip to see me after I arrived home. I know it sounds kind of lame but

I truly enjoyed holding her hand while we relived fun memories of our growing up. She's the best and calls to check on her little 'Bro.'

Wonderful and Talented Healers

I doubt I would have survived all the distasteful experiences I had to endure except for a wonderful and highly trained medical staff that had saved my life, sanity and made the pain bearable.



My nurses were the best. I could have adopted each one. We became family during my stay.

My good wife made so many sacrifices trying to ease my fear and pain, such as sleeping next to me on a cot each night for several days when the nights were never ending and unbearable. What a guardian angel I have for a wife.

The Courage to Communicate Love

One night my room filled with my children, their spouses and grandchildren. That sight, even as I write this, filled my heart and eyes with so many tears I couldn't see to speak or control my shaky voice for a while.

How could I have been so fortunate to have such special people in my life? That night I summoned the courage to pour out my heart and soul to each of them and told them how proud and how much I loved them.

These tender communications were long overdue. *I guess deathbed repentance is better than no repentance.*

Surgery and Fear of the Unknown

'I've never had surgery or been "knocked out."

The anesthesiologist had a hard time convincing me to get a block. *I wasn't having a baby!* I finally agreed upon one condition that really surprised him. I said matter of factly, "If I come back with breast implants I'm coming looking for you!"

One shot in my IV and I was out. When I came around in the recovery room I thought I was teaching a webinar. *That would have been something new and very interesting!*

Finally - Wonderfully Good News!

I was blessed to have a hospital experience with a happy ending. The colonoscopy and surgery revealed a large malignant tumor, the size of a man's fist, that had not spread anywhere else.

A couple of days later I received more good news. Lab analysis confirmed the cancer was contained and had NOT spread to any lymph nodes or organs.

During the 2 1/2 hour surgery they removed my appendix, fixed a hernia and cut out 15 inches of my colon. I should be good for at least another 100,000 miles. I received lots of IV fluids and three units of blood before surgery. All my fluids should be topped off now. However, I don't think they balanced my tires because I'm a little shaky and wander back and forth when I do my exercise walks.

More Good News From the Oncologist

I was really dreading going to the oncologist. The thoughts of having to take Chemo and being sick again was more than I could contemplate.

My waiting room experience was not pleasant. Every pamphlet and magazine was about cancer. I felt almost suffocated and demoralized as I gazed into a big room of people getting Chemotherapy. I had to admire their courage.

Finally the nurse called my name. She acted a little strange when I refused a blood test. I had just been through over 20 painful blood draws at the hospital. According to the nurses I didn't

have friendly blood draw veins. I thought they could get their information from the hospital.

I'd began to wonder if all the blood tests had drained all three units of blood transfusions I'd previously received.

The oncologist was a very cool dude! First he said he'd forego the blood test this time. Yes!

He carefully explained all the lab tests and the type of cancer I had. It's amazing they know so much about a tumor.

Best of all my oncologist gave me even more hope. I have Type 2A cancer. I have an 85 - 90% chance of being free of cancer during the next five years! If I make it past five years I will be able to pass GO and collect my \$200 and then purchase Boardwalk.

Near Death Experiences (NDE)

The value of my life changed when my pulse hit "0" in the emergency room and I received the news I had a large cancerous tumor in my colon. These events warned I may be close to the end of my life.

I felt an immediate desire to draw closer to my wife, children, grandchildren, relatives and friends. I wanted to express my love and appreciation to them.

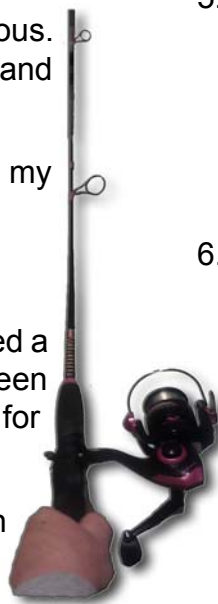
It's now easy to see that life is precious. Each day should be used to enrich and foster better relationships.

Many things have already changed in my life. More changes will follow.

Spending More Time With the kids

My daughter and son-in-law purchased a fishing license for me along with a green fishing pole for me and a pink one for Leanna.

I can't wait to go fishing this summer with all the kids and grandkids. Life will soon be good again!



Recommendations

1. If you are 50 years or older, please get a colonoscopy. You're not invincible! I could have avoided a lot of pain, suffering and expense by having a test 10 years ago.
2. The greatest loss to your children, grandchildren, friends and relatives will be YOU! Start planning to be more a part of their lives. You have many experiences to share they can benefit from hearing.

Attend special events honoring your children and grandchildren such as school plays, Eagle Scout awards, piano recitals and other events to help build their confidence and self-worth.

Use Skype to connect with your children and grandchildren if they live far away

3. Don't put off writing your history. Your life can be turned upside down without warning and changed forever in a few minutes. Don't wait until it's too late.
4. Express your love and appreciation to your spouse, kids, family and other special people in your life. Do this often. You might not get another chance. *I was lucky!*
5. Are there some apologies due from you? Don't put off healing and mending some strains in your family tree. You will feel so much better and receive such relief in casting off old grudges, baggage and other emotional burdens.
6. Use Heritage Collector to make some slide shows. The photos combined with a narrative of your voice will become a priceless treasure to your kids and grandkids. It's easy to do so get started.

A Second Chance and New Beginning

My life has forever been changed for the best compliments of my two NDEs.

I feel so blessed and grateful for my family, friends, staff and coworkers, relatives, and our software users who shared messages of hope and continued encouragement.

A big thanks to all of you who offered prayers and your assistance.

Best Wishes.

Marlo E. Schuldt

Cancer Survivor and Grandpa



I'm thinking about making my hospital bracelet into a Christmas ornament as a reminder of what's really important in the years to come!



I was released from the hospital on the December 23, 2011. I was able to share Christmas at home surrounded by my children and grandchildren. What a special blessing! It's the best Christmas I've ever had.



My sincere thanks to the doctors, medical staff and management of the Timpanogos Regional Hospital. I owe them my life and have the utmost respect for their expertise and the wonderfully caring attitude of their nurses.