



Ever Had a Post-Polio “Co-Incicle”?

Sunny Roller

During the past few years I have become infatuated with the idea of miracles--especially when it comes to our polio and post-polio experiences. Miracles have been referred

to as "personal love letters from God" and defined as "events that appear to be contrary to the laws of nature, regarded as an act of God." Others would call these happenings coincidences—"remarkable occurrences that are simultaneous or somehow connected." That can work, as well. Maybe we should call them "co-incicles!" Whatever the word, these baffling interludes can quickly become precious memories. When things look bleak, the memory of “co-incicles” can strengthen us, bring us back to the positive and improve our outlook for the day. When remembered regularly with awe and gratitude, they may even have the power to encourage us through new post-polio difficulties and dangers.

When asked, “have you ever had a post-polio ‘co-incicle’?” here are three of our stories:

A Thank-God Minute

I can remember one Canadian winter rather like this winter, when we had a tremendous amount of snow and extreme cold. It was after dark. I was on my way to a friend’s house for the evening. Her home, the only one there, sits at the end of a very long road. I had just started driving up the lane when some unexpected force pulled my car into the snow bank. Abruptly, I was well and firmly stuck. What a dilemma. I had forgotten my cell phone. I had also forgotten

my crutches, but they would have been useless in the ill-omened snow. The brutal night air was about -30 degrees and if I got out of the van I would automatically fall and not be able to get up. I panicked! What could I do? This is a time that having a physical disability can be terrorizing. Suddenly, out of the darkness, I spotted two small headlights coming toward me. Later, I found out that my friend's husband had glanced out their living room window at the exact time I skidded into the snow bank and ditch. He had watched as my headlights swerved. They knew I was coming so decided to drive out and see if it was me. The timing was perfect. I was never so happy to see anyone in my life! They helped me through the deep snow into their van; then called a tow truck to rescue my vehicle as well. That was a Thank-God Minute.

An Ectoplasmic Encounter?

Minnesota gets a lot of cold and snow. Well, several years ago, I was on my own (something my wife doesn't let me get away with most of the time)--out shopping. I found a parking spot on the street that would allow my ramp to come out and get me and my wheelchair onto the sidewalk. I had about a block to go to get to the store and I set off along a not-too-well-plowed sidewalk. I careened around the corner only to realize that this section of sidewalk was even less well-shoveled. I crept ahead. I hadn't bounced and bumped along 10 feet when my chair slid sideways off the shoveled area and into a snow bank. I broke through the thin cover of ice and my chair tilted precariously. I could no longer move

either forwards or backwards. I was unalterably stuck without a person in sight and scared to death that I was going to tip over and fall hard into a concrete wall that loomed very, very close. I suddenly heard a voice behind me saying, "Say fella, it looks like you could use some help." Of course I replied, "Oh yes please, if you



could help me get back onto the shoveled path I would be ever so grateful." He

pulled down on the back of the wheelchair and pivoted me back onto the shoveled path and gave me a push. Although I couldn't see him, I said, "thank you, thank you, I didn't know what I was going to do to get loose." Reaching the store entrance I quickly whirled around in order to see the face of my benefactor. I looked ahead, then looked back and there was no one there. There was no one crossing the street or walking the other way on either side of the street. There was not one person I could see anywhere. Maybe ghosts have more ectoplasm than I'd given them credit for.

The Unexpected Collision

One day my friend and I left a funeral to go to a restaurant with the grieving family. After our meal, we began leaving the restaurant when two women noticed us and seemed particularly interested in me. One stopped us, placed a hand on my shoulder, and said, "Oh you poor dear, confined to a wheelchair. That must be horrible. How my heart goes out to you." I felt a rush of blood warm my face as I gathered my thoughts. I then was quick to enlighten the sympathetic woman. I just could not continue rolling by and allow her to persist in her feelings of pity for me. That would just not do. Therefore, I turned toward her, smiled, and said, "No, you are mistaken; indeed, my wheelchair liberates me. I have a truly wonderful life!"

Today I ask myself why this occurrence came to mind as my "wonder-experience?" What is it about this decades old incident that strikes me as a small miracle? I believe the answer lies in the unexpected collision of two women, each with opposite perspectives. One able-bodied with deep-seated views of people with disabilities as misfortunate; the other disabled with a life-long goal to break down barriers, both physical and attitudinal. I had never been in that restaurant before; indeed, I had never been in that town. I hope that the outcome of that brief moment in time was--enlightening another human being.

These are amazing little stories. They are truthful personal accounts that make our eyes sparkle when we tell them. What is one of your favorite post-polio "co-incidences?" It's worth remembering.

Source: Post-Polio Health International (www.post-polio.org)