



"I'm lucky—I received two miracles in one day," says **Juanne**, center, with her husband, **Ed**, grandsons **Mathew**, **far left**, and **Alex**, and daughter, **Syanna**.

On the operating table, Juanne Herrold stopped breathing; as she was drawn toward a pure, white light, she heard a beautiful voice offer her a choice . . . "You can die now," it said, "or you can live . . ." Here's what happened next . . .

# A promise to live

**B**lood pressure's down to 50-20 and dropping."

"She's not breathing. We'll have to try . . ."

Juanne heard the doctors' frantic voices, knew they were fighting to save someone's life. But when she tried to open her eyes, she couldn't.

"We're losing her!" the voices shouted.

Suddenly, Juanne realized, They're talking about . . . me!

Machines howled. Doors crashed open . . . then, a blazing, white light engulfed her.

Just a few days before, the 69-year-old grandmother had felt a pain in her abdomen. "Must be something I ate," she told her husband, Ed, figuring the pain would go away by morning. But it didn't.

## Closing her eyes to the light, Juanne prayed, I want to live!

The next day, Ed insisted they go to the doctor. "I'll be fine," Juanne said as he drove. "This is a waste of time."

And Juanne hated wasting time. Having raised seven children while working full-time, she was used to busy days. "I don't have time to be sick!" she'd joke.

Even now, recently retired, Juanne's schedule was packed. There were the grandkids—her five "little treasures," to take to the park. And there were her kids—all grown up, but still in need of the occasional home-baked pie. And then there was their new house in the Smoky Mountains of

North Carolina, which required cleaning and seemingly endless trips to the hardware store.

"Sometimes, you've just got to slow down," Ed told her now as he parked the car.

Still, when the doctor ordered tests, Juanne grew impatient. "All this for some cramps?" she grumbled.

"Mrs. Herrold," the doctor told her later. "I'm sorry, we found a tumor in your colon—it's cancer."

Juanne felt Ed's arms around her. No! she gasped.

Surgery was scheduled for the next day. As anesthesia took effect, the voices in the room were muffled at first, then clear. "Blood pressure dropping, not breathing . . ."

I'm . . . dying! Juanne realized in horror. And now, suddenly, a blazing, white light appeared.

She was struggling to walk against a force—a roaring wind—that pressed against her. I have to go on, she breathed, pawing at the light.

Then she felt a presence surround her—and heard a beautiful voice. "Juanne," it called. "You have a choice. You can die or you can live."

Peace flooded her body. Her limbs floated like air. I'm with God, Juanne realized with awe. I want to stay here, she murmured.

But as she moved toward the light, Ed's face appeared. She saw him smiling on their wedding day, laughing in the Smoky Mountains, pacing in the hospital. And there were her children, and her "little treasures." "I love you, Gran'mommy," they called.

I can't leave them! Juanne

gasped. I have to go back!

Closing her eyes against the light, Juanne prayed. Please God, I want to live!

And the light vanished.

"She's coming around!" she heard someone cry. Opening her eyes, she saw her doctor—then passed out for the rest of the night.

When she awoke, a respirator whirred, an EKG machine hummed, an IV line dangled from her arm. And yet, Juanne smiled, I'm alive!

"Hi, honey," Ed whispered.

"I had a remarkable dream," Juanne began. "I was dying and . . ."

Ed's face fell. "It wasn't a dream," he choked. "Doctors said you stopped breathing on the table. You died!"

It wasn't a dream? Juanne marveled. That means . . . Tears sprung to her eyes. I'm going to live! she knew.

But when a new doctor came in, his face was solemn. "We got all the cancer," said pulmonologist Harry Lipham, M.D. "But you've developed a blood infection called sepsis. It's moved into your lungs and kidneys."

"What does that mean?" Ed asked.

"It means her organs are slowly shutting down," the doctor replied softly.

"Then fix it!" Ed cried.

But Dr. Lipham just shook his head. "It's spreading too quickly. Your family might want to prepare for . . ."

Juanne looked at Ed, then thought of the blazing, white light and beautiful voice. "There must be something," she said.

"Actually, there's a new drug called Xigris," Dr. Lipham said.

"Get it!" Ed blurted.

"But it's not FDA-approved yet," he said.

"And in trials, it saved only one patient in five."

"I have seven children," Juanne told the doctor, "and five grandchildren who need me. Please, let's try the drug."

"I'll see what I can do," Dr. Lipham replied.

However, most patients with severe sepsis die within 48 hours, which meant Dr. Lipham had only two days to locate the drug, have it shipped and, because the drug wasn't FDA-approved, convince both the drug manufacturer and the

hospital to allow him to give it to Juanne. This process usually took months, not hours. "It doesn't look good," he warned.

Still, Dr. Lipham made an urgent call to Eli Lilly, which manufactures Xigris. There, employees located a supply of the drug at a clinic two hours away. "Have them send it by courier—now!" the doctor demanded.

He then called an emergency meeting of the hospital's board to plead Juanne's case. Soon, the board agreed: Juanne could have the drug.

But Juanne's organs were shutting down. "Don't give up," her children pleaded.

"The drug will be here soon," Ed promised.

dripped it into her IV while her family prayed: Please let this work!

An hour later, Juanne's kidneys and lungs were working again. Her heart began beating loud and clear. "Amazing," Dr. Lipham said.

She'd evaded death no once, but twice in 24 hours. And after nine days in the hospital, she went home.

As she entered the house with Ed, she marveled. Everything's different! Sure there are the bills and the laundry, she thought as she looked around. But did the sun always flit across the walls so beautifully?

Thank You, God, she wept joyfully. For saving my life

## "The medicine is here!" nurses cheered to Juanne

for opening my eyes.

Today, Juanne is sepsis- and cancer-free. And although she often finds herself neglecting the cleaning or putting off errands, she wouldn't have it any other way: she's too busy holding hands with Ed or laughing with her "little treasures," who today number 12 in all.

"Most people are thankful to have just one miracle in a lifetime," Juanne says. "I had two in one day—and they keep coming now that I've slowed down enough to notice."

—Elizabeth L. Holzemer

## Why you should never ignore an infection

**T**hough most heal normally, no infection should be ignored—even a scraped knee, say experts at the Organization for Safety & Asepsis Procedures. A worsening infection can allow bacteria into the bloodstream and lead to sepsis, the condition that nearly killed Juanne. But cleaning cuts promptly is all you generally need to do. And for infections, always take the full course of antibiotics your doctor prescribes. For more information, log onto [www.apic.org/cons](http://www.apic.org/cons).



Have you had a powerful, life-changing experience you'd like to share? Please send the details along with your name, address and phone number to: Success of Modern Medicine, *Woman's World*, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. If we print your story, we'll pay you \$250. Submissions may be edited for style.