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On September 18, 2001, I suffered my first heart attack. It was as senseless as the attack on the twin towers in New York City only a week before. There were no heart disease risk factors to plunge me into a four year battle that ultimately led to a life saving heart transplant on July 14, 2005.

I was a healthy 40-year old woman living in Spokane, Washington. Not overweight, no high cholesterol, no high blood pressure, non-smoker, organic, mostly vegetarian diet, no family history of heart disease—my doctors saw no reason to be concerned about my heart. Yet after that first heart attack, I endured 32 heart catheterizations, 11 stents, two open-heart surgeries, and a thoracotomy that was part of an experimental program to grow new vessels around my heart. All this occurred in only three years.

In May of 2005, I was placed on the heart transplant list after surviving cardiac arrest two times. With 70 people here in the Northwest waiting for a heart ahead of me, my transplant surgeon estimated it would be nine months to a year before I was called. We all knew I did not have that much time. He broke the news to me in the bleakness of my hospital room.

The very next morning, much to everyone's surprise, he came in with a consent form for a heart transplant. He had a heart for me. "How?" I asked in amazement. A donor heart was taken off the transplant list because it needed too much repair to be suitable for a recipient. But my surgeon was willing to repair it, bring it back, and transplant in me. I asked him, "Why do you think it will work for me?"

His answer, "Because this is the one God has for you!" I trusted his judgment and faith in God and signed the form. He was taken by helicopter to a local airport where a Lear jet met him for the trip to Seattle. The repairs were done and the transplant was successful.

Although things went well the first few months, I contracted a cancerous type virus from the transplanted heart and the only viable treatment was chemotherapy. After nine months of chemo twice a day—the virus became dormant. It is a permanent virus but my hope is that it will not surface again.

Shortly after recovering from chemo, I broke my right knee and leg in two places putting me in a wheelchair for 12 weeks. After that was behind me I found out now that I may possibly face another bout of chemotherapy for cervical cancer. By a miracle, the cervical cancer was healed before the need for surgery or chemo!

I am passionate and intent on sharing my story of perseverance and how God has sustained my family and I during many years of turmoil and tragedy. Regardless of what comes my way, I am happy to be alive and trust that God will be with me every step of every hurdle.