

LESSON IN LIVING

FROM HADES TO HEAVEN

Elma Allen Milano

My experience in "Hades" began when, one day, out of the "blue," I had not the strength to dry myself or get dressed from my bath. I was so weak I could barely think and was shaking like a leaf. It ended up with an ambulance trip to the emergency room, a 6-hour wait and back home again. This jaunt was repeated the next day and ended up with another extensive wait before being put in the hospital with pneumonia and a urinary tract infection. It was two weeks before I left the rehab center and returned home.

Why do I refer to my time in the health facilities as "Hades?" It's because I still have keen hearing and cannot sleep unless it is quiet and dark. Those of you who have been in hospitals know of the 24-hour noise and awakenings. This means I went for about two weeks with only short naps. The last night was the absolute worst as I listened to the dreadful sounds of a man dying of emphysema. All I could think of was the few grandchildren I have who still smoke. How I wished they could hear this poor man. I must pray for those who still battle this terrible addiction.

I appreciated the caring helpers at the hospital and rehab center. They worked long, hard hours and were very kind to their patients. It was no one's fault that I could not sleep; it was just one of those things. But, I became so sleep-deprived, I felt like I would lose my mind.

"Heaven" was experienced when I arrived home to find my family had remodeled my sleeping area and given me a warmer place to rest and added safety features. I awakened to the sound of chirping birds and breathed in the sweet smell of citrus blossoms. My sleep was once again undisturbed and restful.

My children were very kind and caring. Meals were furnished, transportation was provided; no one could have asked for more caring attention. Friends and neighbors were also thoughtful with their cards and calls. Having never been hospitalized for anything except a short stay when having babies, I had not realized how tiring it would be to even talk to other people. I knew prayers were being offered in my behalf. It seems that was what I needed to help me pull through. Now I will be more understanding of those who are ill. When they cannot see me, I will know they are trying to heal, and leave them alone as I pray for them.

They tell me that both of my ailments take a long time to heal. Not being inclined to be patient with my afflictions, I must now take better care of the prime stewardship of my own health. Meanwhile, thanks to all who have prayed for me!

This was written in 2006 when Elma was 86-years-old. The entire Lesson in Living series is on lintonmilano.com.