

Living Hope

STEPS TO LEAVING
SUFFERING BEHIND



LYNNE COCKRUM-MURPHY ED.D.



“This is the book to show everyone that the past can’t hold you down, that trauma can be overcome.”

– MJ Caldwell, R.N.

“Living Hope is powerfully written and deeply mesmerizing. A must read for anyone seeking to shift their emotional pain to inner peace and emotional freedom. Lynne Cockrum-Murphy shares her compelling story so others may benefit.”

– Connie M. Leach, ED.D., Career and Life Coach,
author of *Adolescent Girls at Risk* and co-author of
the *Charge up Your Life* books

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: August 2015
Published by Sojourn Publishing, LLC

ISBN: 978-1-62747-147-3
Ebook ISBN: 978-1-62747-148-0



Acknowledgement

Every day, when I wake up and again when I go to sleep at night, I express my gratitude for so much that gives me joy like these special people that enrich my life.

I want to thank my husband, Doug Murphy for all the ongoing support and unconditional love he has provided for thirty plus years. It certainly has changed my world view and life.

Also I deeply appreciate Tom Bird and his delightful team. He and RamaJon kindly guided me through the development of several books and encouraged me to share my story, strength and highest self.

I also acknowledge my amazing sister, Brenda Wodele, who allows me to put our family history (as I see it) into books. She is a loving supporter of my life.

And finally I thank all those unseen guides, masters, teachers and angels that are always actively involved, playing a nearly silent role in our lives yet rarely publicly acknowledged for all their unconditional love.



Prologue

I suspect you are attracted to this book because you have been in pain – emotional pain – and feel burdened by life’s events and yet, you want so much more – and part of you believes it is possible.

Truth is it’s more than possible. More than likely you chose this book, these steps, to propel yourself into the life you seek. Happiness comes to those who seek it and allow it.

Sharing my journey from suffering, emotionally and physically, to the inner assurance that I am a glorious spiritual being in the self-realization process, is meant to strengthen you as you go forward in your own journey.

May you find everything you need for today, here and now!



Chapter 1

My Beginning

I survived. I was the only one. It wasn't anything I had done. I was only two and a half. My dad saved my life. I screamed, standing in my crib in my mom and dad's bedroom. My throat burned, my face burned. He carried me outside and laid me down on the lawn in front of our house.

I have told the story too many times. The details pieced together from what relatives told me are a bit hazy now so many decades have passed. Someone said my dad threw me out the front window and I was found on the lawn, but isn't it more likely the window blew out when the furnace exploded? So I do not know for sure what happened only that he saved me from dying in that burning house.

He died in the hospital soon after from burns (and maybe from the smoke) because he kept going back into the house to try to rescue my two older sisters, Susie and Peggy. They died in the house. Their bedroom was at the back, beyond the kitchen. No one could get past the flames to get them out. One of the girls was found praying beside her bed. The other was found in the hallway. It was April, 1958.

Mom and I were the only ones in our family of five who survived. The difference between our experiences was that I had been in the house and I now had third-degree burns on my arms, legs, chest and face. Mom had been at Grandma's house putting a box of meat from her brother, Uncle Bill, the butcher,

into Grandma's freezer. Grandma and Grandpa owned most of the block. Their house was up the street, two doors from ours. Mom and Grandma didn't know our house was on fire until the fire trucks came and they went out to the street to see what was going on. I can only imagine how traumatic that was.

I suspect I lived in the hospital for several months after that. A few years ago, I asked my Great Uncle Dan how long I was in the hospital. He couldn't remember, too many decades past. Now all those family members who were around back then are gone. Too much time has passed to get answers.

I have vague memories of an unfamiliar place, sitting in a crib, looking out the windows, loneliness and tears. Because of the cold floors and the empty room, I guess it was the hospital. I don't remember the pain, just a peculiar, black, lacy substance on some of my skin that would peel away.

The truth is I didn't figure out the bit about the lacy black skin for decades. I always had an unusual attraction to objects that had lots of holes, like a dead saguaro cactus, or any object with deep, small round holes. Once I realized this, black, holey, lacy things were even more intriguing to me. Eventually the pieces began to fit together and I understood. Now, I believe it was the black, dead skin that had to be peeled away daily as my burns healed that created such a strange fascination for me. I still don't remember the pain.

So I survived and life went on. My mom, who wasn't in the fire, but had lost her husband and two daughters, went to work as a bookkeeper in the lumber industry. I can't tell you how she was affected by her losses. She didn't talk about it. She said she tried to talk to a minister, but it didn't help her understand how God could let her children die.

I wish I remembered how old I was when she told me how she felt after the fire had wiped out her life. I guess I was four, but why would a parent say these things to a four-year-old?

She told me she wanted to commit suicide and actually thought it through one day while sitting in the bathtub at Grandma's house, holding the razor. She said she decided not to kill herself because she wanted to see how everything turned out, to see what would happen next. Such a simple answer. Her decision had nothing to do with me. She wanted to see what would happen next. It jarred me to the core. What she said has hurt all of my life.

I have talked about what she told me with several people, hoping it would help me not to feel so unwanted, that it might take away the ache. Possibly, because she told me her reason for not giving up, I always believed she would have been happier if my dad and sisters had lived and I had died instead. I understood her pain and loss better when she told me she felt suicidal, but then I felt so unimportant to her. I wasn't enough of a reason for her to live. She told me this herself.

After the fire, I stayed with Grandma a lot. Mom went to work. Grandma made me feel good. She may have lost her son, but she never said anything to me about it.

Grandma rubbed my arm down with lotion several times a day. It itched horribly all the time. I really wanted to scratch, but Mom and Grandma wouldn't let me. They taught me to rub the burns with the palm of my hand. I would even rub my arm vigorously when they weren't watching. I was happy to not scratch at it, just so long as I could do something to stop the terrible itching.

As far as I remember, I always had complete use of my arm. Grandma told me it was thanks to the nurses. Not through physical therapy (did that even exist then?), but because the nurses played ball with me and I played with them. Enough of the tissue grew back, connected and worked correctly that although both of my arms appear to me slightly unusual in

shape, and definitely scarred, they work beautifully for baseball, typing, driving, and living. I am so very grateful.

I remember a day when Grandma rubbed lotion into my arm while we sat on the couch in her living room. She told me my arm made me special, because, “We can never ever lose you. You are the only little girl in the world who has an arm just like this.” She explained, she and my mom could always find me and recognize me. I felt delighted and astonished. I cherish that moment and her. She made me feel loved and important over and over until I became an adult.

I have never been self-conscious about my arm. I don’t cover it with long sleeves. I was teased by kids when I was in school. I’ll never forget one boy’s comments when we were in fifth grade. He called me “a burnt pig.” What a shocker! It was the worst thing a kid had ever said to me. At the same time, I think what bothered me most was that he called me a pig. My surprise was due to my thinking there was nothing wrong with having burns. I suspected he thought I was fat, but how could my burns be used in an epithet?

As a teacher, I faced it too but the students were kinder. One of my first years of teaching, a middle school boy said I looked like Wonder Woman, but they had made a mistake when building my bionic arm. That struck me as pretty funny.

After the fire, my mom couldn’t be there for me; she was grieving and surviving. She drank more and more. I didn’t get what I wanted from her (love and attention). The cuddling I wanted wasn’t possible because the front of my body was badly burned. When I was in my early twenties, she said she liked that I always hugged her hello and goodbye; she didn’t know where I learned it because she has never been like that. So, cuddling and hugs I craved, probably because I went without.

Today I recognize a gift in the loneliness I developed in those experiences. My mom unknowingly, in her own pain, gifted me a desire – a deep yearning for more: more love, more comfort, more time and more attention.

Always yearning for more drove me to seek: to seek something to help me. Originally, I thought it was in another person. I thought my mom had what I wanted and needed. Later, I'd want others to help me, even to fix me. I thought others had what I wanted. Eventually I realized my need for love and comfort were only marginally met by people so I transferred all that to a deep desire for God. That yearning must be why the song *Breathe* sung by Kathryn Scott spoke to me when I heard it. I related to her hunger and desperation for that essence we call God.

I believe on a karmic level it served me to be the burnt baby for all those months, when my pain was so great and the burns so deep, that people couldn't touch the front of me for a long while. I felt very lonely. The loneliness was also created by what felt like long periods sitting in my crib in the hospital, wondering where my family went and why they weren't there with me. I think my Grandmother visited me. I remember blue angels visiting, talking with me at night. I liked them. But mostly I remember sitting in a cold, empty place looking out the windows wondering what had happened.

The newspaper clipping is from the newspaper in the town I lived in at the time of the fire: April, 1958. It shows the devastation that changed my mother's, my grandmother's and my life.

Two dead, Two Injured In Arcata Fire



FIREMEN INSPECT THIS COTTED HOME AT 215 1/2 NORTH AVENUE, Arcata, in which two firefighters died of smoke last night. The firefighters blamed a hole in the roof for an explosion which caused the fire.

Another child was seriously burned in the blast. Raymond L. Cronin, the father, was in critical condition from burns suffered when he tried to save all three daughters. He succeeded in rescuing only one.



“What an important book to read for anyone who has suffered a traumatic life experience including at the hands of another. Lynne shares some deeply personal experiences and offers hope to others that will strengthen, encourage and provide a way to leave the suffering behind. Her book describes a profound journey of discovery and one that readers can relate to and take away a sense of personal growth not only in the author herself as she wrote the book but in themselves as well.”

- Adriane Hopkins



A short but powerful true story of loss, starting with a house fire that killed Lynne Cockrum-Murphy's sisters and father and left her badly burned when she was just 30 months old, and follows the life that grew out of that tragedy. Instead of giving in to a family history of dysfunction she writes about dealing with loss, family alcoholism and chaos, an eating disorder and shows that there is a way to move beyond the events of the past. Interwoven in the story are actions, steps, tools and even a reading and movie list to help you move forward into a life filled with spirituality, meaning and purpose. The story is a model of hope, action and success.



Lynne Cockrum-Murphy is an intuitive consultant specializing in bringing guidance to those who seek assistance with their spiritual path, in addition to facilitating physical healing, emotional growth and removing blocks to a life of joy, meaning and purpose. She has a doctorate in Education, is a licensed substance abuse counselor, an Access Bars® instructor, and an advanced level certified ThetaHealer® and course instructor. She continues to teach for Northern Arizona University and maintains a private practice in Phoenix Arizona where she lives.

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