

BOOKS BY LENORE JANECEK

Health Insurance: A Guide for Artists
Consultants, Entrepreneurs & Other Self-Employed

A
Thousand
Sparks
of
Light

Lenore Janecek

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Summary: Shining a light on the appalling issue of medical error, this stirring memoir tells of one health professional's empowering story from the hospital mishap to the courtroom battle that catalyzed her now public crusade. More than the legal battle, this is an intimate spiritual journey, an unforgettable story about not giving up on yourself -- and in the process provides advice on how take charge of your safety.--Publisher.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my sons, Frank and Michael,

And

My grandchildren, Jake and Jessica

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Most dear and most loved, my two sons, Mike and Frank, who believed in me wholeheartedly, told me not to quit and shared their unconditional love with me. To my grandchildren, who have brought me such love, joy, and playfulness, I hope one day your children and grandchildren are as special as you.

I thank God for the words which flowed lovingly on these pages. I dedicate my life to the Lord who shared the essence of being with us so we could become the sparks of Divine Life to which we will one day return in wholeness and therefore repair the world.

My heartfelt thanks to you, dear reader, for sharing this journey with me. My hope is for you to pay it forward through your actions and deeds. Your spark is your soul connection with God, and it is given you in this lifetime to be of service to others.

INTRODUCTION

IF IT COULD HAPPEN TO ME...

“I have good news and bad news for you,” my doctor said. “The good news is that you do not have cancer. The bad news is that you did not need the surgery. The genetic test revealed cells belonging to another patient, a man, on which we based your surgery.” In shock, I could only wonder at that moment how this could happen. I was overcome with anger, fear, and disbelief. This was the second occurrence of a doctor calling me with distressing news.

The first of these occurred in September of 2000 while I was driving in my car. I received a call on my mobile phone from my doctor informing me that a routine colonoscopy had revealed a malignant cancer in my small intestine. I was in such shock that I had to pull off the road. “There must be a mistake,” I pleaded hopefully. My doctor told me that he had personally reviewed the results in the pathology department because he, too, could not believe the results. “You need to go immediately to one of the two surgeons I recommend,” he insisted.

As a health care specialist, I have provided advice on health care issues to two governors, the state legislature, large corporations, smaller businesses, and the public. I’ve authored a book on the subject. I followed the advice I’d so often given professionally to others: I had asked the right questions; I had a family member accompany me to the surgeon’s office to ensure a thorough understanding of the diagnosis and recommendations; and I had obtained concurrence from another medical professional on the diagnosis and treatment plan.

During the hours of major abdominal surgery that followed, an incision was made from my breasts to my pubic bone. The surgeon explored all major organs to ensure detection of any further metastasis, and he then removed parts of my ileum and colon. He did not, however, find any cancer.

Immediately following the surgery—and during the next few weeks and month—my surgeon and the nurses seemed to avoid any questions regarding the removal of my cancer. As a strong communicator and public speaker, I garner information from both spoken and unspoken messages. During each encounter with these professionals, their nonverbal communication, evidenced through body language, indicated such uneasiness that it began to appear they were concealing important information. My family and I suspected that some kind of an error had occurred.

At my six-week check-up, still having problems with my digestive tract, I requested a set of my medical records and asked for genetic testing that would compare my cells with those found in the pathology report. I knew from my health care background that DNA testing could definitively confirm whether the pathology cells from which my surgical recommendation had been made did indeed belong to me.

From mid-November to New Year's, I was very ill. Without my medical records from the hospital for follow-up care, my primary-care physician couldn't help me. She supported my efforts to get the information from the doctors, but even her vigorous appeals for both my records and results were thwarted.

When five months passed without receipt of my medical records or genetic test results, I threatened to register a formal complaint with the State Department of Professional Regulation (the regulatory licensing agency for doctors). As a result, I received a response from the G.I. doctor regarding the outcome of the genetic test. That's when he called and gave me the “good news, bad news” story. He told me my medical records were in “risk management,” not on their way to my primary-care doctor. I was furious because I had been violated, unjustly maimed, and needlessly disfigured for life. Anger and shock prevented me from achieving mental, physical, and spiritual balance. I lost trust, calm, and peace. I was unable to resume work full time, and my finances fell into disarray. I was depressed and unable to function normally. I did not want to see or be with anyone.

Then, with new resolve, I vowed to use my remaining energy and resources to fight back. I had to obtain my medical records so that I could receive appropriate medical treatment. Numerous requests in person and in writing for my medical records were to no avail. Without those crucial records, I had to secure an attorney to seek relief through the courts. The lawyers from the “noted university hospital” where I had undergone surgery stated to the judge the hospital had “lost” my medical records. After the judge “threw the book at them,” my records miraculously appeared the following day.

And this is where my story begins, dear reader...the jury trial: the secrets and deaths we uncover, the fights for justice, and the breathtaking moments.

Lenore Janecek, September 2014

PREFACE

THE FIRST SECRET

AND SO IT WAS,
GOD CREATED THE WORLD
SACRIFICING THE LIGHT OF HIS/HER SPIRITUAL ESSENCE
TO CREATE MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS/HER OWN IMAGE,
THEN SHATTERED THE DIVINE LIGHT, SCATTERING
A THOUSAND OF SPARKS OF LIGHT,
HUMANS, AND ALL THINGS LIVING
EARTHBOUND,
BIRTHING RADIANT SOULS,
WHOSE PURPOSE ON EARTH IS TO GATHER
EVERY SPARK OF LIGHT WITH
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS
AND WHOLENESS OF SPIRIT
TO REPAIR THE WORLD
AND RETURN AS ONE SOUL TO
THE CREATOR.

LENORE JANECEK, 2014

**PART 1—IN
THE BEGINNING**

TO DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Birds chirping nearby were heralding the arrival of spring and the promise of summer. I felt life rising from my bosom—breaking free from the nest, cracking through my shell of rebirth and promise, yet feeling the pain of metamorphosis.

It was at the Vermont writing residency, in May 2004, that I received the call from my attorney, Howard Schaffner.

“Lenore, opposing counsel, Larry Helms, has petitioned the court to proceed with your case against the hospital for malpractice, and I cannot prevent us from going to court,” Howard said.

“But Howard, I am only in the second week of my Vermont residency, and I have two more weeks to go. I thought you were going to ask for

a continuance. After all the planning for court that ended up cancelled because they asked for a continuance, why shouldn't we?" I said.

"Because they know you are well enough to be away writing, instead of working. If that's what I have to tell the judge as a reason why we must ask for a continuance, it does not bode well for our case," he replied.

"I have to think about it," I said.

"Well, you'd better think fast, because we must let the Court know tomorrow, at the latest," said Howard.

"I will call you tomorrow morning. It will give me the afternoon and evening to decide," I told him.

"Lenore, this is the chance you've been waiting for, your day in court!"

"Yes, Howard, but not while I am trying to write a book about what happened to me. Now, after three and a half years of their torture, they want to bring me into court," I said angrily.

"Talk to you tomorrow, Lenore. This may make the entire difference in the case. Remember that when you are deciding. Goodbye," he said.

I must decide whether to stay or go. I have waited years for the trial and for my health to get better. However, both have been very challenging for me.

It has been difficult writing here, unlike my Ragdale Residency in Lake Forest. I do not feel the muses here, or the rhapsody of words. Do I have the strength to be here, or shall I leave the words up to God?

What do you want me to do, Lord in Heaven? Show me the way, Lord. Show me the way.

Flowers bloom and blossom outside my window. As I write, I feel the sun's warmth upon my face. Are the cascading waters I see from my window a reflection of life? The soothing calm of the water is just a few feet away from the force and energy where water meets rock. When you reach the rocks, do you find out there are rough waters ahead?

"A pile of rocks ceases to a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind," Antoine de Saint-Exupery said.

What shall I do? I could not help but think of Sally Field, when in the movie *Forrest Gump* she tells Forrest about life as she lies dying. "Life is like a box a chocolates, you never know what you're going to get." I feel so much like Forrest. I don't know what to do.

It's warm here in the sun. For days, I have been cold in this room. Is there an essence in this home that wants me to me go, or is it that my real essence has not been here?

You really have the day to decide, I told myself. You do not have to come up with an answer until tomorrow.

A THOUSAND SPARKS OF LIGHT

Out of the glacial rock that stands before me is a unique piece of the earth. It seems to be many things, with strata of shiny mica and slate.

The large white-and-yellow barn rises in the background. I see people walk past me, yet the window screen blocks their view of me.

I feel and hear Mother Nature, with her smells and energy radiating forth as if she knows I need her nurturing wisdom and help right now.

Purple and yellow flowers spring forth as the green earth comes to life with plants and shrubs.

I remember Georgia O’Keeffe’s words: “You really never see a flower, it’s so small, yet to see one is like friendship. You really see a friend if you look hard enough.”

Whispers and songs, people and birds pass, yet they do not see me. There is a joy in that for me. It is wonderful to have an opportunity to watch the world go by. You really do not notice life and its melodies until you are ready to hear the songs. I am in the moment, and the moment is in me.

“Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinion of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself.” The words of Katherine Mansfield resound in my mind.

I see my friend and fellow writer Matthew on his way to the Bad Girl’s Café. On the porch, sitting in a chair with his wheelchair carefully

TO DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

hidden below, I realize why he loves to go there. For his moment in the sun, he is able-bodied like everyone else. No one can match his loving spirit.

It is in this moment I realize I must return to the battle. I must take up the cause, like the Don Quixote of *Man of La Mancha*, for myself and all the Matthews whose lives, or limbs, have been taken from them because of a medical error. I “must fight the unbeatable fight, to beat the unbeatable foe, to fight with my last ounce of courage, to dream the impossible dream.”