

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
Life in the Ozarks – A Spiritual Journey
by Judith Ingram

Leaving Maui was such a relief for me, even though it was exhausting making all the preparations; repacking the crate, cleaning the condo spotless, as well as shipping both my car and my husband's car. He insisted he was bringing his race car. Everything was shipped to California, then trucked to Tennessee. Once again, it was very costly, and would take weeks to arrive, so this time we took more things with us on the plane. By the time our flight arrived at the Tennessee airport, I was beyond exhausted. The motel shuttle wasn't at the pickup location for nearly 20 minutes, and it seemed forever before it got there. By then, I was nearly on the verge of tears. The shuttle dropped us off at the car rental where I sat down and waited for my husband to get the paperwork done. By the time we finally got to the motel, I felt like I was going to die. After my husband checked in, we drove around the building to our unit, as I gasped at the sight of it being upstairs. Every step I took felt like lead in my shoes. I was counting the seconds to that room. My only focus by then was getting to that bed before I collapsed.

Once we got to the door, I leaned against the wall, barely hanging on. When the key wouldn't work and my husband said he had to go back to the motel office, I felt I was on the verge of a mental breakdown. As I waited for him, I just couldn't stand any longer and had collapsed right where I stood. When he returned, he picked me up and carried me to the bed. He then went out and found something for us to eat since we were both starving. I could hardly eat ... I was so weak. The next morning, we headed out to Arkansas. Upon arriving to our new home location, we stopped at the realtor's office to pick up the keys for the house, and met the realtor for the first time. When we arrived at the house, we were in awe. The pictures didn't show how beautiful it was.

The two-story house was situated on a slight hillside, with a single car garage down below. The top portion was the living area with two bedrooms and one bath. The lower portion was a full-size basement with half walled off and built into a workshop area, and the other was a large open space with a half bath. There was sliding glass door to a patio out back. The entire quarter acre was full of towering trees with terraced stone flower gardens wrapping around one side and in the back. The living room had a very large picture window facing the narrow road out front with only two homes across from us. No houses were on either side or in back of our house. It was more remote than we expected, and we were delighted.

Our bedroom had a slider that went out to the upper deck where part was covered, and part was open space. The first couple of nights we slept on the floor. I remember how peaceful it was. No more noise, except the sound of crickets, which were very soothing to me! It was like heaven ... until after I had walked all around the property and on the second night, I woke up itching so bad that I cried all day ... and for days. That's when I learned what chiggers were. I was in such agony to the point that I wanted to leave. All that beauty and peace was not worth the cost of getting chiggers from head to feet. We immediately went to town to the drug store to find something to help the itching, and it helped a little.

While in town we took the rental car back, and found a cheap pickup truck to buy. We also bought a bed. It took about a week before I was feeling better. I learned the hard way, don't touch anything outside. People told us that eventually they wouldn't bother us, and in time that was true ... had it not, I may have sold the place. But it did take about a year, and until then I was very careful. They didn't seem to bother my husband though. He told me when he lived in Texas at one point, he had chiggers there. He admitted he had suspicions that there might be chiggers, yet he failed to warn me.

When everything had arrived, we rented a UHaul truck and drove to Tennessee. My husband also got a car dolly to transport his race car, while I drove my Honda, and we headed back to the Ozarks. We stored most everything in the downstairs basement as my husband was planning on doing a lot of inside work on the house, as well as the outside. Eventually we bought some used furniture for the living room, and dressers for the bedroom. Winter was setting in about then, and we loaded up on firewood. There were two large stone fireplaces, one up and one down stairs. We bought a new potbelly woodstove and installed into the living room fireplace. In the kitchen/dining area we set up both of our PC computers side by side, and I went right to work as quick as I could. I had told Rosie I needed one week to get settled, and in one week I was back on the job.

It wasn't long after we got settled in that my husband wanted to get a dog. We went to the animal shelter to check them out. It wasn't like any animal shelter I had ever seen. They only had a few, but they were in outside pens, in the dirt and mud, with only a small area under an old wooden rooftop. There was one that looked like a purebred Border Collie curled up in the corner, looking sad. The man told us he was about eight months old. He said he'd been there most of his life, and didn't even have a name. My first thought was how those dogs had to live outside in the freezing winters, in such a terrible environment. It was such a shame. We both set our sights on the Border Collie and when he was let out of the pen, he immediately went to my husband's side curled up against him, and that was it. He jumped into the back of the pickup and we took him home. We named him Buddy. I had never seen a dog so appreciative as I did Buddy. He was the best, a real sweetheart, and he brought us both a lot of joy.

As I spent my days working on the computer for real estate business, he tore down walls, opening the spare bedroom up to the living room, and making it into an office space. We would go to town and browse the secondhand stores looking for tools. What we couldn't find, we purchased. So, my husband had everything he needed to do the remodel job. For two years he was still working on the place, and all my belongings were still in boxes. It seemed he was never going to finish, and frankly, I was getting depressed about that.

My husband kept his race car in the garage and occasionally would work on it, though he only took it out for a drive once in a while. When he wasn't working on the house, he was out in the yard working in the rock gardens pulling weeds, or stacking firewood and chopping kindling, raking leaves, and playing with Buddy. Everything was being paid for by me, and when it got more costly than my salary could handle, I once again tried to encourage him to look for work.

When I began putting the pressure on him, things began to put stress on our relationship. He began to pout and grumble that I didn't spend my days sitting around watching him work, keeping him company, although when he needed a hand, I did help. I had a lot of responsibility with my job, and a lot to prove to keep it, and to me that was my priority. He soon began to talk about how he would like to go fishing, and I thought that would get him off my back. I bought him a fishing pole and all the gear, and he started spending time at lake down the road. But then he whined that I did it didn't go with him, and he didn't go as often, then not at all. I was busy making money to support him, and I began to resent his attitude. His neediness was weighing on me.

One morning, while he was still asleep, I got a knock on the door. It was the lady from across the road. She told me they had been given a puppy but couldn't keep it because her husband was sick and dying of cancer. She said she was looking to find her a good home and asked if I might be interested. When I asked what kind of puppy, she said a purebred miniature doxen, telling me she had papers. When I asked what color the puppy was, the lady said red. As soon as she said that, something inside gave me a rush. A memory of when I was a girl, and the first time I had seen a red mini doxen. I knew someday I would have one, but I never sought to buy one because I somehow knew the right one would come to me someday. The memory had long faded until that day when the lady went home and came back with the precious puppy and placed her in my arms. It was like a wish, a dream, a prophesy come true.

I immediately took her into the bedroom and placed her next to my husband in bed. The puppy was so full of life jumping all over him. When he woke up and saw her, he was filled with joy too. For days I thought of a name and I would call out to her, but she wouldn't respond. Then one day I called out Lillie May, and she came running to me. I knew then that was her name. The funny thing is, when the lady gave me her papers, I stuck them in a drawer, not even reading them as I didn't intend on registering her. It was about a year later when I was looking for something in that drawer and saw the papers, and decided to see what they said. I immediately saw that Lillie May's mother's name was Daisy May, and that most likely was why she responded to Lillie May. I did get her fixed because I never planned on having puppies.

Lillie May became my love and joy, filling me with something that was empty inside. My husband had Buddy, and I had Lillie May. She was so tiny that I would put her in the pocket of my coat and take her shopping with me. When she got too big for my pocket, I would put her in my big purse. I bought her sweaters, rain coats, and blankets, treating her as if she were my baby. I could see my husband growing jealous, but Buddy really loved her too. The two of them played together, slept together, hung out together. I could tell from his attitude that he was more than jealous, I sensed his resentment because she was getting all my attention and affection.

One day I called my brother Johnny in California. He said he was fixing his place up in hope of selling his old singlewide trailer and moving out of the senior park. He had relocated there when he left Colorado, and had purchased it from my mother. She had bought it when the old folks next door passed away, and she turned it into an office. At the time she had a magazine called Travelin' on A Shoestring. Johnny had been there for several years and was working for Burger King doing all their business stuff on his home computer. He actually was running several stores

in Southern California, and had several computers setup, monitoring each one. He was very intelligent in the computer world, having been a pioneer since the 80s. I could sense he was really miserable living in that senior trailer park. I asked him if he would like to move to Arkansas, but he wasn't much interested at first. He said he had a lot more work to do on the place and was hoping to get at least five thousand. It was an old trailer and he hadn't kept it up. From the sound of it, the place was in bad shape.

One day I had a vision. It came to me out of the blue and told me to tell my brother to put a For Sale sign in the window for thirty thousand dollars, and someone would come and pay full price with a thirty-day cash close. My brother laughed at me. I said, just do it, what do you have to lose. He did what I said, and in less than a week a man knocked on his door and said he wanted to buy it. He offered full price with a thirty-day cash close. My brother was blown away. Immediately, I started working with the realtor to find him a place in our area. I would go out and take pictures and email them to him. Nothing was convincing him to move to Arkansas, until one day the realtor called me and said she had a cute A-Frame cabin coming on the market and gave me first look. When I sent the pictures to him, he got very excited. He said that was his dream home. And the crazy thing was, the sale price was thirty thousand dollars. He was able to purchase it free and clear. He soon moved there, and was only a mile or so away from our house.

Him and my husband got along good. My brother soon joined the volunteer fire department. He would come over to help my husband work on the house. I would fix dinner, and he really loved that. It was really wonderful having my brother there. It seemed to lighten the mood between my husband and I. As time went on, however, he came less and less as he got more involved in community stuff, and that's when things began to change.

Eventually, my husband stopped working on the place and started playing video games on his computer. He would stay up way past midnight while I went to bed. The first thing he did every morning was get right back to his games. We would sit side by side, me working and him playing games. I began to get an attitude about that. Our feelings for each other grew colder in time, and we weren't even making love any longer, especially since I was sound asleep when he came to bed, and he was sound asleep when I got up in the morning. Our conversations had almost faded as there wasn't much for us to talk about any longer.

Finally, my gestures that he looks for work became a demand. I suppose while he was doing work on the house, I justified supporting him, but when he stopped and left things undone to sit around playing video games day and night, while all my things remained in boxes, that was it for me. Needless to say, I became agitated, missing the little I had left over after giving up most of what I owned. For three years I hadn't seen a wall hanging or a knickknack, or a family photo album. My life felt bare without the few things I kept, the most precious items I treasured.

When I once again began telling him to look for a job, once again his negative attitude rose up. Every week I would print up a bunch of resumes and insist he go to town, only to return empty handed, telling me no one was hiring. He finally did get a job at an Auto Parts shop, but was fired two weeks later, which he said was because the owner thought his wife was paying too

much attention to him. Then he managed to get a couple of yardwork jobs from nearby neighbors. At least he made enough funds to pay for his own cigarettes.

When he started pouting that he missed the water, and how he used to love going to the ocean for a swim, he wanted to buy an above ground pool. I told him he would have to pay for that himself, in which he earned enough to do so. I thought he'd be happy then, but then he hardly used it. When I asked him why, he said because I'm not in it with him. I tried to spend time in the pool with him, but floating around in water every day wasn't something I found much pleasure doing. To be honest, which I was to him, I never was a water person. He knew that, yet he used it against me. Nothing seemed to make him happy. What he needed was someone who flourished him with attention, and frankly, my attention grew less and less over time with his negativity. I, myself, needed support and appreciation for working hard to make a living, but I didn't let that affect my attitude. I just kept busy with work. With three offices and over a hundred agents, there was a lot to keep me busy.

After two years, and growing depressed in what seemed like another dead-end relationship, I finally sat down with him to express my unhappiness. That conversation led to our divorce, but not before he admitted that he had been offered work, it's just that he didn't want to go back to fixing cars. He then said he would, when he realized his time was up. But it in my mind it was too late. At that point I was more than irritated, I was mad that he had refused work and lied to me all that time. It made me sick. I just wanted him to leave.

The day after our conversation, he went to the basement and about an hour later it sounded like a train was coming through the house. The noise was coming from the fireplace and when I saw a flash of fire go up the chimney, I ran downstairs to see what was going on. There was no need for a fire, and up until then, we had never had a fire in the downstairs fireplace. I found him sitting in front of the fireplace with open boxes as he was throwing all his things into the flames. His clothes and shoes, his collection of old hotrod magazines, and just about everything he had left to his name. I was very upset and yelled at him. He nearly set the house on fire. He didn't say a word, he just got up and walked away.

I realized he was on the edge of a mental breakdown so I went upstairs where he sat on the couch and sat beside him. I tried to comfort him, but I wasn't going to change my mind. He finally realized it was the best thing for both of us. He decided to return to Maui. I used my credit card and bought him a one-way ticket.

He packed a carry-on bag, leaving what he didn't burn behind. He also signed his car title over to me. His state of mind was somber for days before driving him to the airport in Tennessee. We hadn't spoken a word, not even on the long drive. After dropping him off I felt a huge weight lift from me as I drove away. The feeling of freedom once again filled me, a feeling I knew so well. I stopped to have breakfast on the way back home, while Buddy and Lillie May stayed in the car. As I sat in the café staring at my wedding ring, I took it off and dropped it in my purse. It was then that I truly felt the end of it all. It wasn't tears of sadness that overcame me, it was tears of relief.

I soon contacted an attorney who drew up the divorce paper. Since he left everything to me, I thought there were things that his daughter might want. I contacted her in Florida and she made arrangements for her and her husband and little boy to come and get his things. They stayed the night with me while she went through his boxes, taking what she wanted and leaving the rest. She also left the race car which was in bad shape, actually. Mostly rusted out from being in Maui. I put the word out that I was selling it, and was contacted by a neighbor who told me there was a guy who had cancer and was slowly dying, telling me that for years the man talked about wanting a race car, something he could work on. It had always been a dream of his, but the family didn't have much money and wanted to know how low I could go on the price. I felt bad for the man, especially when his wife came to see the car and she was so excited. I told her I would take \$100.00. She said I just made a dying man the happiest man alive.

It was a hard life there after my husband left, but I managed on my own for the next four years. I felt like a pioneer woman stacking wood, chopping kindling, blowing the huge piles of fallen leaves each year. Then we had an ice storm. I had never seen anything like it. I woke up that morning and it looked like a winter wonderland. It was so beautiful. I went out front and gazed around, then went to get my camera. When I returned, I started to hear loud booms, snapping and cracking noises all around me. Then I saw, the trees were snapping in half, huge limbs were crashing to the ground and I ran inside quick. Right then the electricity went out.

For weeks I had no power, living in fear that that trees would fall on the house. All around me for days it sounded like bombs going off. It was terrifying. One day I went out to see the giant oak tree behind the house and was scared to death at what I saw. The tree over towered the two-story home at least another story high, and when I saw the top starting to lean over the roof, I went to the tree and prayed. I asked it to please don't crush my house. I promised when it thaws out, I will have it pruned, as I knew it was way too top heavy. I don't know how old it was, but the trunk was so large you could only wrap your arms half way around it.

Since I was out of power for three weeks, it was very difficult. I managed to put all my refrigerator stuff on the upper deck where it was frozen solid outside. Thankfully, the neighbor down the road a bit had a generator and let me drive down to his place to use his wi-fi so I could send and receive work from Maui. They even let me take a shower a couple of times. I just loved their huge log home, and inside was very beautiful. However, one of their trees did fall on the roof and did some damage to the back of the house. Thankfully, for me, the oak tree came within inches of touching my roof, but it never did snap. Every day I would go outside and look, and was amazed at how close it came. When the storm was over, I hired a crew to come lighten its load, as I promised! It cost a thousand dollars. They had some heavy-duty equipment that lifted the guy way up in the air.

So many people suffered during that ice storm. I heard on the news that an elderly woman had filled her bathtub up with hot water before it went cold, and climbed in to keep warm. It took a couple of days to clear the road of fallen trees before her son could reach his mother's house. He found her dead lying in a tub of frozen water. It was so sad. I also heard a police officer was killed while out directing traffic when a large dagger like branch fell and killed him instantly.

Those daggers were falling all me, like glass smashing to the ground. The storm was so massive it affected three states. Thankfully, my brother survived as well.

That was one terrible storm, but there was another when hail as large as soft balls hit. That storm caused so much damage I had to have a new roof, a living room window, and the screen repaired on the upper deck. It seemed every winter I was losing my power, but mostly for a couple of days. That three weeks before was the hardest. Sometimes we got tornado sirens and I would stay in the basement with my doggies. One time a tornado touched down in the nearby town and completely destroyed it.

I called my brother to come and stay with me, but he didn't want to leave his house. He told me later that he was going to crawl under his cabin until he discovered it was crawling with copperhead snakes. He said he tried everything to drive them out, including blasting music. He finally had to call a professional for help. When the roads were opened, so I could go shopping, I took my brother with me. I was shocked at what a tornado can do. The damage was devastating. Nothing was left. It was like a scene out of a movie.

I knew all about those copperhead snakes. I had killed two myself. One had bit my little Lillie May when I was stacking firewood. She probably saved my life, but hers was touch and go. She was bitten on the snout, which caused her airways to swell, making it difficult to breathe. The veterinary was about 20 miles away and I drove as fast as I could to get there, with an overwhelming fear and panic. Thankfully, they gave her a shot and she survived. At the time, I didn't mess with the snake, I just swooped her up and took off. But when I returned, I went to the woodpile and looked for it. When I saw it, it started coming at me. I reached down and grabbed a big piece of firewood and threw it down as hard as I could to stop it. Then I went and got a shovel and began trying to kill it. I never knew how tough their skin is. It took some pounding but I finally did kill that thing.

The winters were the hardest I had ever encountered, though the spring and summers were very nice. One summer I had a big deck built out front, and with the tall fence my husband had built to block the neighbors view, it was a nice place to relax in the shade. We had to get permission to build the tall fence from the Ozark Acres committee. The reason we wanted one, and the reason they approved our request was because when the house directly across the road had sold and the new folks moved in, they moved in with junk piling up all around. A sore sight to see out our living room picture window. Normally they didn't allow a front yard fence for the houses along the road, but they felt sorry for us. They had given them several notices to clean the place up, but that failed. Then they started raising turkeys and the smell was so awful. Thankfully, they did get them to remove the turkeys.

One day I was sitting at my computer when I heard yelling from across the road. I got up to see what was going on. I saw the man backing up into his steep driveway with a flatbed trailer full of more junk he was bringing in. His wife was yelling at him, and when he got out of the truck and was walking to the back of the trailer, I saw the truck start to move and I gasped as it came down the hill directly toward my house. I saw the woman running after it, trying to jump inside. She managed to stop it just as it smashed through my fence and hit the rock wall, only ten feet from

my plowing into my house. I think my heart stopped for a moment watching that happen, holding my breath in terror. Needless to say, I didn't get along too well with those neighbors. But the house next to them, was a different story.

There were only the two houses close to me. The other neighbor was the one who gave me Lillie May. Her husband was very ill and his sister had come from out of state to help take care of him. I got to know her well. In all the strange experiences I had encountered, talking to ghosts was not one of them, until one day a ghost spoke to me. I didn't see the ghost, and I wasn't even sure at first if it was a ghost.

When DeeAnn had come to help care for her brother before he passed away, she used to come visit me. When her brother passed away, she was an emotionally a wreck, telling me her sister-in-law wouldn't give her some of his belongings. What she wanted most was his cowboy hat. She was upset about that in a very deep way. It wasn't long after when DeeAnn moved into town into an apartment. She called me one day and invited me over. After that I went to visit her a couple of more times when I went to town to do shopping. She seemed kind of depressed, but I didn't know what to do for her, other than listen and show compassion.

One morning I was in the kitchen cooking myself some breakfast when I heard a voice in my head tell me I had to tell his sister he was with her. I wondered what was going on as I tried to ignore the strange voice. It kept saying over and over I had to tell his sister he was with her. I wondered what sister, and then I heard the voice say DeeAnn. At first, I was taken aback, and brushed off the voice and went on with my day, while the strangeness lingered.

The next day, it happened again. I stopped by DeeAnn's a few days later to check on her and she seemed very sad. She was glad that her sister-in-law decided to give her the cowboy hat, but after she hung it on a hook in the living room, it brought a lot of memories flooding her mind. She missed him so much. I could feel her pain. I went home that day and the voice again returned, saying the same thing, and it made sense to me then. He saw her pain and he desperately wanted her to know he was with her. Every time she spoke of him by name, she called him BJ. I had never met BJ myself.

When the voice came to me repeating the same words, I decided to see if I could communicate with what I believed by then was the ghost of BJ. I told the voice I would not say anything to DeeAnn until I had proof, and so I asked what BJ stood for. The voice told me it stood for Billy Joe. Each day I felt the conviction grow stronger to talk to DeeAnn about what I had been experiencing. I called her one morning to see if she would like to go out to lunch, and she accepted. When I picked her up, we chatted a bit in the car until we got to the restaurant.

After we ordered our lunch, I asked her if she believed in the supernatural, and she perked up and said she did. She shared with me that she had seen things moved around before, things she knew were not in the same place they were. Then she told me just recently BJ's hat had been turned, which she noticed right away and it made her feel like he was letting her know he was there, but she thought it was just her imagination and hope. I could tell she was holding back tears. I had never seen such a bond between siblings, but then I had never known anyone who lost one. As

she was talking, I felt the presence of BJ show up. It was very strong, and the voice inside my head was telling me over and over to tell her.

I had to know for sure before I could say such a thing, and so I asked her what BJ stood for, and she said Billy Joe. Suddenly I felt a rush inside and I looked her in the eyes and told her BJ was with her. I told her for some strange reason I heard a voice that had been urging me to tell her that he was with her, yet, I wasn't sure if it was real ... but after she confirmed his name, I knew then I had to let her know. I told her he didn't want her to hurt any longer, and that he's been watching over her, and it seemed important that she knew he was all right. In that moment she broke down and started crying, and she reached out and took my hand, thanking me. When we were leaving, she asked for a hug, and as we held each other for that brief moment, I felt BJ's presence disappear ... to never return again.

It was such an emotional moment I will never forget.

The next time I saw her she was working at the grocery store. She was happy and glowing, and we had a short chat. She told me to stop by on her day off sometime, and one day I did. When I entered her apartment, there was another lady there. DeeAnn introduced her as her neighbor Sandy, also a co-worker at the grocery store. DeeAnn only had two chairs, so I sat on the floor. When DeeAnn introduced me, she told Sandy I was the one who helped with BJ. The lady lit up and said how wonderful that was, saying DeeAnn is a happier person now, saying how she also believed in the supernatural, praising me for me for such a gift.

As I sat there, I felt the presence of a ghost appear, and suddenly I heard a strong voice telling me to tell the lady her father was there. I clearly heard, "Tell her, I'm watching over the boy." Tell her, the voice kept saying. As DeeAnn and the lady were into a different conversation, the voice kept nagging at me. I thought to myself - to the voice - I'm not saying anything until I know if her father is even dead. When the two had finished their conversation, I spoke up and asked Sandy if she was born and raised in Arkansas. She said she was, mentioning her entire family still lived in the area. I asked her what her dad did for a living, and when she said he had passed away a few years ago, I knew then I had to speak up.

I said to her, "I know, because he is here." The look on her face was deeply emotional and she started to cry, saying she had been feeling his presence at times but thought it was her imagination. I told her that he wanted me to tell her that he has been here through this difficult time and has been watching over the boy. I had no idea what that meant, as she gasped and said, "OMG," telling me her oldest son was just convicted and sent to jail. She said she's been worried sick about him. The tears ran down her face as she thanked me for giving her that message. She said now she can have peace of mind. And after I had told her these things, the voice said, "Tell her I'm right next to her," and when I did, she began to smile through her tears, saying, "I love you daddy." She expressed that now when she talks to him, she knows he is listening. She said she had been praying for her son's emotional wellbeing, and felt relieved that he wasn't alone.

My time in the Ozarks brought many experiences, including an encounter with something I really don't know what it was. I have written my entire experience in detail called 'The

Guidesouls.' All I know is, after that experience it changed my life in a very profound way. The visions I saw are as vivid today as they were then, as I have watched many come to pass.

I finally decided, after four years, it was time to leave and move back home after I had a terrible fall. The hospital ran an EKG said the impact was so hard it bruised my heart, and dislocated my shoulder. When I was all healed, I called my mother, expressing how I wanted to leave but had no one to help me. I didn't call my brother Rusty in California to help me, as I had always done in the past because his wife and I didn't get along and communication had been severed for years. One day I got a call from him. He told me that mom had told him my situation and he offered to help, saying my sister-in-law gave the ok.

After six total years in Arkansas, I finally moved back to Oregon. I called my brother after making arrangements to fly him into Little Rock. A lady friend who had bought a vacation cabin near to me, who lived in Little Rock, said she would pick him up at the airport and drive him to my place. It gave her an opportunity to spend the weekend at her cabin. Before he had arrived, I had to make one of the saddest decisions of my life. I had to let Buddy go because I just couldn't take him and Lillie May with me. The day I took him to the Vet, where they could rehome him, was the day I cried so hard as I drove away. I could tell Lillie May was sad too, and I cried all the way home.

When my brother arrived, I had everything packed and ready to go. We went down and rented a UHaul truck. On the way back to the house I was following my brother when I saw him hit the curb and the car dolly jumped up and slammed down. I didn't think anything of it at the time. The road was quite narrow. The next day a couple of friends, and my brother Johnny came and helped us load up. Rusty and Johnny hadn't seen each other in years. We put my Honda on car dolly, and with the house totally empty, I went to get Lillie May who was hiding in the closet. She didn't know what was going on. I could tell she was scared and confused.

It was starting to get dark as we pulled away and headed out. We had only got about ten miles down the road when a truck started honking his horn and waving us over. My brother pulled into a parking lot. The man came over and told us the car dolly tire was flat. We thanked him and he left. I called the UHaul emergency number and they said they would send someone to fix it, but took about three hours for him to get there. By then it was too late to continue on so we ended up going to a motel for the night.

On our way to Oregon, it was a long trip. Poor Lillie May had a difficult time, especially when we crossed New Mexico and all there was for her to go to the bathroom was sand, rocks and cactus. It was kind of humorous but sad that she didn't know what to do in that situation.

Before leaving, I had spoken to my daughter Danielle, and she was in a bad way. Her and her boyfriend had broken up, after having my grandson, who was two years old then. She had no where to go. What I did was I leased a two-story house for six months, since I also needed a place to go, and we lived together until the six months was up. She was attending the community college at the time, so I took care of my grandson. We were both ready to part ways by then. I helped her get into a duplex and I purchased a manufactured home in a senior park. My house in the Ozarks had sold a few months after I left, giving me the funds to move on.

During this entire time, I continued to work for the Maui real estate company. I was able to keep up with the marketing and graphic work. Over the time I started working for them they went from three offices down to one. They had closed the office in Kahului, Maui, and the one in Hilo, Big Island, leaving only the Kihei office. They went from over a hundred down to about fifty agents. Times were getting hard for them and I could foresee that my time with them was coming to an end. After twelve years I got my notice. I was sad to lose my job and financial security, which uprooted my life in a terrible way, but it all turned out good in the end.

Over the years I have wondered what my life might have been if I had left my husband back in Maui and accepted Grant's offer, but I'll never know. I have no regrets. Life goes as it goes, and through much struggle I survived, as I always had. Coming back home to Oregon was my greatest decision.

Full circle once again, from Oregon to Hawaii to Arkansas and back home to Oregon! My life has never been short of blessings.