

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS – 21

OCTOBER – DECEMBER, 2010

Friday, October 8, 2010. Hello, everyone! Just over a week ago I finished my previous journal essay by mentioning that all sorts of things were going on, including getting ready for TWO services, and that I would continue the story in Penny 21. I was enjoying the creative challenge of this busy time, but now I must get back into journal keeping. Here's how things stand as of now.

There was an underlying tension going on among some staff members during this time, and I was involved in it. In mid-September, before she left for Jamaica to attend her uncle's funeral, my night aide Margaret told me that she had been notified that she was going to be transferred to another floor. She had been one of my aides at night since I arrived at Sky View almost 5 years ago, and long ago had become my friend. I told you that during the funeral activities in Jamaica Margaret read my poem *The Choice* to her assembled relatives (see Penny 20 for both the poem and the story). When Margaret returned, and was still on my floor, I thought maybe the administration had decided to let things stay the way they were. But it was not to be.

Last Friday night, when she came to attend to me, Margaret told me that was her last night on our floor. She was off for the weekend, and on Monday she would be starting on her new floor. I pondered my options:

- Q. Should I become angry with Sky View over this decision?
- A. To my mind came Scriptures where Jesus talked of authority and of the attitude servants should have: "We have only done our duty." No, I could not be angry with Sky View.
- Q. Should I (politely!) ask the administration if the decision could be overturned?
- A. That would certainly take me off the purpose for which God placed me in Sky View. I am here to advance God's kingdom, and this involvement didn't seem to fit for me.
- Q. Should I be bowed down with sorrow and regret?
- A. Why would I CHOOSE to be sad and upset? I don't like to dwell in those emotions, although I felt them briefly upon first hearing the news. Margaret and I will be spending all eternity together. NOTHING can change that! When she worked on my floor, it was not unusual for us to be apart for 2 weeks or more at a time, for the aides rotated schedules regularly. Surely Margaret will come to see me once in a while. Hope lifts up our spirits!
- Q. Should I rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS and give thanks in ALL circumstances?
- A. This is so obviously the choice for me that the others flew out of my mind's window almost as soon as they arrived. So much gratitude filled my soul as I began to give thanks. I am glad for Romans 8:28, for example, that tells me God can make good arise out of situations that seem so bad. And what precious memories I have! Thank you, Lord!

Margaret came to me again in the morning and asked if I had been able to sleep. I nodded and typed, "I made the choice to rejoice," a clear reference to the poem. Then I suggested she re-read the poem herself. "It's hard," she said, and again I nodded. I don't mean to minimize her pain. After all, she is being removed not just from me, but from 46 residents that she cares for! And people certainly are different when it comes to emotional matters. The God of ALL comfort loves ALL his children dearly, and knows exactly the degree of comforting we need. Our job is to receive it, to stay in God's everlasting arms as long as we need to, and then move on, strengthened in our faith.

Any time we make a choice we are working in the realm of the will. I think it's possible to make a sincere positive choice that you don't immediately feel in your emotions. Fortunately, we have the

Holy Spirit to confirm our desire to bend our wills to God's. Don't worry; your emotions will catch up eventually! And so I am at peace, praise God. I haven't seen Margaret since she moved. God bless her! I hope she has made the choice to rejoice in the Lord, too, and is well on her way to healing.

I had to smile as I reviewed this entry. Ever since I became a public speaker (now a public writer), God has given me tests from time to time to keep me authentic, to make sure I practice what I preach. This situation was a test of the poem, *The Choice*. I love being in God's school!

Wednesday, October 13, 2010. The 2 services I mentioned have now been held, the first on October 7 and the second yesterday. Scripture and Prayer with Verna and Friends is always held on the first Thursday of the month, and Praise Fellowship, the group that invited us to speak at their monthly meeting, holds theirs on the second Tuesday. I based both services on my poem *The God of All Comfort* (see my website). At Praise Fellowship we had twice as much time. I enjoyed being able to enlarge and otherwise vary the original program. Best of all was being able to clearly see the hand of God all over the place in both services. Inwardly, I'm giving God a huge bouquet of flowers, with more gratitude than words can express!

One verse of *The God of All Comfort* has to do with relationships. In my musings on the topic, I mentioned the fact that people are always coming and going in our lives. I didn't mention a further truth: that those who have gone (for reasons other than death) sometimes reappear, and it seems as though we had never been apart. Now add the eternal God into the mix, and the comings and goings take on a whole new meaning: they are part of a plan, part of a whole. All this was illustrated very well by the people who attended and presented our 2 services.

On Sunday, October 3, a woman came into my room and said, "You don't know me. My name is Trish." And just that quickly a new friend entered my life, largely through Leo, who had told her about me. Trish said she would attend the service at Sky View, and on Thursday, there she was! As soon as she was seated, I was surprised and delighted to see Marilyn arriving! I first met Marilyn over 40 years ago, when her husband and I were both teaching music in the same studio. Through the years, it was not unusual for us to lose contact with each other for lengthy periods of time. She had attended the celebration Leo and I had for our 50th wedding anniversary in June, 2007, and that was the last we saw each other until she showed up at Sky View on October 7. I understand Marilyn had met Frank, a friend of hers and a member of our team, who told her about the service and invited her to come. This, too, was part of God's plan!

The team for Scripture and Prayer with Verna and Friends has remained quite consistent during our 4 year existence. Only Carol, our first pianist, has gone, and that because she and her husband moved out of the area. Her place was filled by Earl, whom I met 25 years ago when he and his wife began attending my Bible Basics courses. Earl introduced us to Loretta, a new friend who serves as a substitute for him, and was our pianist at the Praise Fellowship meeting. I have known my husband Leo for 55 years and my son George all his life! In 1999 I taught a one session Bible overview at the church where I was pastor. Among the attendees were 8 people from the United Methodist Church in Shrub Oak, one of whom was Cliff. When I retired from being pastor, I began attending this church, and never really left, although I had to stop attending services when my feeding tube was installed more than five years ago. Cliff became a team member in Drum Hill, where I held weekly services, and he continues to this day. At the UMC I met John and Sharon, who help us whenever they can. Frank, Barbara, and Vallie entered my life when I lived at Drum Hill; all 3 stayed with me. Vallie was the connecting link between the two services, for she is also a leader in Praise Fellowship.

I must be sure to mention Ruth, my 4th floor resident friend, whom I met about a year ago, when she moved to Sky View. Ruth read my poem *The God of All Comfort* at the Sky View service. On at least two other occasions she read something at our services, which she regularly attends and enjoys. Both of us are sure it was God's plan for us to meet, and Sky View was the place.

Speaking at Praise Fellowship involved a Paratransit bus trip to the Shrub Oak United Methodist Church, where the group holds their meetings. This involved my friend and travel companion, Carolyn, whom I met in 2000, shortly after I retired from being pastor of a church. Soon thereafter I was teaching a Bible study in Carolyn's house, also part of the plan. October 12 was a beautiful day to take a ride through the colorful countryside! At the church, Carolyn and I were warmly greeted by Vallie and my team members. Also in the audience were Mary and Terry, two of the women who began the group 17 years ago. Mary and I met in the mid-1970s. She was invited by a neighbor to go with her to the initial meeting of a weekly Bible study being proposed for the area. That meeting was in my house. As Mary puts it, "I stayed. The neighbor didn't." Mary was a new widow when she joined the Bible study. What impressed me was the fact that she never complained or blamed God for her situation. After the Praise Fellowship meeting I was able to remind her of this and to thank her for the blessing she had been to me through the years. She smiled and said I had blessed her too. I call this "coming full circle," always a satisfying experience.

Terry and I met in the mid-1980s when she, like Earl, became a member of my Bible Basics classes. During the response time on Tuesday, Terry mentioned how she and I, during those long ago years, used to talk privately, both of us seeking God's will for our situations. "I always felt so comforted after one of our talks," she said. This, too, was a coming full circle experience. Do you see why I feel so blessed? Who but God could work things out so well? No wonder I love him!

Tuesday, October 19, 2010. Last evening I finished typing the previous entry. Someone new to reading the Penny essays might think I typed it all on the 13th; no, my typing is much slower than that, due to the PLS that is paralyzing my body. On the other hand, please don't picture me spending many hours a day laboriously pecking out words with 1 or 2 fingers. In time that may be true, but not yet. I do most of my typing with the 4 fingers of my left hand, using my right hand mainly for shifting and moving the cursor.

Besides my work (writing), I also have a social life here at Sky View, and sometimes other events distract me from my computer. Such was the case last Wednesday. I was overflowing with joy concerning the 2 services, and was eager to begin my report, but something BIG was going on in our world that day that I didn't want to miss: the rescue of 33 miners in Chile. A drama like that does not happen often, and I wanted to absorb as much of it as I could, for further reflection. I am so glad I made that choice! After I finish this entry, I plan to go to my Sky View service file and begin writing a meditation on the subject for our November meeting. I'm not sure what all my points will be, but it will include finding God everywhere and the value of an individual.

In case you were wondering: I am concluding this entry 4 hours and 20 minutes after I started it, BUT the actual typing time was one and a half hours.

Saturday, October 30, 2010. This afternoon I finished writing the service for November. I did use the incident in Chile as a basis for my main points, and had many fresh thoughts left over, the majority of which will end up in the December service! I'm sure many people the world over are mining that story for sermon material, to the glory of God.

Since Halloween comes on Sunday this year, when most of the regular staff is gone, the costume parade for staff and residents was held yesterday. I went down to watch, as I like to observe the creativity that goes into the outfits. Gwen and one of her friends, both Sky View residents, were dressed as prisoners, with black and white striped outfits and hats. A staff member walked between them as a warden, taking them to trial. What made this both funny and endearing was that Gwen at times would say convincingly, "I didn't do it!" When I got back to the 4th floor, my nurse asked me where my costume was. She laughed as she read what I typed: "I am dressed as a nursing home

resident.” When she told what I had written, some staff members looked to see what I was wearing. When they caught on to my joke, they laughed too!

Friday, November 12, 2010. My resident friend Lorraine, of whom I have written several times, died yesterday afternoon here at Sky View. She had been declining for several months, and was confined to her bed almost entirely for the last few weeks. Ruth and I kept looking in on her, sometimes together, often apart. We would share with each other any news we had, talk about God and Heaven, and promise to pray for her. My last eye contact with Lorraine came about 10 days ago. I was sitting in her room when she suddenly opened her eyes, noticed me, and smiled. I blew her a kiss, which she happily returned before falling back asleep.

Lorraine had 3 daughters and 1 son, who loved her very much. Ruth got to know the family better than I did, because their rooms were close together. But on Wednesday I had the privilege of meeting her daughter Laura. While Lorraine was sleeping and breathing peacefully, we had a wonderful time getting acquainted. Later on Ruth joined us, and the circle seemed complete. Then yesterday, as I was driving down the hall for another visit, I saw a plastic bag filled with linens outside her door, and suspected that Lorraine was gone. Laura came out of the room at that moment, verified my suspicions, and invited me to come in. Instead, I turned around and drove home, wrapped up in my thoughts.

Those thoughts were mostly good ones. I pictured Lorraine healthy and happy in Heaven, her long ordeal over. And I was thankful for the memories she left behind, and that I had Ruth to share those memories with, although Ruth and I have admitted to each other that our own deaths may come suddenly at any time. The three of us spoke of continuing our friendship Up There. What I will remember most about Lorraine are her quick wit (how she made us laugh!) and the tender way she spoke of God’s holding her hand during her hospitalizations near the end. Thanks, Lorraine!

Sunday, November 14, 2010. Ruth came to my room today with her own writing about Lorraine’s death, which she dated to coincide with the date of the event. With her permission, I am sharing it with you.

November 11, 2010

Today is a different kind of a day for me. (I’m Ruth.)

I can explain why, although it may be with some difficulty. “GOD” has taken Lorraine to her final resting place. It was a struggle for her, and all who knew her on the 4th floor would certainly agree.

May she rest in Peace.

Ruth Parton

My comments: I like what Ruth wrote for several reasons. First, I like the way she set apart the word “GOD.” What differences would there be within us and around us if we all respected God as “GOD”? Then, too, I like Ruth’s description of Heaven as Lorraine’s “final resting place.” That term is commonly used to refer to cemeteries, but Ruth is right: Heaven IS a place of rest, the last one we will ever need! And I appreciate her capitalization of the word peace in the last line: “May she rest in Peace.” Peace is not only a desirable commodity that God makes available to his faith family members, but peace is used in the Bible to refer to Jesus in ways that make a capital letter appropriate. One example is Isaiah 9:6, where Jesus is called Prince of Peace. Also, Paul in Ephesians 2, speaking so eloquently of Christ Jesus, said this of him: “He himself is our peace.” Yes, Lorraine will rest in Peace, for she is with the one who IS our Peace!

Thursday, November 18, 2010. Time for some lighter material. On Sunday, November 7th, our country ended Daylight Saving Time and went back to Standard Time. This was the night when we got an extra hour of sleep, the hour that was taken from us when the clocks changed in March. How well I remember what the extra hour of sleep meant to me when I was a college student and always seemed to be tired. In 1954, my senior year, I got up on that special Sunday and, as was my custom, got dressed for church. I wondered why fewer girls than usual were moving about in the dormitory at that time of the morning. Then a friend came up to me and said, "Oh, Verna! Are you going with us to Sunday School today?" Her question made no sense to me. I had already made the decision to skip Sunday School every week and attend the worship service only, because I needed the sleep. When I realized that I had failed to set my clock back, thus missing the benefit of my favorite night of the year, I was so devastated that I can still feel some of the disappointment when I retell the story. P.S.: Resisting the temptation to get back into bed, I did go to Sunday School that day!

Here at Sky View it doesn't matter if I sleep during the extra hour or not, for I have more than enough opportunities to rest throughout the day. I do want to keep up with what is happening around me, though, so on Saturday, November 6, I planned to have Leo change the clocks when he came to visit. After he returned home, I remembered! "Oh, well," I thought, "I'll just have to subtract an hour until tomorrow."

Sunday morning I woke up, glanced at the clock, and couldn't believe my eyes: it was 7:10 and the night shift aide had not come yet to attend to me! Had she left? Was I skipped? Immediately I rang the call bell, and in a short time, she arrived. I don't know what I did – glare at her, perhaps? – but she answered by saying, "It's only 6:10, you know. Your clocks have not been changed." As the truth quickly dawned, I tried to signal that I was embarrassed and that the fault was mine. To my relief, it worked, for soon the aide and I were laughing together over the whole silly incident. Before she left my room, the aide turned my clocks back to Standard Time – a bonus! – and I happily fell back asleep.

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Andrea, my reflexologist, still comes to visit and give me a treatment on most Thursday evenings. When she is finished, she takes an envelope containing a check from a designated spot in my bookcase, usually on the first shelf. Recently a new supply of checks was put on the second shelf, with my approval. After our session was over, I wanted to inform Andrea about the change in location for her check, so I wrote on my Lightwriter: CHECK 2ND SHELF. Andrea began looking through the various things on my second shelf and then asked, "What am I checking for?" I stared at my Lightwriter screen, and understood! When I typed, YOUR CHECK, we both laughed at the unintentional joke.

Thursday, November 25, 2010. Thanksgiving Day! I do have much to be thankful for, not only today, but every day. I want to record 2 special things that happened this week and then I will write some Thanksgiving thoughts. A few days ago Allison, one of our nurses, introduced me to her sister Rebecca, thinking we might enjoy sharing the poetry that both of us write. What an experience that turned out to be! She read some of my poems and loved them; she read me some of hers, and I was delighted! It soon became evident that GOD had arranged a meeting between two of his daughters, for his glory. We share so much in common that I felt I was seeing a glimpse of myself in my early twenties, the age Rebecca is now. I give to God this relationship and will wait to see how it unfolds.

Sometimes the aides at Sky View are asked to float, that is, to work their shift on a floor other than their regular one. At 2 AM today an aide with a familiar shape came into my room and turned on the light. It was Margaret! She said when she heard that 4th floor needed a floater, she jumped at the chance to "go home," if only for a night. She had visited me twice before this night, much to my delight. We had a good talk while she was attending to me, and, as usual, God was the centerpiece of our conversation. When she came back at 6 AM, our conversation resumed. Margaret is adjusting

to her new position, by God's grace. When she left, the words to my poem Parting Song came to mind and brought me joy: "We shall meet again, although I don't know when. I also don't know where, whether here or There. But I can let you go, for deep inside I know it's part of God's good plan that we shall meet again." This poem works for all kinds of partings. Try it and see!

Sunday, November 28, 2010. Today I finished writing the December 2 service, which took me longer than usual, so now I feel free to finish my Thanksgiving report. People kept asking me if my family was coming, and I kept saying, "I don't know." The one thing I knew was that I intended to be thankful. MaryBeth and her family decided to remain in Massachusetts for Thanksgiving and Marty and Ed planned to spend the holiday with Ed's relatives in Tennessee. Leo was going to volunteer in the ER at Northern Westchester Hospital, as he does most weekends and holidays. A Thanksgiving meal was being offered free at the hospital that day. What's more, Leo was scheduled to get up early Friday morning to take a train to North Carolina to visit our son David and his family. George and Janet decided to host a dinner for her family, made poignant by the critical illness of one family member. Add to this the fact that my family knows I wouldn't be disappointed if they don't see me on a particular day, and you can see that I really didn't know.

What happened on Thanksgiving: I watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, mostly while lying in my bed, and before the day was over, also watched a major part of two football games. I did some typing, and talked with Ruth about the buffet dinner that Sky View served for the residents and their guests. Then in late afternoon visitors began coming, starting with Leo, who came here before returning home from the hospital. Later on George came with two of his sons: Eric, who lives and works in Manhattan, and Evan, a senior at Binghamton University. While they were still there, Rebecca dropped in to deliver a handmade Thanksgiving card to me. I enjoyed my day!

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Usually on Sunday mornings I think of the churches I used to attend and the preachers whose sermons I enjoyed on TV as long as they were available to me. Now that this source has also ended, I look for sermons wherever I can find them. This morning I heard a remarkable one, delivered – just for me – by my aide Perry as he worked to get me out of bed, dressed, and into my chair for the day. His sermon, on the general topic of animals, was just the right mixture of facts, personal story, Scripture, and imagination to capture my attention and move me to a new place in my thinking. He began by discussing his favorite animal (though not mine!) – snakes. He referred to Proverbs, Genesis, and Isaiah in his talk, concluding with a fascinating picture of the end times when we will be able to "pet the snakes, and none of them will harm us!" I was amazed that I found this inviting!

From there, Perry went on to tell me about a sheep his uncle gave him when he was a young man on his small Caribbean Island. That sheep became quite a companion for him. Whenever he called out "Ma-a-a-a!" the sheep would come running up to him and then walk beside him wherever Perry wanted to go. I heard this story through the filter of John 10 that popped up in my mind as Perry spoke, for in that chapter believers are called sheep who know the voice of Jesus, their shepherd, and who follow where he leads. What rich imagery! Then came the time when Perry had to leave for such an extended time that he gave his sheep back to his uncle. Three years elapsed before he returned for a visit. The uncle took him to the pasture where his large flock of sheep was located and challenged his nephew to see if his sheep remembered him after all this time. Perry called out "Ma-a-a-a!" and only one sheep raised her head at the sound. Yes, she remembered! I was overjoyed! By then I was seated in my chair, ready to face the day. Perry did more than get me out of bed today; he also filled my "cup" to overflowing! I will be mulling over this Sunday morning sermon for a long time! The Lord provides, doesn't he?

Monday, November 29, 2010. Last night I watched CNN's 2-hour presentation of their Heroes

of the Year competition. How inspiring! The program opened with all 33 of the rescued Chilean miners on the stage! What a privilege it was to see them! They thanked the audience and the viewers for our prayers and gave God glory. One of the miners said that some of their rescuers were in the audience. As the cameras focused on the rescuers, the miner said, "THEY are OUR heroes!" Smiles and applause and love and God all blended in a powerful way, setting the stage for a wonderful program. The whole program, which consisted of introducing 10 worldwide finalists and their work, was a great demonstration of loving your "neighbor" as yourself.

Sunday, December 12, 2010. I wrote a lot of new material for the November and December services, connecting the Scriptures with the incident of the collapsed mine in Chile, but what a worthwhile project that turned out to be! Not only did we have 2 meaningful services with meditations titled The God Who Is There; The God Who Knows Our Names; and God's Plan of Salvation, Illustrated; but I was also delighted to realize that these 3 meditations would serve very well as a Christmas greeting for this year, especially since the latter includes thoughts on the Incarnation. If you have not yet read these pieces and you want to, you will find them on my website under Christmas greetings, 2010.

Thursday, December 16, 2010. For the past few weeks my mind has been filled with wonderful thoughts of Jesus and his Incarnation, far more than I needed for the monthly service we hold. One thought in particular demands to be told, so I am going to tell it to you. It begins with a verse from the Psalms:

All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad. Psalm 45:6.

I have on my desk a copy of a hymn that I remember from childhood, titled Ivory Palaces. Both the words and the music were written by Henry Barraclough in 1915, almost 100 years ago. The note under the title say that the hymn was "Suggested by a sermon of Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman's on Psalm 45:6 (see above) in which Christ is pictured coming out of the ivory palaces of heaven to redeem mankind, clothed in garments which are perfumed with myrrh for beauty, with aloes for bitterness, and with cassia for healing, the fragrance of which remain to tell of His near presence." Here are the first 3 verses, which are all about the garments:

My Lord has garments so wondrous fine, And myrrh their texture fills;
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine, With joy my being thrills.

His life had also its sorrows sore, For aloes had a part;
And when I think of the cross he bore, My eyes with teardrops start.

His garments too were in cassia dipped, With healing in a touch;
Each time my feet in some sin have slipped, He took me from its clutch.

Here is the chorus to the song:

Out of the ivory palaces Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love Made my Savior go.

What a contrast! Our Lord exchanged his beautiful garments for strips of cloth, and the ivory palaces for a manger in a barn. Why would he do such a thing? Only because he loved you and me and everyone else with such an intense quality of God-love that he HAD to become incarnate so he could die for us. There was no other way! Only the blood of the Lamb of God – our Lord Jesus Christ – could wash away our sins and make us acceptable for a personal relationship with him. It seems to

me that the least we can do to show our appreciation for all this is to love the Lord our God with our whole being, putting him first in our lives. What do you think? Now here is verse 4:

In garments glorious He will come, To open wide the door;
And I shall enter my heav'nly home, To dwell for evermore.

Long gone are the strips of cloth that swaddled him as a baby and the garments men gambled for at the foot of the cross. Our Lord is again clothed in a radiance that we will see when he comes to take us to the ivory palaces with him. Truly Jesus is the Gift that keeps giving! I will close this meditation with another Bible verse, this time from Revelation:

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! Amen. Revelation 5:13.

Monday, December 20, 2010. I am becoming increasingly aware, as I observe and mingle with the residents of Sky View, that besides being a community of those who live here, who need more help than our families can give, we could also be divided into several subdivisions according to our diseases. As I write this, I am reminded of the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis, where God divided the people of the earth into language groups. I'm not suggesting that we be grouped according to our diseases, but I do think those who use oxygen to breathe, for example, might feel a kinship with others in the same condition.

I belong with those who have neurological diseases, which includes MS, ALS, PLS, and Parkinson's. I am not aware of anyone here who has ALS, the only disease in the list that moves quickly toward death. People can live for DECADES with the other illnesses, which cause progressive crippling that we must adapt to, rather than early death. One week from now I will have been in Sky View 5 years, and some of those in the same category were here long before I arrived.

What started me thinking along these lines was an incident I observed when members of the Salvation Army were on the 4th floor to give us a concert and to pass out gifts. They had distributed song sheets stapled together to the residents, enabling us to sing along. I noticed that one woman was having a hard time turning the pages and oh, how I identified with her! Our neurological diagnosis is not the same, but both diseases apparently have the same effect on our fingers. Turning pages, especially 1 at a time, is so unbelievably difficult that it would be easy for me to become frustrated, if I were not on my guard. Sometimes even then a little frustration slips through, often precipitating an unpleasant coughing spell. "Relax, relax," I tell myself, and usually, I do.

Thursday, January 6, 2011. That's right – 2010 is over, and I am just now getting around to closing out Penny 21! I was sick much of the second half of December, and whatever energy I had on my "good" days, I used to write a birthday poem and the January service, which was held today. Once again I was grateful for the medical care I receive here at Sky View. I had 2 chest X-rays, plus monitoring of my temperature and blood pressure, a blood test, a visit from my doctor, and the constant attention of my nurses and aides – all without leaving my room! The doctor thinks I had a sinus infection, with reaction to medication causing the mild nausea I had for many days.

Illness of various kinds, most of them (like mine) involving coughing, were especially rampant here on the 4th floor. Last week the night nurse gave me some extra medicine, saying everyone on our floor was to receive a dose every other night until we got 5 doses, in an effort to stave off a flu epidemic. Diane, our social worker, explained that our medical staff went through all our records and gave the medicine, which acted like a flu booster shot, to all who could tolerate it. The plan seems to be working! I'm so glad to have a whole staff of people watching out for our health!

I will close Penny 21 with a New Year's Eve story, the conclusion to the story I told a year ago. At that time Lorraine, Ruth, and I all wanted to watch the ball drop in NYC, marking the start of 2010, and all of us fell asleep instead. Lorraine died in November. Ruth again fell asleep, but this year I woke up 9 minutes BEFORE midnight and saw the ball drop! Happy New Year, everyone!

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