

SNAKES ALIVE

At age 60-something, Nancy moved from her home in the city to a rural area “My husband of 43 years had passed away 7 years prior. I had retired, and I needed to rebuild my life,” Nancy shared. “Our kids were scattered all over the country and there was just me and my French bulldog, Sybil. I had never lived in the country, but it was something my husband, Nick, and I had dreamed about when we retired.”

Nancy discovered a small three bedroom house that she could afford and would be plenty of room for when family and friends came to visit, but required little upkeep or repair. It included a two acre plot of land with a gurgling creek that ran alongside the back yard. Neighbors were nearby but not right on top of her like her place in the city.

She decided to have a small orchard of apple trees but discovered that her shovel could not budge the large stones hidden under the top soil. A kind neighbor brought over his tractor and extracted them in a couple of hours. Nancy replaced the low fence with a 6 foot wire fence as she tried to keep the deer from snacking her new trees, shrubs and flowers. But deer were not her only visitors. Three raccoons and a skunk stopped by nearly everyday.

She also learned that her trash barrel had to be secured and kept in the garage so resident bears didn’t investigate the contents. “I’d never seen a bear in person,” Nancy explained. “And I sure don’t want to now.” It wasn’t long before a stray cat wandered onto her porch and after a few weeks of feeding her, the cat was welcomed into Nancy’s home as well. Sybil pretty much ignored the interloper until the kitty attempted to share the bed with Nancy. That issue was finally resolved by Sybil sleeping on the right side of Nancy and Henrietta Cat on Nancy’s left.

One afternoon, Nancy responded to Sybil’s frantic barking and discovered a huge snake curled around the railing of her back porch. “I tried not to scream or faint,” Nancy said, “as I backed into the house dragging Sybil with me. Who could I call for help? No one was around. At that point Henrietta was at the kitchen window hissing like crazy. I could see that the snake had slithered off the railing and was now coiling up under the porch swing. So I prayed, slipped out the side door, walked into the garden tool shed and grabbed a rake. I was shaking so hard I almost dropped it as I extended it over the snoozing reptile. I snagged the snake and prayed to God that it wouldn’t climb up the handle as I raced out the back gate on my way to the creek. Thankfully, the the snake dislodged itself from the tines of the rake and disappeared into the weeds.”

Nancy’s rake remained by the back door for a couple of weeks just in case.

Reflection: Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Lord, what a great promise! You encourage me to go, to do, to participate in life regardless of my age. You encourage my creativity and curiosity. You only put two restrictions on me—don’t let fear paralyze you and don’t be discouraged. Right now I am leaving this baggage behind. I don’t need anything but the assurance that wherever I go, you will be right there beside me.