

Couple celebrates wife's survival on 1-year anniversary today

By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader For most couples, a wedding anniversary or Valentine's Day are a special time to celebrate their relationship. For Mike and Jana Christian, today is that special day. Just one year ago today, Jana was literally minutes away from death. And her husband, she fully believes, is the reason she is alive today.

In August of 2008, Jana and Mike competed in a mounted shooting competition at the fair. Prior to her turn in the arena, her horse began to buck. Little did she know, this specific event would set in motion events that would threaten her life.

"My horse started bucking really hard," Jana said. "What it did was it tear my abdominal wall. What I had was a strangulated small bowel obstruction, or twisted gut, and an intestinal infarction. A year and a half later, I learned with both of them, you only have a 1-percent chance of living, I had both – plus the tear." On May 12 of 2009, Jana and Mike were in Wichita with his mother, who they had just learned had terminal cancer. Mike brought Jana back to their home in Hooker, Okla., so Jana could go to work as a massage therapist at Streiff Chiropractic Clinic the next day. Mike then returned to Wichita to be with his mother.

"My gut twisted when I was home alone," Jana said. "I was asleep and rolled over in bed around 3 a.m. and it twisted off. I thought I had the flu, so I made myself throw up until 4:30 and decided I would call Mike, and drive to the hospital. I didn't want to call the ambulance just in case it was the flu."

Jana got in the car and began a 20-mile drive from Hooker to Liberal. She made it as far as the old Hobo Truck Stop, then she could go no further.

"I got to Hobo, and I couldn't drive any farther, and I couldn't talk to my husband any longer either – the pain was so excruciating," she said. "We are always together and I had all the emergency numbers, he didn't have anything. So, he spent a long time trying to call someone."

Stopped at a closed truck stop in the middle of the night, Jana was aware she was at the end of her life. As she felt herself die, she said one simple prayer – help immediately arrived.

"Finally, my father-in-law came and got me after sitting at Hobo," Jana said. "The pain was so bad. While I was sitting at Hobo, I knew I was dying – I could feel it. All of a sudden, God started flashing beautiful pictures of good things that happened in my life. I said one prayer, 'Just please don't take me away from Michael.' Then my father-in-law showed up and took me to the

hospital. He thought I was dead, he didn't want to come to the car."

Upon her arrival at the hospital, Jana was in so much pain, she was unrecognizable. She was also unable to hear those trying to help her. Again, her husband called in aid.

"I got to the hospital and a lot of the nurses are my clients and they didn't recognize me because I looked terrible – nobody recognized me," Jana said. "I remember bits and pieces of the emergency room. I remember them trying to talk to me, but the pain was so bad that I couldn't hear what they were saying. Tina Vangieson, Mike called her immediately, she came to the hospital and I could hear her. She would repeat what the nurses were saying so I would answer her. I could hear her because I work with her all the time.

"Thank God Mike called her because she knew all of my medical history because we are so close," she added. "She was there with me until Mike got to the hospital. Without Mike or Tina, I wouldn't be alive today."

Dr. Buie, Jana said, is another reason she is able to talk about her experience today. He had informed Mike at one point Jana had only a half hour to live.

"When the doctor called Mike, he said, 'Your wife only has 30 minutes to live,'" Jana said. "He told my husband that he saved my life.

"Mike had said, 'I can't lose my wife,'" she continued. "Mike saved me, he kept calling me on the phone and talking to me. I just kept telling him the pain was too much. I finally closed the phone because I knew I was going to die, and I didn't want him to hear it."

But, Jana didn't die. At 11 a.m. on May 13, 2009, she went into surgery. One week later, she was at home with her husband.

"This happened at 3 in the morning, it was 5 a.m. before I made it to the hospital," she said. "My surgery was around 11 a.m. I lost eight feet of dead intestines. I was in the hospital for seven days, I should have been in for 10."

Jana would like to thank the man that saved her life just a year ago today – the man she married nearly three and a half years ago.

"I just want Mike to know that I am grateful he saved my life," she said. "It isn't everyday you get a second chance to marry your best friend. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Mike and Dr. John Buie saving my life a year ago on May 13, 2009.

"My husband, long distance, on the phone, he is the one that saved my life," she said. "Mike is my hero, and I am proud to be his wife, I love you Mike."

Today, Jana is in great health and back to work. She has not taken her second chance at life lightly.

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“It is just an amazing journey how I have come back,” she said. “That man has done everything for me. He took care of me at the hospital, he took care of me at home. I have never loved or been loved like this.

“Things are fabulous now,” she concluded. “I am healthy and happy.”