

Back From the Dead

At the end of an exhausting day at work in a small Wisconsin town, diesel mechanic Bruce Van Natta needed to take one last look beneath the logging truck he was fixing. Little did he know it could have been the last thing he did—ever.

It was Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2006. Van Natta slid feet first beneath the engine of the truck that, with one front wheel removed, was resting on only one jack. He asked the driver to get into the cab to check the engine temperature, but as the driver did so, the weight of the truck dangerously shifted, causing the jack to torpedo out from beneath the truck. The low-design axle of the vehicle suddenly came crashing down, crushing Van Natta's chest.

It should have been instant death for this mechanic, but what happened next defies logic.

After his friend frantically jacked the truck up again, Van Natta says he was horrified to see the middle of his body flattened out like a cartoon character. In a panic, he pulled himself out from beneath the truck just enough to free his head. Then, literally drained of energy and blood, he closed his eyes and died.

Sort of.

In describing what happened next, Van Natta says his spirit hovered above the scene, overlooking all that was transpiring. He could see a man on his knees, crying and apologizing as he stroked the head of another man lying beneath a truck. From his vantage point above the scene, Van Natta didn't realize he was the victim.

"I was in a state of perfect peace with no pain and no sorrow," he writes in his book *A Miraculous Life*.

Then, as his spirit seemed to drift higher, he saw two angels kneeling at both sides of the trapped man.

“There was light emanating from both of them,” he writes.

When the EMTs arrived, Van Natta continued to watch from above. At first glance, first responder Shannon Cila thought Van Natta was dead, but when she called his name he opened his eyes.

“Bruce was the name of my grandfather, so that kind of made it more personal to me,” Cila says. She began patting Van Natta’s face, reminding him he had a wife and children to live for.

At that point, Van Natta realized he had a choice: return to his mangled body and fight for life, or close his eyes and leave the excruciating pain behind. Whenever he closed his eyes, he began to feel a sensation of traveling through a tube.

“It was like going through a tunnel a million miles an hour,” he says.

Van Natta didn’t physically see God in that moment, but he already knew the love and power of Jesus Christ in his life. He’d had prophetic dreams and had been delivered from a gripping drug addiction. He and his wife, Lori, even felt called to full-time ministry. Yet this out-of-body experience left a permanent imprint of God’s presence in his life.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison Trauma Center, doctors were baffled. Major arteries severed in five places should have killed Van Natta hours before, but his heart was pounding.

“Everything between my ribs and pelvic bone was crushed,” he says.

Over the course of five surgeries, gifted physicians pieced Van Natta back together, but the damage to his small intestine

left him with less than one-sixth the normal length—not enough to absorb the nutrients a grown man needs. Tube-fed, he was told he'd probably die within a year or two.

The following February, New York minister Bruce Carlson flew to Wisconsin to pray for Van Natta. They had been introduced by a mutual friend a few years prior when, mysteriously, Van Natta recognized Carlson from a dream he'd had.

As Carlson prayed, Van Natta says he felt an electric shock streaking through his body.

“Immediately, I began to feel something cylindrical moving around inside of my stomach,” he says. “My condition started to improve within a week.”

Van Natta started a liquid diet within days, graduating to solid food soon after. Doctors had no explanation when tests and a subsequent surgery revealed an additional six feet of intestines in his body.

Today Van Natta is healthy and able to eat normally. As president of Sweet Bread Ministries, he travels extensively with his family, teaching and preaching—often on supernatural healing. And he continues to marvel at how God now uses him to bring healing and breakthrough to others.

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Watch videos of Bruce Van Natta and Dr. Reggie Anderson sharing supernatural encounters of “God with us” at