Out of Body
By Maureen Williamson

There we were tripping along the uneven sidewalk in downtown Arcadia, Florida. I was still in my go-to-church dress clothes, and enjoying the sunshine. We were taking Leah’s tiny Chihuahua for a short walk as we promised while she visited friends in Miami.

Everything in my world was orderly, and I was admiring the trees and flowers that were coming back with a vengeance in places after the devastation of the previous year’s hurricanes. Three had hit our little town hard, smashing buildings and scattering them across the countryside.

Suddenly, my shoe hit a broken edge of a sidewalk that was protruding upward out of place. The next thing I knew I was flying headlong in the air. It seemed like it took a long time to land, probably something to do with the length of my body! Foremost in my mind were thoughts that my precious right ankle was at risk, and I must protect it. My legs had been broken in eight places years ago. My right ankle took the brunt of the injury and was a problem now, thirty-six years later. I did not want to land on my face either, so, I took the downward dive full force on my left hand, left hip, and finally on my knees. This was not a pretty picture.

Bill was still holding onto the dog’s lead, and all he had to say was, ‘Get up, Sweetie, Ants!’ God knows where I found the strength but that word, ‘ants,’ was enough to get me moving!

Florida’s most notorious villain, more so than alligators, in our minds, were Fire Ants. They are everywhere. Just stepping onto a lawn could have serious consequences unless it had been adequately treated. I’m sure that most people living in these parts have infected bites, or scars, from Fire Ants on the ankle area of their legs. People have died after an attack by Fire Ants in Florida. I didn’t want to be the next statistic in that regard.

I struggled as Bill lifted me to my feet by my arms. I watched as a huge mound began to rise on the back of my hand. It looked like a blue egg forming. Add this to the shock of landing in such an ungainly position was all too much for me. ‘I am going to faint,’ I remember saying. My eyes rolled back, and down I went for a second time.

This time there was no embarrassment, but it was so easy to just float away. I murmured, ‘Jesus,’ and felt like I was headed toward him. This was really something, a feeling of weightlessness and no discomfort. Perfect peace. I was having my version of an “out of body” experience.

I was experiencing no stress, just bliss. And then I heard, as if from far away, Bill’s voice
saying, ‘Sweetie, Sweetie.’ And felt some tapping on my face. My eyes rolled back into place and the embarrassment and injuries were back with me. It was Bill’s hand gently patting my cheeks. Now I am examining four serious bruises and a few lacerations, but I am fine.

If that was an “out of body” event, it was not a bad experience. I was laying in the hot sun, on a broken sidewalk, with the threat of Fire Ants, and experiencing bliss. Heaven must have been just a breath away.