
THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

ONE FALL DAY

In late December of 1987, I had my third child, a girl. My husband and I were blessed with two boys and one girl. We had three healthy children - all under the age of three. Anyone who has had one or more children can imagine what my days were like during that time. A wise man, my husband encouraged me to pursue an interest or hobby at least one night a week. Anything you want to do he said. I decided to tell him two of my childhood dreams and to my surprise he picked the second one I named. It just so happened that in mid January of 1988 a new class was starting that would help prepare me to accomplish my dream hobby. I signed up for the three hour night course that met once a week. At three weeks old my daughter joined me at the local community college for the semester long class. As I entered the classroom with my new born and a diaper bag in hand, heads turned to look at me with interest. No one questioned me, though I'm sure some were curious to see a young mother with a new baby in that particular class. I was just excited to be there and anticipated my dream becoming reality. On that cold January night I began ground school to learn to fly.

Most student pilots take their practical flying lessons while in ground school, but because of my family's and baby's needs, I needed to take the actual flying part after I passed the written exam. That summer of 1988 I took the written flight exam and passed. I was so excited that I had mastered the complex information about weather, maps, radio communications, and aeronautics for my private pilot license. The next step was getting in the air to learn the practical skills of flying. Floyd was my flight instructor and had more civilian aviation flight time than many military war pilots. He loved flying, and he loved teaching flying. I loved learning from Floyd.



After seven hours of instruction in the air, he said I was ready to solo on my next lesson.

I knew that the time would come and had looked forward to my solo flight with a mixture of eagerness and trepidation. On the morning I was scheduled to solo, I packed my flight bag - being sure to include my log book, head set, sunglasses, and a white t-shirt for the post solo ceremony I'd heard about. I also asked my husband to say a prayer for my safety. My dad and mother-in-law particularly were not especially enthusiastic with my new hobby. They thought flying was too dangerous, especially for a young mother of three. No amount of assurance or statistics about how flying was safer than driving in a car helped alleviate their concerns. I'm sure I didn't tell them I was scheduled to solo that fall day.

After a forty-five minute drive to Lucien Field, I got out of my car to approach the airport office. My tennis shoes crunched loudly over the gravel parking lot as I approached the airport office. Once inside, the sound of men telling stories of previous exploits and the smell of coffee greeted me. I looked for Floyd and soon found his reassuring and generous smile as he said hello. After the conclusion of the latest story, Floyd and I were on our way - walking in the brisk fall morning to do the pre-flight check of the Cessna 150. After take off, we flew to Shreveport's south practice area to review some maneuvers. It helped to settle the flock of butterflies that had invaded my stomach that morning. As my butterflies began flying in formation, Floyd said through the headset, "Let's go to DeSoto Parish." I knew what that meant.

As we approached the airport, Floyd's coached me on my landing. Following his directions, I landed smoothly. The DeSoto Parish airport was huge in comparison to the 1900 foot private airstrip at Lucien

where I'd been training. As we rolled to a stop, Floyd gathered his bag and a portable radio and got out of the plane. Through the open door he said, "Take her up. You can do it." His confidence exceeded mine as he firmly closed the door and stepped back from the plane. He adjusted his hand held radio to the plane's frequency and tested that I could hear him before waving me off.

It was time to solo. I adjusted the flaps, checked the gauges, and declared my intentions for take off over the radio. Brakes on, I powered up to full throttle, and with a big deep breath, I released the brake to accelerate down the runway. Thirty, forty, fifty miles an hour-I picked up speed until I felt the nose lighten and the wings ready to fly as the wheels barely skimmed the ground. I pulled back on the yoke, and felt the wonderful weightless sensation of flying. I was up! I was flying by myself! It felt great. I climbed to altitude. Floyd



radioed that my take off looked great. It was nice to know he thought I looked good up there flying. It was also the moment when I understood the saying that flying is the second greatest thrill known to man. As I flew over the airport, I came to the full and complete realization that I was all alone in the airplane. Of course I knew it when I took off, but as I flew, I came to fully comprehend that if I wanted down from the air, I would have to land the plane all by myself. My instructor couldn't help adjust the trim. He wouldn't be able to grab the yoke if I had the approach angle wrong. He wouldn't be able to see what I was doing or if I left out a step. He couldn't take over if I needed him. Safely landing that plane on that day depended on me. Yes, Floyd could talk to me on the radio. Yes, he was confident I could do it. But could I? I had never before been pilot in command and alone in flying an airplane. In that moment, I wasn't sure I wanted to be the pilot in command. As much

as Floyd wished, encouraged and was there for me, he was on the ground, and I was alone 1000 feet up in the air in the cockpit of Cessna six lima sierra. What if I messed up? What if I crashed? What if I died? What if this was my last birthday? Yes, I was soloing on my birthday. My sons were 3 1/2, and 2 1/2 years old, and my baby girl was almost 1. My children needed me. My husband expected me back. He was planning a birthday party for me that evening. He said he was getting a cake, so I'd better show up. He also said our parents were coming to the party. They had no idea what I was up to that day.

As I approached the base leg before my final approach I trimmed the plane, put the flaps down and reduced the engine power. I adjusted the attitude of the plane and adjusted my attitude as well while I prayed for God's help and protection in attempting what is the greatest thrill known to man. The reason flying is said to be the second greatest thrill known to man is because landing is the first. Flying isn't really that difficult when compared to landing. I understood that saying completely now. My job in that moment and the only way to get down at this point was to take that 1100 pound two seat Cessna and gently put its landing gear on the ground in the right sequence at the right air speed and right attitude and come to a full and complete stop before the runway ran out.

Sometimes in life it seems we've lifted off into situations with which we are not fully comfortable. We take off on a ride or course in life that we think will be good or fun. Soon the full implications and complications of our situations become understood. What initially seemed like a good idea or path to take in life has dramatic twists, turns, and consequences. Sometimes we don't know what to do. We want to get through or out of our situation, but like me in the plane the day I soloed, we aren't sure of how to get down our out of our difficulties. Sometimes we stay in the traffic pattern continually circling not being able to come to a solution or too afraid to make a commitment to "land the plane" so to speak. We don't want to mess up. We don't want

to crash. We don't want to be hurt or hurt anyone else. We wonder what to do. We wonder how to move forward.

As I flew over the DeSoto Parish airport on that November in 1988, I paused in my thoughts, took some deep breaths, and I prayed. I remembered my training. I remembered the constant repetition of steps I'd been taught. I remembered Floyd, the instructor who had all those hours of training and trusted that he knew I was ready and able to fly solo. I remembered his words of encouragement and confidence in me. Lastly, I took firm hold of the yoke and began executing the plan I'd been taught. I assessed the variables and made the decisions I needed to make to land the plane. I believed I could do it, and I knew I had to do it.

In our day to day lives we can have all the knowledge in the world. We can have the support of teachers, mentor, family and friends, but if we don't take hold of the situation and make the decision to work our plan, we'll never get out of the traffic pattern. We'll never get down safely. We all have things that call for action on our part. We can't just wish problems and challenges away. Hiding our heads in the sand won't work. Moments like my solo day in the traffic pattern come to all of us. We have to decide to land the plane or die trying. Real life is not a dress rehearsal. It is a challenging, curtain up, in the moment, live performance before the world. We don't get to rewind the tape or rewrite our lives. We can only go forward in each moment. How we do it and with who is our choice.

For Christians, there is an awesome advocate, teacher, and Lord in Jesus Christ. Just like Floyd was tuned in to my frequency in the plane, God is tuned in to our frequency 24/7/365 through prayer. We don't have to handle life's problems all on our own. The Creator of heaven and earth goes with us in our walk through life. God's Word makes it clear. In Hebrews 13:5-6 we read, "God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" The Lord will make you competent to deal with whatever comes your way. We never have to fly solo when we put our

hope, faith, and trust in the the Sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.

I did land safely at the DeSoto Parish airport that November day in 1988. I was thankful to God and Floyd. For my birthday party that evening, my husband prepared a cake for me with a balsa wood rubber band airplane on top. I still have the wings of that rubber band plane to remind me of that special day almost 26 years ago now. I continued to train after my first solo. I have landed many times including practicing emergency landings in farm fields, on river sandbars, grass airstrips and vacant roadways. I achieved my childhood dream and earned my private pilot's license.



I hope the story of my solo flight enlightened and inspires you to take on the opportunities and challenges life presents in a confident and constructive way with Christ as your pilot. I hope you will remember, Christians don't have to fly solo. I think on these things and hope you will too.

God bless,
Robin Robbins House

Additional Scriptures To Review

Deuteronomy 31:8
Isaiah 40:28-31
Psalm 55:22
I Peter 5:6
Philippians 4:6-7

What Does the Bible Say?

What did the leper do and say to Jesus in Matthew chapter eight?

How quickly was the leper cleansed?

What were Jesus' instructions to the leper?

Who did Jesus encounter when he entered Capernaum?

What was wrong with the servant of the centurian?

What was Jesus surprised about with the centurian?

What was wrong with Peter's mother-in-law when Jesus came over?

What did Jesus cast out and with what did he do it?

What did Jesus take on himself?

What did Jesus mean when he said "foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests; but the Son of man has no where to lay his head"?

What did Jesus mean when he said for the dead to bury the dead?

What happened when Jesus rebuked the winds?

Tips for children and picky eaters

Many times little ones and even grown ups are overwhelmed by a whole piece of fruit or large portion size of an unfamiliar food. They feel they can't eat it all or may not like the portion size. My children would sometimes prefer to refuse to eat a fruit or food altogether rather than be committed to something they weren't sure they would like or a portion size that they felt was too large for their appetite.

One way I dealt with this issue for my family was to set up a tray of what I called hors d'oeuvres. My little ones really liked it when we had hors d'oeuvres for supper. I would get a big serving tray or several small saucers for the various foods I prepared. It is important to make food look appetizing as well as being tasty and nutritious. These meals were especially popular during the summer months when I didn't want to heat up the kitchen and when there was an inexpensive variety of fruits and vegetables in season. We could eat this meal easily on paper plates and used toothpicks for our utensils. My children loved eating with toothpicks! I liked the easy preparation of this meal and the clean up when we used paper plates.

For fruits that tended to oxidize, I used pineapple juice to keep the fruit from turning brown. Unlike lemon juice which can accomplish the same retardation of



oxidation, pineapple juice tastes sweet, not bitter, like lemon juice does. I strained pineapple juice off into a large bowl from a can of pineapple tidbits. The pineapple tidbits became part of our meal. I dipped and fully coated with pineapple juice the fruits (like apples and bananas) I had sliced into bite sized pieces before arranging them on the tray(s). I washed and cut raw vegetables and arrange them on the tray(s), too. Sometimes I would put a vegetable dip in a small bowl. For the protein portion of the meal, I cut various lunch meats into strips that I rolled up and speared with a toothpick. Sometimes I served nuts or made a tuna salad and put crackers on the tray to go with the meats. I cubed cheeses or rolled cheese slices like I prepared the lunch meats. We passed around the tray(s) and everyone liked to select what they wanted to eat for their meal. My children even enjoyed counting how many toothpicks they each used for the different foods during the meal.

PREPARATION AND STORAGE - These meals can be made in advance and stored in tupperware or baggies until it is time to eat. As long as the food has not been sitting out too long and there is no fear of contamination, leftovers can be put back up in snack size or sandwich size baggies and refrigerated for another time or treat.

What did the two demons Jesus met in the country of the Gadarenes ask Jesus?

Why did the herd of swine go into the sea?

What did the Gadarenes ask of Jesus and why?

Answers to these questions can be found in Matthew chapter eight.

