

The Amazing VERA DOWLING STORY



Pastor Max Solbrekken interviews Vera Dowling

In 1994 I had the privilege of interviewing Vera Dowling on several occasions for Video and TV. They were amazing programs.

This little book contains transcripts of those tapings, gleanings from some of her taped speeches, news interviews and other personal conversations with her over the years!

It has been Donna and my pleasure knowing this great Christian lady since the

1970s, as well as her late husband Stan. She has had an extraordinary life of faith and service to God and her fellowman.

I am including a number of conversations we have had in the past few years, right up until February 11, 2009. Her faith has been failing since she fell and broke her hip and was hospitalized for a number of weeks last year.

Vera is still a going concern and a marvelous Witness for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Until very recently she enjoyed riding the bus to and from her shopping or other events she was invited to and invariably was given great opportunities to share the pure gospel with numerous people!

Last year Vera was invited to meet Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth 11 at Buckingham Palace to be presented with a special Medal, honouring her for service during WW11. Due to her fragile condition she felt it necessary to decline the Queen's kind invitation and received the Medal by mail from London.

Vera Dowling has been interviewed numerous times because of her excellent reputation as a pilot and trainer of pilots. She has also declined interviews by high profile media because of her insistence of giving God all the glory for her achievements without taking any for herself. Their reluctance to do so, has forced her occasionally to refuse their

overtures!

Her reputation as being the first and only woman test pilot in World War II, and the first woman to fly a commercial charter airplane in Scandinavia, is intriguing and exciting. Vera Dowling was the first woman in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve to lead a military flight formation over Bristol, Britain, and among the first 14 women pilots selected to enter the Royal Air Force, and the first woman flying instructor in Alberta!

She made the news recently when she took her first ever parachute jump strapped to an expert jumper on her 86th birthday and the next year on her 87th birthday in **2006** and **2007**. She stated that that experience was one of the greatest she had ever had.

Vera Dowling often stated: **“I think I learned more about faith in God flying an airplane, than in a church pew. Because you are alone and there was no place to go for help but up.”**

I ACTUALLY EXPERIENCED THE BLOOD OF JESUS CLEANSING ME!

Here are some special memories that Vera has related to Donna and myself in the last few months! m.s.

I do not recall the actual moment or hour when the blood of Jesus enveloped me, but

the experience was so overwhelming that I will never forget it! It changed my entire life and made me realize how God looks upon sin in all its forms. After that phenomenal experience, I was filled with the **'fear of God'**, which is the utmost holy respect and reverence for God Almighty and His Word!

I actually felt the **'blood of Jesus'** come over me like a great wave. It seemed to come from the outside and it came through me and every part of my being – inside and outside – felt a peace I cannot describe. And I felt as though for the first time **"I had come home"**! Only I would know it, but it was there – the powerful, living and wonderful **BLOOD OF JESUS!**

I felt like I was at home, for the first time in my life and I have depended upon the blood of Jesus from that moment and I did what my Mother taught me as a child: **Take all my problems to Jesus because He is the only One who can solve them!**

The tremendous experience of Jesus' blood sweeping over me made a great impact upon me. After that, I had to be totally honest in everything: **thought, word and deed!** And I have lived by that premise by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit!

I have had many wonderful experiences with the Lord and with those whom the Lord has put me in contact. One such an experience occurred when my younger brother **Andrew**

came from Australia to visit me in Canada. He was a very innovative man and excelled at manufacturing some of the most winning racing boats in that country but got involved in excessive drinking and a worldly lifestyle.

Upon seeing me, he burst into tears and said: ***“I have not lived a good life. Please help me, I want to be like you Vera!”*** I answered, ***“It is like Jesus you need to be like, Andrew!”***

He asked me what he must do and I answered: ***“You must believe totally in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. There is NO other Saviour. It is your belief in Him that counts!”***

Then I prayed with him. Later he traveled to Denmark and spent some time with our older brother, Max who was also a strong believer in Jesus Christ. And I’m quite certain that he helped him to get to know Jesus.

It is vital that we tell people the truth about God and the devil, heaven and hell, sin and salvation, the blood of Jesus Christ and the soon return of our Lord to rapture His Church and to judge the quick (living) and the dead!

**EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE
CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**

The Bible says: **“...Verily, verily, I say unto thee: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him**

should not perish but have everlasting life.

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

“He that believeth on the Son hath life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:3,7,16,18,36)

One of my favourite songs is, ***‘His Eye is on the Sparrow’***. I’ve asked Pastor Max Solbrekken to have that song sung at my funeral. I love the lyrics because they are so true and proclaim the great truth that God constantly watches over us! He is omnipresent and always with us and ever present to forgive, heal and comfort us!

The Bible says: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Ps.46: 1); **“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a broken spirit.”** (Ps.34: 15, 17, 18)

For many years about twenty-five, sparrows visited us regularly. I gave the staff at **NAIT** the five that were living in my backyard, but I kept a weak, sickly little sparrow I called **Spring** and nursed it back to health. He stayed with me for ten years and was such a

blessing!

GOD'S POWER AMAZED GANG LEADER!

The last few years we have seen an unprecedented rise in hooliganism and muggings in Edmonton. In our area, we have heard several reports of beatings and muggings of elderly people!

Naturally, folks are alarmed at these provocations. Being very active, I have always enjoyed going for walks in the early evenings during the summer months. Knowing that the Lord is always with me has removed the fear of these thugs.

About two years ago as I was on one of these walks, I encountered a gang of hoodlums approaching me. The leader, a tall man in his early twenties, walked up to me and asked: ***"Where are you going, Grandma?"*** I answered: ***"I'm going for a walk."***

He extended his hand toward me, saying. ***"Would you like to shake my hand, Grandma?"*** I answered: ***"Yes."*** As I took his hand, I spoke the name of Jesus Christ and my hand became like a steel vise. He screamed in pain and slowly sunk to his knees.

All the gang members stood in disbelief as though they were paralyzed. When I released him, the gang leader said: ***"Let's get out of here!"*** I interjected: ***"Not so fast. You will hear***

what I have to say. That was the power of God you felt. Jesus died for all of you. God loves you and wants to save you!”

They nodded in agreement and ran away as fast as they could, disappearing into convenience store on 124 St. A young 14-year-boy stayed with me weeping and saying: ***“Help me get out of this gang. They are forcing me to do bad things and to hurt people.”***

I prayed with him and encouraged him to break away from them and get some decent friends. I hope that he had the courage to do so, as he seemed like such a fine boy!

A short while after my encounter with that gang, I got on a City bus and suddenly heard a commotion. Some of those hoodlums who were sitting near the front said to one another: ***“There she is. There is that lady!”***

Then they quickly moved to the back of the Bus. That was my last encounter with that gang of muggers! I pray that they will give their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ!

**GOD WAS IN
MY PLANE!**

By Vera Strodl



Just how long I had been able to dodge the claws of cloud and sweeping sheets of rain, I do not know; but the fuel check showed only fifteen minutes left!

I was ferrying a single-engine Fleet Air Arm Fighter plane from Scotland to England. I ran into a cold front but did not feel there was any need to worry, for I could follow the steep, rugged cliffs of the coastline.

I hadn't been flying long when the cloud base ahead appeared lower than I could fly under. I turned back only to be confronted with a wall of cloud extending upward from the roaring white-capped surface of the sea. I tried to escape in every direction. I was flying so low that I could actually scent the salt spray below.

If only I had a radio, I thought. If only I could fly by instruments – if only the nearest airfield would fire rockets or mortars, I might be able to fight out the storm. Only fifteen minutes left!

My last chance would be to try to land the plane wheels up, on a tiny tongue of land that came into view. Then I realized that if I landed there, the rocks would rip open the belly of the aircraft and tear me to pieces with it. I was paralyzed with fear. Then, in that moment with death so near, there flashed into my mind one of the Bible stories my schoolteacher back home used to tell, of Jesus calming the storm on Galilee.

She quoted Jesus as saying, **“Why are you all so afraid? Where is your faith? Don’t you know I am in the ship with you?”** And she would say, **“Boys and girls, we all have our storms, but Jesus is concerned about each one of us. God is good. He’s big and He’s near. In any problem you have, Jesus is near and He wants you to trust Him.”**

Well, I realized I was in the same position as the disciples on the storm-tossed sea. And I too had forgotten that Jesus was on board. I screamed out in the same fearful fashion, **“O God, I have tried everything! Do something for me!”**

GOD HEARD AND ANSWERED!

I would be glad to live again that frightening, terrorizing fear to experience once more the wonderful moment that followed. No sooner had the words left my lips than the cockpit lit up with a bright light, and a beautiful sense of peace came over me. It was like passing from the darkest night to the brightest day.

A lovely calm voice spoke, **“Fear not, for I am with you. Reduce your speed, Vera, and turn to the left.”** I wasn’t frightened anymore. Outside, the rain was beating on the wings and lightning flashed. The ground was out of sight and I couldn’t see ahead – but it didn’t worry me.

Vera Strodl ferrying planes in WW11

And then I saw a black-and-white checkered box indicating the approach end of the active runway of an airfield. I do not remember landing. It seems that other hands were on the controls. The wheels floated onto the runway as on silk, and the airplane stopped. I sat there praising God and saying, "Thank You, Lord, for seeing me through this terrifying experience."

When I taxied in and parked, the man in the control tower burst out with these words, "You girls, up in weather like this! Why, we wouldn't send our men up in this with radio, radar and aids. You came in with a beautiful approach – a lovely landing, with no trouble at all. How did you do it?"

I replied, **"I had nothing to do with it."**

"Well you were the only one who got out."

I answered, **"Give the glory to God."**

GIVE THE GLORY TO GOD!

Had I been asked to fly the Atlantic with my choice of radio aids and instruments or by faith in God, I would have made my flight by faith. Instruments and radio are subject to failure, but Jesus never fails!

My dream of flying started at an early age. My childhood was filled with fear, because my father was an alcoholic. I trembled when he was around. He would beat me unmercifully. But my mother had great faith. She instilled into me to take my problems to God – as did my schoolteacher.

When I was about eleven years of age, the home conflicts became unbearable because of my father. I prayed, **“Dear Lord Jesus, if this is to be my life, please take me away. I don’t want to live like this.”**

With tears rolling down my face, I pleaded for His mercy and forgiveness for my soul, and He answered me. Joy flooded my soul. It was as if I literally stepped out of my old wretched self. I knew my sins were gone.

God’s voice spoke to my innermost being, **“Have courage. Everything will be all right. You will be a pilot and fly airplanes.”**

Many things happened to discourage my dream. The years that followed would have been impossible to endure without Jesus. He was very close, and I knew His voice. I could hear Him say, **“Hold on. Everything is going to be all right.”**

I started learning to fly when I was 16. Twenty minutes flying time represented two weeks wages. Two years of countless struggles elapsed before I secured my private pilot’s

license. Flying for the most part during my lunch hour, I became known as **“the girl who goes home to lunch in an airplane.”** The truth is I went without lunch in order to fly.

Isn't God a wonderful God? He lets us believe for the impossible and never lets us down. I have had many occasions to prove this.

There came a cable from the *Air Ministry*, which told me in hard, cold words, **“War is imminent. All civil flying must cease and women pilots will not be required in the war.”**

All that for which I had worked, struggled and slaved during these years suddenly crumbled to dust at my feet. Had I been a millionaire I would not have been able to buy a single minute's flying time. I was heartbroken.

In my despair, I cried, **“Lord, what do I do now?”** Immediately the reply came, **“Don't take a job unless it is flying!”**

I CHOSE TO BELIEVE GOD!

The British Government said I couldn't fly. God said I could and I would. I chose to believe God, and when all seemed helpless, I received an offer of a job as a test pilot for an aircraft company.

As my first job with the company, I was asked to give a demonstration of the aircraft to Army officials. My experience was limited, and with a prayer, I climbed up to 1,500 feet and

started in a dive for a loop. Halfway around the aircraft hung on its back and refused to come around. The carburetor, being designed to operate right side up was soon exhausted of fuel. The propeller stopped. My feet left the rudder pedals and I hung there on a single lap strap. A sea of upturned faces watched from the tiny grass field. I was losing height and still upside down. The voice I knew so well said, **“Put the stick over to the right!”** This I did and the plane righted itself, coming out of an awkward half roll. But the propeller was the same dead stick.

I said, **“Thank You, Lord, but where do I put her down?”** Then, without much help from me, the airplane side-slipped and landed on a spot reserved for spot-landing competitions!

The crowd cheered, screamed and clapped their hands. They said that they had never before seen such an amazing exhibition of inverted flying. What they thought was my good flying was really (as God and I knew) my bad flying!

Then I was accepted into a ferry service called the Air Transport Auxiliary. We ferried all types of bombers and fighters. The use of radio and instruments were not permitted, and therefore, flying in a cloud was discouraged. You see, the pilot's sense of balance is completely snatched away when flying in a cloud, and his only hope is to fly by his instruments. So we ferry pilots developed a healthy respect for a cloud and never flew into

one if we could help it.

On one occasion I was to ferry an old, war-torn *Typhoon*. I inspected it thoroughly and took off. The trip was to take only twenty minutes. After flying for about ten minutes I noticed the oil pressure falling rapidly and the oil temperature was rising equally as fast. Smoke started pouring from the engine. My first thought was to switch everything off and bail out .by parachute, **but I couldn't get the hood open.** In desperation, I tried everything to fight my way out of the doomed ship.

Then, I spotted a flashing red light. That inner voice said to me, **“Turn toward the red light.”**

The airplane was as hot as fire. It was impossible to see ahead, for the smoke was belching from the engine.

In training, we were taught that the wheels must be up during an emergency landing. If the wheels were down and you hit a rough spot, the airplane would probably turn over on its back and burst into flame, leaving the pilot to his fate.

But the inner voice said, **“Put your wheels down.”** I don't know what you would have done, but there comes a time when all of the laws, knowledge, education and wisdom of man fail and it pays to obey God. I put the wheels down!

I learned later that had I landed with the wheels up, the friction of the hot metal on the runway would have caused the Typhoon to explode. To God, I owe my all!

TO GOD I OWE MY ALL!

Until after the close of the war I had done absolutely nothing to help bring others to Christ. It seemed that I had used my faith solely for self-preservation. I had lived to transport bits of wood and metal across the sky with little or no regard for activities on the earth below. I knew how to use my own faith but I did not know how to tell others to use theirs. As I looked at this picture of my spiritual life I didn't like what I saw.

The air has its thrills, but none could compare with this: **Knowing Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour and telling others the Good News of His great love, mercy, and grace – That is the greatest life has to offer!**

“You must have an awful lot of nerve,” people say to me when they hear of my flying career. Then, they add, **“I wish I could do something like that.”** It doesn't require nerve to do things. Just faith – faith in God!

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Dr. Max Solbrekken interview with Vera Elise Strodl Dowling -Test Pilot for God -

