

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the inspirational life of the late Betty Greene. This remarkable woman was a missionary pilot, in fact, she was the first pilot for Missionary Aviation Fellowship. Betty was born in 1920 and after a life time of service passed on to her reward April 10, 1997. The two passions of her life were flying and serving Jesus. It was a 70 year old friend, Mrs. Bowman, that suggested that Betty combine these two desires to serve God. This spiritual wisdom played a dramatic part in shaping Betty's life. Interestingly, it is also Biblical. Paul explained: **"It is God who works in you both to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Phil. 2:13)**. That is, God first gives you the desire, then the ability. Both the desire and the ability ultimately come from God. God did this for Betty Greene, and He can also do it for you and me.

The desire to be a pilot was realized when Betty became part of a select group of women pilots flying military airplanes during W.W. II. That unit was known as WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots). When that program was terminated in December 1944 Betty was free to pursue the second part of her dream. Now she was free to use her flying skills to advance the cause of Christ. On July 1, 1944 Jim Truxton wrote to her: *"Dear Miss Greene, I read your article in last year's spring issue of His magazine and wanted to inform you that you are not alone. There are several others of us who share your vision for using aircraft and pilots to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth"*. Betty joined with those select few and formed CAMF (Christian Airmen's Missionary Fellowship). This ministry later became known as MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship).

The fact that Betty became MAF'S first pilot was a dream come true. On Feb. 23, 1946 she climbed into a 1933 Waco biplane at La Habra, California and began the long journey to a Wycliffe jungle camp in southern Mexico. Upon arriving she found that the need was great. She logged a hundred hours of flight time during her first month in the field. She also single-handedly took care of the refueling and maintenance of the airplane. A typical trip was from El Real to Tapachula. This took over two weeks on foot but only an hour and forty five minutes by plane. The airplane was definitely a useful tool on the mission field!

George Wiggins was sent to replace Betty in Mexico so she could accept a new assignment in Peru. George was an ex-Navy pilot, but sadly wrecked the Waco while landing at El Real. Jim Truxton imposed on Nate Saint, a dedicated pilot and mechanic, to come from the states and repair the damaged plane. Betty met Nate in Mexico City and filled him in with details of the Mexico work before she left for Peru. Nate, as you probably know, also became a pilot for MAF and died as a martyr with four other missionaries in the jungles of Ecuador on Jan. 8, 1956.

In Peru Betty flew a 950 horsepower amphibious plane known as a Grumman Duck. Not only was this surplus airplane purchased at a bargain price, but the Peruvian government agreed to pay half the purchase price, and also half the cost of any repairs. They further subsidized missionary aviation by selling Betty gas for 17 cents per gallon.

Unfortunately, Marine Corps General Ross Powell was in charge of the plane and thought it was too big for a woman to fly. Since he authorized no one to give her a check ride, Betty studied the manuals and checked herself out. She had been flying amphibians for six years and had flown plenty of bigger military planes. She quickly mastered the plane and became the first woman to fly over the

Andes Mountains. On one flight, searching for a downed airplane, the engine quit at a mere 2,000 feet above the jungle. On this occasion Betty demonstrated her calmness and piloting skills by making a successful dead stick landing on a small river below without damaging the plane.

Later while flying for MAF in Nigeria Betty again came across discrimination against women. While flying a doctor to Sokoto she was saddened to meet with some women in the Emir's harem. These poor women were treated like slaves. They were forbidden to learn how to read or write. They were confined to their quarters like prisoners and only permitted to go outside into the courtyard two days of the year. These women, who were forbidden to even drive a car, were inspired by meeting a woman could pilot an airplane. God used Betty to inspire these women to also dream.

Still later while flying for MAF in New Guinea, Betty encountered the treatment of women that was even more horrendous. When a Moni warrior was killed, for example, the tribe insured mourning in the village by chopping off two or three fingers from hands of young girls. The warrior's wife also became an innocent victim. It was their custom to kill the wife of a dead warrior and place her body beside his be eaten by the birds.

It is hard to find any place on earth where women are treated with dignity where the Gospel of Christ has not paved the way! Betty Greene was a pioneer sharing how Jesus can help everybody, but her ministry was a special encouragement for women!

On another occasion, while on assignment in the Sudan, she flew three government officials 175 miles north to the city of El Renk. There, of all things, she was invited to eat lunch with five Islamic government officials. She was shocked by the invitation as women were normally not permitted to eat with men. She was even more shocked when one of them asked: "Captain Greene, what was it that made you come to Sudan as a pilot?" Betty smiled and shared with them her childhood dream of flying airplanes and serving God at the same time. She told them about MAF and their global effort to make the world a better place in which to live. As Solomon said: **"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11).**

Sadly, in 1990 Betty suffered the first symptoms of Alzheimers. She lingered for seven years and finally became too sick to even eat. She lay contented on her bed, however, staring out the window at the maple trees in bloom. As the end drew near a woman came tiptoeing into her room not knowing that Betty was awake. Betty asked the woman in a clear voice: "Do you know God?" "Yes I do" replied the woman. Betty said: "Isn't it wonderful", A short time later she lapsed into a coma and passed on into eternity.

This information about Betty Greene is from her biography by Janet and Geoff Benge. It was published in 1999. At that time MAF operated 84 aircraft from 47 bases in 19 different countries. At that time it was also the world's largest fleet of private aircraft, averaging a flight every 4 minutes 365 days of the year. May the influence of Betty Greene's godly life remind each one of us that God can both give us dreams and then help us make those dreams become reality!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce