



Lifted by the Lord's Love

By Darrell Knight



My life's dream was to be a pilot, but did the Lord have a different plan for me?

As a young boy I was fascinated with the subject of flight. I couldn't understand how a heavier-than-air machine could rise above the earth and travel through the atmosphere. Consequently, I spent my library time at school researching famous pilots and engineers. After several years I finally began to understand the science behind flight. I even built several model airplanes out of balsa wood, paper, and plastic parts. But flying model airplanes wasn't enough; I wanted to be a pilot.

After graduating from college, I entered the U.S. Air Force flight school. Once there, I was assigned to a gruff, retired lieutenant colonel. He aimed to make us tough-minded servicemen by pushing us to our maximum physical, mental, and emotional endurance. Every day for two hours he voiced his disapproval of our performance with an insulting stream of foul language through my headset. I tried harder and harder to please him but to no avail. As a result, I became very tense and could not relax.

One day after he fired his usual verbal barrage, he ordered me to land and get out of the aircraft. "If you don't fly better tomorrow," he warned, "you and I will part company forever."

I was shocked! I had exerted every ounce of effort possible in the program. How could I tell my fiancée and my parents that I had flunked out of flight school? At this unexpected turn of events, the tensions of the past weeks nearly overwhelmed me.

That evening I was so troubled by the day's flight that I skipped dinner and went to my room. I was angry at both my instructor and myself. I hated the prospect of being called before the flight board and being expelled from the program. Why did this have to happen to me?

I lay in the dark for several hours, feeling angry and thinking about my predicament. Finally, my heart began to soften, and I realized that I could either question the Lord or put my faith in Him. I rolled out of bed, knelt down, and poured my heart out to Him. I thanked Him for His guidance in my

life and apologized for considering my perspective only. I explained that I was willing to accept His will—even if it meant changing vocations.

As I returned to my cot, I felt peace. The feeling gradually intensified until I was engulfed in a sweet and thrilling contentment that eased my pain and my sense of rebellion. I recognized it as the Savior's love for me. I knew that I was not alone and that I was a valued son of Heavenly Father.

After a night's sleep, I arose and began preparing for the day. I felt a strong, new sense of calmness. I no longer dreaded my instructor's wrath. I knew that whatever happened, I would do my best and accept the results.

At 5:30 a.m. we took off. For two hours I went through the usual routine of rolls, loops, spins, and simulated forced landings. During that time I was calm and relaxed while my instructor was unusually quiet. I heard no stream of aggravating language over the headset. I had the most enjoyable flight of my life.

He finally broke the silence by asking, "Knight, you really want to fly, don't you?"

I answered with a firm, "Yes, sir, I do."

He replied, "Well, if you keep flying like you have today, we shouldn't have any more trouble."

I was so mentally and spiritually elated that I felt as if I could have walked on the clouds we were then passing. From that day on, we both adjusted to each other. His language never changed, but my reactions did.

That night I knelt in prayer and thanked the Lord for guiding my life and offering His love. I recalled the verse in the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord comforted Joseph Smith: "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; (D&C 121:7) . . . They shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

My experiences with my flight instructor, while not enjoyable, were for my good. They softened my heart and brought me closer to my Savior. ■