

The Captain

**A Memoir of Life with the Best
Flight Instructor in LA County**



By Jessica Dumas

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This book is dedicated to The Captain,
Robert H. Dumas Sr.
6/6/33 to 5/10/07

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Chapter 1: Another Flight Lesson

The student pilot climbs into the pilot's seat of the Cessna 150 trainer airplane's cockpit as her Flight Instructor gets in beside her and says, "OK little butterfly, let's go see how much you have learned so far." The student answers with confidence, "I'm ready."

The student's name is Jessica Joyner. As nervous as she is, she still wants to learn to fly more than anything. She needs something that will build up her confidence. She likes that her instructor calls her little butterfly. It makes her trust him and that is important when learning to fly.

The Flight Instructor is known as "The Captain" among his friends and students. His name is Robert H. Dumas Sr. and he is well known in the Los Angeles County as a safety-conscious flight instructor. He likes this student for her positive attitude and the way she respects him.

Jessica may sound ready but inside her stomach there are great big butterflies doing great big butterfly flips. It happens every time they go flying. It is not that she does not want to learn. Flying has been a dream since childhood. She is determined and tells herself that she will not let anything stop this butterfly from taking flight. She has believed for years that she would take to flight like a butterfly just as a fish takes to water.

She starts the plane with the turn of a key. Concentrating on keeping the plane's wheels going straight, she starts to taxi the plane toward the runway. She wonders if she will remember the procedure that she has been practicing. She checks the windsock. It is limp and barely moving. This is a good sign as the crosswind will not be a problem when landing. It is a beautiful day to go flying!

Jessica is a young fair-skinned woman about 15 years younger than her instructor who is 43. She has been through an ordeal with trying to leave an abusive husband but does not talk about it much. She is nice-looking with long auburn-brownish hair and pretty hazel eyes that turn a sparkling green in the sunlight.

Her flight instructor likes her as she does not seem the least bit prejudiced toward him. He has taught white women before that seemed to have an attitude by treating him like he did not know what he was talking about. He had been flying since the age of 13 and knew the ins and outs of airplanes like the back of his hand.

But it was not only Jessica's attitude that inclined him to be attracted to her. She is not skinny but has meat on her bones with a nice shape which was how he liked his women. Jessica always welcomed the guidance and instruction of her instructor. He calls her "little butterfly" because when she first met him, he asked her why she wanted to fly. She told him, "Because I've always wanted to be a butterfly, and this is the closest thing to it. After all, if a butterfly can fly, why shouldn't I?" He smiled but did not think this was bizarre but felt it showed she had imagination.

The Captain tells Jessica that the lesson today is to do a takeoff, circle the airport, and land without him needing to repeat the instructions like he has been for the past few lessons. Hesitating, she responds to her instructor with, "Oh, OK." The Captain could tell she wasn't immensely confident in herself and says, "I know you can do it." She smiles and says, "We will see." It was not that she was afraid. She just did not think she could remember all the steps. There are several steps in going around the airport and then landing without the Captain helping her remember some of them.

Jessica asks him, "Do I have to do the pre-flight too?" He chuckles under his breath and rubs his chin like he does when he's thinking and then says, "What do you think?" She doesn't know

why she even asked. She knows it is part of getting ready to fly anywhere. The pre-flight was her least favorite part of flying but she understood how important it was as accidents can be prevented by making sure the aircraft is airworthy.

The Captain always emphasizes the importance of the pre-flight with all students. Jessica taxis the plane into the pre-flight area next to the runway and turns off the engine. With checklist in hand, she climbs out of the plane after the Captain. He stands by to watch that she does a proper inspection.

Jessica goes through what is called a walkaround to check for any damage to the airplane's outer skin by running her hand over the plane's surface as she inspects it for any dents or loose rivets. She checks it off on the checklist. She checks both tires to make sure they have enough air and the landing gear brakes are not leaking any fluid. She checks how much fuel is in the tank and since it is over half full, they will not need to get gas. She checks the oil to make sure it has enough. She notes how much gas and oil there is on the checklist.

She checks that the baggage door is locked. She checks that the vertical stabilizer, rudder, horizontal stabilizer, and elevator are working. She checks that the antenna and lights are not damaged. Then she moves to check flaps and ailerons making sure they move properly. She can skip the check for ice on the wings since it is 72 degrees out.

She is not done yet. She then moves to the front of the plane to check the propeller for any damage and that the spinner is secure. She makes sure she does not forget to check the important pitot tube, fuel vent, and stall warning vane to make sure they are clear. Finally, the outside checklist is done!

Somehow Jessica was able to get through the pre-flight outer inspection without his help. She gives him a salute when she is finished, and the Captain gives her a nod of approval. Since the Captain has been in the military, he conducts much of his instruction in a military style and saluting the Captain is a custom of acknowledgment that you have completed a task.

Next comes the pre-flight checklist inside the cockpit. They get back in the plane and she begins with calculating the weight and balance. Even though it is not required to do this every time, the Captain requires his students to do it so they know how and understand how important it is to make sure the added weight does not exceed the gross weight limit for the type of aircraft that you are flying. A pilot must have this information on board at all times and could be subject to a ramp check by authorities at any time.

She adds his weight of 170 to her 140 pounds plus the weight of how much fuel they have and the Captain's bag of 5 pounds that he carries for his flight manuals, maps, and flight instruments. She hates math but is allowed to have a small calculator to figure it out and writes it on the checklist. Before she has a chance to figure it out, the Captain asks, "How much fuel will you be using if we do two go-arounds?" She knows the ballpark figure for doing one go-around but has not done the exact calculation so takes a minute to calculate and writes it on the checklist.

Completing this without his help builds up her confidence and now she is ready to do the pre-taxi and run-up check. She starts the pre-taxi by setting certain instrument indicators to their proper settings and turns on the radio. She needs to check that the brakes work by rolling a few feet and then braking. Once the pre-taxi is done, she does the run-up by running the engine RPMs up as far as it would be typical of flying to warm up the engine for takeoff.

The Captain is impressed that she made it through all the checklists and tells her, "Good job. You shouldn't be worried about remembering what to do up there when the time comes. Since I've been repeating the instructions over and over, you will hear my voice in your head." Then

with a smile, he says, "You know I'll help you if you need it. Besides, I'm not going to let you kill my ass!"

They both laugh which relaxes her somewhat. After doing the dozen pre-takeoff checks which is mostly double-checking things, she slowly rolls the plane to the runway and stops. He picks up the radio mike to let the tower know what they plan on doing by saying, "This is November 7-9er-5-3 Golf, ready to take off and doing a student go around. Requesting permission to takeoff on runway 2-6." The tower comes back with, "Cleared for takeoff on runway 2-6." He snaps his fingers and says, "Darn it, I forgot that I should have had you do that." She smiles and says, "Oh yeah. Thanks."

Jessica checks her seatbelt and adjusts her sunglasses. She looks at him as she waits for a minute for his signal to takeoff. She has learned most of his hand signals by now which are needed inside and outside most single and twin-engine planes because the engines are so loud you cannot hear above them. He gives her his go-ahead signal by pointing forward and she salutes him in agreement.

Jessica loves this part as it gives her a feeling of power. She pushes in the throttle all the way so the little Cessna engine can get up to the speed of 70 knots (approximately 81 mph) for the wings to be able to lift off the ground. She loves how when you reach that speed, the plane seems to know it is time to fly, just like a butterfly.

Ever since her first lesson, she feels that takeoffs are vastly easier than nerve-racking landings. The takeoff and the landing are both dangerous but there are more accidents doing landings than takeoffs. Some reasons are due to the pilot being tired, something going wrong that the pilot does not know, landing toward a setting sun, heavy winds, or other factors. But even so, flying is so much safer than driving.

Jessica and the Captain are now in the air. The takeoff went smoothly and as soon as she levels off the wings in the departure leg, it gets a bit quieter and he says, "Good job." Then she slowly pushes her foot down for the left rudder to turn into the crosswind leg. The plane obeys her commands ever so smoothly. Due to all her previous lessons, she knows exactly where to turn left again for the downwind leg. It goes just as smoothly as they circle the airport.

As she passes the halfway mark of the downwind leg, she's happy that she has made it this far without him correcting her on something. She now is wishing she did not need to use the radio. The Captain teaches all his students how to use the radio so they can fly into any airport. Compton airport does not have an air traffic control tower, so it is not required to communicate but he still insists.

Jessica feels like using the radio distracts her. She usually stumbles through the simple statement that the tower expects. However, her instructor is going to require her to do it, so she gets ready. The trainer airplane she is using is older, so it does not have the convenience of a button for the mike built into the yoke and a headset so you could hear better. With this trainer she must take her hand off the yoke to reach over to get the mike.

Jessica's biggest problem with using the radio is remembering the call letters and numbers of the airplane, but she realizes this will get easier the more she does it. She takes a deep breath as she tells herself, "It will come to me when I do it, so calm down." She pushes the button down to turn on the mike and after a short hesitation, she says, "This is November 7953" but then she pauses as she tries to remember the military name for 'G' as it is necessary to use them instead of just the letters.

Jessica was feeling flustered hoping the Captain would help her out, but then she remembered that she had used word association to remember the 'N' and the 'G.' She used the name of

butterflies to remember the names. The Nymph family of butterflies that can be seen as late as November is for the 'N.' She remembers the Glasswing butterfly that is seen at many golf courses is for the 'G.'

She pushes the button again and says, "Let me correct that number. This is November 7-9er-5-3 Golf coming in for a landing on runway 2-6 now approaching the base leg. Do we have permission to land?" The tower quickly answers letting her know that she is clear to land on runway 2-6.

After bringing the speed down at the right time as she was taught, she comes around the left turn to the base leg before the final approach to the runway. Getting more nervous now, she turns into the final approach but then takes a few seconds too long to start the landing procedure and suddenly the trees below are getting closer and closer, way, way too fast!

She realizes in a second that she is descending too fast and begins to panic. She yells out to the Captain, "What do I do now—I don't remember, what should I do!?" Frantically she turns her head to the right for his answer, but to her shock...HE'S NOT THERE!

What the heck? Jessica took another look and could not figure out what was happening. She asked herself, "Have I finally lost my mind or am I dreaming? He was with me before, wasn't he?" She is getting incredibly scared but cannot take the time to think about it at that moment or she will surely crash the airplane.

In a matter of a split second, which seems to pass in slow motion, the trees are about to jump up and hit her. She feels that this small plane would not be much protection if she were to hit those trees. She takes a deep breath and says out loud to herself, "OK, I can do this. I just need to calm down. OK, yes, I hear your voice in my ear now. More power! Push in the throttle!"

She quickly pushes the throttle in, and the airplane climbs in the nick of time to take her over the trees. After clearing the trees, she remembers to pull the throttle back just enough so that she glides gracefully to an almost perfect landing with a slight bump or two. She laughs to herself saying, "How in the world did I pull that great landing off?"

With a big sigh of relief, she yells, "I made it! This little butterfly took flight and made it back home!" Jessica is ecstatic but what happened to her instructor? She figures she must have imagined he was with her when she started out. She is still wondering about it as she slowly taxis down the runway. Before she realizes it, she is nearing the end of the runway.

She needs to taxi to the Captain's hanger which means she needs to slow down and turn left at the end of the runway. She starts to brake, but nothing happens! She keeps trying. With a sick feeling, she realizes that the braking system is not working!! She then tries to turn so she will not go headfirst into the wall, but the steering is not working either. She is about to crash into the cement wall that surrounds the airport. Right before she hits the wall, she screams out, "NO, NO. GOD HELP ME!"

I WOKE UP SCREAMING!

My eyes popped open as I sat up with a jerk! Was it just a dream? It seemed so real! I then realize that it really was a dream. But what a dream! I had just relived parts of my first solo flight over 40 years ago! I remember it like it was yesterday.

Below is a photo of coming in for a landing at Compton airport. Do you see the trees at the bottom of the photo? They were much closer in the dream and on the day I soloed.



Chapter 2: Was it Just a Dream?

I couldn't get the dream off my mind. It had parts that were different than what actually happened when I soloed. After I did a couple of takeoffs and landings without him telling me what to do as he had asked, what really happened was that he wanted me to taxi over to the airport office. Then he got out of the airplane and closed the door. I figured he had to get something from the office, but he then turned to me and was yelling something but because of the noise of the engine and propeller, I couldn't hear so I yelled, "What?"

He opened the door and said loudly, "OK, take her around." I thought he was kidding at first so I yelled back so he could hear me above the engine's noise, "Do you mean by myself?" He repeated that he wanted me to go around by myself. I yelled back, "No, I can't do this on my own yet! I'm not ready to solo yet! PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!!" I tried to convince him again, but he just said, "I taught you, so I know you can do it!" and then closed the door.

I sat there dumbstruck still wondering if he was kidding or not, but then I remembered something that he told me when I first started lessons—he never let his students know when he thought they were ready to solo to keep them from worrying about it too much. That calmed me somewhat, but I still didn't feel quite ready.

Even though my instructor who was known as the best flight instructor of LA County said I was ready to solo, the logical me had doubts. Just in case I didn't make it back from this first solo flight of mine, I needed to do something before my takeoff. I was nervous but not fearful. I knew about fear all too well and what I felt was like great big butterflies in my stomach. What I needed to do was to write a note to my seven-year-old daughter who wasn't with me because her father had kidnapped her from me after he attempted to kill me.

I wanted to explain to her why I couldn't keep her with me after what she called 'the incident' (described in Chapter 8) that caused us to be separated. I don't recall the exact words I wrote to her except that I loved her very much and would never do anything to intentionally hurt her.

I wanted to say so much more, but I couldn't sit there much longer in case another plane needed to get to the runway. I put the note in my backpack, said a quick prayer, and turned the key to start the engine. I was so excited I thought I was going to wet my pants! My dream of flying solo was finally coming true!

Chapter 3: Going Back in History

In order to explain why my daughter wasn't with me, I need to take you back in time about ten years from March of 1977 to April 1, 1967, the day I married my daughter's father, Sam. Yes, on April Fools' Day, I was the fool that married someone I thought I loved, but it was more like I was in love with the idea of getting away from home, just like many others of that age.

Neither one of us was superstitious about April Fool's Day and it was the perfect time of year to start a new life. Sure, I felt like I loved him, but what does a 19-year-old really know about love? He had charmed me with gifts, promises, and fun times as he vowed his everlasting love for me. I had a sheltered childhood and was eager to get away from my parents but still wanted to do what they expected by marrying someone of the same religion that was supposed to love and cherish me for life. At the time, we had the same values and goals so we could make a good pair.

I wasn't aware that Sam was a mixed-up guy looking for an innocent virgin and because of my being raised with strict religious values and a naïve outlook, I fit his bill. He was a narcissist in the making but I was a naïve teen that had been dumped by my first love when I was 17. I was primed to do anything needed so that I wouldn't lose another love. I had never heard of the term narcissistic and had no idea men could be so controlling.

I was only 19 and he was 20 when we married and within a year of marriage, I was feeling like there was something wrong with him but didn't know who to turn to about it. He had become anxious about small things and mistrusted me for no reason doing things like calling me several times at work or asking me who I was with when I'd go shopping. He was becoming materialistic wanting to live in a better place and then wanting to buy a home when we couldn't afford one yet. In the first two years of our marriage, we moved from our little basement apartment in St. Paul to three different places in Stillwater, each better than the last.

I figured I had to do whatever possible to keep the marriage together because of two things. One being that marriage was sacred, and two, I had to think of the child I was carrying. Our beautiful little girl was born in January 1970 (she is 9 months in photo). Sam was delighted with her even though he accused me of cheating and gave me the third degree as to whether she was his or not. Because of some of her similarities to him, he finally had to agree she was his.

By then, he was drinking heavily after work and would come home and pick on me, calling me names and belittling me when I would try to defend myself. It got worse after the death of our friend Jerry who had been our best man at our wedding and was Sam's best friend before we were married.

I found out years later that it is usually a trauma that makes some mental illnesses begin. At the time, I was not aware of what mental illnesses he had until years later. His third ex-wife told me he had been hospitalized and diagnosis with paranoid schizophrenia, bipolar, and sociopathic tendencies.

Also, at the time I had no idea what narcissistic meant. It has only been a few years that I have discovered that many of his strange ways were due to having a narcissist personality disorder and was not from an actual mental illness.



He could be dreadfully cruel. Many narcissists were abused as children, but most will never get better because they don't think there is anything wrong with the things that they do. I discovered years later that Sam had been abused by his mother and his father was abusive to her. The cycle of abuse continued as I was caught up in a world of being a battered wife.

The change took place slowly and I had no clue what was happening to him and thought that I could help him if I could just get him to quit drinking since that was the time when he was the worst. I didn't have any idea what was wrong with him, but I knew some of his symptoms were not normal behavior, such as the way his moods could change quickly from being exceedingly up and happy to being disturbingly violent and cruel.

The violent side of him was like living in a constant state of fear of what may happen next and I would leave to go to my parents or a friend's for a while determined to not go back but somehow he would talk me into returning when he was back to his happy self. His anger could be set off by the most ridiculous things and sometimes I would think that he was joking but soon would see he was not. He could be so funny and then instantly turn into a monster who would do things like dump a pot of spaghetti over my head because it didn't taste exactly right.

Moving from Place to Place

Things got worse when Sam decided to move us away from my family and friends in Minnesota down to live in Florida where I didn't know anyone. We lived in West Palm Beach for about six months when he got caught swindling his employer, so we abruptly packed our car and moved to Denver. This photo was taken of Lorissa when she was three while we lived in Florida after going to Disneyworld. She sure was a cutie!



Whenever he thought the authorities got wind of where he was, we would move to another address and eventually moved to Los Angeles, California. I had always dreamed of living in California but not under these circumstances.

I believe it was heavenly intervention that brought me there to be rescued. I believe that because we didn't go to LA just once, it was twice. The first time wasn't long enough for me to make a connection with someone to help me but when he decided to leave LA to move to Phoenix, our car broke down just 50 miles down the highway, so we ended up returning. I knew someone in heaven was looking out for me.

By the time we came to LA the second time, I was clinically depressed but didn't know it as I didn't even know what that meant. My daughter remembers me as always being sad and she would see her dad hit me and didn't understand why. I didn't have anyone to turn to being in a strange city that had no type of domestic violence shelters back in the 70s. Everyone in my family was tired of me leaving and then going back. They didn't realize how much he would threaten me and them with death or violence.

Sam would take all the money I earned as I would work two jobs while he sat at home saying he would babysit instead of putting forth some effort to find a job. My daughter was at the age that she should have been in preschool, but he didn't want her to go and said he could home school her. He kept wanting me to have another baby, but I would make excuses as to why I couldn't get to the doctor to take out the IUD birth control device I was using. I would pray to God not to let me get pregnant again to bring another child into this crazy marriage. He must have been listening because I never got pregnant by him again.

It Was Like Being in Jail

My work was my only escape, away from his nasty comments to tear my self-esteem down or find an excuse to beat me up. I didn't know how I was ever going to get away from him because he would never let me take our daughter anywhere by myself because he knew I would take off with her and leave him.

I had tried leaving several times, but he would always find out where we were and threaten me or her or my family until I agreed to go back with him. I lost all respect and trust of him and even began to despise him. While he would go out at night until the early dawn, I would stay awake thinking up ways I could either escape or do away with him. I was too afraid to do either.

My family and few friends that I had left were tired of me calling on them for help and then going back to him. My mother had called the police on many occasions when I had sought protection at her house until my mother asked me not to come there but to call the police myself when he would get that way.

I was in jail in my own home and didn't have anyone to fight for my freedom. I was sinking into clinical depression without a lifesaver to hang onto. Sam would ask what happened to the sweet girl he married that used to smile and laugh all the time. I didn't dare tell him that it was because of him. I had learned to keep my mouth shut or get a fist in it.

Chapter 4: Meeting The Captain

With such a tight grip on me, you may wonder how I got away from Sam to meet anyone else. It just so happened that I took the bus to work five days a week and I had the same bus driver every morning that was looking out for me. He was a friendly and nice-looking guy with the nickname of Cowboy. One bad day when I was wearing dark glasses to cover my bruises, I sat in the front seat behind the driver's seat. Cowboy asked if I was OK. I started telling him about my life in jail. He sympathized and gave me his number to call if I ever needed help.

I thought maybe this would be my way out, but I was too afraid to call him for a few months. Just his small token of kindness must have boosted my esteem somewhat as Sam took note and had to beat the crap out of me just in case I had met someone and was getting any ideas about leaving. The next day was a payday and I was so upset that I couldn't concentrate on work, so I left early and wandered the downtown shops because I didn't want to go home.

I remembered that Cowboy had given me his number that I had written backward in a secret place in case Sam saw it. I found a phone booth and called Cowboy. He was happy to hear from me and asked if I was up to going to a party. All I could say was, "Hell yeah!"

Who is This Guy?

It was a party for bus drivers, and I kept hearing people talk about the Captain. I asked, "Who is this guy?" Cowboy introduced me to a man who was having fun playing dominos on the kitchen table with another bus driver. He took one look at me and asked, "What is a fine thing like you doing here?" I didn't know what to say except that I was looking to have some fun.

Then he asked me if I would like to go flying with him in his airplane. I thought maybe he was kidding until he showed me a picture of his twin-engine airplane. I was really interested then because I had always wanted to learn to fly. When I said that I would love to learn how to fly, he wanted to know why. I remembered how as a child I would dream of being a butterfly, so I told him, "Because I've always wanted to be a butterfly, and this is the closest thing to it. Afterall, if a butterfly can fly, why shouldn't I?" He smiled and asked if he could call me to set up a time. I had no idea how I would be able to do it, but I gave him my work number. He said he would get in touch to set up a time to go flying.

There was some sort of thing that happened between us. It wasn't a romantic chemical thing because I was not physically attracted to him but there was something that made me like him and feel like I could be myself and feel safe at the same time around him. He was almost old enough to be my father, loud with a crazy sense of humor, and notably down to earth with the attitude that he didn't care what anyone thought of him.

Another thing about the Captain was that he had a super dark complexion like a true African, so I asked him if he was from Africa. He laughed and said he wasn't, but he had taken a trip to Ghana and lived there for six months. Then he said he had traced his heritage back to Haiti and it was possible that he was related to the famous author, Alexandre Dumas. I found out later that he looked a lot like Alexandre and very well could have been related.

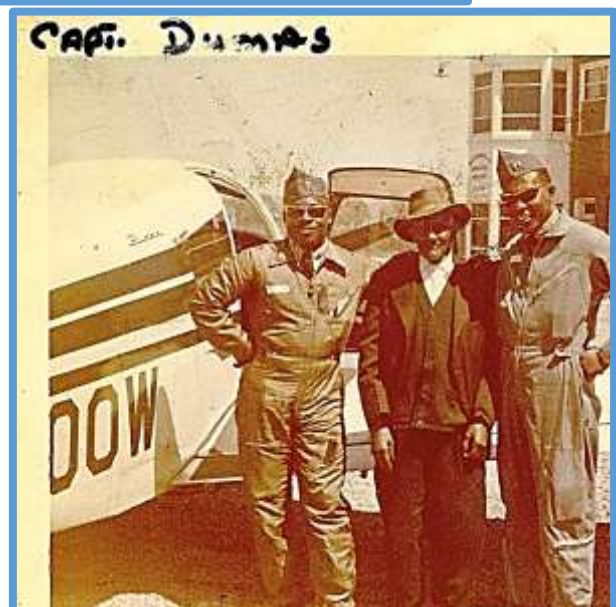
I was intrigued by his stories and the way everyone seemed to love being around him. As the evening wore on, I learned more about him such as his taste in music being rhythm and blues, which most everyone at the party would dance to as the host played his tunes on his reel to reel system. By 10 pm, I was feeling pretty good after a few drinks but was still extremely nervous contemplating if I should call home or just go home or what. I didn't want to think about it and tried to focus on this intriguing man that I had just met.

Chapter 5: The Captain's History

Before continuing with what happened at the party, I'd like to explain some of the Captain's history before I knew him. He was born on June 6, 1933, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Mamie and Robert James Dumas. His father died when he was five and he's not sure why he died but there were rumors that he was murdered. His mother moved to Chicago and he and his sister Virginia were raised on the south side of Chicago. His mother remarried when he was nine, but he never talked much about his stepfather. The family grew larger with three brothers and another sister.

Ever since he could remember he had wanted to fly airplanes. He joined the Civil Air Patrol and at age 13 he learned to fly even before attending Dunbar High School. At age 17 he enlisted in the Air Force and afterward served in the Army. He served in the Korean war.

On the left he was in the Air Force with two P-51 Mustangs (1951) and in the Army on the right (1955). On the bottom was 1952 when he was in the 10th Air Postal Squad of the Air Force.



He married his first wife, Rosie, in 1952, and over the next several years had a big family of eight children. After the military, he worked in the steel mills of Chicago and acquired a small single-engine airplane that he would fly around the area in his spare time.



The below photo is the Captain with his first two children Bobby and Valerie.

His marriage was having problems and when it ended, he moved to Los Angeles in 1967 and started a new family with girlfriend Cathy and daughter Lisa. He worked in a wire plant while going to school to be a flight instructor. He then was hired by Floyd's Flying Service at Compton Airport in 1969. In March of 1970 he had a son he named Kobinah which means born on Tuesday in an African language.

In 1972, he decided to go to Ghana, Africa, with friends he knew from there. He wanted to see if he could start a flying business there but was unsuccessful after six months and returned.

Around 1974, the Captain and a good friend of his, Melvin Neville, became partners in the purchase of a twin-engine Cessna 310. He was in love with that plane and he flew it as often as he could in the local area. He even flew out of state at times. He was well known in the South Bay area for being a safety-minded flight instructor. He was a member of the 47 Flying Club of Compton Aviation. A tribute to him is featured at the Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum at Compton Airport as part of the airport's history for being their First African American Flight Instructor.



On the right is his son Kobinah (Koby) when he was about 5 enjoying his dad's airplane.

Being a flight instructor was not full-time employment, so he took on the dangerous job of working for the Los Angeles MTA as a city bus operator working mostly out of the Long Beach Division. It took a few years before he had enough seniority to request certain routes and the hours he wanted. He liked working early in the morning from 5:00 am to 2:00 pm as there were less people taking the bus. The bus routes that he normally worked went through gangster territory. Most drivers did not like working those routes, but he did not mind.

Most everyone that took his bus on his route were the hard-working kind that paid him respect, but there were a few times he was about to get robbed and had to handle the situation. This was before they had the ticket money locked down so no one could steal it. When he was threatened, he would pull out one of those flat razors that he kept in his shirt pocket as if it were a pen. As soon as they saw it, they got the message and without a word, turned around and left. He could get away with carrying a razor as it was not a firearm and wouldn't get him fired if anyone complained.

The Captain became known as the “flying bus driver.” He had a newspaper article written about him that the below picture was in. You can read the article in the Appendix.



His relationship with Cathy broke up around 1973 and he remarried a friend from Chicago by the name of Betty. They did not have any children and were not together for long. He was married to her when I met him in late 1975.

Even though he was a smoker and drinker of hard liquor, he was a healthy man except that he had problems with his feet and back, which he attributed to taking 33 parachute jumps out of airplanes while in the Air Force. He had several surgeries trying to correct his foot problems and went to chiropractors for his back. He stayed certified as a flight instructor until he was around 60 years old.

Chapter 6: Back to the Party

The party was at a man's home who was a good friend of the Captain. His friend's last name was Robinson, and everyone called him Robbie. Robbie offered to let me stay for the night with no strings attached if I was afraid to go home. I figured I wouldn't be in any more danger doing that than going home, so I accepted the offer.

I called Sam to let him know I was staying at a friend's house for the night and he just couldn't believe it. Sam demanded to know where I was, but I would not tell him. We got into a fight with him calling me all kinds of curse words and when I had heard enough, I ended the call by hanging up on him. I was steaming mad mostly because he wouldn't let me talk to my daughter.

What really bugged me was that he would stay out all night with no explanation. In his tiny mind it was OK for him to go spend the night out with who knows who or where. but it was not OK for me. I was so sick of his double standards and was so ready to leave him, I also knew he may just end up killing me if I go back. I was scared to death but didn't know how to get my daughter away from him so the next day I went home and took the beating I expected, but it didn't seem to hurt as much because now I had a friend.

After a few weeks of not hearing from that friend I figured he wouldn't call me. I had given him my number at work but maybe he lost it or maybe he just didn't want to teach me for whatever reason. About three months after meeting him at the party, I received a call at work asking if I'd like to go flying that weekend. I told him that was like asking me if I liked butterflies.

The Captain told me he had been meaning to call me, but he had to get his wife back to Chicago and then file for divorce. He was certain that his wife was cheating because she had been calling Chicago and talking for hours running up his phone bill. His wife wasn't upset about him filing for divorce and that gave him even more reason to do it.

I was so excited and had figured out a way to convince Sam that I was working on the weekends. All I had to do was get a part-time job. In the meantime, since I had to work Saturdays occasionally, I could go to work for only a couple of hours and then call the Captain to pick me up. The good thing was Sam couldn't call me at work on weekends because the phones were off.

Chapter 7: First Airplane Ride

My first airplane ride was the most thrilling thing I had ever done! The Captain and two friends of his flew in his Cessna 310 up to Big Bear Lake located in the mountains east of LA. Flying above the mountains was so beautiful it was making me feel as free as a butterfly floating on mountain breezes.

I sat in the back seat with the Captain's friend and the guy kept trying to kiss me. I would push him away and then the Captain would yell at him to leave me alone. I wondered why he was so adamant about keeping his friend away from me. It didn't dawn on me then that he was interested in me for more than just teaching me how to fly.

After we returned, he asked me if I wanted to take flying lessons from him. Without even thinking of how I could get away to do that, I jumped up and down with an enthusiastic "Yes!" I managed to get away every couple of weeks and it was so much fun that it brought me out of my depression. Sam started accusing me of having an affair and wanted proof that I had been working on the days I went flying.

When I couldn't produce it, he took it out on me big time. I was sure now that he would kill me if he somehow found out what I was doing. I could see hate in his eyes when he was using me as a punching bag. Until this day I do not understand how a man can say he loves a woman and then beat her up.

The Captain told me some time later that he had enjoyed my company and wanted to get to know me better but wasn't sure how to proceed since I was married. I was interested in him mainly for one reason—to learn to fly.

I was Sleeping with the Enemy

It was getting worse and worse dealing with Sam. It was scary the way his eyes were becoming so evil when he was hitting me. I worried that I would not survive any more abuse. My head had become his punching ball and my sides his football. I had a few broken teeth and was beginning to hurt all over even when I had no bruises, which I'm sure was responsible for many of my health issues years later.

Little did I understand then that Sam needed medication and professional help. There was nothing I could do to help him. Like most abusers, they want to isolate you away from connections to family and friends. A battered woman suffers very much like a P.O.W. held captive and brutally tormented until cracking up or dying. I already felt like I was cracking up and I sure didn't want to die by his hands.

In the meantime, I was getting closer to the Captain. I loved his company as he always made me laugh and he was so very protective always asking how things were at home.



Chapter 8: The Incident

Most days I went to work physically sick from worrying and living with a man who could change from happy to violent in a split second. Sam didn't know I had been taking Valium to calm my nerves in order to walk on the eggshells he forced me to walk on. I got them from a friend at work and took them in order to get through the days of work and nights with a maniac.

One morning I prayed for a way out and when I got to work, something was telling me to call the Captain. He said he would come and get me for lunch at his place since he had to get ready for work. He lived just a few miles from my work so when he came to get me, I let it all out telling him how scared I was and how I didn't know what to do.

Even though I was due to go back to work, I couldn't bring myself to go and he told me to stay giving me a drink to calm my nerves. I called work to say I was sick and couldn't work for the rest of the day. He had to go to work in a while, so he took a shower and was walking around in his robe when there was a knock at the door that was probably a neighbor stopping over for a drink.

When the Captain opened the door, there stood Sam with our daughter beside him. I was shocked and wasn't sure how he found me as I never left clues of the Captain's address but then Sam always had a knack for finding me no matter where I tried to hide from him. I'm sure he had been following me.

Sam asked the Captain if he could talk to his wife and he said that it was up to me. Reluctantly I agreed to step out in the hallway to talk to him feeling apprehensive but somewhat safe with the Captain nearby. Sam started in on me with accusations that I had a pimp now and yelled, "I do not want my daughter being anywhere near that ni--er." Unlike me, he was very prejudiced, especially when it came to African Americans. I calmly told him that the Captain was not a pimp but a respected member of the community offering flying lessons to anyone of any race or color.

Then Sam blew up yelling that I was "sick in the head for wanting to fly." He put his hands around my throat without really choking me as he demanded, "So are you sleeping with your pimp?" Before I could answer, he wanted to know why he was in his robe and why he acted so concerned about me. I told him he was getting ready for work, but I knew that no matter what I said, he would not believe me. He was getting more upset and yelled, "You're nothing but a slut!"

That's when I saw the flash of shiny steel and realized he had a knife in his coat pocket. He was going to stab me with a butcher knife right in front of our daughter! I tried to get away from him, but he grabbed me and started flinging the knife around like he was trying to decide where to stab me.

I considered the fact that maybe he really didn't want to hurt me, but he continued to stab at me anyway and I tried to dodge the knife. Somehow the knife hit the back of my ear as I turned away from him, but I didn't feel like I had been cut. I was screaming as I dodged the knife and my daughter yelled, "Stop Daddy Stop!"

He didn't even hear her as he continued to stab at me. Then he knocked me down to the floor and as I was trying to roll away, I felt his hard shoe hit me in the ribs over and over. I let out a loud scream and thought I was going to pass out. Suddenly I heard the Captain's thunderous voice yelling at Sam to get away from me as he waved his pistol in the air. He told me to go inside so he could deal with the situation but I was hysterical and afraid that Sam would hurt

him because Sam was a really big guy at least 6 inches taller but at the time I wasn't aware of the Captain's military background as an MP and how competent he was dealing with trouble-makers.

I remember yelling, "No, no, don't...he will hurt you!" But the Captain said, "Don't worry about me." I tried to get my daughter to come with me inside, but Sam wouldn't let her. Once inside the apartment, I realized that I was bleeding from the side of my head and I started to shake even more uncontrollably as I tried to stop the bleeding.

A moment later I heard two loud gunshots and started to scream again but a moment later the Captain came in and said that they were gone. I asked about my daughter and he said that Sam had pulled her down the hallway and that's why he aimed the gun high in fear of hitting her.

He had shot the gun above their heads to scare Sam out of there because he was refusing to leave. I couldn't stop crying hysterically and the Captain tried to comfort me but then saw the blood and called 911. Within minutes the ambulance came as well as the police since the neighbors most likely reported the gunshots.

In Shock but Still in One Piece

I vaguely recall being taken to the hospital at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Beverly Hills, which was the closest hospital to the Captain's apartment in West Hollywood. They sewed up the cut behind my ear with 22 stitches and said I could have lost my ear. The cut on my right thigh only needed a few stitches. I ended up with one fractured rib and various bruises all over my arms, torso, and hips.

Even though I was in shock, I kept asking for my daughter and was told that as soon as they had word from the police, they would let me know. A psychiatrist came to talk with me and gave me a card to contact a therapist when I was up to it. What seemed like hours later I was told that both men were picked up and at the police station being questioned. The officer said my daughter was shook up but fine and they would keep her until I got out of the ER. I asked the staff to release me as soon as possible so I could take her home.

I felt so bad that my little girl had to witness such a horrible thing at such a young age. I had to get a taxi to go to the police station and when I got there, she was asleep on a wooden bench and when I woke her, she jumped for joy to see me and then started to cry when she saw my bandages. We got home and she fussed over me and my bandaged ear like she was playing nurse. The next morning, I checked with the police and asked them to let me know when they release Sam since I did not want to be where he could find us.

The next day was my daughter's seventh birthday and even though I wasn't up to doing much, I took her to her favorite place on the beach and afterward bought her a doll and a small cake with a candle with the little money that I had. I wanted to be out of the apartment we were living in by the time Sam got out of jail, so I packed up the little stuff that we had and was ready to go to a friend's house.

The police had let the Captain out after spending the night in jail, but they had not let Sam go. They asked me if I knew anything else so I mentioned he was wanted in Florida and they said they would check into that but for some reason he didn't get extradited like I had hoped.

Chapter 9: My New Life Begins

After a short stay at a motel, I was glad the Captain asked me to move in with him so he could protect me. When he was at work, I would answer his phone calls as he would call to check on me on his breaks. It would not be the Captain but someone breathing heavy at the other end and I knew it was Sam. He must have gone through my purse earlier and found the number. Once Sam called and asked where our daughter was, so I hung up on him. I was not going to tell him that she was in a foster home until I was able to care for her. The Captain told me to leave the phone off the hook until he got home. I'm sure Sam was threatening me to keep me from going to court to testify against him and it worked.

The closer the court date got, the more afraid I got. I did not have the courage to face him. The day before court, I called and talked to the judge who understood but said the charges would have to be dropped. Just like with many other abused women, my abuser got away with assaulting me. All I wanted at that time was to get on with a life without Sam in it. Unfortunately, I was not thinking right which happens to most abused women. I figured if I caused him to go to jail, I would never be free of him. Even getting a restraining order does not stop this type of maniac from killing. I would have to live in fear after he got out no matter what the courts did. If there had been shelters for abused then, I would have gone to one.

This picture is one of my favorites that was taken when we flew up to Porterville, which was about 200 miles north of Los Angeles to see an air show. It was my first time to an air show and I've always considered it our first official date.

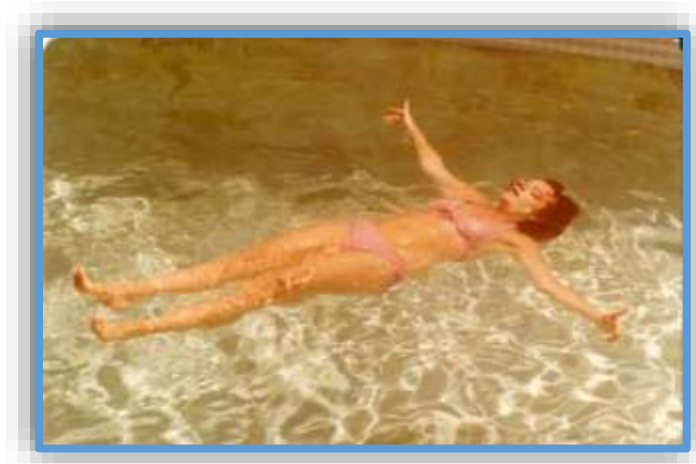


One of my favorite memories was shortly after I moved in with the Captain. We went on a road trip to the Monterey Jazz Festival in Monterey, California, in August of 1976. As we were dancing, he simply said, "I think we should get married." There was nothing romantic about it, but it was unique. He took me by surprise, and I told him that I was not interested in getting married because it would ruin our relationship. He wasn't surprised at my reply but over the next year he didn't give up asking until I said "Yes" and he put an engagement ring on my finger. The photo below was taken in Monterey in the room we had where it was non-stop party time. I had sewn our African print shirts just for the occasion.



Our First House

Other things happened because of the incident. The Captain had to move due to being evicted for using a firearm on the premises, so we moved into another apartment. He had a friend that was a real estate agent who was looking for a house that we could buy together. Shortly after my solo flight, we bought a small house in Gardena that had a pool. I had aquaphobia due to my oldest brother drowning but I was determined to teach myself not to be afraid of the water. I discovered that if I floated on my back and put my head back just enough to let my ears go under water, it was very soothing. It became my way of relaxing.



My daughter was staying with a foster family for her safety and because the social worker didn't think I was functioning well enough to deal with her until we both went through therapy. She was having behavior problems due to being so upset and anxious not understanding why her father did what he did and why she couldn't be with me. It was way too much for someone so young.

I called her as often as I could to reassure her that we would be together again soon, but she would cry every time I called and the foster mother told me it may not be such a good idea to call so often as it upsets her too much. Her father had turned her into a real 'daddy's girl' convinced that he was the best daddy in the world. She hardly ever got to see me with the long hours I worked so I wanted so badly to make it up to her but if my calls were too upsetting to her I would back off calling her so often until she had some time to heal.

Father's Rights in the 70s

Unfortunately, in those days the father had the right to see his children no matter what he had done to their mother. After about a month of her being at the foster home and just about the time I was going to take her home, Sam was given permission to visit her by social services. He told the foster mom that he wanted to take her around the corner for an ice cream cone and she said that would be fine but to be back by a certain time. That time came and went without him bringing her back. I was informed the next day by the social worker and I broke down crying wondering if I'd ever see her again.

An agonizing seven months went by without a word and then my sister who lived in Wisconsin called me saying a social worker had called her asking if she was a relative of my daughter and then was able to bring my daughter to her house for a visit and possibly put her in my sister's care. Sam had taken her back to Minnesota and then was stopped for something and the Florida embezzlement charge was still outstanding, so he had to be extradited to Florida to go to court.

As it turned out, he had to serve some time, which was a blessing as it gave me relief and my daughter back for the time being. I bought a plane ticket for us and went to get her. She had grown two inches since I last saw her, but she was so happy to see me with all kinds of questions. I brought my baby home.

Short Lived Happiness

My happiness was short lived because Sam somehow convinced Florida that he would take care of paying back the money, so they set him free. He found out where we were staying from the social worker and came out to LA. He called and we talked for a long time and he seemed to be better and willing to work with me in sharing custody of our daughter. Without really considering what I should do, I made the mistake of meeting with him to discuss what he said would be how we would jointly share custody.

Of course, he had lied again, and he threatened me with a fake gun that I thought was real. He had hidden it under the car seat. He wanted me to give him another chance and said that he would not hurt me if we got back together. I agreed only because I didn't trust him and had no idea what he would do if I refused. I had not been away from him long enough to get strong enough to say no to him.

It made me sick trying to think of a way to tell the Captain that I was leaving him to go back to my abuser. When I tried to explain, he didn't like it but said he understood. He asked me to promise that I would call him if he tried to hurt me. I assured him that I would and that I would find a way to get away from him.

One Last Try

Things were OK for a week or so with Sam. After about four weeks, I told Sam I just couldn't keep up the fake life and asked how we could share custody without disrupting our daughter's life too much.

He surprised me and agreed so I suspected he must have a girlfriend that was waiting on him, which turned out to be true. The next day I went to work with a feeling of uncertainty. It must have been because I suspected exactly what he did. I got back from work and the apartment was too quiet. He had taken her again.

I called the Captain and he told me to come over and we would discuss it. There was nothing we could do but call the social worker and tell her what happened and to keep a lookout for her as he most likely would go back to Minnesota. Within a few months, the social worker called me to say she just received divorce papers for me that said he has sole custody without giving me any visitation rights.

Apparently, he had told an attorney that he didn't know where I was, so they notified me by placing a notice in the LA newspaper but since I never read the newspaper, I wasn't informed. The only thing I could do is save money for an attorney so I could fight it. I was sick with grief and sunk into another pit of depression. I went to the doctor and got antidepressants so I wouldn't be thinking about suicide so much and get on with my new life.

Healing Begins

I was on the road to healing as I had started going to therapy again and got to tell the whole story and tell how everything made me feel. How my self-esteem had gone down the toilet and the therapist was helpful in giving me ways to build up my self-worth again even though I wasn't sure I had ever really had good self-esteem.

The therapist helped me see why Sam wanted me but then when I was with him, he didn't act like he loved me. She explained that it wasn't true love but a way to make him feel like he was normal and in control at the same time. I was amazed and sickened at the same time. She explained that getting to know what the signs of an abuser are will help me not to get involved with one again. I was all ears.

Chapter 10: Time to Solo

Ready or Not

Back to the story of how my self-esteem shot up to the sky by learning to fly. After being told that I was ready to solo by the well-respected flight instructor who loved me and wouldn't want anything bad to happen to me, I was now sure that he wasn't kidding about wanting me to take the airplane on my own to do what I had been working toward—to solo!

If he thought I was ready, I trusted him so after writing my note to my daughter, I took a deep breath and whether I was ready or not, I started to roll the airplane toward the pre-flight area by the runway. Somehow, I successfully finished the pre-flight, got back in the airplane, and even though I was shaking from excitement, I was able to remember the takeoff procedure as I went through the motions without a hitch and was in the air within a few minutes.

He Knew I was Ready

Of course, he was right—I was ready! It was the most exhilarating experience of my life—a real dream come true as I had always wanted to fly like a butterfly. But that didn't mean I wasn't nervous. I forgot my nervousness for the short time I was in the sky overlooking the city as everything he had taught me came to me quickly as I flew the short distance around the flight pattern of the small airport.

My blouse was soaked in the back when I landed but all went well and just as in my dream, I got awfully close to the trees but landed safely; however, the brakes didn't fail like in my dream. I was so exhausted after soloing that I don't recall much except that the Captain and his friends came running out to the plane when I taxied to his hanger. They toasted me with a bottle of Champaign and a welcomed shot of whiskey.

For two weeks after that day my self-esteem must have shot up 100 points or something. I bragged about my solo flight to my co-workers, friends, and family. I had not felt this good since graduation day or even better. I flew an airplane by myself! How many people can say that? The Captain certainly benefited from my happiness. He said he had never seen me so elated and exhilarated.

The picture below was taken on that special day of me standing next to the trainer airplane that I did my solo flight in.



Chapter 11: Second Time Around

I finally accepted his proposal a few months after I soloed. He had given me an engagement ring that was made of white gold. I did not realize that I was allergic to some metals and white gold has nickel in it which caused my finger to swell up. I thought we were going to have to cut off my finger, but we finally got it off. I had the diamond put into a gold ring as I could wear pure gold.

We couldn't decide when to get married until our best friends announced they were going to Vegas to tie the knot. The Captain was happy for them, but I could see a mischievous look come over his face and I wondered what he had up his sleeve. About a week before their wedding day he approached me with a big smile and said, "Let's do it with them!" What? I just didn't think we could be ready for a wedding in a week!

He assured me that they were just going to the courthouse so there wasn't anything to plan except the trip. I finally agreed but was not happy without at least having a dress to match his shirt. I couldn't find anything we could afford so I bought the fabric and started to make them. I had been making my own clothes since I was in high school, but I had never made a man's shirt. I found some yellow and satiny fabric with tiny flowers for my dress and then some plain yellow fabric for his shirt. I was sewing every night after work and was able to get them ready just in time to leave on Saturday.

As it turned out we got married at 3:00 o'clock Sunday morning of Mother's Day since the guys insisted on doing some gambling first. The courthouse was open 23 hours a day, so it did not matter what time we went. When we got to the courthouse, we signed papers with the Justice of the Peace. He had us say our vows but then the Captain couldn't find my ring when it was time to put it on my finger as shown in the photo below. He was searching his pockets as I stood by getting perturbed. He had forgotten that he had given it to the best man to hold. But after he got it, all went well, and we were officially Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Dumas Sr.



The Captain handed me the keys to the airplane saying that I had to fly the plane back home because he had a few too many free drinks from the casino. It was daylight by the time we got done celebrating and decided to go home. I had not been drinking more than a few sips of

champagne so I had no problem flying. It was fun but then it started raining which made the plane bounce around a little. I was able to control it and my new husband and instructor complimented me on a “flight well done.”

Through the Good Times and the Bad

Shortly after getting married, our best friends who had gotten married at the same time went on a trip in the Cessna 310 down to Mexico to see her family. Unfortunately, they never came back. The last time we heard from them was when he called us from Brownsville, Texas. He said there was a hurricane off the gulf’s shore, but he figured it would not be a threat as of yet and since they had just a short trip to get to New Orleans to see his mother, they would be fine. A week later the Captain called his friend’s mother to see if they had left for home yet. She said they never showed up.

That’s when the Captain called Search & Rescue to do a search. They never found anything, so we didn’t know what to do. A few days later we got a call from a Sheriff who had spotted some wreckage and went to investigate. They found some body parts and luggage that identified them. Not only did we lose our best friends, we lost the Captain’s precious airplane. It was the first and only time I saw him break down and cry. They had no life insurance and we had to clean out their apartment. It was a very difficult time for us newlyweds, but it made our bond even tighter.

Later that year we decided to drive to the Midwest to go meet each other’s family. We were going to drive my car to give it to his daughter in Chicago since we had acquired another car and did not need three cars. I got to meet the Captain’s mother, sister, his children from his first family and old friends. They were so nice and welcomed me with open arms.



The Captain on the left is next to his sister and on the right of me is his oldest daughter and his mother on the far right.

When we got to his ex-wife’s house, the kids went crazy with excitement. It had been a few years since they had seen their father and they were all over him. I am not sure who is who in this photo so I will not list names.



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

When it was time to meet my family, all the way to Hudson, Wisconsin, he couldn't wait to meet my parents and say, "Guess who's coming to dinner!" It was the title of a popular movie in the late 60s with Sidney Poitier. He expected that they would not want an African American son-in-law even though I told him my family wouldn't feel that way.

When we got there, he announced himself with "Guess who's coming to dinner" and my mom immediately said with a chuckle, "Oh, you're not the first one." He didn't know what to say as she gives him a hug. She busted his bubble and goes on to tell him she has a niece who is married to an African American and they think it is wonderful because God does not see colors like too many humans do.



In back row from left, my sister Dolores, my sister-in-law Marilee, my brother Cassidy, my sister Debbie, my mom Lorraine, my dad Nels. In front on left, brother-in-law Dick, me and as the Captain said about this picture..."I'm the black spot."



This photo of my daughter and I was taken at the same time as the above photo.

A Whole Family

I saved money until I had enough to hire an attorney in Minnesota so I could get joint custody of my daughter. I was surprised when Sam agreed to it but then he had married again and was doing pretty good. I was just glad I would be able to have her come to visit on her vacations. During one of those visits, the Captain was having fun swimming with her because he had found his match as far as swimming went as he was a very fast swimmer but had not seen a child that could swim as fast as she could.

He loved having her there and came running in the house dripping wet and wanted to know when we were going to have a baby. What? He was always full of surprises. We had talked about children before, but I wasn't too sure I wanted to have more since going through so much with my daughter. I couldn't foresee anything like that happening with him, so I told him OK, but that I only wanted one.

In late 1979, I gave birth to a son who weighed 10 pounds and two ounces. I gained over 40 pounds and was borderline diabetic while pregnant. I knew he was going to be a football player by the way he kicked me in the ribs all the time. I named him Walter after my brother who drowned when I was two. He took after my side of the family and was very light skinned when born, but as he got older, he got a bit more color.

When our son Walt was less than a year old and starting to talk, he would get all excited every time we were out driving, and a motorcycle would drive by. He would yell out, "Da, Da." He thought every motorcycle was his dad and grew up loving the sound of a motorcycle.

Somehow, we messed up the birth control after having Walter and 11 months later in November 1980, I gave birth to a second son that we named Eric. It almost felt like I had twins, but it turned out to be for the best as they always had someone to play with.



This photo was taken when Eric was only a few weeks old and I think his big brother Walter was trying to include him in the picture or push him away. I was not sure which, but this photo won an employee contest in the monthly newsletter on my job of the cutest baby photo in 1980.



My daughter was jealous of our babies since they took so much my time, but she soon became their favorite babysitter.

This is my daughter Lorissa when she was 10 and Walter was about 8 months old. She was always close to him and they are still close.



of

Airplanes to Motorcycles

Two years after losing his airplane, the Captain had his eye on a Honda 900 motorcycle and was willing to sell his classic 1968 T-bird to get the down payment. At that time in my life I can't say I was a thrill seeker, but I loved fast moving means of transportation like airplanes and motorcycles, so I didn't try to talk him out of getting a motorcycle.



We had some really fun times going places on the Honda. One of my favorite memories is when we drove up the beautiful Pacific Coast Highway that runs along the Pacific Ocean to visit friends in Oxnard. Everyone thought I was nuts for taking pictures while riding on the back of a motorcycle, but it was easy and seemed to come naturally for me to hold on with my legs as long as we were on smooth surfaces.

Around the summer of 1980 the Captain met a guy from work who started coming by our house a lot. He had grown up in Panama and had a very distinguished accent. His name was Gil Raphael and after hanging with the Captain for a while, he also got a motorcycle. They were almost inseparable then. They would go to the motorcycle clubs and somehow make it home without getting stopped for drinking and driving.



However, the Captain was pushing his luck and caught the attention of a police car because he was speeding. Gil was trying to keep up with him but by the time he caught up he saw that the police had caught up with the Captain in front of our house.

Gil was smart and did not stop as he knew he'd end up in jail with the Captain. Speeding up he whizzed by them and the police asked the Captain, "Was that your friend?" The Captain answered, "No, that was Gilly gone." For years after that, Gil was affectionately called, "Gilly Gone."

Gil's family would come by a lot to swim in our pool and visit. I became good friends with his wife, and it was her who took me to the hospital to have Eric because the guys had been drinking.

This picture is the Captain on the left holding Walter and Gil on the right holding Eric. The boys and my daughter all called him "Uncle Gil" as they had taken to loving him like the Captain and I did.

On the right next to his motorcycle is the Captain holding Eric at about 8 months and me holding Walter when he was about 20 months.

Below is Walter in front with Eric learning to love motorcycles. They both bought one later in life.



When Walter bought a Honda, he knew how to drive it because his dad taught him how while he was growing up.



The joint custody of my daughter went on until she was 13 when she was able to come and live with us because she was able to legally decide where she wanted to live. A few months after she arrived, my stepson Koby was sent to us by his mother who said he needed his father's discipline for a while. The Captain said he'd have Koby straightened out in no time. I was just happy to have four children in the house. Finally, a whole family together as we watched the children grow.



Around 1985, we took a trip to Minnesota to see the family. The boys were introduced to my brother Cassidy's donkeys. While there we took my brother, Cassidy, for his first ride in an airplane. He acted the same way I did on my first small plane ride. He was so thrilled I thought he was going to cry a tear of happiness. Especially when we flew over his place. He couldn't believe how wonderful it was to see everything from high in the sky.

The photo of Cass by the plane was taken before we took off in a rented plane. The Captain had fun when he walked into the airport's office and said he wanted to rent an airplane. They were not sure what to think of this arrogant black man and the man waiting on him stuttered as he asked for the Captain's flying license. He wipes it out and smacks it down on the counter and says, "Here, check this out. I know not too many black folks live in these parts of the country but that's OK, the Dumas is here to show you that we can fly too." It was hilarious but that was the Captain...always messing with people.

The Captain went down as close as he could legally, and Cass was in awe to see the farm he lived at from the air, so I took the photo below for him. When we got back, he couldn't stop talking about how fun it was and how you can see so many lakes and now believes there are more than 10,000 lakes.



Chapter 12: Years Went by Too Fast

Walter and Eric were taught about airplanes and their dad would take them up in the mountains in California for a quick trip to Big Bear Lake. They loved going in the winter so they could play in the snow. Eric loved flying but Walt would get air sick and didn't like it unless he could be co-pilot which his dad would let him do often.



From left, Lorissa (14), the Captain (50), Jessica (35), Walter (5), Eric (4)

I could go on and on about all the fun times we had together, but this is supposed to be a short book. You will need to read the longer version in the book I am writing on my life. He had the motorcycle for over 15 years but had to give it up as he got older. He continued to tell all his friends lots of flying stories and continued flying occasionally by renting airplanes until his mid-60s when he couldn't get his license renewed due to having high blood pressure.

Through the Not So Good Times

Of course, our life together wasn't perfect. We both made mistakes but were able to work through them. We were separated for about a year and a half because I couldn't take how he had changed after he stopped drinking. It was good that he quit but without alcohol he was as grumpy as a grizzly bear who wouldn't go to AA or get any kind of help to learn how to be sober. I was not happy with how he had no patience with the children and how he was ignoring me.

I told him he had been the one to teach me how to stand up for myself so that was what I was doing. He had told me years ago that the only way to know how much someone loves you is to let them go and if they come back you have your answer. He reminded me of that then and I told him we would see. I had no intension of getting a divorce and I hoped he would do the right thing to get me and the boys back.

I'm sure it hurt him because he went back to drinking and said he would never quit again. I felt guilty about that, but he told me he was a big boy who could take care of himself and he was willing to pay the consequences of his actions. We both went through a lot of changes while apart. I had moved 60 miles away and was commuting to my job for a year up to four hours a day when traffic was bad. It took a toll on my health and the time I spent with the boys until I found a job closer to home.

Back Together Again

We ended up getting back together after he retired in 1988. He even used his retirement money to buy us a house in Rialto, California. I was grateful for the house and for having him back as I had missed him badly. I also knew our two boys needed their father as they were getting to be a handful for me.

By that time Lorissa had moved to Las Vegas with her boyfriend and she was about to make me a grandma. She had a little girl that December and then 14 months later had another girl. She eventually had four girls all together after she moved to Wisconsin.

A few years later, the Captain wanted to move back to be closer to friends in the Gardena/Long Beach area so I got a transfer on the job and we moved to North Long Beach in time for the boys to start Middle School. It was a nicely mixed neighborhood of several different races and that was what I wanted for the boys.



I had no idea how rough of an area it was, but I always felt protected with the Captain around. He became the neighborhood watch godfather and we never had any robberies or trouble. The only thing that came close was when I got mugged walking home from the bus stop some years later after my car broke down.

This photo was taken in 1996 in Las Vegas when the Captain's daughter Valerie got married. Eric on the left (15), Walt on the right (16).

I also did not know at the time how dangerous it was for the boys to walk to school when they started at Jordan High School. Walt told that he dressed like a gang banger in order to keep the gangs away from him and Eric. Walt was carrying a knife for protection and then got kicked out of school for it. I then enrolled him in Lakewood High where it was not as bad. I also put Eric in Wilson High after going down to Jordan and raising some stink about the school being so dangerous and I wanted my son transferred to Wilson. The Captain had taught me well.

After the boys graduated and moved out it was just the two of us again. We had to move out of the house we had rented for nine years as it was being sold. We bought a home up the street but only lived there for two years. We had to sell it because I had to quit working due to my health. I had several on-the-job injuries from working on a computer 8-10 hours a day. We rented an apartment at a senior complex a few miles away and that's when the Captain's health started getting worse due to so many years of drinking.

One day he told me he could not get his fork up to his mouth to eat. I took him to the hospital, and they said he had a stroke. He recovered from it somewhat, but we did not realize that his circulation in his feet and legs was not good. I had scheduled a flight to go see my daughter in Wisconsin, so I went and had a friend check on him often. He had an appointment for the doctor to check on a sore he had on his foot so she took him and the doctor told him he need to go to the ER as he had gangrene from the infected toe.

As it turned out, they had to amputate his toes, but it was still spreading so they took his foot. That did not help so they had to amputate his leg above the knee. He was fitted with a prosthetic leg, but he did not use it much. A couple of years later, he had some tests done that revealed he had some sort of blood disease and his liver was going. I asked him if he would like to go see his kids in Chicago and when he said OK, I spent the money I had gotten from my Worker's Comp claim to buy a small travel trailer. We left to go across country in March of 2007.

Our son Walt was living in Phoenix, Arizona since he went to school there at Motorcycle Mechanics Institute. He and his girlfriend had just had their third child together, so we wanted to meet his new son. The Captain was doing pretty well when we got there, but within a couple of weeks, he got pneumonia and ended up in the hospital.

At the age of 73, he was diagnosed with pneumonia and yet another stroke that was causing him to aspirate food into his lungs because of a swallowing weakness caused by the stroke. The doctors said he would continue to get pneumonia unless they put in a stomach tube; however, the Captain did not want anything to prolong his life and so he was transferred to hospice.

While in the hospice some of his children who lived in Las Vegas and California came to see him. He perked up some and the hospice said he was healthy enough to go home or to a group home. I was not sure if I could care for him anymore, so we decided on a group home.

I was so thankful that I had called the children to let them all know. He had a great time visiting with them all. He asked me where his daughter was, and I asked him which one since there were a couple who lived in Chicago and then some stepdaughters.

He scratched his head as he was trying to remember the name and then he said, "The one that likes to swim with me." I thought for a minute and realized he could only mean Lorissa. I told him she lived in Green Bay and it's too far and too expensive to get here but that we could call her. He looked like he was going to cry so I gave him a big hug. I'd cry too if I knew I wouldn't see my kids again.

Even though the Captain had issues with Lorissa when she was a teenager, I think he really loved her and missed her. He remembers her as the one who could swim as fast as he could. The boys went through the same thing with him when they were teens, but they accepted that it was his way.

Walt now had five children, two who lived in the Los Angeles area with their mother and three that lived with him and their mother in Phoenix. I think he was trying to be like his dad but decided five was enough! Both of our sons do a lot of things like the Captain.



I took a lot of pictures that day as they all knew this may be the last time to see him alive. Since there were so many pictures from that visit, I'm inserting just a few special ones.

On the left the Captain is telling stories to granddaughter Zyalah.(5).

On the right the Captain shakes hands with great-grandson DJ (5).

Below the Captain holds his latest grandson Dezmyne (3 mos.).





With 4 of his sons and a grandson.
From left is Eric, Koby, Walter holding Dez, and Ronnie, all with the last name of Dumas.



From left is Niki and son DJ, Eric, Ron, Koby, Val, Ondrea, Walt, Mike

Chapter 13: The Phone Call

As a new day dawns in the Valley of the Sun, the pain in my back makes me realize that I need to roll over to get to the higher part of the memory foam mattress. I crack open my eyes to search for the red numbers on my alarm clock and see a blurry 5:30 a.m. Feeling exhausted I want desperately to go back to sleep even though once I'm awake, I usually can't go back to sleep. I lay back on the pillow next to mine as I try sleeping again. I'm sound asleep within a few minutes when the realistic dream comes to me.

Facing another hot Arizona day with just three hours of sleep would have to be enough rest under the circumstances. I start to whimper as thoughts of my ailing Captain cloud my mind as I hoped he'd be able to talk to me today. But first I need to treat myself to my usual morning dosage of pain medicine with a swig of warm water kept right next to our bed. It was only May but already hot enough to turn on the air conditioning as I face another day living with the fear of losing him.

I prayed that he would make it four more days for our 29th anniversary. We had been living in a travel trailer for the past year so that we could afford to spend time with family in different cities and states. I knew his time was limited and even though we didn't talk about it much, he knew and was happy being able to do something to keep his mind occupied.

My mind flies through memories of the past 32 years like a movie that is on fast forward. He used to tell me that if he died tomorrow he would have no regrets because he lived a very full life. I met him when I was 27 and he was 42. He told me then that he could see my potential and I would ask what potential he was talking about but all he would say is, "You'll see."

Before I even told him that I had always wanted to learn to fly, he asked me when I wanted to start flight lessons. Sure thing...he taught me how to fly and when he asked me to marry him, how could I say no to a man with an airplane who was going to make my dreams come true. My Captain and I spent the rest of his life following our dreams.

But then I remembered it would all come to an end soon. As of yesterday, it had been a month since he had been admitted to a hospital in Phoenix, Arizona. At the age of 73, he was diagnosed with pneumonia and yet another stroke that was causing him to aspirate food into his lungs because of a swallowing weakness caused by the stroke. The doctors said he would continue to get pneumonia unless they put in a stomach tube; however, he did not want anything to prolong his life and so he was transferred to hospice.

I prayed again to ask God that if he's going to die, let him go peacefully without suffering. It's OK that I've suffered this past month from an emotional rollercoaster because my love for him carries me through but I can feel and see the effect it's had by the dark circles under my eyes and the increased all-over pain as my constant companions of fibromyalgia and arthritis kick-start my day. However, I almost welcome the physical pain to distract me from the emotional pain that makes my heart ache with the fear of living without him.

Wishing he were here with me instead of there in a strange bed, I fall back down on the bed and hug his pillow that still has the slightest smell of him lingering from his night sweats before going to the hospital. I can't bring myself to wash the linens on our bed until I know he's coming home. As I dose off, I imagine us in bed holding hands as we've done over the years, especially since he's been sick. I swear I can feel his touch as I drift off into dreamland and then I had the profound dream.

It was the most powerful and unforgettable dream! I jumped out of bed to write it down so I wouldn't forget any bit of it. I was wide awake then and stretched with a smile on my face

thinking of the wonderful early days we had together, not aware that the dream would have a special meaning to me later.

It was about 7:00 a.m. and I had a lot to do that day. My priority was to figure out what was the best way to proceed with his care. I called the social worker and I left her a message and then I thought maybe I should do what she had suggested earlier—make the appointment with the Biological Resource Center to discuss signing papers for his body donation and cremation so that his wishes would be carried out for when that time came. They kindly took my call saying someone would come at 10:00 to meet with me at the group home where he was staying just a few miles away.

After two cups of coffee, I still don't feel like facing this day, but it was time to make my daily call to the group home to check on how he was doing since I wasn't able to go there every day. I was just about to call Gloria (his group home caregiver) when the phone rang, and it was her. She blurted out, "Jessica, I'm so sorry to tell you this but he passed in the night." I gasped and dropped the phone.

Shock waves tore through my body and I understood why some people faint at bad news. Time seemed to stand still even though I'm sure a few minutes went by as I kept hearing someone saying over and over, "Hello, Hello." I finally realized the phone was on the floor, so I picked it up and cried, "No, not yet. I wanted to be with him when he died."

She consoled me for a minute and then I had to hang up as the shockwaves were hitting me like jolts of electrical charges of pain. I let out the most painful guttural uncontrollable scream. Then after rocking back and forth sobbing not knowing what to do next, I took a deep breath and said to myself, "OK, I knew this was coming. I can do it with God's strength."

Time to Pray

I squeezed my eyes tight to whisper a short prayer, "Dear Father, please hear me now and give me strength. I was hoping to have just a little longer with him but I'm so thankful that he didn't suffer." I said a few more words and as I said, "Amen," the phone rang again—it was Gloria again. I almost didn't answer it because I figured she was calling to tell me how much I owed her for the time he was under her care since she knew I had just found out that the insurance would not cover until an agent came out to evaluate his condition.

Chapter 14: Another Prayer Answered

I was upset that she was calling again so I answered with a sharp “Hello.” It was Gloria saying how sorry she was over and over, so I thought she was giving me her condolences, but she kept saying it. After a moment of confusion, I asked, “What is it?” She excitedly said, “He’s alive! He’s breathing again!” She was talking so fast I wasn’t sure I heard her right and said, “What?” She said again, “He’s alive!” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing! I dropped the phone again!!

Was I Dreaming Again?

Feeling like I was in a dream, I picked up my cell phone and I could hear Gloria going on and on about how she couldn’t believe it and how sorry she was for calling earlier. She explained, “I swear he was dead but I went to clean up a little and as I was pulling his sheet up, I saw his chest move so I started to shake him and his eyes popped open for a second and he’s still breathing. I’m so sorry I called you before!” I told her it was OK, and I would be right over. I hung up and said a silent prayer, “Thank you, Lord!”

It only took a minute to throw on some clothes and I dashed out the door so quickly that I ripped the blouse I had on but kept going not caring as nothing was going to stop me from getting to him as fast as I could. I know the angels must have been watching over me as I rushed to him trying not to have an accident in what seemed to be a long three miles to the group home. I couldn’t shake the dreamlike feeling again—it was so surreal.

When I got there, Gloria opened the door and was trying to explain what had happened again, but I rushed by her and went to his side, cradling his head and crying as I told him, “I’m here now baby, it’s OK, I’m here.” He looked so tired and frail, but even more non-responsive as before plus he was breathing very fast as if he was hyperventilating along with a profuse cold clammy sweat pouring off his head. I could tell he was in pain and called out for Gloria to come to his room.

Time to Call the Nurse

I asked Gloria to call his nurse and she said she already did so then I became frantic wanting to do something to help when I saw the oxygen tank sitting across the room where we had put it since he continually refused to leave the oxygen tube in his nose. Even though I had never worked the machine before, I hooked it up and placed the tube gently under his nose.

He was too weak to fight it now but I’m not sure that it was of any help as he continued to breathe fast as if he couldn’t get a breath. Then I wiped his head with a wet cloth as I assured him that I wouldn’t leave and that the nurse would be here soon to help. My mind was in a whirlwind wondering if I should have him taken back to the hospice and how the heck was I going to make it through this if it was, in fact, the end of our time together.

The nurse, Pamela, arrives and checks his breathing, which has tripled the normal rate. His blood pressure was very high, and his pulse was high too at about 130, so she told me she could help him relax by giving him a small dose of morphine and assures me she will stay all day to make sure he’s comfortable. She then asked, “Do you realize what’s happening with him?” I nodded my head saying I thought so and asked, “How long do you think it will take?” She said, “It’s hard to tell but probably sometime today. Do you have family close by?” I said I had a son that lived here in Phoenix and she said, “Call him—you will need him now.”

I agreed and called Walt and he said he’d be there as soon as possible. He and his girlfriend Ondrea arrived about 9:30. We hugged and gathered around the bed letting him know that we were all here. Even though he couldn’t respond, I could see him relax a little more.

Chapter 15: Time to Say Goodbye

A little later after another nurse arrived, both nurses examined him. His hands were getting colder and Pam said his leg was cold and she couldn't get a pulse on his foot. I held back my tears and knew it was time to call his children that lived out-of-state. First, I called our youngest son, Eric, to tell him that it's time to say goodbye so I put my phone up to the Captain's ear so Eric could speak to him.

When Eric was done telling his father how much he loved him, I know he felt bad because he wasn't there and asked what he could do for me. I told him just to keep on being himself using the talents his father gave him. He said he'd call his brother Koby to let him know. Then I called his oldest daughter, Valarie, and after she spoke to him, she told me she'd call her other brothers and sisters.

I was in a daze wondering who else I should call and remembered to call his best friend who lived in Texas then. I could not think of anyone else and realized that even though I had made a list of people to call, I had left it at home. It hit me that even though I had been grieving for him for the past three years ever since the stroke caused him to lose his leg, I was nowhere near prepared for watching him die.

Comfort in the Psalms

The details of the next few hours are somewhat of a blur as to the order that they happened but I remember how good it felt to sit by his side and read parts of the Psalms to him that he liked such as Psalms 23, 40 and 41 as well as David's repentant prayer in Psalms 38. As I read, he relaxed, and I know he could hear me as he had a very slight smile on his face. Even the nurse listened. She thanked me saying that she loved hearing me read from the Bible.

An elder from my congregation came to spend some time consoling us. He read one of my favorite scriptures in Revelations 21:3-4 that the Captain and I shared many times together as we looked forward to when God would fulfill his promise that there would be no more tears, sorrow and most of all, no more death. I placed my hand softly on the Captain's forehead as the elder said a strengthening prayer to our Heavenly Father.

After we said "Amen," I felt the Captain's head move as if he was trying to lift his head and he was trying to say something. I bent my head down close to his mouth to try to understand what he was saying. I heard his weak voice say "Amen" and "Thanks" for the prayer. It was a special moment, and I was grateful that he heard the prayer.

When the elder had to leave, I managed to play the perfect hostess and walked him to the door. A few moments later Gloria told me a man had arrived to do the medical evaluation from the insurance company. I didn't want to go but knew it was something that needed to be done so that his bill at the group home would get paid.

His Last Breath

It was now 2:45 p.m. and just as the insurance man said, "Well, I can assure you that he's approved for coverage," Ondrea came running down the hall waving me to come back so I jumped up leaving the insurance man to find his way out. I ran down the hall knowing he must be breathing his last breath and afraid I would not be able to say goodbye.

When I walked into his room, I saw Walt was bent over his dad crying. I knew in my heart that it was over, so we hugged as our tears joined in overwhelming sadness. For a moment I felt hurt that I wasn't there at the end but then I realized who better for him to pass the Dumas torch to than our first-born son.

Another Prayer Answered

I'm sure all his family and friends would want to know that at last, he had a look of complete peace on his face and that God had answered my prayer to not let him suffer. I was also so thankful for God answering my prayer to let me have a little more time with him. As we spent some time comforting each other, Pamela came in to offer her condolences. She added some humor about how stubborn he was and how she called him "You ole goat," which fit him perfectly and made us smile.

I thanked her for being honest with us in what was happening to him as well as being lovingly gentle in her care for him. I'll never forget her for the very precious thing she did earlier when she handed me a tissue saying, "Keep this forever—it has his tears." She had wiped some tears from the corner of his eye and saved it for me. She also removed his t-shirt to give me, which I kept for years and then passed on to Walt to keep with some of his ashes and mementoes.

Aftershock

The rest of that day was a blur, but I wanted to get my memories down in writing while they were still fresh in mind even though not so clear as I was still in that first stage of grief—the overwhelming fog of shock. Losing a close loved one is the hardest thing that we humans face. After all, God created us to live forever so dying is very unnatural. I thought there could be nothing worse than losing my parents until I felt the pain of losing a husband that I truly loved for over 30 years.

For days after he died, I was in a fog of overwhelming perplexity not knowing what to do next and not being able to decide on anything or even to sleep in the bed we had shared. My heart felt like a knife was stuck in it, but my mind slowly started to make it perfectly clear that the busier I was the easier it was to deal with. I began to write and plan my eulogy and other things for his memorial services. I would be typing late into the night and fall asleep at my laptop.

For days I would get ready for bed as late as possible. Then I'd sit on the edge of the bed but just couldn't make myself lay down because I knew I would start crying. It wouldn't be for just a few minutes of tears but hours of a painful mourner's lament of wailing and weeping until I'd have a headache and stomachache. I would stay away from the bed as long as possible. I had to find some way to be able to sleep so I started calling people I knew and chat for hours.



One night I called Gil, the Captain's best friend who lived in Texas. The Captain and I had been friends with him since 1980. He would hang out at our house almost every day before he moved to Texas to be near family. He had a motorcycle and the three of us would go riding. Even though he was not related, our kids grew up knowing him as 'Uncle' Gil. The three of us would spend many hours hanging out together. We were known among our friends as the 'Oreo cookie.'

I liked him because he was a true friend, not just someone who came around to drink up the Captain's beer or whiskey. Gil was the kind of friend I needed at the time and I got in the habit of calling him almost every night. I liked the way he listened and always had something positive to say that was encouraging. Before long I was able to sleep in the empty bed.

We would talk about all the good times the three of us had. We remembered how often the Captain said that he had lived a full life with no regrets like in his favorite song by Frank




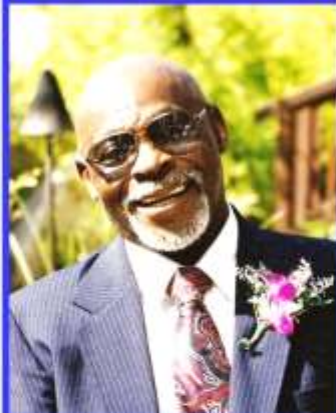

Sinatra, "I Did it My Way." He would sing the song whenever he had a few too many drinks. He never expected that he would live past the age of 60 and would say that any time after that was a bonus. He was fortunate enough to enjoy a bonus of 13 years.

The Memorial Service

Since the Captain's wishes were to have his body donated and then be cremated, I had to wait until that was over to have the memorial services, so I planned it for a little over a month after his death. There were so many details to prepare, as this would not be a small service. The thing that took most of my time was going through photos and videos to select those I wanted included in the video presentation that Koby was putting together and for the program that Eric was designing.

I also recorded myself giving my eulogy that would be in the video so I wouldn't have to get up and speak. Our son Eric worked at Cal State Fullerton at the time and he was able to rent the theater on campus for the services. I had sent out invitations and put up flyers at the small airports in the area to let anyone who knew the Captain to know they were invited.

**Memorial Services
for**



Known as the "Flying Bus Driver" He was the "Safest Flight Instructor in LA County"

Robert Dumas

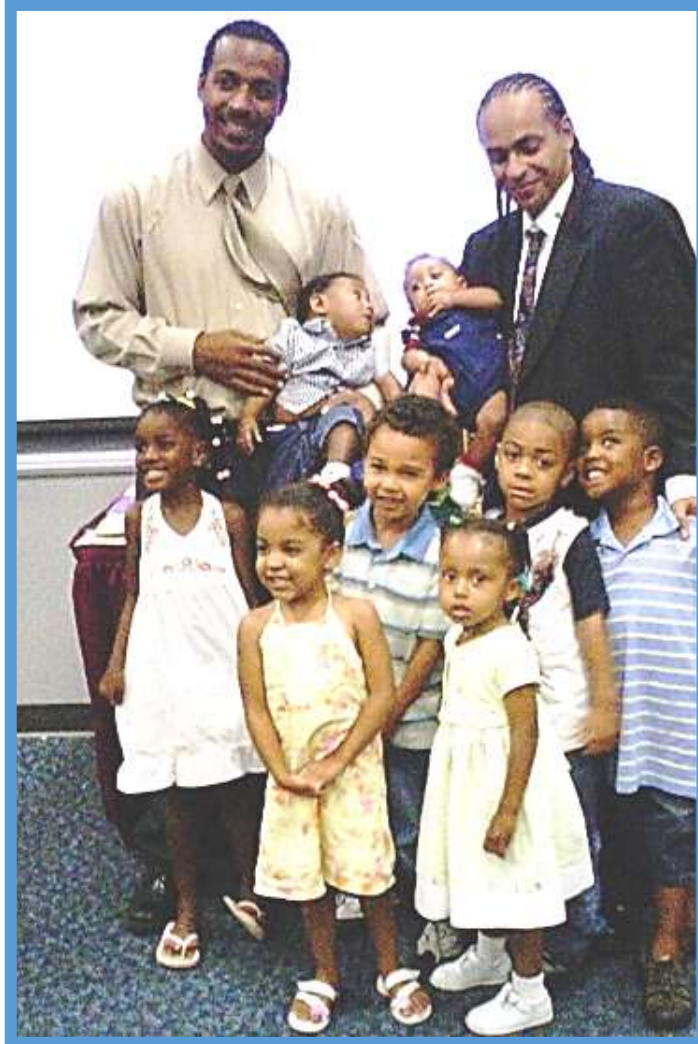
Saturday, June 23rd at 2:00 p.m.

Everyone who knew the "Captain" is welcome to join in celebrating his life with pictures, video & mementos.

Cal State University-Fullerton
Titan Theater in the Titan Student Union Bldg. (TSU)
800 N. State College Blvd.
Fullerton, CA 92831

(North off 91 Fwy & West off 57 at Yorba Linda or Nutwood Ave—see map)
Repast at Sky Café - 961 W. Alondra Blvd., Compton, CA at 4:00 p.m.

My son Walt drove his family and I to California for the services and we were all anticipating how the video would turn out that Koby was preparing. When we got at the theater, I set up the display of items alongside the chest that held the Captain's ashes. There was a good turnout but not as many as I anticipated.



From left to right in the back: Eric is holding his baby son Eric Jr (or EJ, 9 mos) and Walt is holding his baby son Dezmyne (Dez, 4 mos), in front of Eric are two little girls who are Walt's named Anyah (5) and Zyalah (4). To the right of Zyalah is Eric's stepson Justin (4). The little girl in front of Walter is Eric's daughter Alexandyra (3). On the right of her standing in front of Walt is his son Walter (4). On the right of him is DJ (3), the son of Nicole who is daughter of Valerie, the Captain's first-born. Photos of these as of 2019 are shown on the next page.

13 Years Later

Below left to right, EJ (14), Anyah (18), Dez (13), Zyalah (17), Alexandyra (13), Walter (17), DJ (18).



There were only two children that were not there. Jazmyne, Walt's oldest who was 9 at the time shown below with her Grandma Jessica. As of 2020 she is 22. And Isis, Eric's oldest who was 7 then and is now 20 shown below on the right.

Jazmyne at 9 and at 22



Isis at 7 and 20



For the second part of the services or repast, I planned for certain family members to bring food to the upper deck of the Sky Cafe restaurant at Compton Airport. This was the airport that the Captain was well known at, so it was appropriate for everyone to gather there. We could watch the airplanes take off and land as we told flying stories about the Captain. It was sentimental for me as this is where the Captain had taught me how to fly.



On the left are three of the Captain's sons at the repast, Walt, Koby, and Eric. Walt and Koby are now in business together. To find out about it you need to follow them on Instagram. Eric has been working at Beachbody.com for several years as a manager and web developer. They are all doing great being the best Dumas possible following what their father taught them. Lorissa is also doing great and has become a talented photographer and an efficient caregiver. I am so proud of them and all their children as well as the children's children.

As of the last count in 2020, the Captain has 13 children (including steps), 40 grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren, and at least one great-great-grandchild (see the Dumas Family Tree in the Appendix). My daughter Lorissa, her daughters, and her grandchildren (my great-grandchildren) are also shown on that family tree and photos are on the next page. If anyone wants to add or change anything on this tree, please contact me at www.jessicajdumas.com.

From left is Lorissa (50), Candice now 27, her daughter Amirra (8) and Caitlyn now 25 and her two children Jayce (6) and Keely (4)



Chapter 16: The Meaning of My Dream

A few days after he died, I began to type up his eulogy (in Appendix A) for the memorial services. While I was writing about how he taught me to fly, I had a ‘lightbulb moment.’ Suddenly it hit me as to why I had the dream that was like my first solo flight the morning of his death on May 10, 2007. It was as if the Captain was telling me he knew that as much as I didn’t want him to leave me, I was ready to go solo in life without him because he had taught me all he knew to help me be strong. I couldn’t help but begin to cry.

The dream was almost exactly like what happened when I did my first solo flight in 1977. The Captain had told me, “You can do it. I know you can do it!” Just like then, he knew I could cope with this one last lesson, as hard as it was to accept. This lesson was like how to recover from a manual stall, which is somewhat of a shock when the engine gets turned off on purpose and the plane then falls nose first into a spin as he had put me through in training.

Whenever he would put the plane into a spin, it didn’t scare me because I had full trust in his ability to bring the plane level again. He would do it over and over until I was confident enough to do what I had to do to get the airplane out of the spin. He was a unique and wonderful instructor.

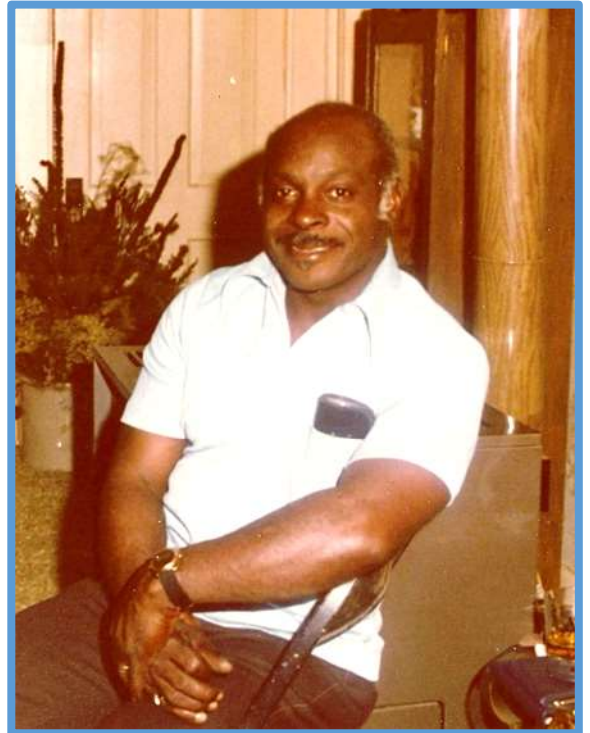
He definitely lived up to what his peers and students used to call him as “the best flight instructor in L.A. County!” The Captain was a well-known flight instructor and was considered an unconventional instructor because he taught how to recover from a spin that can kill you, which was not required to be taught at the time and what most likely killed John F. Kennedy, Jr.

He knew I would be able to pull myself up out of that stall or the shock of his death and keep on flying solo through life without him. In other words, he knew my strength and ability to survive. I now finally understood what he meant when he said that I had potential. He wouldn’t explain what kind of potential.

He would not tell me what he meant because I think he did not want me to know he meant that he knew he would die early in life because most alcoholics don’t live past 60. He could see that I had the potential to deal with an alcoholic and take care of him in the end.

I believe that God had a part in bringing that dream to me as He knew just what I needed at the time to help me make it through that terribly sad day along with those long months of horrible grief.

I can still hear the Captain’s voice in my ear at times saying, “Good job” or “You can do it.” Not only was he my husband—he was my friend, my mentor, my coach, my pilot, my Captain, my soul mate, and my true love.



Appendix A on the next page contains some of the eulogy that I gave at his memorial service. It tells a lot about him that was not covered in my story.

Appendix A: Eulogy for Captain Dumas

First of all, many thanks go out to my sons, Eric and Walter for all their help in preparing these services. Also, thanks to son Koby for his hard work on this video presentation and making it possible for me to pre-record my eulogy to be played on his video in honor of the man we knew as “the Captain.”

Last Will & Testament for Robert Henry Dumas Sr.

The opening sentence of his will is and I quote, “I direct that upon my death, there will be no funeral held except for a simple memorial service and that I be cremated before such services, after which my ashes be spread over the Pacific Ocean.”

Even though it may seem unusual, we will be carrying out his wishes except for the part that said “simple” memorial service. How can you have a simple service for a man that was by no means, simple? Especially since he fathered such talented children, many who have made these arrangements.

Jack of all Trades

I admired many things about him but one of the greatest was how he wouldn't let anything get in his way if he wanted to do it. I'm sure that's how he was able to do so much in his lifetime. He was a “jack of all trades” type of guy and here's a list of his professions, as well as hobbies, interests, and favorites:

PROFESSIONS:

1. Airborne Trooper for the Air Force during Korean War & a Sergeant in the Army
2. Steel & Metal Specialist (at steel mills of Chicago and wire plant in Los Angeles)
3. Pilot with private, multi-engine and commercial licenses
4. Flight Instructor at Compton Airport (awarded safety awards) known as the ‘safest flight instructor in LA County’
5. Bus Operator for MTA (awarded safe driving awards)
6. Certified Locksmith and owner of Dumas Mobile Lock & Key Service
7. Computer technician and owner of Dumas Computer Repair Service
8. Security Officer (with permit to carry firearm)

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:

1. Aviation enthusiast—owner of a Cessna 310 twin engine airplane and member of the 47 Flying Club of Compton Aviation
2. Motorcycle enthusiast—owner of a 1980 Honda 900 and member of the Great Kings of Africa motorcycle club
3. RV enthusiast—owner of a 1980 Komfort 32-foot fifth-wheel trailer
4. Mechanic—worked on his airplane, motorcycle, van, cars, and pick-up truck
5. Electrician—he took classes in electronics and worked on vehicles
6. Welder—worked on building a helicopter and several other projects
7. Gardener—had a vegetable garden of tomatoes, peppers, collard greens, etc.
8. Carpenter—constructed several small projects for his workshop or home
9. Fisherman—loved salt & freshwater fishing by boat and on shore
10. Cook—well known for his soul food, BBQ, sweet potato pie, and peach cobbler
11. PC user—started out with a Commodore in the mid-80s and then upgraded

12. Photographer—carried a 35mm or video camera almost everywhere he went
13. Traveler—besides going to Japan, Korea and other places in the military, he took a trip to Ghana in Africa by cargo ship and lived there for six months. He flew by himself in his twin-engine airplane as far as from Compton, California to Chicago, Illinois. We flew to Big Bear Mountain, Catalina Island, and Las Vegas several times. Plus, he made several ground trips with family or friends either by car, van or pickup pulling our fifth-wheel trailer to places such as Mexico, Chicago, Indiana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Las Vegas, Nevada, Phoenix, Arizona, and many places in between.

HIS FAVORITES:

1. Music—R & B and Country (he declared “Look at Us” by Vince Gil, as our song)
2. Singers—Temptations, Commodores, BB King, Kenny Rogers, Vince Gil, Sinatra
3. Song—*I Did it My Way* by Frank Sinatra
4. Sports—Basketball & Football
5. Teams—LA Lakers and Green Bay Packers
6. Games—Chess, dominos and pool
7. Video games—Chess and Flight Simulators
8. Books-fiction—Anything by Steven King or Dean Koontz
9. Books-nonfiction—The Bible and educational books on computers or flying
10. Magazines—Flying, Reader’s Digest, TV Guide
11. Exercise—Swimming & stationary bike
12. TV show—Star Trek (all versions), Seinfeld, Sanford & Son, and Law & Order
13. Movie Star—Samuel Lee Jackson, James Garner, Steven Segal, Sandra Bullock
14. Movie—Top Gun and anything with airplanes
(He also loved the last movie we watched together – the Notebook)
15. Meal—BBQ ribs, baked beans, collard greens, corn-on-the-cob & potato salad
16. Alcoholic Drink—Seagram’s VO whiskey and Budweiser beer
17. Pastime—Reading, hanging with the family or with the fellas
18. Activity with family—Flying, traveling by motorcycle, car, van, or pickup pulling a travel trailer
19. Best friend—Gil Raphael (from 1980 to the day he died) and wife Jessica

I didn’t know him during his first two professions or the first 42 years of his life so there may be some things I left out, but the point is that he was very active. He was known by many as the best flight instructor in LA County because of his safe record and the unorthodox way of teaching all his students how to pull out of a forced stall (putting the nose up so high that the engine quits and the plane falls into a spin).



Teaching this was not required by the FAA, but he felt it was what killed a lot of pilots (including JFK, Jr) because they didn’t know what to do if the plane went into a stall and

started going straight down. He wanted his students to know how to recover properly and come out of it alive.

His knowledge of aviation was astounding. He knew planes so well, he could name the brand of an airplane flying overhead, just by the sound of its engine. In 1973, he had a newspaper article written about him being the “Flying Bus Driver.” There were very few pilots and bus drivers in the Long Beach/South LA area who didn’t know Dumas during the 70s & 80s.

Yes, Captain Dumas was a free-spirited, very unique person that many knew as being arrogant, proud, loudly outspoken, to-the-point, and downright tactless at times. He would “tell it like it is” and didn’t care if it hurt your feelings. What I admired about those attributes was that he didn’t take any guff from anyone and stood up for what he believed. He would say whatever was on his mind.

We were from different worlds and complete opposites. Besides the obvious difference in race, he grew up in the roughest part of Chicago and was street-smart. I was a country girl as green as the hills of Minnesota where I grew up. He was loud, but I was quiet. He was hyper, but I was mellow. He loved to argue, but I avoided conflict. He would spend his last dollar on a beer, but I was a tightwad. He loved R & B music, but I loved Country.

I could go on and on about our differences, so I guess it’s true what they say about opposites attracting. However, we had a few things in common—the biggest being our love for flying. The first couple of years together we spent almost every weekend at Compton airport. Either he’d be teaching me or someone else to fly or be working on the helicopter he was building, doing maintenance on his airplane, or just hanging out with his airport buddies.

In 1980, he decided to buy one of the fastest Honda motorcycles they made. I never worried about him flying, but I began to worry about his safety on that bike. It amazed me that he didn’t kill himself or both of us but somehow, he kept upright with both wheels on the ground most of the time. His best friend Gil well remembers the close calls they had. The three of us had some great times hanging with the motorcycle set and going on road trips. This photo was taken of us in 1999, wearing the African caps I made for us.



In retrospect, I believe he was showing signs of dementia caused by mini strokes for several years that were never diagnosed because he wouldn’t go to a doctor. When I finally convinced him to see a doctor in 2002, he was put on high blood pressure medicine and told to quit drinking and smoking, which he tried to do several times.

The high blood pressure required him to give up his instructor’s permit which he hated. In 2004, he had a bigger more evident stroke that caused him to lose his leg due to vascular collapse. The last three years of his life were difficult for us both. He was not the same but had become a sweet, mellow, and quiet guy that would listen to me read to him until he fell asleep. As hard as those years were, I savored them and will forever hold them dear.

In conclusion, Captain Dumas always said that he had no regrets in life because he lived it to the fullest just as his favorite song says by Frank Sinatra, “I Did it My Way.” So as a tribute to him, we will play his song as you proceed up to say your farewells. Everyone is invited to come out to Compton airport for the repast so we can spend time watching airplanes take off and land as we remember our days with the Captain. .

Appendix B: Over 10 Years Later

The Captain often spoke of life being like flying on a cross-country course with most of it being an easy joyful ride while there would always be some turbulent bumps along the way that would shake you up and make you think about how precious the gift of life is. He would say you needed to make the best of it every day because you could get run over by a bus tomorrow.

Sometimes I find myself smiling as I recall some of his words of wisdom as well as his outrageous sense of humor. It took me months after his death to get over expecting to see him when I came home because of a saying he used to have that he called, "I'm in the B class." It and many other sayings he had are included in the Appendix on Dumas Quotes to Remember. He had a lot of funny sayings that his family and friends will always hold dear.

If it had not been for family and friends, I'm not sure how I would have gotten through it. I wish to thank my family for being so very helpful and thoughtful. A special thanks to my sister, Dolores, my brother, Jonathan, and my daughter, Lorissa, for opening their homes for me to stay during the months I had no income. I had retired early due to my health problems and I had filed for disability but was not approved yet. I wasn't able to collect his Social Security survivor's benefits until I was 60 years old which was almost a year after he died.

I also wish to thank our dear friend, Gil Raphael (in photo), who opened his home and his heart to me after we both lost our best friend. I don't know what I would have done without Gil's generosity, friendship, and compassion during the saddest time in my life.

He had a way of making me laugh until my stomach hurt and he still does. We still can spend hours talking about the fun and crazy times we had with the Captain. I believe the Captain would be pleased to know that Gil and I have remained friends after all these years.

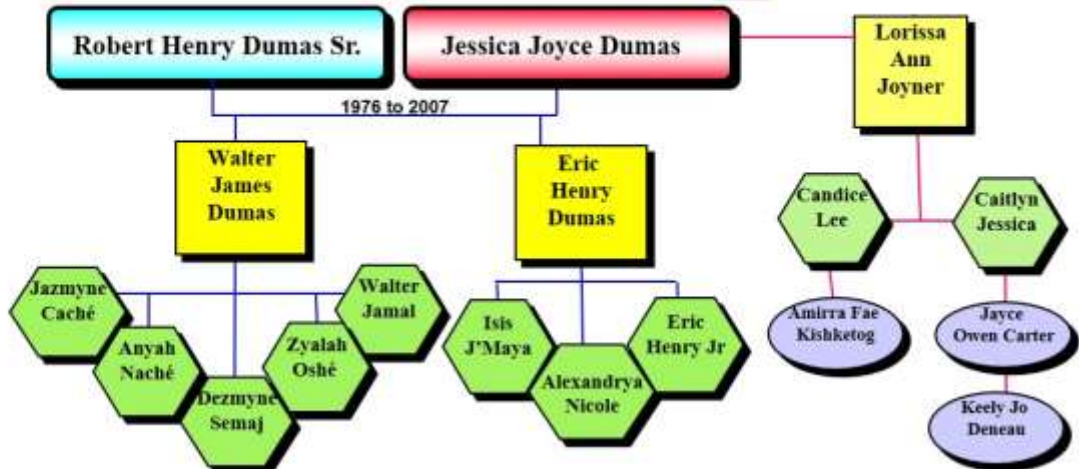
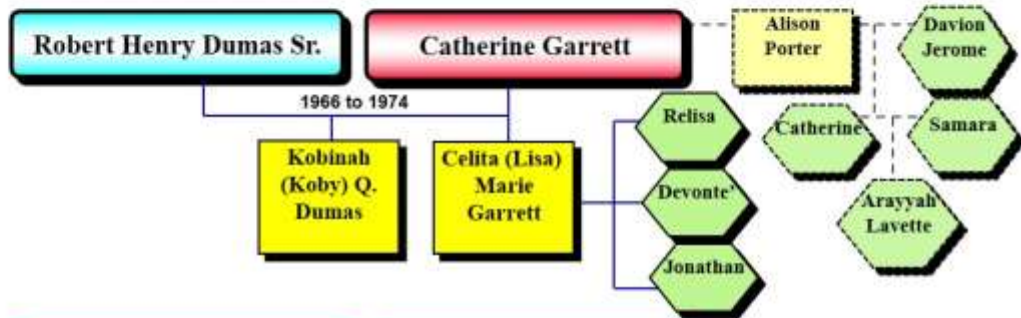
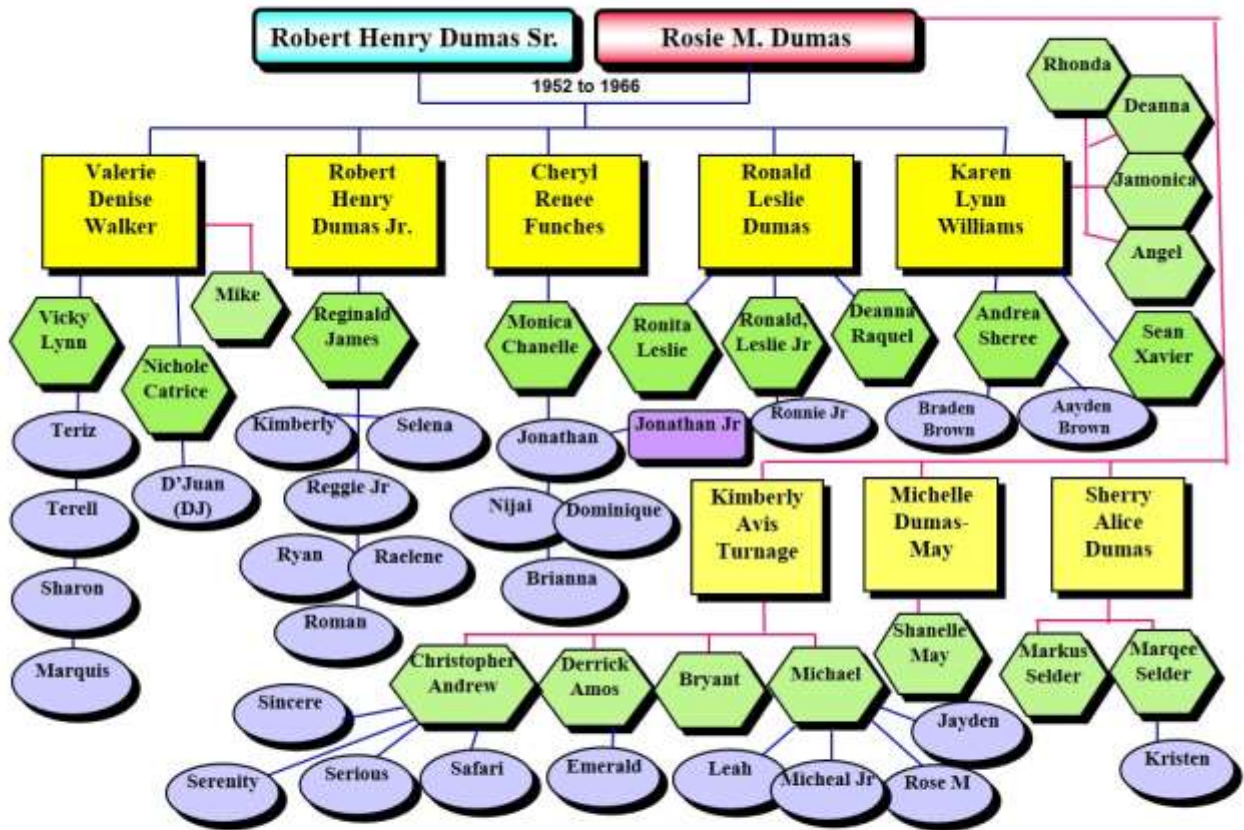


The Captain often told me that my dreams would come true if I just believed in myself and trusted in God. He was right! Just like he was right that I would be fine as I solo through the rest of my life without him. He taught me much more than how to fly. I learned how to stand up for and not back down on what I believe in, to always tell the truth, even if it meant hurting someone's feelings, and to always give credit where credit is due—to our Heavenly Father.

The next Appendices are items I prepared and put on display at the memorial service such as the Dumas family tree (with birthdays removed for security reasons), a poem I wrote, the newspaper articles written about him, and a list of several quotations of his sayings.

Appendix C: Dumas Family Tree

ROBERT HENRY DUMAS SR. FAMILY TREE



Legend:

- Children 13
- Grandchildren 40
- Great Grandchildren 32
- Great-great Grandchildren 1

Biological — Blue line
 Step — Red line
 Extended — Dashed line

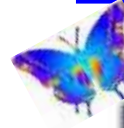
Designed by Jessica J. Dumas
 Updated 9/20/20

Appendix D: Flying Solo Poem



In memory of Robert
Dumas

Have you ever wondered?
Are we as God's creatures alone, flying solo?
Like the majestic eagle soaring above mountain height
Or the song birds like the gentle and tiny sparrow
And like the butterfly fluttering alone in sky so bright.
Somehow the polar bear survives alone in the snow
As does the lone wolf howling at the moon in the night
And in the beam of your headlights, the dashing doe.
It is clear that God makes sure most creatures are all right.



But what about the lonely pilot on missions to and fro?
Reflecting brings back memories of my first solo flight
And of the days with my pilot that made our love grow
Now every plane reminds me of his smile so out of sight
As the 30 years of memories bring tears that overflow
For the pilot who gave me his heart as well as insight
To use our gift of life to the fullest, and in faith know
That God answers prayers & gives comfort from plight.
The answer is NO—we are not alone,
even when flying solo.



And
with the
legacy
he left
behind,
I will
never be
alone!

~Luke 12:6-7

Poem by Jessica Dumas (May 20, 2007)

Dedicated to my pilot & husband, Robert Henry Dumas Sr.

(June 6, 1933—May 10, 2007)

Appendix E: The Captain's Engine Quits (1964)

Newspaper clipping from *Wisconsin State Journal*, Thursday, October 29, 1964

(The clipping is hard to read after all these years)

2 Big Brothers Help Crippled Plane to Land

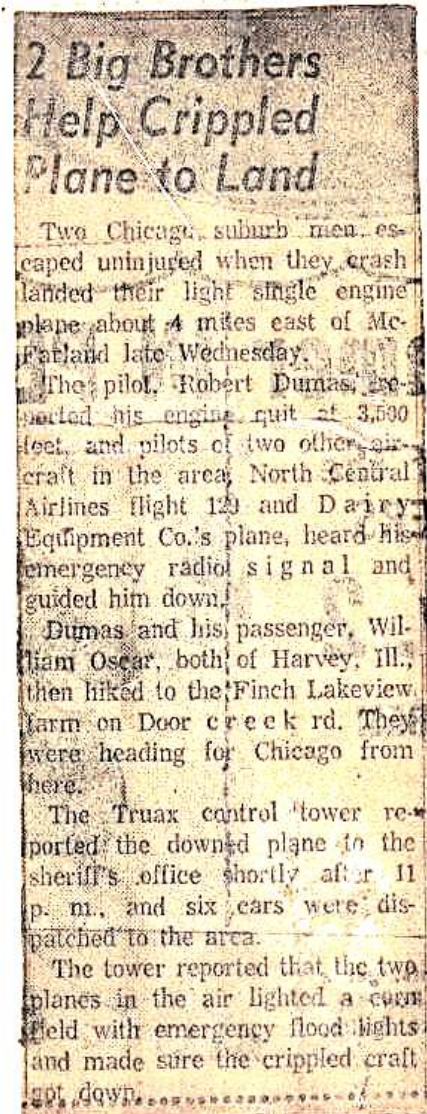
Two Chicago suburb men escaped uninjured when they crash landed their light single engine plane about four miles east of McFarland late Wednesday.

The pilot, **Robert Dumas**, reported that his engine quit at 3,500 feet, and pilots of two other aircraft in the area, North Central Airlines flight 129 and Dairy Equipment Co.'s plane, heard his emergency radio signal and guided him down.

Dumas and his passenger, William Oscar, both of Harvey, Ill., then hiked to the Finch Lakeview farm on Door Creek Rd. They were heading for Chicago from here.

The Truax control tower reported the downed plane to the sheriff's office shortly after 11 p.m., and six cars were dispatched to the area.

The tower reported that the two planes in the air lighted a corn field with emergency flood lights and made sure the crippled craft got down.



Appendix F: The Flying Bus Driver Article (1973)

Published in *The Los Angeles Sentinel*

Thursday, May 10, 1973

[Exactly 34 years prior to the day of his death]

“Get on the Good Foot and Fly”

SAYS FLYING BUS DRIVER

By Barry P. Grier

If an RTD bus pulls over at a bus stop, the door opens, and the bus driver says, “Get on the good foot” you’re probably in good hands. This same bus driver also divides his time as a freelance flight instructor at the Compton airport.



Robert Dumas, who received his operator’s license in 1946, has flown everything from C131’s to small Cessna jobs. “I do what I want to do. Whatever I’m tuned in to. Whatever,” explains Dumas, who said that his first longing for flying captured him as a child. “Since then,” he commented, “I’ve always wanted to fly.”

CREDENTIALS SHOWN

The other afternoon while Dumas was in a local tavern, a few bar patrons disbelieved his credentials as a flying instructor. Of course, you’ll meet persons in a bar that swear they’re ancestors to Cleopatra or once swam the English Channel.

Hearing a man discuss his abilities as an aircraft pilot prompted many unbelievers to doubt Dumas’ credentials. “I don’t have to prove anything to anyone,” Dumas exclaimed, “I just enjoy myself and enjoy what I’m doing.”

HAD DOUBTS

After a few gin and tonics, this writer said that he would take a ride with the “flying bus driver.” (Actually, I had my doubts, too.)

On meeting Dumas a second time, he reminded me that I said I would take a ride in his plane. The gin and tonics had dulled my memory, but I took up the challenge to see and believe. On riding out to the Compton airport where Dumas freelances as an aircraft flight instructor, the 40-year-old pilot described flying as “easier than driving a car.”

THE DROP

That may be so, I thought, it’s the drop that bothers me! However, on arriving at the Compton airport, Dumas checked out a Piper Cub and said, “Let’s get on the good foot,” and started checking out his flight plan and equipment.

The former airborne trooper said that when it comes to flying, “I fly, I don’t be jiving. I’ve got my life in my hands.” (Mine too, I thought.)

CLEAR PROP

After checking out his equipment, Dumas yelled a quick “Clear prop,” and shortly thereafter, Dumas and yours truly were airborne.

Dumas got his first “smell of aviation fuel” as an aircraft mechanics student in Chicago at Dunbar High School. “I was with the civil air patrol in high school and that had a lot to do with my continuing love for flying,” he said.

Once when the plane lurched, Dumas confidently remarked, “Those bumps you feel are caused by the clouds; and I can’t do a damn thing about the elements.”

CATALINA ISLAND

Reaching the “Airport in the Sky” at Catalina Island, Dumas revealed his plans to one day “fly commercially in the Caribbean.” He looks forward to such a flying venture, Dumas said, because “it’s something” that he just wants to do.

Presently, he maintains a busy schedule as a bus driver for Rapid Transit and giving instructions in aircraft flying. “My students,” he commented, “are only as good as I am.”

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Explaining that he “is death on emergency procedures,” Dumas put his plane into a stall, which I didn’t think was funny to show me emergency techniques that he instructs his students. After a blood curdling scream, “Hey, man,” the aircraft took up speed. Dumas, who obviously thought something was funny, said, “The propeller is just like a fan. It keeps the pilot cool. When it stops, that’s when it’s time to sweat.”

On our return to Compton airport, Dumas continued to boast of the safety in flying exclaiming, “Man, you can get killed going to the corner store in your car.” (Sure, I thought, but I’ve never heard of anyone falling out of their car at 1,600 feet.)

After what seemed to me a perfect landing, Dumas checked in his plane and gave this writer a mock navigator’s certificate.

After I told him that I couldn’t navigate his bus, much less a plane, Dumas laughed and remarked, “Sure you can. Just get on the good foot!”

Appendix G: Quotes to Remember from the Captain

By Jessica Dumas

Captain Dumas had witty sayings to fit any occasion. He made up some of them and others were quotes from somewhere. These are just a few to remember him by:

“There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are NO old bold pilots.”

He constantly quoted this saying from a pilot he admired by the name of E. Hamilton (Ham) Lee. He’d explain that smart pilots were well aware that to become an old pilot, you must humble yourself to the airplane by respecting that it can kill you if you don’t fly safely—being too bold or being “cocky” as many pilots describe it, is a guaranteed way to die, and thus it made sense that there were no old AND bold pilots.



“The radio station—W.O.R.K.” He always said that work was a dirty word so instead of saying he was going to work, he’d say he was going to “the radio station.” Some people actually thought he was a DJ! After he retired, he would give everyone a hard time about them needing to go to “the radio station” since he was so happy he didn’t need to go there anymore! And then he’d add...

“I’m not going anywhere but crazy.” A saying he made up for when he was asked why he didn’t get a job after retiring. Also, if asked where he was going, he’d say, “Crazy” especially if he thought it wasn’t any of your business where he was going.

“I’m the HNIC around here!” He would tell his friends this often. He made it clear to everyone that he was in charge of his “domain” or as he also called it, the “Pondee” (short for Ponderosa). He made up this term for himself and he used it so much that I crocheted a headband with HNIC on it, which he loved and wore often. In case you don’t know –HNIC stands for **“Head N---r In Charge.”**

“What am I, invisible?” He would say this when he felt he was being ignored, such as when waiting at a counter to be helped in a store and the clerk took a little too long to wait on him or especially if they waited on someone of a lighter complexion first, he would loudly ask, “What am I, invisible?” There were many words to describe him but invisible was not one that fit! He made a point of being noticed and respected. I loved him for that and tried to do the same, but it did not work for me like it did for him.

“I’m in the ‘B’ Class—I’ll ‘B’ here when you’re here, I’ll ‘B’ here when you’re gone, and I’ll ‘B’ here when you get back.” He would tell me this whenever I got ready to go somewhere. He was what we call a “home body” as he preferred to stay home, except of course when he was in the mood to go flying or cycling. While raising our boys, he made sure nothing conflicted with being home when they came home from school—he didn’t want them to be “latch-key” kids.

“I wash, sprinkle and iron. I stew, bake and boil. I mow, hoe and rake. I can even play baseball.” This was a saying he quoted to his friends when they’d ask why he was in the house doing ‘women’s work!’ He never considered it that saying it was just his way of showing love for his family. He was a great cook and took pride in his cooking and baking. Plus, he did a lot of household chores that I was extremely grateful for. His sweet potato pie that he made without a

recipe was well-known and delicious. I finally watched him make it once and wrote down all the ingredients, so I would have the recipe. I make in remembrance of the ‘good ole days.’

“Don’t forget who gave you the grease.” This was what he told his children whenever he thought they needed reminding that they would not have gotten here without him. I think he made this up deriving it from the saying that “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” He was definitely a loud squeaky wheel and was proud to pass that on to his children, but he expected their respect in return.

Stop practicing death!

He would tell his friends this when they would fall asleep after having a few drinks. No one could out drink him. He would also tell this to anyone who spent the night on the couch and did not get up with the birds like he did. He would tell me this too when I wanted to sleep in on a Saturday or Sunday morning. He was always up early and such an active guy that he could not understand anyone not wanting to be awake as much as possible so they could live life to the fullest.

Now it is his time to sleep, but we will remember him for his emphatic sense of humor and love of flying. I will always think of him whenever I hear a small plane fly overhead.

THE DUMAS NAME WILL LIVE ON

Eric (2) on the left and Walter (3)—my twins!

SO LONG AND THANKS FOR READING!



DUMAS

YEAR 1401

A name with mysterious origins, the Dumas's were respected and feared. They were known as strong warriors and would often be hired to help protect the lands of the rich.

