

## Endorsements

Our job in television is to look for the occasional guest who truly inspires, who moves us to think about the really important things in life. Rarely has anyone done that as well as Mickey Robinson. His is a story of triumph out of tragedy, life out of death, and hope out of despair. Mickey's story is a vital human document.

—Fred Griffith

Former ABC TV host, Cleveland Morning Exchange,  
Cleveland, Ohio

*Falling into Heaven* is a true story that will impact every reader. What so many people are longing for—love and peace—can be found in these pages. Reading passages in this book recounting the early '70s transported me back to those special, God-ordained moments. I thank God that I was there along with many others that our Lord had placed in Mickey's path. This book is a testimony to what the power of God can accomplish, even through the most difficult and challenging times.

—Phil Keaggy

Award-winning guitarist, singer, songwriter

Mickey Robinson inspires people to believe that with the supernatural God, all things are possible. I have known him and his family for over thirty years. His message of hope has a dramatic effect on people everywhere. In a time where multitudes are oppressed by fear and disorientation, Mickey's story is a refreshing oasis of life. If you are seeking guidance and power for your life, this book will help you get directed on that path. We fear death because we do not have answers. Without becoming theological, Mickey Robinson answers many of our questions about the afterlife and, perhaps more importantly, he points us to our eternal helper in this present life.

—Francis Frangipane

Author, teacher, and founder of In Christ's Image Training

Mickey Robinson's story is one of the most inspiring and engaging stories you are likely to hear in your lifetime. It sizzles with supernatural encounter. No matter where you may be on your spiritual journey, the

message in these pages will bring you face to face with a God of infinite love and compassion.

—Steve Fry

Senior Pastor, The Gate Fellowship, Franklin, TN

As a physician and surgeon, I am in awe of Mickey's story of supernatural healing and recovery. His recovery would be considered as much a miracle today as it was back in 1968. More importantly Mickey's story shows God's abundant grace and mercy, restoring hope and purpose, and launching Mickey and his wonderful wife, Barbara, into a ministry that has touched the nations. This life story of God's power to change tragedy into triumph will leave the reader marvelling at the God of wonders at work in our world today. Mickey's story can be anyone's story who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

—Theodore Sawchuk, MD

Urologist, Fargo ND, Co-founder of Burning Hearts Ministry

*Falling into Heaven* is a powerful true-to-life message about a man who flew into the fires of destruction, only for them to be changed into the flames of transforming love. From a body caught in a raging fire, a heart was fashioned that will capture you. The contagious testimony and message of Mickey Robinson will grab your entire being and might be used to light a fire in you!

—James W. Goll

Founder of Encounters Network • Prayer Storm • G.E.T. eSchool

Our dear friend, Mickey Robinson, is one of the most passionate voices we know today. His near-death experience and heavenly encounter followed by a miraculous recovery brings hope and encouragement to anybody who hears it. We are thankful for what we've learned from Mickey's story and are convinced you will be too!

—Michael W. and Debbie Smith

Award-winning songwriter, recording artist, and author

Bonnie and I treasure the friendship that we have shared with Mickey and Barbara Robinson for over twenty-five years. We have seen few who walk with such authentic zeal for God and for all people. His

miraculous recovery and accurate encouraging words of power have come to pass without fail for us and for many people. This book is a fruit of a life lived overcoming trials and tears with real joy. It is full of the testimony of the power of God's love and truth.

—Dr. Mahesh and Bonnie Chavda  
International leaders and authors  
Pastors of All Nations Church

Mickey's life has transcended the outer reaches of tragedy and triumph. His story will encourage and give hope to everyone who reads it. It is a must read for those who have reached the end of their own resources.

—Thomas S. Caldwell  
Chairman, Caldwell Securities Ltd.

Mickey Robinson's life story is ineffable. I personally know Mickey and have been fortunate to work with him at many conferences. He is a man of character, talent, and prophetic wisdom beyond his years. He is a true voice for this generation! I am privileged to call him a friend.

—Paul Baloche  
Award-winning songwriter, worship leader, and recording artist

*Falling Into Heaven* combines one of the most gripping, real-life, action-adventure narratives with a breathtaking account of the supernatural. Mickey's life is a literal beauty-from-ashes story of redemption, and needs to be heard by anyone with a pulse.

—Jordan Christy  
Author of *How to Be a Hepburn in a Hilton World*

This is one of those books, that once you start reading, you don't want to put it down. It is an intense story about an intense man who is a passionate lover and follower of Jesus. I recommend the book and I recommend the man.

—Don Finto  
Pastor Emeritus, Belmont Church, Nashville, TN  
Founder, Caleb Company Ministries

You are about to meet a man who once fell from the heavens in flames, and who knows where you can touch the fire that heals from heaven. My friend is a walking miracle. Join him on his journey from a devastated life to one that greatly dares and dreams, and share with him the secret of his ongoing encounter with the resurrected Christ that has transformed multitudes.

—Winkie Pratney  
International author and teacher

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# Falling

A Skydiver's Gripping Account

# Into

of Heaven, Healings, and Miracles

# Heaven

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Mickey Robinson

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*Falling Into Heaven: A Skydiver's Gripping Account of Heaven, Healings, and Miracles*

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Disclaimer from the author: This is my story and the book is true and as accurate as I can remember. In a few instances, I have changed the names to protect their privacy. While I believe God performs miracles today, my story includes the dedicated help of professional caregivers. This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. It is unwise to ignore or not seek out the counsel of trained physicians. God works through the hands of doctors and the reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

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Dedicated to my family

Michael

Matt and Natasha

Jacob and Sommer  
Elijah, Shiloh, and Jorden

Bryan and Elizabeth  
Ariel, Merci, and Ivy

You are my treasures

And to Barbara . . . a braver woman,  
deeper vessel, truer beauty, vintage partner  
I cannot imagine

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <i>Foreword by Don Piper</i> . . . . .  | 11 |
| <i>Introduction</i> . . . . .           | 13 |
| One                                     |    |
| Kiss the Sky . . . . .                  | 15 |
| Two                                     |    |
| Man in a Shadow . . . . .               | 23 |
| Three                                   |    |
| The Bells<br>of St. Michael's . . . . . | 29 |
| Four                                    |    |
| The Need for Speed . . . . .            | 37 |
| Five                                    |    |
| Somebody to Love . . . . .              | 46 |
| Six                                     |    |
| Choices . . . . .                       | 53 |
| Seven                                   |    |
| Wall Street . . . . .                   | 60 |
| Eight                                   |    |
| Snap Decisions . . . . .                | 68 |
| Nine                                    |    |
| Dream Catcher . . . . .                 | 78 |
| Ten                                     |    |
| What Goes Up... . . . .                 | 86 |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Eleven                                 |     |
| Mortal Contact . . . . .               | 101 |
| Twelve                                 |     |
| The Last Day . . . . .                 | 111 |
| Thirteen                               |     |
| Caught Up . . . . .                    | 117 |
| Fourteen                               |     |
| Transcending Worlds . . . . .          | 122 |
| Fifteen                                |     |
| Dawn of a New Day . . . . .            | 129 |
| Sixteen                                |     |
| Ashes to Gold . . . . .                | 150 |
| Seventeen                              |     |
| Walking the Line . . . . .             | 166 |
| Eighteen                               |     |
| In Pursuit of Peace . . . . .          | 177 |
| Nineteen                               |     |
| Peace Is a Person . . . . .            | 197 |
| Twenty                                 |     |
| Man Tends, God Mends . . . . .         | 207 |
| Twenty-One                             |     |
| Nowhere to Hide . . . . .              | 214 |
| Twenty-two                             |     |
| Falling to Heaven . . . . .            | 228 |
| Twenty-three                           |     |
| Eternity: The Final Frontier . . . . . | 240 |
| <i>About the Author</i> . . . . .      | 252 |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> . . . . .      | 253 |
| <i>Endnotes</i> . . . . .              | 255 |

## Foreword by Don Piper

It takes a great deal of courage to share an experience that challenges our notion of what is possible with God. I know a little something about that. In January of 1989, I was returning from a pastor's conference in East Texas when an 18-wheeler crossed the center stripe of a rural highway and hit my Ford Escort head-on. I was killed instantly, pronounced dead by four sets of paramedics, and found myself surrounded by God's glory in a place called heaven. Only a series of miracles and tens of thousands of fervent prayers allowed me to live and, eventually, regain most of my physical abilities.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Mickey Robinson numerous times. He and I have appeared on several television programs together to share our respective stories. Indeed, only a small cadre of people understand what it's like to stand in the presence of Almighty God outside the veil of this mortal body, and then return to relate their experiences. Mickey belongs to this band of brothers and sisters who allows faith and conviction to overcome doubt and skepticism. In this way, he is more than just my brother in Christ. He possesses a unique insight into what it's like to overcome unthinkable tragedy.

This book is a biography of a man who lived fast, fell hard, and rose humbled and healed by the mercy of a loving Savior. *Falling Into Heaven* will encourage you to believe in the power of prayer, the sufficiency of God's grace, and the strength of the human spirit. It is the story of a young man chasing worldly dreams, and a sovereign Creator who relentlessly seeks our

## Foreword

affection. You will walk with Mickey during the highs and lows of growing up. You will understand his struggle to connect with a Heavenly Father that seems real but so far away. You will hurt with him as he endures unimaginable physical pain. You will rejoice in the miracles that stunned medical experts and confirm what the Bible tells us in Jeremiah 32:27, “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”

I am grateful to Mickey for allowing me to contribute a small part to a book that will undoubtedly strengthen the faith of thousands of believers and introduce many, for the very first time, to the saving power of faith in Jesus Christ. It is my sincere hope that Mickey’s story will bless you as much as it has blessed me.

Don Piper

Author, *90 Minutes in Heaven*

# Introduction

This book is a story about life—life seen through the eyes of a young man born the last half of the twentieth century. More change took place during this time in history than in all previous centuries combined. The population more than doubled. Technology, information, and knowledge increased and is now shared globally, as it happens! The post World War II society of America emerged—lavishly filled with freedom, prosperity, and unprecedented opportunities of power.

The ascent to achieve the American dream was dangled before this young man's eyes and mind, glamorously portrayed by movies, TV, movies, music, sports, and a handsome young American president. This brave new society also contained dark, ominous shadows of the Cold War, potential nuclear annihilation, and the breakdown of sound traditional values. The revolutionary aspect of the turbulent late '60s trumpeted free love, drugs, lawlessness, and “God-is-dead” or “God-is-whatever-you-want-your-god-to-be” belief systems.

The man this story is about grew up in the ideal, American, suburban, middle-to-upper-class dream. Even his street address, Pleasant Valley, gave the impression of near utopian, mid-American optimism.

However, his home life was plagued with family strife, alcoholism, and unpleasant disharmony. These conditions were not completely uncommon in that era; they were just more hidden and not talked about openly at that time.

## Introduction

Looking outside his family role models, he gravitated to a lifestyle of adventurous, live-for-the-moment pleasure seeking until his world was savagely interrupted by a tragic collision with human mortality.

At a point of utter hopelessness, he passed from this natural world into the spirit realm of the heavens. This heavenly encounter transcended the laws of time and physics, and he was transformed by the majesty of God's glory and power.

He returned to the earth with physical and emotional impossibilities to overcome that were met with healings, miracles, and supernatural spiritual guidance. This guidance and perilous journey occurred through the rough waters of a rapidly changing cultural shift. These conditions were overcome by the unchanging, unrelenting love of God. He was sent back to be a messenger—a messenger of life and hope to all people. "I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth...and touched the face of God."<sup>1</sup>

I am that young man. This is my story.

One

# Kiss the Sky

The walls of the factory glowed in the sweltering heat of summer. As humidity turned the Otis Elevator warehouse into a steam bath, workers moved like ants in a puddle of molasses.

Everyone, that is, except me.

I was nineteen years old, and not even eight hours of hard work could slow me down. I just put my body in gear until the four o'clock whistle blew, then launched out of that warehouse like a missile.

Turning the key on my '63 Ford, I heard a voice behind me.

"Hey, Mickey, you want to get a beer?"

"No. I have to get to the airfield," I said. "Another time maybe."

I didn't look to see who was talking before switching on the radio and grabbing a cigarette. As the squeal of an electric guitar pierced the air, I sped out of the parking lot and took any shortcut to get me home faster.

With Steppenwolf's *Born to Be Wild* playing loudly, the Ohio countryside became a green blur as the speedometer hit 90. The road stretched before me like a magic carpet. I caught my reflection in the rearview mirror. It was summer and I was tan, physically toned, highly focused, and motivated by a solitary purpose. One of my high school teachers, trying to get me to pursue

an acting career, said the world was just waiting for me, but right then I didn't care about the world.

I was in love with the sky.

Just five months before, I'd jumped out of an airplane for the first time and floated to earth beneath an old, olive-drab military parachute. That jump was hardly spectacular, yet something amazing happened when I stepped into the sky that day. An unseen hand punched a delete button in my soul. From that moment on, everything in my life disappeared except the desire for more. More sky, more sensation, more speed.

Hurling through ozone-drenched atmosphere at 125 mph filled me with more life and freedom than I'd ever known. *Free falling* was the right name for my new craving; I was passionately falling into freedom! In those elongated seconds before my parachute opened, there was no past and no future. No draft number. No Vietnam. No time clock. No boredom. No boundaries. If I could have injected free falling into my veins, I would have done it without a moment's hesitation.

As I pulled into the driveway, my thoughts were still consumed with this new love of my life. I took one last drag before flicking the cigarette over my shoulder. Standing on the front porch was my fourteen-year-old brother, leaning against the house, impatiently waiting for me with my packed parachute.

Leaving the radio playing full blast, I wordlessly bounded up the steps and brushed past him through the front door.

As soon as I entered the bedroom, I peeled off my work clothes and climbed into the clean, white jumpsuit that smelled of sky. As I grabbed my jump boots and started back down the hall, I caught a glimpse of my mother in the kitchen. She didn't turn around and I didn't stop. She knew I was in a hurry. I was always in a hurry.

My brother and I threw the parachute gear into the trunk

and took off for the country airport in a cloud of dust. As the speedometer climbed, I turned to him and said, “So...now you’re grounded.”

“Don’t rub it in,” he said with a pained look on his face. “It’s a bummer they won’t let me jump.”

“Don’t sweat it,” I said. “You’ve got all the time in the world to fly. But yeah, it’s a drag. We’ll get it all worked out somehow.”

My brother loved the sport as much as I did, but he was underage. Just a week before, an air traffic controller had gotten wise to his jumping and put his skydiving career on hold.

As we pulled into the Brunswick Flying Ranch, I spotted the Piper Cherokee 6 all gassed and ready to go. Although this wasn’t much of an airport, it was convenient for me. A 2,200-foot runway and a plane were all I needed to support my habit. A small group of us were starting our own sky-diving operation and I was a partner in this new venture.

Walking from my car to the runway, I could feel all eyes on me. I enjoyed the special recognition. At my day job I was just a name on a time card, but here I belonged to a tribe of elite beings. The people watching were kind of skydiving groupies, and I was one of the rock stars of the group.

In every sport, people gravitate toward the ones who seem to stand out because they have “the right stuff.” Well, I had the goods for skydiving. And I was feeling really cool about it.

“Hey, Superstar!”

I looked up into the grinning face of my friend and mentor, Dan. He was one of the first Americans to become a D-licensed skydiver after World War II. Dan was a living legend in a sport now being taken over by a new wave of extreme sport pioneers.

He’d recently initiated me into the mysteries of *relative work*, the highly synchronized maneuvers where skydivers join together at corresponding speeds. That evening Dan, Steve, and I were



planning to jump at 13,500 feet and link together for a sixty-six-second free fall.

Also joining us for this flight would be two student jumpers. Our pilot, Walt, planned to let the first student out at 2,800 feet and then go on up to 4,000 feet so the other student could make a ten-second free fall.

All six of us were looking forward to trying out Walt's new aircraft. This Cherokee 6 promised to be excellent for skydiving, with plenty of power so we could get up to jump altitude quickly.

The farmland of Ohio spread around us like a golden quilt as we gathered in the shadow of the plane that hot August evening. As I breathed in the rich smell of summer hay, the falling sun set the earth ablaze with color.

Walt signaled that it was time to load up.

He'd removed all the seats except his pilot's seat from the plane, so there was room enough for all five skydivers and our equipment. As we climbed into the aircraft one at a time, I grabbed a place on the floor toward the back. I was just getting settled when I heard Steve call my name.

"Hey, Mickey, switch places with me, will you?"

I moved forward to a spot on the floor beside Walt, who was now flipping switches and doing preflight checks. Finally he pulled back on the throttle and we started a quick sprint down the runway. Spotting my brother standing in the crowd, I gave him a grinning thumbs-up as the plane cruised by him like a convertible in a parade.

I thought I heard a strange noise. Was the engine sputtering slightly, or was it my imagination?

I listened again. The engine was purring loudly. I must have been mistaken. Settling back-to-back against another skydiver and resting my head against the fuselage, I closed my eyes. It would be a while before we reached 13,500 feet, so I decided to

take a little catnap. I was never nervous before a jump. The closer I got to the actual moment, the more relaxed I became.

The drone of the engine and the extreme summer heat lulled me into a twilight sleep almost immediately. As I drifted off, I remembered something that had happened a few days before, when I'd gone to visit a friend at the hospital.

I was pretty unfamiliar with hospitals. They were dreary places full of sick people, and I couldn't wait to get out of there. Maybe it was the confinement that bothered me. But as I was leaving, I passed an old man slowly making his way down the hall. "Young man," he called out in a thick Middle Eastern accent.

I stopped and hesitantly turned around.

"You're a good-looking boy."

"Thank you," I stammered, a little embarrassed.

"You have such nice skin."

Without another word, he turned and continued tottering down the hall. I smiled and stole a glance at my tanned forearm. I always glowed like a beach bum in the summer.

I was jolted awake when Walt pulled the throttle wide open for takeoff. My body leaned like a sack of cement into the back of the skydiver beside me.

I shook my head a few times to clear away the memory of that old man. Taking a deep breath as I looked around, I was relieved to find myself in the cockpit of an airplane rather than the hallway of that hospital. *Having to spend even one day in a place like that would give me the creeps.*

The aircraft picked up speed, and soon I felt the wheels pull away from the asphalt. Still a bit drowsy, I sensed the pilot had pulled way back on the stick, resulting in an unusually steep climb. Walt was impressed with the performance of his week-old aircraft, and he was particularly enjoying the speed and power of this takeoff.

But then, still at low altitude, there was a strange sound. Silence.

The engine died and we lost all of our lift, plunging to the ground at a horrific speed. We were experiencing an aerodynamic stall. Walt frantically tried to restore power, but it was no use. There were no options. The engine was gone.

“That’s it!” he cried. “We’re going down!”

Because we’d been ascending at such a steep angle, there was no gliding forward, no chance of even making a crash landing. As the nose of the aircraft pitched forward, we dropped to earth like a broken toy.

A huge tree loomed in front of the cockpit window. There was no time to brace myself. I didn’t even have time to swallow before the Cherokee 6 took full impact on its wing and midsection against a tree, hurtling me forward and slamming my face against the instrument panel. As the plane cartwheeled before skidding to a stop on its belly, the ruptured fuel tank spewed gasoline throughout the cockpit.

I lay there barely conscious for a few moments before the splattered fuel ignited into flames. As if in a dream, I felt pieces of the burning, melted material falling on me. I waved my arms back and forth in a weak attempt to brush away the hot, sticky debris.

I didn’t know which end was up. My mind was numb except for the stabbing impulse to escape. A voice in my head kept screaming, *Get out!* but my body couldn’t respond.

When I saw light pouring through the torn fuselage, I frantically pushed one leg through the hole to try to exit the plane. But my parachute equipment was caught on something behind me. No matter how hard I twisted or heaved, I was going nowhere.

Stuck like a fly in a web of burning metal, the adrenaline finally reached my gut and coaxed a sound from the only part of

me that wasn't numb. If it hadn't been for my screams, I would have burned to death.

Until then, no one had realized the pilot and I were trapped in the cockpit. With only minor injuries, the other four skydivers had exited the plane immediately after it skidded to a stop. But on his way out, Dan stopped for a split-second to glance toward the cockpit. He saw Walt move but heard no cries for help, so he assumed we were both okay and would be following him out of the plane.

Dan was just a few yards from the wreckage when he heard a loud *whoosh* followed by the terrified screaming of a man on fire. Going back into that plane was like running toward a bomb ticking off its last seconds. Still, he ran toward the sound of my voice.

The pilot's seat had crunched forward on impact, jamming it under the instrument panel. Walt moaned in pain while I screamed for help, each of us oblivious to the other's deadly predicament.

I didn't see Dan enter the cockpit. My jumpsuit and equipment were soaked with fuel and on fire when I heard his familiar voice say, "Help me, Mickey. Help me!" I twisted with my last ounce of strength as two inhumanly strong arms heaved me out of the wreckage. With his bare hands, Dan slapped at the flames burning my head and neck while screaming over his shoulder, "I'll be back for you, Walt! Undo your seatbelt!"

Dan let go of me to run back inside. In that second, the left wing, which had been drained empty to reduce weight, exploded.

I somehow managed to stagger fifteen feet farther away before my fuel-drenched jumpsuit ignited again. I collapsed on the ground. Immediately Dan was at my side, rolling me back and forth until the last flame was quenched.

I lay next to the burning plane, smoldering like a coal fallen from a furnace. "How bad?" I whispered. "How bad am I?" The

words rasped out of my throat as the right side of my face was horribly burned.

“Can’t tell, Mickey,” Dan responded. “Don’t talk. Just lie still.”

I heard sirens and running footsteps and roaring like the sound of a bonfire after a homecoming game. The air was thick with the stench of gasoline and burning debris. Snakes of black smoke crawled in the sky above me, and faces floated in and out of view like human clouds.

Something was soothing the fear and numbing the pain. I was sinking into the peace of perfect shock, a merciful hand lifting me out of my tormented body.

As white fingers slid an oxygen mask over my face, my blackened flesh peeled off and slid onto the ground. Someone carried me through flashing red lights and thudding doors until I couldn’t see the sky anymore.

As the whine of an ambulance pierced the air, pictures beat against my brain like birds escaping from a cage. My father’s face as he caught the biggest fish of his life...my mother’s small hands clutching rosary beads...Mickey Mantle slamming a ball out of the stadium and into the stars.

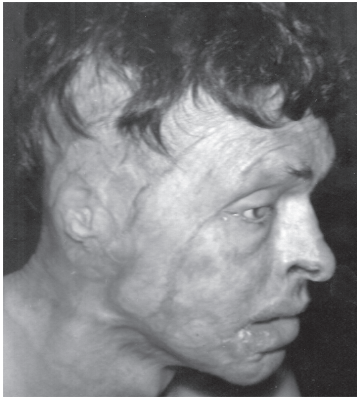
Then I saw a boy standing on a windy hill. It was me. But my intimate romance with the sky in free fall was brutally terminated when we hit the ground.

*This must be the end.*

I had no way of knowing it was just the beginning.



Aftermath of the tragic crash of August 15, 1968.



Still badly burned and hanging onto life, December 1968.



Both legs paralyzed with severe nerve damage.

# Ashes to Gold

Six months without taking any nourishment by mouth is a long fast by anybody's standards. My food—a high-protein mix with vitamins and some medicine—was mixed in a blender then put in a bag that hung above my bed. The nourishment went through a tube about a quarter inch in diameter and then drained into my stomach.

A group of doctors analyzed my X-rays and discovered that my esophagus was the normal size except for the last three and a half inches, which had been scarred to a thin stricture, allowing only a watery substance to pass through. The doctors explained to me their plan to try to expand the opening.

In preparation for my first surgery at Highland View, as I lay on the surgical table, the doctors made me swallow a numbing substance called Xylocaine viscous. They told me it was supposed to make the surgery painless. I had to hang my head off the back of the table as they pushed some type of optic scope down my throat through the tiny opening and into my stomach. I felt like I had swallowed Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* sword! Then fifteen medical students took turns looking down the scope.

A doctor with a light on his head fished around the hole in my belly, looking for a string that had been run down the scope into my stomach. He pulled it out and taped it to my side. Another doctor fed the other end of the string out my left nostril. When it

was time to stretch my esophagus, they moved the string (which looked like waxed dental floss) from my nostril into my mouth, tied a tiny stainless steel bullet around the end, and pulled on the end of the string coming out of my stomach and belly to make the bullet go down my throat, stretching my esophagus ever so slightly.

This procedure was done every Tuesday and Thursday. They let me swallow the numbing stuff every time, but I had to be awake. Although the Xylocaine numbed my tongue, the back of my mouth, and my throat (except at the scarred part), I felt like somebody was pulling a football through me. This was painless?

After four treatments in two weeks, I ate five bowls of liquefied mashed potatoes with butter and salt. It might as well have been steak and lobster! Little by little I grew stronger and gained weight.

The third week I tried cream of celery soup with salt. I liked salt. I started to feel like a real person. Every day I was making progress, and every day the three men in my room celebrated my little victories.

Because my right hand couldn't do anything, I was given a special wheelchair with two rims on the left side that allowed me to steer with one hand. I finally had mobility, at least a little...as much as I could take sitting down. I didn't keep track of my progress; I just kept going. I had visitors every day and every night, and they noticed whenever I gained even a little momentum.

One day without any announcement, my father showed up in the middle of the afternoon. With his hand on my bed's guard rail, he looked at me and said, "Hi, Son. I just took a chance that you wouldn't mind seeing me. I thought it would be..." His voice quivered and he coughed to clear his throat. "Just a second. I'll be right back." He walked out of my room and disappeared down the hall.



Several minutes later, he came back and walked up to the side of my bed again. I could tell he'd been crying. I had never seen my dad shed a tear or show any sorrowful emotions, except when he got misty-eyed the day he found out his mother had died.

I started crying from down deep inside me. "Dad," I said, "why does it have to be like this?" Under all of my hurt and resentment, I loved my dad and I knew he loved me.

"I've done everything wrong," he said, emotion choking his voice. "All the drinking, all the trouble in our family. I made a mess of my life. But you're young, and you've always tried to do your best. How could this happen to you? I don't understand."

With his tears came complete forgiveness and reconciliation. We never discussed any details or asked for any explanation. All of the tension between us was simply wiped clean. Years of intense conflict and escalating hostilities that left me full of toxic memories and emotions were all washed away with cleansing tears coming from both me and my father. And those inner wounds did not leave scars like the fiery plane crash did on my body.

I didn't understand what the Bible teaches about forgiveness. All I can say is that forgiveness worked a miracle that neither my father nor I was capable of on our own.

I learned later that if we want God to forgive our offenses, we must be willing to forgive others. I also learned the immense power of these words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."<sup>12</sup> Holding on to unforgiveness is like being locked in a jail cell made out of bars of bitterness.

My father didn't change the things in his lifestyle that I didn't like. But I was free concerning our relationship, and so was he. Inner healing of damaged emotions is sometimes connected to healing of damaged bodies.

Years later, before he died, my stone-cold atheistic father found peace with God and put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

My skydiving buddy Jerry was going to Florida for a week of free fall training while it was freezing in Ohio. He asked Robert to go with him. Robert was part of a group of three underage guys we called “the flying punks.” They were the youngest skydivers in America. Robert had not missed one day of seeing me since August 15. But I encouraged him to go, knowing he would love it.

Jerry and Robert went to Florida, and Jerry picked up the tab for everything. My little brother had the time his life with a good friend. I was overjoyed that Robert was getting rewarded with something he could never do on his own.

The day before they got back, I was having a skin-graft operation. These procedures had become common routine for me. I knew I would hurt, but I would get over it. But this time, for some reason, something went wrong. The anesthetic was too strong, my blood pressure plummeted, and I was unconscious all day and well into the night. Just before dawn I heard a whispering sound. “Mr. Robinson, can you hear me?” I woke up and realized that person was actually screaming in my ear. I almost died from that overdose. I never talked to anybody about it; I was just glad they were able to bring me back.

The next day Jerry brought Robert to the hospital to see me. They came alongside my bed and my brother said, “So, what have you been doing while we were gone?”

I replied, “I guess I made a real *ash* out of myself.” Burn-crash pun. They burst out laughing with surprise and relief.

Humor is part of healing, and that was the first spontaneously funny thing I’d ever said. This was a good sign. Scripture says, “A merry heart does good, like medicine.”<sup>13</sup>

I was happy to hear the stories about their skydiving trip, especially Robert’s. They had a blast.

The doctors determined I could get away from the hospital for an eight-hour outing on a Saturday. Robert and Jimmy, who

also lived in our house and helped out by providing transportation, picked me up on a Saturday morning. Eight hours was about as long as I could take, but it was good to get outside of the hospital and actually go into a house.

After a couple of these outings, my friends and family found amusement by imitating me trying to walk the way I did in therapy. They did a good look-alike of me, going in slow motion like a gooney bird trying to take off. I wasn't very good at chasing them in my wheelchair, so I threw my crutches at them. Men will be boys, and I think playing is also part of healing.

The hospital had an art studio for their patients that was developed by a young woman named Micki McGraw. She was in a wheelchair, but she was a mover and a shaker. I visited the studio and began doing art left-handed. I made a beautiful mountain scene with a lake and pine trees—a quiet, serene pen-and-ink drawing.

Word got out, and someone from the Cleveland newspaper came, took a picture of me and my art, and put it in the paper. Art is therapeutic, and I believe creativity is another part of healing.

My friends Grant and Linda, with whom Julie and I always double dated, were getting married in a month, so I etched their initials in a rock that was part of the drawing, then gave it to them as a wedding present.

One day the nurse came into my room and said, “You have a phone call. You can pick it up on the pay phone at the nurse’s station.” It was about seven o’clock in the evening.

She wheeled me to the nurse’s station, and I picked up the receiver. “This is Mickey.”

“Hi. It’s Julie. I’m calling from school.” It was just to hear her voice. I hadn’t seen her since Christmas, although she wrote every day. After a pause, she said, “Mickey, I’ve given this a lot of thought, and I just don’t think we have a future together.”

“What are you saying?”

“I’m sorry, Mickey. But I’m sure about this. It’s best for you too. I’ve got to go now.”

I could hardly breathe. I held the phone to my left ear until it made a busy signal. I hung up and looked down the hall, which was as empty as my heart.

I was devastated. Julie was the only thing I had left of my former life, and our wedding was what I had to look forward to for the future. I knew I needed to talk to somebody, but I wasn’t ready and I didn’t know whom I could talk to. So I rolled slowly past my room to a dark place at the end of the hall, where I tried to pull myself together. I didn’t want the guys to know what had happened.

Finally I rolled the wheelchair back to my room. The nurse helped me into bed and gave me my eight o’clock medicine. I turned to the wall, staring at nothing. *How could this happen?* I couldn’t sleep.

About three a.m. I started to sob from deep within. I did my best to bury it in the pillow. But within a few minutes I heard a voice. “Man, you’re going to be all right. They’re gonna fix you up. You’ll be back on the street doin’ yer thing in no time. Nothin’s gonna stop you, man. Nothin’.” It was Larry, my paralyzed, black roommate. As Larry’s words moved across the dark room, I felt waves of love hitting me like breakers smacking the beach. Each word carried the love of the Father. It was the same vibration of love I’d felt in heaven, the same love that sent me back to earth.

With each word my sobs receded, and when he stopped speaking, there was no more weeping. This comfort came from a man paralyzed from the neck down who did not know what Julie had said to me on the phone. God used him as an instrument to “bind up the brokenhearted.” Only God can make beauty from ashes.

The next morning after breakfast and before therapy, I rolled my wheelchair next to Larry’s bed frame and put my left hand on

his shoulder. “ I really love you, man. Thank you. I mean it. You did it for me.”

I went down to therapy and hit it as hard as I could. I kept hearing Larry’s voice saying, “Nothin’s gonna stop you, man. Nothin’.” Every time the therapist stretched my muscles, I felt God’s love comforting me.

After that day, my progress really accelerated. I got stronger and gained a little weight. I tried walking outside of the parallel bars. The therapist gave me a four-pronged aluminum cane that I could hold with my left hand. It was a little scary, but I did it and actually I did really well. The therapist fitted my legs for braces from my knees down. They looked like Charlie Chaplin black shoes and kept my feet from dropping down. They gave me greater balance, and I used them more and more.

When Dan, my skydiving partner, first saw me walk with the quad-cane, that tough guy cried like a baby. It was his victory too. He had pulled me from the burning airplane. He never let me speak negatively. He came to see me almost every day. And finally he saw me walk!

I had the esophagus-stretching procedure twice a week. And I had other operations, like skin grafting. I may have had more stitches than all the baseballs in the Cleveland Indians dugout. The operations hurt, but at least I wasn’t sick anymore. Therapy was canceled on the days I had surgery. And I had quite a supporting cast of family, visitors, and my three roommates—the dream team.

Three weeks after the phone call from Julie, I heard a loud crash. I pulled the string to turn on my light. Larry had metal tongs stuck into holes on either side of his head and a cord going through a pulley that held about fifty pounds of weight, which held his neck in place as the bone graft was healing his broken spinal column. Somehow the tongs had pulled out of his head!

With no time to get in a wheelchair, I threw myself on the

floor. I dragged myself across the room, pulled myself up with my left hand, and with my bandaged right hand, I held his head steady. As his blood flowed through the fingers on my left hand, I screamed, "Nurse! Get in here right now!"

I knew that paralyzed people can move from involuntary muscle spasms. If Larry were to have a spasm and his head fell off the pad, he would be dead. I literally held his life in my hands, just as he had held mine in his three weeks previously. Thankfully, the nurse and surgeon came in to put the metal tongs back in his head.

Three weeks before Grant and Linda's wedding, my therapist and the doctors agreed that I could get a pass to attend the ceremony. I signed all kinds of papers saying that if anything happened, it was their fault. Somebody found me some pants, a decent dress shirt, a tie, and a sport jacket. I was really thin, but about eighteen pounds more than when I arrived and incredibly stronger. The nurses helped me get into the clothes, carefully pulling my pants over the leg brace and my Charlie Chaplin-like shoes. Then they combed what was left of my hair. I was ready to go.

My sister's good friend Sandy picked me up in her GTO. Because I was really late, she put the pedal to the metal. We got to St. Michael's Church, the one I grew up in, after the wedding had started. With Sandy's help, I made it up the stairs. We went in the door and sat in the back row. Nobody saw me.

It was hard for my bony bottom to sit that long on a wooden church pew. But I was glad I made it to see this. Especially since Julie was the maid of honor.

When the minister pronounced Grand and Linda husband and wife, the whole church stood and watched the bride and groom happily walk down the aisle. When Grant saw me, he stopped in his tracks. The people behind him crashed into his back. When everybody saw me, they all ran over to hug me, except Julie. She smiled and walked right past me.

## About the Author

A plane crash in 1968 consumed half of Mickey's body in third-degree burns. Mickey entered heaven and was given a mission to bring a life-giving message of hope back to Earth. Since his second chance at life, Mickey has been a public speaker nationally and internationally. In addition to his personal appearances, his dramatic life story and additional messages of hope have been broadcast on TV and radio. In August 2010 a portion of Mickey's testimony was part of a two-hour special on the highly acclaimed History Channel. It has been broadcast multiple times in the U.S. and other nations with overdubs in their own languages. For over three decades, his message of encouragement and hope has continued to change lives and inspire people of all ages.

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