

## STEPPING OUT ON THE WATER

By Donna R. Jensen

“Mom, *please!*” my teenage son groaned. “You’re doing it again!”

As I stood at the stove frying his eggs, the song I had been humming had turned into praise. Mid-phrase I stopped singing. Playfully I punched him on the arm.

For as long as I can remember I’ve loved to sing. At the age of nine I began to play the piano. Soon I was accompanying myself as I sang. Mom and Dad encouraged me, buying one new piece of sheet music after another. When my Great Aunt Ida came to visit, we quickly discovered our mutual love of singing. One afternoon, her eyes twinkling, she smiled up at me through wire-rimmed glasses as she sat at the piano. “You know, Honey, I have always been told that you can’t really sing until you’ve suffered.

“Oh?” I murmured, thinking back over my fourteen years. “Then I guess I’m ready to sing!” Music was therapy for me. Most days, I sang for hours. Much to my chagrin, I was unable to sing in public. I had developed a fear of singing off key that crippled my performance even after studying voice.

At twenty-nine years of age, I was born again. A short time later when I heard the song, “To Be Used of God”, my heart whispered, “amen!” I was so grateful for my salvation. Any way God wanted to use me,” to sing, to speak, to pray...” any way at all, I was willing. I prayed earnestly to be able to sing for the Lord, but my fear remained.

The following year I married and moved from California to Pennsylvania. There we attended a small country church. My sister-in-law’s mother was the organist. After a songfest at her house one evening, she asked me to sing at church on Sunday. I agreed to try if she’d play *every* note I sang.

My solo came just before the sermon. Somehow, I managed to get through it. I was honored when the minister asked me to sing every Sunday before he preached.

In a couple of months, my husband accepted the opportunity to learn to weld and be paid for it in the shipyards in Newport News, Virginia. There we joined the congregation of a very large church. Our first Sunday we sat behind the church secretary. At the close of the service she introduced herself and said that she’d like to hear me sing a solo. She gave my name to the choir director who asked me to sing. I said I would, but I kept putting it off.

A trip to the doctor that February confirmed that I was pregnant. Talk about elated! Nearly thirty-one, at last my dream of mother-hood was coming true. I continued to put off my solo. A pregnant lady can find lots of reasons for not doing things.

Five months into my pregnancy I contracted a virus infection that caused me to lose my voice. For a month I could only speak in a whisper. When my voice did come back, it seemed to have holes in it. Some notes just weren't there.

This time a new fear gripped me. *What if I could never sing again?* Clasp my Bible to me as though it was God Himself, I sat down to have a talk with Him. I promised that I'd look for opportunities to sing for Him if He'd give me back my voice.

As my husband's training neared its completion, we made the decision to make our home in Arizona. Seven months pregnant now, I wanted to move before our child was born.

Friends from church invited us over for dinner the week we were to leave. We ended the evening by gathering around the piano to sing. Ed, our host, was the first to realize that my voice was back. "Donna!" he exclaimed, "that means you can sing for us before you leave."

He went right to the phone and made the arrangements.

That Sunday night, as I made my way to the front of the church, I thought, "Boy, Peter walking on the water was no greater miracle than me getting up here to sing tonight!"

As I stepped to the microphone a wonderful calmness settled over me. The notes of the song came effortlessly. I was able to forget about myself and sing about my savior. Almost before I knew it I was back in my seat.

The service over, I was stopped as I got up to leave by a hand on my shoulder. A gray-haired lady from behind me leaned forward and said, "My dear, I'm seventy-two years old and I want you to know that in all my life, I've never heard anything more beautiful!"

That experience gave me the courage to step out on the water again and again in many different ways and never once did Jesus fail to hold me up.

Post Script:

I sang every Sunday at our new church until I went to the hospital to have our baby.

When it came time for Wayne and I to dedicate Melissa to the Lord it was the Sunday that a new wing on our church was to be celebrated as well.

As the opening part of the service progressed, Wayne leaned over and told me he'd like to sing a song too. I was amazed. I'd never heard him sing. Now, with no preparation, he chose to sing with a packed church. Not wanting to discourage anyone when performing was so hard for me, I simply asked him, "What would you sing?"

He replied, "Oh I don't know..." Leaning forward he picked up a hymnal and began to leaf through it. Stopping on, "In My Heart Their Rings a Melody, he said, "I think I could sing this."

We had been told that we could do or say whatever we desired so I knew it would be okay to add Wayne's song.

When we were called to the front, I told the congregation after singing my song that Wayne had never sung publicly before but since this was such a special occasion for us, he wanted to sing too.

A couple of lines into his song the organist stopped playing. Wayne thought he must be singing so badly that she couldn't play for him. He kept singing though and did beautifully. Later we found that when he started singing bass the organist couldn't transpose it so thought it best to let him sing a 'Capella.

At the close of the service people came up to me and said, "You sang beautifully, but weren't you *proud* of your husband?"