

NOTES FROM: *The Fun of It*, by Amelia Earhart

SUMMARY: This autobiography was an unplanned bookstore find – I didn't even know she wrote one – but when I saw that Amelia Earhart (the famous pilot) had an autobiography, I bought it *immediately*. It did *not* disappoint!

Amelia was the first woman to fly solo over the Atlantic Ocean, and she inspired a generation of men and women to follow their dreams, before she mysteriously disappeared in 1937 while attempting to circumnavigate the globe.

She's also really, *really* funny, which I didn't expect, and she had a deep personal history of reading, which didn't surprise me one bit. Combine her natural ability and curiosity, her supportive parents and her well-stocked library, and there weren't many obstacles that could have blocked this lady's way.

Her optimism for the future was inspiring as well, not to mention her leadership ability in the field of education. She didn't buy for a *second* the idea that only men could fly, or that girls shouldn't have the same supportive and aspirational upbringings either. She wasn't like, militant or anything about it – she was just a positive *force* for progress and growth, and her life is absolutely a testament to that.

There's also quite a bit of history in here about the first flights, first airports and first discoveries, etc. - some of which are *hilarious*, and *all* of which make you glad that history is populated with brilliant stars like Amelia Earhart. I love my parents – indeed, they've given me exactly the same kind of support that Amelia's parents did – but I can confidently state that with a mother like Amelia Earhart, a child could overcome *anything*.

“Perhaps the fact that I was exceedingly fond of reading made me enduring. With a large library to browse in, I spent many hours not bothering anyone, after I once learned to read.”

“Books have meant much to me. Not only did I myself read considerably, but Mother read aloud to my sister and me, early and late. So fundamental became the habit that on occasions when we girls had to do housework, instead of both pitching in and doing it together, one was selected to read aloud and the other to work.”

“Of course, I admit some elders have to be shocked for everybody's good now and then.”

“I have never lived more than four years in any one place and always have to ask, ‘Which one?’, when a stranger greets me by saying, ‘I'm from your hometown.’”

“But somehow, I did not get into the swing of the western universities before aviation caught me. The interest aroused in me in Toronto led me to all the air circuses in the vicinity. And, by dragging my father around and prompting him to make inquiries, I became more and more interested. One day he and I were among the spectators at a meet at Long Beach. ‘Dad, please ask that officer how long it takes to fly,’ I said, pointing out a doggy young man in uniform.

‘Apparently it differs with different people,’ my good parent reported after some investigation, ‘though the average seems to be from five to ten hours.’ ‘Please find out how much lessons cost,’ I continued. ‘The answer to that is a thousand dollars. But why do you want to know?’ I wasn’t really sure. Anyway, such were the second-hand conversations I had with the patient pilots of those days.”

“‘I think I’d like to learn to fly,’ I told the family casually that evening, knowing full well I’d die if I didn’t. ‘Not a bad idea,’ said my father just as casually. ‘When do you start?’”

“For a ship doesn’t fall like a plummet, even if the engine goes dead. It assumes a natural gliding angle which sometimes is as great as eight to one. That is, a plane 5,000 feet in the air can travel in any direction eight times its altitude (40,000 feet) or practically eight miles. Thus it has a potential landing radius of sixteen miles in still air.”

“At any rate I already know that everything I have studied that I was interested in has given me something.”

“Then, in case we were marooned, we had an emergency ration called pemmican, a very concentrated food used by explorers. A spoonful or so a day is supposed to keep one healthy and happy. After testing this concoction, which is reminiscent of cold lard with dark unidentified lumps floating in it, I question the degree of happiness obtainable, whatever the health content.”

“We circled around the vessel, hoping that the Captain would guess what we wanted and have the bearings painted on the deck for us to read. But nothing happened. Then I wrote out a request that he do so, put the note into a bag with a couple of oranges for ballast, and tried to drop it on the deck, through the hatchway in the bottom of the plane. But my amateur bombing did not work; my aim was faulty and the two oranges landed in the water some distance from the ship.”

“I think in the future, as women become better able to pull their own weight in all kinds of expeditions, the fact of their sex will loom less large when credit is given for accomplishment.”

“Through particularly bumpy going, while I tried to fly and also to pump gas from the reserve into the gravity tank, I lost my map. In that ship, it usually lay open upon my knee, fastened with a safety pin to my dress. But in the strenuous moments over Texas, the pin was somehow loosened and the map blew away.”

“Parents, one or the other or both, should go with their children on the first ride. To see that the safeguards of a licensed pilot and licensed plane are in force is just as definitely a responsibility as overseeing other present-day activities. For the present generation is going to get off the earth some way or other!

“Of course, when a pilot finds it necessary to land away from an established airport he – or she – heads for a good big pasture if one is around. One day, one of the girls had to seek a pasture for some reason and the best one she saw had animals in it. Nevertheless she landed safely and then to her consternation watched the creatures solemnly walk toward her. Her version of the story is that she promptly offered up a little prayer. It was ‘Dear God, let them all be cows.’”

Orville Wright: "When the world speaks of the Wrights, it must include our sister. Much of our effort has been inspired by her."

"While the boys had a job at a printing office and then a bicycle shop as their vocation (with aeronautics always an avocation), Katherine Wright acquired Latin and Greek. The money she earned as a teacher in these subjects she turned over to her brothers so they might continue their aeronautical experiments which by this time occupied them to the exclusion of bread-and-butter business. So Katherine Wright helped pay for and actually helped build the first heavier than air plane ever flown."

"The first place I encountered was Londonderry, and I circled it hoping to locate a landing field but found lovely pastures instead. I succeeded in frightening all the cattle in the county, I think, as I came down low several times before finally landing in a long, sloping meadow. I couldn't have asked for better landing facilities, as far as that is concerned. There ended the flight and my happy adventure. Beyond it lay further adventures of hospitality and kindness at the hands of my friends in England, France, Italy, Belgium, and America."