

Name Susan Hulme

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_

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By signing this release form, I authorize Jana Harper to use my name, picture, and cloud story.

Signature: Susan M. Hulme



### My Cloud Story:

(Susan begins by pulling out an old flight manual with her father's name inscribed on the cover).

This is a book that I found in my son's apartment that my father had given him. *Thunderstorms*

I went out west to see my father who had been ill for a couple years with Parkinson's. I started spending the night with him in hospice, so I was actually with him the night he passed away. He couldn't speak, and he was breathing very heavily, and his eyes were closed. But I knew that one of the last senses to go is hearing, so I felt that he could hear.

The last night/day that I went to see him I took this flight manual with me. After I sang to him for about two hours, I was like, "Well, Dad? I brought your flight manual." He had been a pilot in WWII. He flew over seventy missions in the South Pacific. He's a very shy person, but throughout my whole life when he told the stories about his flights, he would just light up and there was all this detail as if it had just happened yesterday. Otherwise he was pretty quiet. He read all the time. He was a pretty private person.

So that night I thought I'd read something to him, because it was all about weather, and although he worked for the telephone co. his whole career, he had a farm and a garden and animals and that was really his true love. He studied the weather all the time.



So I was looking through the manual that night and found chapter ten. It was called "Flying Into Thunderstorms." I felt it was a metaphor for what he was probably going through. He was about to fly himself, you know, this was sort of metaphorically his last mission. It was preparing the pilots how to navigate when you see the big storm: what the air currents are doing, where you need to go, how you need to move, etc. But it was such a beautiful metaphor for taking flight, for being prepared, for going into fear, flying into fear.

I'll read a couple of lines from the introduction:

"If you become a pilot you will find it increasingly important to be able to reach your destination or objective regardless of the weather conditions you encounter enroute. Over 44,000 thunderstorms occur daily over the earth's surface. No doubt you will run into a thunderstorm area at sometime or another...The purpose of this chapter is to give you an understanding of the physical makeup of thunderstorms. By understanding thunderstorms and the problems presented by them, you can overcome the major hazard associated with flight through thunderstorms, the fear of the unknown, the mental hazard that often makes a pilot forget his skill and training."

He died that night, well, early the next morning, about five o'clock, and I woke up and I didn't hear him breathing and the nurse came in and told me he had passed away about thirty minutes before I woke up, so I think it was a sweet story. I know he heard me.

Well, a while after that I was flying to Telluride on a little twelve seater, and the pilot's got the doors wide open. I had my iPhone and was photographing clouds, thinking about all this. I guess it was the next trip after he had passed away. But that door open- you could see the pilots and what they see and the clouds as they come at you so quickly as you're flying through them. It was so intense and I thought, "how does someone do that?" It takes so much courage, to be so completely in this fog, in these clouds.

My dad flew B-24's and he flew with navigators but they didn't have radio. They would get into these thunderstorms over the South Pacific and be twisted and turned around, and have to roll off from their crew and not know where they were. So his stories are all about flying in thunderstorms and having to get below the clouds, right over the ocean, so you could see where you were going, so you could see anything. His stories were so vivid: I know that he's experienced clouds in a way I never will.