

CHRISTIAN HEROES: THEN & NOW

GLADYS AYLWARD



The Adventure
of a Lifetime

JANET & GEOFF BENGE

Used by Permission

CHRISTIAN HEROES: THEN & NOW

GLADYS AYLWARD

The Adventure
of a Lifetime

JANET & GEOFF BENGE

YWAM
PUBLISHING
P.O. BOX 55787 SEATTLE, WA 98155

Used by Permission

YWAM Publishing is the publishing ministry of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), an international missionary organization of Christians from many denominations dedicated to presenting Jesus Christ to this generation. To this end, YWAM has focused its efforts in three main areas: (1) training and equipping believers for their part in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), (2) personal evangelism, and (3) mercy ministry (medical and relief work).

For a free catalog of books and materials, call (425) 771-1153 or (800) 922-2143. Visit us online at www.ywampublishing.com.

Gladys Aylward: The Adventure of a Lifetime
Copyright © 1998 by YWAM Publishing

Published by YWAM Publishing
a ministry of Youth With A Mission
P.O. Box 55787, Seattle, WA 98155-0787

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Benge, Janet, 1958-

Gladys Aylward : the adventure of a lifetime / Janet and Geoff Benge.
p. cm.—(Christian heroes, then & now)

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: Recounts the life story of the Englishwoman who financed her own overland trip to China to become a missionary.

ISBN 1-57658-019-9

1. Aylward, Gladys—Juvenile literature. 2. Missionaries—China—Biography—Juvenile literature. 3. Missionaries—English—Biography—Juvenile literature. [1. Aylward, Gladys. 2. Missionaries. 3. Women—Biography.] I. Benge, Geoff, 1954-. II. Title. III. Series.

BV3427.A9B46 1998

266'.0092—dc21

[B]

98-19368

ISBN 978-1-57658-019-6 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-57658-550-4 (e-book)

Eighteenth printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

Used by Permission

Contents

1. Back up the Tracks.....	13
2. Not Good Enough to Be a Missionary.....	19
3. All Aboard.....	31
4. "It's Missionary, Not Machinery!".....	43
5. The Knock on the Door.....	57
6. The Road Ends Here.....	69
7. Inn of Eight Happinesses.....	81
8. Jesus in the Ark.....	95
9. The Honorable Foot Inspector.....	107
10. Ai-weh-deh.....	119
11. Vehicles That Flew Like Insects.....	129
12. All That You Are and All That You Do....	141
13. Read by Millions of People.....	155
14. A Price on Her Head.....	167
15. As Black as the Night.....	181
16. Going Home.....	191
Bibliography.....	205



Back up the Tracks

Gladys Aylward pulled herself up to her full five-foot height as she peered over the edge of the wooden train platform. Eerie flashes of orange light lit up the sky and the forest to the east. Loud cracks of gunfire and the boom of cannons rolled through the darkness. Ahead lay the railroad tracks. Even though the train had rumbled down them less than an hour ago, they were already covered with the powdery snow that continued to fall, blanketing everything.

Gladys pulled her fur coat tight around her and shuddered. She didn't want to step off the platform and begin her trek, but she had no choice. The only reason she had no choice now was that she had refused to get off the train earlier when asked to,

and the frustrated conductor had allowed her to stay on board as the train wound its way through the Siberian forest. Now Gladys chided herself for being so stubborn and not getting off the train in Chita, as everyone else had. But she'd thought that every mile traveled down the line was a mile closer to China. And it was. But it was also a mile traveled farther into a war zone!

It had all looked so easy back at Muller's Shipping Agency in Haymarket, London, where the clerk had traced out the route on a map. "Over the English Channel by boat from Hull," he had said. "Board the train in The Hague, Holland, and overland through Germany, Poland, Russia, Siberia, and on to Tientsin in China."

Gladys frowned. As easy as he had made it sound at the time, the clerk had also mentioned that there was a war going on in Siberia. But to Gladys, then twenty-eight years old, it seemed an unimportant detail in the grand scheme of getting herself to China. Now she found herself in the middle of that unimportant detail! The train she'd been riding was stopped at the front line of the little war going on between Russia and China. It had delivered fresh Russian soldiers and now waited to pick up the dead and wounded and carry them away from the front. But how long it would take to fill up the train with the dead and wounded was anyone's guess. Perhaps a week. Perhaps a month. Possibly not until the New Year, 1931! No one seemed to know.

Finally, the frustrated conductor had given Gladys a cup of strong, black coffee and pointed back up the railroad tracks in the direction from which they had come. Although he spoke no English, his message was clear: Gladys was not welcome to stay and wait for the return train ride. She was going to have to walk back to Chita.

With her bags in hand, Gladys finally stepped down onto the railroad tracks and began her trek. As she walked, she recalled the landscape. She hadn't seen a single person, not even the light from a house or a barn, on the journey down. For thirty miles there was nothing but thick, dark forest.

An icy wind whipped at Gladys's exposed face. Gladys could feel its bitter cold seep through her woolen stockings and sweater. With each whip of the wind around her, she felt her strength being sapped. Soon she could no longer carry her bags, so she slid them along on the snow. Her smaller bag had a pot and a kettle tied to its outside that jangled loudly with each slide.

Gladys had been stumbling along for about an hour when she realized that the orange glow of cannon fire was no longer on the horizon. Even though she'd been at the front line, the thought of people being nearby had been strangely comforting. Now she was completely alone in the vast Siberian wilderness, trudging along snow-covered train tracks. Every so often, a large clump of snow slipped off a tree limb and landed with a loud thud. Gladys would stop and peer into the dark shadows of the

forest and wonder whether it was the sound of a bear or a wolf nearby. Such animals were out there, and a lone woman in the forest at night was easy prey for them.

Gladys began wondering whether she would actually make it back to Chita, or whether the bitter cold or a wild beast would claim her life first. But she had to make it back. She had things to do in China. God had called her there. Surely He wouldn't let her die in the snow in a Siberian forest.

Slowly Gladys shuffled on up the tracks. The hours folded one into another. Her feet became numb, and she began dragging and sliding them along just as she did her two suitcases. But stubborn as she was, Gladys finally had to admit she was totally exhausted. What should she do? If she stopped she could make herself some hot coffee and eat a stale cookie. But would she be able to go on after that? She'd heard stories of people who when trapped in the cold and snow had become so exhausted they calmly sat down and froze to death. Gladys was scared of that happening to her. Yet she knew that if she kept going, in the end she would fall facedown in the snow. Then, with nothing warm in her stomach, she would not have the energy to get up again.

Finally, she could no longer resist the lure of a stale cookie and hot cup of coffee. She scooped away the snow until she felt one of the wooden railroad ties beneath it. With both hands she took her small spirit stove from her bag, set it down on the

tie, and tried to light it. Her fingers were so thick and numb that it took her four fumbled attempts before a yellow-blue flame finally began to glow from the stove. Gladys placed some snow into the kettle and set the kettle on the stove to melt and boil the snow.

With a cookie and hot coffee inside her, Gladys felt even more tired. But she dared not sleep in this frozen wasteland. In the end, though, she gave in, but she promised herself that she would sleep for only a little while. She arranged her suitcases around herself and pulled the top of her fur coat up over her head. Then she rolled up into a ball and fell asleep.

Inspiring true stories of men and women who answered God's call

A wealthy Irish girl rescuing children in India? An English maid preaching the gospel in China? An American pilot serving missionaries in Ecuador?

Christian Heroes: Then & Now chronicles the exciting, challenging, and deeply touching true stories of ordinary men and women whose trust in God accomplished extraordinary exploits for His kingdom and glory.



Gladys Aylward

(1902-1970)

"Her worst nightmare had come true..."

As improbable as it seemed, Gladys Aylward was certain God had called her to China as a missionary. But now, at age twenty-seven, she was being dismissed from missionary training school for failing her Bible class.

Without formal education or a missionary organization to back her, Gladys raised her own finances for the overland trip that would bring her to the country and people that God had etched so deeply on her heart...China!

What follows is an amazing adventure of faith and determination. Gladys Aylward, a housemaid from England, dared to trust God in the face of dire and seemingly hopeless circumstances. Her life is one of the truly great missionary stories of our era.

YWAM
PUBLISHING

P.O. BOX 55787 SEATTLE, WA 98195

ISBN 978-1-57658-019-6

**PROMOTIONAL
COPY**

U.S. \$8.99

Used by Permission