

Girls Who Grew Up to Change the World



Jessica Cox

(Born 1983)



Jessica had dreamed of flying from a young age. She would get frustrated with being different to everyone else and found that imagining herself soaring through the sky above them all helped.



What made her different? Jessica was born with a rare birth defect that means she has no arms.



She wore prosthetic arms because she felt she needed them to fit in. the arms were heavy and would get uncomfortable in the Arizona heat.



At the age of fourteen, she made one of the biggest decisions of her life, and decided to stop wearing them.



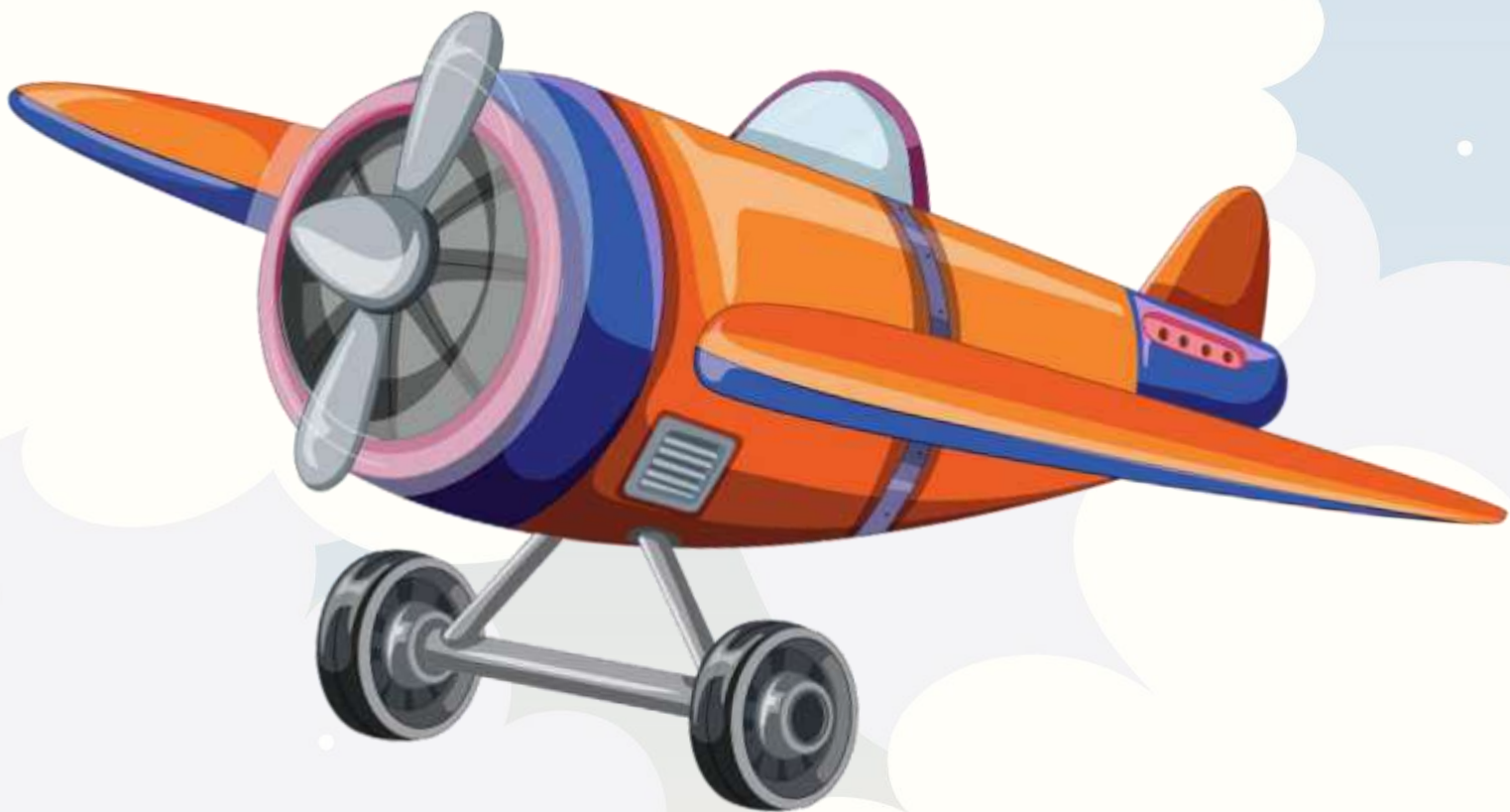
Instead, she embraced her difference, learning how to handle every day tasks with her feet. She hasn't looked back since.



She drives, swims, dances, scuba dives, surfs, holds a degree in psychology and has three black belts in taekwondo, which she won competing against people with both arms. She never felt disabled, she just knew she was differently abled.



She also learned to fly. As she was learning, new ways had to be found to enable her to do everything she needed to do in a plane, from buckling the seatbelt to starting the engine.



Jessica didn't let it stop her. It took two instructors, with four planes, across three states, but she finally got her pilot's licence after three years of training. It had been a long journey.



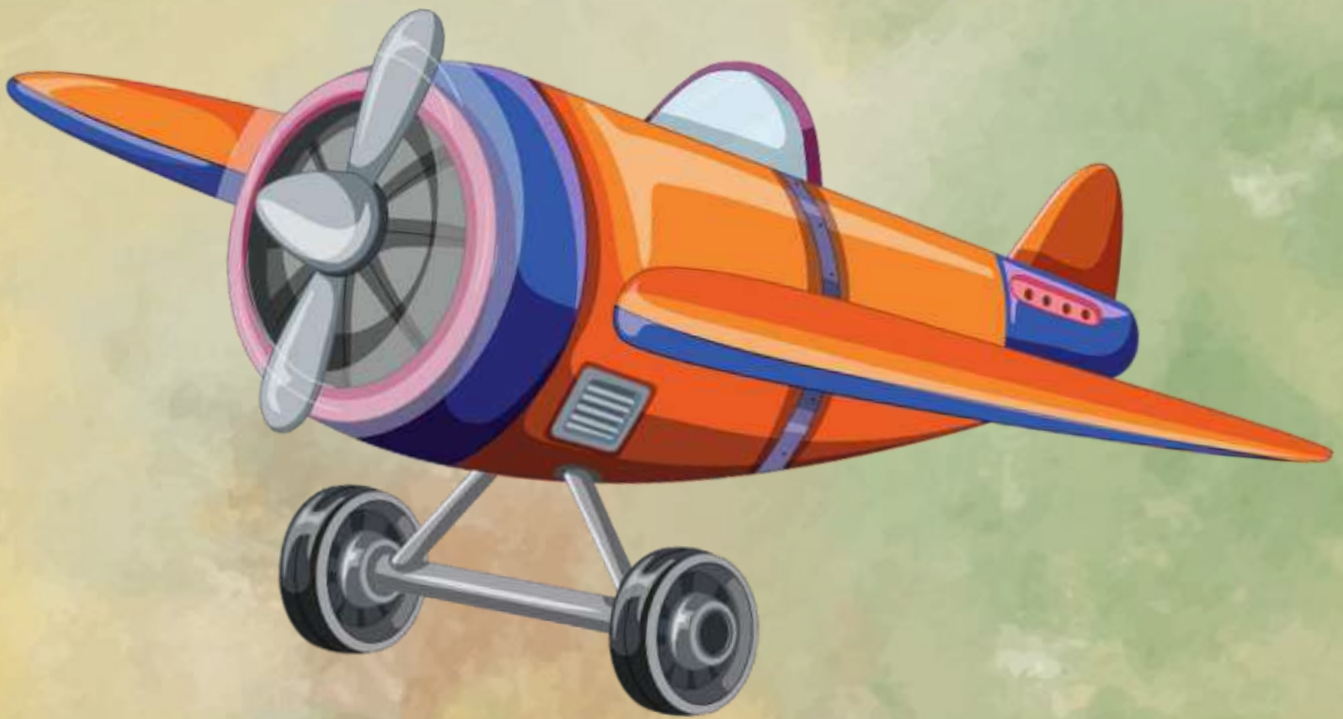
In 2013, Jessica flew to Ethiopia. There, she met an eight-year-old boy called Tariku, who had also been born without arms.



They ate together with their feet and Tariku introduced Jessica to injera, a kind of pancake bread popular in Africa



Seeing her fly herself out of his village on plane, he must have felt there was nothing in the world he wasn't capable of.



Jessica's advice for people feeling isolated because of their disabilities?



‘Develop self-confidence in your special abilities because there are things you can offer the world that other people can’t.’





THINK

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